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The Impact of Interactive Word Walls in a United States History Classroom: An Action Research Study

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has made this opportunity possible. To my parents, Steven and Patricia Jones, who often went without so my sister and I could have whatever our hearts desired. To Miesha Jones, with the understanding that big sister is just a synonym for role model. I take that responsibility seriously. To my friends who provided support and motivation. Lastly, I want to dedicate this dissertation to Bryant Kirk White, who reminded me of the importance of Jeremiah 29:10. Thank you all for being the catalyst for my motivation in completing this difficult task.

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Lastly, I would like to thank two amazing leaders who invested in my professional growth. Mr. Robert Jackson and Mrs. Cassy Paschal did not only give me permission to conduct this study, but provided endless support, professional opportunities, and encouragement.

I am forever grateful for each of you.

ABSTRACT

As a scholar practitioner, the goal is to use the most effective teaching strategies available to help eighth-grade social studies students retain the vocabulary from each unit of study and increase both their short- and long-term memories. The problem identified for this action research was that the current use of the word wall (WW) vocabulary retention tool was not successful in accomplishing this goal. Further, I observed that students were not performing at grade level on the district mandated benchmarks at the end of each quarter. Using four phases of conducting a study, I reviewed literature to discover what was known about teaching strategies to enhance content area vocabulary retention. The present study involved the implementation of an interactive version of the word wall (IWW). The six-week intervention included four weeks of interactive activities that used a multimodal approach to learning with the goal of enhancing learning through active participation. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. The research question was aligned with the identified problem of practice (PoP) and states: *What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on the retention of social studies vocabulary when implemented in an eighth-grade social studies class?*

Keywords: word wall (WW), interactive word wall (IWW), multimodal

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL .... English Second Language

IWW .... Interactive Word Wall

NCLB .... No Child Left Behind

NRP .... National Reading Panel

RTT .... Race to the Top

WW .... Word Wall

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Memory is a critical value of education. Ultimately teachers want students to learn information, critically process it, and remember what is learned. To increase the retention of material, teachers must find strategies to help students retain what they learned (Nemati, 2013). Teaching for understanding and long-term retention is the crucial part of my role as an eighth-grade social studies teacher. This action research project focused on an area of social studies that I identified as in need of enhancement: vocabulary.

It is estimated that the average teenager has a vocabulary of approximately 10,000 words (McCrum, Cran, & MacNeil, 1986). However, they use far less in their daily conversations. Alqahtani (2015) made a further distinction between active and passive vocabulary. Active vocabulary terms are words used by students in their everyday conversations. Passive vocabulary consists of words students understand when used by others but do not commonly use. The words or terminology that are used in content-specific classrooms can be classified as passive vocabulary, because students seldom use the academic content words in daily communication. Subject area teachers identified retention of content-related vocabulary as an area to be improved (Genc & Savas, 2011). Because students do not use the content-specific terms daily, it is challenging for them to become proficient in their usage (Genc & Savas, 2011). The content area of focus for this research is middle school social studies.

Vocabulary development is essential in social studies classrooms because the vocabulary terms provide students with an understanding of key ideas and concepts (Graham, Graham & West, 2015). A challenge facing many social studies teachers is how to help students achieve proficiency in the content area concepts by learning to apply the appropriate vocabulary when discussing events and circumstances of history. This challenge can be observed when teaching a unit on the American Revolution. Political concepts and alignments during that period in history are no longer relevant in today's political arena. For instance, "*Taxation without representation* refers to the King taxing colonists without giving them a voice in Parliament." In this example: *taxation, representation, king, colonist, voice,* and *Parliament* are six critical words at the center of understanding why the American Revolution occurred. However, the use of these six words in the context of the American Revolution is considered passive vocabulary. To reinvent their meaning for application in active conversation would likely result in different meanings, if they were used at all. In daily conversation, students may use the words tax, queen, or voice, but in different contexts.

Proficient application of content specific words could enable the students to apply these terms appropriately to other disciplines and venues. An example may be when the student understands that *voice* means having the "freedom to offer an opinion;" then they may discuss voice in place of opinion in daily conversation (*Merriam-Webster*, 1993). In my professional practice, I have observed that vocabulary retention deficiency occurs when students are asked to apply and use social studies specific words in multidisciplinary subject areas and assessment measures.

If students do not use content-specific vocabulary within the context of the subject, they are challenged to recognize the same terms in other contexts such as in assessments (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). When vocabulary recall testing is recent to the instructional period, students will likely perform better than if they are asked to recall the vocabulary after several units of instruction have intervened (Murphy, Hofacker, & Mizerski, 2006). The tendency to remember an item in the last position is the recency effect (Murphy et al., 2006). Teachers rely on the recency effect by giving students vocabulary memorization and mastery tests following a unit of study. Vocabulary memorization and mastery tests are the lowest forms of retention, because students simply recall the terms and definitions provided by the teacher rather than internalize the words. Although students perform well on their vocabulary memorization tests, they often do not maintain long-term memory of the content area words when they are asked to recall them following the immediate instructional period (Murphy et al., 2006)

Vocabulary is taught most effectively when students contextualize the terms. Merely teaching the meaning of words for mastery tests is on the lower level of Bloom's taxonomy and not a best practice for educators (Manyak, Gunten, Autenrieth, Gillis, & Mastre-O'Farrell, 2014). Teachers should teach vocabulary in an integrated manner (Manyak et al., 2014). When teachers teach vocabulary through integration, they should make sure not to focus on teaching dictionary definitions but to present the terms in different formats and contexts (Manyak et al., 2014). When students are asked to form associations between common and less common words, they are also better able to recall them even when outside of the context of the instructional period (Nemati, 2013). Other

strategies for enhancing long-term memory of vocabulary are grouping, acronyms, imagery, and highlighting (Nemati, 2013).

A commonly used technique is the word wall (WW). WWs allow teachers to present terms in different format and contexts. WWs are defined as "a collection of developmentally appropriate vocabulary displayed in the classroom" (Yates, Cuthrell, & Rose, 2011, p. 31). Teachers create a WW by listing the key terms for the unit of study. The list is displayed in the classroom so students can use it as a point of reference. WWs were introduced to provide a visual reminder of the content vocabulary. For example, *duty* is a misinterpreted term during the American Revolution unit. The term duty refers to taxes imposed, but students think the term refers to a task a person is required to perform. History teachers would introduce the term to students and use the WW strategy to display the term on a bulletin board. Students are able to refer to the board throughout the unit. However, to be an effective tool for learning, teachers need to create interactive uses that employ the WW as a tool to promote long-term retention and active vocabulary usage in daily conversation (Yates et al., 2011). Unlike the current use of WW, Interactive Word Walls (IWW) strategies allow students to use the word wall daily to practice words by incorporating a variety of activities (see Appendix F). IWWs differ from WWs because IWWs are more than a list of terms mounted on the wall. IWWs require teachers to intentionally incorporate engaging strategies during their instruction of content vocabulary.

Chapter One of the proposed study is a brief overview of the background of the identified problem. The background of the problem supported the need for action research. I presented an intervention plan that aimed to increase vocabulary retention.

Chapter One includes the research purpose, question, theoretical constructs and design appropriate to the action research.

Statement of the Problem

South Carolina promotes achievement using of literacy strategies that enable students to explore, evaluate, reflect, and apply word meanings in a meaningful context. I employed explicit and meaningful vocabulary instruction with a literacy strategy, the interactive word wall (IWW) model, in my middle-level social studies classroom. The IWW enabled students to explore, evaluate, reflect, and apply word meanings in a meaningful context in the social studies classroom. The unit of study on the American Revolution was a concern. I determined that an area of need was developing a unique way to help students learn and remember vocabulary on a long-term basis.

The content-specific words of the American Revolution are not part of the students' daily active language, and this caused them to perform below grade level on their district benchmark. When I made this discovery was made, I reflected on how I could enhance their long-term memory. Students were not presented with the American Revolution vocabulary terms in previous grades, and the terms were not a part of their active language. Through a student-participant Likert scale survey, I learned that one of the reasons students performed poorly was because they did not understand the terminology, which caused them not to meet the unit assessment level of mastery. The district curriculum writers suggested that teachers incorporate WWs in our classroom. Materials were purchased and are being passively used in classrooms. The content words are displayed in the classroom, but students do not engage with the material. The problem

identified for this study was that students were not retaining needed social studies vocabulary with the current use of WWs. The action research discovered a unique way to use WWs that engaged the students in an active usage of content vocabulary.

Study Rationale

Early in teen development, students desperately need peer acceptance and find themselves in a social world filled with distractions (Erikson, 1963). Gaming and the prevalent social media venues of texting, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat often occupy a priority status among the teen culture. The teacher has to compete for the attention of teens who are preoccupied with their peer engagement venues. Edgerton (2001) suggested that teachers should implement lessons that are engaging. Students' content comprehension increases when they are engaged in classroom activities.

As a social studies teacher responsible for teaching what the students may refer to as "ancient history," the American Revolution, it is challenging to find ways to distract their attention from their social life and refocus them on the reasons for the war and the vocabulary necessary to comprehend the elements of the war. Using the WW in unique ways to attract and engage the students in learning was the focus of this action research.

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Purpose Statement

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The study took place in an eighth-grade South Carolina history classroom. The American Revolution was the unit of study. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of implementing a unique intervention using the IWW model to enhance retention of content-specific vocabulary words in a social studies unit of study on the American Revolution. Quantitative data was collected using the one group pretest and posttest design. A pretest and posttest of unit-related vocabulary words was administered at the

beginning and end of the unit of study. I assumed that the pretest results would show a lack of understanding of most of the words to be used in the intervention. Qualitative data also was collected using a semi-formal focus group interview and observation notes.

Research Questions

1. What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on the retention of social studies vocabulary when implemented in an eighth-grade social studies class?

2. What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on student engagement in an eighth-grade social studies class?

Frameworks

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework describes the concepts underlying the problem of practice. The proposition is that when teachers use an interactive approach to teaching vocabulary and incorporate the elements of student accountability and long-term memory, vocabulary recall can last beyond the unit of instruction. The teaching strategy utilized in this action research is an interactive approach. It includes having students teach a word and maintaining responsibility for the class remembering their word.

Theoretical Framework

Peer pressure and socialization priorities explained in Erik Erikson's (1963) stages of psychosocial development, Jean Piaget's (1929) theory of cognitive development, and Russ Edgerton's (2001) theory of engaged pedagogy can help to explain why students do not consider learning content-specific vocabulary. Each theory was used to support the study purpose and research question.

Erik Erikson's Theory of Social Development deems student engagement a necessary pedagogical practice when teaching middle-level students. Erik Erikson (1963) was an ego psychologist, who identified the conflicts that take place with one's ego. Erikson discussed psychosocial stages people encounter as they develop. He defined psychosocial as the relationship between an individual's social life and their personal thoughts and behaviors (1963). The psychosocial stages allow individuals to develop trust and identity and prepare for their future. Erikson recognizes eight stages a person enters as they reach adulthood. Stage five, identity versus role confusion, is crucial for students of this study.

Identity versus role confusion is the stage students enter during their adolescent years. During stage five, students want to be accepted by their peers. Students start to re-examine their identity in efforts to be recognized. Students seek their identity through their many peer interactions that are rooted in peer pressure. Adolescents find themselves seeking approval through social media and their many peer interactions. Unfortunately, during this stage, many teens' focus transitions from education to acceptance (Erikson, 1963).

Middle-school teachers struggle with educating adolescents whose focus has moved from education to acceptance. Teachers are forced to compete with social media platforms and peer interactions for students' attention. One way to ensure students do not lose educational focus during the identity versus role confusion stage is to make learning context words meaningful by creating lessons that are engaging and interactive (Larson, Dixon, & Townsend, 2013). This action research employed a version of the WW that is engaging and interactive to increase students' vocabulary content acquisition. The

interactive aspect of the WW retains the academic focus students lose during the identity versus role confusion stage.

Piaget's (1929) theory of cognitive development espouses the notion of active learning. Students learn best when they are engaged in their learning and are using a multimodal approach. The IWW will incorporate activities in which students will participate while engaged with their peers. The theoretical framework that supports requiring students to carry the responsibility for teaching a word and providing strategies for their classmates to sustain memory of the word is supported by the Pyramid of Learning Theory (Hattie, 2009).

Psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) argued that cognitive functions are developed with social development. He also stated that emerging cognitive and social development is the job of an educator. He suggested that educators use collaboration as a way to address cognitive and social functions. Vygotsky (1978) created the term "zone of proximal development" and stated that this zone is the level of development a child can reach with the assistance of teachers and peer collaboration. Vygotsky's (1978) theory supports the idea that students should learn literacy skills, such as retaining content vocabulary, by engaging in explicit instruction with their peers.

In recent research, Russ Edgerton (2001) discussed engaged pedagogy. Edgerton coined the term "pedagogies of engagement" in 2001. He reflected on projects on higher education and proclaimed that learning about *things* does not enable students to acquire knowledge (p. 1). Edgerton offered a student-centered approach to teaching and learning. Engaged pedagogies are comprised of aspects of active learning, interactive engagement, and project-based learning. When engaging activities and lessons are implemented,

learning is purposeful and meaningful. Teachers notice an increase in peer interactions and active learning while catering to diverse learning styles and talents. Engaged pedagogies should be a part of instruction because the student engagement positively influences their academic success and content acquisition. Teachers see an increase in student performance and a decrease in failure rates when pedagogies of engagement are employed.

Action Research Design

Action research was the methodological approach used in conducting this study. Action research is the organized inquiry conducted by those in the educational field who have an interest in the teaching and learning process (Mertler, 2014). Educators conduct action research to gather information used to improve various aspects of the educational system (Mertler, 2014). In short, action research is carried out by teachers to enhance their practices.

Traditional educational research is typically conducted by researchers who are removed from the educational setting (Mertler, 2014). Action research differs from traditional research methods because teachers are participants in the study. As the teacher and researcher, I studied instructional methods to improve the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction in the classroom.

The focus of this study was to examine the effect the implementation the IWW model had on vocabulary acquisition in a social studies classroom. The study followed the action research cycle of planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (Mertler, 2014). Phase one of the study involved identifying a problem of practice and reviewing related literature to frame a research plan. Phase two was the implementation of the framed plan

with the collection and analysis of pertinent data. Phase three involved the implementation of the IWW. The last phase, phase four, was the reflective stage, which involves reflection on the study and further questions for future research. Mertler (2014) reported that action research is cyclical. Therefore, the above steps would be repeated as necessary.

The study was conducted using a mixed methods approach in which qualitative and quantitative data was collected. It was anticipated that when students were taught social studies vocabulary utilizing a hands-on, interactive approach, their recall of content vocabulary will increase on the posttest immediately following the unit of instruction. I anticipated that the post test scores would remain higher than they may have been before the use of IWW implementation and that this enhanced rate can be attributed to the interactive intervention that was implemented through the IWW. I recognize that this is one class and because there is no control group to compare to, it can only be assumed that retention would increase because of the intervention.

Potential Deficiencies

Teachers are limited when conducting action research (Mertler, 2014). Assumptions, delimitations, and limitations must be considered for the educator to adjust their action research the most efficient way (Mertler, 2014). Assumptions are things that are out of the researcher's control. This study investigates vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, one must assume that vocabulary acquisition will remain important in the middle school classroom. The biggest assumption I made was ensuring that the sample population represented the population to which inferences would be applied.

Limitations are the weaknesses in the action research study that are not controlled by the researcher. Student attendance is low at the school, and students often miss instruction. A student missing the days when the IWW was introduced was beyond the researcher's control and is a limitation of the study. Another limitation of the study is time. The assessments must be administered in a certain window in accordance with the district policy. To combat this limitation, I created a pacing guide for administering the pretest, introducing the IWW strategy, and administering the posttest. Delimitations are defined as factors that are controlled by the researcher. The delimitations of this action research was the research question, unit of study that was chosen, population, and strategies that were used as part of the IWW.

Summary and Conclusion

The problem of practice for this action research was that the current use of the WW method was not successful in enhancing vocabulary retention. The purpose of this research was to examine the effects of implementing a unique intervention using the IWW model to enhance retention of content-specific vocabulary words in a social studies unit of study on the American Revolution. The research questions developed for this study were: What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on the retention of social studies vocabulary when implemented in an eighth-grade social studies class? And what are the effects of the IWW strategy on student engagement. Recall was measured following the intervention, and it was anticipated that recall would remain at a significant level.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Traditionally, teachers define vocabulary and have students write the definitions in their notebooks (Blachowic & Fisher, 2000). Students approach content-specific vocabulary from the perspective that they only need to memorize the definitions of the words and remember them on a short-term basis or until the unit of study is concluded (Harmon, Wood, Hedrick, Vintinner, & Willeford, 2009). It is common practice for teachers to put up a WW as part of a unit of study, and the students are expected to use it as a reference source for checking spelling and recognizing appropriate unit of study related terminology (Frost, 2016). The problem identified for this study was that the use of WWs, in their current non-interactive form, was not successful in enhancing vocabulary retention (Harmon et al., 2009). However, the IWW approach might show stronger outcomes (Harmon et al., 2009). An interactive approach requires students to be more engaged with the WW rather than simply using the WW as a reference point. When students are engaged in the acquisition of learning, they are more likely to retain information in their long-term memory (Wagstaff, 1999).

Uniqueness of Proposed Interactive Word Wall Protocol

The action research proposed used a multimodal interactive approach to content-specific vocabulary education with the expectation that long-term retention would increase. To monitor the effect of this innovative interactive action research approach, a posttest was administered. When teachers use a didactic approach to teaching, students do

not have opportunities to work with the information and retention of learning is less than 10% (Hattie, 2009). The more interactive the students are in activities that include discussion, practice, and teaching each other, the higher the level of retention (Hattie, 2009). In this study, one IWW strategy that was used by this researcher was to allow the students the opportunity to teach word meaning to each other. At the level of teaching to another person, 90% retention is expected. In addition to each student teaching one of the vocabulary words to their peers, is the notion of accountability (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). The teaching students were responsible for developing an interactive word recognition and definition recall. Their success was evidenced in using the test data, formal interviews, and field notes that I collect.

The pyramid of learning illustrates the average retention of material when presented in a specific learning strategy (Hattie, 2009). The rationale for study is that when students retain the meaning and usage of specific terminology for a field of study, they may likely transfer this knowledge to other subject areas. It may be that they will carry forward techniques that are used in teaching and apply these same techniques to learning other content-specific vocabulary. The action research proposed discovered unique ways to use IWW, which enhanced students' understanding of concepts in other content areas.

The purpose of this action research study was to examine the effects of implementing a unique intervention using the IWW model to enhance the retention of content-specific vocabulary words in a six-week social studies unit of study on the American Revolution. In this study, I moved from a didactic teaching approach to an

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interactive approach. To examine the effectiveness of a vocabulary enhancement intervention on memory, the following research questions were presented:

1. What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on the retention of eighth grade social studies vocabulary?

2. What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on student engagement in an eighth-grade social studies class?

Scholarly Literature

The scholarly literature relative to topic outlines the background issues, events, and ideologies. Historical theories and ideologies are discussed in this section to acknowledge the existing scholarship on vocabulary.

Stages of development. Erik Erikson's Theory of Social Development provides the theoretical framework that deems student engagement a necessary pedagogical practice when teaching middle-level students. Erik Erikson (1963) is an ego psychologist who identified the conflicts that take place with one's ego. Erikson discussed psychosocial stages people encounter as they develop. Erikson (1962) defined psychosocial as the relationship between an individual's social life and their personal thoughts and behaviors. The psychosocial stages allow individuals to develop trust, identity and prepare for their future. Erikson (1963) recognized eight stages a person enters as they reach adulthood. Stage five, identity versus role confusion, is crucial for students of this study.

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their many peer interactions that are rooted in peer pressure. Adolescents find themselves seeking approval through social media. Unfortunately, during this stage, many teens' focus transitions from education to acceptance (Erikson, 1963).

Middle-school teachers struggle with educating adolescents, whose focus has moved from education to acceptance. Teachers are forced to compete with social media platforms and peer interactions for students' attention. One way to ensure students do not lose educational focus during the identity versus role confusion stage is to make learning context words engaging and interactive (Larson et al., 2013).

Piaget's (1929) theory of cognitive development espoused the notion of active learning. Students learn best when they are engaged in their learning and are using a multimodal approach. Short- and long-term memory activate when concepts and constructs are ingrained deeply into the brain's schemata through repetition. Erikson's theory of social development confirmed the reason for a deficit in students' vocabulary acquisition during their middle school years. Students are distracted by their social developmental needs; therefore, they are not focused on learning new skills and information. Although Erikson suggested in his theory of cognitive development that adolescents enter a stage where they are more concerned with being accepted than mastering content, teachers remain accountable for teaching students.

Social constructivism. Psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) rejected the assertion made by Piaget (1929) that it was possible to separate learning from the social contexts of a child's development. Vygotsky argued that cognitive functions are developed simultaneously with social development, and it is the educator's duty to emerge cognitive and social functions. According to Vygotsky (1978), educators can use collaboration to

address students' cognitive and social functions. Vygotsky claimed a child's cultural development appears on a social and individual level, and that applies to logical memory and the formation of contexts. One of the contexts Vygotsky referred to was the role language and culture plays in a child's cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) coined the term "zone of proximal development" and stated that this zone is the level of development a child can reach with the assistance of teachers and peer collaboration. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory supports the notion that students should learn literacy skills, such as retaining content vocabulary, by engaging in explicit instruction with their peers.

Pedagogies of engagement. Russ Edgerton created the term "pedagogies of engagement" in 2001. He ascertained that students learn best when they are engaged in the learning process. Edgerton stated that teaching and learning should be student-centered and involve aspects of active learning. His theory supports Piaget's and Vygotsky's idea that engaging practices influence academic success. Engaging pedagogy are instructional practices that support peer interactions, multi-modal approaches to teaching content, and authentic products as a form of assessment. In this approach, teachers transition from presenters and lecturers to facilitators of learning. Because students are involved in their learning, they are more likely to retain information (Edgerton, 2001).

Culturally relevant pedagogy. Another way to engage students in learning content is to make learning relevant. Au and Jordan (1981) stated, "the context of school learning is often different from that of informal learning and often unrelated to the child's culture. Bringing the relevance of the text to the child's own experience helps the child

make sense of the world" (p. 149). The researchers coined the idea of making learning relevant as culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant teaching was made popular by Gloria Ladson-Billing in 1995; however, this idea impacts 21st century learners (Irvine, 2010). Culturally relevant teaching is an approach to teaching in which the teacher identifies the unique culture strength of each student and uses it to promote student achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1995). For decades, teachers have implemented culturally relevant pedagogy into curriculum and instruction to effectively teach in diverse classrooms. Culturally relevant pedagogies improve outcomes for the group of diverse students who are struggling to comprehend content. To create a culturally relevant teaching environment, teachers intentionally build student-teacher relationships, teach the whole child, use developmentally appropriate learning and teaching styles, and create a classroom environment based on equity. Teachers can use culturally relevant principles when designing vocabulary activities. There are interactive word wall strategies that teachers can use to make learning culturally relevant. Perhaps using culturally relevant activities to break language barriers leads to an increase in content vocabulary acquisition.

　　Accountability movement. Accountability and standardized testing dominate the educational system in the 21st century (Spring, 2014, p. 429). The accountability movement arrived over a debate of who should control public schools and what the purpose of public schools is. Researchers and stakeholders began believing that education should be more responsive to citizens. The accountability movement made schools more transparent because they required state departments of education to report schools' standardized test scores publicly. Teachers became more competitive once they realized

they would be penalized because of their students' poor performance. Administrators became more competitive upon realizing their schools would receive a grade of passing or failing based on the test scores (Spring, 2014). Unfortunately, students are required to show a certain level of mastery on the standardized test, but there is a correlation between failing test grades and a low reading level (Shapiro, Solari, & Petscher, 2015). Students who cannot read cannot perform well on a standardized test that is driven by reading comprehension. Since students are required to maintain a significant literacy level to complete a standardized test, school districts began to focus on building content literacy skills.

Literacy initiatives as a response to the problem. Colonial education was developed in the 17th and 18th centuries as a social function. The purpose of education was to maintain a social distinction by teaching students' literacy for religious purposes (Spring, 2014). Although the reason for teaching literacy has evolved over centuries, literacy remains a key component of American education. No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and his initiatives were developed as a response to the literacy deficits noticed as a result of the accountability movement (Spring, 2014). These three national programs place a focus on literacy development in 21st-century education.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was proposed in 2001 and signed by former President George W. Bush. NCLB involved a collaboration of various leaders who sought to advance America and close the achievement gap between minority students and their advantaged counterparts (Spring, 2014). Students' reading skills were identified as a deficit that, if approved, would decrease the achievement gap between minority students

and their peers. Under the NCLB initiative, literacy skills would increase through the implementation of reading grants, reading programs, and improving schools' libraries.

The Race to the Top (RTT) initiative was created during the Obama administration. Similar to NCLB, Race to the Top is an effort that included sections that focused on literacy in the 21st century. The initiative offers incentives to states that are willing to reform and improve teaching (Spring, 2014). RTT created significant changes in the education system by requiring districts to raise standards and structure curriculum for college and career readiness. Students must be literate to enter college. RTT promoted literacy by requiring schools to adopt new strategies to help struggling readers. A common characteristic of struggling students and their schools is the lack of content literacy, because they do not receive significant instructional support outside of school (Biemiller, 2011). The RTT initiative encourages low-performing school districts to be intentional with reading strategies to promote literary fluency.

The initiative that places a greater focus on literacy skills is the implementation of the Common Core standards. Common Core standards outline what students should know in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics with an emphasis on literacy skills. Common Core is driven by learning goals that outline what students should know and be able to do before they are promoted to the next grade. The Common Core standards were created to ensure students graduate from high school with a set of skills to succeed in life (Spring, 2014). One skill that the curators of Common Core recognized that college and career ready students needed was literacy skills. The creators of Common Core recognized that students needed to develop adequate literacy skills to be successful. The No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core programs

were created as a response to a lack of reading skills. These initiatives were designed to increase students' literacy skills; however, they are a direct response to the accountability movement and standardized testing.

21st century skills. Overtime educators became cognizant of students' needs and created a framework for 21st-century learning. The 21st Century Skills framework is an education initiative and reform movement. The framework was developed with input from educational stakeholders, who were knowledgeable about the needs of students. The model was created to ensure students are successful in work, life, and citizenship. Schools in the United States are expected to adhere to the guidelines in the P21 framework as a foundation for developing curriculum and instruction (DiBenedetto & Myers, 2016). The mandates for curriculum and instruction are classified as the 4cs; critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (DiBenedetto & Myers, 2016). Critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity are areas of curriculum and instruction that promote an increase in students' learning for the 21st century. Writers of the 21st Century Skills framework recognize the importance of educating students for college and career readiness.

The developers recognized literacy and civic mindfulness as a needed area for students to be career and college ready. Students must be literate to perform specific jobs and attend college, causing literature to be the goal for 21st century education (DiBenedetto & Myers, 2016). The writers of the framework were sure to include four curriculum classifications that appeal to the developmental needs of students. Teaching literacy and vocabulary development is more obtainable if the information is presented in an instructional method that appeals to students' wants and needs (Nagy, 1991). The

IWW is developed with the push for 21st century skills as a foundation. The IWW is a strategy used to teach students literacy and vocabulary through collaboration. Collaboration appeals to student's wants and needs (Nagy, 1991).

Learner-centered ideology. The learner-centered ideology places a focus on the child and their learning and aligns with the push for students to obtain 21st century skills. The learner-centered ideology outlines the background that influences the problem of practice. The problem in this study was that the WW, as currently used in schools, does not increase students' vocabulary content knowledge. I investigated the impact an IWW model had on vocabulary acquisition. Different from WWs, an IWW engages students in the vocabulary acquisition because it is learner-centered.

The needs and interests of students are paramount in a learner-centered school. Learner-centered ideologists believe curriculum developers should select strategies that interest children and require student use (Shiro, 2014). Learner-centered schools are considered "activity schools," because the school is filled with activities that align with the way students learn (2014). The learner-centered ideologist agrees with Vygotsky's (1929) theory of social constructivism by requiring students to learn through interactions with the learning environment. The IWW is a strategy that takes WWs to the next level. The terms and activities are deliberately arranged to maximize vocabulary retention. Students have choices of how they want to learn the vocabulary and engage in activities that are developmentally appropriate. IWWs include activities that promote active learning, engagement, and culture relevancy. Several of the characteristics of the IWW strategy are aligned with learner-centered ideologies.

Incorporating word walls. In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) concluded that there was no single and specific research-based way to teach vocabulary. The NRP (2000) recommended that instructors use a variety of direct and indirect instructions to teach content words. One way to teach content words is by using WWs. As students move through grade levels, they are required to learn new content words. Over the years, the role and importance of vocabulary acquisition has been discussed by many researchers (Cronsberry, 2004; Yates et al., 2011). Pedagogical conversations occur about the best way to teach vocabulary for long-term retention. Several reviews of vocabulary strategies point to the significant role of WWs in content area classes (Cronsberry, 2004; Yates et al., 2011). WWs are identified as a collection of words that are displayed in a classroom (Cronsberry, 2014; Yates et al., 2011). WWs help teachers approach vocabulary instruction in a meaningful way to increase students' independence while they are reading and writing in all content area courses. WWs focus on a small number of targeted words that contribute to students' academic success in the course. Cronsberry (2014) suggested that the WW should be displayed on a wall, chalkboard, bulletin board, or any designated place in the classroom. Research has produced guidelines that aid teachers in designing WWs in a meaningful way.

First, teachers must decide when they want to introduce the terms (Cronsberry, 2014). The words can be introduced weekly in small chunks, or the teacher can begin the unit by presenting all the words on the WW. The teacher then designs full lessons or brief creative exercises to engage students in learning the terms (Cronsberry. 2014). Researchers suggest whole-class, small-group, or individual activities to teach students to

master the terms. Teachers must be sure to create diagnostic assessments to measure student's mastery of the content words presented using the WW.

Vocabulary Learning

Blachowicz and Fisher (2000) ascertain that students should play an active role in the acquisition of content vocabulary. Research suggests that vocabulary learning follows a developmental course. Biemiller (2001) concluded that vocabulary growth is inadequately addressed. His study focused on the ability for vocabulary acquisition to improve over time. Biemiller (2001) suggests that 80% of root words learned before the sixth grade are learned by the direct explanation from parents, peers, teachers, and texts (p. 5). Biemiller (2001) adds that there are various factors that influence the lack of vocabulary growth; the greatest factor limiting vocabulary acquisition is that reading comprehension strategies are left at home. Unfortunately, some students live in homes that provide little to no reading support. Content vocabulary teaching is then left to the schools; however, students are not receiving vocabulary instruction at school because it is not a part of the curriculum.

Biemiller (2001) suggested that vocabulary instruction is the "missing link" to reading comprehension. He encouraged teachers to take a more aggressive approach to teaching vocabulary rather than a passive one. Vocabulary instruction should be intentional, and the purpose should be for long-term retention and follow-up usage beyond the classroom instructional unit. Biemiller (2001) described a basal approach to teaching vocabulary. The suggested approach is teacher centered and requires the teacher to teach vocabulary acquisition in a sequential method.

Guidelines for vocabulary instruction. Manyak, Gunten, Autenreith, Gillis, and Mastre-O'Farrell (2014) explained the importance of vocabulary instruction in all content areas. The researchers write that vocabulary instruction is one fifth of the essential components of reading instruction and plays a key role in comprehension (Manyak et al., 2014). Students need to comprehend more words than a teacher can explicitly teach. Therefore, teachers must teach vocabulary in an integrated manner (Manyak et al., 2014). They should be sure to not focus on teaching dictionary definitions but present the terms in different formats and contexts (Manyak et al., 2014). Teaching vocabulary is more impactful when students contextualize the terms. Simply teaching the meaning of words is on the lower level of Bloom's taxonomy and not a best practice for educators (Manyak et al., 2014).

The difference between teaching students the definitions or terms and teaching students to contextualize the terms is they are labeled as definitional and contextual knowledge. Researchers provide guidelines for vocabulary instruction (Stahl, 2005). Educators must first realize that regurgitating the definition of the term does not mean the students know the vocabulary word (Stahl, 2005). The difference between definitional and contextual knowledge of vocabulary terminology determines whether students have knowledge of the terms. As Stahl (2005) explained, "Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world." Students may recognize the definition of words; however, the goal is for students to be able to use the terms in various contexts. Acquiring contextual knowledge of vocabulary terms is an essential guideline for determining students' vocabulary acquisition.

Multiple exposures in multiple contexts. Vocabulary instructional methods that give students multiple exposures to the information would have a greater impact on vocabulary learning (Wagstaff, 1999). Reviews of articles have provided evidence of the role that multiple exposure plays in mastering content vocabulary. The National Reading Panel (2000) suggested that students have a greater improvement in vocabulary acquisition when they encounter the words often. Interacting with the terms more than once allows students to place the meanings into their long-term retention (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). Stahl (2005) reiterates that seeing the words in multiple exposures in contexts does not simply mean repetition and drill of the words, but that students must fully engage with the words in specific contexts. Repetition and drill of the word meanings may result in a child's speed of assessing the word, but it does not ensure that the student comprehends the words (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). One way to ensure students are comprehending the terms is to provide meaningful information about the words. Meaningful information about the content words allows students to decontextualize knowledge of the word meanings (Stahl & Fairbanks, 2016). Nitch (1977) conducted a study and found that providing students the opportunity to see words in different contexts produced better results that seeing words in a single context. Multiple exposure of content words provides students with an opportunity to acquire contextual knowledge.

Isolation versus integration. Vocabulary knowledge cannot be fully mastered, but it deepens over time (Genc & Savas, 2011). Teaching vocabulary in an integrated manner can cause students' vocabulary acquisition to deepen and expand. Historically, teachers have presented content vocabulary in isolation (Genc & Savas, 2011). Students

are provided with a list of content terms and definitions prior to a unit of study and they are required to memorize the terms and definitions. Teaching vocabulary in isolation results in rote memorization that students only retain in their short-term memory (Genc & Savas, 2011). Genc and Savas (2011) suggested that vocabulary should be taught in integration and not isolation. Teaching vocabulary in integration involves explicit instruction of the words by using specific strategies for word learning. The National Reading Panel (2000) explained the effectiveness of explicit vocabulary instruction. Effective vocabulary instruction requires students to see vocabulary in various authentic contexts rather than the isolated drilling of definitions (National Reading Panel, 2000). Rich and robust vocabulary acquisition is the result of teaching vocabulary through integration.

Integration leads to active engagement and depth of processing (Genc & Savas, 2011). Active engagement involves students' ability to make meaningful reflections on the words and the way they are used (Beck, McClaslin, & McKeown, 1980). It is imperative that students are actively engaged in the learning process because active engagement leads to the ability to comprehend text and content vocabulary (Vintinner, Harmon, Wood, & Stover, 2015). Active engagement leads to an increase in vocabulary acquisition. The integration of the intentional learning strategies, such as the IWW, provide opportunities for students to acquire content words in a meaningful way (Vintinner et al., 2015). Educators can integrate literacy in their classrooms by promoting a print-rich classroom environment.

Print-rich environments. There are specific qualities that a classroom has if the classroom environment promotes literacy and reading development. One characteristic

these classrooms have is that teachers are able to enhance literacy by creating a print-rich environment. In a print-rich classroom environment, students can read and write for authentic purposes and audiences daily (Pool & Carter, 2011). A print-rich classroom environment supports learning content vocabulary because it offers materials and activities that encourage students to read, write, and discuss the text seen in the classroom (Pool & Carter, 2011). Teachers who promote print-rich environments are cognizant about selecting classroom materials that facilitate language and literacy (Pool & Carter, 2011). One instructional strategy that teachers use to incorporate a print-rich classroom environment is WWs (Pool & Carter, 2011). Teachers select content words that are used during the unit of study and post the words on a designated wall in the classroom. By displaying the words on the wall, teachers emphasize the importance of students reading and using the words during the study.

Criticisms of the current use of word walls. Simply using a WW is an ineffective way of teaching vocabulary. One of the biggest criticisms of using WWs is that researchers have found them to be ineffective because they are not developmentally inappropriate (Frost, 2016). WWs are usually a collection of words on the wall that students refer to during the class setting. The students rarely interact with the traditional WWs. Another criticism of the WW is that teachers do not make changes to the wall throughout the course (Frost, 2016). Teachers typically put all the content words on the WW and do not use them as an instructional tool. The WWs are sometimes looked at as simple decor on the wall. For WWs to be effective, teachers must make them memorable, useful, practical and efficient (Wagstaff, 1999). The solution to the criticisms is to make WWs interactive and engaging by creating IWWs.

An interactive approach. Print-rich classroom environments are important, but what teachers do with the artifacts on the WW is more important. WWs are commonly used in classrooms and serve as a visual for students. Research shows that WWs should not be used as a reference point for students, but students should engage in the WWs (Jackson & Narvaez, 2013). To support literacy and student engagement, teachers have developed IWWs. WWs are like graphic organizers and are usually student generated.

In step one, the IWW is built by determining the student's vocabulary needs. Teachers should align the content vocabulary with the curriculum and needs of students. The words are then paired with pictures or real objects. Pairing the words with pictures and real objects helps to appeal to students who are visual learners and English Language Learners (Jackson & Narvaez, 2013). The third step is selecting where to place the WW. The fourth step is the most important step, because this is when students build the WW. Building the WW in class supports deep understanding of the words and engages students in the discipline. During the final stage, students completed sheets to track daily instruction using the WW (Jackson & Narvaez, 2013). These sheets can be used as formal assessments, because they signify what concepts and words the students mastered and did not master. These five steps are important, because they are a guide to implementing the IWW strategy. Intentional implementation is key to an effective WW. In comparison to the traditional WWs, recent researchers deem the IWW a progressive approach to teaching content vocabulary (Gambrell & Marinak, 1997; Kohn, 1993). There are studies that present stakeholders' reactions to IWWs however, there are not many studies that measure the effectiveness the IWW has on students' vocabulary retention. It is important to note that the IWW does not teach the students the content words, but the strategies

used have the possibility to increase long-term retention of content words. This action research studied the impact the IWW strategy has on students' vocabulary retention in comparison to traditional WWs.

Glossary of Key Terms

Accountability Movement: Educational movement that places an emphasis on accountability through the implementation of standardized testing. The accountability movement took flight in the 20th century after stakeholders realized the importance of transparency in education. The movement requires departments of education to release standardized test scores at the end of the school year. The test scores are used to grade schools based on the success of their students. The accountability movement also allows schools to hold teachers accountable for enriching the minds of their students (Richburg, 1971).

*Action Research***:** *"*The systematic inquiry conducted by teachers, administrators, counselors or others with a vested interest in the teaching and learning process or environment for the purpose of gathering information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn" (Mertler, 2014, p. 4). Action research is research methodology where the researcher takes an active role in the study. The researcher collects, analyzes, and uses the data to create a plan of action to implement solutions to identified problem of practice (Mertler, 2014).

American Revolution: A political upheaval that occurred between 1765 and 1783 during which the colonists overthrew the authority of Great Britain and fought for their independence. The war was won by the colonists who founded the United States of

America. Th*e* American Revolution is a mandated South Carolina History unit of study (Hicks, 2011).

Active and passive vocabulary: Words used by students in their everyday conversations; conversely, passive vocabulary is words students understand when used by others but do not commonly use (McCrum et al., 1986).

Contextual knowledge: The ability for students to recognize vocabulary in the context used. Students go beyond rote memorization, because they are required to recognize the words rather than simply define the term. Students must recognize the word in context to prove that they truly understand the content word. For example, a *party* could mean one thing in a language arts class but have a different meaning in social studies when discussing political parties (Stahl, 2005).

Educational Ideology: A collection of beliefs that is maintained by an individual or society. Educational ideology describes a collection of conscious and unconscious beliefs about the purpose of education (Shiro, 2013).

Interactive word wall (IWW): An assortment of developmentally appropriate words which are showcased in large letters in the classroom. The IWW is created to present terms in a different format and context, and it is designed to be an interactive tool for students that could be used in various disciplines (Yates et al,, 2011).

multimodal: Several different modes of activities (Mertler, 2014).

psychosocial: As Erikson (Erikson, 1963) described, the development of a person's personality and social attitudes from infancy into adulthood.

Pretesting: The preliminary assessment administered to students before the unit of study. The pretest is used to identify what students know before the instructional period (Chabot, Costa, Chaffey, & Cabrillo, 2014).

Primacy Effect: The tendency to remember items in the first position (Murphy et al., 2006).

Posttesting: Assessment administered to students following a unit of study. The posttest identifies what students learned during an instructional period (Chabot, Costa, Chaffey, & Cabrillo, 2014).

Recency Effect: The tendency to remember an item in the last position (Murphy, Hofacker, & Mizerski, 2006).

Short-term and long-term memory: The memory that is stored in a rapidly decaying system. Information stored in the short-term memory system often fade over time. Long-term memory differs, because information stored in this system is not temporary or permanently lost. During the recall, it is easier to remember information that is stored in the long-term memory system (Cowan, 2008).

Social Constructivism: A sociological theory of knowledge in which human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through peer (Vygotsky, 1978).

*Social media***:** An intangible interpersonal collection of online communication channels created for self-expression (Chai & Fan, 2016).

Social peer pressure: The social influence of one's peer group to perform a certain action, adopt a particular value, or conform in efforts to become accepted (*Merriam-Webster's*, 1993).

teacher-researcher: In an action research study, the individual who takes a dual role of being the teacher and the researcher. The teacher-researcher is an active participant in the research (Mertler, 2014).

Vocabulary acquisition: Learning- and understanding-introduced content vocabulary to a degree where it is used accurately in both oral and written communication (Beck & McKeown, 1991)**.**

Vocabulary in context: The ability to recognize the meaning of words during oral and written communication, and the capability to extract meaningful information and ideas about the word within the context that it is used (Beck et al., 2002).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): The difference between what learners are able to do without help and what they need help to do (Vygotsky,1978). This concept was coined by Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky.

Summary and Conclusion

The problem identified in this action research is that students are not retaining social studies vocabulary with the current use of the WWs. The purpose is to examine the effects of implementing a unique intervention using the IWW model to enhance short- and long-term retention of content-specific vocabulary words in a social studies unit of study on the American Revolution. The study is supported by Erik Erikson's (1963) Theory of Social Development, which informs us of the conflicts that teens address at the eighth-grade level. Social pressure seizes their attention, and teachers must be creative in developing ways to attract their attention to the subject and engage them in interactive activities for learning (Hackathornal, Solomon, Blankmeyer, Tennial, & Garczynskib, 2011). Piaget's (1929) cognitive development supports the contention that when students

are actively engaged in their learning, the schemata, in this case for each vocabulary word, is more deeply developed; hence, the increase in long-term memory can occur with repetition. The intervention was implemented over a six-week period. The reflections and observational input from stakeholders will be used to modify the currently planned intervention for a replication of the intervention at another time.

Chapter Two was a presentation of research literature and theories grounding the problem of practice. Literature reviews and theoretical constructs were discussed in relation to the invention and supporting the rationale for the plan. The methodological approach that was used came from Mertler's (2014) four phases of action research: (a) planning, (b) acting, (c) developing, and (d) reflecting. Each of the phases was described. Upon completion of the study, the findings are presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five is a discussion of how the researcher discerns the findings and establishes meaning to create new studies. Finally, the dissertation will end with the teacher's plans to share her findings and seek publication.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The Development and Viability of Action Research

In a bold attempt to move research investigations from the laboratory to the context of the natural setting, Kurt Lewin and his students conducted research in the neighborhood setting. The results demonstrated that a participatory protocol, rather than an autocratic protocol, produced far different results, with greater accuracy and meaning They also found that when the research was conducted in the natural setting with the actual people who were affected by the findings, it yielded much richer data (Adelman, 1993).

Lewin set the stage for a whole new approach to research that placed value on discussion, opinions, feelings, reflective thought and understanding of behaviors of ordinary individuals as cited in (Adelman, 1993). Lewin was engaged in his studies on the human condition and leaned his research toward understanding how minorities felt about exploitation with a goal of attempting to ameliorate their dilemma (Adelman, 1993). Contemporary researchers interested in understanding people and human conditions began to embrace action research and case studies as viable sources of information (Yin, 2003). Unlike scientific research where the researcher is an onlooker isolated from the study, action research incorporates the researcher as part of the study instrumentation. Quantitative and qualitative research designs both have unique features that make them useful in an action research study. According to Mertler (2014), the quantitative design

provides useful information that can be analyzed statistically to describe a large group of people. Quantitative research design yields numerical data that allows the researcher to make inferences, analyze problems, and suggest solutions to those problems.

In their 10-year longitudinal correlational quantitative study, Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) assessed the reading and cognitive ability of 56 first-grade children. The students then received a reading program intervention for 10 years. The reading program consisted of spelling, writing, and phonics program that was developed by their teachers. Of the 56 students, 27 remained in the school for follow-up testing during their junior year of high school. The study sought to discover if a student's reading level in their early elementary years predicts reading abilities during their adolescent years. The findings suggest a correlation between first-grade reading cognitive levels and 11th-grade reading comprehension, vocabulary, and general. If students were strong readers during the initial test in the first grade, typically they engaged in more reading material as the years progressed (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).

Vintinner, Harmon, Wood, and Stover (2015) used a qualitative descriptive content analysis approach to determine the efficacy of the IWW strategy. The researchers evaluated teachers' responses to the instructional strategy before and after the strategy was used in each language arts classroom. The researchers selected a diverse group of participants by including a variety of teaching experiences, races, and school demographics. During the pre-interviews, teachers saw the IWW as a reference point and did not believe they made an impact on students' vocabulary retention. Teachers were taught how to use the IWW. During the post interview, teachers expressed that they saw a significant increase in student's vocabulary retention after they incorporated WWs the

correct way. This study does not rely on teachers' perspective to assess the benefits of the IWW strategy, but instead on data and student performance before and after the implementation to evaluate the success or failures of the strategy.

Problem of Practice

The problem of practice for this action research was that students are not retaining social studies vocabulary with the current use of the WW. The WW method for teaching vocabulary would be considered passive and was not successful in enhancing long-term vocabulary retention (Harmon et al., 2009). The purpose of this research examined the effects of implementing a unique intervention using the IWW model to enhance their retention of content-specific vocabulary words in a social studies unit of study on the American Revolution. The research questions developed for this study were:

1. What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on the retention of social studies vocabulary when implemented in an eighth-grade social studies class?

2. What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on student engagement in an eighth-grade social studies class?

The focus of this study identified the short-term and long-term effects the implementation of the IWW model had on vocabulary acquisition in a social studies classroom. Quantitative data was collected and analyzed to measure the effectiveness of the IWW on acquisition of content vocabulary terms during the American Revolution unit. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected using pretests and posttests, formal interviews, and field notes. The study was conducted using a one-group pretest-posttest design. A pretest was administered before the introduction of the IWW model as the

treatment. A posttest was completed approximately five weeks later after teaching students the words using the IWW model.

This study followed the action research cycle of planning, acting, developing and reflecting (Mertler, 2014). To frame a research plan, I identified a problem of practice and reviewed related literature. The IWW strategy was introduced during phase two. Phase three was the implementation of the framed plan with the collection and analysis of pertinent data using mixed methods. The last phase, phase four, was the reflective stage, which involves reflection on the study and further questions for future research. The results are reviewed by the researcher and changes in the strategies are once again addressed making action research a fluid and viable approach to teaching vocabulary for long- and short-term memory.

Action Research Validity

Action research usually is not considered to be a rigorous form of research, because it has built in confounding variables and lacks generalization to other events or situations that may be similar, but in fact are very different (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). The teacher is part of the research and is the research instrument that creates, implements, and assesses the intervention. Teacher effect is a highly probable influence on the findings, especially because the teacher has a vested interest in the outcomes (Mertler, 2014). Action research can have construct validity, however, when the problem, purpose, and research questions are aligned and support each other. For instance, the research question becomes a fundamental element in construct validity. If the question is appropriately designed to complement the purpose of the study, then content validity can be evidenced (Mertler, 2014).

Working outside of the norm or traditional paradigm of research design, the teacher can establish her credibility within the classroom environment (Fennell, 2008). Credibility is comparable to internal validity for determining how phenomena occur and function (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Internal validity is replaced by credibility in action research. The concept of credibility becomes a measurable outcome when researchers complete an intervention and reflect on the intervention and effects on the participants' learning outcomes (1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) compared applicability of the intervention to generalizability to other groups as a method of external validity and recommended the exchange of generalizability to the concept of transferability.

Significance of Study

The school's composition is ideal for the proposed research study because of the diverse culture. The school is comprised of students who have low socioeconomic backgrounds and students who speak English as a second language. Such students often have difficulties with vocabulary acquisition (Pierce & Fontaine, 2009). Engaging students by using IWWs is not only a sound educational practice, but it serves to increase the achievement of low socioeconomic students (SES) and English as Second Language (ESL) students. Generational poverty and low educational attainment of families are obstacles for students before they enter the classroom. The students must receive immediate interventions to be successful in vocabulary acquisition (National Research Council, 1990; Johnson, 2001). It is the duty of the classroom teacher to break down the barriers that hinder a student's vocabulary acquisition.

By including created definitions in the students' words along with visual representations of word meanings, IWWs support the language development of all

students, especially ESLs and readers who struggle with reading comprehension (Pierce & Fontaine, 2009). The findings for this study can provide insight to other classroom settings and be used in other capacities. They also can be published in journals, teacher trade magazines, blogs, and on the internet for other teachers to follow and enhance their teaching. The study also promotes social change, because the literacy achievement gap between diverse students will decrease.

Role of the Researcher

According to Mertler (2014), the researcher has a dual function in the action research process. The researcher functions as both the teacher and the researcher. Traditional research differs from the action research because the researcher is removed from the study environment. I took the role as a teacher-researcher because I served as the instructor and the individual implementing the IWW model. I identified the problem of practice and created the research questions for this study. I also collected and analyzed the data of this employed study. The role as a teacher-researcher allowed me to reflect on classroom practices to improve instruction.

Research Context

A rural school in South Carolina served as the context of this study. I teach eighth grade South Carolina History to students who are considered at or below grade level. I teach four blocks of 60-minute classes. It is important to note that I only used the IWW strategy in one class. The class has a sample size of 12 students. The students in the class are eighth graders who range from 13 to 15 years old.

The school district is a suburban district comprised of 23 schools with an enrollment of 16,000 students. The school district is demographically diverse.

Demographics indicate that the district includes 62% White students, 28% Black students, 4% Hispanic students, and 6% identified as Asian or multi-racial. Only 34% of the student population are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The district describes the student body as follows: 29.8% of their students are identified as gifted and talented, and 12.5% receive special education services. The school district is amongst the highest statewide for its 91% graduation rate.

The middle-school setting in this action research study was one of three middle schools in the school district. The school has a diverse student enrollment of 886 students. The population is 62% White, 28% Black, 4% Hispanic, and 6% Asian. Approximately half of the student population receives free or reduced lunch. The school is classified as an international magnet school, which means there is an increased focus on global connections. Teachers start with basic concepts and standards that they bring to life by infusing the material with international themes, global connections, and digital technology in hopes that students gain a deeper learning. Although the school is classified as a magnet school, three fourths of the student population are labeled on or below grade level. The other 25% of the population is classified as gifted and talented. The school's composition is ideal for the employed action research study.

Design of the Study

The focus of the action research was to identify the effect of the implementation of the IWW model on vocabulary acquisition in a social studies classroom. I followed the action research cycle of planning, acting, developing and reflecting (Mertler, 2014). Mertler (2014) reported that action research is cyclical; therefore, the above steps were repeated as needed.

Planning

Mertler (2014) suggests that planning is the first cycle in action research. During the planning phase, I identified an intervention aimed at increasing student interaction with the social studies content area vocabulary of the American Revolution. The history classroom is equipped with an IWW. I developed ways to increase the activity level of students' involvement with the IWW. Using a more hands-on approach incorporating a multimodal approach will enhance long-term memory.

Ethical Considerations

Mertler (2014) wrote that making sure action research adheres to ethical standards is a primary responsibility of the teacher-researcher. When implementing the intervention in action research, it is the responsibility of the researcher to protect individuals' rights (Mertler, 2014). The first step I took in this regard was to contact the school district to obtain permission to carry out this action research study in the classroom. The second step is to consider how to protect the middle-school students from any discomfort and to maintain ethical considerations for all students and their parents. Communication is the key to maintaining the ethical implementation of the study.

Teacher-researchers are influential individuals in the eyes of their students. It is highly inappropriate to make students feel they are pressured to participate in the research study due to a fear of negative consequences for their unwillingness to participate. It is my duty to ensure that the research is ethically carried out by creating an environment that is risk-free and comfortable for students. I am required to maintain ethical standards of behavior and to alleviate some of the students and parents concerns or questions about the study. The details were presented at a meeting informing them of the research and

parental permission was obtained. Parents were provided an open invitation to visit the classroom during intervention sessions. They were also provided with a list of days and times that the intervention took place.

The social studies class population used in this study is diverse. There are both girls and boys in the class, and the age range is 13 to 15. Since students are underage and a part of a protected population, a consent form was given to parents at the orientation meeting in which I explained the study purpose and process. The consent form described the action research process and asked for students' and parents' permission before conducting any research (Mertler, 2014). The consent form also informed participants of the nature of the study and their option to opt out at any time. I protected the privacy of all students (Mertler, 2014). The raw data retrieved from each student is not be identified with their names; instead, each student has a pseudonym to protect their identity. For any plan to work successfully, all stakeholders must be in agreeance. I attained the permission of the school district before introducing the action research. I was vigilant to take into consideration the academic, social, and personal needs of the students and ensured their comfort and personal safety throughout the intervention (Mertler, 2014).

Sample

The study examined the impact the IWW model had on vocabulary acquisition in a social studies class. The study sample consisted of students in my social studies classroom. The group consist of 12 eighth graders who were in a semester-long class. The participants for the study were identified as students whose reading comprehension is at or slightly below the correct grade level according to their performance on standardized reading tests. The study began the 2017-2018 school year and was conducted over a six-

week period. This study used convenience sampling, because I do not choose the students in the classroom.

The following biographical statement for each student is presented. The information will provide insight regarding the uniqueness of each student in my eighth-grade history class. A pseudonym was used to protect the identity of each student.

Nancy. Nancy is a regular-education student who reads at an eighth-grade level. Her grades are average compared to her classmates. Comprehension of historical facts is a weakness for Nancy.

Mia. Mia is an outgoing student who participates in various after-school activities. Mia enjoys history and always participates in class. Mia likes group work and activities that are engaging. Mia is in an English One course. She is reading above an eighth-grade level.

Shannon. Shannon is a quiet student who maintains an A average. The biggest struggle for Shannon is her absenteeism. Shannon is often absent from school and misses a lot of the content vocabulary needed to be successful.

Ali. Ali is a talkative student who seems to use class as a time to socialize. Ali struggles with comprehending content vocabulary. Ali usually receives Ds and Fs on all her assignments.

Katie. Katie is a quiet student who is reading at an eighth-grade level. Although Katie is reading on grade level, she struggles to retain the academic vocabulary discussed in a historical context. Katie also participates in various after-school programs, which hinder her from studying and completing assignments at home.

Parker. Parker is a quiet student who enjoys reading and history. Parker is reading at an eighth-grade level; however, he does not perform well on standardized tests. Parker has difficulties retaining academic vocabulary in his history class.

David. David is an outgoing student who plays three sports. Although he is in eighth grade, he plays varsity sports. Sports are the focus for David, and he does not have additional time after school to focus on academics. In class, he enjoys hands-on activities and lessons where the teacher is not lecturing. David maintains a C average.

Jake. Jake is a student who receives special education services for Math and English. Jake is able to read words on a page, but he has difficulties with word comprehension and identifying word meaning. Jake enjoys history class and maintains a B average (with services provided).

Henry. Henry is a student who speaks English as his second language. Henry receives services that help him master the English language. Henry reads below grade level Dbut enjoys history class. Henry performs above grade level in the area of Math. Vocabulary retention has been an obstacle for him this school year.

Karl. Karl is a quiet student, but he does enjoy working in groups. Karl enjoys learning by doing and creating projects. Karl reads at an eighth-grade level. He maintains an A average in the class.

Zack. Zack is an outgoing student who was recently moved from his grade level English course to an honor's level. He works hard in class and puts forth effort to excel in class. Zack maintains an A average.

Jamie. Jamie is a talkative student who enjoys the debates and conversations in history class. He also enjoys reenactment. Jamie does not learn well when the teacher

provides lecture-based notes. Jamie participates in various school activities while maintaining an A average.

Hogan. Hogan is a student who speaks English as his second language. Hogan enjoys his math and science courses but is struggling in history and English. Hogan speaks English fluently, but he struggles with academic vocabulary.

Instruments

During the action stage, I implemented the intervention, collected data and analyzed the data. The plan was administered during six weeks of instruction and carried out in their social studies class for one hour. The plan began during the American Revolution unit of study and focused on vocabulary development. An IWW was used as the focal source of the activities. Specifically, the IWW contained all the words in the unit of study, whereas in the past, students would simply use the WW as a point of reference for vocabulary usage and spelling. Its use was converted into a series of daily activities designed to engage each student. I used data of various types throughout the action stage of this study. To assess the impact of the IWW on the retention of academic vocabulary in a history classroom, I used both quantitative and qualitative data.

Pre/post assessment. I conducted the study using a one-group pretest-posttest design (Mertler, 2014). There was no control group against which to compare. I administered a posttest approximately five weeks later after teaching students the words using an IWW model. I administered a 10-question assessment at the beginning of the study. The assessment questions were pulled from a test bank that was developed by the district's curriculum coordinator. The assessment was completed by each participant. The assessment contained 10 multiple-choice questions on the American Revolution unit. The

assessment required students to use their knowledge of academic content to choose the best answer from four choices. The same assessment was administered at the end of the six-week period to assess if students retained academic vocabulary presented using the IWW strategy.

It was anticipated that due to the interactive engagement and hands-on use of the words, the students would score higher on the posttest. In addition to the posttest, students participated in a formal interview, which was used to analyze students' perception about the use of IWWs.

Likert scale. A Likert scale was also administered to collect data (see Appendix B). I created the 15 question survey by identifying areas of concern that was discussed at the district meetings. The survey was administered before students engaged in the IWW strategy and required students to answer 15 questions pertaining to the way they learn content and content vocabulary. The student-participants could choose agree or disagree on a continuum for each question. A Likert scale was administered in the form of a survey and allowed me to gather information relatively quickly (Mertler, 2014).

Observation field notes. To collect qualitative data, I captured observation field notes throughout the six-week study. Teachers are always watching their students; however, observation field notes provide an opportunity for teachers to carefully observe students in a systematic way (Mertler, 2014). I carefully watched my students for six weeks and conducted semi-structured observations. Semi-structured interviews are interviews that allow for flexibility. I was able to ask questions to follow-up students' answers. In a structured interview, the researcher does not pose questions that are not planned. I created columns to record observations. On the right side of the column, I

noted the dates and times of the observed behaviors and the student actions observed. On the left side of the column, I noted interpretations of what was observed. I could use observation notes to capture the actual actions of students as they participated in the strategies as opposed to simply hearing their perceptions or feelings. Students' perceptions and feelings were also collected during the formal interview stage of the action research process.

Focus group interviews. Observing students provided me with insight regarding the actions of students as they participated in the IWW strategy. However, I thought it would be beneficial to also know the students' perceptions and feelings about the strategy that was introduced. The six-week study concluded with a focus group interview. I conducted a one-hour interview with the participants. The focus group interview was administered as a group. I asked the participants a series of open-ended questions about their feelings and perceptions of the IWW strategy. I closely monitored the interview and required each participant to take part in the interview to ensure each person could share their unique perspective. I concluded the interview and action research study by asking each participant if they had any additional comments.

Data Collection and Analysis

I examined the effectiveness of a vocabulary enhancement intervention on the retention of academic vocabulary. The following research questions were presented:

1. What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on the retention of social studies vocabulary when implemented in an eighth-grade social studies class?

2. What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on student engagement in an eighth-grade social studies class?

To obtain the student-participants' perceptions of IWWs and the way they learn content vocabulary, a 15-question Likert scale survey (see Appendix B) was administered to all of the participants during one period. The survey included some of the following statements: (a) "It is easy for me to learn vocabulary in History class.", (b) "I use the word wall displayed in my teacher's classroom.", (c) "I would retain the meaning of my vocabulary words if I interacted with them in class.", (d) "I learn best when content is presented in multiple formats.", and (e) "I learn vocabulary best when I am engaged." Students were asked to rate their answers to each question using a scale of 1 to 5. The scale was represented by (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, or (5) strongly agree. At the beginning of the six-week study, I introduced the American Revolution unit. Students are required to learn content vocabulary to master the American Revolution unit. I introduced IWW strategies into my classroom instruction.

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected to measure the effectiveness of the IWW on the acquisition of content vocabulary terms during the American Revolution unit. Qualitative data was collected in the form of teacher observations throughout the implementation of the IWW strategy and a formal interview after the implementation. Quantitative data was in the form of a student-participant questionnaire before the implementation of the IWW and a 10-question pretest and posttest assessment.

The research design was chosen to obtain an accurate profile for each participant. A mixed-methods design was chosen because using both types of data provides a better understanding of the research than simply using one type of data (Mertler, 2004, p. 104).

There were aspects of each learner that could not be captured by simply collecting numerical data. However, statistical data was necessary to measure the participant's comprehension of content vocabulary. At the conclusion of the study, I analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data.

The data analysis included the process of collecting, organizing, and coding the data. After the data was collected and analyzed, I interpreted the data. The data collection led to the development of an action plan, which included the sharing and communicating of results. Upon completion of the analysis, which took place over a six-week period, I prepared a presentation for the parents, administration, and other teachers to share results and seek input for revising the intervention if warranted.

Sharing. After the research study concludes, I will discuss with the students the benefits of using various techniques like those used in our activities to increase their content vocabulary memory skills. I will ask them to compare the various activities as they relate to their own use and evaluate what worked for them and what did not. I will plan to have a class meeting of the students, administration, and other teachers, in which the students can explain what worked best for them. At this point, I will take the feedback from the students to make adjustments, if needed, to the current intervention for the next implementation period. The next plan is to seek publication opportunities for the study. One such option may be to pursue presentation and publication opportunities with national organizations such as the Association for Supervision of Curriculum Development (ASCD), Educational Leadership, the Journal of Vocabulary Research, and the Journal of Effective Teaching Learning by Doing.

Reflecting. The reflection stage is integrated throughout the action research process rather than after the study is complete. Reflecting is a critical step in the action research process because it allows the teacher to make necessary changes throughout the research process (Vaccarino, Comrie, Murray, & Sligo, 2006). Mertler (2014) suggested that it is imperative for the researcher to seize each opportunity to reflect. I revised the study throughout the cyclical action research process by examining the individuals involved in the study, determining what led me to research the vocabulary retention aspect of the classroom, and considering the necessary conditions to implement future changes (Mertler, 2014).

Conclusion

The problem identified in this study was that the current use of the WWs is not successful in enhancing vocabulary retention. The purpose was to examine the effects of implementing a unique intervention using the IWW model to enhance short- and long-term retention of content-specific vocabulary words in a social studies unit of study on the American Revolution. The study is supported by Erik Erikson's (1963) Theory of Social Development which informs us of the conflicts that teens address at the eighth-grade level. Social pressure seizes their attention, and teachers must be creative in developing ways to attract their attention to the subject and engage students in interactive activities for learning (Hackathorna1, Solomon, Blankmeyer, Tennial, & Garczynskib, 2011). Piaget's (1929) cognitive development and Edgerton (2001) pedagogies of engagement support the contention that when students are actively engaged in their learning, the schemata, in this case for each vocabulary word, is more deeply developed; hence, the increase in long-term memory can occur with repetition. The study was

implemented over a six-week period, and data was collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The reflections and observational input from stakeholders will be used to modify the currently planned intervention for a replication of the intervention at another time.

Summary

Chapter Three was a presentation of the teacher-researcher's observed problem of practice. Literature reviews and theoretical constructs were discussed in relation to the intervention and supporting the rationale for the plan. The methodological approach that was used came from Mertler's (2014) four phases of action research: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. Each of the phases was described. Upon completion of the study, the findings were presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will be discussion of how the researcher makes sense of the findings and established meaning to make recommendations and create new studies.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This study examined the impact of the IWW strategy on the retention of content vocabulary. Twelve eighth-grade South Carolina history students participated in the action research. The activities were implemented and data was collected in a general education setting during the afternoon blocks. Students participated in various IWW activities for six-weeks. The identified problem of practice was that eighth-grade history students are not retaining content vocabulary following the immediate unit of instruction. By triangulating multiple sources of data, I was able to provide a description of the impact of the IWW strategy. I collected qualitative and quantitative data during a six-week period. Students participated in a survey and pretest at the beginning of data collection. I also collected observation notes. A formal interview was administered at the conclusion of the six weeks to measure any possible changes in students' perceptions. I also collected data from a posttest assessment, which followed the intervention. The study population is a group of eighth-grade students who range in vocabulary acquisition and reading level but perform below grade level on the district-mandated social studies benchmark. A pseudonym was used to protect the identity of each student. Chapter Four presents a summary of the findings.

Research Question

What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on the retention of social studies vocabulary when implemented in an eighth-grade social studies class?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research study was to examine the effects of implementing a unique intervention using the IWW model to enhance the retention of content-specific vocabulary words in a social studies unit of study on the American Revolution.

Overview of Data Collection

Twelve student-participants were invited to participate in the action research. Each student provided a signed copy of the consent form. Participation in the study varied due to student absences. A ten-question pretest was administered to determine the baseline data from which to measure (Appendix E). Students also completed a survey that presented valuable information about the students' perception of word walls and vocabulary instruction (Appendix B). The implementation of the interactive word wall strategy commenced after students completed the survey and pre-test. For six consecutive weeks, students participated in various interactive word wall strategies (Appendix F). I completed observation notes as students participated in the intervention. Students completed a posttest at the end of the six-week study. The posttest was a set of ten multiple choice questions which was valued at ten points per question. Students could earn a score of 100 percent if they correctly answered each question. Lastly, students participated in a semi-formal focus group interview which allowed me to hear the students' perception of the interactive word wall strategy.

Findings of the Study and Interpretations of the Results

This study used action research methods to improve student vocabulary acquisition in a South Carolina History course. To evaluate the stated problem of practice, I incorporated IWW strategies during a six-week period in the history classroom

during the 2017-2018 school year. The multiples sets of data used in this study revealed a number of results. After carefully examining and analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data, three prevalent themes emerged related to (a) the impact on the comprehension level of the participants, (b) the increased level of student engagement, and (c) students' positive perception of the intervention. Each of the themes offered insight in response to the research question about the impact of the interactive word wall strategy on vocabulary acquisition.

Student Comprehension

Quantitative data was collected by assessing all students using a one-group pretest-posttest method. Students were presented with ten multiple-choice questions from the district-mandated benchmark exam. Each question required students to use their knowledge of academic vocabulary to correctly answer the questions. I calculated students' pretest and posttest scores to learn information about the success of the interactive word wall strategy. Student scores are presented in Figure 4.1 to visually represent the change in scores before and after the intervention. Participants demonstrated gains of various levels. The study revealed that vocabulary acquisition was positively related to the implementation of the interactive word wall strategy. Therefore, the first theme that emerged was a noted improvement in student comprehension of content vocabulary.

Results of one-group pretest-posttest. Analysis of the data indicated that students acquired academic vocabulary when an interactive version of the word wall was introduced. Eleven students' scores improved and one student's score remained the same for both the pretest and posttest. Specifically, Mia, Jake, and Karl improved significantly

by showing a 40% improvement. Jake and Mia only answered five questions correctly on the pretest, but they answered nine out of ten questions correctly on the posttest. Jake is a student who receives special education services for reading comprehension. Contrastingly, Mia is a student in an honor-leveled English class. It should be noted that Jake has difficulty with reading comprehension, but he received the same posttest score as a student who reads above an eighth-grade level. Ali's score improved from 20% to 50%. Ali struggled throughout the year to comprehend social studies content and vocabulary. Although Ali had difficulties, she made a significant improvement. Parker and Katie are also struggling readers who improved from 40% to 60%. Henry, David and Hogan made a 30 percent improvement. Hogan speaks English as a second language and improved from 30% to 60%. Zach is the only student whose did not show any gains between the pretest and posttest. However, Zach is an above grade-level reader who had the highest pretest score.

Figure 4.1. Student pretest and posttest scores for the 2017-2018 school year.

Pretest	40	50	50	30	40	40	30	50	30	40	70	30
Posttest	60	90	80	50	70	60	60	90	60	80	70	60

Figure 4.2. Student pretest and posttest scores for the 2017-2018 school year
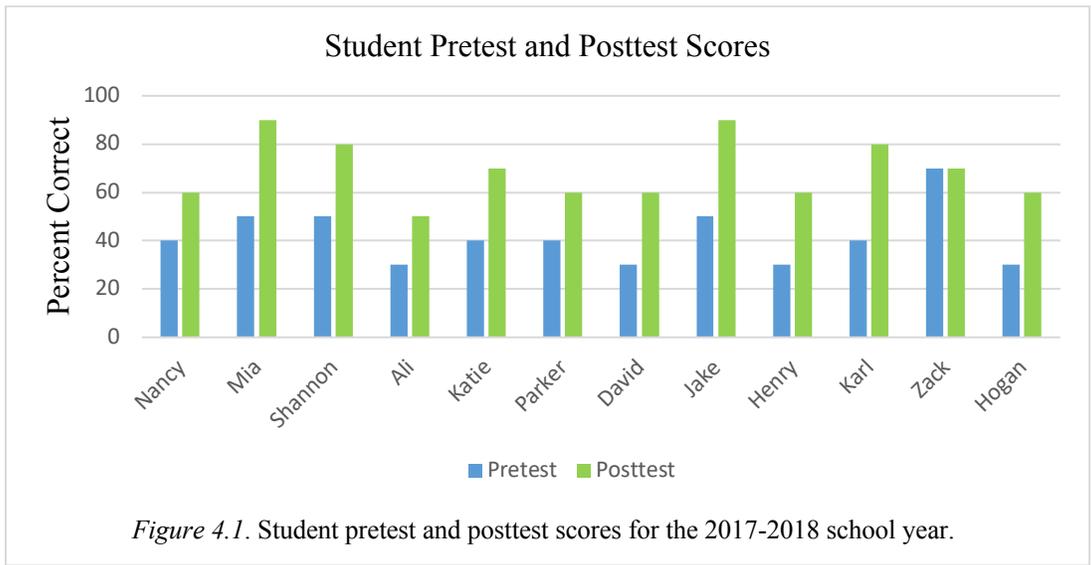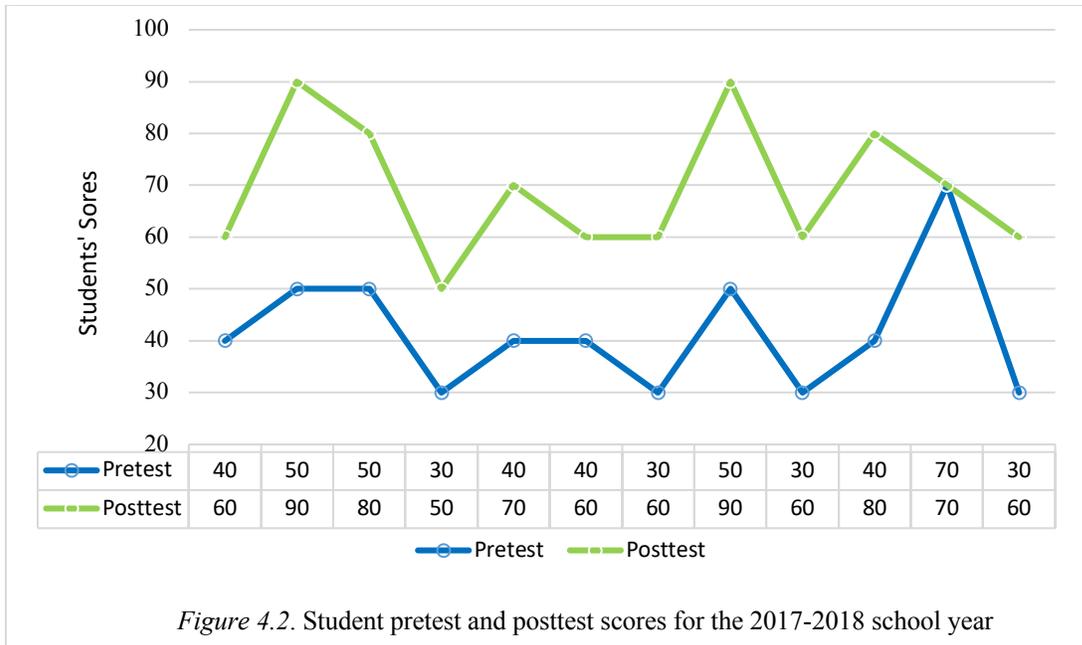
As displayed in table 4.1, the minimum score for the pretest was 30% and the highest score was 70%. The lowest posttest score was 60% and the highest posttest score was 90%. The mean score for the pretest was 41.66%; the mean score for the posttest was 69.17%, with 27.51 points as the increased mean value. The difference in the mean and range shows that the implementation of IWWs is positively related to student comprehension of content vocabulary.

Table 4.1

Student data of the scores on the 10 questions taken from the district benchmark exam

Student	Pretest	Posttest
1	40	60
2	60	90
3	50	80
4	30	60
5	40	70
6	40	60
7	30	60
8	50	90

9	30	60
10	40	70
11	70	60
12	30	60
Mean	43	68.3
Median	40	60
St. Dev.	12.9	11.93
Min.	30	60
Max.	70	90
Range	40	30

Student Engagement

In addition to an increased level of comprehension, student engagement was another theme that emerged. Students completed a Likert scale survey (see Appendix B) before the IWW was introduced as a method of vocabulary instruction. I administered the survey to assess students' perception and use of the original WW. The survey indicated that students learn content vocabulary when they are engaged in the learning process.

Results of Likert Scale

Table 4.2

Student data from the Likert Scale survey

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
#1	2	2	1	5	2
#2	3	3	1	3	2
#3	0	0	0	5	7
#4	4	4	2	0	2
#5	0	0	2	4	6

#6	4	2	3	0	3
#7	1	2	0	4	5
#8	2	2	1	4	3
#9	0	0	2	6	4
#10	4	6	0	1	1
#11	0	0	2	2	8
#12	1	0	3	2	6
#13	2	2	0	4	4
#14	1	1	4	3	3
#15	1	0	2	5	4

The Likert Scale survey provided additional support pertaining to the research question. Students stated that they have a difficult time retaining content specific vocabulary. However, the survey revealed that students do not take initiative in studying at home. The word wall was implemented as an intervention. Students indicated that the original word walls were not helpful. Word walls are a collection of content specific vocabulary displayed in the classroom. Teachers create WWs by listing the key terms for the unit and displaying them in the classroom (Yates, Cuthrell, & Rose, 2011, p. 31). Likert Scale survey displayed that students retained information when they are engaged while learning content vocabulary. Ten out of the twelve student-participants agreed that they learn best when they are presented with visuals. In addition, nine of the participants stated that they learn best when they are active and collaborating. Students then showed that interactive and engaging versions of vocabulary are preferred over non-interactive

vocabulary classroom posts (see Appendix F for a complete list of interactive word wall activities). In addition to using the WW as a reference point, students participated in engaging activities. For example, students took ownership by creating the IWW. Each group was assigned a word and required to add their term and interactive images to the wall. The activity allowed students to engage in an authentic creation of the IWW. Students do not only define the word, but they described the word's meaning and concepts (Buehl, 2001). Lastly, the Likert Survey demonstrated that vocabulary in History class is intersectional with other classes and that their understanding of the importance of vocabulary can be complimented more effectively with the use of visual, interactive, and engaging representations.

Results of Observation Notes. During the American Revolution unit, several interactive word wall strategies were used during daily instruction (Appendix F). I observed various student behaviors that impacted their vocabulary acquisition and behaviors that indicated their level of engagement. At the end of each day, I scribed in a journal which contained reflections and observations as the research occurred. The observation notes (see Appendix G) includes times of observations, observed student behavior, and valuable commentary. I interpreted the observed behaviors. The behaviors were categorized into three major themes related to student engagement; (a) behavioral engagement, (b) cognitive engagement, and (c) relational engagement. The interactive word wall strategy is positively connected to students' relational engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement.

Behavioral engagement. Behavioral engagement is identified as the quality of students' participation in the classroom and school community. This class meets at the

end of the school day. Due to the time of the day, this class has the highest number of behavior issues and several students fail to participate in classroom assignments. I observed each student-participant's behavior engagement while students completed the interactive activities. During the interactive word wall activities, students remained on task.

At the beginning of the data collection period, students generalized that learning vocabulary was a boring and difficult task. Students expressed that they did not want to complete the vocabulary assignment and preferred studying them at home. For example, one student stated, "Can you just give us the words and definitions so we can study them at home?" I did not provide students with a list of terms to study at home because 60% of the student-participants indicated on the survey that they do not study vocabulary terms. Students appeared hesitant and confused when I introduced the activity. However, students seemed to understand and appreciate the activities once I provided explicit instructions. For example, students participated in an interactive word wall activity, the *hot seat.* I selected a student to write a word on the board and another student to be in the *hot seat*. The student in the hot seat was unable to see the word, but it was his/her job to guess the word by asking questions to eliminate the possibilities (see Appendix F). When I asked the students, who wanted to be the next person in the hot seat, all students raised their hands. Students willingly volunteering is a positive change in student engagement because it is typically difficult to encourage this group of students to participate.

Students also remained on task for assignments that were completed individually. For example, after the six-week study, students participated in an activity called *maximum words*. Students were required to construct a story and use their content words

in the story. Students were eager to complete the task and created their own competition

to see who correctly used the most words in their story. I also noticed individual student

behavioral changes. Katie is a student who has a difficult time focusing in class.

However, she remained on task and completed the interactive activities. Ali is a student

who normally socializes during class time. Ali also remained on task and completed her

assignments during this six-week study.

Another example of evidence of student behavioral engagement was that each

student adhered to the rules and norms of the classroom and activities. Students who did

not adhere to the rules and norms were easily redirected. As stated, students in this class

have a difficult time adhering to rules and norms at the end of the school day. Teachers

must implement rules and norms when allowing students to engage in interactive

activities. Student-participant observations provided evidence of an increased level of

behavioral engagement. Jamie and Ali are the most talkative students in the class. The

two students are often off-task and must be reminded of the rules and norms. The two

students were on task during the study and were observed completing their assignments.

For example, when completing the *conversation competition* assignment (see Appendix

F), I expressed to Jamie how much work he was able to complete by being on task

compared to the past, he stated "Well I like this." Jamie's comment revealed that he was

interested in the interactive word wall activities; therefore, he was more willing to adhere

to the rules and norms. Furthermore, maintaining attention, concentration, and persistence

are some of the classroom norms. Students also displayed behaviors associated with

attention, concentration, and persistence. For example, eight students indicated on the

Likert scale survey that learning content vocabulary and completing vocabulary

assignments was difficult. Those eight students completed the activities despite experiencing difficulty or opposition. For example, Henry, who speaks English as a second language, had difficulty completing the *list-group-label* assignment (see Appendix F). During this activity, students were required to create their own categories for the terms. This assignment challenged students cognitively, but instead of his norm of turning in an incomplete assignment, Henry adhered to the classroom norms and asked for additional time.

Cognitive engagement. Cognitive engagement relates to students' engagement in academic tasks. There are students in the class who are always behaviorally engaged because they do what is required. However, they seem behaviorally engaged but are not engaged cognitively. When interactive word wall strategies were employed, students were cognitively engaged.

The first evidence of this theme was students took ownership of their learning. At the beginning of the study, each student was given a content term. I normally create the classroom WW by writing each term on a sentence strip and displaying it in the classroom. However, on the Likert scale survey, eight students indicated that the current word wall was not used in the classroom. Nine students stated that they did not use the word wall posted in the classroom. Therefore, I implemented an activity which allowed individual students to take ownership of the word wall. By taking ownership and creating an authentic structure, students were more likely to use the word wall. Each student took ownership of their word by adding their term, definition, and interactive images to the classroom word wall. As a result, students became more cognitively involved. For

example, one student stated, "I forgot what this word means", Mia excitingly replied, "go look at the word wall."

Additionally, students' efforts shifted from simply completing assignments to earning a grade to wanting to understand and master the material. Students were observed going beyond the requirements. For example, during the activity, *article detective* (see Appendix F) students were required to find one article or image that related to one of the content words. Students exceeded the request. For example, Karl, Zach, and Shannon found articles that related to several content words. Shannon stated, "look, this article shows *impose, repeal, and mercantilism*." Also, when students completed their Frayer Model (see Appendix F), they were required to comprise two characteristics and examples of the word. Several students went beyond the requirement by including additional characteristics and examples. Students actively participated and contributed during class discussions.

Relational engagement. Relational engagement is defined as the level of student interactions in the classroom and school community. Students were observed collaborating in the classroom. Several of the interactive word wall strategies were completed as a whole group or a small group. Students were able to increase their relational engagement by building positive peer relationships. I observed students who never converse willingly working together to complete the interactive assignments.

Students also developed a sense of belonging because of the interactive word wall activities. There was a sense of belonging seen in students who stated they prefer to work alone in their initial survey. For instance, Karl, Parker, Katie and Shannon stated that they preferred to work alone and do not learn when working in groups. However, at various

time during the six-week study, these students asked, "Can we work with a partner like we did yesterday?" For the first time, I could witness students building relationships and motivating each other. For example, when Henry was having a difficult time grouping and labeling his words, he relied on the help of a peer. I perceived that the classroom climate and culture was one of positivity as students built meaningful relationships. Once students felt a sense of belonging, they became more cognitively and behaviorally engaged. Students who genuinely care for each other and know that they are in a caring environment are motivated to engage cognitively and behaviorally (Deci, 2010). I observed that the three areas of engagement were interconnected and increased during the six-week study.

Student Perception

Student-participant interviews were conducted after the data collection period. The interviews provided a narrative of students' perceptions about learning content vocabulary and the implementation of the interactive word wall strategy. The students were asked a series of five questions (Appendix C). I recorded, transcribed, and summarized each student's response. The discussion of the interview supports three themes that emerged related to the student-participants' perception of the interactive word wall strategy; (a) students viewed the intervention as *engaging* (b) students viewed the interactive word wall activities as *challenging*, but useful, and (c) students *retain* the content vocabulary when interactive strategies were employed.

Engage. A common theme emerged while analyzing students' responses regarding various elements of the interactive word wall strategy. One prevalent theme was that students were more engaged when interactive word wall strategies were

implemented. All student-participants' responses support this theme. Students stated that the interactive word wall strategies "were fun" and that they "had a chance to actually work with the words instead of just seeing them on the bulletin board." Students completed a Likert scale survey before the intervention was implemented. The students indicated that they did not use the word wall and did not learn from the word wall. Contrastingly, when students were interviewed they stated that an advantage of the interactive word wall was that they were able collaborate and participate in meaningful activities. Karl stated, "I did not think I would like the word wall at first, but I actually liked it and I liked how we could actually do fun stuff while learning." Shannon mimicked his sentiment by stating "I was really engaged, especially when we played games and competitions to see who knew the definitions."

Several of the students stated that they were engaged because the strategy fostered collaboration. When asked if they prefer to learn content vocabulary at the beginning of the unit or throughout the unit using the interactive activities, Mia stated "I prefer to do it this way because I am able to work with people. It is hard for me to understand when you give us the words and tell us to study them. I was able to understand it better when I worked with my group and they explained it to me." Shannon was the only student who expressed that she preferred working individually. She expressed "the only part that I did not like was it was a lot of group work." Although Shannon disagreed, the remaining eleven participants conveyed that they were more engaged because they were able to collaborate and learn from their peers. They agreed that they were more engaged during the interactive approach than when they were required to define the terms at the beginning of the unit.

Challenge. Another theme that emerged was students perceived the interactive word wall strategy as challenging. One student stated, "The interactive word wall activities were hard to complete. You giving us the terms to study at home is much easier." Another student agreed by stating, "I felt like I had to think harder to complete some of the assignments." Students discussed one assignment in which they had to correctly use all of their terms in a historical story. Hogan said, "it was so hard to think of a story and use the words the correct way." The other participants agreed with Hogan's statement. I also asked the students what the perceived as the disadvantage of the interactive word wall strategy. Several of the participants affirmed that a disadvantage was that the strategy was more difficult. Ali said, "I think the interactive word wall is too much work and too hard just to learn vocabulary." Although several students concluded that the strategy was challenging, they voiced that the intervention was useful. Jake concluded the discussion by stating, "Some of the assignments were difficult, but they did help me learn the terms." Four of the participants agreed with Jake's statement.

Retention. An analysis of students' response included content vocabulary comprehension supports. The student-participants perceived the interactive word wall as a strategy that supports their comprehension of content vocabulary. Parker stated, "I learn by looking at pictures, so the images and drawings helped me remember the terms." When asked what were the advantages of the IWW, students referred to the actual word wall. Students stated that they were able to remember the content terms because "the word walls did not only have the terms, but also the meaning and examples of how to use the word." Although the word wall was not visible during the posttest, students stated that they frequently looked at the word wall during the six-week study. Therefore, they were

able to retain the content vocabulary before the test was administered. Henry said, "I remembered the definitions because I looked at the wall so much during class."

Students indicated that they were also able to comprehend the terms because the interactive word wall included examples that were relevant. David detailed, "I was able to remember the terms because we used real examples. It is easier to remember vocabulary when we can relate it to something we already know." The student-participants agreed that their acquisition of content vocabulary increased because they were able to refer to the wall and use real word examples. When the student-participants were asked how they felt about the interactive word wall strategy, 100% of the participants stated that learning content vocabulary is typically difficult, but the interactive strategies made it an easier task. Mia stated, "I felt like I was prepared for the test." One student stated, "I was able to use some of the words in my ELA class." The analysis of the semi-formal interview supports the idea that students can retain content vocabulary when teachers use an interactive version of the word wall.

Conclusion

Literary scholars suggest implementing WWs in the classroom to support students' acquisition of content vocabulary. The WW strategy was used in the classroom, but I noticed that students were not mastering their vocabulary terms with the current use of the strategy. I conducted an action research study to investigate the impact an interactive version of the WW would have on student comprehension. I used a small sample size (n=12) that represented the overall population of the students. The 12

students were diverse in their race, gender, socio-economic status, and cognitive ability. I used quantitative and qualitative methods during the action research process.

The quantitative and qualitative data indicated that student engagement and comprehension was positively related to the IWW implementation. For the one-group pretest-posttest, 11 out of the 12 participants' scores increased following the IWW implementation. One student decreased by 10 points. The average from the pretest increased 27.51%. In addition to vocabulary acquisition, student participant interviews and teacher observation notes showed that students were also more engaged when IWW strategies were used. Overall the results were positive, and the analyzation of the data indicated a likely success with the implementation of the IWW vocabulary activity.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Five begins with a summary of the study indicating the problem of practice. The introduction is followed by a brief discussion of the major points of the study and what was revealed throughout the action research process. Implications of the findings are discussed followed by suggestions for future research. Finally, there is a discussion of the action plan that was developed. The action plan will be shared with other teachers in the school.

The retention of content vocabulary is a difficult task for students. Teachers often present the content terms to students at the beginning of the unit of study and expect students to retain the terms for summative assessments. Teachers use traditional WWs in their classrooms as a method to help students retain their content vocabulary. Unfortunately, the current use of the WW was not successful in a history classroom. Data suggests that students were not retaining the content terms. This study examined the impact of the use of the IWW in a history classroom. The IWW differs from the traditional use WW because students are expected to engage in the creation and use of the WW when it is interactive. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected to measure the effectiveness of the IWW. To examine the effectiveness of a vocabulary enhancement strategy, the following research questions are presented: *What are the effects of an IWW enhancement strategy on the retention of social studies vocabulary and student engagement when implemented in an eighth-grade social studies class?*

Overview and Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the IWW strategy on the acquisition of content vocabulary in an eighth-grade history course. I recognized that although I was using WWs in my classroom, students were not retaining the content words. As a history teacher who recognizes the importance of content words, I designed this action research to determine if students' acquisition of content words would increase with a more engaging form of the traditional WW. I used various IWW strategies throughout the unit of study.

I collected data for six weeks during the 2017-2018 school year with one section of my South Carolina history course in a rural school district. The 12 student participants were a sample that represented the population of all the students that I teach. The students vary in academic ability, sex, race, and socio-economic status.

Students participated in a survey that helped identify the students' perception of vocabulary strategies. A pretest was also administered at the beginning of the six-week study. During the implementation of the IWW, I observed the student-participants. I also made interpretations from the observations. At the end of the six-week study, each participant completed a posttest. The posttest was the same test students took at the beginning of the study. The study concluded with students participating in a formal interview. I asked a series of open-ended questions to assess students' perception of the IWWs as it relates to their retention of content vocabulary.

The study revealed that vocabulary acquisition was positively related to the implementation of the IWW strategy. Three themes emerged during data collection (a) the impact on the comprehension level of the participants, (b) the increased level of

student engagement, and (c) students' perception of the intervention. Each of the themes offered understanding in response to the research question about the impact of the interactive word wall strategy on vocabulary acquisition.

Students acquire content vocabulary when interactive word wall strategies are used in a history classroom. Eleven of the twelve student-participants saw an increase in their posttest scores. In addition, the average score increased from 41.88% to 69.17% showing a 27.29% improvement. In addition to assessment scores, observation notes and semi-formal interviews indicated that students retained content vocabulary when interactive strategies are introduced. There was also an increase in student engagement. An analysis of observation notes showed

Implications of the Findings

The literature review for this study included Piaget's (1929) Cognitive Development, Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development, Edgerton (2001) Pedagogies of Engagement, and Ladson-Billings (1995) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to determine whether the IWW implementation impacted content vocabulary retention. The researches theorized that students retain information when they are engaged in content that is relevant. There have been several studies that seek to identify the impact engaging activities have on vocabulary comprehension. The goal of this study was to identify the impact the IWW, an engaging strategy, had on the comprehension of content vocabulary. Data analysis suggested that the strategy had a positive impact on the acquisition of content vocabulary in a Social Studies classroom. The implications of the findings include significant increases in comprehension level and student engagement.

The study group showed an increase in comprehension on the one-group pretest-posttest. Eleven of the twelve student-participant performed better on the posttest than they did on the pretest. One student's score remained the same, but none of the students showed a decrease in their comprehension level. The posttest scores indicated a positive correlation between the IWW strategies and content vocabulary comprehension.

Furthermore, students showed an increase in engagement. The Likert Scale survey was administered before the implementation of the IWW. The Likert scale survey responses signified that students perceived the use of WW as useless and unengaging. Students indicated that they learn better when they are engaged in the lesson and activities are interactive. IWW strategies were used during the American Revolution unit and students were observed. The data collected from observation notes showed a theme of engagement. Students exemplified signs of relational engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement. The noted student engagement was not prevalent before the implementation of the IWW strategies. In addition to observation notes, a semi-formal interview showed a change in students' perception of the IWW and vocabulary instruction. Students made positive comments about IWW strategies. An analysis of the students' comments revealed three overarching themes. Students stated the IWW was engaging, challenging, and helped with their comprehension. The observation notes and interview exposed a positive correlation between IWW strategies and student engagement.

It seems there is a connection between interactive and engaging strategies and vocabulary comprehension, and this study showed an apparent link between IWW implementation and content vocabulary comprehension in a Social Studies classroom.

The use of word walls was not making a positive impact. This study built upon the knowledge of word walls and familiarity with student engagement theories to see an improvement in vocabulary acquisition. The research question was answered: an increase in vocabulary acquisition is positively related to incorporating IWW strategies.

Methodological Limitations

Methodological limitations are limitations that impact the data collection process. A possible limitation of the study is the design of the study. Addressing the limitations in the methodology could increase the validity of the data collection. I chose to collect quantitative data by administering a pre-test before the intervention. Before completing the pretest students asked if the assessment was graded. Students in this section of South Carolina history are extrinsically motivated by grades. Students in this class rarely complete an assignment if it does not affect their average. They are also less likely to perform well on a test that is not graded. Several students received low scores on the pretest. Perhaps students did not perform well because they knew the assignment would not impact their grade. Future studies might use a different approach in which data is collected using a more formative assessment.

Students also were aware that they would complete the same test at the end of the study. I mentioned that the goal of the study was to demonstrate an increase in vocabulary acquisition. Perhaps, students' knowledge of the goal influenced their pretest and posttest score. It is possible that students scored low on the pretest, so they could show an increase in their vocabulary acquisition. To ensure validity, future studies could omit the disclosure to the participants that the pretest and posttest will be graded. In addition to mentioning the overall goal of the test, a different assessment could increase

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the validity of study. Students completed a multiple-choice assessment. Edgerton (2001) suggested that teachers should not depend on multiple choice test to acquire assessment data. He states that students do not only have a 25% chance of guessing the correct answer, but multiple-choice questions also tend to rely on students' acquisition of facts. Students typically do not have to use higher level thinking skills to answer multiple choice questions. Collecting data from an authentic assessment could provide better insight on students' comprehension of content vocabulary.

Another present methodological limitation that possibly influenced the data and findings of the study was the focus group interview. I chose to conduct a focus group interview rather than individual interviews due to time restraints. Focus group interviews allow the researcher to simultaneously interview a small group of people. I initially perceived the focus group interview as the best option; however, it was evident that the participants mimicked others' comments. There was a tendency for one or two participants to dominate the discussion. When I prompted other individuals to share, they simply replied, "I agree." Hearing individual perspectives could provide additional findings. Due to the age and level of the students, a semi-structured interview could increase the validity of the responses.

Lastly, the research setting and sample size were limitations. I was allotted eight weeks to implement the study because this is an action research study. Eight weeks is a limited time in the field. Perhaps if I had a longer time to implement the strategy and administer multiple assessments, I would acquire valuable information. In addition to the limited time-frame, the study was only conducted in my classroom. Although the sample size was diverse, it would be beneficial to see how the IWW strategy impacts students

beyond my classroom. The class size used in this study was also a limitation. The action research was implemented in a class of 12 students. The students in the class was diverse in their race, gender, socio-status, and abilities; however, a larger sample size would offer more perspectives and insight. An increase in the sample, duration of the study, and a change in research setting could improve the validity of the study.

Suggestions for Future Research

Recall that the purpose of this study was to identify the impact the interactive word wall strategy had on the retention of academic vocabulary. The research aligned with the purpose of the study, but as the study concluded, several questions surfaced. Qualitative data analysis revealed that several of the students were kinesthetic learners and preferred a hands-on approach to learning. A few of the students in the classroom stated that they preferred a more traditional way of learning content vocabulary. The strategies used in the study were more appealing to the kinesthetic learners. A question for future research is: how does the interactive word wall strategy impact learners from various learning domains? The data is not categorized by the types of learners. It would be interesting and beneficial to know how the intervention impacts various learners.

Another area for future research is to identify the impact the intervention period has on vocabulary acquisition. The researcher can begin the study by administering a pretest before incorporating the use of the interactive word wall strategies. The researcher can then administer several posttests over the course of the action research. Students, in this study, participated in six weeks of vocabulary instruction. However, most units are not six weeks long.

In addition, future researchers can provide invaluable information about vocabulary instruction by identifying the impact the interactive word wall has on long term retention. The tendency to remember an item in the last position is the **recency effect** (Murphy, J., Hofacker, C., & Mizerski. R. 2006). It is easier for students to recall academic vocabulary if the test is administered as soon as they finish the unit of study (Murphy et al., 2006). However, the goal of vocabulary acquisition is for students to maintain the terms in their long-term memory. This action research is restricted to a short time frame. However, future researchers can identify the long-term effect of the interactive word wall (IWW) strategy by collecting data months after the IWW intervention.

Lastly, future research may also involve a larger population and a different assessment. This study could be conducted in an urban school setting, a special education course, or a gifted and talented course. A diverse set of students and teachers could present new or similar findings. It would be valuable to understand how the interactive word wall strategy impacts various groups. I also used a multiple-choice assessment to identify students' comprehension level following the intervention. Edgerton (2001) made a point that multiple choice tests are not the best form of a formative assessment. He stated that students perform well on multiple choice assessments because they are required to recall facts. Students also have a 25% chance of simply selecting the correct answer. He suggested using authentic forms of assessment where students have to use higher-level thinking skills to prove they acquired the content. Future researchers can use a larger population and a different assessment to measure student comprehension.

Action Plan

Action research is designed with the idea that some type of action will result from the study (Johnson, 2008). I developed an action plan that will occur on several levels within the educational setting. The action plan will occur at the individual, team, and district levels. The results of this action research support the idea that the acquisition of academic vocabulary may increase when teachers integrate interactive strategies to teach academic vocabulary.

Using the information, classroom teachers, history teachers, school administrators, and district curriculum planners would be interested in the research findings that provide evidence that students acquire content vocabulary when teachers incorporate the use of IWWs. On the individual level, I will focus on my instructional practices. I focused on the American Revolution unit for this action research study. Since the implementation of the IWW strategy showed gains in the acquisition of content terms for the American Revolution unit, I will use IWW strategies on a regular basis for each unit of study. The IWW strategies were incorporated throughout the lesson in each class.

At a team level, I will include other history teachers. Teachers at the middle school where the action research study took place are required to attend department level professional development workshops on literacy strategies. I plan to meet with the school-based administer and present the findings of the study and present professional development workshops on how to implement IWWs in classrooms. I will begin the workshops with presenting the research findings and then provide IWW strategies that history teachers can use in their classroom. The hope is that the implementation of the IWW on a regular basis will lead to students learning their content vocabulary. With the

improved acquisition of content words, students will begin to perform better on standardized tests and school-wide scores will increase.

Finally, I will present the data findings to the district social studies coordinator. The district coordinator introduced WWs to all social studies teachers and suggested that the WWs be displayed. Unfortunately, the current use of the WW is not beneficial, and I would like to share the positive findings pertaining to the interactive approach to WWs. I will inform the district coordinator that educators can improve the WW strategy by making it interactive. I will highlight the increase in the test scores and the positive feedback received from the students at the conclusion of the action research. In addition to sharing the results of the study, I will share the list of strategies that was used throughout the study. The list of strategies, along with their directions, will be shared with all of the district's social studies teachers.

Mertler (2014) described the action research community as one made up of various professionals in the educational field who are driven by a common goal (p. 247). The findings from this action research process can be further examined as school-based and districtwide leaders begin to use the strategies to enhance vocabulary retention. This action research has the potential to expand beyond my classroom.

Conclusion

Teaching for long-term retention is a crucial part of an educator's job. One goal of an educator is to find successful strategies to help students retain the information learned in their class (Nemati, 2013). With the goal of teaching students' academic vocabulary for their long-term retention, teachers can incorporate strategies that will help students acquire academic vocabulary.

Vocabulary development is necessary in a social studies classroom because the terms help students understand essential ideas and concepts (Graham, Graham & West, 2015). Unfortunately, a challenge facing history teachers is how to develop strategies that will help students achieve proficiency in content area vocabulary. This study explored the importance of vocabulary development in a social studies classroom and offered a multimodal approach to teaching vocabulary. As demonstrated in this study, interactive ways of teaching vocabulary provide opportunities for students to engage in learning content vocabulary and promote independence in reading and writing by building vocabulary (Manyak, Gunten, Autenrieth, Gillis, & Mastre-O'Farrell, 2014). Students can use higher levels of thinking to contextualize and acquire content specific vocabulary. Acquisition of content vocabulary should be a skill for improvement for students in a social studies classroom.

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APPENDIX A

PARENTAL CONSENT

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I am a student at the University of South Carolina. I am seeking a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction. I will be conducting an action research study by observing and assessing my eighth-grade South Carolina history students. My research is designed to increase students' retention of academic vocabulary using an interactive word wall strategy (IWW). Students will not be required to do anything outside of their normal classroom assignments. Students will be assessed using pre-tests and post-tests. In addition to formative assessments, student will write daily journals about their engagement using IWWs. The identity of students will remain confidential and will be changed to report the results of this action research study. Your consent to use your child's work is voluntary. Please complete the bottom portion of this form by February1st, 2018.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ms. Paketrice Jones, Doctoral Candidate '18

_____

By signing below, I give my permission for Ms. Jones to use my child's work as part of this study.

Parent/Guardian's name: _____ Child's name:

_____

  Parent/Guardian's signature: _____

STUDENT-PARTICIPANT QUESTIONAIRE

Student-participant Questionnaire: Please answer the following questions by circling the response that best describes you. If you STRONGLY DISAGREE with a statement, circle 1. If you DISAGREE circle 2. If you are UNCERTAIN or UNSURE circle 3. If you AGREE circle 4, and if you STRONGLY AGREE circle 5. There are no right or wrong answers. Choose your answers quickly. Do not think about a question too long.

1. I usually study for vocabulary tests.	**1 2 3 4 5**
2. My teacher uses word walls to teach vocabulary.	**1 2 3 4 5**
3. I use context clues to determine the meaning of a word.	**1 2 3 4 5**
4. It is easy for me to learn vocabulary in History class.	**1 2 3 4 5**
5. I learn best when information is presented visually.	**1 2 3 4 5**
6. I use the word wall displayed in my teacher's classroom.	**1 2 3 4 5**
7. I learn best by completing an activity.	**1 2 3 4 5**
8. I learn best when my peers teach me the content.	**1 2 3 4 5**
9. I would retain the meaning of my vocabulary words if I interacted with them in class.	**1 2 3 4 5**
10. I benefit from academic vocabulary being posted in the classroom.	**1 2 3 4 5**
11. I learn best when content is presented in multiple formats.	**1 2 3 4 5**
12. I learn vocabulary best when I am engaged.	**1 2 3 4 5**
13. I understand the importance of vocabulary in a History class.	**1 2 3 4 5**
14. I learn vocabulary when I am able to create visual representations to define the word.	**1 2 3 4 5**
15. I use the words I learn in history class in my other classes.	**1 2 3 4 5**

APPENDIX C

FORMAL INTERVIEW

Student Gender _____ Student Name _____

Content vocabulary is something that you learn in every academic course. Today I am
going to ask you how you feel about the learning and recalling of content vocabulary
using interactive word wall strategies.

1. How do you feel about learning new content vocabulary?

2. What makes learning content words difficult? Why?

3. Would you rather learn content vocabulary throughout a unit using interactive word
wall strategies or learn all of the terms before the unit? explain

4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using interactive word wall strategies to
learn content vocabulary?

5. After learning content vocabulary using the IWW strategies, how do you feel about
IWWs?

APPENDIX D

LIST OF AMERICAN REVOLUTION TERMS

1. Impose

2. Mercantilism

3. Parliament

4. Merchant

5. Policy

6. Repeal

7. Loyalist

8. Patriot

9. Duty

10. Parliament

11. Boycott

12. Bombardment

13. Partisan

14. Militia

15. Guerilla warfare

1. Why did many colonists believe the new taxes imposed by the British government were unfair? 8-2.2
    a. They did not apply to all British colonists.
    b. Colonists did not have representation in Parliament.
    c. The laws were designed to deregulate trade.
    d. British merchants were taxed at a higher rate.

2. During the French and Indian War, how did the British change their policy towards the colonies?
    a. They began to enforce the policy of mercantilism
    b. They allowed the colonists more freedom to trade
    c. They forced colonists to pay taxes to Great Britain.
    d. They did not allow colonists to serve in the military

3. Why did Parliament repeal the Stamp Act and most of the Townshend duties?
    a. British merchants were hurt by the colonists' boycott.
    b. The King ordered Parliament to repeal the taxes
    c. Colonial merchants were hurt by the boycott
    d. The Sons of Liberty protested the taxes.

4. During the Revolutionary War, which activities would a Loyalist/Tory have participated in? (8-2.4)
    a. housing Patriot soldiers
    b. joining the Continental Army
    c. speaking in support of the English King
    d. writing a pamphlet protesting the Stamp Act

5. How can the British bombardment of Charles Town in May of 1780 be described as a siege?
    a. Loyalists fought against Patriots in the city.
    b. Partisans used guerilla warfare to ambush the British in the city.
    c. British troops surrounded the city and cut off Patriot supply lines.
    d. Patriot soldiers fought to change the government of the colony.

6. The North American colonies took advantage of Great Britain's policy of salutary neglect to
    a. establish religious freedom as a fundamental right

b. work out trade arrangements to acquire needed products from other countries
c. introduce the practice of slavery into the New World
d. establish a standing army

7. How can the role of partisans during the American Revolution best be described?
   a. were messengers for British troops
   b. cared for wounded Patriot soldiers
   c. fought the British using guerilla war tactics
   d. served in the Continental Congress

8. Which of the following best describes the "militia" or "partisan" soldier during the American revolutions?
   a. claims to be loyal to one side but is actually spying for the opposing side
   b. forced to fight for the army but does not agree with the cause
   c. travels with the army but does not carry a weapon
   d. trained to fight as a soldier but is not part of the regular army

9. James is a South Carolina colonist living in Charles Town. He does not like the new taxes, but he remains loyal to King George III. He does not support the idea of independence from Great Britain. Which group would he MOST likely support?
   a. Loyalists
   b. Partisans
   c. Patriots
   d. Sons of Liberty

10. Why did many colonists believe the new duties imposed by the British government were unfair?
    a. They did not apply to all British colonists.
    b. Colonists did not have representation in Parliament.
    c. They were difficult to perform.
    d. British merchants were taxed at a higher rate.

APPENDIX F

LIST OF INTERATIVE WORD WALL STRATEGIES

Whole Group Activities

1. **Word Wall Creation**- Groups take ownership of one of the content words. Each group contributes to the WW by adding term and images to the wall .
2. **Hot Seat** (whole group)- Teacher or a student selects a word from the WW. The word is written on the board behind the student, unable to see the word. The student in the hot seat has to ask a series of questions to correctly guess the word.
3. **Circle Rotation**- The teacher divides the class into two groups to form an inner and outer circle. For the first 15 seconds, the student in the inner circle asks a prepared vocabulary question to the student who they are facing. If the outer circle student correctly answer the questions they receive a point.
4. **Guess my word**- Students are divided into two teams. One student from one team comes to the front of the class, chooses a word from the basket, and describes the word without using it. Whichever team yells out the correct word first earns a point. The next student to describe a word comes from the other team, and so on. Whichever team has the most points when time is called wins. You may wish to limit each team to two or three guesses per turn.
5. **That's Sketchy**- Students are divided into teams. One student from one team comes to the front of the class, chooses a word from the basket, and draws a picture representation of the word without writing any letters. Whichever team yells out the correct word first earns a point. The next student to draw a word comes from the other team, and so on. Whichever team has the most points when time is called wins. You may wish to limit each team to two or three guesses per turn.
6. **Making Choices**- The teacher poses different characteristics of a term to the students. If the term relates to the term, the student says the word. However, if it does not the students remain silent.

Small Group Activities
1. **Conversation Competition**- Students are assigned a partner. When the teacher says "go" the students stand up and have a conversation with their partner. The students must use a certain amount of the terms in their conversation. Once they use the designated number of terms, they sit down. The activity continues until all students are sitting.
2. **Article Detectives**- The teacher hands students a set of texts. Students will find a picture or article that relates to the word of the week or the assigned term.

Individual Activities
1. **Word of the Day-** The teacher identifies a term of the day each day of the unit. Students must try to use the word in the correct context throughout the class period.
2. **Maximum Words-** Students create a story and uses as many words as possible. Words must be used in the correct context.
3. **List-group-label-** Students must use their higher level thinking skill to classify/label each term.
4. **Concept Ladder (Graphic Organizer)-** Students place a word at the top of a ladder image. Students fill in information about different aspects of the word as they complete the ladder.
5. **Concept Wheel (Graphic Organizer)-** Students draw a circle on a sheet of paper and divide it into four squares. The student scribes different information in different parts of the circle. For example, a word from the wall they want to understand better, a list of words they think of when they hear the word from the wall, a formal definition of the term, the term in their words.

APPENDIX G

TEACHER-RESEARCHER OBSERVATION NOTES

Date: Time:	List all of the student observed behaviors that may impact vocabulary retention	List all of the student observed behaviors that show the level of student engagement when using the IWW strategy	Interpretations of the observed behaviors

APPENDIX H

POST-TEST

1. Why did many colonists believe the new taxes imposed by the British government were unfair? 8-2.2
    a. They did not apply to all British colonists.
    b. Colonists did not have representation in Parliament.
    c. The laws were designed to deregulate trade.
    d. British merchants were taxed at a higher rate.

2. During the French and Indian War, how did the British change their policy towards the colonies?
    a. They began to enforce the policy of mercantilism
    b. They allowed the colonists more freedom to trade
    c. They forced colonists to pay taxes to Great Britain.
    d. They did not allow colonists to serve in the military

3. Why did Parliament repeal the Stamp Act and most of the Townshend duties?
    a. British merchants were hurt by the colonists' boycott.
    b. The King ordered Parliament to repeal the taxes
    c. Colonial merchants were hurt by the boycott
    d. The Sons of Liberty protested the taxes.

4. During the Revolutionary War, which activities would a Loyalist/Tory have participated in? (8-2.4)
    a. housing Patriot soldiers
    b. joining the Continental Army
    c. speaking in support of the English King
    d. writing a pamphlet protesting the Stamp Act

5. How can the British bombardment of Charles Town in May of 1780 be described as a siege?
    a. Loyalists fought against Patriots in the city.
    b. Partisans used guerilla warfare to ambush the British in the city.
    c. British troops surrounded the city and cut off Patriot supply lines.
    d. Patriot soldiers fought to change the government of the colony.

6. The North American colonies took advantage of Great Britain's policy of salutary neglect to

a. establish religious freedom as a fundamental right
b. work out trade arrangements to acquire needed products from other countries
c. introduce the practice of slavery into the New World
d. establish a standing army

7. How can the role of partisans during the American Revolution best be described?
    a. were messengers for British troops
    b. cared for wounded Patriot soldiers
    c. fought the British using guerilla war tactics
    d. served in the Continental Congress

8. Which of the following best describes the "militia" or "partisan" soldier during the American revolutions?
    a. claims to be loyal to one side but is actually spying for the opposing side
    b. forced to fight for the army but does not agree with the cause
    c. travels with the army but does not carry a weapon
    d. trained to fight as a soldier but is not part of the regular army

9. James is a South Carolina colonist living in Charles Town. He does not like the new taxes, but he remains loyal to King George III. He does not support the idea of independence from Great Britain. Which group would he MOST likely support?
    a. Loyalists
    b. Partisans
    c. Patriots
    d. Sons of Liberty

10. Why did many colonists believe the new duties imposed by the British government were unfair?
    a. They did not apply to all British colonists.
    b. Colonists did not have representation in Parliament.
    c. They were difficult to perform.
    d. British merchants were taxed at a higher rate.