

JTAR

EDITORS

GIL NAIZER

APRIL SANDERS

LAURA ISBELL

TAMI MORTON

SUSAN WILLIAMS



Journal of Teacher Action Research - Volume 6, Issue 2, 2020
practicalteacherresearch.com, ISSN # 2332-2233

©JTAR All Rights Reserved

JTAR

Journal of Teacher Action Research Volume 6, Issue 2, 2020

Using Action Research to Develop Data Literacy in Initial Teacher Education Shannon Kennedy-Clark Vilma Galstaun Peter Reimann Boris Handal	4
Coupling PhET Simulations and POGIL: High School Chemistry Students' Learning And Engagement in Argumentation on the Topic of Atomic Theory Tracey A. Bennett Sarah B. Boesdorfer	26
Using Bibliotherapy and Personal Reflection as Tools for Reducing Math Anxiety Christine M. Higgins Joseph M. Furner Tina Gerencser	54
Finding Words: Students Taking Part in their Vocabulary Development Francine Falk-Ross Mary Catherine Hillman Jeanette De Los Santos Rhonda Fernandez Von Charpentier Sandra Flank	70
Action Research in an Ethiopian Classroom: Instructional Methods that Improve Vocabulary Retention Sarah Bischoff Michelle Parker Margaret Mishra	83
Supporting English Language Learners Through Inclusion and Task-Based Instruction Sarah E. Bularzik Christopher Bogiages	104
Multiple Means of Engagement in Elementary Social Studies Amanda Carter Tanya Flushman	119



About the Journal

Founded in 2013, the Journal of Teacher Action Research (ISSN: 2332-2233) is a peer-reviewed online journal indexed with EBSCO that seeks practical research that can be implemented in Pre-Kindergarten through Post-Secondary classrooms. The primary function of this journal is to provide classroom teachers and researchers a means for sharing classroom practices.

The journal accepts articles for peer-review that describe classroom practice which positively impacts student learning. We define teacher action research as teachers (at all levels) studying their practice and/or their students' learning in a methodical way in order to inform classroom practice. Articles submitted to the journal should demonstrate an action research focus with intent to improve the author's practice.

Editorial Team

Co-Editors

Gilbert Naizer, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University-Commerce

April Sanders, Ph.D.
Spring Hill College

Associate Editors

Laura Isbell, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University-Commerce

Tami Morton, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University-Commerce

Susan Williams, Ed.D.
Texas A&M University-Commerce

Production Editor and Webmaster

Chase Young, Ph.D.
Sam Houston State University

www.practicalteacherresearch.com

SUPPORTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH INCLUSION AND TASK-BASED INSTRUCTION

Sarah E. Bularzik

Gyroscorp Limited

Christopher Bogiages

University of South Carolina

Abstract This action research study describes the influence of task-based instruction on English Language Learner (ELL) motivation in a seventh-grade inclusion classroom. This research study was grounded in a theoretical framework that involved inclusion education, ELLs, task-based instruction (Willis, 1996), and the ARCS Model of Motivation (Keller, 2008). This action research study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to explore the following research question: What is the influence of task-based instruction on ELL student motivation in a grade seven English Language Arts (ELA) inclusion classroom? The participants in this study included 5 ELL students and 10 Native English Speakers (NES). The data collection methods used in this study were focus groups, field observations, student work documents, and student exit ticket surveys. Data analysis and discussion were grounded in the four dimensions of motivation, as defined by Keller's ARCS model: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. The results of this study indicated that, when responding to the influence of task-based instruction, ELL students showed the highest positive responses about attention and relevance, moderately positive responses about satisfaction, and the least positive responses about confidence.

Keywords: teacher action research, English language learners, task-based instruction, ARCS Model of Motivation, inclusion education

Introduction

Located on the Gulf Coast of the United States, Bayview Middle School (BMS; pseudonym) serves nearly 600 seventh and eighth-grade students. Almost 80% of BMS students qualify for free and reduced lunch, and BMS has one of the largest populations of English language learners (ELLs) in the surrounding area. At BMS, my goal (first author) was to provide support for both the English language arts (ELA) teacher, Brittany (pseudonym), and the students, particularly the ELLs. In this classroom, one-third of the students are ELLs. As the

ELL population in her classroom grew, Brittany wanted to find ways to meet the diverse needs of her students, specifically her ELLs but was unsure how to do this effectively. With a shared sense of purpose, we embarked on an action research journey that examined the effectiveness of teaching strategies that could better support engagement and motivation for all students, including ELLs.

Over the past 15 years, the number of ELLs in middle school classrooms in the United States has risen dramatically (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Many middle school teachers have been ill-equipped to effectively support students who need to learn both content and literacy skills simultaneously (Willis, 1996; 2007). These rapid changes in student demographics have led to new challenges for teachers who want to “effectively and efficiently” meet students’ individual needs (Mahat, 2008, p. 82). Given the complex nature of this problem of practice, the action research approach (Mertler, 2014) allowed us to identify, integrate, and study the impact of a set of research-based supports for both the teacher and students.

Action research provides a systematic and cyclical approach to solving complex problems of practice (Mertler, 2014). In this study, I played the role of both researcher and practitioner and utilized Mertler’s (2014) four-stage framework for action research. The *planning stage* focused on understanding the problem in context, a review of the relevant literature, and the development of an intervention. The *acting stage* focused on studying the enactment of the intervention, which involved multiple, smaller cycles of action research. As a result of what we learned, we generated an implementation plan. The publication of this manuscript represents the *reflecting stage* of this instance of action research. These four stages of action research guided the implementation of this study and now serve as an organizing framework for this article.

Planning Stage: The Problem in Context. I co-taught with Brittany, who was a full-time English teacher at BMS. Additional participants of this study included the 15 students in one grade-seven ELA inclusion classroom. When attempting new strategies such as the ones developed in this study, it is wise to include a small number of participants in order to lessen the impact of any possible adverse outcomes. Action research is a well-established methodology for studying problems of practice on relatively small scales, often with fewer than 20 participants (Mertler, 2014). Of the 15 students included in this study, five students were receiving ELL services. The remaining ten students were Native English Speakers (NESs). This research study took place in the fall of 2017, over five weeks.

In our earliest conversations, Brittany discussed the challenges of maintaining engagement and motivation among her ELLs. When the NESs were being challenged and motivated, the ELL students were struggling to stay focused and keep up with the lesson. When asked about this, the ELLs expressed their desire to read, write, and participate well, but they often struggled because they were distracted, embarrassed, or confused. Brittany knew that she needed to make some significant changes to her instructional strategies in order to meet the needs of these students better.

Literature Review

A review of the literature focused on 1) the nature of inclusion classrooms, 2) strategies that foster student achievement among ELLs, and 3) strategies that foster engagement and motivation for all students. For this study, we defined inclusion as "the fundamental right of all children and adults to participate fully, and contribute in all aspects of life and culture, without restriction or threat of marginalization" (Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2014, p. 32). In an inclusion classroom, students with disabilities and students who are ELLs are educated with their same-aged peers in a typical classroom environment in order to meet students' unique needs within the least restrictive environment (Jacobs & Fu, 2014). Successful inclusion often involves creative methods of instruction (McCray & McHatton, 2011; Willis, 1996; 2007). A crucial element of effective ELL instruction (Willis, 1996, 2007) includes the identification and evaluation of common and effective inclusive practices (Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010) and the cultivation of effective communication skills (Dockrell, Bakopoulou, Law, Spencer & Lindsay, 2015; Jacobs & Fu, 2014).

After a thorough review of several instructional models, the first model selected was the ARCS model of motivation (Keller, 2008). The acronym, ARCS, comes from the four dimensions of motivation: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. In order to have motivated students, a teacher must grasp student *attention*, the students must find the instruction *relevant*, students must be *confident* and believe that they will succeed, and students must be personally *satisfied* by the learning experience (Keller, 2008). The use of the ARCS model has demonstrated a positive impact on student motivation and achievement for a wide variety of students, including ELLs (Hess, 2015; Liao & Wang, 2008). The ARCS model uncovers opportunities for teachers to develop lessons that target motivation in creative and engaging ways while also providing a framework of the particular aspects of motivation that can be measured.

While the ARCS model seemed likely to support our work as teachers, we also needed a framework to support the development of effective communication skills for ELLs. For this purpose, I selected Task-Based Instruction (TBI) (Willis, 1996; Willis & Willis, 2007). The TBI framework structures lessons around the three stages of pre-task, task-cycle, and language focus. During the pre-task stage, the teacher explores the topic with the students, makes a note of the useful phrases or words, and helps students understand the task's instructions. In the task-cycle, students work in pairs or groups to do the task, prepare to give an oral or written report, and present and compare their reports. In the language focus, students examine and discuss specifics about the text, and the teacher guides students to practice new phrases, words, or patterns that are occurring. The TBI framework provides ELLs with opportunities for authentic language use within the four language-learning domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This communicative approach prompts students to communicate because an information gap exists, making it necessary to communicate in order to complete the task (Arslanyilmaz, 2012; Huang, 2010; Roessingh, 2014; Widdowson, 1978). Working in cooperative groups, conversations with group members provide the repetition necessary for language learning to progress from short-term to long-term acquisition (Zainuddin, Morales-Jones, Yahya & Ariza, 2011).

The TBI framework identifies seven types of tasks that naturally involve most, if not all, of the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Willis, 1996; Willis & Willis, 2007). These seven types of tasks are listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem-

solving, sharing personal experiences, creative tasks, and matching (Willis, 1996). For a complete description of each type of task, see Willis (1996).

Development of the ARCS – TBI Intervention. Brittany worked with a grade-level planning team at the beginning of each week to collaboratively design her daily lessons. These lesson plans possessed clear objectives, aligned with local and national standards. However, they did not include documentation of instructional supports for ELLs. A preexisting school system for collaborative planning led to the development of the daily lesson plans. Therefore, I felt it would be essential to establish a planning process that could be fluid and adaptable to integrate the TBI and the ARCS models into the developed lessons.

In order to integrate task-based instruction and the critical elements of motivation into the preexisting lesson plans, I created a protocol to identify strategies for implementing TBI and supporting student motivation. Brittany and I referred to the protocol as the Task-Based Instruction Integration Protocol (TBI-IP). The protocol was designed to be used before the start of teaching a lesson and reflected seven types of tasks from the TBI framework. The protocol had five steps which included; 1) a review of the learning objectives and general structure of the lesson, 2) a discussion about the objectives of the lesson among the collaborating teachers, 3) the selection of one of the seven types of tasks from the TBI framework, 4) the integration of the task into the lesson plan, and 5) and a reflection on and documentation of the changes to the lesson. The cyclical use of this protocol for daily lesson plans was an effective strategy also congruent with the action research design of this study. Throughout the five weeks of this study, these shorter cycles of action research provided rich data in near real-time that guided our daily implementation of TBI.

Methodology

Acting Stage: The Task-Based Instruction Intervention. Throughout this study, Brittany and I used the TBI-IP to examine the preexisting daily lesson plans and identify appropriate ways to integrate one TBI activity into each lesson. Opportunities to integrate TBI differed from lesson to lesson, and the length of time designated to the task-based activity also varied. For example, in one lesson, students needed to learn new vocabulary. The original lesson plan had students working by themselves to complete a vocabulary worksheet. In order to add a TBI introduction activity to this lesson, we gave students flash cards with ten new vocabulary words and ten pictures. Students worked in pairs and completed a matching task. They placed the word next to what they thought was the corresponding picture. Students then picked three of the vocabulary words and wrote a sentence using the word in the appropriate context.

In another example, a daily lesson plan asked students to write a Schaffer Paragraph. A Schaffer Paragraph is a structured approach to paragraph writing that includes five sentences: a topic sentence, a concrete detail, a commentary, a second concrete detail, a second commentary, and a concluding sentence (Schaffer, 1995). In this particular lesson, the writing focused on describing a character from the book they were reading. As a TBI introduction to this lesson, we had students complete both a matching task and an ordering-sorting task. They received an envelope with five sentences on separate pieces of paper and five Schaffer Paragraph labels. The students worked in pairs to order and sort the

sentences so that they were in the correct order, creating a paragraph. They also labeled the sentences according to the parts of a Schaffer Paragraph.

The TBI activities for the new vocabulary and Schaffer Paragraph lessons are two examples of the sixteen different instances of TBI interventions that took place within this research study. In order to assess the impact of the interventions on student achievement and motivation, I employed four data collection strategies: student focus groups (motivation), daily field observations (attention), collection and review of student artifacts (achievement), and daily student exit ticket surveys (motivation).

Focus groups (Butin, 2010; Mertler, 2014) were used to gather information about ELL student motivation at the beginning and end of the study. Qualitative data gathered in the initial focus group informed decisions made in the TBI interventions. Each question in the focus group related to one or more of the elements of the ARCS model. For example, the question 'What makes it easy or difficult to pay attention to English class?' provided data regarding student attention during the intervention but also provided opportunities to uncover insight into the other elements of the ARCS model. The focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a coding structure based on Keller's (2008) four elements of the ARCS model.

When students were engaged in a task-based instruction activity, I used a field observation checklist (Butin, 2010; Mertler, 2014) to identify the on-task/off-task behaviors of the ELLs in the classroom. This provided additional data that was also compared to the students' self-reported behavior on the exit tickets. During a task, I observed each ELL one time per minute and tallied if their behavior was on task or off task. These notes provided the raw data to assign each student an ordinal rating for their attention based on the five-point Likert scale (5) exceptionally attentive, (4) attentive, (3) moderately attentive, (2) less than attentive, and (1) needs improvement. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze this data, using the median as the measure of central tendency, and the interquartile range as the measure of variability, as suggested by Holcomb (2017) for ordinal data.

Student artifacts of learning (Butin, 2010; Mertler, 2014) from each of the task-based instruction activities were collected and analyzed to determine the level of student achievement occurring during each intervention. These artifacts were either the actual written student work or a photograph of a student's finished product after a task. For example, in the Schaffer Paragraph sorting activity, we have previously described, I took a photo of each pair of students' work, documenting the order in which they arranged the sentences to create a paragraph, and also showing how they labeled each sentence. I employed a process of document analysis that was standardized and specific (Butin, 2010), which focused on a student's ability to communicate rather than focusing on their grammatical correctness. Student work was again rated on a five-point Likert scale. In this Likert scale, the phrase 'well done' refers to effective communication: (5) exceptionally well done, (4) well done, (3) complete, (2) less than complete, and (1) needs improvement. This

produced ordinal data, and I again used descriptive statistics to analyze this data, using the median as the measure of central tendency, and the interquartile range as the measure of variability (Holcomb, 2017). These statistics were calculated for all students in the classroom, and the analysis of ELL student work was compared to the analysis of NES student work.

At the end of each lesson in the intervention, students responded to exit ticket surveys (Butin, 2010; Mertler, 2014) consisting of closed and open-ended questions. These questions solicited student perceptions of the lesson as they related to relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. Students responded to statements using a five-point Likert scale: (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) no opinion, (2) disagree, (1) strongly disagree. Each Likert response was followed by an open-ended question that asked, 'Why did you give those scores?' Again, the ordinal data were analyzed using descriptive statistics wherein the median was used as the measure of central tendency, and the interquartile range was used as the measure of variability (Holcomb, 2017). These statistics were calculated for all students in the classroom, and the analysis of ELL student responses was compared with the analysis of NES student responses.

The qualitative student open-response questions were coded using a priori codes based on the ARCS model (Keller, 2008). Table 1 provides the definition and a student example for each a priori code. To ensure the reliability of my a priori codes, I worked with Dr. Christopher Bogiages, the second author of this article, to establish strong qualitative reliability (Creswell, 2014) with an intercoder agreement of 81.81%. I also used a second reliability measure, Cohen's Kappa, to measure agreement that takes into account the role of chance (Gewt, 2014). The results of my Cohen's Kappa statistical analysis indicated a Kappa of .749, which shows substantial agreement.

After analyzing the qualitative data from the Exit Ticket Survey from all students in the classroom, we compared the results from ELL and NES student responses. Using descriptive statistics, I calculated the frequency of student responses within each a priori code, reporting the number and percent (Holcomb, 2017). I compared the ELL and NES results. For the a priori codes, Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction, I additionally coded students' responses as either positive or negative, using the emergent codes Positive ARCS Response and Negative ARCS Response; Table 1 provides the definition and a student example for each of these codes.

In this way, the ARCS model and the TBI model were reflected in both the design of the data collection tools and the analysis of the data each tool generated. These four strategies – focus groups, field observations, student artifacts, and exit ticket surveys – covered the critical elements of the study from multiple perspectives. This array of data ensured high-quality data collection and made it possible to capture the outcome of this intervention in a quantifiable and objective way.

Table 1: Codebook

Code	Definition	Student Examples
Attention	Reference to 'task completion': student comments about how easy/difficult it was for them to pay attention in class, may mention participating well/not participating well, perseverance to complete the task/giving up on the task, or helping each other/not helping each other	I gave those scores because my partner and I cooperated.
Confidence	Reference to 'I can do it' in a non-emotional way: student comments about how class made them feel more/less confident, may mention how the task helped them to believe/did not help them to believe they could do well in English, might talk about the task as being easy/hard	Some of the words were harder than it was last week. But I understood it.
Negative Response	Student makes a negative or indifferent comment about attention, relevance, confidence, or satisfaction	I was very distracted by someone in the classroom, so I could NOT do my work!
Positive Response	Student makes a positive comment about attention, relevance, confidence, or satisfaction	Because I really like the group work we did today.
Relevance	Reference to 'helping': student comments about how the class helped them/did not help them to reach their personal goals, may mention why the task was important/not important to them; the student may say 'no opinion.' Reference to emotions: student comments about how satisfied/not satisfied they were with their performance in class, may mention that they are happy/unhappy or proud/embarrassed by their work in class	This will help me in my test tomorrow and use higher vocabulary.
Satisfaction		I gave those scores because I really liked when we got to explain how we got the answer.

Results

The data collection plan targeted each of the four components of the ARCS model of motivation. For the sake of brevity in this article, this data was compiled to present an overall description of student motivation during the intervention period. The data is displayed in scatterplots, showing the relationship between two variables (Holcomb, 2017). A line of best fit (or trendline) indicates the relationship between these two variables, showing change over time (Chaudhary & Kumar, 2010). Although correlation does not imply causality, the trendline suggests a relationship between variables (Chaudhary & Kumar, 2010). This trendline identifies how student motivation changed over the course of the intervention.

Positive Effect on ELL Attention and Relevance. Figure 1 shows four series of points and four trendlines, displaying the median ARCS ratings for ELLs. The lines of best fit for attention and relevance both show positive slopes, suggesting that the intervention increased ELL students' attention and relevance. For confidence, the line of best fit shows an undefined slope, suggesting that the intervention had no effect on ELL students' confidence. For satisfaction, the line of best fit shows a negative slope, suggesting that the intervention may have had a negative effect on ELL students' satisfaction.

Positive Effect on NES Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. Figure 2 shows three series of points and three trendlines, displaying the median ARCS ratings for NESs. Because of the practical constraints, observation data measuring student attention was only gathered for the ELL students participating in this study. That is why data on NES students' attention is not included in Figure 2. The lines of best fit for relevance, confidence, and satisfaction all show positive slopes, suggesting that this intervention may have had a positive effect on NES students' relevance, confidence, and satisfaction.

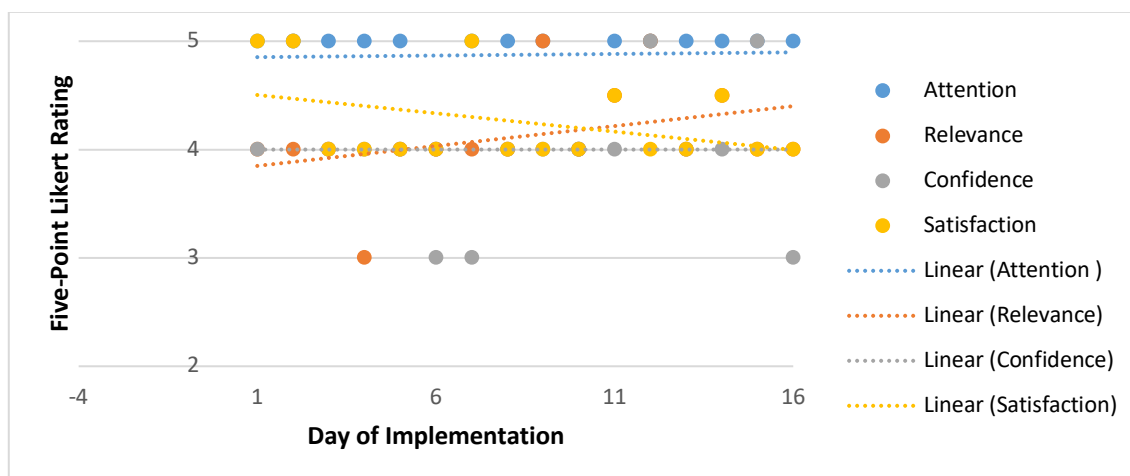


Figure 1: Median ARCS ratings for ELLs

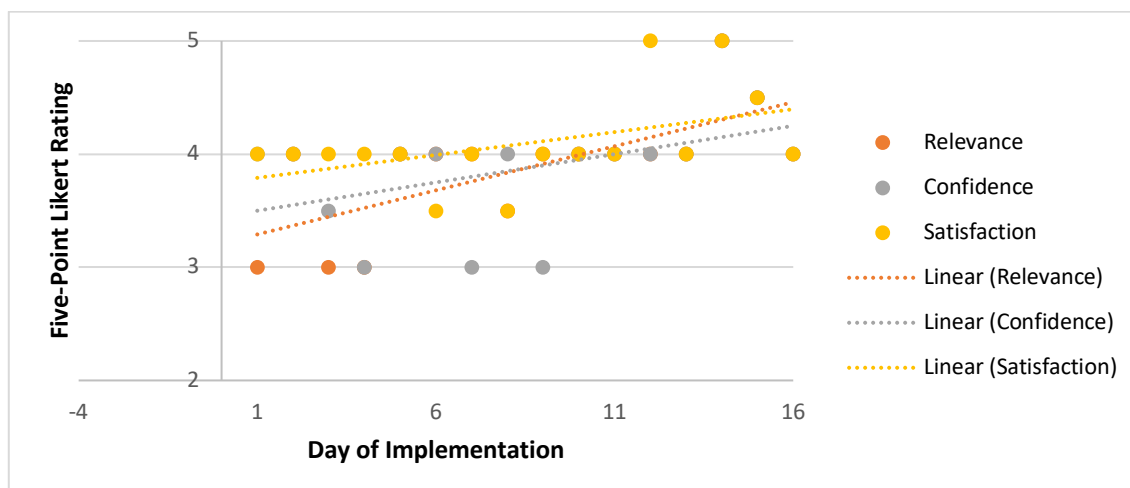


Figure 2: Median ARCS ratings for NES

Differing Effects on ELL and NES Student Work. Figure 3 shows a series of points and trendlines for ELL and NES student work. The line of best fit shows an undefined slope for ELLs, suggesting no relationship between variables; this indicates that from the beginning until the end of the research study, ELL student work stayed the same. For NESs, however, the line of best fit shows a positive rate of change; this indicates an increase in the quality of NES student work throughout the course of this research study.

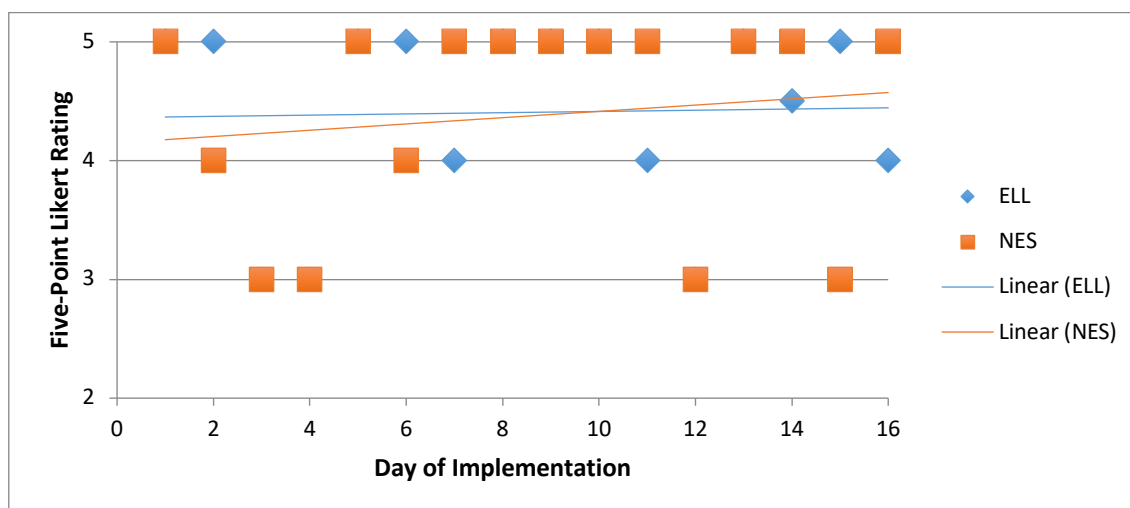


Figure 3: Student work for ELLs and NESs

Frequency of ARCS Responses. Table 2 shows the frequency and percent of student responses for the a priori codes: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. The data is broken down by student groups: ELL and NES students. Table 3 displays the percentage of times students spoke positively and negatively about their attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction in exit tickets.

Table 2: A Priori Code Data for ELL and NES Students

A Priori Code	ELL		NES	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Attention	19	22.35	43	23.63
Relevance	28	32.94	39	21.43
Confidence	8	9.41	37	20.56
Satisfaction	30	35.29	63	34.62
Total	85	100	182	100

Table 3: Students' Positive and Negative Responses

A Priori Code	ELL		NES	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Attention	89.47%	10.53%	72.09%	27.91%
Relevance	89.29%	10.71%	66.67%	33.33%
Confidence	75.00%	25.00%	67.57%	32.43%
Satisfaction	70.00%	30.00%	69.84%	30.16%

Discussion

Interpretation Through Focus Groups. The data displayed in the previous figures and tables can be more clearly interpreted through the lens of ELL students' voices, expressed in the focus groups. A closer look at ELL students' conversations within the two focus groups of this study helps to further interpret this data.

ELL Attention. In both focus groups, students were asked the question: 'What makes it easy or difficult to pay attention to English class?' In Focus Group One, one student expressed that he finds himself, "thinkin' about other stuff." No other students responded to the question. In Focus Group Two, however, several students interrupted me with responses even before I could finish asking the question. Two students agreed that groups are distracting when people talk to each other, making it difficult for other students to hear the teacher. One of these students also expressed, as he did in Focus Group One, that he gets distracted because he is thinking about other stuff. Three students expressed that they often get distracted because they are tired at the end of the day. I then prompted students to tell me about what makes it easy for them to pay attention. Carisa responded that working in pairs made it easy to pay attention, while Manuel expressed that fun activities,

like tasks that involved stories and pictures, made it easy to pay attention. These two students made specific references to task-based instruction in their responses.

ELL Relevance. Students were also asked the question: 'How does English class help you to reach your personal goals?' This prompted students to share if they felt the class was relevant. In Focus Group One, students' responses were minimal, but one student commented about personal goals of reading, and two students expressed that it helps them reach their personal goals when the teacher talks about something that they like. Students were only a little bit more responsive to this same question during Focus Group Two. Melissa said that 'learning different words and stuff like that... like the Schaffer Paragraph' helps her to reach her personal goals. I asked a follow-up question of the students, saying, 'What topics in the class are important to you?' Carisa said, 'I like when somebody else reads [stories] out loud.' Manuel also added to the conversation, saying, 'I like when we read stories... When they, um, um... sometimes when they are telling the story, I, like, describe it in my head, too.'

ELL Confidence. During both focus groups, students were asked the question: 'How does English class help you to feel more confident communicating in English?' In Focus Group One, Manuel said, 'Oh, like, when we make groups, we have to talk to each other.' Carisa agreed with Manuel saying, 'I was gonna say that.' I asked the students what about group work helped them to feel confident, and Rafe responded, 'It's easy to talk to them.' Melissa also expressed that when she gets good grades, she feels confident. In Focus Group Two, students were asked the same question. Melissa and Carisa both responded, saying that they don't like speaking in front of the class. Manuel also added that if he has to speak in front of the class, he faces the opposite direction, avoiding eye contact with other students. Melissa, Carisa, and Manuel then engaged in a conversation about the difficulty of speaking in front of the class and explained they are afraid that people will laugh if they make a mistake. I then asked the students what would help them feel more confident speaking in front of people. Manuel said, 'if I feel proud of what I did,' it makes him feel more confident about his work. Melissa agreed. Carisa went on to explain that she feels confident about her work when the teacher is next to her because 'when you need help with something, they just help you.'

ELL Satisfaction. Students were also asked the question: 'In what ways are you satisfied with how you are doing in English class?' In Focus Group One, Melissa responded, saying that her grades make her feel satisfied. Manuel responded that satisfaction comes 'when you get a high score... when you feel like you've done good' and when someone 'comments on your work.' In Focus Group Two, Melissa again shared that 'getting good grades' makes her feel satisfied. Manuel expressed that sometimes he likes it when they work alone. Manuel explained, 'I stay focused, like, the whole class time... And when I'm focused, um, sometimes the time goes really fast.' Carisa agreed with Manuel, saying that she felt the same way. Manuel then continued to elaborate on what makes him feel satisfied in the English classroom. He said, 'when we do fun stuff, the time goes so fast.' When I asked Manuel to explain if any of the tasks we did in class were considered fun stuff, he responded quickly, saying 'the story.'

Implications

The findings of this study demonstrate how persistent attention to instructional strategies that provide additional support for ELLs not only benefits ELLs but also benefits NESs. While not all of the elements of the ARCS model of motivation were positively impacted for ELLs by the intervention in this study, the lack of positive impact on confidence suggests that future work should further target this element of motivation. During the focus groups, ELL students made direct references to task-based instruction throughout their conversations. Specifically, they mentioned task-based lessons when they answered questions about their attention and relevance. When it came to satisfaction, students made specific statements about being more satisfied with the class when task-based instruction activities took place. When it came to confidence, students shared that they struggled with confidence in the classroom. This struggle with confidence was also seen in the quantitative data. The student did mention that some of the structures used within task-based instruction – like working in pairs and receiving feedback from the teacher – were helpful to them. However, ELL students still had strong feelings about lacking confidence even after the intervention.

One implication for future practice is to further explore ways to increase ELL student confidence. Analysis of the data collection methods in this study indicated that task-based instruction itself did not significantly increase ELL student confidence. During the focus group, students in this study expressed that they often felt uncomfortable when speaking out loud in front of their peers. Future research could explore strategies for helping ELL students to gain confidence, particularly in their speaking skills. Given the positive outcomes demonstrated in this smaller-scale study, we feel more confident that future studies could explore these improvements with a larger population of students.

Conclusion

Systemic inequities often prevent ELL students from being provided with a democratic, student-centered, inclusive learning environment (Briscoe, 2014; Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010; Knudsen, 2009; Marx & Saavreda, 2014; Theoharis & Toole, 2011). As an attempt to address this issue in a specific context, this action research study asked: What is the influence of task-based instruction on ELL student motivation in a grade seven ELA inclusion classroom? The students' motivation was measured according to the four elements of the ARCS model: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (Keller, 2008). The research question was, therefore, answered by examining ELL students in each of these elements. Using a convergent and parallel mixed-methods design, qualitative and quantitative data were gathered simultaneously and merged in the analysis (Creswell, 2014). Data were analyzed in order to determine the impact of task-based instruction. The results of this study indicated that ELL students showed the highest positive responses about attention and relevance, moderately positive responses about satisfaction, and the least positive responses about confidence. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that ELL students responded positively about the influence of task-based instruction on their motivation.

About the Authors

Sarah E. Bularzik, Ed.D., is an educational consultant for Gyroscorp Limited, an English education company headquartered in Tokyo, Japan. She holds an educational doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of South Carolina. She has worked as a middle school English teacher, a school administrator, and an adjunct professor. Her research interests include English Language Learners, motivation, and the inclusion classroom. Email: sarah.bularzik@gmail.com

Christopher Bogiages, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Instruction and Teacher Education in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. His work and research focus on action research, online course delivery, doctoral student support, and using social network analysis to examine the development of a community in online graduate courses. Email: bogiages@mailbox.sc.edu

References

- Arslanyilmaz, A. (2012, January). *An online task-based language learning environment: Is it better for advanced or intermediate second language learners?* [PDF]. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ976564.pdf>
- Braunsteiner, M., & Mariano-Lapidus, S. (2014). A perspective on inclusion: Challenges for the future. *Global Education Review*, 1(1), 32-43.
- Briscoe, F. M. (2014). "The Biggest Problem": School leaders' covert construction of Latino ELL families--institutional racism in a neoliberal schooling context. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 13(5), 354-373.
- Brooks, K., Adams, S. R., & Morita-Mullaney, T. (2010). Creating inclusive learning communities for ELL students: Transforming school principals' perspectives. *Theory into Practice*, 49(2), 145-151.
- Butin, D. W. (2010). *The education dissertation: A guide for practitioner scholars*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Chaudhary, A., & Kumar, A. (2010). *Krishna's textbook descriptive statistics: statistical methods*. Meerut, India: Satyendra Rastogi.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Dockrell, J. E., Bakopoulou, I., Law, J., Spencer, S., & Lindsay, G. (2015). Capturing communication supporting classrooms: The development of a tool and feasibility study. *Child Language Teaching & Therapy*, 31(3), 271-286. doi:10.1177/0265659015572165
- Gewt, K. L. (2014) *Handbook of inter-rater reliability, fourth edition: The definitive guide to measuring the extent of agreement among raters*. Gaithersburg, MD: Advanced Analytics, LLC.
- Hess, A. N. (2015). Motivational design in information literacy instruction. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 9(1), 44-59.
- Huang, J. (2010). *Grammar instruction for adult English language learners: A task-based learning framework*. [PDF]. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ891084.pdf>
- Jacobs, P., & Fu, D. (2014). Students with learning disabilities in an inclusive writing classroom. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 10(1), 100-113.
- Keller, J. (2008). An integrative theory of motivation, volition and performance. *Technology, Instruction, Cognition and Learning*, 6(2), 79-104.
- Kilanowski-Press, L., Foote, C. J., & Rinaldo, V. J. (2010). Inclusion classrooms and teachers: A survey of current practices. *International Journal of Special Education*, 25(3), 43-56.
- Knudsen, A. (2009). The importance of student-centered democratic education & the effects on placement of English language learners. *Middle Grades Research Journal*, 4(1), 77-97.

- Liao, H., & Wang, Y. (2008). Applying the ARCS motivation model in technological and vocational education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 1(2), 53-58.
- Mahat, M. (2008). *The development of a psychometrically-sound instrument to measure teachers' multidimensional attitudes toward inclusive education*. [PDF]. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ814377.pdf>
- Marx, S., & Saavedra, C. M. (2014). Understanding the epistemological divide in ESL education: What we learned from a failed university-school district collaboration. *Urban Education*, 49(4), 418-439.
- McCray, E. D., & McHatton, P. A. (2011). "Less afraid to have *them* in my classroom": Understanding pre-service general educators' perceptions about inclusion. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 38(4), 135-155.
- Mertler, C. A. (2014). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Roessingh, H. (2014, Winter). *Teachers' roles in designing meaningful tasks for mediating language learning through the use of ICT: A reflection on authentic learning for young ELLs*. [PDF]. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1030386.pdf>
- Schaffer, J. C. (1995). *The Jane Schaffer Method: Teaching the Multiparagraph Essay: A Sequential Nine-Week Unit*. (3rd ed.). San Diego, CA: Jane Schaffer Publications.
- Theoharis, G., & O'Toole, J. (2011). Leading inclusive ELL: Social justice leadership for English language learners. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 47(4), 646-688.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2018, April). The condition of education 2018. *English Language Learners in Public Schools*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp
- Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. Edinburgh Gate, England: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.
- Zainuddin, H., Morales-Jones, C. A., Yahya, N., & Ariza, E. N. W. (2011). *Fundamentals of teaching English to speakers of other languages in K-12 mainstream classrooms*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

