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The Impact of Sentence Frames on Readers Workshop Responses

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THE IMPACT OF SENTENCE FRAMES ON STUDENT READERS

WORKSHOP RESPONSES

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I was standing outside my classroom ready to greet students on the first day of middle school. Halfway down the hall I noticed a boy of Hmong descent walking towards me. He looked a bit rough and was walking alone. He didn't make eye contact. I greeted him like I had greeted other students...nothing. Thinking he may not have known I was addressing him I greeted him again... absolutely nothing. I was taken aback. Later in the day he entered my classroom for my sixth period English Language Arts (ELA) class. He was not enthusiastically engaged in any of the class activities. As the days progressed and we began to feel a bit more comfortable with each other, I asked him a question during an independent reading time. I waited . . . and waited . . . and waited. His eyes finally shifted towards me, and he sat up looking surprised, as if I really expected or wanted a response from him. He looked at me and then glanced away, and then looked at me and then looked away again. I wondered if he had been allowed to sit and not been asked to respond much or if he did not have the ability to respond. Perhaps it was a little of both. He did not know how to begin or start a response. He needed help to begin his response and was looking to me for help to get him started. I want to help students like him to be able to form a response. Perhaps being able to first form a response in writing may lead to better oral responses. In my Readers Workshop class students are asked to respond in writing. I want to look at how the use of sentence frames impacts student written responses.

Background of the Researcher

For the past two years I have been an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher in a middle school setting. This year I am working with sixth graders during a Readers Workshop, a class in which students choose books to read independently while applying strategies and writing responses to text. Before teaching ELA, I worked for six years as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher working with English Learners (ELs) in an elementary, middle school, and high school setting. As an ESL teacher and now as an ELA teacher (with an ESL perspective) I have noted how difficult it is at times to get ELs to engage in discussion and writing assignments related to the topics being studied. Part of this may be due to middle school adolescence, but another factor may be a lack of inherent grammatical structures, vocabulary terms, language functions, and the ability to use them to make up sentences, organize thoughts, and to express one's thinking. ELs may have limited experience and exposure to this type of *academic expression* and, more importantly, they may not have had someone with whom to practice these types of written or spoken expressions. Students may have something to say about a topic but are reluctant to speak or write because they do not know how to begin. Providing a structure or a path for ELs to write a response may help them to express themselves. I want to provide a starting point or path to elicit student written responses during my Readers Workshop class. Sentence frames, as a scaffold, may offer the EL the opportunity to more efficiently write responses. This study will look how sentence frames impact students written responses during a Readers Workshop (RW). In this chapter, I will

explain issues surrounding ELs and the acquisition of academic type expressions and school content.

Academic Language for English Learners

Zwiers (2008) has noted how ELs may have limited opportunities to practice reading and writing in English. He points out how many ELs use their First Language (L1) at home, with friends, in schools, and in the community. Kinsella's 2008 study (as cited in Donnelly & Roe, 2010) makes another important point in that some ELs may not be literate (reading and writing) in any language. These ELs may lack sufficient academic language in both their home language and English, which may impact their opportunity to learn additional content and academic language. Carrier (2005) points out that while native speakers of English may only be asked to assimilate content vocabulary within their already inherent literacy understanding, some ELs are asked to learn literacy skills, content vocabulary, and, at the same time, learn a second language, English.

The time it takes to learn another language has been well documented: It takes seven to ten years for ELs to develop academic language (Thomas & Collier, 1979, as cited in Peregoy, 2005). What may be seen as a student's refusal to engage in a class assignment may simply be that the student has not yet had the opportunities to feel competent and to fully express him or herself using the mainstream classroom language. Because of limited exposure and experiences to academic type expressions, it is important that students practice these skills. Providing a path to first write expressions may assist ELs to more efficiently practice both their meta-cognition and literacy skills.

I want to explore what opportunities sentence frames may provide ELs to write a response to text. Sentence frames are templates of language functions into which students can insert appropriate vocabulary (Carrier, 2005). For example, I may ask students to complete the following sentence frame, “I agree with _____ because_____.” If students first practice writing expressions, then it may help them to develop academic language to express their thoughts. In a Readers Workshop class students write to response to their reading. I will implement sentence frames during my Reader’s Workshop class to scaffold their written responses.

Readers Workshop

My school has designed its Readers Workshop structure mostly from the work of Lucy Calkins, a scholar at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University (Calkins, 2010). The Readers Workshop is structured to allow for the balance of teaching to the whole classroom community while also meeting the individual needs of learners. Teachers create a safe environment where students are free to make mistakes, reflect on misunderstandings, practice strategies, and to share and learn from each other. The daily literacy session starts with a mini-lesson objective based on state standards or students' needs shown through assessments. This mini-lesson provides a model of how students can apply the learning objective and strategies to their own reading and gives them a chance for guided practice in this application.

Students then independently practice the mini-lesson learning objective during the Work Time. The main task of the students during this time is to read, think, talk, write, and construct meaning about text. Students are allowed to choose what they read during

Work Time. Allowing students to choose the text they read is a practice that has shown increased engagement and motivation in students (Cordova & Lepper, 1996). Depending on the needs or choices of the students and teacher, students may read independently, with a partner, or with a group. Students write their responses and reflections to their reading. They may take part in a Book Club or reading partnerships. According to Calkins (2010) the teacher's main tasks during Work Time are to support students' construction of meaning through small group instruction, confer with individuals or groups, help students set goals around their reading, and to support students in applying the learning objective of the mini-lesson to their reading.

Readers Workshop ends with a Close, a time for learners to share their learning from the day. The learning objective of the mini-lesson is reviewed. Students share their learning and strategy application, reflect on how they have constructed meaning, celebrate progress towards goals they have set, and possibly set goals for the following day.

Literacy Strategies and Meta-cognition

Literacy strategies may include predicting, asking questions, citing evidence, making connections, inferring, visualizing, making anecdotal notes, summarizing, and reflecting (SPPS Readers Workshop). During Readers Workshop students are asked to think and write as they use these strategies while reading. In their responses students are asked to think about what they are thinking when they read and respond to literature. Meta-cognitive strategies (thinking about thinking) are strategies students learn to monitor their own thinking. During Readers Workshop, ELs are asked to learn content

and practice literary strategies in a second language. The lack of inherent grammatical structures and language conventions may impact an EL's opportunity to practice meta-cognitive skills. To work around an EL's possible lack of grammar skills and help them practice meta-cognitive skills, teachers may use sentence frames to lessen the grammar requirements.

Sentence starters are sentences to help get the student to respond to text. “The main idea of the story is _____” is one example. On the other hand, sentence frames are templates of language functions where students can insert appropriate vocabulary words, for example, “The _____ is _____, but the _____ is _____.” This idea is supported by Carrier (2005) who states, “Sentence frames are ready-made chunks of language that help language learners develop fluency and communicate concepts without getting over-involved in grammar rules” (p. 7). Wood (2002) explains how sentence frames can more easily be stored and remembered as a whole multi-word unit rather than as individual words. This makes the sentences much easier to recall and use as whole chunk units.

Sentence Frames and Scaffolding

Sentence frames may provide ELs a structure to practice meta-cognitive strategies and literacy writing skills. As noted earlier, sentence frames may help ELs communicate without getting bogged down by grammar rules. Sentence frames are a structured language practice used to scaffold and provide students with opportunities to write, think, and talk about concept terms and academic language (Carrier, 2005). Carrier (2005) explains how sentence frames help students as they complete phrases which may be just

beyond their level of what they can produce unassisted. Sentence frames can be used in classrooms to help ELLs communicate their ideas and express their thoughts. One example of a sentence frame used to help an ELL state the author's message in a text may be "The author's main message is ____ because in the story ____." Another example is "The author wants us to know that ____." To compare two ideas, "Oranges are ____, however bananas are ____." There is a need to provide ELLs the scaffolding to practice meta-cognitive strategies while responding to text reading. Sentence frames may offer a path for ELLs to more efficiently respond in writing to content.

Guiding Questions

In this chapter I discussed ELs' obstacles and challenges to learning academic language and school content, all while learning English. The main focus of this study will explore the impact of sentence frames on student Readers Workshop Responses. I hope my research will provide insight into the following question: What types of sentence frames best scaffold students' written response to reading? Since I intend to explore various types of sentence frames and ways of using them, action research will best suit my research project. My action research will take place during my Readers Workshop class.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One, major issues related to my study and the purpose of my study were described. In Chapter Two, research of literature relevant to sentence frames and how they are implemented to elicit written responses are explored. Chapter Three includes a description of the research design and the methods used to implement the

study. Chapter Four shares the results of the study. Chapter Five analyzes and reflects on the data, discusses limitations, and suggests implications for further research and instructional strategies.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will research prior literature relevant to sentence frames and how they are being implemented to elicit written responses. First, the importance of meta-cognitive and literacy skills is reviewed to show how sentence frames may be used to help students engage in meta-cognitive strategies to practice literacy strategies. Second, sentence frames as a scaffolding tool is discussed. Next, a Readers Workshop framework is described. Lastly, the gap in the research is discussed, followed by the research question.

Literacy Strategies and Meta-cognition

Wenden (1998) describes meta-cognitive strategies as self-regulating skills learners use to plan, guide, and monitor their learning. When learners are made aware of a range of strategies and taught how to determine when to apply an appropriate strategy to a certain task, then they are able to control and improve the quality of their learning (Wenden,1998).

Literacy strategies are processes teachers teach students to comprehend and respond to text. Students use these strategies teachers model for them as they read to comprehend new information and write to respond to that information. Strategies may include predicting, asking questions, clarifying, making connections, inferring, visualizing, making anecdotal notes, summarizing, and reflecting (SPPS Readers Workshop). Chamot and O'Malley's (1994) example of a reading lesson includes three stages: pre-planning (developing a plan before reading a text to focus on key words, phrases, or types of information in the text), monitoring (asking self-questions about the

learning process), and evaluating (reflecting on what was learned through journals or learning logs). One writing example of the use of meta-cognitive strategies is from Smith, Rook, and Smith (2007), who state that if one's goal is to write with clarity, then one reviews each paragraph and asks if it makes sense. If it does not, the writer then identifies the areas that lack clarity and rewrites them. Sentence frames may be useful to elicit an initial response and then to discuss and clarify responses.

Scaffolding

The modifications and adaptations teachers use in the classroom provide support or scaffolding to help ELs complete assignments and tasks. Rush, Eakle, and Berger (2007) explain how scaffolding should include both the curricular materials and the teaching process. Some examples of scaffolding strategies, according to Coleman and Goldenberg (2010), may include building background knowledge, visuals, repetition, role-play, the use of primary language, and peer interactions. Also noted was the importance of explicit instruction. "Explicit instruction means a clearly stated objective, clear input, modeling, and repeated practice before students work independently, and a consolidation of learning at the end of the lesson" (p. 108).

Carrier (2005) explains how sentence frames can be used as a scaffold to help students write expressions beyond their ability level. Sentence frames provide scaffolding for students to write and think about content.

Sentence Frames

In order to clarify the definition of sentence frames, this section defines and describes a variety of related concepts: sentence frames (Donnelly & Roe, 2010),

formulaic language units (Wood, 2002), sentence starters and academic expressions (Zwiers, 2008), sentence builders (Nattinger & DeCarrico, as cited in Carrier, 2005), sentence stems (Pawley & Snyder, as cited in Wood, 2002), and lexical phrases (Nattinger & DeCarrico, as cited in Wood, 2002).

In the research literature some of these terms have been used interchangeably. Carrier's (2005) describes sentence builders and sentence frames as common terms, yet in some of her examples as seen in sentences 1-3, they appear to be sentence starters.

- 1) It looks like _____. (p. 7)
- 2) They are shaped like _____. (p. 7)
- 3) Milkweed bugs prefer _____. (p. 7)

Carrier continues to describe sentence frames as a template of a language function where students can insert appropriate vocabulary. An example of a sentence frame is highlighted in sentence 4.

- 4) I think that the blob is composed of _____ because _____. (p. 9)

Zwiers (2008) using a sentence frame for cause and effect from a text is shown in sentence 5.

- 5) Even though the textbook says the cause was _____, I believe it was _____.

Carrier uses Wood's (2002) *formulaic language* definition to describe sentence frames: "They are ready-made chunks of language that help language learners develop fluency and communicate concepts without getting over-involved in grammar rules" (Carrier, 2005, p. 7).

Wood (2002) describes formulaic language units as “ready-made chunks or multiword units of language” (p. 2). One important concept is how formulaic language can be remembered by the user as a single phrase or single lexical units which can then be more easily recalled and used by the user (Wood, 2002). The phrase or sentence can be stored in long-term memory as a whole chunk of language and then also recalled as a whole chunk (Wood, 2002).

Wood (2002) did not conduct a study but synthesizes the research of Hakuta (1974) and Peters (1983) on using formulaic language with children. In a 60-week study, Hakuta, working with a Japanese child, notes evidence of initial acquisition of prefabricated chunks later analyzed and used to facilitate overall language development. In another study, Peters describes how a child stores formulaic language as whole units, analyzes the stored chunks and recognizes structural patterns, and then develops the ability to use them to analyze new chunks of language. In his conclusion, Wood (2002) notes how formulaic sequences are multiword units stored in long-term memory and retrieved as chunks and how being able to recall formulaic language from memory as wholes reduces the initial language processing and gives the speaker support to focus on learning content.

Zwiers (2008) looks at sentence frames and academic expression sentences as tools teachers can use to help ELs acquire academic language. Zwiers defines academic language as academic language is, “the set of words, grammar, and organizational strategies used to describe complex ideas, higher-order thinking processes, and abstract

concepts (p. 20).” Zwiers provides examples of academic expressions used for interpreting language arts as seen in sentence frames 6-9.

- 6) The author used that analogy because _____. (p. 117)
- 7) The _____ is an important symbol for _____ because _____. (p. 117)
- 8) I feel that _____. (p. 117)
- 9) Evidence includes when _____. (p. 117).

Lastly, he points out that sentence frames are more commonly used to help students write, but can also be used to help students clarify what they are trying to say.

Sentence frames or multi-words units have been used to create language functions to help ELLs learn new concepts during a lesson. Much of the literature (Carrier, 2005; Donnelly & Roe, 2010; Smith, Rook & Smith, 2007; Tretter, Ardasheva, & Bookstrom, 2014; Zwiers, 2008) focuses on taking into account the overall core concept of a lesson and the learning objectives to determine what appropriate sentence frames to implement into a lesson. Key aspects could include identifying key content-specific vocabulary terms, the types of questions being asked, and the language functions needed to answer these questions. Students may be asked to respond to, compare, sequence, describe, make judgments, or infer. Once the purpose and objectives have been determined, sentence frames can be developed.

Carrier (2005) did not actually conduct a study with results, but she points out a method of how to implement sentence frames. She looks at content objectives as the starting point for determining what literacy skills are needed to learn content. She explains how ELs need literacy skills to locate information, interpret, ask questions,

answer, describe, explain, infer, and make predictions about the concept. Once the content objectives, literacy objectives, and language functions have been identified than sentence frames can be developed to meet or align to learning content.

Similarly, Donnelly and Roe (2010) did not conduct a study or show any actual results, but they also offer many examples of structured language to practice content vocabulary and language functions. They explain how sentence frames can be used during ELD (English Language Development) instruction to develop academic vocabulary for ELs during a social studies lesson. In their work with teachers they noticed a tendency to view ELD as a separate instructional activity for ELs and not part of classroom instruction. In this article they developed a lesson for a fourth grade social studies lesson, “How and Why Did People Travel to California?” They demonstrated how teachers use ELD in classroom content area instruction. First, they determine the core concept by looking at text questioning, tasks, assessments, and state content objectives. Next, they noted key vocabulary words that the students will need to know to understand the concept. Then to develop sentence frames they determined what language functions (e.g., compare, summarize, classify, predict, state an opinion, inference, cause and effect, persuade) that students needed in order to understand the concepts being studied. In this unit the overarching language function for social studies lesson was compare/contrast. Finally, they developed two sets of sentence frames for the language function compare/contrast. Figure 1 illustrates sentence frames used with *familiar vocabulary* and concepts while figure 2 shows sentence frames used with academic language from the text.

| |
|--|
| Example 1 Simple sentence <u>Oranges</u> are <u>sweet</u> . <u>Lemons</u> are <u>sour</u> . _____ are _____. |
| Comparative sentence <u>Oranges</u> and <u>lemons</u> are both <u>fruit</u> , but <u>oranges</u> are <u>sweet</u> , and <u>lemons</u> are <u>sour</u> . _____ and _____ are both _____, but _____ are _____, and _____ are _____. |
| Complex comparative sentence The main difference between <u>oranges</u> and <u>lemons</u> is <u>oranges</u> are <u>sweet</u> , while <u>lemons</u> are <u>sour</u> . The main difference between _____ and _____ is _____ are _____, while _____ are _____. |

Figure 1. Compare/Contrast Sentence Frames Using Familiar Content

| |
|---|
| Example 2 Simple sentence People <u>migrated</u> to the <u>west</u> . People <u>migrated</u> from the <u>east</u> . People _____(ed) to the _____. People _____(ed) from the _____. |
| Comparative sentence People <u>migrated</u> to the <u>west</u> from the <u>east</u> . People _____(ed) to the _____ from the _____. |
| Complex comparative sentence Three reasons people <u>migrated</u> from the <u>east</u> to the <u>west</u> were <u>work</u> , <u>land</u> , and <u>adventure</u> . Three reasons people _____(ed) from the _____ to the _____ were _____, _____, and _____. |

Figure 2. Compare/Contrast Sentence Frames Using Academic Language

Tretter, Ardasheva, and Bookstrom (2014) implemented the use of sentence frames during a science lesson. The strategies were used to teach first year high school ELs, with refugees making up 80% of the class. They noted how explicit language strategies were needed because of students' phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors

that limited communication and comprehension of the material. They explained how teachers should design lessons that provide students with not just the brick vocabulary but also the mortar language structures they use to tie it all together. Dutro and Moran (2003) first introduced these terms explaining how bricks and mortar are terms used to differentiate between content-specific vocabulary and general academic terms.

Tretter et al. (2014) described content related science vocabulary such as *mass* and *gravity* as *brick* words, and the language structures that connected the bricks as the *mortar* words. An example of a content sentence containing both brick and mortar terms is shown in sentence 10.

10) The more mass an object has, the stronger gravity field it generates.

To understand this concept, students must understand the brick words *mass* and *gravity*, and the comparative language structure of *the more* _____ *the stronger* _____. Another comparative sentence could include the word sequence in sentence frame 11.

11) (something) _____ *is as* (adjective) _____ *as* (something else) _____.

These comparative language structures can show students the relationships between the science terms and better understand the science concepts. “The core scientific concept is bound up in the relationship as much as in the specific terms” (Tretter, Ardasheva, & Bookstrom 2014, p. 40). To help students become familiar with the sentence structure they first used more concrete examples like, “The bigger the sandwich I eat, the less

hungry I feel.” The sentence frame examples were then displayed on a poster that hung on a wall so students can refer back to it.

In their study, Tretter et al. (2014) gave a pretest to their students in October focusing on mortar vocabulary. They again assessed the students throughout the year in December and March. The students’ average scores improved from the October pretest score of 45% to 82% in March. The standard deviation in scores also decreased from 34% on the pretest to 25-27% in March. The results showed that not only did mortar vocabulary improve, but also the overall spread of scores decreased. They also reported how much more confident the students felt in their ability to express their knowledge by using these language structures. While the study looked at how students could apply science vocabulary to structures, it did not note if students were then able to write longer or produce a greater variety of responses.

While many researchers have described or shown methods on how sentence frames can be used in the classroom, not many actual studies have been done to show the results of how they impacted students’ written responses. Sentence frames may impact students’ written responses in length, depth, and variety of sentences but the studies did not look or note these results. This is a possible gap in the existing research. This study will attempt to fill the gap by looking at the impact of sentence frames on students Readers Workshop Responses.

Readers Workshop

Readers Workshop (RW) at my middle school follows the model provided by the district. Much of the current practice has been adapted from the Teachers College Reading

and Writing Project (Calkins 2010). The lesson begins with the teacher modeling the use of strategies to comprehend the text and then observing the use of the strategies in conferences and written responses. Students are expected to read a variety of genres, participate in literature discussions, and develop written responses to literature. Students select books to read independently, and set reading goals based on their strengths, needs, and interests. The main task of the student is to read, think, talk, and write their way through the text. There are three main components of RW:

Whole Class Instruction Mini-Lesson, 10%-20% of instructional time.

- 1) Literacy Work Time, 60% of instructional time.
- 2) The Close, 10%-20% of instructional time.

Whole Class Mini-lesson

The mini-lesson focuses on one teaching point addressing grade level benchmarks. During this time the teacher reinforces and models the teaching point and creates clear expectations for student work. Literacy strategies are practiced as students read and respond to text. In their responses students may be asked to notice key details and cite evidence from text to demonstrate what they are thinking as they read and respond to literature. Strategies may include predicting, asking questions, citing evidence, making connections, inferring, visualizing, making anecdotal notes, summarizing, and reflecting. Cooperative routines are established such as Turn and Talk, and Think, Pair, Share. Students then transfer the teaching point to their independent text during their independent Literacy Work Time.

Literacy Work Time

During Literacy Work Time the students read independently and participate in reading partners or book clubs while the teacher confers with individual students or provides small group instruction. At the heart of Literacy Work Time students are discovering their interests through choosing and reading a variety of genres and generating a passion and love for books. Kittle (2013) writes: “I believe in the rigor of independent reading, the power of guiding student choice to increase engagement, skill, and joy” (p.). She advocates that the pathway to reading difficult texts begins with reading books we enjoy. She believes that teenagers want to read if we just let them. During Literacy Work Time, students independently choose “just right” books and read. The students read daily at their independent reading level from a variety of genres and practices the strategy the teacher has modeled. The teacher meets with groups or individual students to provide necessary instructional strategies and modeling on how to authentically talk and write about text and develop their reading plan.

The Close

During the Close, the class conducts a shared conversation reviewing, reflecting on, and assessing the day’s teaching point. Students process their thoughts, show what they learned, ask questions, and reflect on their learning.

The Gap

Sentence frames may provide support for student written responses. Most prior research has described how sentence frames may be implemented as part of classroom

instruction to scaffold students' acquisition of content and language. Not as much prior research has been done to show evidence or results of how they impacted students' written responses as far as I could tell. Outcomes such as sentence length, depth of responses, and sentence variety were not shown. This is a possible gap in the existing research. The main focus of this study will explore the impact of sentence frames on student Readers Workshop Responses.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The main purpose of this study was to explore the impact of sentence frames on student Readers Workshop Responses. The study implemented sentence frames during a 6th grade Readers Workshop class to provide a scaffold for ELs to respond to text. The goal was to help students write a response to their readings by scaffolding and providing them a path through the use of sentence frames.

Overview of Chapter

This chapter describes the methods used in this study. First, the rationale and description of the research design are presented. Second, the methods used to collect data are described. Finally, the data collection and analysis of the data methods are presented.

Research Paradigm

Research is typically divided into the categories of basic and applied (Merriam, 2009). Applied research is done to improve the quality of practice in a particular discipline. A form of applied research is action research. I conducted action research during this study.

Action research is a type of applied research conducted by teachers to improve instructional practices in the classroom (Glanz, 2003). According to Pelton (2010) “Action research, in a school setting, is a systematic approach to improve teaching practices” (p. 3). Pelton (2010) describes the *action* part of action research as almost everything a teacher does on a daily basis. The introduction about my teaching experiences with the young Hmong student was an example of what teachers do on a daily basis. A teacher observes a student’s reactions and responses to a task, then decides

what supports a student might need to successfully complete the task. The teacher is the researcher and is also an active participant. Pelton (2010) defines the *research* part of action research as “the methods, habits, and attitudes” (p. 4) a teacher brings to the classroom. The methods could include collecting data, teacher observations, and making adjustments in instructional processes. He describes action research as reflection-in-action. The teacher models instruction, considers the impact of instruction, and then makes adjustments. It becomes a constant cycle of *action-data-reflection*. Pelton (2010) states that many students are left behind if teachers only reflect on end of the year assessments to determine students’ needs and instruction.

The action research process typically follows these five steps (Pelton, 2010):

1. Issue Identification
2. Data Collection
3. Action Planning
4. Plan Activation
5. Outcome Assessment

The issue in my classroom was ELs' written responses to readings. Students tended to write short responses, at times one or two words, to questions being asked about their readings. Students responded to a question by answering *yes* or *no*, but had a hard time explaining their answers. This occurred even when I explicitly asked that they respond using full sentences.

Pelton (2010) cited work done by three authors—Curtis, Webb-Dempsey, and Shambaugh—explaining how data should be used to guide instruction and report

outcomes. Data collection could include student work samples, student responses, and teacher journals. These were the three methods I used to collect my data. Other methods included quizzes, running records, checklists, benchmark tests, standardized tests, and personal observations. Data was used to guide my work as an action researcher. My action plan was to explore the impact of sentence frames on student Readers Workshop Responses. I planned my action, activated my plan, analyzed the new data, and presented my outcomes. The outcomes are described in Chapters Four and Five.

Participants

I was the sixth grade Readers Workshop teacher, so my research was conducted within a mainstream Readers Workshop class. The class had a total of 25 students. The participants were six ELs who were in my Readers Workshop class. The participants were intermediate to advanced language learners who struggled to write responses compared to most of their peers. There were five Hmong speakers: four intermediate language level learners and one advanced language level learner. The one Spanish speaking participant was at the intermediate language level. The remaining class was a mixture of native English speakers, nine special education students, and a few higher level ELs who were not included in the study. Since this was an action research study, I was also an active participant.

Setting

My school was located within a large urban school district. Our school offered a district-wide program rooted in American Indian history, culture, art, language, traditions, and values. We welcomed students from all backgrounds to learn through

American Indian Studies in grades Pre-K through eighth grade. Enrollment is 672 students which includes 19% American Indian, 26% Asian American, 28% African American, 16% Hispanic, and 9% Caucasian. One third of the students, 33%, are ELLs and 19% were Special Education. The student population eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch was 93%. The percentage of students proficient in the 2012 MCA II for grade 6 reading test was 20%.

Data Collection

Data Collection Technique # 1: Teacher Journal/Log

I used the journal to reflect on and think about my action research project. Pelton (2010) advocates that teachers stop and consider students' weaknesses and strengths before planning the next day's instruction. The journal was a valuable resource to reflect on the impact of sentence frames and student learning. I recorded information in my journal about student responses as well as my own reflections about the lesson. Action research is reflection-in-action. Therefore, I continuously considered the impact of my actions while they were being implemented. The journal was used to record the action research cyclic method of "action-data-reflection." Recording included what impact sentences frames had on written responses, questions asked, student engagement, and conference discussions.

Data Collection Technique # 2: Student Work Samples

Qualitative data such as student work samples is one of the best sources of data (Pelton, 2010). Student work samples showed me how well students had mastered a skill and the effectiveness of a strategy. I used them as examples to show how students

interpret what they thought I wanted them to do. I noted student responses to determine what may be working and focused on ways to improve my instruction in areas where students don't seem to be responding as I hoped. The samples were kept and used to show what impact sentence frames may have on students' daily written responses.

Data Collection Technique #3: Readers Workshop Responses

I used The Readers Response rubric (Readers Workshop, 2014). The rubric was a district assessment tool. The rubric was used to assess students' understanding of the texts they read. Table 1 is an example of one of the rubrics used to assess students understanding of their independent text:

Table 1

Readers Response Rubric

| 1 Point | 1 Point | 1 Point | 1 Point |
|---|--|---|--|
| I can retell important events in a story and how they made character/s react. | I recognized an unfair scene in the story and explained how it affected the character. | I used evidence from the story to support my opinion. | I explained the character's perspective about the events and how it may be different from other character's perspective. |

(Readers Workshop, 2014)

District rubrics have been established for both informational texts and literature, and include rubrics for characterization, inferencing, identifying main ideas and supporting details, citing text evidence, and themes. The rubrics offered some flexibility as I developed sentence frames to meet specific reading purposes during Readers Workshop. The rubrics used numerical scores to assess student work and were

quantitative data points. The written responses provided valuable information to record and analyze what impact sentence frames had on student responses. The scoring rubric was used to assess student work and to reflect on what student scores told me about my instruction and the impact of using sentence frames on student responses. The student responses were evaluated on a daily basis.

Procedure

This research occurred over a three-week period. Research took place during the middle of the school year so students had already been familiar with writing responses to their reading. During the first week sentence frames were used during collaboration with a Social Studies Leadership Project. The last two weeks sentence frames were used during the Readers Workshop Class. The adaptations I made depended upon the type of text we read. First, informal samples were collected to demonstrate student responses without the use of sentence frames. Then sentence frames were developed to meet specific objectives and assessments within the Readers Workshop lesson. Student work samples, teacher journal, and responses were analyzed and assessed for evidence of understanding of the main teaching points. Data was also collected through individual and group conferencing to question students and gather other information about student comprehension, responses, and reflections. During the whole process, I kept a journal to note and reflect on student work samples, outcomes and sentence frame adaptations.

Readers Workshop responses were analyzed to determine how their responses correlate to the rubric. The rubrics used a 4-point scale. I knew if the students were being successful if they showed measured progress according to their scores on the

rubric. Student responses were analyzed to determine if students had met the objective of the lesson and supported their thinking with evidence from throughout the text. I noted if sentence frames elicited longer responses. The teacher journal was used to record materials, strategies, and lesson processes as I implemented the sentence frames.

Analysis of Data

The three methods I used to collect data were student Readers Workshop Responses, a teacher journal, and student work samples. The responses were analyzed with the rubric to see if students had met the learning task and made progress according to the corresponding rubric. My journal was used to note text being read, and the types of sentence frames used to scaffold written responses, and conference responses. I planned, and commented on what impact sentence frames may have on responses, changes I have made to gather responses, and overall student engagement. Students work sample were collected to show what impact sentence frames had on students' responses. The student work samples were collected daily and analyzed to see if there were ways to adapt the sentence frames to scaffold students' responses and then to analyze the overall impact over the three-week period.

Verification of Data

The study used both quantitative and qualitative data sources to analyze the impact sentence frames had on student responses. Data was collected both qualitatively and quantitatively, a mixed methods approach, to take account of any weaknesses or strengths of each approach (Pelton, 2010). The teacher journal and student work samples provided me with qualitative data on the impact sentence frames had on students'

responses. The Readers Response Rubric was a standardized district assessment tool that provided me with quantitative numerical data. All three data collection methods tools provided insight into my research question. Pelton (2010) encourages multiple data sources to allow for triangulation. The data from the three methods were analyzed for any connections, consistency, and confirmations that may provide a greater understanding of my data. Validity is when your data sources align, measure, and answers the research question. My three data sources aided me in answering my research question and added validity to my research. My research question looked at the impact of sentence frames on student Readers Workshop Responses.

Conclusion

Chapter Three discussed the methodology of action research on the use of sentence frames during a Readers Workshop class. The methodology described the three types of data collected. One was a journal. I used the journal to record information about student responses as well as my own reflections about the overall lesson. A second type of data collected was student samples. I noted student responses to determine what was working and focused on ways to improve my instruction in areas where students didn't seem to be responding as I hoped. The third type of data collected was Readers Workshop Responses which were evaluated through a rubric. The rubric used numerical scores to assess student work and were quantitative data points. The scoring rubric was used to assess student work and to reflect on what student scores told me about my instruction and the impact of using sentence frames on student responses.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The main purpose of this study is to explore the impact of sentence frames on students' Readers Workshop Responses. This research took place in a sixth grade Readers Workshop Class during a three-week period. The first week of the study the Readers Workshop class was involved in a collaborative project working with their sixth grade social studies class on a Minnesota Leadership project. The last two weeks were a typical Readers Workshop class. During the entire three weeks students used sentence frames to write responses to their reading. Journal notes were taken to record observations and provide insight on the process. Student work samples were collected and a rubric was used to assess students' Readers Workshop Responses. In this chapter I will reflect on the journal notes, student work samples, and Readers Workshop Responses to see what insights can be learned about the use of sentence frames.

Journal Notes

In this section the journal notes cover the first week of the history project. No writing samples or rubrics were used during the first week. In the writing sample section and the Readers Response section, journal entries are woven into the two sections. During the first week of research the Readers Workshop class was collaborating with the social studies teacher, Ms. Jones,¹ to work on their Minnesota History Day Project. The goal of the project was for students to conduct in-depth research on a person from history who has demonstrated leadership. Sentence frames were used in the Readers Workshop

¹ All names used in this study are pseudonyms

class to scaffold student research note-taking and to assess what impact using sentence frames had on the students' written responses.

Ms. Jones had designed a Cornell Notes outline for students to take notes on as they read their articles about their subjects. The left margin of the page is used to write questions that align to notes taken on the right side of the page. Ms. Jones wrote questions in the margins and I added sentence frames on the right as a scaffold for students to write notes. The sentence frames helped to answer the questions in the right margins. I reflected upon the class during their research note-taking to see what insights could be gained about teaching using sentence frames. Each reflection consists of an observation, and how it is significant to teaching.

- 1) Observation- Students had difficulty reading their articles and completing their notes using the sentence frames.

Significance- What I quickly discovered was that most students had printed articles which were too difficult for them to read. Students had difficulty independently comprehending and identifying key points from the articles.

Ms. Jones had students go to a few chosen websites to look for articles; otherwise, students were researching articles on the web. In reflection Ms. Jones and I should have provided leveled articles for topics. Sentence frames are not useful as a scaffold if text is too difficult to read.

- 2) Observation- Students could not tell me much more information about their topic. Here are a few responses from students as I spoke with them about their subjects.

Teacher: "Who are you researching?"

Char: "I don't know how to say name."

Teacher: "What do you know about your person?"

Char: "School teacher, upset for teachers hitting."

Teacher: "How did this person show leadership?"

Char: "Volunteered to be there for others."

Teacher: "Who are you researching?"

Quen: "Jesus Christ."

Teacher: "What do you know about your person?"

Quen: "He help people, he teach people."

Teacher: "How did this person show leadership?"

Quen: "He died on cross."

Teacher: "Who are you researching?"

Kyle: "Xang Vang, a master farmer."

Teacher: "What do you know about your person?"

Kyle: "He was born in Laos and migrated."

Teacher: "How did this person show leadership?"

Kyle: "Taught other Hmong to farm and sell."

Teacher: "Who are you researching?"

Chew: “Gordon Parks.”

Teacher: “What do you know about your person?”

Chew: “Born in Kansas.”

Teacher: “How did this person show leadership?”

Chew: “Photography awards.”

Teacher: “Who are you researching?”

Al: “Xang Vang.”

Teacher: “What do you know about your person?”

Al: “He help Hmong get social services”

Teacher: “How did this person show leadership?”

Al: “Don’t know”

Significance- While some articles may have been difficult students were able to tell me some information about their topics but could not tell me any more details about their topics. In reflection the topics should have been narrowed because they were very broad.

- 3) Observation- Students did not comprehend some of the questions and sentence frames.

Significance- Some words and concepts were too abstract for students to respond to. Words such as *legacy* and questions such as, “How does your topic connect to legacy?” were too abstract because students did not have the

background knowledge to answer the question and understand associated vocabulary. The sentence frames were not successful as a scaffold because of unknown concepts and vocabulary. Sentence frames as well as new concepts and vocabulary should be first modeled using familiar content.

- 4) Observation- I noticed how the note-taking assignment may have appeared a bit overwhelming to Quen, Chew, and Al.

Significance- As I spoke to students I realized that the assignment as a whole may have been too overwhelming. On reflection the clustering of the sentence frames within the Cornell Notes may have worked better if it had been broken into separate smaller tasks.

- 5) Observation- The note-taking outline Ms. Jones and I produced was new to the students and may have actually hindered their progress.

Significance- This is also the first time I have asked students to use sentence frames within the Cornell Notes form. I attempted to take the questions in the margins and then use sentence frames to elicit details about their subjects and more in-depth responses. So it is possible that I actually hindered learning by asking students to learn unfamiliar content with unfamiliar tasks or outline. In reflection I may have more success if I had used a note-taking format with which students were familiar.

- 6) Observation- Students had more success when I had them use sentence frames with a more familiar Box and Bullet format to take notes.

Significance- Although we did not have much time for this project, I had students switch to a more familiar format, Box and Bullet, to write notes. A Box and Bullet format sets a purpose for reading in the upper box and aligns bullets below to write relevant information. The main heading or purpose for reading was, “How does your person show leadership?” I then used sentence frames next to the bullets to scaffold students' written responses to show evidence of leadership. The sentence frames were the same as the ones used in the Cornell Notes. This helped students to comprehend text and write responses later. At this point I want to point out that I had to guide students to places in the articles where they could find relevant information. We did not have time or access to technology to look up leveled articles, if they existed, to complete this project. In reflection I should have had students practice first using sentence frames with a familiar format.

- 7) Observation- Ms. Jones attempted to have students complete a thesis worksheet at the very beginning of the project. Students had already chosen a person for their leadership topic yet it was clear that students did not have the background knowledge to complete the thesis worksheet. Although this task did not include sentence frames, it does provide some insight.

Significance- The thesis worksheet left the students confused because they did not have the background information to answer the questions. In reflection using

sentence frames would not have been an effective scaffold because students did not have the background information for their topic.

Two days before students were to begin their project, I wanted to model strategies for reading articles about a person who has shown leadership. The person I choose was Malala Yousafzai, the teenage girl who was attacked and shot in the head by the Taliban while riding home on a school bus. She survived the shooting and is now the youngest person ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

I began the lesson by showing a video *Malala Speaks Out* (Oct 7, 2013). It is an ABC news report that I found on YouTube. This provided students with the background and visuals for our topic. We discussed key points and together as a whole class wrote notes about key points from the video. Then I had students read two articles about Malala. I went to the website *newsela.com* to find an article. This website is useful because it has relevant articles which are written at different reading levels. Students were asked to number paragraphs and paraphrase each paragraph, strategies with which they were familiar. The next day I asked students to create a Box and Bullet, another familiar strategy, to write a response to the prompt, “What is one important idea about Malala Yousafzai?” and cite evidence. In retrospect this would have been a good time to model how to respond using sentence frames and to introduce new concepts and vocabulary.

This reflective process on my use of sentence frames has been very helpful. It has led to observations which will add insight to my teaching processes when using sentence frames to scaffold students’ written responses. The reflections will lead to changes, such

as narrowing topics and providing students with access to leveled texts. Time constraints may have made me miss a crucial sequence in the lesson. I should have modeled and used sentence frames when I asked students to take notes for Malala Yousafzai. Then students may have had a better idea of how the sentences frames fit and related to their leadership content subjects. As I reflect on this, it may even had made more sense to have students use the sentence frames to write about someone they know, perhaps a family member. Then they may have better understood the concept and function of the sentence frame and to how use them with new content.

Student Work Samples

The last two weeks of this study took place during the Readers Workshop Class. My journal entries are included and have been woven into this section. The unit of study for the workshop was Developing Critical Literacies. The goal was for students to read to analyze critical scenes or events in a story and notice how the author develops character perspectives, how positions of power may change in a story, and how outcomes may seem fair to one group and unfair to another group. The sentence frames I used asked students to write their opinion of character perspectives and if positions of power change in the story. The sentence frames also prepared students for the formal Readers Workshop assessment at the end of the week. During the first week of my research I noted how sentence frames should be first modeled using familiar content. This week I used pictures, a video, and a familiar story to model the use of sentence frames. Whole class discussions took place to share sentence frame responses and then students used the sentence frame to write a response related to their independent books. I collected student

written responses as they used sentence frames to respond to text. I analyzed and reflected upon the work samples to see what insights could be gained about teaching using sentence frames. Students' work samples consist of student responses to whole class mentor texts and to their independent reading text.

The character perspective concept was first introduced by projecting a picture of a professionally dressed man and a woman where the man is aggressively pointing at the woman as he speaks while the woman stands passively listening. I wanted students to express their own views and tell me what was happening in the picture. I used the sentence frames to elicit an oral response to questions from the story. Who appears to have the power in this picture and why? What were the woman's or man's perspectives? What are they thinking? Students were encouraged to use sentence frame examples (12a-d) that were hanging on the front wall:

- 12) a. I feel that _____.
- b. In my opinion _____.
- c. I believe that _____.
- d. It seems to me that _____.

Student oral responses included the following:

“I feel man because he look like he yelling at her and she just stand there like she frighten.”

“I think both of them have the power the girl can just beat him up and go.”

“I feel the woman is thinking that she should not be listening or caring what he says.”

“I think the woman is thinking what did she do why did he just come and start yelling for no reason.”

“I believe the woman is thinking she is going to be in trouble and she is going to be fired.”

Overall the sentence frames used to elicit responses for the character perspectives appeared useful. Most students used the first sentence frame listed, *I feel that...*, although they left out the word *that*. A few students began their response with, *I think ...*, which was not a sentence frame listed on the board. A few shy students who normally would not respond in class now had a sentence frame to start their response. I called upon them and they were ready with a response. Using sentence gives students an opportunity to practice with peers and listen to how other students use them to respond.

Next, we read the mentor story *My Side of the Story* by Adam Bagdasarian (2002). The story is about a young boy, Adam, whose older brother has wrapped scotch tape around his head because Adam would not play with him. Adam, who now realizes he has the power, with the evidence of the tape wrapped around his head, runs to tell his mother to seek justice. As Adam bursts through the door into his mother’s bedroom, he stops in his tracks because, unexpectedly, he confronts his father. At this point the tables turn on Adam as his father then proceeds to lecture and physically punish him for bursting into the room without knocking.

As a whole class we used sentence frames to discuss possible responses to note how the positions of power changed in the story. Students then wrote responses to the mentor text using the same sentence frames to write a response related to their

independent books. The examples are an analysis of student responses to sentence frames 13-16.

- 13) In my opinion _____ has the power in this relationship because _____.

Most students wrote *the older brother* in the first blank and noted that it was because he was physically stronger. The older brother's name was not given at the beginning of the story.

- 14) I feel _____ has the power now.

Most students noticed that the power changed later in the story; however, two students did not. One factor or point of confusion may be that students did not know what part of the story the sentence related to. The sentences may be more useful if I had use sentences to show story sequence such as shown in sentence frames 15-16.

- 15) In the beginning _____.

- 16) Later in the story I feel that _____.

I also could have extended the sentence so students could explain their thinking as in sentence 17.

- 17) Later in the story I feel that _____ has the power because _____.

The next day a short video, *Margo Lilly*, was used to show students an important event and how it affected the characters' perspectives. The video is about a young couple whose baby was stillborn. In the scene they are attempting to plant a tree in their backyard along with the baby's placenta. The issue they face is that it is the middle of

winter and the ground is frozen. The man wants to give up, but the woman desperately needs to have it buried now.

Sentence frame 18 was written on the whiteboard and student were asked to describe a character's perspective and how it may have changed:

18) The man's/woman's perspective is that _____.

The sentence frame seemed to give them language to express their views. Student examples include:

"The man's perspective is that can't dig a hole because the ground is frozen and they may hurt themselves. Why can't they use hot water instead of a blow dryer? I think he came back because he felt sorry for his wife and because they lost the baby."

Another student responded but altered the sentence frame:

"Woman- her perspective is that she wants to plant a tree at a certain location and she doesn't care if the ground is frozen, she'll just keep digging. The husband came back because he loves her and wanted to give her what she wants."

The purpose of implementing sentence frames 19a-f was to model their function during the week and to prepare students for the formal Readers Workshop assessment at the end of the week. The sentence frames 19a-f were implemented to scaffold written responses that correlated to the rubric illustrated in Table 1 in Chapter Three (repeated here for convenience). Students' work samples for the week consist of student responses to *My Side of the Story* and to their independent reading text. Student work samples are in Appendix A.

Table 1

Readers Response Rubric

| 1 Point | 1 Point | 1 Point | 1 Point |
|---|--|---|--|
| I can retell important events in a story and how they made character/s react. | I recognized an unfair scene in the story and explained how it affected the character. | I used evidence from the story to support my opinion. | I explained the character's perspective about the events and how it may be different from other character's perspective. |

(Readers Workshop, 2014)

Students used the following sentence frames to write responses for the week. The sentence frames were scaffolds to elicit responses that match the rubric:

- 19) a. An important event from my story is when _____.
 b. This event is important because _____.
 c. At first _____ thought that _____.
 d. _____ reacted by _____.
 e. _____ perspective was that _____.
 f. Finally, in the end _____ learned that _____.

Student responses from their independent books lacked details. Sentence frame 19b asks students to explain why the event in their story was important. One response was, "Eric found out that Melody is a sensitive girl." During group conferences student were asked to explain their response because some responses were simply describing something that happened in the story that may not have been important. After discussions students were able to change their answer and add more detail. Examples include, "An

important event from the Bully Book is when Eric's friend Melody dated Jason who bullied him. This is important because when Jason started dating Melody he stop bullying Eric." The sentence frame helped students to begin their response but further discussion clarified their understanding of what a major event would involve.

The third and fourth sentence frames asked students to describe a character's perspective and how they reacted. Responses were encouraging as students were able to provide in depth, logical responses. The fifth sentence frame was less successful. I had orally asked students to use the sentence frame to write a response from another character's perspective. Responses were shared with peers and a few with the whole class. Three out of the five students successfully described another character's perspective while two students responded with the main character's perspective.

Overall, the students felt that the sentence frames were helpful in guiding them to write responses. Students were able to show understanding of the text using the sentence frames and expand on their answers. One benefit was first having students practice using the sentence frames with familiar content, *My Side of the Story*. Students were able to practice and note how the sentence frames were used and then write a response to their independent books. Students also noted how the sentence frames related to the rubric for their formal assessment. The sentence frames were helpful to scaffold students' writing at their ability level and to respond to text that was at their ability level.

A pattern I noticed is that the sentence frames do not elicit written responses of depth or details during *daily* student independent reading responses. Why are the independent reading responses lacking details? One factor may be we had whole class

discussions as students responded to the video using sentence frames and were able to ask questions. This gave the students the time to share and hear other students' responses. This did not take place for the independent responses. Also, the independent responses are written towards the end of the class and students may have felt rushed. Another factor may be that this is the student's first attempt to use these sentence frames to respond to text. Finally, group conferences or Turn and Talks may have been useful as a follow up to allow students to have discussions and clarify their responses.

Readers Workshop Responses

Informal and Formal Critical Readers Responses were collected and assessed using the district's Critical Readers Rubric. My journal entries are woven into this section. Students wrote paragraphs to respond to their independent books. The rubric illustrated in Table 1 was introduced at the beginning of the week for the Informal assessment without the use of sentence frames. Later in the week a Formal assessment was given with use of sentence frames. The scoring rubric was used to assess student understanding of their text with and without the use of sentence frames. The data was used to reflect on student learning and about my instruction and the impact of using sentence frames on student responses. Having students write a final formal assessment, along with student samples, and my observations will provide insight on the overall use of sentence frames. The student informal and formal scores are shown per component in Table 2. The X indicates that the student met the component and received a point. Student Critical Readers Responses are in Appendix B.

Table 2

Readers Response Rubric

| Student: - Informal - Formal | I can retell important events in a story and how they made character/s react | I recognized an unfair scene in the story and explained how it affected the character. | I used evidence from the story to support my opinion | I explained the character's perspective about the events and how it may be different from other character's perspective. | Overall Score |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|-------------------------|
| Yor: -Informal -Formal | X X | X | | X | Informal-1 Formal- 3 |
| Quen: -Informal -Formal | X X | X | X | X | Informal-1 Formal- 4 |
| Kyle: -Informal -Formal | X X | X | | X | Informal-3 Formal- 2 |
| Chew: -Informal -Formal | X | X | | X X | Informal-1 Formal- 3 |
| Al: -Informal -Formal | X X | X | X | X | Informal-2 Formal- 3 |

For component #1, *I retell important events in a story and how they made characters react*, most students were able to state an important event in both their informal and formal responses. In the formal responses most students used the sentence frames they had used during the week to write responses: *An important event from my story is when _____*, and *This event is important because _____*. Others used their own version such as, *An important event is _____*, and *This is important because*

_____. However, in the formal response four of the five students changed and wrote about a different important event. Two students changed because they had finished and started another book. Overall the important event formal responses were more fully explained with details added and appear to be more crucial to the story compared to their informal responses.

For component #2, *I recognized an unfair scene and explained how it affected the character*, three out of five students were able to receive a score for this component. However, the three students did not use a sentence frame to describe the unfair situation. The unfairness aspect was discussed during the week; however, a sentence frame was not explicitly used to elicit a response about unfairness. Sentence frame 19d, _____ *reacted by* _____, related to the unfair rubric component. Five out of the five students used the sentence frame in their formal responses; however, the sentences did not elicit a response about unfairness. Lastly, two students wrote about an unfair situation in their informal response, but did not write about one in their formal response. This may be because they both noted the component in the rubric during their informal response but overlooked it during their formal response.

For component #3, *I used evidence from the story to support my opinion*, students were less successful, two out of five, in responding to this component. Sentence frame 19e, _____ *perspective was* _____, was modeled during the week along with a quote to show evidence. *The father's perspective was that Adam should not have burst into the room without knocking. His father said, "What the hell are you doing?"*

Showing evidence was pointed out and emphasized during the week. In retrospect a sentence frame to help students show evidence should have been used.

For component #4, *I explained the character's perspective and how it may be different from another character's perspective*, all students received a point for this. Students were able to describe another character's perspective and how it related to the events in the story.

Overall, the sentence frames used to scaffold students' Critical Readers Responses were helpful. First, the sentence frames provided students with a purpose for reading. Second, the sentence frames helped to correlate responses to the rubric's components. Third, the sentence frames provided students with an organized outline to gather information and write a final response that met the learning objectives.

Discussion

Using sentence frames to scaffold students' writing responses has led to five main insights about their use in teaching sixth grade ELs in a language arts class. The lessons learned can be used by elementary language arts teachers to plan future tasks using sentence frames to write responses. There are many factors that will impact the effectiveness of sentence frames to elicit student responses.

One insight is that sentence frames are not helpful as a scaffold if the text is too difficult to read. If the text is not at the students' appropriate reading level, students will have difficulty reading their articles and writing responses using the sentence frames. This may or may not appear obvious; however, this is what I experienced during this

research project and in other EL teaching situations. Leveled articles should be made available for ELs to make the topics easier to comprehend.

A second insight is that a new strategy such as sentence frames may be more effective if they are first introduced using familiar content to make their meaning and function comprehensible. Familiar content and background information will make sentence frame tasks accessible to students. I had used a picture, video, and a familiar story to elicit responses with sentence frames. Students were then asked to use the same common sentence frames to write responses to their independent books. Students were able to use the language to write and think about their own independent book responses. When sentence frames were not introduced using familiar content, students had difficulty completing the sentence frame. During the leadership research project students had difficulty completing sentence frames because the content was unfamiliar and students did not have sufficient background information for their topics.

A third insight is that the initial teaching of sentence frames tasks or function should take into account objectives, content vocabulary, new concepts, student background knowledge and final assessments such as rubrics. During this study, students had trouble responding to questions and sentence frames that involved new concepts and vocabulary. Examples include concepts and words such as *legacy* and *perspective*. Taking into account these factors will guide teachers to set long-term objectives and choose appropriate sentence frames that may be more successful to scaffold student responses to meet objectives.

A fourth insight is that using sentence frames to write responses was more effective if students first practiced using the sentence frames orally. Using sentence frames to elicit a beginning response helps students come up with a response to share. Whole class, partner, and group discussions helped students to share, listen to other examples, think, and clarify their responses. In this study, shy students who typically would not share a response had a response to share using the sentence frame. Teachers should not assume that a coherent written response means that the topic is understood. It would take many repetitions before these language forms become part of the students' inherent grammatical knowledge. Other factors include establishing routines and an environment where students are used to orally responding, working with peers, and being randomly called on to share responses.

A fifth insight is that sentence frames may provide students with a template or scaffolding to critically think, organize thoughts and make writing more structured and coherent. First, a sentence frame can provide students with a purpose for reading such as identifying the main idea. Next, it is important to follow up with a sentence frame to explain, elaborate, cite evidence, or reflect on their responses. An example is when I asked students to retell an important event. The events students first wrote about seemed trivial but the follow up sentence frame asks to explain why this was an important event. This made students defend their responses and prove that they were important events. Finally, after students have gathered information, they can then use their responses to organize their thoughts to write a longer, more detailed summative response.

Summary

I used three sources of data to answer the research question. One source was a journal. The journal notes provided many insights. Three important insights include having leveled text, modeling sentence frame use with familiar content, and making sure students had enough background information to complete sentence frames. The second source of data was student writing samples. One important insight includes using a follow up sentence frame to have students elaborate and explain their initial response and orally sharing their responses to clarify and help produce more detailed longer responses. The third source of data was the Readers Response to critical reading. This showed how sentence frames could be used to provide students with an organized outline to gather information and write a more structured and coherent final response that correlated to the rubric.

There are many factors that surround the use of sentence frames that need to be accounted for in order to make their implementation a successful learning tool and scaffold. I will discuss these factors and implications for instruction in Chapter 5. I will point out limitations to the research and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to explore the impact of sentence frames on student Readers Workshop Responses. In this research project I attempted to answer the question of how sentence frames impact student Readers Workshop Responses. I attempted to answer this question through action research in a sixth grade Readers Workshop Class and during a sixth grade Social Studies leadership project. The leadership project covered a period of one week while the Readers Workshop class covered a period of two weeks. One source of data was a teaching journal to reflect on instruction, processes and student learning. Another source of data was student samples that were collected on a daily basis. The last source of data was a Readers Response written assessment for a critical reading unit.

There are many factors that need to be accounted for in order to make sentence frames a successful learning tool and scaffold. This chapter looks at factors related to the implementation of sentence frames and implications for instruction. The research limitations and suggestions for further research will also be discussed.

Discussion

Most prior writing on this topic has described how sentence frames may be implemented as part of classroom instruction to scaffold students' acquisition of content and language. Carrier (2005) explains how sentence frames can be used as a scaffold to help students write expressions beyond their ability level. However, it appears not much prior research has been done to show evidence or results of how they impacted students' written responses, as far as I could tell. Based on this study, sentence frames can be

successfully used to scaffold students written responses. However, there are many factors that surround the use of sentence frames that need to be accounted for in order to make their implementation a successful learning tool and scaffold. I will discuss these factors and implications for instruction and teaching methods when using sentence frames.

Teaching Instruction and Implications

One important implication for instruction is long-term planning. Much of the literature (Carrier, 2005; Donnelly & Roe, 2010; Smith, Rook and Smith, 2007; Tretter, Ardasheva, and Bookstrom, 2014; Zwiers, 2008) focuses on taking into account the overall core concept of a lesson and the learning objectives to determine what appropriate sentence frames to implement into a lesson. Factors that impacted student responses that were noted in the literature and during this study were content specific vocabulary, abstract concepts, and student background knowledge. In this study another important factor was preparing curricular materials such as leveled text. Sentence frames used as a scaffold are not effective if students cannot comprehend the literature they are reading. Lastly, there are many sentence frame examples to use to respond to narrative or expository type text. This should also be accounted for when planning instruction to determine what is the purpose of the lesson and what sentence frame to use. Then the sentence frame should be first practiced with familiar content. A list of factors to consider when planning to use sentence frames are in Table 3.

Table 3: Factors to consider when using Sentence Frames

| Lesson Objectives | Literacy Objectives | Language Objectives |
|--|---|---|
| Background Knowledge New Concepts New Vocabulary Leveled Reading Materials Assessments/Rubrics Types of Questions Peer Discussions | Predict Persuade Question Inference Describe Give Opinion Cite Evidence Clarify Make Connections Reflect Take Notes Interpret Visualize | Student Language Levels Classify Summarize Cause and Effect Compare/Contrast Explain Sequence |

A second important implication for instruction is that sentence frames are more effective in environments where students first discuss their written responses. Coleman and Goldenberg (2010) advocate for instruction that teaches both oral and written language development at the same time. In this study responses were positively impacted when students were able to share, listen, think about, and clarify their responses through discussions. Establishing routines to share responses may benefit ELs. A routine could include first using a sentence frame to elicit an initial oral response. This is an important first step to get ELs to respond to text and have something to share and to begin dialogue. Next, share with a partner to practice and clarify their response. Then share with the whole class to discuss and listen to other responses. A final important step is to circle back and use the sentence frame to respond to another topic or text, such as a student's independent text, and discuss responses again.

A third important implication for instruction is to first introduce sentence frames using familiar content to teach concepts and to make their meaning and function comprehensible. Using familiar content and providing background knowledge will make sentence frames a more effective scaffold. During the leadership project students were asked to learn about unfamiliar topics and write a response using unfamiliar scaffolds, sentence frames. Students had difficulty completing sentence frames because the content was unfamiliar and students did not have the background information for their subjects. Also, students were not sure what a few sentence frames were asking them to do. A more successful process could include first using concrete, familiar concepts to first teach sentence frame function. Donnelly and Roe (2010) offer many examples of sentence frames to practice content vocabulary and language functions. First, they developed two sets of sentence frames. One set of sentence frames was used with familiar vocabulary and concepts while the second set of examples was used with academic language from the text. Similar to Donnelly and Roe, I first modeled the use of sentence frames using a familiar story we had read earlier in the year. The story background was already familiar to students and I used it to teach the concepts of perspective, power, and character reactions to important events. Then the students used the sentence frames to demonstrate understanding of concepts by writing responses from their independent books. This process helped students to respond independently.

A fourth important implication for instruction is that sentence frames may be used to encourage students to think critically. As Carrier (2005) pointed out, sentence frames are structured language used to scaffold and provide students with opportunities to

write, think, and talk about concept terms and academic language. This is important because in this study students were able to complete sentence frames to gather information and answer key points; however, their responses required more sentence frames to demonstrate depth of understanding. Initial sentence frame responses required additional reflection and elaboration to identify and clarify points of confusion. After first using a sentence frame to set a purpose for reading and responding to text, it is important to offer additional sentence frame scaffolds to monitor thinking and reflect on learning. Chamot and O'Malley's (1994) example of a reading lesson included three stages: pre-planning (developing a plan before reading a text to focus on key words, or types of information in the text), monitoring (asking self-questions about the learning process), and evaluating (reflecting on what was learned). All of these reading stages help model critical thinking of reading material. During a reading lesson sentence frames can be used by teachers to elicit student responses.

Limitations

This research took place in a mainstream sixth grade Reader Workshop Class of 32 students. Of the 32 students, six were EL participants that were part of this study. There may be variables in the mainstream class that affect the results that would not be in a smaller class or in an exclusive ESL class. Variables may include inhibitions of ELs to share with whole class, and limited opportunities to share. There was also insufficient time to introduce these sentence frames and to practice their use with more authentic topics. During this study I was the English Language Arts classroom teacher. This limited my opportunities with ELs to question, discuss, and reflect on our learning.

Finally, a larger sampling of responses and use over a longer period of time may produce more comprehensive results such as differentiating the sentence frames to match student ability levels and eventually removing the scaffolding.

Teaching Suggestions and Dissemination of Results

I have gained much insight into factors that would enhance the use of sentence frames as a scaffold and will share these insights with my colleagues. As part of a regular staff meeting or Professional Learning Community I may first introduce a simple sentence frame to have teachers complete and respond to an abstract, unknown, obscure topic. This would show the importance of providing background information and supplementary materials such as leveled text, illustrations, videos, and other visual aids. It is also important to relate the sentence frame, concepts, and new vocabulary to familiar content and student prior knowledge. This will connect how to use the sentence frame to learn new content being taught.

Another important strategy to share is oral practice through class discussion. An oral practice routine I would share includes first using a sentence frame to have students write an initial response. This is an important first step to allow ELs to respond and have something to share to begin dialogue. Next, have students share with a partner to practice and clarify their response. Then they could share with the whole class to discuss and listen to other responses. An important last step is to provide a sentence frame to elaborate and reflect on their learning; examples may include to summarize a point, provide evidence, take a side, make a prediction, ask a question (5Ws), make connections, or reflect. A final important step is to circle back and use the sentence

frame to a respond to another topic or text, such as a student's independent text, and discuss responses again.

Further Research

This research confirms prior literature and studies and adds insights to using sentence frames to scaffold ELs' written responses. The following are suggestions for further research.

Once initial pre-planning and objectives have been established teachers could take into account the text type, narrative or expository, before implementing sentence frames. There are many sentence frame examples teachers may use to elicit responses. Creating sentence frames to provide ELs a template to respond to, think about and reflect on learning could scaffold writing. Perhaps teachers could use a backwards mapping process to note the learning objective and then work backwards to create initial sentence frames. Working one's way from what the students need to know through the steps to get there by building up of skills and knowledge could include sentence frames to connect prior knowledge to new concepts and vocabulary. Research is needed to identify patterns or sequences that may be more effective to elicit responses.

Another suggestion is to note how this scaffold is used for entering versus more advanced ELs. A sentence frame for an advanced EL may be more complex while a sentence frame for a beginning ELs will be a simple sentence. A simple sentence could include, *Apples are sweet*, and *Apples are tart*. A more complex example is, *Apples are fruit; however, some are _____ while others are _____*. A third suggestion is to implement sentence frames over a longer period of time and with more participants to

note if the scaffolding can become part of the ELs' lexicon and if scaffolding can be gradually taken away. Perhaps over a longer period of time students will be able to produce both oral and written responses without the use of sentence frames.

A fourth suggestion is to research the implications of active engagement through speaking using sentence frames. Speaking routines could be explored to identify effective routines for student engagement. Control groups could be arranged with differing aspects of engagement to note how responses are affected through sharing, thinking, and reflecting. Research identifying effective routines that encourage effective oral practice routines using sentence frames would also benefit classroom instruction.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to explore the impact of sentence frames on student Readers Workshop Responses. This research started because I had noted how difficult it is at times to get ELs to engage in discussion and writing assignments related to the topics being studied. I wanted to provide a starting point to elicit student written responses during my Readers Workshop class. The results of this study have led me to believe that sentence frames, as a scaffold, may offer the EL the opportunity to more efficiently write responses. More importantly, I have gained much insight into other factors that will greatly enhance the use of sentence frames as a scaffold. I feel I have found a way of structuring lessons to introduce sentence frames from simple, authentic activities to more content related activities, and finally to extend the use of sentence frames to elaborate and reflect on learning.

During this research I have learned that there are many variables that have to be accounted for when implementing a new strategy and writing a paper. The capstone process has taught me to be a more reflective teacher. As a classroom teacher working on the front lines there is little time to reflect on a lesson before the next day starts. Many of the strategies discussed in this paper had been previously studied, but until you go into a classroom and practice what you have learned, it is all theory. This paper has helped me to synthesis important aspects of a lesson for an EL using sentence frames.

Although prior research has many examples of sentence frames use and academic language not much research has delved into the sharing, elaborating, and reflecting of responses and discussed results. During the course of this study it was clear that giving the students time to first orally practice responses to wring prompts with their peers was key to higher quality written responses. Peer interactions are key to Sentence frames, as a scaffold, and can engage and hold students accountable to produce and share their thinking. This research will guide me as I continue to engage students through the use of sentence frames and academic phrases. I will share my insights with other staff and teachers as we collaborate to support and provide scaffolding to elicit student responses to questions being asked.

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APPENDIX A

Student Work Samples Using Sentence Frames 19a-19f

Weekly Notes:

NAME

Chew

| 1 POINT | 1 POINT | 1 POINT | 1 POINT |
|---|---|--|---|
| I retell important events in a story and how they made the character's react. | I recognized an unfair scene in the story and explained how affected the character. | I used evidence from the story to support my opinions. | I explained the character's perspective about the events and how it may be different from other character's perspective |

MONDAY NOTES:

An important event from my side of the story is when Adam's older brother wrapped tape around Adam's head.

This is important because Adam ended up being unfairly punished by his father.

READERS RESPONSE-

BOOK TITLE:

The bully books

An important event ~~from~~ from the bully book is when Eric ~~with~~ friend melody dated ~~someone~~ ~~the~~ Jason who bully him.

This is important because when Jason started dating melody he stop bullying Eric.

PAGES READ: 83 to 96 Min. 25

/8

TUESDAY NOTES:

At first Adam thought that he would get even with his brother.

Adam reacted by running to his mom's room to seek justice.

READERS RESPONSE-

BOOK TITLE: The bully book

At first Daniel don't want Eric to help him.

Daniel react by telling Eric to show him Eric Yearbook so they know that the author of the bully book.

PAGES READ: 97 to 114 Min. 25

/8

WEDNESDAY NOTES:

Adam father's perspective
was that Adam should not
burst into the room. His father
said "What the hell are you doing?"

READERS RESPONSE

BOOK TITLE:

The Bully Book

Jason perspective was that
he thought that if his girlfriend
don't see him bully other she will
like him. He bully Eric the main
character

PAGES READ: 114 to 128 Min. 12

/8

THURSDAY NOTES:

Finally, in the end Adam learned that his father ideas of justice was different than his but Adam still did not understand why his brother didn't get punished.

READERS RESPONSE- BOOK TITLE: The bully book

Finally, in the end Eric learned that he really is a loser he lost a fight he can't win nothing.

PAGES READ: 128 to 142 **Min.** 25

APPENDIX B

Student Formal and Informal Workshop Responses

Chew: Formal

The main character in my story is Eric Haskins. An important event from The Bully Book is when Eric became the grunt that everyone hated. This is important because he getting bully and trying to finding a way to stop it once and for all. At first Eric thought that since his friend Melody dated Jason he wouldn't get bully. Eric react by staying close to Melody. Jason perspective was that he know if his girlfriend not around he can bully Eric. Finally, in the end Eric learned that no matter what he try he'll always be the grunt who is a loser.

Chew: Informal

My main character ~~name~~ is
Eric

The event I am writing about
is when Eric become the grunt
because ~~he~~ he was a loser and
everyone make fun of him but
his friend. When he become the
grunt his classmate hated
him and think that he a
dumb kid.

Yor: Informal

My main character is Philippa. The event I am writing about is when Charlotte went to visit Philippa for the last time. Philippa was upset and she kept it to herself so Charlotte won't feel bad. In the next few weeks Charlotte and her family will be moving in to a new home. Philippa and Charlotte has been friends for 7 long years ~~and~~ and now Charlotte is going away.

Yor: Formal

The main character is Bod Owens. An important event is when Mrs. Owens accepted to take care of the "women's" baby. This is important because a man named Jack, is trying to find Bod and kill him. At first Mrs. Owens thought that taking care of the baby will be easy. Mrs. Owens was afraid but she was also determined to take care of Nobody - But he is now known as Bod. Silas has volunteered to be his guardian and bring him food from the outside world. Everyone in the graveyard reacted by trying to convince Mrs. Owens to let the baby go. The main leader of the graveyard, Josiah Washington's perspective was that it is wrong to keep an alive baby in the graveyard. But later on as Bod grew up, he had a desire to explore the outside world. In the end, Silas learned that he must teach Bod the basic things he'll need before going out into the world.