THE EFFECTS OF READING AND DISCUSSING POETRY ON FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO READ AND VOCABULARY ACHIEVEMENT

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Requirements for the Degree of
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in the
Department of Education and Educational Psychology
at
Western Connecticut State University
2010
THE EFFECTS OF READING AND DISCUSSING POETRY ON FIFTH GRADE
STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO READ AND VOCABULARY ACHIEVEMENT

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Western Connecticut State University

Abstract

This study examined the effects of reading and discussing of poetry in a fifth grade setting in a suburban school district in the Northeast. A protocol designed by Nancie Atwell (2006) was used as the treatment in the study utilizing a pretest posttest quasi-experimental design. The sample of convenience (n = 141) was drawn from the fifth grade in a suburban school district in the Northeast. All students were administered the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) to measure their levels of motivation prior to treatment implementation. Form S of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test: Vocabulary Subtest (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000) was utilized as a pretest to measure vocabulary achievement prior to treatment. Both the experimental and the control groups received literacy instruction in the form of the reader’s workshop model, but the experimental group’s instruction was supplemented with eight weeks of reading and discussing poetry using the Atwell protocol three times per week. Upon completion of the treatment, students were administered the Motivation to Read Profile and Form T of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test: Vocabulary Subtest to measure changes in motivation and vocabulary achievement.

An ANOVA was used to measure the effectiveness of the treatment on both student motivation to read and vocabulary achievement. For both research questions,
results of the one-way ANOVA required accepting the null hypothesis. Thus, there were no significant differences in the vocabulary achievement or the motivation to read of fifth grade students who read and discussed poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s poetry protocol as compared to fifth grade students who did not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol. Students who received the treatment continued to perform as well as those in the control group who did not receive the treatment.
APPROVAL PAGE

School of Professional Studies
Department of Education and Educational Psychology
Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership

Doctor of Education Dissertation

THE EFFECTS OF READING AND DISCUSSING POETRY ON FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS’ MOTIVATION TO READ AND VOCABULARY ACHIEVEMENT

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experience with actual students. He exposed to me practitioners, theorists, and researchers who examined issues of motivation and the development of life-long readers. Most importantly, he taught me that you do whatever you can to ensure that your students learn and know that you care about them, always.

Throughout my time in this program, I established new connections who have elevated my work, and I have fallen back on old connections who continue to support me in a variety of ways. Essentially, I know I have the best network of friends in the world, and I am forever grateful to each of them.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for instilling the value of education in me and supporting me, and my educational progress, unconditionally.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Tanya, and our daughter, Giana. They both give purpose to my work and have offered unwavering encouragement along the way. As with all of our challenges, Tanya holds me to task while providing me with absolute support. I am eternally grateful to have both of them as part of my life.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Poetry is often described as having the potential to deepen student thinking and motivate students to engage in the process of reading and writing. According to the National Council of Teachers of English (2005), whether taught on its own or woven throughout the English curriculum, poetry offers students opportunities to engage with ideas, deepen language skills, stretch writing abilities, and share their own thoughts and emotions.

Atwell (2006) asserts that poetry connects people at the most essential level: heart and mind to heart and mind by allowing them to think, laugh, and define feelings. Often times, rather than being able to explore poetry through natural talk, curiosity, and revelation, students are forced to answer someone else’s questions designed to elicit specific answers (Heard, 1989). Gangi (2004) argues that this practice undermines a child’s natural engagement with poetry and possibilities of words. When these authors speak of the nature of poetry as an extension of who students are as people, they are talking about the potential and possibilities of poetry as a tool to enhance motivation and to help students develop language skills (Atwell, 2006; Gangi, 2004; Heard, 1999; O’Connor, 2004). Atwell states that if she had to choose just one genre to teach in a language arts program, it would be poetry due, in part, to its ability to motivate students and develop language skills.

Gambrell (1996) found that teachers know that motivation is at the core of many of the issues that they are faced with in education today. Wigfield (1997) focused on the area of Language Arts and reported that motivation to read is critical to consider at all age
levels. Essentially, teachers are not only looking to best motivate all students academically, but, more specifically, looking to motivate students to be effective and critical readers (Gambrell, 1996).

**Statement of Purpose**

The major topic researched was the impact of a specific protocol established for reading and discussing poetry. While the creator of the protocol (Atwell, 2006) speaks to the variety of benefits of reading and discussing poetry, the focus of this research was on how this specific protocol impacted student motivation to read and vocabulary achievement, two important components of becoming an effective reader.

In a review of research over the past 25 years, Wigfield (1997) found that much has been learned about how children learn how to read; however, the majority of research studies focused on cognitive aspects of reading and paid less attention to what motivates students to read. Yet, for students to develop into effective readers, they must possess both the skill and the will to read (Paris & Oka, 1986). Motivation frequently distinguishes learning that is temporary and superficial from learning that is permanent and internalized (Oldfather, 1993). Gangi (2004) maintains that poetry can reengage lost learners.

In addition to motivating students, work with poetry inherently focuses on the use of words and their varied meanings (Atwell, 1991). A well-developed vocabulary is a prerequisite for fluent reading, a critical link between decoding and comprehension (Joshi, 2005). Fountas and Pinnell (2001), state that when students are immersed in rich, lively poetry, they are also immersed in intense, concise, and skillfully crafted language. Baumann, Kameenui, and Ash (2003) suggest that an effective vocabulary curriculum
must help students develop an appreciation for words and experience enjoyment and satisfaction in their use. If teachers want to develop the language skills of students, poetry is an effective way to do so (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

As an advocate of using poetry to meet a variety of instructional aims, specifically to motivate students and develop language skills, Atwell (2006) developed a poetry protocol that encourages regular exposure to poetry in a way that directly involves students in the process of constructing meaning, and sharing thoughts and opinions in a social way while exposing to a students to a wide variety of themes and ideas. Atwell (2006) believes her protocol for reading and discussing poetry will enhance student motivation while developing students as critical readers and writers.

**Statement of Problem**

Researchers such as Harrison and Gordon (1983), Benton (1986), and Wade and Sidaway (1990) as well as practitioners such as Heard (1989), O’Connor (2004) and Atwell (2006) all cite the power of poetry as it relates to motivating students to read and development of language skills. However, there are very few empirical studies to support the link between the reading and discussion of poetry in classrooms and the improvement of reading motivation and vocabulary achievement. A review of literature reveals two studies that examine the link between poetry and language development, as well as between poetry and vocabulary development and the appreciation of multiple perspectives, but none have examined the use of poetry instruction and its impact on students’ motivation to read and vocabulary achievement.
Poetry Research Overview

Dixon (1984) conducted a study to examine the effect of reading and discussing poetry on fourth grade students’ use of figurative language in writing. In this study, the researcher selected 10 poems that were rich in their use of figurative language. These poems were read and discussed over five weeks in two 30 minute sessions each week. The researcher-designed treatment was implemented in six fourth grade classrooms, with only two classrooms making up the control group. A researcher designed pretest posttest was administered to the experimental groups, but only the posttest was administered to the control group. In addition, the researcher was one of the teachers in the experimental group and had a more in-depth knowledge of figurative language than others in the study. While there was no difference found between the experimental and the control groups, the experimental group that was taught by the researcher did perform better than the control group.

Walker (2008) conducted an eight-week, quasi-experimental study that consisted of a researcher-designed series of poetry workshops implemented over the course of 11 hours of instructional time with a matched treatment group of 28 eighth grade students. The treatment was developed, implemented, and evaluated by the researcher. Walker’s findings suggested a relationship between poetry and vocabulary achievement and the appreciation of multiple perspectives, two factors that are related to reading achievement. Walker found the students in the treatment group showed significant improvement in the areas of appreciation of multiple perspectives and vocabulary achievement.

These two studies represent the most recent research on the effects of poetry instruction. The proposed study will contribute to this body of research by examining the
effects of a specific poetry protocol designed by Atwell (2006) on students’ motivation to read and vocabulary achievement, both of which have been found to be important to the development of critical thoughtful

**Description of Potential Benefits**

In the Connecticut Language Arts Framework (2006), the State Board of Education asserted that an effective language arts instructional program must: provide students with exposure to others’ lives and to worlds beyond their own through literary text; help students use language to think critically and to solve problems in everyday life; and provide students with the tools and motivation to continue their learning beyond school. For teachers to meet these expectations, current practice must be examined, refined, and improved. Poetry may have the potential to support teachers in meeting these instructional goals.

This research project examined a specific protocol for reading and discussing poetry (Atwell, 2006) that could be used by teachers. If it is effective in improving student motivation to read and vocabulary achievement, teachers may be more willing to integrate poetry into their classroom routine. Benton (1986) found that 100% of teachers felt that poetry should be taught in school, although they were concerned about their own ability to teach it as well as their students’ preconceived notions about poetry.
**Definition of Key Terms**

1. *Direct vocabulary Instruction* pertains to vocabulary that is learned through explicit instruction such as key word identification and repeated multiple readings (Nelson, & Stage, 2007).

2. *Indirect vocabulary Instruction* pertains to learning words primarily through speaking and written exposure and social interactions (Nelson & Stage, 2007). This supports the theory that the more students participate in rich speaking and reading vocabulary experiences, the greater their vocabulary knowledge will be (Brabham, & Lynch-Brown, 2002).

3. *Literacy* is the ability to use language to read, write, speak, and listen. Effective literacy programs foster active, responsible learning (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

4. *Reading comprehension* is the degree to which students understand the texts they read with accuracy, ease, and fluency (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

5. *Poetry* is writing in verse that is both imaginative and artistic. It uses language that is honed to communicate specific meanings by evoking sensory images and feelings and features figurative language, rhythm, and sound patterns (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

6. *Reading motivation* is a measure of a student’s self-concept as a reader and his value of reading (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996).

7. *Reading workshop* has come to be thought of as an organized set of language and literacy experiences (typically, a mini-lesson, individual reading, conferring, and sharing) designed to help students become more effective readers. Fountas &
Pinnell (2001) expanded this definition to include independent reading, guided reading, and literature study.

8. *Social interaction* is the relationship to other individuals on a personal level as well as an academic level (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

9. *Traditional reading instruction* is an approach to teaching reading that includes the use of basal anthologies, teacher’s manuals, workbooks, and program assessments (Shannon, 1982).

**Research Questions**

By using a systematic approach, this research explored the impact of reading and discussing poetry using a specific protocol put forth by Atwell on student motivation to read and vocabulary achievement through the following questions:

Research Question One: Is there a significant difference in the reading motivation of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol?

Research Question Two: Is there a significant difference in the vocabulary achievement of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol?

**Overview of Methodology**

This study used a sample of convenience (n=141) of fifth grade students from a suburban intermediate school in New England. The sample was representative of the school population in gender make up and was comprised of 50.4% male students and
49.6% female students. There were six classes of students involved in the study, each with one teacher. Three teachers and their classes made up the experimental group, and three teachers and their classes made up the control group. The methodology employed in this study was a quasi-experimental treatment control pretest posttest design, with random assignment to treatment and was conducted to examine the impact of reading and discussion poetry on student motivation to read and vocabulary achievement. For research question one, reading motivation was measured by the Motivation to Read Profile: Reading Survey (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) that was administered pre and posttest. For research question two, vocabulary achievement was measured using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Vocabulary Subtest (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000) that was administered pre and posttest.

During an eight-week period (for a total of 24 lessons), students in the experimental group, whose teachers received staff development in the use of Atwell’s protocol for reading and discussing poetry, had their English Language Arts instruction supplemented with this approach. The students in the control group, whose teachers had not been trained, continued to follow the language arts curriculum normally employed in the school.

The Atwell protocol consisted of the teacher reading a selected poem aloud to students. While the teacher was reading, students had the opportunity to mark up the passage based upon a specific teacher instruction, or an individual response. Once the students processed the passage, the teacher led the class in a brief, focused discussion. The poems used in the treatment group were structured by theme and were the same for all three classrooms.
Description and Justification of Data Analysis

The independent variable for this study was literacy instruction with two levels: level one – used a poetry protocol; level two – did not use a poetry protocol. The dependent variables for research question one and two were reading motivation and vocabulary achievement, respectively. For research question one, after conducting an ANOVA on the motivation to read pretest results, it was determined that the groups were performing equally on the motivation variable. Thus, an ANOVA was an appropriate test to conduct on the posttest results as well. For research question number two, after conducting an ANOVA on the GMRT Vocabulary Subtest pretest results, it was determined that the groups were performing equally on the motivation variable. Thus, an ANOVA was an appropriate test to conduct on the posttest results as well.

Data Collection, Procedures, and Timeline

1. Teachers distributed and collected a letter requesting consent from parents and students for participation in the study. The signed consent forms were collected by the teachers and given to the researcher. (March, 2009)

2. All participants in the study completed a Motivation to Read Profile in order to provide the researcher with information on each student’s reading self-concept and his or her value of reading prior to treatment. (March, 2009)

3. All participants in the study will completed the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (Form T) to provide the researcher with a general assessment of the vocabulary/word knowledge of each student prior to treatment. (March, 2009)

4. Throughout an eight-week period, teachers of the experimental group supplemented their language arts instruction with Atwell’s model of reading
and discussing poetry. This will happen three times a week. Teachers of the control group conducted their classes according to the traditional model of language arts instruction. (March, April, May, 2009)

5. All participants in the study completed the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (Form S) to provide the researcher with a general assessment of the vocabulary/word knowledge of each student after treatment. (May, 2009)

6. All participants in the study completed a Motivation to Read Profile to provide the researcher with information on each student’s reading self-concept and value of reading after treatment. (May, 2009)

7. Statistical analysis using *The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) was conducted to examine the impact of the treatment on students’ vocabulary achievement and reading motivation.

**Chapter Conclusion**

The central assertion made in Chapter One is that, as teachers look for ways to foster student motivation and develop language, poetry may be able to do so in an effective way that motivates students and facilitates the development of language. Further, the protocol put forth by Atwell (2006) allows this to take place on a regular basis in a brief amount of time thereby maximizing instructional time.

While there are many practitioners (Atwell, 2006; Koch, 1973; Heard, 1989; O’Connor, 2004) who cite the benefits of using poetry in the classroom there are very few research studies to support their claims. What the research does suggest, however, is a link between the use of poetry in the classroom and language development of students and the appreciation of multiple perspectives. This research examined whether the study
of poetry, using the Atwell protocol helped to promote the motivation to read and vocabulary achievement of fifth grade students. If shown to be successful, this research could have a significant impact on teachers’ willingness to incorporate poetry in the classroom on a regular basis.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of literature is presented in several parts. The first part provides an overview of poetry with an emphasis on relevant practitioner-based literature. The relationship between poetry and cognitive development are then discussed. This section includes a review of the empirical studies that have been conducted on the relationship between poetry, motivation, and vocabulary development. Next, teacher and student perceptions of poetry are explored because they directly impacts poetry instructional practice and provide evidence as to why poetry might be reluctantly used in classrooms. Reader response theory is then introduced because it supports the implementation of the Atwell protocol used in this study. This theory is then applied to the study of poetry in the classroom. Since reader response is focused on individual reader experience and motivation, and since motivation is one of the dependent variables in the study, several related theoretical constructs of motivation are described. After having reviewing the theoretical work on motivation, the relationship between motivation and reading achievement are explored because motivation has been shown to impact student reading achievement. Finally, vocabulary achievement, also an important component of reading comprehension, is discussed.

Overview of Poetry

The review of research revealed few empirical studies on poetry and its impact on classroom instruction; thus the researcher reviewed literature that offered a pedagogical perspective on teaching poetry to students and the impact that this would have on student motivation and achievement. Koch (1973), O’Connor (2004), Heard (1989), and Atwell
(2006) all offer perspectives that are relevant to this study and represent the type of practitioner-based literature that is available to educators.

Former Poet Laureate Rita Dove once said that merely the whisper of poetry’s name frightens everyone away. O’Connor (2004) asserts that for many people, young and old alike, poetry conjures up images of an impossibly distant past. According to O’Connor, this lack of accessibility makes it difficult for students to make meaningful textual connections to the poems. Furthermore, poetry is often read and analyzed and discussed in a mechanical way that further distances the readers from the poem. O’Connor also advocates for teachers to engage students in experiences with poetry that make the material more accessible for students. This has implications for educators because poetry is already in our lives and can help us better ourselves in emotional, social, and academic ways (Heard 1989; O’Connor, 2004).

Many poets start from a love of words and wordplay (Hall, 1992). O’Connor (2004) states that when students work with poems in an open atmosphere, they are able to take risks and try new ways of using language. By simply working with and experimenting with words, students not only pay attention to sound and denotation, but to connotation as well (O’Connor, 2004). O’Connor postulates that students take time to work with words to better understand them and fully utilize them in a powerful way. Further, O’Connor also asks that students explore the presences and absences in their environments: what they are surrounded by, what they choose to surround themselves with, and what happens when their relationships to their surroundings change. Through this type of work, students better understand and express their individual identities. When students identify and use words, these words are reflections of attitudes, values, and
experiences. Finally, the richness and subtlety of poetic language make it an ideal vehicle for vocabulary acquisition (Collins, 1963). Vocabulary achievement has been shown to be a critical link to improved reading comprehension and is one variable that this research study examines.

In reflecting on the genre of poetry for children, Heard (1989) notes that so much children’s poetry is condescending or silly, as if this is the only kind of poetry to which younger students should be exposed or even enjoy. Conversely, students need poems that challenge them. Heard (1989) found that students unanimously liked the poems that were difficult to understand when compared to the poems that were more easily accessible. Poems that are more challenging are like puzzles to which students apply their own experience to unlock deeper meanings of words and images. Further, in order to best interact with poetry in order to make connections and examine the use of language, students should be allowed to explore poetry through curiosity, natural talk, and revelation (Heard, 1989). However, what happens in most classrooms is that students are forced to answer someone else’s questions, meant to help them “understand” the poem. Based on this, it is no wonder that poetry is rarely read by students and adults (Heard, 1989).

Koch (1973) worked with third to sixth grade students to engage them in the act of reading, discussing, and writing poetry based on the work of authors such as Whitman, Shakespeare, and Blake. Typically, these authors were thought to be suitable for use in high school and college classrooms. Koch felt that there must be a way to make great poetry accessible to all ages of learners. By focusing on the use of poetry to help students find perceptions, ideas, feelings, and new ways of saying things, Koch used the reading
of these complex poems to inspire discussion and writing with his students. Through this, Koch discovered that his students were capable of enjoying and learning from “great” poetry. Further, Koch (1973) noted that the typical criteria for selecting poems to teach children were mistaken and that poetry for children must go beyond the sing-song sort of Muzak in the background of their elementary education. Essentially, this mentality hinders intellectual growth as it gives students nothing to understand that they have not already understood, thus condescending to their feelings and intelligence. By engaging students in work with poetry, Koch found that students were more motivated to read and write as well as increased their facility with language.

**Atwell Protocol**

In 2006, Atwell published *Naming the World* as a resource for classroom teachers. The work that Atwell put forth in this text is used as the treatment for the experimental group in this study. In this text, Atwell selected specific poems, grouped by themes, in order to engage students in the act of reading and discussing poetry on a regular basis. Atwell selected poems, from published authors as well as former students, based upon their engaging and challenging themes, as well as their use of rich language. In order to facilitate the reading and discussion of each poem, Atwell also developed a specific protocol for teachers to follow. This protocol allows for consistency in delivery, as well as ensures that the poetry experience is meaningful and concise. The Atwell protocol engages the students with poems both orally and in writing, and asks students to discuss them in a natural way so that their inherent curiosity is honored and a genuine connection with the poems can be forged. The Atwell protocol takes into account the need for students to engage in poetry in ways that are meaningful, relevant, and allow each to
explore poetry though curiosity, natural talk, and revelation (Heard, 1989; O’Connor, 2004). Through her stance on poetry, supported by her protocol for reading and discussing selected poems, Atwell focuses on factors that motivate students and allows each to interact with the poem in a developmentally appropriate and engaging way. Further, along with the individual connection to the text, the Atwell protocol focuses students on the words the authors choose and the ways in which those words are used. Atwell’s protocol provides students and teachers with the challenging material to present in a context that honors curiosity and social interaction.

**Summary**

In much of the practitioner-based literature on poetry, authors discuss the potential of poetry as a vehicle to motivate students and affect reading achievement in a variety of areas, including vocabulary achievement (Atwell, 2006; Koch, 1973; Heard, 1989; O’Connor, 2004). Atwell has developed a protocol, and selected poems for use with the protocol, that, according to her, has the potential to motivate students and engage them in the reading and discussion of poetry as a means to deepen student comprehension as well as to develop vocabulary.

**The Relationship of Poetry and Cognitive Development**

The implication of Atwell’s work is that motivation is an inherent part of getting students to engage in the act of thinking. Dewey (1910) sought to examine the nature of human thinking. He contended that thinking is born of some perplexity, confusion, or doubt evoked by a specific occasion or experience. Once an area of difficulty presents itself, then the individual must begin to think of a solution. This process can be supported with the information at hand; however, Dewey believed that one cannot think
without having some experience or prior knowledge to help develop a solution. When
one has a problem to solve, to urge him or her to think with no prior experience involving
some of the same conditions is wholly futile.

When engaging in the act of thinking, there are several natural resources at one’s
disposal: one is curiosity. Dewey felt that curiosity was a vital and significant factor in
the act of thinking and was well served by social stimuli and challenging materials to
foster one’s intellect. When students engage in reading and discussing poems following
Atwell’s protocol, they are engaging in the act of thinking in a challenging and social
way that fosters curiosity and desire to learn (Atwell, 2006).

While few in number, there are two empirical studies that examine the link
between poetry and cognitive development, specifically in the area of language. Walker
(2008) conducted a quasi-experimental study that sought to examine the impact of poetry
on a variety of variables including writing fluency, vocabulary use, metaphor and
multiple perspectives use, revision, and, overall writing quality. This project consisted of
an eight-week, 11-hour series of poetry workshops developed, implemented, and
evaluated by the researcher at a charter school in Southern California. The research
questions for the study included:

1. Did the learning experienced in a series of poetry workshops improve
   the low-level processes of metaphor use?
2. Did the learning experienced in a series of poetry workshops improve
   the high-level processes of metaphor use?
3. Did the learning experienced in a series of poetry workshops improve the use of metacognitive strategies including the appreciation of multiple perspectives and willingness to review and revise ideas?

4. Did the learning experienced in a series of poetry workshops result in improved expository writing?

This quasi-experimental study included a treatment group of 28 eighth grade students in an English class, and the control group included 28 eighth grade students in the same school who were matched to the treatment students using baseline data (e.g. gender and SES) collected from school records and baseline competencies on pretests. Matches were made on the criteria of: (a) vocabulary use and (b): writing quality. Vocabulary use was measured using text analysis software (Web Vocabulary Profiler, 2006), and writing quality was assessed via a student response to a California High School Exam related essay prompt that was given a baseline score from an external reader using the CAHSEE scoring guide. The purpose of matching was to create a control group that was as similar as possible to the treatment group.

Throughout the eight-week study, students in the experimental group engaged in an integrated writing curriculum entitled *The Poetry Project*. The Poetry Project consisted of eight workshops, delivered over eight weeks for a total of 11 hours. Workshop 1 focused on expectations for the upcoming workshops and vocabulary building. The purpose of Workshop 2 was to introduce image making through the use of similes. Workshop 3 engaged students in the act of writing poetry with peers, and examined the use of color and sensory detail through an exemplar poem and the writing of poems based on the mentor. Workshop 4, which took place after a three-week winter
break, introduced students to a revision strategy, presented metaphor through a mentor poem, and asked students to consider multiple perspectives through metaphor poems. In workshop 5, students were introduced to imagism through the work of William Carlos Williams, and the used revision strategies to revise individual poems. In an attempt to increase individual attention, the researcher employed the assistance of an additional instructor in order to facilitate student conferences. In workshop 6, students continued to explore multiple perspectives, from an interpersonal point of view, through the work of a specific poet, Paul Fleischman. Workshop 7 sought to have students analyze imagery and metaphorical writing in order to consider multiple perspectives from an objective point of view. In workshop 8, students completed posttest work and a revision exercise. This standards-based curriculum, included reading and discussion poetry, journaling, poetry writing, revision, and publication and was based on California Content Standards for English language arts.

Students in the treatment group showed significant improvement in the appreciation of multiple perspectives (p= .043). To measure student ability in the area of multiple perspectives, two different poems were selected for reading. One was read as the pre-test and the other was read as the post-test. After reading each poem, the students answered one question: “What does this poem mean?” The teacher then read a response to the question that was presented as the work of an 8th grade student from another school; however, it was actually written by the researcher. The students then had to answer the following questions: (a) Do you think this student is right? Why or why not? and (b) Does this student’s idea about the poem change what you think about it? Why or why not? Responses were then evaluated using a 3-point scale: (1) single point of view,
(2) multiple points of view and, (3) multiple point of view plus evaluation. Each response was read and scored by the researcher and an external evaluator. The two readers scored 73% of the responses identically, and score differences were solved through discussion.

Students also showed significant improvement in the use of vocabulary (p = .010) as assessed through the use of text analysis software applied to an essay prompt related to the California High School Exit Examination. In order to assess vocabulary use, an essay prompt was administered as a pretest and a posttest. The pre and posttest essays were the same question:

*Throughout your years in school, you have studied about many different people.*

*Think about one of these people you have studied during your time at school.*

*What makes this person special enough to study?*

*Write an essay in which you discuss a person you have studied in school. Explain what it is about this person that is special. Use details to support your ideas* (Walker, 2008).

While the essay prompt was the same pre and posttest, students had to select a different person about whom to write for each. Text analysis software, Web Vocabulary Profiler, was then used to determine the type/token ratio of words used in the essay. Types of words, according to Vocabulary Profiler include the first 1000 most frequently used words (K1), the second 1000 most frequently used words (K2), academic words and off-list words. For this study, vocabulary was measured by the percentage of K2 words used.
In another study, Dixon (1984) sought to determine the effects of exposure to the rich language of poetry on the figurative language development of students in fourth grade. A population of eight fourth grade classes was selected from a local school system in Northwest Ohio that served an economically, culturally, and racially diverse population. The experimental group (n=95) consisted of three classes from two different schools. The researcher delivered the treatment in two of the three classes. The control group (n=99) consisted of four classes from two different schools. Of the four classes, two had just completed a month long unit on creative writing.

In this quasi-experimental, pretest posttest study, students in the experimental group read and discussed poetry for 30-minutes, twice per week, for five weeks. Each discussion was focused on the figurative language used in the poetry and the discussion was facilitated though questions designed by the researcher. During the ten treatment sessions, the facilitator of the lesson, either the researcher or the trained classroom teachers, read selected poems on familiar topics and guided the discussion on the author’s use of figurative language. Students were encouraged to create figurative comparisons orally and were also asked to write their own paragraphs about the same topic as the poem where use of figurative language was also encouraged.

In order to measure student outcomes, the researcher designed both the pretest and posttest measures. In the pretest and posttest, students were required to choose one of three pictures shown by the researcher and then write a descriptive composition about the picture. The writing was then analyzed by dividing the number of figures of speech by the total number of words in the composition. This figure was then multiplied by 100 in order to convert the score into a percentage. This allowed for comparison of
compositions of unequal length. In addition, the figures of speech used in the composition were evaluated qualitatively by the researcher and two members of her dissertation committee using a five-point scale. The pretest was the same as the posttest; however, students were asked to choose a different picture for the posttest.

In the quantitative analysis, the researcher used a t-test to compare the pre and post treatment use of figurative language in the experimental groups (t=2.55) and it was significant at the .05 level. This analysis was not conducted on the control group data. Next, a t-test was used to compare the figurative language usage in the teacher-taught classrooms to that of the researcher-taught classrooms. The resulting t-value of -2.117 was significant at the .05 level, indicating that mean usage of figurative language was greater for groups taught by the researcher than for groups taught by the classroom teacher. A one-way ANOVA was then employed to compare the figurative language usage between the experimental and control groups (t=0.96). The one-tailed probability of 0.169 indicates that the t-value of 0.96 is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance which provides evidence that no differences existed in the mean posttest usage of figurative language. As indicated by the t-test computed on the pretest and posttest usage of figurative language by the experimental group, growth in mean usage of figurative language examples was present. Students in the experimental group wrote a greater number of figurative language examples on the posttest than the pretest. However, the comparison of experimental and control groups gave no evidence that differences existed in the mean posttest usage of figurative language. Moreover, students who were part of the treatment did show an improvement in their use of figurative language; however, the researcher was not able to attribute the growth to the treatment.
Summary

The two studies described above represent the limited research on the impact of engagement with poetry and cognitive development in the area of language. Both of these studies suggest that poetry has the potential to positively impact the development of students’ language abilities. In addition to this limited research, there is much practitioner-based literature that argues that poetry can positively impact students’ cognitive and language abilities; however, poetry remains a genre that is not regularly used in the classroom. Teacher and student perceptions of poetry can offer insights as to why this might be.

Perceptions of Poetry

Student Perceptions of Poetry

Wade and Sidaway (1990) surveyed four mixed-ability classes from two schools (n = 100) ranging in age from 9 to 12. In reflecting on their past educational experiences, 71% of 9 to 10 year olds and 69% of 11 to 12 year olds said they did not experience lessons involving poetry. Interestingly, 6% of 9 to 10 year olds and 8% of 11 to 12 year olds reported that they had regular experiences with poetry, but 48% of 9 to 10 year olds and 21% of 11 to 12 year olds reported that they thought they should. Benton (1986) suggested that modern readers’ current experiences and interests create a cultural gap between themselves and pre-twentieth century writers who make it difficult for them to relate to the text. Due to this, students have developed a certain tentativeness about engaging with poetry.
**Teacher Perceptions of Poetry**

Wade and Sidaway (1990) also surveyed teachers (n = 86) from six different middle schools to gather information about their views on poetry. All staff that responded claimed to enjoy poetry and said that they included it in their teaching. Notably, 70% listed lack of confidence and lack of knowledge as two major difficulties in the teaching of poetry. While teachers often seem unsure as to how poetry should be incorporated into the curriculum, the following four reasons were most frequently mentioned: (a) poetry is valuable in developing children’s awareness of the possibilities of language; (b) poetry gives pleasure and enjoyment to children; (c) poetry is a stimulus or resources to encourage writing and discussion; (d) poetry develops the whole child.

Harrison and Gordon (1983) also surveyed teachers in secondary schools and found that they were reluctant to teach poetry. This directly impacted students’ attitudes toward poetry with 84% of students in these schools reporting that they did not like poetry. Benton (1986) found that 100% of teachers surveyed felt that poetry should be taught in school, but were concerned about their own ability to effectively teach it, as well as their students’ preconceived notions about poetry. While teachers recognize the value of poetry, the research suggested that there were a variety of reasons that explain why it may not be brought into the classroom, or may only be brought in reluctantly.

**Summary**

Those who work with poetry often speak about the many ways in which the reading and discussing of poetry can benefit students. Interestingly, both students and teachers have reported negative perceptions about poetry. This may explain why the use of poetry in the classroom is often lacking throughout the course of the school year. If
research could demonstrate a relationship between the use of poetry and improved student motivation and vocabulary achievement through the use of an easy to use protocol that actively engages students, this might ease teachers’ fears about using poetry and allow them to engage students in more authentic ways. In turn, students’ negative perceptions of poetry might also change.

**Reader Response Theory**

In order for students to go beyond concrete or surface interpretations of poetry and derive deeper meaning, students must find ways to respond to, and connect with, poetry in a supportive environment. The Atwell protocol used in this study necessitates that teachers create thoughtful, comfortable experiences through which students can respond to poetry while also learning from the responses of their classmates. One of the theoretical perspectives that supports this type of engagement is that of reader response.

In her seminal text, *Literature as Response*, Rosenblatt (1938) articulates the concept of reader response theory. In this theory, reading is described as a transaction between the reader and text in which each makes an equal contribution. Essentially, each reader brings his or her own background knowledge to each text with which he or she is engaged. It is this background knowledge that helps each reader respond to, and make sense of, the text. Further, what is important about a work of literature is an individual matter, including whether or not it is important at all. Rosenblatt puts forth two types of reading, efferent and aesthetic. In efferent reading, one is reading to take away information. In aesthetic reading, the focus is on what is being lived through in the reading and connects directly to what the reader is feeling and thinking. Oftentimes, when reading, there is a balance of both stances; however, in school settings, students are
often asked to read from an efferent stance even if the material at hand would be better suited to an aesthetic stance. Further, Rosenblatt (1978) speaks of the invisible reader and argues that the reader should be sharing the limelight with the author and text rather than being cast into the shadows.

**Reader Response Theory and Poetry**

In *The Reader, The Text, The Poem* (1978), Rosenblatt postulates that the “poem” is a live circuit between the reader and the text. Just as with an electric circuit, each component of the reading process functions by virtue of the presence of the others: A specific reader and a specific text, at a specific time and place. If there is a change to any of these, there occurs a different circuit or different event; essentially, a different poem. Thus, reader and the text are essential components that are manifested in each reading of a poem. Rosenblatt would argue that the poem cannot be a poem unless the reader brings his or her experience and background to the reading of it.

Atwell’s protocol embodies the essential elements of reader response as students are asked to bring forth their own background and experience in order to make sense of the poem being read and discussed. It is this engagement that creates a motivating experience for students. Furthermore, it has been shown that motivation can positively impact student achievement in general as well as in the area of reading. Students who are motivated to read have been shown to have positive increases in comprehension and vocabulary achievement. By honoring the tenets of reader response, Atwell engages students with poetry in a way that is inherently motivating.

**Theoretical Constructs of Motivation**

The Latin root of the word “motivation” means “to move”; in this sense the study
of motivation is the study of action (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). In a meta-analysis of recent research on motivation, Wigfield (1997) found that the study of motivation has increased dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s. Modern theories of motivation focus on the relation of beliefs, values, and goals with action (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Throughout this research, many have discussed their work in the context of different theoretical perspectives on motivation. As this study focuses on the reading and discussion of poetry as a motivational force, it is necessary to examine the theoretical perspectives of motivation that relate most closely to this research: (a) self-efficacy theory, (b) expectancy-value theory, (c) goal theories, and (d) self-determination theory.

The Atwell protocol relates most closely to these theories as it seeks to engage students in the reading and discussion of authentically challenging poetry in a way that allows each student to feel positively about his or her contributions to the discussion thereby fostering intrinsic motivation within each student. Individual background is honored in order to bolster self-confidence, and a community of learners is fostered as the class works toward the common goal of deeper understanding.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy theorists such as Bandura (1997, 2001) and Schunk (1990) discussed how children’s beliefs about their inherent abilities impact their achievement behaviors. Bandura postulates that human functioning is a series of reciprocal interactions between personal influences, environmental features, and behaviors. Bandura states that “the capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life is the essence of humanness” (2001). In order to exercise control over one’s life, one must have a positive perception of one’s self. Efficacy beliefs play a central role in the self-regulation of
motivation through goal challenges and the expected outcomes. It is partly on the basis of efficacy beliefs that people choose what challenges to undertake, how much effort to expend in the endeavor, how long to persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, and whether failures are motivating or demoralizing (Bandura, 2001). Bandura distinguished between two types of expectancy beliefs: (a) outcome expectations—beliefs that certain behaviors will lead to certain outcomes and (b) efficacy expectations—beliefs about whether one can effectively perform the behaviors necessary to produce the outcome. These two ideas are, in fact, different, as it is possible for one to believe that a certain behavior will produce a certain outcome, but he or she may not believe that the behavior can be performed. The likelihood that people will act on the outcomes they expect specific performances to produce depends on their beliefs about whether or not they can actually produce those performances. Bandura proposed that individuals’ efficacy expectations are the major determinant of goal setting, activity choice, willingness to expend effort, and persistence. The way in which poetry is presented in the Atwell protocol allows each student to have his or her thinking, opinions, and background knowledge honored.

Expectancy-Value Theory

Expectancy-value theorists such as Eccles and Wigfield (1983; 1992) define expectations for success as individuals’ beliefs about how well they will do on upcoming tasks. Eccles et al. (1983), in the expectancy-value model, define beliefs about ability as the individual’s evaluations of his or her competence in different domains. These beliefs relate to one’s expectations about performance on an impending task while the other relates to one’s beliefs about competence in the specific domain. Interestingly, while
these two constructs are separated in theory, in practice, empirical work shows that children and adults do not distinguish between the two (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Eccles et al. (1983) outlined four components of task-value: attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost. Attainment value is defined as the personal importance of doing well on the task. Intrinsic value is the enjoyment one gains from performing the activity or the subjective interest the individual has in the subject. Utility value is determined by how well a task relates to current and future goals. Essentially, how useful is this task as it relates to one’s future progress? Even if one is not interested in the task, he or she may still find value in it as a means to progress. Cost is what one must risk or put forth in order to engage in the specific task. This, of all the components, is focused on the more challenging aspects of the task since it relates to the effort needed or the opportunities lost as a result of the choice to engage in the task. The Atwell protocol helps the teacher to present poetry in a challenging, yet accessible way to students in order to bolster their beliefs about performance on similar future tasks.

Goal Theories

Motivation researchers have also developed different perspectives as to how one’s goals relate to achievement behavior. Schunk (1990) defines a motivated state as one where goal-directed behavior is instigated and sustained. Essentially, a motivated student is part of a process whereby he or she works toward a goal or common objective, preferably one that he or she had a part in setting, while sustaining a level of engagement and commitment to task. While both Bandura (1997) and Schunk (1990) have shown that specific and challenging goals promote improved performance and self-efficacy, other researchers have branched out to investigate broader definitions of goal orientations.
Through this work, two types of goal orientations were defined: ego-involved goals and task-involved goals. Individuals with ego-involved goals seek to promote favorable evaluations of their competence related to goal attainment while individuals with task-involved goals focus on mastering tasks and increasing competence. With the Atwell protocol, the students are engaged in focusing on a task-involved goal: to immerse themselves in poetry in a focused and meaningful way.

**Self-Determination Theory**

Deci and Rylan (2008) focused on the concept of self-determination and asserted that individuals seek out optimal stimulation and challenging activities and find these activities intrinsically motivating because they have a basic need for competence. Further, they argued that intrinsic motivation is maintained only when individuals feel competent and self-determined. Much of this work is focused around discussion of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the relationship between each and self-determination. Deci and colleagues defined several levels in the process of going from external to internalized regulation: (a): external - regulation coming from outside the individual; (b) introjected - internal regulation based on feelings that one has to do the behavior; (c) identified - internal regulation based on the usefulness of the behavior; and (d) integrated - regulation based on what the individual thinks is valuable and important to the self. The Atwell protocol presents poetry in a way that allows students the opportunity to seek meaningful challenge in a way that seeks to connect to intrinsic motivation.
Summary

Research on motivation has grown dramatically over the past two decades. Through this work, theorists have delineated several related yet distinct perspectives on motivation. The theories put forth relate to self-efficacy, expectancy-value, goal setting, and self-determination. The Atwell protocol used in this study engages students in reading and discussion poetry in a way that honors the underlying principles of each of the motivation theories discussed. While each approaches the concept of motivation from different perspectives, the one common area of agreement is that motivation frequently makes the difference between learning that is temporary and superficial and learning that is permanent and internalized (Oldfather, 1993).

Relationship of Reading Motivation and Achievement

In examining the design of contexts to increase student motivation to read, Guthrie and Alao (1997) identified eight principles for thinking about instruction and classroom structures to support this work. Within these principles, the following relate to the work being done in this study: (a) real-world experience, (b) self-direction, (c) social collaboration, (d) self-expression, (e) interesting texts, and (f) curricular coherence.

Real-world experiences are defined as providing experiences for students to interact with events, such as the reading of a poem, through the uses of their senses and by recording said experiences through writing, drawing or photographing. Direct sensory observations are immediately exciting and develop motivation in students. In the Atwell protocol, students engage in the act of hearing and reading a specific poem and are given time to record their reactions in writing.
For the area of social collaboration, students work together in a variety of social structures as they learn content and strategies relevant to the conceptual theme. Much research has been conducted on various forms of cooperative learning, and several have examined the effects of social supports on motivation. Guthrie and Alao site research on positive group interdependence. Interdependent groups coordinate their efforts, share information, and build upon each other’s thinking. In the Atwell protocol, students work interpedently to discuss the text.

With self-expression, students are supported in articulating their understanding of the work in ways that are personally and culturally relevant to them and their audience. The authors discussed case studies in which students attribute their intrinsic motivation for reading to safe a safe classroom in which teachers and peers enjoy each other’s exhibits of literary knowledge and self-expression. In the Atwell protocol, the emphasis is on creating a safe environment where students can share opinions connected to the text and honor what each student has to say.

Student interest in text is also an important factor to maintaining motivation to read as students who read books that interest them have been shown to spend more time reading and read a larger number of words in the books than did students who read books that they did not find interesting (McLoyd, 1997). Atwell specifically selected poems for use with her protocol due to the fact that young adult readers were likely to be interested in the form, theme, or content of each.

Finally, curricular coherence is key as classroom instruction should integrate content, cognitive strategies, and social interactions for learning by connecting the expectations, activities, materials, and displays of understanding around
multidisciplinary, conceptual themes. Beane (1995) stated that when the curriculum offers a sense of purpose, essentially, when it is coherent, young people are more likely to integrate educational experiences into their schemes of meaning, which broadens and deepens their understanding of their self and the world. Atwell has set forth purpose in her curriculum which asks students to use poetry to not only examine good writing, but to help make sense of issues and themes in the greater world. Further, this work is grouped by specific theme. Students can see the purpose and organization of the work in order to deeply engage with it.

In summary, Atwell’s protocol for reading and discussing poetry honors several of the contexts that help to increase student motivation to read. Again, motivation to read is important as it leads to increased comprehension and vocabulary development. These principles connect to the identified need for a literacy rich classroom environment where student choice is honored, social interactions are essential, and students can engage with a wide-variety of texts that are thematically linked to content.

Cole (2003) used qualitative methodologies to examine the questions of what motivated students to read the classroom. Through a case study approach, Cole focused on student opinions, feelings, and choices as critical links to understanding motivation to read. As Cole progressed through her research, she found that each was motivated by different beliefs, reasons, and purposes for reading. Based upon these factors, Cole concluded that when reading instruction is presented in an engaging and social way, children become motivated to read, which has the potential to improve many areas of reading comprehension including vocabulary development. Atwell’s (2006) protocol
honors the eight principles mentioned above and seeks to encourage students to learn in a thoughtful, social way.

Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, and Cox (1999) sought to examine the motivational and cognitive predictors of text comprehension and reading amount. The researchers found that motivation to read predicted the reading amount and, thereby, contributed to increased reading comprehension. This research consisted of two studies. The first study was organized around the following questions:

1. To what extent are two types of text comprehension – (a) passage comprehension and (b) conceptual learning from multiple texts – predicted by reading amount when accounting for the contributions of past achievement, prior knowledge, reading motivations, and reading efficacy to text comprehension?

2. To what extent is reading amount predicted by reading motivation when accounting for the contributions of past achievement, prior knowledge, and reading efficacy to reading amount?

3. To what extent is reading amount predicted by intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation when analyzed separately and controlling the contributions of each for past reading achievement, prior knowledge and self-efficacy.

In this study, passage comprehension was measured through reading a combination of informational and narrative passages and answering a series of questions. The responses were coded and positively correlated with the standardized test of reading comprehension. Conceptual learning from multiple texts, a second indicator of text comprehension, was measured by having participants engage in the act of independently searching multiple texts for ideas and information on an assigned topic. Students
responded in drawing and writing, and the responses were classified using a six-level coding rubric. Reading amount, which assessed the breadth of reading in different topic domains and the frequency of reading in each domain was measured through student self-report. Reading motivation was measured by the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ). Reading efficacy, which was defined as the student’s sense of being able to read, was measured by three items on the MRQ.

Participants for this study (n=271) were drawn from third and fifth grade classes attending one of three schools in a multicultural, mid-Atlantic metropolis. The researchers found that reading motivation and reading efficacy were positively correlated (r = .64 p<.001) indicating that students who were motivated to read felt positively about their reading ability and, conversely, students who felt positively about their reading were motivated to read. Further, reading amount positively correlated with reading motivation (r = .37 p<.001), and reading efficacy (r = .24 p<.001) indicating that students with strong reading motivation and positive feeling about themselves as readers were likely to read more than those who were unmotivated or who had negative feelings about themselves as readers. The researchers then found that reading amount contributed to a significant proportion of the variance in passage comprehension, F(1, 179) = 4.77, p<.05. In addition, intrinsic motivation had a significant impact on reading amount, F(1,190) = 24.31, p<.001.

In the second study, the researchers sought to examine the generalizability of the results of the first study to a high school student population. The results suggested that reading amount predicted passage comprehension at a statically significant level F(1, 11,738) = 116.58, p<.001. Reading motivation also predicted passage comprehension
F(1, 11,738) = 956.16, p<.001. These findings confirmed the effects of reading amount on comprehension observed in Study 1. The work of Guthrie, et al. suggests that reading efficacy and motivation positively affect reading amount, which, in turn, affects reading comprehension of students at both the elementary and high school levels.

Unrau and Schlackman (2006) examined the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on reading achievement for urban middle school students. The research questions for the study included:

1. To what extent does intrinsic and extrinsic motivation relate to the reading achievement of students in middle school?

2. What are the relationships among gender, grade, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to read, and reading achievement?

3. Does intrinsic and extrinsic motivation change significantly over time for middle school students across ethnicities, school grade, and gender?

In this study, students engaged in texts that aroused their curiosity, heightened their involvement, and presented them with challenges that built competence and self-determination by using knowledge skills and strategies to gain a deeper understanding of books and topics. The researchers studied approximately 2,000 students in an urban middle school containing students in grades 6, 7, and 8 in the Los Angeles area. The school’s population included about 75% Hispanic students, 20% Asian students, and the remaining were African American, American Indian, and White. Over 90% of the students participated in the free or reduced lunch program. The researchers used the Motivation to Read Questionnaire and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test to develop a deeper knowledge of students’ motivation and its relationship to reading performance.
The data were collected across two academic years. The Motivation to Read Questionnaire was administered in the fall of Year 1 and the fall of Year 2, which established two grade cohorts.

The researchers found that intrinsic motivation had a stronger positive relationship with reading achievement for Asian students than for Hispanic students. The researchers suspected that this was because more Asian than Hispanic students were able to pursue and fulfill the innate psychological needs for competence and self-determination. Further, researchers found that as students progressed to a different grade level, intrinsic motivation to read decreased. This study confirmed the importance of motivation and the need to explore ways to better motivate students at the upper-elementary and middle-levels of school.

Guthrie, Anderson, Alao, and Rinehart (1999) examined the effects of Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI), a specific program designed to foster motivation, on reading engagement, the joint operation of motivation, strategies for reading, and cognitive knowledge. CORI classrooms were organized around broad themes in science; sensory experiences such as hands-on activities to support the themes; student input into guided teaching; collaborative learning strategies such as using prior knowledge, interpreting text, and making connections; and student self-expression. In this study, these classrooms were compared to traditionally organized basal and science instruction in three schools in a large, mid-Atlantic state, with third and fifth graders. Measures of reading engagement included performance assessments, and pretests were standardized reading tests. Goals for English/language arts and science were the same for both programs. The first research question addressed the extent to which CORI increased
learning in familiar and new knowledge domains. The second research question addressed the extent to which CORI increased motivated strategy use in familiar and new knowledge domains. Significant main effects and interactions suggested that the principles of CORI enabled students to increase reading engagement and conceptual learning within both a familiar and a new domain more so than the traditional classrooms. The researchers stated that replication of the study was needed to verify the results due to the study’s limitations, such as a possibility of a teacher effect rather than a program effect and demographics of the study.

Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, and Prencevich (2004) further studied Change in Curiosity in Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). The researchers addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent do CORI and SI (Strategy Instruction) lead to increases in intrinsic motivation to read (defined as reading curiosity and preference for challenge)?

2. To what extent do students who experience CORI and SI increase their amount of reading?

In this study, CORI was implemented in eight third grade classrooms (n= 150) for 12 weeks. Strategy Instruction was implemented in 11 third grade classrooms (n = 200) for 12 weeks. While the implementation and the strategies being taught were similar, students taking part in the CORI program received specific motivation support and explicit links to reading. The researchers found that this specific program caused children’s motivation to read to increase while children involved in Strategic Instruction (teaching multiple reading strategies) did not see an increase. Inspection of the means
showed that the sample as a whole increased in reading challenge and curiosity. After performing a series of repeated measures ANOVAs in each area of motivation, the researchers found statistically significant increases in the CORI group for challenge, $F(1, 31) = 17.08, p < .001, n^2 = .12$, and curiosity, $F(1, 131) = 8.16, p < .01, n^2 = .06$. No significant change was found for challenge or curiosity in the SI group. Further, the CORI and SI groups did not differ in reading frequency at either of the assessment points.

**Summary**

The studies above provide evidence of a link between motivation and reading achievement. Specifically, students who are motivated to read are likely to display behaviors that will allow them to achieve at higher levels. The Atwell protocol is one that engages students in reading and discussing poetry in a way that fosters student motivation. Along with motivation to read, one domain of reading achievement on which this study focused is that of vocabulary development.

**Relationship of Vocabulary Instruction and Reading Achievement**

Vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in people’s lives and future possibilities (Kucan & Beck, 1997) and it is one of the best predictors of educational achievement (Kurdek & Sinclair, 2001). A well-developed vocabulary is a prerequisite for fluent reading, a critical link between decoding and comprehension; yet, the role of vocabulary in reading has received much less attention than decoding or strategies (Joshi, 2005). Many recent studies have examined the link between vocabulary and reading achievement and have found that students with poor vocabulary have difficulty with reading comprehension and have grave difficulty in making up lost ground as time goes
on (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, Wasik, Ross, Smith & Dianda, 1996; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Rupley, 2005).

In a study of students in the early elementary grades, Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) studied 117 first graders and 129 third graders to examine the effects of just reading, performance reading, and interactional reading-aloud styles on learning. With just reading, teachers simply read stories with using them for discussion or instruction. In performance reading, teachers encouraged some discussion before and after the story but performed it without any interruption. Finally, in interactional reading, the teacher read and discussed the text simultaneously with students. In this study, the researchers examined the reading styles of a larger groups of readers than those in previous studies, and manipulated the three reading-aloud styles simultaneously across several textual readings, while controlling for the texts selected and read, and executing an experimental design with the potential to reveal statistical differences in effects of reading-aloud styles for first and third graders and for vocabulary acquisition and comprehension with two different texts.

A MANCOVA was used to analyze the effects of style and grade on vocabulary acquisition and comprehension and found that reading aloud styles were statistically significant and consistent for vocabulary development; however, performance reading and interactional reading-aloud styles had a more significant impact on vocabulary development. According to the researchers, these findings confirm that teacher explanations and student discussions were critical factors that benefited students’ learning of words and concepts and construction of meanings from texts read aloud in elementary school classrooms.
As vocabulary achievement has been shown to improve overall reading comprehension, Nash and Snowling (2006) addressed the issue of students with poor existing vocabulary knowledge. The central question addressed was how to best teach new vocabulary items to these children. This study consisted of 26 children, ages seven and eight, with poor exiting vocabulary knowledge as determined by a pre-screening. Through this, students were selected to take part in the intervention. Students were ranked and assigned closely matched pairs to another student in one of the two interventions. Half of the students were taught new vocabulary using definitions, while the other half were taught a strategy for deriving meaning though context. Tests of vocabulary knowledge were given before teaching, after teaching, and then 3 months after teaching. The researchers found that students who were taught using vocabulary in context versus students who were taught using definitions showed significantly better expressive vocabulary knowledge. Further, the context group went on to show significantly better comprehension of text containing a number of the taught words and demonstrated that they could independently use the strategy of using context clues to derive the meanings of words. The researchers concluded that exposing students to vocabulary in context is effective in increasing vocabulary knowledge and improving reading comprehension in children with poor existing vocabulary knowledge.

Nelson and Stage (2007) examined the effects of multiple meaning vocabulary instruction on vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of third (n= 134) and fifth (n=149) grade students enrolled in a small Midwestern public school. Classrooms received either contextually-based multiple meaning vocabulary instruction embedded in the standard language arts instructional program or the standard language arts program
alone. In the experimental classrooms, each target word was taught over 2 days for approximately 20-30 minutes each day. In the control classroom, students were taught using a traditional basal anthology.

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading test was used as a pretest and posttest measure of students’ vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. The results revealed that students generally showed improvements in their vocabulary skills pre- to post-treatment, F (1, 285) = 34.07, p<.001. Follow-up Newman-Kuels post hoc tests to the obtained statistically significant Change by Level interaction (F (1, 285) = 20.35, p<.001) revealed that students in the low achieving group were more likely to show improvements in their vocabulary skills than those who were in the average to high group. In addition, students in the experimental group showed improvement pre- to post-treatment in the area of reading comprehension, F (1, 285) = 10.68, p<.01.

Summary

Vocabulary development and achievement are directly linked to reading comprehension. Researchers suggested that students who had a more well-developed vocabulary would achieve at higher levels. The poems that Atwell selects contain rich, challenging language that seeks to develop student vocabulary in an indirect way. In addition, during the discussion of the poem, the author’s use of language and word choice is often discussed.

Chapter Conclusion

The review of research reveals that while there is limited empirical research related to poetry in the classroom, two studies suggest that poetry can have significant impact on students’ cognitive development. Further, there is practitioner-based literature
that speaks to the power of poetry to motivate students, as well as to develop their language skills. Motivation is shown to have a significant impact on student development in a variety of areas related to reading comprehension including vocabulary achievement. Vocabulary achievement is shown to be a critical link to fluent reading. This study examined the link between the reading and discussion of poetry and student motivation to read and vocabulary achievement.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to investigate the effects of reading and discussing poetry on fifth grade students’ motivation to read and vocabulary achievement. This section describes the methods and procedures that were utilized to conduct this research. Chapter three includes the research question and hypothesis; a description of the setting and subjects, an explanation of the research design, the instrumentation, a description of the data collection and their analyses, and limitations to the study.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

1. Is there a significant difference in the reading motivation of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol?

H1. There is a significant difference in the reading motivation of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol.

2. Is there a significant difference in the vocabulary achievement of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol?

H2. There is a significant difference in the vocabulary achievement of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s poetry
protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol.

**Setting and Subjects**

The participants in this study were a *sample of convenience* selected to suit the purpose of the study. The population of interest for this study was fifth grade students enrolled in an upper-middle class school system in New England. According to information found on the town web site, the total population of the town was approximately 20,000 with a median household income of $108,731. The percentage of non-white town residents was under 10%.

According to information reported to the *Basic Educational Data System* (BEDS, the school district has an enrollment of about 3,750 students. At the intermediate school, which houses grades 3-5, there were a total of 845 students. At the fifth grade level, there were 14 sections of students, with an average class size of 20. The total enrollment of fifth grade students was 288 with 144 male students and 144 female students. Over the past several years, the percentage of non-white students enrolled in the district has remained under 10%. Over 97% of the students were classified as English Proficient. Three percent of students at the K-5 level were eligible for free and reduced lunch. At the administrative level, the school was run by one principal and one assistant principal.

**Student Participants**

The sample was representative of the school population in gender makeup. The sample size of \( n = 141 \) is outlined in Table 1. The sample was comprised of 50.4% male students and 49.6% female students from six fifth-grade classrooms at the Intermediate School. Three classes were randomly assigned to the control group, and three classes
were randomly assigned to the experimental group. The three teachers of students in the experimental group received staff development, provided by the researcher, in the use of Atwell’s protocol for using poetry in the classroom as detailed in her book *Naming the World* (2006), while the teachers of the control group did not receive this training and did not supplement their regular reading and writing workshop instruction with this poetry protocol. Teachers of classes in the experimental group supplemented their reader’s workshop with Atwell’s protocol three times per week, approximately 15 minutes each time, while teachers in the control group continued their instruction as dictated by the curriculum scope and sequence. During this time, the control group was engaged in units of study on non-fiction and narrative writing.

**Teacher Participants**

The six teachers participating in the study had an average of 9.5 years of teaching experience. A description appears in table 1. Three of the teachers in the experimental group were provided with staff development in the implementation of the Atwell protocol and were provided with materials related to this work. The staff development consisted of two 90 minute sessions. During the first session, the researcher distributed copies of Atwell’s text *Naming the World*, presented an overview of the Atwell protocol, and provided information about her perspectives on teaching and learning as they related to her work in *Naming the World* (2006). Between the first and second sessions, teachers were asked to read through the text and poems provided in order to more deeply connect with Atwell’s work, as well as to formulate questions. During the second session, the researcher modeled the protocol for the teachers by having them engage in reading and discussion of three of the poems using the protocol. There was then time for questions
that had arisen. Teachers were then provided with the poems that they would use with their students, and also a form on which they could keep a log of each lesson. The log required teachers to note the date, time, and length of lesson, as well as any issues or extenuating circumstances. The poems used by each teacher in the experimental group were selected by the researcher and were the same throughout the study. The staff development took place during the month of January 2009, and the treatment occurred during February, March, April, and May of 2009. The three teachers whose classes were part of the control group did not receive any staff development or materials until after the research had been completed.
Table 1

*Teacher Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Number of Years Teaching</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Highest Degree Attained</th>
<th>Independent Variable Grouping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher D</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher E</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explanation of Research Design**

This study was designed to investigate the effects of reading and discussing poetry on fifth grade students’ motivation to read and vocabulary achievement. A quantitative analysis, using a quasi-experimental pretest posttest treatment control group design, was used. The independent variable for this study was literacy instruction with two levels: level one – use of poetry protocol; level two – no poetry protocol. The dependent variables were vocabulary achievement and reading motivation. For research question 1, all students were administered a *Motivation to Read Profile* as a pretest to measure their initial levels of motivation. After the treatment implementation, students completed the Motivation to Read Profile as a posttest. For research question 2, form S of the Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary Subtest served as a pretest to measure vocabulary.
achievement prior to treatment. Upon completion of the treatment, student were administered the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Subtest (form T) as a posttest measure of vocabulary achievement. During the eight-week period (for a total of 24 lessons), students in the experimental group, whose teachers received staff development in the use of Atwell’s protocol for reading and discussing poetry, supplemented their reader’s workshop lessons with this approach. The students in the control group, whose teachers had not been trained, continued to follow the language arts curriculum without the addition of poetry. Table 2 delineates a figure of the quasi-experimental design that was applied to each research question.

Table 2

Delineation of the Quasi-experimental Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Atwell Protocol

Atwell designed her protocol for looking at poetry to expose students to reading and discussing poetry on a daily basis. The poems selected by Atwell were chosen due to their relevant and engaging content, as well as their use of language and literary constructs. The teachers in this study were all provided with the same poems to use throughout the eight week period. Each week, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the teachers in the control group engaged in reading and discussing the selected poem based upon the Atwell protocol.
The first step in the Atwell protocol is to engage the students through an oral reading of the poem. During this time, students are to immerse themselves in the act of listening in order to truly hear the words of the author. After the oral reading, students are asked to reread the poem on their own. This rereading allows students the opportunity to notice components of the poems in a different modality, as well as to make individualized notations based upon teacher direction (i.e. looking for specific aspects of language or craft) or personal reaction. After rereading the poems and making notations, the students engage in a short, focused discussion about the poems that allows them to make personal connections and to examine aspects of the author’s craft and word choice. Again, this discussion is lead by the teacher who seeks to probe students’ thinking using points outlined in Atwell’s protocol. Throughout, students look at author’s craft and words choice, as well as discuss personal connections to the text. The schedule of selected poems is presented in table 3.
### Table 3

**Schedule of Poems for Treatment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Poems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 1     | What Poetry Can Do | *Valentine for Ernest Mann* – Naomi Shihab Nye  
              |                  | *My Room* – Joe Powning  
              |                  | *Patterns* – Anne Atwell-McLeod  
              |                  | *The Little Boy* – Helen E. Buckley |
| Week 2     | Your Life        | *Autobiography in Five Short Chapters* – Portia Nelson  
              |                  | *Mail Call* – Adrienne Jaeger  
              |                  | *Famous* - Naomi Shihab Nye  
| Week 3     | Ideas In Things  | *The Red Wheelbarrow* – William Carlos Williams  
              |                  | *Watermelon* – Nora Bradford  
              |                  | *The Swing Set* – Grace Walton  
| Week 4     | The Senses       | *The Fish* – Elizabeth Bishop  
              |                  | *Campfire Lullaby* – Zoe Mason  
              |                  | *night songs* – Molly Jordan  
              |                  | *Afternoon Beach* – Molly Jordan  
| Week 5     | Growing Up       | *Quotes* – Benjamin F. Williams  
              |                  | *Living in Rings* - Anne Atwell-McLeod  
              |                  | *The Drum* – Nikki Giovanni  
              |                  | *On the Road* – Ted Kooser  
              |                  | *The Dream of Now* – William Stafford  
| Week 6     | Metaphor         | *Poem* – Julia Barnes  
              |                  | *Adirondack Chair* – Jacob Miller  
              |                  | *Hypodermic* - Benjamin F. Williams  
              |                  | *How Can I Describe* – Zephyr Weatherbee  
              |                  | *The Skirmish* – Nat Herz  
| Week 7     | The Natural World | *Homemade Swimming Hole* – Michael Stoltz  
              |                  | *The Pond* – Marnie Briggs  
              |                  | *Thoreau’s Nightmare* – Alison Rittershaus  
| Week 8     | Reading and Writing | *Reading Myself to Sleep* – Billy Collins  
              |                  | *Rescued* – Carl Johanson  
              |                  | *The Osprey* – Mary Oliver  
              |                  | *Did you Ever* – Marcia Conley Carter  

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Instrumentation

This study utilized two instruments: Motivation to Read Profile: Reading Survey (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000). The MRP was used as a valid and reliable assessment of students’ reading self-concept and value of reading. The GMRT vocabulary subtest was utilized as a valid and reliable assessment of students’ vocabulary achievement.

Motivation to Read Profile: Reading Survey

The MRP reading survey (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) is a self-report, group-administered instrument. The survey assesses two specific dimensions of reading motivation: self-concept as a reader and value of reading. It consists of 20 items and uses a 4-point response scale. There are 10 items each for both the self-concept and value components. The items that focus on self-concept as a reader are designed to elicit information about the student’s self-perceived competence in reading and self-perceived performance relative to peers. The value of reading items are designed to elicit information about the value students place on reading tasks and activities, particularly in terms of frequency of engagement and reading-related activities. To assess the internal consistency of the survey, Cronbach’s alpha statistic was calculated, which revealed a moderately high reliability for both subscales (self-concept = .75; value = .82), which confirmed the reliability of the instrument as acceptable. A test of validity of the reading survey explored the relationship between level of motivation and reading achievement. Statistically significant differences were found among the mean scores on the self-concept measure for students categorized as high, middle, and low readers, revealing that
scores were positively associated with reading achievement (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Statistically significant differences were also found on the value measure, with younger students scoring more positively than older students, a finding in keeping with the work of other researchers (McKenna & Kear, 1990).

**Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test**

The *GMRT* (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000) is a norm-referenced, group administered test designed to assess students’ general level of reading achievement. There are two subtests: Vocabulary (45 items) and Comprehension (48 items). The vocabulary subtest was used in this study. Vocabulary questions are formatted as a test-word in a brief context followed by five other words or phrases and the student must choose the one word or phrase that means most nearly the same as the test-word. The Comprehension test measures a student’s ability to read and understand different types of prose. The reliability estimates indicate strong total test and subtest internal consistency levels with coefficient values at or above .90. Alternate form correlations for the total test scores are at or above .90. Alternate form correlations for the subtests range from .74 to .92. Total test coefficient values are at or above .88. Content validity was documented through a process of test development to identify the scope of the subtests and identify effective items within subtests. Problematic items were eliminated. Construct validity is supported by strong intercorrelations between subtests and total test scores.

**Data Collection**

In January of 2009, the proposed research was approved by the Western Connecticut State University Institution Review Board. In February of 2009, teachers
self-selected to be part of the study and were assigned to either the experimental or control group.

In March of 2009, teachers distributed and collected a letter requesting consent from parents and students for participation in the study. The signed consent forms were collected by the teachers and given to the researcher.

In March of 2009, all participants in the study completed a Motivation to Read Profile. This instrument provided the researcher with information on each student’s motivation to read based upon self-reported answers related to each student’s reading self-concept and his or her value of reading. In addition, all participants completed the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Vocabulary Subtest (Form S) to provide the researcher with a general assessment of the vocabulary/word knowledge of each student. These vocabulary subtest pretest scores served as a covariate in the researcher’s data analysis.

Throughout an eight-week period, in the months of March, April, and May of 2009, teachers of the experimental group supplemented their language arts instruction with Atwell’s model of reading and discussing poetry. This happened three times per week for eight weeks. Teachers of the control group conducted their classes according to the traditional model of language arts instruction.

In May of 2009, all participants in the study completed the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Vocabulary Subtest (Form T) to provide the researcher with a general assessment of the vocabulary/word knowledge of each student, as well as the Motivation to Read Profile to provide the researcher with information on each student’s reading self-concept and his or her value of reading. Both of these assessments were administered the week after the poetry treatment had been implemented.
Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to answer the main research questions. *The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)* was the primary statistical program for this project. The independent variable for this study was literacy instruction with two levels: level one – use of poetry protocol; level two – no poetry protocol. The dependent variables were vocabulary achievement and reading motivation. For research question one, the researcher used an ANOVA to analyze the differences in vocabulary achievement between the experimental group and the control group. Form S of the vocabulary subtest of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Vocabulary Subtest (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000) was administered as a vocabulary pretest prior to the treatment. Form T of the vocabulary subtest was administered as a posttest. For research question number two, the researcher used an ANOVA to analyze the differences in reading motivation between the experimental group and the control group. The *Motivation to Read Profile: Reading Survey* (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) was used as both a pretest and a posttest. The results of these analyses are reported in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Limitations of the Study

The internal validity of an experiment is the extent to which extraneous variables have been controlled by the researcher, so that any observed effect can be attributed solely to the treatment variable (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). In this study there was an internal threat as it related to testing since there was a pretest and posttest measure for vocabulary achievement and motivation to read. This threat was less serious for the GMRT (Form S and T) since there were alternate forms of the instrument there was
always the possibility for students to become test-wise from the first administration to the second precipitated by the relatively short eight-week time period between administrations.

The external validity of an experiment is the extent to which the findings of an experiment can be applied to individuals and settings beyond those that were studied (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). In this study, population validity, the extent to which one can generalize from the experimental sample to a defined sample, was an issue. The experimental sample in this study was a small sample of convenience from a homogenous fifth grade population. While the findings of the study might be generalized to the local population, it would be risky to generalize findings beyond the local community. In order to generalize results of this study to a larger population, the study would need to be replicated using larger, randomized samples, from different grade levels in different socio-economic populations.

Another factor to consider is the Hawthorne effect which speaks to the issues of the students’ awareness of their participation in the study. While students were not made aware of the hypothesis of the study, they were aware that they were part of a study and, therefore, may have been more apt to work to perform better than in a more natural setting.

Finally, the issue of posttest sensitization is a factor as well. For the measure of reading motivation, participants in the study will take the same form of the Motivation to Read Survey (both pre and posttest) and this, coupled with the Hawthorne effect, may impact student responses. For the GMRT this was better controlled for as there are two forms (S and T) of the test.
Statement of Ethics and Confidentiality

Permission to participate in this research was sought from the district superintendent, school principal, and all parents of participating students. To assure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a confidential identification number. All data are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office and will be maintained there until the findings have been published; accessible only to other researchers for whom the data will prove useful in further comparative analyses and who are enrolled in Western Connecticut State University’s Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership Program.

Chapter Conclusion

A quantitative analysis, using a quasi-experimental pretest posttest treatment control group design, was used to implement this study. This chapter outlined the methods the researcher employed to investigate the effects of reading and discussing poetry on affected fifth grade students’ motivation to read and vocabulary achievement. It began with an introduction followed by the research question and the researcher’s hypothesis. The setting and subjects for the study were described. Next, a detailed description of the research designed was provided, including elements of the protocol, designed by Atwell (2006), that was used to facilitate the reading and discussion of the selected poems. Then, the instrumentation and data collection and analysis were explained. Finally, limitations to the study were described. Chapter Four will report the results of the study.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA AND THE FINDINGS

This study was designed to investigate the effects of reading and discussing poetry on fifth grade students’ motivation to read and vocabulary achievement. This chapter includes a review of the research questions, the hypothesis, and a description of the analyses and findings of this study.

Research Question and Hypothesis

1. Is there a significant difference in the reading motivation of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol?

H1. There is a significant difference in the reading motivation of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol.

2. Is there a significant difference in the vocabulary achievement of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol?

H2. There is a significant difference in the vocabulary achievement of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s poetry protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol.
This research began with 141 participants in the fifth grade. 71 students were in the control group and 70 students were in the experimental group. A quantitative analysis, using a quasi-experimental approach, was used to address the above research questions. The independent variable for this study was literacy instruction with two levels: level one – use of poetry protocol; level two – no poetry protocol. The dependent variables were vocabulary achievement and reading motivation. All students were administered a Motivation to Read Profile as a pretest to measure their initial levels of motivation. Form S of the Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary Subtest served as a pretest to measure vocabulary achievement prior to treatment. The pretest score was used as a covariate to control for initial vocabulary level. During an eight-week period, for a total of 24 lessons, according to the schedule provided by the researcher, students in the experimental group, whose teachers received staff development in the use of Atwell’s protocol for reading and discussing poetry, supplemented their reader’s workshop lessons with this approach. The students in the control group, whose teachers had not been trained, continued to follow the language arts curriculum without the addition of poetry. After the eight week period, Form T of the Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary Subtest and the Motivation to Read Profile were administered to both groups as a posttest.

Research Question One: Student Motivation to Read

Data Cleansing

Data were cleansed prior to analysis by excising any subjects who had incomplete data due to either teacher error in administering the instrument to all participants, either pre or post test, as well as student attrition. Because of this, nine participants were
eliminated from the Motivation to Read variable. Further, any identified outliers were included in the study as they represented less than 2% of the sample (Meyers, et al., 2006).

**Verifying Equality of Groups Prior to Treatment**

There are three primary assumptions that underlay the use of an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The first is that the observations are from random and independent samples from the populations (Hinkle et al., 2003). In this quasi-experimental, pretest posttest the sample was one of convenience with classes randomly assigned to treatment. This meets the criteria for the fist assumption. The second assumption is that the distributions of the populations from which the samples are selected are normal (Hinkle et al., 2003). Normality is established by examining the descriptive statics and ensuring that all skewness and kurtosis numbers are less than the absolute value of one, which is the generally accepted value for normal distribution (Hinkle et al., 2003). The final assumption is that the distributions in the population are equal; this is the assumption of homogeneity of variance (Hinkle et al., 2003). These three assumptions provide that the distributions on the population have the same shape, means, and variances; that is, they are the same population (Hinkle et al., 2003). If these assumptions are not violated, then it is appropriate to run an ANOVA.

**Descriptive Analysis.** Descriptive statistics for the Motivation to Read pretest instrument are provided in Table 4. Distribution indicates similar standard deviations between groups, and all skewness and kurtosis numbers are ±1.0, which is the generally accepted value for normal distribution (Hinkle et al., 2003). Pretest scores, disaggregated by group (treatment, control) are graphically represented in Figure 1.
Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Motivation to Read Instrument Pretest*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>67.00</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>57.91</td>
<td>60.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>59.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>7.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>43.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>78.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentiles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>54.00</td>
<td>55.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>59.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1 contains boxplots, with the lines in the middle of the boxes representing the mean scores for the Motivation to Read pretest scores. The length of the boxes are interquartile ranges. The bottoms and tops of the boxes represent the 25th and 75th percentiles, and outliers fall outside of the boxes. The whiskers at the top and the bottom of the plots that originate from the box represent the smallest and largest values that are not outliers.

Figure 1. Box-and-whisker plot of Motivation to Read Pretest Scores

**Homogeneity of Variance on The Motivation to Read Pretest.** Before verifying that there is equality of groups prior to treatment, by conducting an ANOVA, the data must be homogenous in terms of variance (Hinkle et al., 2003). Levene’s
Homogeneity of Variance tests (see Table 5) that the error variance of the dependent variable (Motivation to Read pretest scores) is equal across both groups (treatment and control). When p>.05, the variances of the distributions in the population are equal. In this case, p=.43 or p>.05.

Table 5

_Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances for Motivation to Read Pretest Scores_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Analysis of Variance on the Motivation to Read Pretest.** Based upon the fact that the underlying assumptions for running an ANOVA were met (Hinkle et al., 2006), the researcher conducted an ANOVA to look for differences between groups (treatment, control) on the Motivation to Read Pretest (see Table 6). An alpha level of .05 was used for the quantitative inferential analysis. If p<.05 then statistical differences exist. In this case p=.11, demonstrating that there is statistical similarity between the treatment and control groups. This analysis demonstrates that all groups of students displayed similar levels of motivation according to the Motivation to Read Profile before treatment implementation.
Table 6

**Analysis of Variance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Motivation to Read Pretest Scores Comparing Treatment to Control**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>683.58^a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>683.58</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>683.58</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>683.58</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>35630.40</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>263.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>597722.00</td>
<td>137</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a R Squared = .019 (Adjusted R Squared = .012)

**Analysis after Treatment**

**Descriptive Analysis.** Descriptive statistics for the Motivation to Read posttest instrument are provided in Table 7. Distribution indicates similar standard deviations between groups, and all skewness and kurtosis numbers are ±1.0, which is the generally accepted value for normal distribution (Hinkle et al., 2003). Posttest scores, disaggregated by group (treatment, control) are graphically represented in Figure 2.
Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Motivation to Read Instrument Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>67.00</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>58.97</td>
<td>60.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>59.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>9.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>31.00</td>
<td>43.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>44.00</td>
<td>33.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>76.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentiles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>54.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>59.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>66.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. Box-and-whisker plot of Motivation to Read Posttest Scores

**Homogeneity of Variance on The Motivation to Read Posttest.** Before examining the equality of groups after treatment, by conducting an ANOVA, the data must be homogenous in terms of variance (Hinkle et al., 2003). Levene’s Homogeneity of Variance tests (see Table 8) that the error variance of the dependent variable (Motivation to Read posttest scores) is equal across both groups (treatment and control). When p>.05, the variances of the distributions in the population are equal. In this case, p=.64 or p>.05.
Table 8

Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances for Motivation to Read Posttest Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Analysis of Variance on the Motivation to Read Posttest.** Based upon the fact that the underlying assumptions for running an ANOVA were met (Hinkle et al., 2006), the researcher conducted an ANOVA to look for differences between groups (treatment, control) on the Motivation to Read Posttest (see Table 9). Because two research questions were asked of similar samples, a Bonferroni adjustment was used to decrease the possibility of Type I error (Myers et al., 2006). Therefore the alpha level was adjusted to .025. If p<.025 then statistical differences exist. In this case p = .43, demonstrating that there is statistical similarity between the treatment and control groups. This analysis demonstrates that all groups of students displayed similar levels of motivation according to the Motivation to Read Profile after treatment implementation.
Table 9

*Analysis of Variance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Motivation to Read Posttest Scores Comparing Treatment to Control*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>99.46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99.46</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>99.46</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99.46</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>22198.94</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>160.866</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>22298.40</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*R Squared = .004 (Adjusted R Squared = .003)*

**Research Question Two: Student Vocabulary Achievement**

**Data Cleansing**

Data were cleansed prior to analysis by excising any subjects who had incomplete data due to either teacher error in administering the instrument to all participants, either pre or post test, as well as student attrition. Because of this, 10 participants were eliminated from the Motivation to Read variable. Further, any identified outliers were included in the study as they represented less than 2% of the sample (Meyers, et al., 2006).

**Verifying Equality of Groups Prior to Treatment**

There are three primary assumptions that underlay the use of an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The first is that the observations are from random and independent samples from the populations (Hinkle et al., 2003). In this quasi-experimental, pretest posttest the sample was one of convenience with classes randomly assigned to treatment. This meets
the criteria for the first assumption. The second assumption is that the distributions of the populations from which the samples are selected are normal (Hinkle et al., 2003). Normality is established by examining the descriptive statistics and ensuring that all skewness and kurtosis numbers are less than the absolute value of one, which is the generally accepted value for normal distribution (Hinkle et al., 2003). The final assumption is that the distributions in the population are equal; this is the assumption of homogeneity of variance (Hinkle et al., 2003). These three assumptions provide that the distributions on the population have the same shape, means, and variances; that is, they are the same population (Hinkle et al., 2003). If these assumptions are not violated, then it is appropriate to run an ANOVA.

**Descriptive Analysis.** Descriptive statistics for the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Pretest Subscores are provided in Table 10. Distribution indicates similar standard deviations between groups, and all skewness and kurtosis numbers are ±1.0, which is the generally accepted value for normal distribution (Hinkle et al., 2003).
Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics for Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Pretest Subscores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>61.62</td>
<td>67.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>66.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>16.07</td>
<td>16.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-.59</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>82.00</td>
<td>73.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>99.00</td>
<td>99.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentiles 25</td>
<td>56.00</td>
<td>56.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>66.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>72.00</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 contains boxplots, with the lines in the middle of the boxes representing the mean scores for the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary pretest subscores. The length of the boxes are interquartile ranges. The bottoms and tops of the boxes represent the 25th and 75th percentiles, and outliers fall outside of the boxes. The whiskers at the top and the bottom of the plots that originate from the box represent the smallest and largest values that are not outliers.
Figure 3. Box-and-whisker plot of Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Pretest Scores

Homogeneity of Variance on the Gate MacGinitie Vocabulary Pretest.

Before verifying that there is equality of groups prior to treatment, by conducting an ANOVA, the data must be homogenous in terms of variance (Hinkle et al., 2003). Levene’s Homogeneity of Variance tests (see Table 11) that the error variance of the dependent variable (Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary scores) is equal across both groups (treatment and control). When p>.05, the variances of the distributions in the population are equal. In this case, p=.41, or p>.05.
Table 11

*Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances for Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Pretest Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>Df2</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Analysis of Variance on the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Pretest.** Based upon the fact that the underlying assumptions for running an ANOVA were met (Hinkle et al., 2006), the researcher conducted an ANOVA to look for differences between groups (treatment, control) on the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Pretest scores (see Table 12). An alpha level of .05 was used for the quantitative inferential analysis. If p<.05 then statistical differences exist. In this case p=.43, demonstrating that there is statistical similarity between the treatment and control groups. This analysis demonstrates that all groups of students were performing at similar levels according to the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Pretest Scores prior to treatment implementation.
Analysis of Variance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary

Pretest Scores Comparing Treatment to Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>145.04 (^a)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>145.04</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>145.04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>145.04</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>30487.96</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>234.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>30632.99</td>
<td>131</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) R Squared = .005 (Adjusted R Squared = -.003)

Analysis after Treatment

Descriptive Analysis. Descriptive statistics for the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Postest Subscores instrument are provided in Table 13. Distribution indicates similar standard deviations between groups, and all skewness and kurtosis numbers are ±1.0, which is the generally accepted value for normal distribution (Hinkle et al., 2003).
Table 13

*Descriptive Statistics for Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Posttest Subscores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>63.47</td>
<td>65.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>64.00</td>
<td>66.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>14.16</td>
<td>16.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>56.00</td>
<td>72.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>34.00</td>
<td>27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>90.00</td>
<td>99.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentiles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>64.00</td>
<td>66.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>73.00</td>
<td>76.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 contains boxplots, with the lines in the middle of the boxes representing the mean scores for the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary posttest subscores. The length of the boxes are interquartile ranges. The bottoms and tops of the boxes represent the 25\text{th} and 75\text{th} percentiles, and outliers fall outside of the boxes. The whiskers at the top and the bottom of the plots that originate from the box represent the smallest and largest values that are not outliers.
Figure 4. Box-and-whisker plot of Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Posttest Scores

**Homogeneity of Variance on the Gate MacGinitie Vocabulary Posttest.**

Before examining the equality of groups after treatment, by conducting an ANOVA, the data must be homogenous in terms of variance (Hinkle et al., 2003). Levene’s Homogeneity of Variance tests (see Table 14) that the error variance of the dependent variable (Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Posttest scores) is equal across both groups (treatment and control). When \( p > .05 \), the variances of the distributions in the population are equal. In this case, \( p = .27 \) or \( p > .05 \).
Table 14

*Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances for Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Posttest Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Analysis of Variance on the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Posttest.** Based upon the fact that the underlying assumptions for running an ANOVA were met (Hinkle et al., 2006), the researcher conducted an ANOVA to look for differences between groups (treatment, control) on the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Posttest. A Bonferroni adjustment with an alpha level of .025 was used to decrease the possibility of Type I error (Myers et al., 2006). In this case p=.52, demonstrating that there is statistical similarity between the treatment and control groups. This analysis demonstrates that all groups of students displayed similar levels of motivation according to the Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Posttest after treatment implementation.
Table 15

Analysis of Variance Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Gates MacGinitie Vocabulary Posttest Scores Comparing Treatment to Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>27.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.08</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>27.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.08</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>8514.06</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>64.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>8541.13</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*R Squared = .003 (Adjusted R Squared = -.004)*

**Chapter Conclusion**

For both research questions, after ensuring that the assumptions underlying the use of an ANOVA were not violated (Hinkle et al., 2003), the data were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA in order to look for differences between the control and experimental groups in the area of motivation to read and vocabulary achievement. An alpha level of .05 was used in order to verify equality of groups prior to treatment; however, since two research questions were asked, a Bonferroni adjustment was used to decrease the possibility of a Type I error after treatment. For both research questions, results of the one-way ANOVA required accepting the null hypothesis. Thus, there were no significant differences in the vocabulary achievement or the motivation to read of fifth grade students who read and discussed poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s poetry protocol.
as compared to fifth grade students who did not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol either prior to, or after, treatment.
CHAPTER FIVE:
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Five is presented in five different sections. The first section provides a summary of the study with a focus on the research design and sample. The next section describes the results of the study. The following section examines the current study in the context of relevant research from the review of literature. Finally, limitations and implications of the study are provided, and suggestions for additional research are presented.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of reading and discussing poetry on fifth grade students’ motivation to read and vocabulary achievement. While there was little empirical data related to the use of poetry in the classroom, many widely publicized, practitioner-based perspectives are available to educators. In much of the practitioner-based literature on poetry, authors discuss the potential of poetry to be a vehicle to affect reading achievement in a variety of areas, including vocabulary development and student motivation (Atwell, 2006; Heard, 1989; Koch, 1973; O’Connor, 2004). Based on this literature, the researcher hypothesized that students who engaged in reading and discussing poetry using a protocol designed by Atwell (2006) would have significant, positive growth in the areas of vocabulary development and motivation to read.

The research questions that guided the research were: (a) Is there a significant difference in the vocabulary achievement of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who
do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol? and (b) Is there a significant
difference in the reading motivation of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry
on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not
read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol?

A quantitative analysis, using a quasi-experimental pretest posttest treatment
control design, was used. The independent variable for this study was literacy instruction
with two levels: level one – use of poetry protocol; level two – no poetry protocol. The
dependent variables were vocabulary achievement and reading motivation. Data were
collected in two forms: (a) motivation to read was assessed using *Motivation to Read
Profile: Reading Survey* (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), and (b)
vocabulary achievement was measured by *The Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary
Subtest* (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000). For research question 1, the
equality of groups prior to treatment was established by conducting a one-way ANOVA
on the pretest measure of reading motivation. After treatment implementation, the
researcher conducted a one-way ANOVA on the posttest scores to look for differences
between the treatment and control group on the reading motivation measure. Results of
the one-way ANOVA required accepting the null hypothesis; thus, there were no
significant difference between the treatment and the control group after treatment
implementation. For research question 2, the equality of groups prior to treatment was
established by conducting a one-way ANOVA on the pretest measure for vocabulary
achievement. After treatment implementation, the researcher conducted a one-way
ANOVA on the posttest scores to look for differences between the treatment and control
group on the vocabulary achievement measure. Results of the one-way ANOVA
required accepting the null hypothesis; thus, there were no significant difference between the treatment and the control group after treatment implementation in the area of vocabulary achievement.

The sample of convenience (n = 141) was drawn from a suburban school district and was comprised of 50.4% male students and 49.6% female students from six fifth grade classrooms. This sample was representative of the school population in gender make-up. Three classes were randomly assigned to the experimental group, and three classes were randomly assigned to the control group. In the experimental group, two of the teachers were male and one was female, while all teachers in the control group were female. The six teachers participating in the study had an average of 9.5 years of teaching experience.

In January 2009, the teachers of students in the experimental group received staff development in the use of Atwell’s protocol for using poetry in the classroom, along with relevant supplementary materials as detailed in her book Naming the World (2006). The poems used by each teacher in the experimental group were selected by the researcher from a list provided by Atwell and administered according to the same schedule throughout the study. Teachers of classes in the experimental group supplemented their reader’s workshop with Atwell’s protocol three times per week, while teachers in the control group continued their instruction as dictated by the curriculum scope and sequence. Teachers in the control group did not receive staff development or materials until the conclusion of the study. The study was conducted during February, March, April, and May of 2009.
Review of the Findings

A one-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze differences between the experimental group (those whose language arts instruction was supplemented with Atwell’s protocol for reading and discussion poetry) and the control group (those whose language arts instruction was not supplemented with Atwell’s protocol for reading and discussing poetry).

The first research question addressed was: Is there a significant difference in the reading motivation of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol? The equality of groups prior to treatment was established by conducting a one-way ANOVA on the pretest measure of reading motivation. After treatment implementation, the researcher conducted a one-way ANOVA on the posttest scores to look for differences between the treatment and control group on the reading motivation measure. An alpha level of .05 was pre-established for the quantitative inferential analysis; however, since two research questions were asked, a Bonferroni adjustment was used to decrease the possibility of a Type I error. Therefore, the alpha level was adjusted to .025. If p<.025, then statistical differences exist. Results of the one-way ANOVA (p=.43) required accepting the null hypothesis; thus, there were no significant differences in the reading motivation of fifth grade students who read and discussed poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s poetry protocol as compared to fifth grade students who did not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol.

The second research questions addressed was: Is there a significant difference in the vocabulary achievement of fifth grade students who read and discuss poetry on a
regular basis using Atwell’s protocol as compared to fifth grade students who do not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol? The equality of groups prior to treatment was established by conducting a one-way ANOVA on the pretest measure for vocabulary achievement. After treatment implementation, the researcher conducted a one-way ANOVA on the posttest scores to look for differences between the treatment and control group on the vocabulary achievement measure. An alpha level of .05 was pre-established for the quantitative inferential analysis; however, since two research questions were asked, a Bonferroni adjustment was used to decrease the possibility of a Type I error. Therefore, the alpha level was adjusted to .025. If p<.025, then statistical differences exist. Results of the one-way ANOVA (p=.52) required accepting the null hypothesis; thus, there were no significant differences in the vocabulary achievement of fifth grade students who read and discussed poetry on a regular basis using Atwell’s poetry protocol as compared to fifth grade students who did not read and discuss poetry using Atwell’s protocol.

Relationship to Review of the Literature

Given the many positive things that practitioners have said about the possibility of poetry to increase motivation and develop vocabulary, there have been surprisingly few empirical studies that have sought to provide evidence to support these claims; therefore, the present study does add to the body of literature in the area of poetry and its affect on motivation and cognitive development in the area of language. The empirical research studies that have been conducted examining poetry and cognitive development are scarce and lack methodological rigor. Only two studies (Walker, 2008 & Dixon, 1984), reviewed in chapter two of this study and noted below, were found. These studies used
researcher-designed treatments and instruments, and the instruments were not validated. In addition, in one of the studies (Dixon, 1984), the researcher actually implemented the treatment. The current study was more methodologically rigorous in the choice of instrumentation. Both the GMRT and the Motivation to Read Profile are standardized, valid and reliable instruments. This was not the case in the studies designed by Walker or Dixon.

Walker (2008) conducted a quasi-experimental study that sought to examine the impact of poetry on a variety of variables including: (a) writing fluency, (b) vocabulary use, (c) metaphor and multiple perspectives use, (d) revision, and, (e) overall writing quality. Throughout the eight-week study, students in the experimental group engaged in an integrated writing curriculum that was designed by the researcher and titled The Poetry Project. The Poetry Project consisted of eight workshops, delivered over eight weeks for a total of 11 hours. This standards-based curriculum included reading and discussing poetry, journaling, poetry writing, revision, and publication; it was based on California Content Standards for English Language Arts. Students in the treatment group showed significant improvement in the appreciation of multiple perspectives (p=.043) as well as in the use of vocabulary (p=.010) as assessed through the use of text analysis software applied to an essay related to the California High School Exit Examination.

In the current study, the researcher sought to extend Walker’s work related to student vocabulary development. However, this study was different in several respects. The subjects in Walker’s study were a small sample of eighth grade students (n = 56) while this study used a larger sample (n = 141) of fifth grade students. While Walker used appreciation of multiple perspectives as an affective measure, in this study
motivation to read was chosen due to its documented connection to cognitive development and the fact that a valid and reliable instrument was available for use. In Walker’s study, while the genre of poetry may have been more closely related to the appreciation of multiple perspectives, there was little evidence presented to show its connection to reading growth. Further, the impact of poetry on multiple perspectives was measured through a researcher designed instrument for which no validity or reliability data were provided. While Walker did show growth in vocabulary, this was measured through the use of text analysis software, and, as such, it is not specifically designed to address age-appropriate vocabulary development. As was mentioned earlier, rather than a researcher designed treatment, this current study used a published protocol and specific poems selected for use from a list developed the designer of the protocol.

Dixon (1984) designed a quasi-experimental, pretest / posttest study to investigate the effects of exposure to the rich language of poetry on the use of figurative language development of students in fourth grade. The experimental group (n=95) consisted of three classes from two different schools. The researcher delivered the treatment in two of the three classes. The control group (n=99) consisted of four classes from two different schools. In the quantitative analysis, the researcher used a t-test to compare the use of figurative language in the experimental groups (t=2.55) and it was significant at the .05 level. Next a t-test was used to compare the figurative language usage in the teacher-taught classrooms to that of the researcher-taught classrooms. The resulting t-value of -2.117 was significant at the .05 level indicating that mean usage of figurative language was greater for groups taught by the researcher than for groups taught by the classroom teacher. A one-way ANOVA was then used to compare between the experimental and
control groups \((t=0.96)\). The one-tailed probability of 0.169 indicates that the t-value of 0.96 is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance which gives evidence that no difference may exist in the mean posttest usage of figurative language. As indicated by the t-test computed on the pretest and posttest usage of figurative language by experimental group, growth in mean usage of figurative language examples was present. Students in the experimental group wrote a greater number of figurative language examples on the posttest than the pretest. However, the comparison of experimental and control groups gave no evidence that no difference may exist in the mean posttest usage of figurative language. So, while students who were part of the treatment did show an improvement in their use of figurative language, the researcher was not able to attribute the growth to the treatment.

This present study chose to focus on vocabulary development, a broader focus than that of figurative language in order to see if the rich language used would enhance overall student vocabulary achievement. The population of fifth grade students in this study \((n=141)\) was similar to the fourth grade population used by Dixon \((n=99)\) in gender breakdown. Unlike Dixon’s study, this researcher did not design the treatment or the instruments used to assess student growth. In addition, while the researcher did run staff development for the teachers in the experimental group prior to treatment, the researcher did not implement the treatment as in Dixon’s study. This study used two valid and reliable instruments as pretest and posttest measures while engaging the experimental group in reading and discussing poetry using poems and a specific protocol designed by Atwell.
Both Walker (2008) and Dixon (1984) examined cognitive aspects of language development. The present study considered motivation as well as a cognitive aspect of language development, vocabulary achievement. Despite the claims made by practitioners regarding motivation, no other studies have examined this variable in conjunction with vocabulary achievement. Thus, the present study filled an important gap on the research specific to vocabulary development, motivation, and the study of poetry. The review of research did reveal two studies that examined aspects of reading motivation using the *Motivation for Reading Questionnaire* (MRQ). This questionnaire examined student motivation in the following domains: (a) reading efficacy, (b) reading challenge, (c) reading curiosity, (d) reading involvement, (e) reading avoidance, (f) reading recognition, (g) reading for social reasons, and (h) reading for competition. The instrument used in this study, the *Motivation to Read Profile*, is similar to the MRQ insofar as it allows students to self-report motivation through a series of questions and assesses two related dimensions of reading motivation: self-concept as a reader and value of reading. While the Motivation to Read Profile is not as comprehensive as the MRQ, it was selected for this study due to its ease of use in relationship to the short treatment period and the fact that the overall score was based upon two specific dimensions of motivation that were related to the empirical-and practitioner-based research.

Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala and Cox (1999) sought to examine the motivational and cognitive predictors of text comprehension and reading amount. This work suggested that reading efficacy and motivation positively affected reading amount, which, in turn, affected reading comprehension of students at both the elementary and high school levels. While these authors found positive correlations using the MRQ, an instrument
with similarities to the Motivation to Read Profile used in this study, the MRQ was administered as a pretest and posttest with one year in between administrations. By contrast, this present study was only eight weeks in duration.

Unrau and Schlackman (2006) examined the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on reading achievement for urban middle school students. The researchers used the Motivation for Read Questionnaire and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test to develop a deeper knowledge of students’ motivation and its relationship to reading performance. The data were collected across two academic years. The Motivation for Reading Questionnaire was administered in the fall of Year 1 and the fall of Year 2, which established two grade cohorts. The present study examined similar variables, with a specific treatment focused on vocabulary and motivational growth, but with a smaller population in a much shorter period of time.

**Limitations of the Study**

The internal validity of an experiment is the extent to which extraneous variables have been controlled by the researcher so that any observed effect can be attributed solely to the treatment variable (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). In this study there was an internal threat of testing since there was a pretest and posttest measure for vocabulary achievement and motivation to read. This threat was less serious for the GMRT (Form S and T) since there were alternate forms of the instrument there was always the possibility for students to become test-wise from the first administration to the second precipitated by the relatively short eight-week time period between administrations.
The issue of posttest sensitization was a factor as well. For the measure of reading motivation, participants in the study will take the same form of the *Motivation to Read Survey* (both pre and posttest) and this may impact student responses. For the *GMRT* this is better controlled for, as there were two forms (S and T) of the test used.

Another factor considered was the Hawthorne effect which speaks to the issues of the students’ awareness of their participation in the study. While students were not made aware of the hypothesis of the study, they were aware that they are part of a study and, therefore, might have been more apt to work to perform better than in a more natural setting.

Other variables that may have interfered with the results of this study were the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and students as they relate to poetry. Harrison and Gordon (1983) found that both students and teachers had negative perceptions of poetry based upon previous interactions with the genre. While this study used a protocol thought to be useful in presenting poetry in a student and teacher friendly context, these previously developed perceptions could not be controlled.

It is also important to note the GMRT provides a generalized measure of vocabulary achievement and is not directly related to the language targeted in the poetry treatment. In addition, since the posttest was administered eight weeks after the pretest, it may have been difficult to document any growth that had occurred. Finally, it should also be noted that students were already performing at high vocabulary levels based upon the initial pretest. A test one level above the students’ present grade may have been more appropriate to use. A larger sample size may have shown an effect on students who scored at extremes.
The external validity of an experiment is the extent to which the findings of an experiment can be applied to individuals and settings beyond those that were studied (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). In this study, population validity, the extent to which one can generalize from the experimental sample to a defined sample, is an issue. The experimental sample in this study was a small sample of convenience from a homogenous fifth grade population. While the findings of the study might be generalized to the local population, it would be risky to generalize findings beyond the local community. In order to generalize results of this study to a larger population, the study would need to be replicated using larger, randomized samples, from different grade levels in different socio-economic populations.

**Implications of the Study and Suggestions for Additional Research**

While there is substantive research to support the link between reading motivation and vocabulary achievement, there are only two empirical studies that suggest a link between the above and poetry. Much of the practitioner-based literature does, in fact, talk about the need for poetry in the classroom specifically as it is related to vocabulary development and student motivation. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the small research base, as more empirical evidence is needed to support the claims made by educational practitioners. While no statistical significance was found related to vocabulary achievement and motivation to read when examining students who were instructed using the poetry protocol designed by Atwell and those who were not involved in the treatment, students receiving the treatment continued to perform at similar levels of those who did not during this short treatment period.
As teachers reported tentativeness with poetry engagement, the Atwell protocol offers an opportunity for deep engagement in a teacher-friendly protocol. The protocol was easily implemented in a consistent way with minimal staff development. Districts that are looking to incorporate poetry in new and different ways would be able to do so in a cost and time effective way.

One recommendation for future research is that the treatment be implemented for a longer period of time. This study took place over the course of eight weeks. While students were exposed to poetry on a regular basis during this time, those who advocate for student engagement with poetry suggest teaching it on a regular basis throughout the course of the school year. Further, as reviewed in chapter two, other studies that focused on motivation as a dependent variable were carried out over the course of one to two years of time.

Additionally, in future research, the measures of the dependent variable might be more closely related to what is being taught in the classroom. For example, based on the treatment being implemented, the researcher could create an instrument and then validate this on similar populations prior to treatment implementation. The research should also be conducted upon a more heterogeneous population in order to avoid a ceiling effect. In addition, future research should first examine the implications of teacher and student attitudes toward poetry. Future research should continue to examine poetry as a tool to motivate students and to develop students cognitively in a variety of areas.
References


Appendix A:

Parent/Guardian Consent Form
Appendix A:

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
Parent Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is TJ Leonard and I am the Assistant Principal at Somers Middle School. Currently, I am enrolled in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. This program requires that I design and implement a dissertation research study. This study will occur over the course of an eight-week period from March to May of 2009 and is fully supported by the Somers School District.

The purpose of this study is to identify the effectiveness of using the genre of poetry as a regular part of the language arts curriculum and the connection to students’ vocabulary achievement and motivation to read. While there is much literature about the benefits of poetry for all students, there is actually little research to support these claims. More research is needed to explore these issues.

The Gates MacGinitie Reading Test will be administered to your child to measure his/her vocabulary achievement before and after the eight-week study. At the start and at the end of the study, your child will also be administered The Motivation to Read Profile. Results will be made available to your child’s classroom teacher to inform instruction and program evaluation, but will not be reported to the district or impact your child’s reading grade. The data will also be available for your review should you be interested. Student names will be coded and remain confidential throughout the study.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University’s Institutional Review Board. It is hoped that the results of this study will help teachers, school administrators, and educational policy makers understand how the regular use of poetry as part of a comprehensive language arts program will impact students’ vocabulary achievement and reading motivation.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time. Should you choose not to have your child be part of the study, I will not use any of your child’s demographic or testing data as part of my results. All information is completely confidential.

If you have any questions, please contact me via email at TJLeonard@somers.k12.ny.us or phone at (914) 277-3399 x231.

If you agree to have your child participate in this study, please sign the attached statement and return it to your child’s classroom teacher by _______________. Further, please review the student form with you child as well.

Sincerely,

TJ Leonard
Appendix B:

Student Consent Form

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
Student Information Form to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Student:

My name is Mr. Leonard. I am the Assistant Principal at Somers Middle School. I am also a student too. I go to school at Western Connecticut State University. I am doing an exciting research study and I would like you to be a part of it. I will send a permission slip home with you, but first, I would like you to know about my study.

The study is on how the use of poetry can help students be more excited about reading and help them improve their vocabulary.

I will need to use a few tests in my study. You will take The Gates MacGinitie Reading Test and fill out a Motivation to Read Profile. Your teacher will use these results to help with planning lessons for you, and I will use them to help with better understanding the benefits of poetry. I will share the results with other teachers to help them, but I will not use your names, or the name of your school. The tests we use will have nothing to do with report card grades. All of the information will be kept private.

You will be a volunteer for this study. If you have questions, please ask me.

If you would like to be in my study, please write your name here:

X________________________________________________________

Thank you,
Mr. Leonard
Appendix C:

Teacher Consent Form
Appendix C:

Teacher Consent Form

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
Teacher Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Teacher,

I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. This program requires that I design and implement a dissertation research study. This study will occur over the course of an eight-week period from March of 2009 to May of 2009 and is fully supported by the Somers School District.

The purpose of this study is to identify the effectiveness of using the genre of poetry as a regular part of the language arts curriculum and the connection to students’ vocabulary achievement and motivation to read. While there is much literature about the benefits of poetry for all students, there is actually little research to support these claims. More research is needed to explore these issues.

The researcher will provide you with materials and professional development that will allow you to implement the materials should you be selected to administer the treatment. If you are selected as part of the control group, you will receive the materials and professional development after the student is over. All teachers in the study will administer The Gates MacGinitie Reading Test to measure vocabulary achievement before and after the eight-week study. At the start and at the end of the study, each teacher will administer The Motivation to Read Profile. Results will be made available to each teacher but will not be reported to the district or impact the reading grade of any student. Student names will be coded and remain confidential throughout the study.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University’s Institutional Review Board. It is hoped that the results of this study will help teachers, school administrators, and educational policy makers understand how the regular use of poetry as part of a comprehensive language arts program will impact students’ vocabulary achievement and reading motivation.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Confidentiality is guaranteed; all assessments will be coded to be sure that all data is held in the strictest confidence. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you have any questions, please contact me via email at TJLeonard@somers.k12.ny.us or phone at (914) 277-3399 x231.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign this form and return it to me via interoffice courier mail.

Sincerely,
TJ Leonard