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## Supporting the African American Prekindergarten Student Through Standard Academic English Instruction

Trent Gibson Rogerson

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SUPPORTING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN  
PREKINDERGARTEN STUDENT THROUGH STANDARD ACADEMIC ENGLISH  
INSTRUCTION

by

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## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the ones who never gave up on me and always believed in me.

Thank you for your love, support, and encouragement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my children, Grayson and Halen, for inspiring me to be the best version of myself. Thank you for always believing in me and challenging me. You make me want to be a better person. Being your mom will always be my favorite. I would like to thank my husband, Kris, who never gave up on me during this process. You always thought I could do this and would always encourage me to push through. I got here with your support. I would like to thank the voices that have come before me to break silences and cycles, those who seek to correct history and tell the truth to improve the future. I would like to thank those who have known and encouraged me in this journey. Thank you for your patience and tolerance as I stumble in my journey of anti-racist work. I hope I continue to be worthy of the trust placed in me to correct narratives, dismantle systems, and fight inequalities.

## ABSTRACT

The objective for this research was to determine if prekindergarten African American students would show gains on English language assessments after receiving targeted Standard Academic English instruction. The research question asks, “How can a specialized English language intervention be utilized to identify the strengths and areas of improvement for African American preschool students?” The hypothesis was the students who received targeted instruction in Standard Academic English would perform better on the post-test than on the pre-test given before the instruction period. For this study, eight prekindergarten students were allowed to participate in the research. The students were administered an English Language proficiency screen. The students also received an age-appropriate speech language screener on English grammar as a pre-intervention assessment. The students participated in small group language instruction focused on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. After 20 small group sessions, the students were administered a post-intervention assessment. As part of this study, four parents participated in a parent survey on perceived student language ability, language instruction at school, and language instruction at home. All the students who participated were recognized as proficient English speakers from the initial English Language Proficiency screen. Additionally, each student demonstrated improvement from the pre- and post-data assessments. Because the study sample and the score variance was small, a descriptive analysis was completed. The students did show improvement in all areas of grammar from pre- and post-assessments. The parent information was very supportive of the

preschool instruction the students received. All the parents expressed the importance of modeling and using standard English at home and school.

**Keywords:** African American English, Standard Academic English, Language Acquisition, Prekindergarten Language, Language Intervention, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAE .....	African American English
AAVE .....	African American Vernacular English
AAV .....	African American Vernacular
CRP .....	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
CRT .....	Culturally Relevant Teaching
ELL .....	English Language Learner
ESOL .....	English for Speakers of Other Languages
LEP .....	Limited English Proficient
MSE .....	Mainstream Standardized English
ME .....	Mainstream English
SAE .....	Standard Academic English
TESOL .....	Teachers for English Speakers of Other Languages

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

African American English (AAE) is an example of one of the many English dialects spoken in America. AAE is recognized as an English language dialect with its own rules and patterns (Baines et al., 2018; Boutte, 2016; Craig & Hensel, 2014). Standard Academic English (SAE) and AAE are unique dialects with shared features, and each should be valued independently (Boutte, 2015). AAE and SAE dialects are connected, but AAE “morphosyntactics, phonological, lexical, prosodic, and discourse features differ considerably from SAE” (Baines et al., 2018; Boutte, 2016; Craig et al., 2004, p. 142). Students who spend from birth to five years old raised in AAE homes, communities, churches, daycares, and with generations of AAE-speaking family members can learn AAE as their primary dialect of English (Young et al., 2014). For students who begin school using this English dialect, SAE could be the second dialect they learn (Craig et al., 2014; Morales & Harman, 2019; Stockman, 2010).

In this regard, “Our goal as educators is to respect and extend whatever languages children speak. It is important that we help children add SAE to their language repertoires without denigrating the home language” (Boutte, p. 39). Learning specific language skills and rules requires targeted instruction.

There are many strengths students bring to the classroom when they speak another dialect or have experiences in another language or culture than the school setting (Raz,



2013). Students who are becoming bidialectal or bicultural have experiences and language strengths that can add to the general curriculum and shared experiences in the learning setting (Baines et al., 2018). Schools need to recognize and value the diversity of all the students in the classroom, and that learning an additional dialect other than the home or family dialect should have added value (Boutte, 2016; Morales & Hartman, 2019). Students who become bidialectal or bicultural learn communication skills allowing them to interact in both languages and cultures (Ellis, 2008). Students learning a different language than the home or family language should not be seen as limited, but rather as emergent bilinguals and “linguistically adept” (Boutte, 2015; Connor & Craig, 2006, p. 781; Morales & Hartman, 2019).

### **Problem of Practice**

All students are not evaluated on their Standard Academic English needs, and therefore do not qualify for language services even though the need might exist, and students raised to speak another dialect or language can perform lower on kindergarten readiness than their peers (Anthony & Kritsonis, 2006; Delpit, 2006). Many students could benefit from targeted Standard Academic English language instruction (Malec et al., 2017; Mashburn et al., 2009). Additionally, English language assessments can be used to identify the strengths and areas of improvement in the language learning process (Malec et al., 2017; Moll et al., 1992). The problem of practice addressed in this research addresses the need for targeted English language instruction for all preschool students. More specifically, this specific research offers English language assessments and intervention to African American preschool students, who might not typically receive SAE services in order to identify areas of growth relative to SAE.

### **Research Question**

The research questions were the following: (1) How can a specialized English language intervention be utilized to identify the strengths and areas of improvement for African American preschool students? (2) Does the English language intervention influence skill development in African American Students in the areas of past tense verbs, regular plurals, and personal pronouns? (3) How do African American parents influence the English Language development of students preparing to enter kindergarten? These research questions guided the study as it evaluated the intervention's success based on the students' performances on English language assessments. The preschool language assessments evaluated students' English language grammar and student growth in preschool language skills.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to determine if English language assessments and language services can be utilized with African American preschool students to identify areas of strength and areas improvement in English language skills. To ensure success with the SAE curriculum, teachers should be equipped to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogies (CRP) while working with their students (Cummins, 2015; Gien & Nel, 2018). CRP strategies include instructional practices that value the home culture of the students (Boutte, 2015; Scharf, 2014). When utilizing CRT strategies, teachers demonstrate awareness of the students' backgrounds, family cultures, and learning styles (Baines et al., 2018). Teachers also provide literacy text that represent the students and provide opportunities to interact with the text to make meaningful, culturally relevant connections (Brooks & McNair, 2009). When teachers recognize students' culture and

language as valued and significant to the classroom, the students feel valued (Gay, 1985; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The relationships with their teachers and peers make their learning experiences richer for language learners (Delpit, 2006).

“There needs to be a major shift from the subtle “pathology and deficit” model that is inherent in the failed compensatory education approach” (Anthony & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 1). Valuing language diversity and culture is a paradigm shift for some school and community cultures (Scharf, 2014). It goes beyond multicultural education and includes a welcoming acceptance of our differences. Canagarajah (2006) wrote about Global English and the varieties of English spoken across the world. He writes about the intentionality of code-switching between “Metropolitan” Englishes and the “native” varieties. He introduced “code meshing,” a way of adding language into the growing fluid body of work we use when interacting with each other as a human race (Canagarajah, 2001; Devereaux & Wheeler, 2012). “Every time a teacher insists on a uniform variety of language or discourse, we are helping reproduce monolingualist ideologies and linguistic hierarchies” (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 587). Supporting Boutte’s work in language equality, schools must value all students’ home languages to keep students from feeling their language is less than SAE (Rymes & Anderson, 2004). Canagarajah (2006) wrote, “Valuing the varieties that matter to students can lessen the inhibitions against dominant codes, reduce the exclusive status of those codes, and enable students to accommodate them in their repertoire of Englishes” (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 592).

## Theoretical Framework

This research is framed in theory using Paulo Freire's theory on education as liberation and Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Working within the context that educators can provide the language and tools, learners can have equitable access to education (Freire, 1970; Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993). Freire deconstructed a privileged educational system where people were oppressed and limited by what knowledge they were given (Freire, 1970). Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory includes the fundamental role social interaction plays in language development (Mayer, 2008). Vygotsky believed in the importance of cultural and social aspects of learning, language development, and transmitting of language by adults (Mahn, 2012; Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993).

“Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue with the world, with the world and with each other” (Freire, 1970, p. 58). Paulo Freire's words in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* spoke to learning opportunities when individuals can pursue knowledge with the world and with each other. Freire challenged that all learners are more than “containers to be filled” and “banking” concepts in education work to oppress learners and strengthen the class system (Freire, 1970, p. 58). “The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them” (Freire, 1970, p. 60).

As teachers become advocates for social justice and equitable access to the power of education, the educator's role shifts from an oppressor to that of a liberator (Brass et al., 1985). Freire explained,

The teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (Freire, 1970, p. 67)

Within this work of finding and creating access points to SAE and the power that comes with speaking the language of the hegemony, educators become liberators (Roberts, 1998).

According to Lev Vygotsky, as cited in Mahn (2012), through the speaking/thinking system of the child's brain, the child begins to make meaning of his sociocultural world. Vygotsky examined the processes through which a child develops and creates meaning through the acquisition and use of language. He viewed the speaking/thinking system as a "unified psychological formation as a complex mental whole" (Mahn, 2012, p. 102). Vygotsky further expounded on the development of meaning and process by which developmental, mental functions are shaped by socio-cultural situations in infants' and children's environments (Mayer, 2008). These early interactions are the foundations for the acquisition of language. Vygotsky's speaking/thinking system had "two basic functions of speech—revealing reality in a generalized way and communicating meaning in social interaction" (Mahn, 2012, p. 106).

Vygotsky was interested in the cultural development of individuals and the acquisition of the ability to communicate through language, and he argued that children do not have to "create or invent their language, [children] draw on the developed language around them...speech is based on systems of meaning captured as socio-cultural meaning in human knowledge and understanding" (Mahn, 2012, p. 116). Using

Vygotsky's work as support, students coming into the SAE classrooms could have fully developed a home language drawing on the language spoken around them (Mahn, 2012; Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993). They have created meaning and acquired language through their socio-cultural world in their brief but incredibly formative birth to five years of age (Bylund, 2011; Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993).

### **Overview of Methodology**

This project is an action research study using convergent parallel mixed-methods research with a transformative worldview. Action research can be used with qualitative and quantitative data to gain deeper understanding about a problem of practice (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The researcher can connect theory and practice to influence change when using action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This study uses multiple methods to collect data, including quantitative data sources (pre- and post-test language scores) and qualitative data sources (surveys). Action research takes a transformative worldview because "the research contains an action agenda for reform that may change the participants' lives, the institutions in which individuals work or live and the researcher's life" (Crestwell, 2014, p. 38), aspiring for the "knowledge is transferred to someone in a receiving context that is similar to the sending context that produced the study" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 6).

All prekindergarten students in the child development center were invited to participate in the study. Parents were required to give permission for the minor child to participate. Students who were permitted received traditional English Language support services offered by a certified teacher. The teacher taught SAE using the methods used in teaching second language acquisition. For this study, the services were for a

predetermined length of time. There was a parent survey about language and perception of language at home and the students' language development at home.

The participants involved in the study were prekindergarten students between the ages of four and five years old at ABC Academy [pseudonym]. The preschool was in a suburban area of West Columbia, SC. The private child development center was on the campus of a large church. While the preschool was supported by the church, the participants of this study were traditional students, and their parents paid tuition to attend. The students who were in the prekindergarten classroom also attended the preschool in the three-year-old program. The study began in April and ran for eight weeks.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research study was relevant to educational research and best practices because it evaluates the language abilities of young African American students to determine if targeted direct instruction increased English grammar accuracy. Language intervention services were chosen for this study because it is often used as the service model for ELL students (Krahnke & Christison, 1983). The intended audience for this study was district-level administrators, school level administrators and curriculum resource personnel. Educators need to be aware of home language diversity and the critical importance of directly teaching the English Language. (Gien & Nel 2018; Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017). This research study explored an expanded use of the targeted instruction of English, and specifically teaching English grammar to preschool students. This study asked the following questions: What if the achievement gap can be narrowed by explicitly teaching Standard Academic English to all preschool students? How can language assessments be used to recognize the strengths of African

American students as well as identifying areas for improvement? Can language assessment services extend beyond the ELL populations?

### **Limitations of the Study**

Before the study began, there were certain limitations. Before the study began, there were certain limitations. One such limitation was the COVID-19 global pandemic that effected schools. Public schools were not allowing outside visitors to the school to work with small groups, and the original location for the research was no longer available. Most daycares and preschool centers were not allowing guests to enter their facility and interventionist were having to work virtually with students. Because of concerns about virus transmission there was very limited access to working directly (face to face) with students. It took several months to locate a center that would allow the researcher to work with students in the center. The participating preschool center required the researcher have at least one COVID-19 vaccine to begin the research. The COVID-19 global pandemic effected the research site and the subject availability for this research.

Another limitation was the number of students that participated in the study. There were 16 students in the combined four-year-old preschool class. Participation in the study required parent approval. A total of eight parents agreed for their children to participate in the study; thus, a small group impacted the amount of data collected. Consequently, the study results are not generalizable to larger populations.

Another significant limitation of the study was that language ability could not be determined until the students were allowed to participate and tested. Of the group of students within this research study, none needed language services. The students collectively demonstrated a high level of language proficiency.



## **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter One introduces this action research project by stating the problem of practice and the research question. The purpose of the study and the methodology used for the design are presented, along with the significance of the study, limitations, and the definitions of terms. Chapter Two reviews the literature, theories, and conceptual frameworks that support the current research. The action research method used for this study is a mixed-method design, and Chapter Three covers the setting, time frame, and participants of the study. The data collection instruments used and the rationale for the selection for each instrument is discussed. Chapter Three also includes the procedure, data analysis, reflection, and plan for the action plan with this research. Chapter Four presents the findings and the interpretation of the results of the study. The summary, conclusion and recommendations for an action plan, practice, and future research are included in Chapter Five.

## **Definition of Terms**

African American Language (AAL):	A recognized, English parallel language developed by African Americans over the course of 400 years (Boutte, 2016).
African American Vernacular English (AAVE):	A non-standard variety of English spoken by some African Americans (Boutte, 2016).
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP):	A theoretical model that focuses on multiple aspects of student achievement and supports students to uphold their cultural identities. It also calls for students to develop

	critical perspectives that challenge societal inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 1995)
Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT):	A research-based approach to teaching. It connects students' cultures, languages, and life experiences with what they learn in school. These connections help students access rigorous curriculum and develop higher-level academic skills (Ladson-Billings, 1992).
English Language Learner (ELL):	A student learning English as a different language from their home language (Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017).
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL):	The teaching of English to students whose first language is not English but who are living in an English-speaking country (Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017).
Mainstream Standardized English (MSE/ME):	English used in media and general English-speaking settings (Canagarajah, 2006).
Primary Language:	The main language a person uses to communicate (Krahnke & Christison, 1983).
Standard Academic English (SAE):	English used in academic, government, and professional settings (Stockman, 2010).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Overview of the Study**

The United States has a diverse population. American history grew full of stories as new people joined our country and brought their languages and cultures with them. Before the United States was founded and declared independent by our forefathers, Native American, French, English, Spanish, German, and African people worked the lands and created our country's foundation. Language and cultural diversity have always been present in our country, but as the European colonists grew in power and wealth, the group segregated to become the governing body. As decades and centuries passed in America, this governing body remained, and the hegemony was more clearly defined as European (Anglo-Saxon), English-speaking, Christian, land-owning, and male. This definition shaped a culture of beliefs and systems that were normed for our country, including language (Boutte, 2016; Delpit, 2006; Howard, 2010). With the hegemony defined, African Americans were dehumanized and marginalized for hundreds of years (Watkins, 1993). African American students were denied any formal public education and laws were passed making it illegal for African Americans to be educated or taught to read (Howard, 2010). Laws and systems were created to segregate African Americans in public settings, including schools, and systemic racism and oppression of African Americans limited educational opportunities (Williams et al., 1993).

## **The Purpose of the Literature Review**

A literature review's importance is to ground current research in previous research and theory (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). The materials chosen for the literature review were based on their findings and information regarding African American English (AAE), Language Acquisition, and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). These materials were chosen because they will further the understanding dialectally diverse students acquiring Standard Academic English (SAE). This research will help educators maintain cultural relevance, awareness, and academic rigor for the students and help them grow in SAE. "In this day and time, it is not enough simply to conduct much-needed research in classrooms...We must do better at theorizing production and distribution of critical literary research" (Blackburn & Clark, p. 250).

The strategies used to search for the literature were to search the ERIC and JSTOR database for research peer-reviewed journals on the topics included. Several books from authors in the fields of AAE, language acquisition, and CRP and seminars led by experts in CRP and AAE illuminated additional resources. Using journal articles and chapters, other resources were cited, leading to the discovery of additional research material and relevant research.

## **Historical Perspectives**

For over 200 years, the slave trade forced hundreds of thousands of Africans to the United States. Africans brought a variety of languages and cultures, and they were forced to assimilate into the life and language of a slave (Boutte, 2016). In the late 19th century, when slavery was abolished, it was without SAE language and without education that freed African descendants were able to work legally in the United States (Boutte,

2016). It would be another 100 years before the Civil Rights movement began to demand equity in schools and access to education (Watkins, 1993). While the first Africans were brought to the United States in the slave trade 400 years ago, there are effects of slavery and African American oppression throughout our country and systems of power (Howard, 2010).

Since the beginning of African enslavement in the United States, there have been restrictions on educating African descendants (Watkins, 1993). As generations of African Americans were born and raised in communities with limited access to SAE, another dialect developed out of blends from African languages, English, and influences of other languages (Williamson et al., 2007). Over the years, this language has moved from "broken English," a deficient-based perspective of substandard English, to a recognized English dialect with its own grammar rules and syntax (Baines et al., 2018; Boute, 2016).

The continuing deficient-based perspective towards dialectal diverse Englishes, including AAE allows school systems to deny the assistance some students might need to access the SAE curriculum (Hollie, 2001). While research is abundant for English language learners' needs and the methods to scaffold language learning, all students are not provided these methods (Pearson et al., 2013). The best practices for English language instruction should be used for all students for increased accessibility to the curriculum (Craig et al., 2004; Stockman, 2010).

Following the theoretical framework, this chapter reviews three significant themes. The first major theme explored in this review of literature involves CRP strategies and how they are used in the classroom. The development of AAE as a parallel

SAE dialect, and the history of AAE language are also major themes covered in this dissertation. Motivation for language acquisition and language as power is the third major theme.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Paulo Freire's work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) theorized that students are more than containers to be filled, and that learning is a process in which humans actively engage with the world and with each other. He criticized the practice of oppressors who attempt to change the learner's mindset, as opposed to change the oppressing situation in which the learners are placed (Roberts, 1998). Freire wanted liberation for oppressed people, which started with an understanding that oppressors were content to keep people in their place and hold marginalized people in rank (Freire, 1970). Part of that endeavor is to give the minimum defined amount of education necessary for an individual to feel as if he has received something without realizing it is not enough to move him out of his oppression. "Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well men fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it" (Freire, 1970, p. 63). Related to the problem of practice and Freire's theory of oppression, students who speak diverse dialects have not been given enough language access to meet the SAE curriculum requirements nor have they been given enough SAE language instruction to transcend the language deficit perspective. This responsibility falls on the educator to desire the student to be his equal in learning.

Pierre Bourdieu introduced the sharing of language as a form of capital in *The Forms of Capital* (1986). Language and the knowing of and following of social class

rules were defined as "cultural capital" and "social capital." Language and the appropriate use of language can allow an individual to access further education and employment opportunities relating to economic capital. Social and cultural capital are most often the least directly taught; "the transmission of cultural capital is undoubtedly the best-hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). Directly teaching SAE to language diverse students will propel them to have success with SAE curriculum. Educators must provide instruction to students that scaffold learning opportunities for students to be exposed to various capital forms. No one group in a school setting is more deserving of access to knowledge (Delpit, 2006).

Luis Moll (1992) addressed a "funds of knowledge" approach for educators within this equity in teaching approach. Students come to school with a variety of experiences that are culturally rich and meaningful. Students also have learning experiences from home that frame and shape their perspectives in the classroom. The relationships students have with individuals in their homes and communities, as well as exposure to chores, work, home life, and communication styles, also shape the knowledge bank students bring to school. Moll stated,

Although the term funds of knowledge is not meant to replace the anthropological concept of culture, it is more precise for our purposes because of its emphasis on strategic knowledge and related activities essential in households' functioning, development and well-being. (Moll, 1992, p. 85)

Considering the wealth of knowledge students can bring to school that is not necessarily defined as mainstream curriculum, educators must broaden their definition of knowledge.

## **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Collins and Blot (2003) expanded on the question of "what is knowledge" in their work *Literacy and Literacies*. Throughout their work, they discussed the question of knowledge, literacy, and power. Whoever is in power decides what defines knowledge and what kinds of literacy are meaningful. Over time, the hegemony has determined the correct knowledge and validated the appropriate literacies to define learning. As classrooms' cultural landscapes are recognized as more diverse and the retellings of history through multiple perspectives are shared, literacy can help shape identity (Pearson et al., 2013).

The cultural deprivation theory discussed in the 1960s was based on the premise that people living in poverty, primarily people of color living in poverty, were without the cultural awareness and sensitivities that were recognized as the white middle-class norms expected in society (Raz, 2013). This theory related that people living without white middle-class experiences and opportunities were without culture and lacked general knowledge to be successful in America. The deficient approach led to students' classification, particularly children of color, to be disadvantaged and underprivileged (Williamson et al., 2007). "Theories of deprivation played an important role in the debate over language ability and acquisition among African American children and in explanations of the achievement gap in scholastic tests designed to measure intelligence" (Raz, 2013, p. 38).

Cultural deprivation takes the perspective that there is one dominant culture with characteristics to which all other cultures need to assimilate and model. However, in this theory, culture is also tied to race. The culture of whiteness is tied to the white race. The



white race is a social construct comprised of ethnicity, class, and nation, as well as "assimilation into white cultural norms was hardly desirable to most racially defined minorities" (Winant, 2000, p. 179).

Moving in the direction of a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), this pedagogy focuses on a curriculum that incorporates a diverse and inclusive knowledge base for students and challenges the traditional white normed curriculum. CRP challenges places in the curriculum where racial biases and social inequities exist. Tara Yosso (2002) explained the following five tenants of CRP:

- Acknowledge the central and intersecting roles of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination in maintaining inequity in curricular structures;
- Challenge dominant social and cultural assumptions regarding culture and intelligence, language and capability, objectivity, and meritocracy;
- Direct the formal curriculum toward goals of social justice and the hidden curriculum toward goals of social justice and the hidden curriculum toward Freirean goals of critical consciousness;
- Develop counter-discourses through storytelling, narratives, family histories, biographies students of color bring to the classroom; and
- Utilize interdisciplinary methods of historical and contemporary analysis to articulate the linkages between educational and societal inequality. (Yosso, 2002, p. 95)

Part of CRP includes challenging the dominant social and cultural language.

Language diversity is considered cultural diversity when educators are asked to develop

themselves in culturally relevant practices. "Since language is intrinsic to social capital and instrumental in constructing and maintaining it, the choice of languages in education and the linguistic hierarchy of the wider national language policy become implicated in issues of inequality" (Tamim, 2014, p. 8). With a history of language and cultural marginalization, CRP practices value student languages as part of the rich diversity students bring to the classroom (Gay, 2002). Educators can recognize language diversity and value a student's home language while teaching them the necessary language skills to access the mainstream curriculum through SAE (Boutte, 2016).

One of the interventions in CRP for language diverse students is code-switching (Canagarajah, 2006). Code-switching is the process of moving in between two languages or language dialects. Teachers can validate the language the student speaks at home and reinforce the instructional language. "Every time teachers insist on a uniform variety of language or discourse, we are helping reproduce monolingualist ideologies and linguistic hierarchies" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 587). By explicitly teaching SAE at school and accepting the home language, teachers value the whole child and help students see their value. It is within the framework of CRP educators can modify the curriculum to include spaces for a variety of language experiences where students can recognize they already work within different codes and understand code-switching (Young et al., 2014). For AAE speakers, validation for home language after centuries of oppression, including language oppression, is a culturally responsive way to endorse their home and family experience (Baines et al., 2018; Boutte, 2016).

In 1908, Jane Addams wrote *The Public School and the Immigrant Child*, where she challenged educators in the National Education Association with the following question:

Can we not say, perhaps, that the schools ought to do more to connect these children with the best things of the past, to make them realize something of the beauty and charm of the language, the history, and the traditions which their parents represent? (as cited in Flinders & Thornton, 2004, p. 26)

Over 100 years ago, educators were being called to recognize and embrace the diversity of the language and culture of non-dominant culture. Addams continued to say, "it is the business of the school to give to each child the beginnings of a culture so wide and deep and universal that he can interpret his parents and countrymen by a standard which is world-wide and not provincial" (as cited in Flinders & Thornton, 2004, p. 26). Not only does Addams stress the importance of valuing home language and culture, but also, she demands the school give each child a global cultural awareness. This philosophy of cultural awareness, coupled with an appreciation of world views, instead of limited by region, is engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 1985).

There is a weaving of history and CRP. It is because of how individuals have been treated and marginalized historically that demands Culturally Relevant Pedagogy today. Throughout our history of marginalizing groups of people, there have been individuals fighting for equity. Paulo Freire's work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) advocated for the marginalized and culturally silenced populations to have access to education and language so they can understand the tenants needed to demand change. Freire argued that the dominant political force uses power to oppress individuals by prescribing them the

language and education they require to stay in their non-dominant role. In addition to this system, the hegemony fosters the non-dominant role for marginalized people. Freire (1970) hypothesized a "banking" system in which language and culture are tokens that individuals learn and store. It is learning this system that allows an individual to travel within it. A person can only learn the rules and language of a class by being taught; however, one does not have access to that class without the rules and language. In this withholding of language and codes, the party in power can continue to oppress its people (Bourdieu, 1986).

CRP is a teaching method that focuses on a student's home culture from a strength-based perspective. CRP breaks the more traditional cultural hegemony system embedded in the curriculum and seeks to acknowledge and create teaching opportunities aligned with the students' cultures (Gay, 2002). There are several ways in which CRP is used in the classroom that can benefit the AAE student (Baines et al., 2018).

As with all language learners, AAE students need to be exposed to literature that is reflective of their lives as learners. Teachers can have books in their classrooms that represent the students' stories and languages and include drawings and images to which the students can relate. This CRP practice is also considered a best practice for a linguistically diverse classroom. Baines explained,

The low percentage of trade books and instructional texts by and about persons of color is not only frustrating but is a form of institutional bias...however, it is not an excuse for failing to fill classrooms with books that richly reflect our diverse society. (Baines et al., 2018, p. 46)

African American children represented in books can provide a meaningful context for young learners. Books that represent a variety of student experiences, particularly that of the African American child, can validate the child's learning experience. Using children's books to move beyond stereotypes of cultures or ethnicities is beneficial for all students. "Defining the literature on particular terms and contesting culturally unauthentic depictions serves to counter the hegemony by provoking discussion about systemic forms of injustice and oppression" (Brooks & McNair, 2008, p. 130).

Another CRP teaching strategy that dialectally diverse students benefit from is direct instruction on code-switching for home language and SAE (Canagarajah, 2006). This requires the educator to recognize and understand the student's relationship with home language and culture and be respectful of the tradition and place of value the home language and culture have on their lives. The educator should recognize that the linguistic form students bring to school is intimately connected with loved ones, community, and personal identity. To suggest that this form is wrong, or even worse ignorant, suggests that something is wrong with the students and their family (Delpit, 2006, p. 53).

### **African American English**

One of the most historically oppressed groups of people in our country is African Americans (Watkins, 1993). The United States government legally did not recognize African Americans as individuals during our history, and humans were counted as possessions and as an inferior race. It was also illegal for African Americans to be taught to read or write. Generations of humans born in our country were legally made to be subjugated to the ruling class (Williamson et al., 2007). Legally denying individuals access to education ensured their inability to rise from it. W.E.B. Du Bois was a critical

thinker from the early 20th century. He was openly critical about American society and its justification of race as a social construct and advocated against racism and the advancement of people of color through equal education rights. Du Bois was one of the first men of African American descent to publicly critique the dominant power that had created slavery and protected the institution. His arguments and fight against the racial divide covered political and social justice issues, including equality in education through language (Kirylo, 2013).

There are rich stories, languages, and cultures within the margins that deserve a validated and equal place in society. The African American culture has developed over time, defining itself against and despite of oppression, with its own uniqueness and parallel to the mainstream culture (Hollie, 2001). While it cannot be said one group has a culture simply because of race, as race is not a social construct, a culture developed out of shared experiences, history, and language. Gloria Boutte said, "To say there is a Black culture is similar to saying that humans share much in common. Neither position assumes that all individuals within the represented group are the same. We are both similar and dissimilar" (Boutte, 2016, p. 21).

In her work *Educating African American Students*, Gloria Boutte (2016) described 11 American culture dimensions. Boutte (2016) listed movement, verve, affect, oral tradition, social time perspective, and communalism/collectivity as parts of the African American culture. Of those dimensions, almost all can be directly tied to how language is expressed and received.

Denying equitable educational access, the powerful class was able to receive an education for proficiency in SAE in reading, writing, and speaking skills, and the

institutionalized systems within the United States developed using SAE. Similarly, AAE developed over time, blending African languages with English and other languages throughout the centuries of language and educational oppression (Hollie, 2001). As immigrants and African Americans came to live in the United States and share their languages with their families and communities, their languages have developed and strengthened (Pearson et al., 2013).

Diverse languages and dialects have been marginalized and oppressed as SAE dominates the American school system (Godley & Escher, 2012). The US education curriculum is in SAE, and students are evaluated in SAE, with instruction normed to the assessment and curriculum expectations (Stockman, 2010). In 1974, the Supreme Court ruled on *Lau v. Nichols*, unanimously deciding that the lack of supplemental language instruction in public schools for students with limited English proficiency violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Pearson et al., 2013). Students who spoke a language other than English were struggling to meet the criteria to be successful in American schools, and the schools were not assisting students to access the curriculum and instead blamed the students' lack of progress on a language deficit (Pearson et al., 2013; Watkins, 1993).

The *Lau v. Nichols* case decided that non-English speakers would qualify for services to help them learn SAE (Williams et al., 2007). Students who qualify speak a language recognized as other than English. For dialectally diverse students, such as AAE speakers, their primary language is different from SAE when they enter school at kindergarten (Boutte, 2016). All students are not offered the English language services they might need to access the SAE curriculum. The lack of recognition for AAE and

other dialects maintains the deficient perspective of dialectally and linguistically diverse students (Godley et al., 2006).

### **English Language Instruction**

Language acquisition has its own processes and best practices. There are several approaches to language acquisition. Language theorists would agree that students learn a language best through direct instruction in the target language with comprehensible input (Krahnke & Christison, 1983). The educator needs to model the language and guide the student through the language meaning-making process (Ellis, 2008). Educators need to value the student's home language/dialect and cultural experience to make connections between the student's previous experiences and the learning targets (Delpit, 2006). It is through the meaning-making process and connections that language is acquired (Ellis, 2008). Vygotsky theorized that students acquire language through social interactions. Students learn their home language through socio-cultural situations at home. When students learn SAE, they will process that language through socio-cultural experiences and interactions with others (Mahn, 2012).

By communicating with others and making relationships between language and personal interactions, students can better understand the target language (Appel & Muysken, 2005). When educators work with language diverse students, including AAE students, educators must work without a deficit perspective and use best practices for anti-bias education (Scharf, 2014). The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework (2014) makes recommendations for an anti-biased education. It is organized into the following four domains: (a) identity, (b) diversity, (c) justice, and (d) action. "The domains represent a continuum of engagement in anti-bias multicultural and social justice



education" (Scharf, 2014, p. 2). Part of anti-biased education includes differentiated instruction. Educators who practice differentiated instruction modify and adapt their instructional practices to fit students' needs. The educators also make curriculum and teaching decisions around the students' background, previous knowledge, and skill level. There are opportunities for differentiation with language acquisition, including valuing and recognizing language background, cultural styles, and different expressions (Rymes & Anderson, 2004; Scharf, 2014).

Educators can be culturally responsive to their students by recognizing that different languages and dialects are not lesser ways to speak. "Scientific research on language demonstrates that standard dialects are not linguistically better by any measures; they are socially preferred because they are the language varieties used by those who are most powerful and affluent in a society" (Godley et al., 2006, p. 30). Educators who have negative attitudes about languages diverse students can have lower expectations for student achievement, make assumptions about students' homes, and remain fixed in their own biases towards students (Godley et al., 2006). It is critical for educators to be welcoming, inclusive, and positively receptive to all students.

Because language is central to the individuals' views of the world and hence their sense of identity, the learning of a new form of language could have implications depending on the importance of their own cultural identity and their views of other cultural groups. (Gardner, 2010p. 9)

### **Language as Power**

As Bourdieu wrote about cultural capital, language is part of that cultural piece that gives power. Antonio Gramsci wrote about a similar philosophy, "cultural

hegemony," in the early 1940s while imprisoned in Italy. In his philosophy, Gramsci explained the state could "maintain control, power over its citizens, is through the dominance of cultural aspects, processes, and norms. Thus, the ideology of the dominant class comes to be subtly and overly accepted by the subordinate classes" (Kirylo, 2013, p. 70). Our educational system has done this through our Eurocentric curriculum normed for the dominant white middle class.

For generations, AAE students and families have been told indirectly and directly their language is less valuable than the schools (Delpit, 2006). AAE has not been recognized a dialect, but long been considered "broken English." Years after *Lau v. Nichols* and the recognition in schools about the value of home language and culture, African Americans still have had their language and culture belittled and made to feel inferior to SAE. Directly teaching the value of dialectal differences, and teaching students to code-switch when appropriate in an academic setting is critical for students to see their value at school (Hollie, 2001).

Educators who recognize language diversity in their classrooms also must recognize the cultural forces working with the languages. The educator can recognize where the language is socially situated and guide the learner through the conscious experience of language choice to elicit a specific reaction (Craig et al., 2014). Language use and social roles can be scaffolded and guided to reach the target language. While the educator is guiding the student to the use of the target language, feedback and clarification must create helpful tension to grow the learner in the context of language without diminishing the learner (Ellis, 2008).

Code-switching is one of several strategies that students benefit from in the classroom. Educators need to be cognizant of another strategy when working with diverse language groups, which is motivation (Krahnke & Christison, 1983). The motivation categories for learning another language and culture most recognized for ELLs include the following: “Social factors, such as the relative size of language groups, and social attitudes between groups, affective factors, such as language and culture shock, and motivation personality factors, such as self-esteem, and sensitivity to rejections” (Krahnke & Christison, 1983).

The educator must try to minimize affective interference by supporting the learner in a natural learning environment and recognizing some natural motivation factors that might be involved in the student learning SAE. For language learners, "error produced in the process of acquiring a second language should be viewed as a natural product of the acquisition process, as a source of information non-learner strategies and as a problem best addressed through more input and interaction" (Krahnke & Christison, 1983, p. 642).

In addition to providing an environment that supports motivation to learn SAE, motivation needs to be considered. While the student is required to learn the target language, the student could have preconceived beliefs about the value, capital, and culture of SAE (Godley & Escher, 2012; McBee Orzulak, 2015). This can conflict with the student's home culture, and thus can cause a lack of motivation to learn the target language (Appel & Muysken, 2005). For some African Americans, learning the language used as the language of oppression, and assimilating to the main cultural values of SAE could cause disharmony if their home culture and language feel diminished.

Part of the history with AAE is the construct that this dialect was not valued. For centuries, non-academic English was called broken English. For some African Americans, their home language was deemed substandard or less than and was subjugated to the dominant language. For educators teaching SAE in schools, as part of the mainstream curriculum and valuing the AAE dialectal differences, it is essential to recognize another part of the language acquisition process, which is the internal processing of language and error making (Johnson, 2004). Error making during this period is part of the natural language process. Creative Construction is the process by which students begin to use the language they have learned to make meaning (Johnson, 2004). Educators can guide this process by providing feedback that is "psychologically reassuring and interactionally advantageous" (Krahnke & Christison, 1983, p. 643). By valuing language diversity and language acquisition, the student will be more motivated and confident in the target language (Ellis, 2008; Krahnke & Christison, 1983).

An additional CRP strategy that helps diverse language students succeed at school is making connections between the home and the school visible for the parents, students, and teachers (Boutte, 2016). Relationships are critical for language learning. In the African American community, the relationships are building blocks for language (Delpit, 2006). Drawing the school and the family connections helps the student balance the pull between the two dialects and cultures, developing and honoring both. "The funds of knowledge of approach to teaching also entails using anthropological approaches to understand students' lives outside of school, most specifically students' roles within their families" (Howard, 2010, p. 82). As with other diverse families, AAE families have often been frustrated with past experiences with the school, feeling marginalized, intimidated,

or unwelcome (Howard, 2010). It is paramount that today's educators offer students and their families the opportunities to feel included in the curriculum and see the value their home life contributes to students' education. "Concern for students should be holistic rather than narrowly focused on academic outcomes alone. What is most important will be how educators choose to see Black students and their families and communities" (Boutte, 2016, p. 201).

Knowing the student and the language background can help the educator make decisions for best practices. Some AAE students have target instruction needs to access the SAE curriculum (Pearson et al., 2013). An educator that makes conscious decisions on behalf of the student using CRP will encourage the student to feel welcome at school and create lessons that are inclusive and meaningful (Baines et al., 2018). This benefits all students in creating a learning environment where students have the knowledge to share with each other, to deepen everyone's cultural understanding. In Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, he drew a relationship between people's social interaction and the brain's meaning-making function. As students scaffold information, assisted by interacting with others, they stretch to new learning (Shabani, 2016). Educators seeking to help AAE and other linguistically diverse students make meaning of school, white cultural norms, and SAE can mediate the learning processes. Knowing the students' history and culture, relating it to the home and parents, and making connections to the home language will facilitate meaning-making and learning for the students (Eun, 2016).

### **Relevant Research**

Gien and Nel's research (2018) focused on ELLs whose home language is not English by a comparative study of ELLs and monolingual learners' language and literacy

profiles. The research compared English monolingual learners' language and literacy profiles and ELLs when they are expected to learn language simultaneously in an inclusive classroom using the target language. The researchers suggested the inclusive environment for the monolingual learner does not address the language and literacy profile of the ELL, "limiting and/or obstructing access to, participation in and therefore learning by this vulnerable high-risk community. In this manner the rights of the ELL are violated from a social justice perspective when the expectation in an inclusive school" (Gien & Nel, 2018, p. 45). The theoretical framework is supported by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory from a social and cultural development perspective. This was a mixed-methods research design. The finding shows that the mean-scaled test scores for the monolingual group were consistently higher than the ELL group across 9 of the 11 subtests for language. The research study recommended that educators address the disconnect that effects ELLs in the inclusive classroom. "Policies of inclusion attend to the needs and rights of the ELL and, very importantly, remove barriers to learning and the educational vulnerability of the young ELL" (Gien & Nel, 2018, p. 55).

Rymes and Anderson (2004) conducted a research study on Spanish-speaking and AAE-speaking students in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to examine the recognition of Spanish in the classroom and AAE to create a multilingual classroom that is more "linguistically inclusive, equitable and academically successful" (Rymes & Anderson, 2004, p. 108). This study was about a classroom teacher's experiences over two years in Georgia and her educational awareness and development. This paper focused on the students' classroom experiences in the second-grade classroom and the interactions between the teacher and the AAE and ELL students. The teacher was video

recorded, and the lesson was evaluated for equity in interaction and language validation. The study found that Spanish was given more language validity than AAE. The teacher's interactions and experiences were more constructive and encouraging towards the Spanish speaking students. The AAE students were more marginalized than the Spanish speakers during the lesson. The authors shared, "our findings suggest that where some linguistic varieties are granted more legitimacy than others, so are some cultural backgrounds as well" (Rymes & Anderson, 2004, p. 129). The authors recognized and documented the teacher's struggle to integrate multilingual students into her classroom and provide them the scaffolding needed to get the appropriate education. They also said it is important for teachers to recognize all students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the classroom.

Craig et al. (2014) conducted a longitudinal study to examine shifting from AAE to SAE across early childhood grades in elementary school and how variables influenced the students' adaptations from AAE to SAE. There were 102 AAE speaking students enrolled in the study when it began the first year (the students' kindergarten year). The study looked at how AAE students learned SAE and adapted in school and how well they performed from kindergarten to second grade. The study found evidence of style-shifting (code-switching and code meshing) for the students, though some students performed this task more fluently than others. "Teachers should not assume that progress through the early grades will naturally accompany the development of style-shifting to SAE by AAE students; some students will demonstrate this ability, but others will not, unrelated to their grade" (Craig et al., 2014, p. 153). The authors recommended increased educator awareness and instruction to support students who need to learn dialect shifting patterns

because students who were able to demonstrate this adaptive behavior could outperform their peers who did not make this adaptation on literacy tasks.

This research is related to the present action research study because this study will be seeking to measure improvement for African American prekindergarten students when they receive a language intervention of target language (SAE) instruction outside of the mainstream classroom. The educator involved in the study will work within CRP and use best practices for English language instruction and CRP practices. The studies shared are relevant research as each has a component of the present action research study on which to build.

### **Summary**

For centuries, AAE has been developing as a parallel dialect partially due to the restrictions put on African American people from accessing educational opportunities to learn Standard Academic English. Linguists and speech pathologists recognize that AAE has its own grammar rules and syntax. Over generations, AAE has become a rich dialect for people in the United States. For some young students from AAE homes, entering the school system is their first formal interaction with SAE. Scaffolding language and making connections between the home language and target language and other best practices need to be in place for students. Direct instruction in the target language and validation of language diversity needs to be part of the language curriculum. CRP is highlighted by valuing the home language and culture of the students, using a non-deficit perspective, and working within the social learning theory.

It is the educator's responsibility to teach students the language of the curriculum and give all students equal access to those educational opportunities. Knowing the



language and having the skills to interact with the medium of education will help close all students' achievement gap. Only if language diverse students have the language skills to perform in SAE will they be equitably educated and evaluated within the current curriculum. It is time to change the perpetuating cycle of denying educational opportunities only to yield subpar achievement. The knowledge of and the ability to skillfully use SAE is a tool and power our language and dialectally diverse students need to be successful in school.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Many different English dialects are spoken in America, and Standard Academic English (SAE) is the primary English dialect used in schools (Stockman et al., 2008). All students are not evaluated on their English language ability, and therefore do not receive targeted English instruction even though the need might exist (Stockman, 2010). Many students could benefit from targeted language instruction (Malec et al., 2017; Mashburn et al., 2009). English language assessments can be used to identify the strengths and areas of improvement in the language learning process, and the data could be used to target specific English language needs for success with the SAE curriculum (Malec et al., 2017; Moll et al., 1992). The problem of practice addressed in this research is the need of targeted English language instruction for all preschool students. This research offers English language assessments and intervention to African American preschool students, who might not typically receive SAE services, to identify strengths and areas of improvement to increase English language skills.

#### **Research Question**

The research questions for this study were the following: (1) How can a specialized English language intervention be utilized to identify the strengths and areas of improvement for African American preschool students? (2) Does the English language intervention influence skill development in African American Students in the areas of past tense verbs, regular plurals, and personal pronouns? (3) How do African American

parents influence the English Language development of students preparing to enter kindergarten?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to provide targeted SAE language instruction to African American prekindergarten students, using pre- and post-test assessments to measure language skills and interview parents about their home language experiences with their children. Generally, preschool students are not identified or served for their language needs, unless qualifying with a speech/language impairment; however, there are young dialectal English students who could benefit from SAE instruction to prepare for kindergarten (Boutte, 2015; Cummins, 1986). This research study investigated the effect of providing direct instruction across the four domains of English (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to preschool students. These language skills provide students with the foundational skills they need in SAE to succeed in the SAE curriculum kindergarten class (Krashen, 1976).

### **Description of Intervention**

The intervention for this study was to provide targeted SAE instruction to African American prekindergarten students. The intervention instruction was targeted in the four domains of English language, which include listening, speaking, reading, and writing (a sample of an agenda for the small group session is in Appendix V). The intervention model for the research study demonstrated language instruction used in an English Language classroom setting. The interventionist was a trained and certified teacher.

As part of the listening and speaking skills, students are taught to listen to and verbalize words and sentence structures in the target language, in this case, SAE. Subjects

were appropriately corrected and redirected in the target language to hear and be able to produce the correct sounds. Observing and producing the targeted sounds allowed the students to listen and produce the targeted language outcomes. At the prekindergarten level, language services primarily revolve around essential interpersonal communication, grammar, and sentence structure. Included with the language instruction, the interventionist recognized diverse manners of speech and validated language differences between family and school settings.

The researcher conducted two small groups of four students for language services. The teacher provided pull-out services to students 30 minutes daily, four times a week, for a total of 120 minutes weekly (see Appendix W for student work in the small group).

The teacher began each of the 30-minute sessions reviewing the daily agenda. The teacher read a section of a book as a read aloud for 7-8 minutes. The books chosen for the sessions were from Mo Willems' "Elephant and Piggy" (Willems, 2007; Willems, 2010; Willems, 2013) series. Mo Willems' books use accessible language for prekindergarten students, and his characters show compassion and curiosity. These books provide segues for conversations about language use and understanding others appropriate for the four- to five-year-old child. Also, having multiple books in the series allowed the students to compare books and reference the details, events, and characters in the story. Words were pulled from the text to use as "word work." The teacher would model words from the text to use as examples of verbs (present versus past tense), nouns (singular versus plural), pronouns (he/she/they/it), and sentence word order as part of the weekly word study. The students would practice writing the words independently on a T-chart to compare how new letters could change how a word sounded and its meaning. For example, in one of

the books the character said he could “jump like a frog.” The word “jump” was compared as “today we jump” and “yesterday we jumped.” The today/yesterday example was used to illustrate regular past tense verbs. A similar compare-and-contrast pattern was used for plurals.

After 10-12 minutes of word work and writing, the students had “talking turtle time.” The teacher asked a question about the story and the only person allowed to respond was the student holding the turtle. This allowed the student uninterrupted speaking time, and the teacher could restate and model SAE; focusing on sentence structure, pronouns, and verb tense; for the students. Each student had an opportunity to hold the “talking turtle” and participate. Throughout the lessons, any language varieties were recognized as having value. When redirecting language production, the teacher validated alternative ways to say things. The teacher would explicitly teach the difference between talking to friends and talking to teachers at school, or using different registers. The characters in the story used different words in their dialogue and banter as they are friends. As a small group, the teacher and students discussed how questions or phrases could be said differently depending on the audience. The teacher modeled the target language output and validated language production between peers and family members to incorporate CRP.

The intervention timeline began with student identification in the late spring of the preschool 4K school year. Parents were notified to formally ask for permission for the student to participate, and to participate in the parent interview sessions. The student permission form is in Appendix C. The students received services for approximately eight weeks.

During the last week of services, the parents who opted to participate in the study were sent an electronic survey to complete. Due to restrictions by COVID-19, the original questions selected and approved for the parent interview were used in the electronic survey. The purpose of the questions was to explore the language exposure and experiences of the students at home and the language use and expectations from the parents.

### **Action Research Rationale**

This research included a mixed-methods study. Mixed-method studies use quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The quantitative method for this study was used to analyze the data from the pre- and post-assessments the students take at the beginning of the study and at the end of the intervention window. The language assessment was given as a pre-test and a post-test. The pre- and post-test data were used from the grammar and language assessment in this study. Descriptive analysis was used to evaluate the small data set (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

This data was coded by response and theme. "Data analysis is the process used to answer [the] research question," which is a guide to interpret and make sense of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202). The mixed-method design was most appropriate for this study because it used quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research question. Due to the limited number of student and adult participants, the data would not be statistically significant in a standing quantitative study. The qualitative data balances the study with insight into the students' home exposure to language. The parent survey

also explored experiences in language differences, school setting, and intentional language instruction at home.

The interview results were used as qualitative data. This data was coded by response and theme. The data received from the parents was coded by analyzing their responses to the questions. “Coding [is] assigning some sort of short-hand designation to various aspects of the data to easily retrieve specific pieces of the data” (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 199). Data analysis occurs by “consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said” (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 202). From analysis the data can be sorted and themes emerge. The evidence from the coding process can be placed in the generated themes or categories and that becomes the findings of the study (Effron & Ravid, 2013; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

### **Context of Research Study**

Research took place at ABC Academy [pseudonym] in West Columbia, SC. The two preschool classrooms had a combined total of 16 students. The population was 98% African American. The school was partially funded by the church; however, almost all the students paid full tuition to attend the private preschool academy. There were 40 children (birth to 5 years old) at this school. Of the 16 preschool students invited to attend, 8 students were granted parental permission to participate. Beginning in April, the participants received SAE language services for 30 minutes per session for 20 sessions. Parents were invited to participate in the parent survey as part of the action research study. Of the eight students who were permitted to participate in the research, five parents indicated they would complete the parent research survey, however, only four parents completed the survey. Limited personal information was available from the parent-

subjects because the preschool board of directors and school director limit the collection of data around socioeconomic level, income, and employment of the parents.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher was an English Language Specialist in Columbia, SC. The researcher had experience as a certified elementary teacher, ESOL teacher, and school principal. The researcher was currently serving as an ESOL teacher. The researcher conducted the research while maintaining another position outside of the research site. While at the preschool setting, the researcher worked with the small groups in the campus library and visited both prekindergarten classrooms for observations and to discuss teaching and learning with the prekindergarten teachers. The researcher also met with the preschool director for curriculum discussions and student updates weekly. The researcher was an active participant observer with outsider positionality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher implemented the SAE instruction, administered the pre-and post-intervention assessments, administered the parent surveys, and analyzed the data collected.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants for this study came from the prekindergarten classes at ABC Academy [pseudonym]. The sampling of participants was criterion based. Criterion-based sampling is non probable and purposeful. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). With the focus on the research question, the sample was intentional. Due to the subjects' age, parental permission was required, as young children are considered a



group that must be protected during research studies. Criterion-based selection was used, because for the study to be productive, the participants needed to have certain attributes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Providing SAE services to the pre-kindergartners in a small group is the intervention. The ideal class size for a small group is no more than six students, so groupings were limited based on how service time could be provided. There were two groups of four students for the intervention sessions.

The eight students in the study were in the prekindergarten classrooms and had attended the preschool for two or more previous years of preschool. As a condition of approval to conduct research at the preschool, the preschool director and the affiliated education board would not allow collection of data related to socio-economic, educational, or income levels of the families. The parents were not asked to give any detailed personal or familial information about the student, and the preschool provided the researcher with the students' names and ages. The preschool director provided some educational background on the students and shared any pertinent information related to student behaviors.

- A.A. was a four-year old African American female. Her mother was very focused on education, and A.A. was competitive and sensitive to corrections. She could read and write beyond preschool level. She spent afternoons and weekends with her grandmother.
- K.P. was a four-year old African American female. She lived with her grandmother who worked in school leadership and administration. K.P. could read sight words and simple sentences, and reported she had additional academic work each night assigned by her grandmother. She

was a natural leader and was distracted easily when not challenged. She thrived on praise.

- H.A. was a four-year-old African American female. Her older sister was on the Autism spectrum. While H.A. was not identified yet, she had been receiving language services for two years. She followed directions well, memorized well, and picked up and followed language rules quickly. Her mother was involved in her education and did not want additional testing for H.A.
- T.J. was a four-year-old African American male. He was quiet and timid in his interactions with other students. He was easily frustrated when the other students did not pay attention or got too loud. He would participate in the lessons but often zone out. He had siblings that attended the center and seemed nervous to transition to kindergarten.
- D.S. was a five-year-old African American male. He communicated confidently and participated in sessions. He got along well with others in the group. D.S. had an older sibling who lived with him, and he behaved more maturely than the other students. His parents prioritized education, and he had limited screen time.
- D.T was a four-year-old African American male. He was born premature (at 27 weeks gestation) and was physically smaller than the other students. T.M. had received speech and physical therapy for over two years. He was the only child in his family and tended to be more immature, easily distracted, and off topic. His language production was developmentally

appropriate, and his parents were very supportive. He traveled with his parents and played soccer in the community.

- J.T. was a four-year-old African American male. He lived with his father, stepmother, and half siblings. J.T. was easily distracted during targeted instruction, but he participated when redirected. He loved to draw and look at pictures. J.T. participated best when he was allowed to draw or keep his hands occupied during instruction. J.T. remembered patterns well and was a quick learner.
- J.B. was a five-year-old African American male. He lived with his parents, and one parent worked in education. J.B. was quiet in group and chose to be more of an observer. He spent time with extended family. J.B. enjoyed coming to group and listening to the read aloud.

As part of this study, parents were asked to participate in a parent survey about their language experience, their child's language development, language in the home, and perceptions of school. The parents participated in a parent survey at the end of the research period (see Appendix L).

- Parent 1 was a teacher. She had been in education for over 15 years and prioritized learning experiences for her child. She used her own knowledge of the expectations of a classroom setting to create meaningful learning experiences for her child at home.
- Parent 2 worked in a professional occupation. She valued experience and teaching her children to speak professionally. She provided experiences

for her children to speak with other adults and interact with others to develop language skills.

- Parent 3 worked in child psychology. She supported her child's educational experiences and language development. She had been involved with her child's educational experiences since infancy and was active in the preschool.
- Parent 4 had advanced degrees and worked in a professional industry. She supported the school and provided educational experiences for her child at home with creative toys. She valued professional language and had high expectations of the school to prepare her child for learning.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

#### **English Language Prekindergarten Screening Tool**

The English language prekindergarten screen is a tool used to assess English language ability in rising kindergarteners (Oklahoma SDE, 2015). This screening tool is used one-on-one with the assessor and the student. A series of questions are asked to the student, and responses are from the student indicate proficiency with English. This test focuses on the listening and speaking skills of a young student, and student skills, such as language use, grammar, and sentence structure, along with the ability to appropriately respond to a question, are used to measure the student's English Language ability (Oklahoma SDE, 2015).

This preschool English language screener was developed by the Oklahoma Department of Education for preschool screening to identify students who would qualify for English language intervention services. The Department of English Language

Proficiency Assessments includes this document as part of their online resources and gave permission to be used in this study. A copy of the assessment is included in the Appendix D.

### **English Language-Grammar Screening Tool**

A grammar screening tool was administered to participating prekindergarten students. The language assessment measured regular past-tense verbs, plurals, pronouns, and subject-verb agreement. This screener was used as an assessment to collect pre- and post-data. This tool is used in the elementary school setting with prekindergarten students and was created and published by a Speech Language Pathologist, Natalie E. Synders, MS, CCC-SLP, and published through Synders Publishing (2014). While this tool is used to screen students the preschool level of the public school, the researcher received permission from the creator to use this screener for the research. A copy of these tools is included in Appendix E through Appendix L.

### **Parent Survey**

At the beginning of the study, parents of students selected to participate were asked to participate in a parent survey. The researcher created the survey, and the focus of the survey was on the parents' thoughts about language acquisition, the importance of educational experiences and exposure to language, and the parents' experiences with education and language diversity while in school. The questions were highly structured as the survey was a written form of an oral survey, with wording and order of the questions predetermined. Using pre-determined questions can lead to limited "access to participants' perspectives and understandings of the world" and "reactions to the investigator's preconceived notions of the world" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 109). The

original design of this action research plan included a parent interview. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the interview was modified to an electronic survey. The individual parent surveys were sent electronically, and responses were stored electronically. The surveys were sent without names or parent details for anonymity. There are aspects of both a phenomenological study and romantic conceptions in this study as the researchers attempted to learn information about someone's true experiences, and at the same time, the researcher has previous experience that leads to predict the responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 111-112). A copy of the Parent Letter and Permission to Interview is included in Appendix A and Appendix B and a copy of the parent survey questions are included below.

Table 3.1 List of Parent Survey Questions

1. How likely is your child to follow simple instructions?
2. How likely is your child to speak clearly?
3. How well do you think your child communicates when telling you what he or she did during a visit with a friend?
4. How well do you think your child communicates when telling you what he or she did at school?
5. How well do you think your child communicates when telling you about something about a family event?
6. In general, how confident are you in supporting your child's learning at home?
7. Do you think the school staff and the school materials (curriculum) are inclusive for all students?
8. Do you recognize or notice a difference in the school's academic language and curriculum and the social language students use with peers?
9. Do you specifically teach or model a language difference between social or familial language and the school/curriculum language (Code Switching)? Was that (Code Switching) modeled for or explicitly taught to you?
10. What do you do to help your child build self-confidence in communication?
11. Based on your experiences, what do think is the most critical part of modeling language use for your child?

12. Share your thoughts about preschool education and language instruction. How critical do you think a strong academic preschool is for language development?

### Research Procedure

Over the course of the action research study, the researcher obtained permission to work at the preschool, invited parents and student participants, observed student in the preschool classroom, conducted pre-intervention assessments, provided the instruction for the intervention groups, conducted post-intervention assessments, communicated with stakeholders, and analyzed the data. Table 3.2 outlines the overall procedure.

Table 3.2 Research Procedure Weekly Guide for Language Interventions

Week	Focus	Mode	Objective
Pre- Intervention Window	Approval by preschool board of directors and preschool director.	Communicated research objectives and adherence to preschool and board policy regarding information to be obtained.	Secure location to conduct research.
Week 1	Observation of prekindergarten classrooms and students and permission to participate letters to parents.	Observed students in the prekindergarten classes, planning meeting with teachers and director, introduction to students.	Create a comfort level with students and staff while working at the preschool. To obtain permission from parents to allow students to participate in study.

Week 2	Pre-Intervention Assessment	Students with permission to participate were administered the language screener and the grammar screener individually by the researcher.	Obtain pre-intervention data.
Weeks 3-6	Small group sessions. Students were grouped according to their preschool classroom to facilitate intervention time. Intervention took place outside the classroom.	Small groups met with the researcher in the preschool library. The group followed the daily agenda on listening, reading, writing, and speaking.	Students worked on language skills in the areas of past tense verbs, subject-verb agreement, pronouns, and regular plurals.
Week 7	1. Post-Intervention Assessment 2. Parent Survey Data	1. Individual students were administered the language and the grammar screener as a post intervention assessment. 2. Parents who chose to participate in the parent research were emailed a survey to complete.	1. Obtain post intervention data. 2. Obtain parent survey results.

### **Data Analysis**

The student assessment data from the pre- and post-test assessments were quantitative. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The parent



survey and interview data were qualitative data. The findings from this data were categorized by themes responsive to the research question. Descriptive analysis was used to reflect on the language experiences had by the subjects. The survey data were collected through web-based communication and stored electronically.

Table 3.3 Data Collection Instrument and Evaluation Method

Data Collection Instrument	Data Type	Evaluation Method
English Language Prekindergarten Screening Tool	Quantitative	The language screener has a point scale which assigns a point to each question answered with in the guidelines. “Scoring instructions: Proficiency is 70% or 7 out of 10 items. For students who are unable to answer 7 of the 10 questions, they qualify for ELL services and qualify for “bilingual count.” If you discontinued the test after the first three items because of incorrect responses, the child qualifies for ELL services.”
English Language- Grammar Screening Tool Regular Plurals Regular Past Tense Pronouns Word Order	Quantitative	The grammar screener has a data collection tool to record the correct answers out of 10 questions. A passing score is 80%. The tool is designed to be used over time and measure students’ growth following language services/intervention. Student growth was

		measured from pre-intervention date to the post-intervention date
Parent Survey	Qualitative	Parent survey data was evaluated on specific parent responses. 9 of the 12 questions used a Likert-type scale score response. 3 of the questions had an open-ended response format. Data was evaluated for common themes.  (Adam & Lawrence, 2019)

Google Forms was used to gather qualitative data from the parent-subjects. Three questions were in an open response format to gather the unique experience and perspective of the parent-subjects regarding language use and modeling at home. The researcher identified commonalities between the parent-subjects' responses. The data was analyzed to determine emerging themes.

### **Reflection and Action Plan**

When the intervention cycle and the data analysis were complete, the data was reviewed with the preschool teacher. The data were presented to the teacher and the director of the child development center. The data were anonymous, so student and parent data could be shared. The action plan that was instituted resulting from this study is outlined in Chapter 4.

### **Summary**

Chapter Three details the action research methodology used for this research. This is a mixed-methods action research design included quantitative and qualitative data collection and assessment. The action research took place at ABC Academy Child

Development Center with eight qualified, prekindergarten subjects receiving direct SAE language instruction and four parent participants completing the parent survey. Data was collected over a period of two months, with pre- and post-intervention data compared.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### **Overview of Study**

This research study is designed to evaluate the benefits of direct academic English language support for African American prekindergarten students. Eight prekindergarten students participated in the research. The research took place during the final term of the preschool academic calendar, as the students were preparing to transition to kindergarten. Each student was administered a pre-intervention screener. This screening tool assesses the students listening and speaking skills in English. This assessment was only given at the beginning of the intervention window as a screener for a quick check of the students' English language production (see Appendix D, R and U). Each student was also administered a speech language assessment used with students beginning kindergarten. The speech assessments focused on regular past tense verbs and regular plural nouns, subject-verb agreement, and pronouns. The students were administered the speech assessment as a pre-assessment and as a post-assessment. In addition, parents were invited to participate in a survey about home language, language use at home, and the importance of preschool. The parent-subjects completed the survey at the end of the intervention window.

#### **Problem of Practice**

The problem of practice identified in this study is the need for targeted Standard Academic English (SAE) language instruction for all preschool students. This study

provided English language assessments and intervention services to African American prekindergarten students to identify strengths and areas of improvement to increase SAE language skills. The problem of practice recognizes all students who could benefit from SAE instruction in a small group setting do not receive the services. The English language services are not provided to dialectally diverse students, including AAE students, who might need and benefit from English language services.

Throughout the United States, African American children are denied their ancestor's humanity and instead receive placement in Title 1 and Special Education classes that are discriminatory in nature. They should be placed in English as a Second Language (ESL) and Bilingual Education Programs.

(Anthony & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 3)

The problem of practice also recognizes the deficit perspective AAE speakers have faced over centuries, and the explicit criticism AAE speakers have faced for using a familial language that developed from exclusion and isolation from public education.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions were the following: (1) How can a specialized English language intervention be utilized to identify the strengths and areas of improvement for African American preschool students? (2) Does the English language intervention influence skill development in African American Students in the areas of past tense verbs, regular plurals, and personal pronouns? (3) How do African American parents influence the English Language development of students preparing to enter kindergarten?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to recognize the critical function language plays in the ability and success for all students to access the mainstream SAE curriculum. The study sought to identify the lack of targeted English language services provided to prekindergarten students and evaluate how preschool African American students would benefit from targeted intervention services for SAE. This study dared to ask if the education achievement gap could be narrowed by providing language services so all students can access the SAE curriculum. This study also seeks to value English language dialects, including AAE that some students speak in familial and social settings, and it is different from the SAE used in the education curriculum. It is the purpose of this study to measure growth in SAE for prekindergarten African American students who receive English language intervention that could facilitate performance in the SAE curriculum.

### **Findings of the Study**

The student participants for the study were prekindergarten students who attended a private, faith-based preschool. All the students in the prekindergarten program were invited to participate. Of the 16 students in the prekindergarten program, eight students were allowed to participate in the study. The students were ages 4-5 years old, 3 females and 5 males, and all were African American. The parents of the students were working professionals. All eight students were administered the preschool language screen. All eight students passed the assessment and would have been classified as English Proficient students.

**Research Question 1: How Can a Specialized English Language Intervention Be Utilized to Identify the Strengths and Areas of Improvement for African American Preschool Students?**

The first assessment administered to the pre-kindergarten students involved a language screening tool. As outlined in Table 4.1, eight participating pre-kindergarten students were each administered the Pre-Kindergarten Language Screening Tool for English Language Learners and Bilingual Students (Oklahoma SDE, 2015). The results of the screening indicated 3 of the 8 students answered 9 out of 10 questions correctly and 5 of the 8 students answered 10 out of 10 questions correctly. Proficiency level on the assessment is designated as answering at least 70% or 7 out of 10 questions correctly. Comprehensively, 100% of the students scored either a 9 or a 10 on the Pre-Kindergarten Language Screening Tool for English Language Learners and Bilingual Students. At least one student was able to decode words and write, demonstrating skills beyond the pre-kindergarten level (see Appendix T). According to the assessment, the students' use of English is a strength. This is important because the student subjects in this study demonstrate a strong command of English prior to the intervention. The student subjects in this study had previous exposure or knowledge of English sentence structure allowing them to communicate responses to questions at a proficient level.

Table 4.1 Prekindergarten Language Screening Tool for English Language Learners and Bilingual Students Results

Student	Score out of 10	Completion Level
A.A.	10/10	completed at the proficiency level
K.P.	10/10	completed at the proficiency level
H.A.	10/10	completed at the proficiency level

T.J.	9/10	completed at the proficiency level
D.S.	10/10	completed at the proficiency level
D.T.	10/10	completed at the proficiency level
J.T.	9/10	completed at the proficiency level
J.B.	9/10	completed at the proficiency level

Specialized English language intervention was also provided to the subjects in a small group instructional setting. Language assessments were administered to the subjects, and that data was used to target specific instruction. The assessment data was used to identify areas of strength and areas of needed improvement, and the researcher used language acquisition strategies such as modeling, repetition, and reinforcement to provide targeted language instruction. Areas of strength were identified by correct answers. If a student scored 7 out of 10 or higher, that area was considered an area of strength. Areas of strength were reinforced and encouraged during instruction. During the small group intervention, language varieties were positively recognized by acknowledging language that could be used with friends or at home. If a student did not SAE, the language variety was recognized. The researcher would respond with “What’s another way we can say that? or “How could we say that if we were talking to our teacher?” Differences in language register and grammar were acknowledge with acceptance. No language variety or register was weighted, and the researcher and students discussed the ways language can be used with family, with peers, and with teachers. To further examine areas of strength and potential weaknesses, students were evaluated relative to specific areas such as past tense verbs, regular plurals, and personal pronouns.



**Research Question 2: Does the English Language Intervention Influence Overall Language Skill Development in African American Students as Well as in the Specific Areas of Past Tense Verbs, Regular Plurals, and Personal Pronouns?**

***Student Assessment with Regular Past Tense Verbs***

The eight participating pre-kindergarten students were each administered several grammar probes of a Speech Language Screener for early childhood. For the pre-test on regular past tense verbs, the most common error was not using the regular past tense, but rather the past continuous tense.

The following example demonstrates this:

- Today the girls talk. (prompt)
- Yesterday the girls were talking. (student error)
- Yesterday the girls talked. (researcher models correct form)

During the intervention period, direct instruction was provided on past tense. Students were given the pre-test during week one and students were provided the post-test during week seven. Results from the pre and post-test are displayed in the Figure 4.2.

The assessment entailed examples given by the researcher and 10 prompts. The prompts included a visual and sentence that was read out loud for the student.

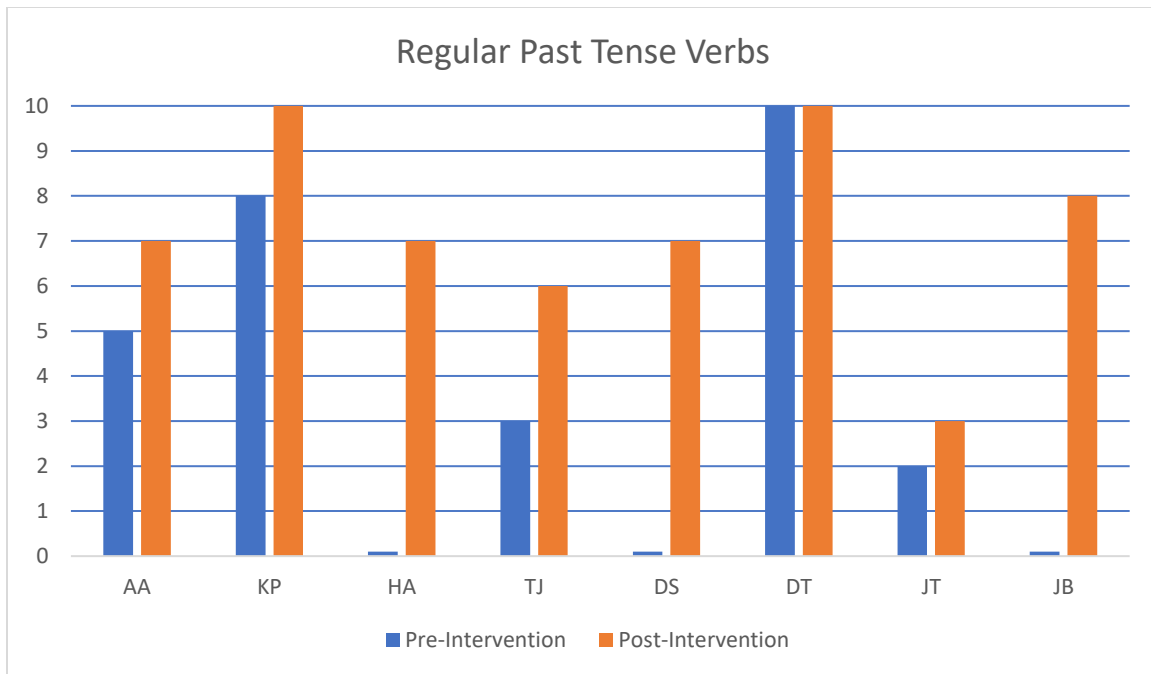


Figure 4.2 Regular Past Tense Pre-Intervention/Post-Intervention Data Chart.

To reiterate, almost all students showed growth from the pre/post intervention assessment on regular past tense verbs after receiving the instruction. One student did not show any measured growth because she got them all correct on the pre-intervention assessment. The average increase in the number of items correct was 3.75. The highest increase was demonstrated by student was 8 answers. This area was demonstrated as an area of strength for 2 students during the pre-test and 6 students during the post-test.

Regular past tense verbs were addressed in almost every session with the students because the students' discussed things from the story that happened the day before (past) and compare to the story features from that day (present). The researcher specifically modeled the past tense ending in speaking and writing examples.

### ***Student Assessment with Regular Plurals***

The eight participating pre-kindergarten students were also each administered Regular Plurals grammar probes of a Speech Language Screener.

Students were given the pre-test during week one and students were provided the post-test during week seven. Results from the pre and post-test are displayed in the Figure 4.2. The assessment entailed examples given by the researcher and 10 prompts. The prompts included a visual and sentence that was read out loud for the student. Results from the pre and post-test are displayed in the Figure 4.3.

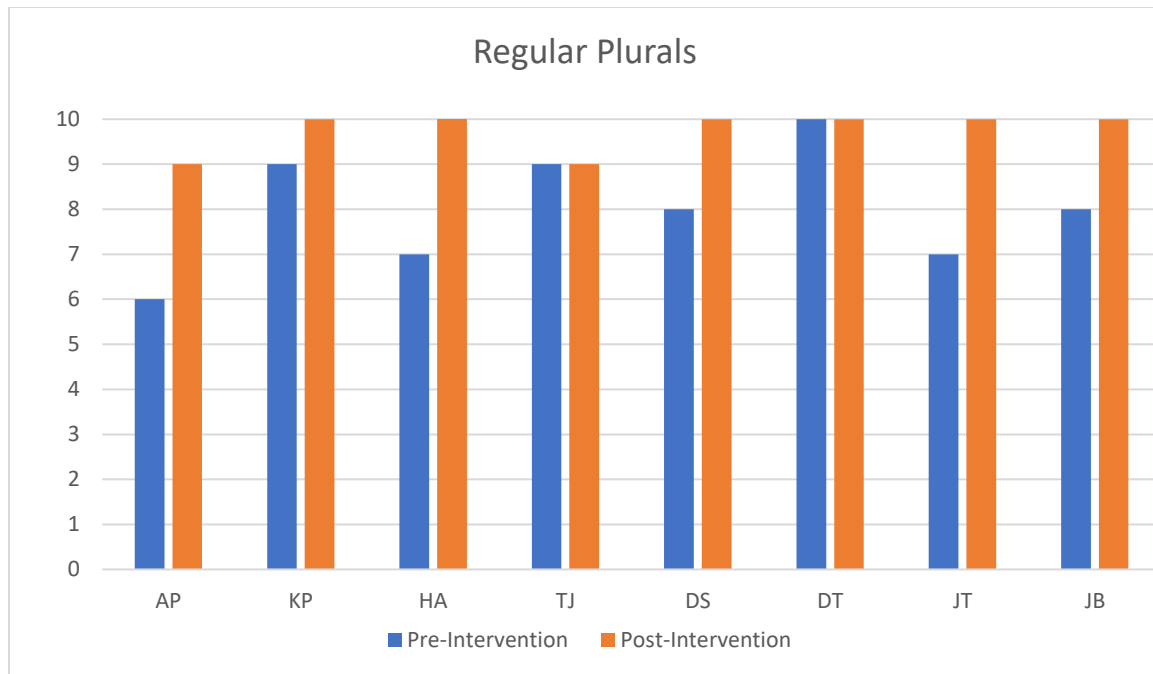


Figure 4.3 Regular Plurals Pre-Intervention/Post-Intervention Data Chart

For the pre-test on regular plurals, 7 of 8 students scored age appropriate with 7 out of 10 prompts responded to correctly. The one student who scored the lowest (6 out of 10) was not putting the ending sound on the nouns. The average increase in the number of items correct was 1.75. Six students scored perfectly on the post test. This area was demonstrated as an area of strength for 7 students during the pre-test and all 10 of the students during the post-test. Regular plurals is an area of strength for the students.

Two of the prompts gave the students the most difficulty. One prompt asked for the plural of “couch” showing a picture of one couch, then two couches. The second one

most missed was “sock,” showing what looked like a math problem. I showed one sock, then three socks. The students would simply answer “four.” During the intervention period, direct instruction and modeling was provided on ending sounds.

Almost all students demonstrated growth on regular plurals from the pre-intervention assessment to the post-intervention assessment. The students who did not show growth had all answers correct on the pre-intervention assessment. Over the course of the intervention period plurals were discussed everyday through speaking and writing. The students produced language to demonstrate practice and fluency. The students practiced being intentional with their ending sounds and ending sound were modeled by the researcher.

#### ***Student Assessment with Regular Plurals***

The eight participating pre-kindergarten students were each administered Personal Pronouns grammar probes of a Speech Language Screener. Students were given the pre-test during week one and students were provided the post-test during week seven. The assessment entailed examples given by the researcher and 10 prompts. The prompts included a visual and sentence that was read out loud for the student. Results from the pre- and post-test are displayed in the Figure 4.4.

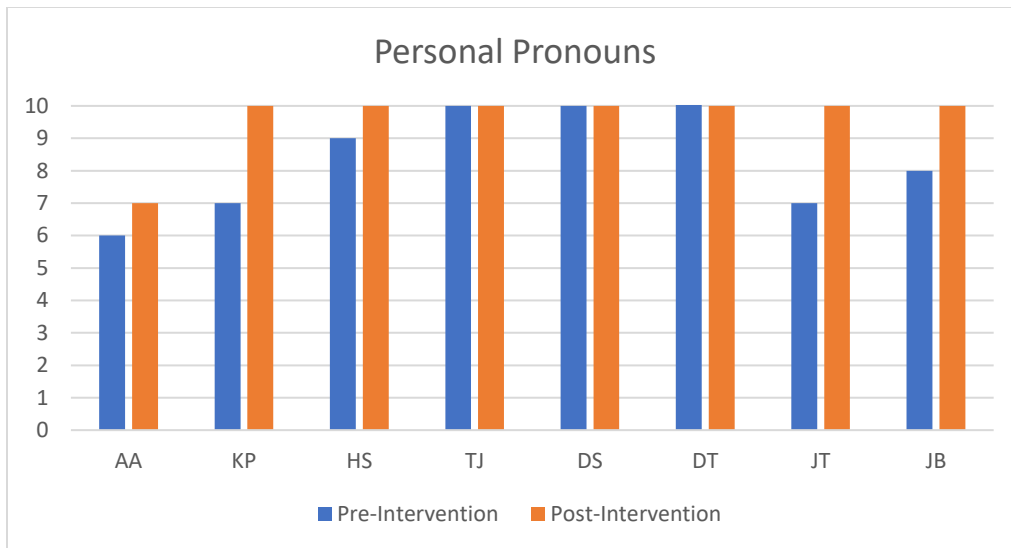


Figure 4.4 Speech Language Screener Personal Pronouns

For the pre-test on regular plurals, 7 of 8 students scored age appropriate with 7 out of 10 prompts responded to correctly. The average increase in the number of items correct was 1.25. The highest increase was demonstrated by 2 students with an increase of 3 answers correct on the post-intervention test. This area was demonstrated as an area of strength for 7 out of 8 students during the pre-test and 10 out of 10 students during the post-test.

The one student who scored the lowest (6 out of 10) used “them” for her answers (“Them is talking.” “Them is walking.”) The students showed correct grammatical use of personal pronouns. During the intervention period, direct modeling and rephrasing correction was demonstrated.

Again, almost the students showed growth in the area of personal pronouns. This was an area of strength for the students, as almost all the students grew in this area, except for the students who correctly answered all the prompts on the pre-intervention assessment. The use of personal pronouns was modeled in discussions around the characters in the book and was also part of the conversations between the students during

peer-to-peer communication. The students generally demonstrated proficiency with personal pronouns with very few errors noted during shared talking time.

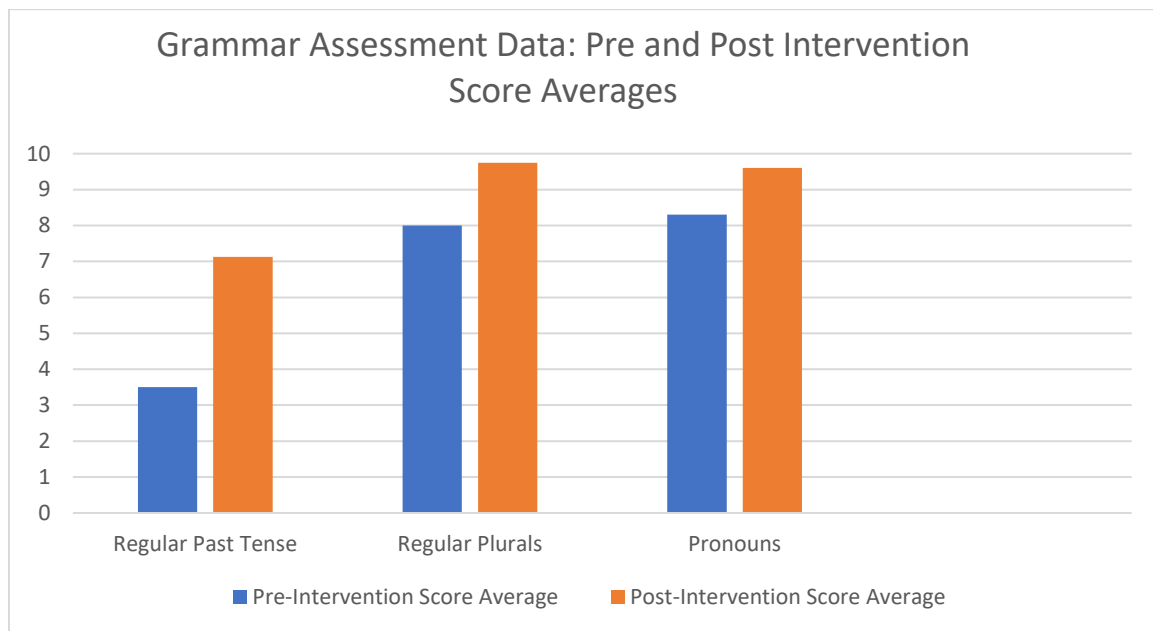


Figure 4.5 Grammar Assessment Data: Pre- and Post-Intervention Score Averages

In terms of examining the students' strengths and weaknesses, the students showed the most weakness in regular past tense verbs with the fewest students scoring at the proficiency level prior to the intervention. Both regular plurals and pronouns appeared to be an area of strength for the students prior to the intervention. Post intervention, the students still collectively scored lower in the area of regular past tense verbs, though this is also the area with the most growth. The students showed growth in each area unless the student scored 10 out of 10 on each the pretest and the post test. According to the pre-and post-intervention data collected by the researcher, English language intervention influenced the skill development in African American students in the areas of past tense verbs, regular plurals, and personal pronouns.

### **Research Question 3: How Do African American Parents Influence the English Language Development of Students Preparing to Enter Kindergarten?**

Of the eight students who were allowed to participate, five parents also chose to participate in the parent survey. Four parents completed the survey. From analyzing and interpreting the data provided by the parent-subjects several themes emerged as to how African American parents influence the English Language development of students preparing to enter kindergarten: (1) Parent-subjects understood the importance of modeling appropriate communication at home, 2) Parent-subjects capitalizing on the home as a place of learning. (3) Parent-subjects understood the importance of preschool. (4) Parent-subjects encouraged their children and provided rewards for targeted behavior. (5) Parent-subjects understood the difference between language spoken at home and the language spoken at school.

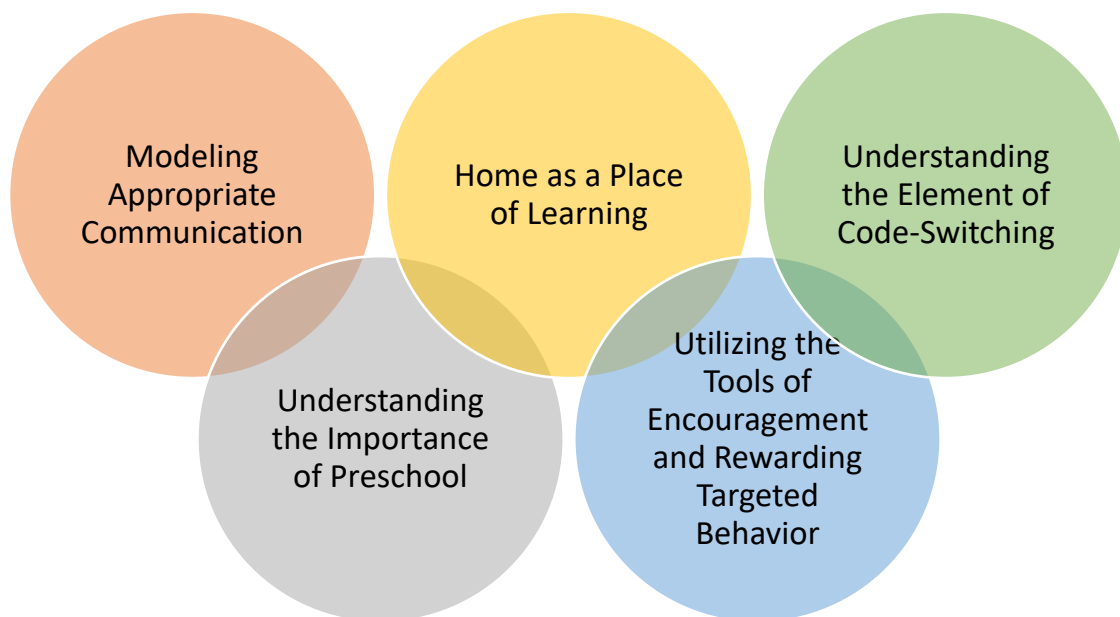


Figure 4.5 Five Emerging Themes Related to Parental Feedback

## **Parent-Subjects Understood the Importance of Modeling Appropriate**

### **Communication at Home and Capitalizing on the Home as a Place of Learning**

*“I also think it is important that accurate language development is important to be modeled at home.” “Repeat the appropriate way to say things and ask them to repeat it after me. I will also say the word that I think he is trying to say.” “They become delayed if their parents aren't already exposing them to a large vocabulary of academic language or speak frequently throughout their individual households.” “Talking with children about the meaning of words. Helping them differentiate which words are acceptable and when they may be used.”*

The parents were very clear in their role as language models and clear with their expectations of language experiences and direct language teaching at home. The parent-subjects reiterated the importance of sharing a language experience with their children and modeling their target language. The parent-subjects expressed the importance for language to be modeled at home. The parents model the desired language for their children. They will also repeat and rephrase things to have their children corrected and exposed to the target language. The parents will also talk with the children about word meaning and which words are used in which settings. The parent-subjects prioritize teaching and modeling “accurate, appropriate, acceptable” language at home. In addition, a parent-subject expressed concern about not teaching and modeling language at home stating, “They become delayed if their parents aren't already exposing them to a large vocabulary of academic language or speak frequently throughout their individual households.” This indicates a responsibility of the parent to ensure language acquisition



is occurring at home, and how parents should capitalize on teaching academic language as part of their household.

### **Parent-Subjects Understood the Importance of Preschool**

*“Preschool education and language instruction is the foundation and building block towards the road of a successful academic career. Preschool transitions children from the home life to school life. It instills expectations for the school setting and betters the chances for the child to succeed. preschool language instruction is key to instructing those foundational behaviors in read a text and the basic number senses in mathematics.” “I believe that there's definitely a clear relationship and I do believe that it's highly critical for children to attain the necessary language skill set to thrive while in preschool and afterward.”*

All the parent-subjects indicated high confidence in ABC Academy to provide their student an inclusive and academic learning experience. From the data collected from the parents when asked about the importance of preschool language, one parent-subject stated, “it’s highly critical for the children to attain the necessary language skill set to thrive while in preschool and afterward.” It is this recognition of the importance of preschool that motivates the importance of an academic preschool setting. Another parent-subject expressed the importance of preschool education to set up the foundation for their children’s academic career stating, “preschool language instruction is key to instructing those foundational behaviors in read a text and the basic number senses in mathematics. “Collectively the parents value preschool education: “preschool education and language instruction is the foundation and building block towards the road of a successful academic career.” The parent-subjects indicated high value on

prekindergarten as an indication for the preparedness and success of an academic career. Through their responses the parents prioritize early child education and have confidence in the education setting they chose for their children.

### **Parent-Subjects Encouraged Their Children and Provided Rewards for Target Behavior**

*“I reward my child verbally with over exaggerated expression. I correct any language that is not appropriate or pronounced incorrect and then acknowledge the correction.”*

*“I encourage and teach both verbal and non-verbal communication.” “I encourage them often. Constant encouragement and if they mispronounce a word, I correct them and have them try it as often as they can, so that they know how it should sound. I also try to make my daughters comfortable expressing themselves and give corrective feedback in a loving, supportive manner.”*

The parents demonstrated the importance of their role for modeling language and serving as their child’s role model and teacher for language. One parent-subject stated, “I encourage and teach both verbal and non-verbal communication.” The parent-subjects used positive forms of correction for language instruction and redirection. The parent-subjects modeled the target language and give feedback or corrections. “I correct any language that is not appropriate or pronounced incorrect and then acknowledge the correction.” The parents also acknowledged any derivations from their target language and provided alternative ways to say and pronounce words. The parent-subjects took an active role in their children’s language development. They taught targeted language through modeling and corrections. The parents also offered rewards through “encouragement” in a “loving and supportive manner.” Through the parent-child

dialogue, the parent-subjects encouraged targeted language development and rewarded their language development with feedback and responses.

### **Interpretation of Results of the Study**

Using an English language screener, the participants would not have been identified as students who needed English language assistance at the preschool level. The participants of the study would not typically qualify for the services from which the intervention was modeled. The study results did show the students improved on the grammar skills from the pre-assessment data to the post assessment data. Overall, targeted direct instruction on grammar skills improved the students' grammar skills according to the data. Though the students were in the normal range of student English language production, the intervention service was purposeful in increasing the scores on the assessments. Collectively, these students have strong abilities in SAE. During the intervention and assessment collection period the students demonstrated high listening and verbal skills in Standard English (see Appendix N, O, P, and Appendix Q). Several of the students were able to demonstrate reading skills, too. During the read aloud of the book and assessments, those students attempted to read the book or prompts for themselves.

The parent data showed the parents have strong confidence in their ability to educate their child at home and provide rich and meaningful learning experiences. The parents focused on direct targeted language interaction using SAE. Most of the parents directly teach some form of code switching for language, with one parent sharing they explicitly taught different behaviors and would teach language differences as the child aged.

The following five themes emerged from the parent survey: (1) Parent-subjects understood the importance of modeling appropriate communication at home, 2) Parent-subjects capitalizing on the home as a place of learning. (3) Parent-subjects understood the importance of preschool. (4) Parent-subjects encouraged their children and provided rewards for targeted behavior. (5) Parent-subjects understood the difference between language spoke at home and the language spoken at school. The parents highly value academic preschool setting and see language and language development to be critical in their child's academic preparedness. Over all the parents greatly value education and meaningful language experiences for their children.

### **Conclusion**

From the student data, the students demonstrated growth on the assessment from the SAE language services. From the beginning of intervention to the end, there was an increase in the student scores on the grammar and language assessment. Targeted, specific language instruction in a small group setting seems to have influenced the language scores for the students. In the area of past tense verbs, plurals and pronouns, the students showed improvement. From the student data, it was concluded that the students were English language proficient and had previous knowledge of the English language for listening and speaking. The students were able to learn new skills and make connections to previous English Language exposure.

From the parent data, it showed the parents were confident in supporting their children's learning at home. The parent data also showed they were confident in their children's listening and speaking skills. The parents valued an academic preschool setting

and reinforcing academic language skills at home. The parents shared their thoughts on the importance of direct language, modeling, and code-switching.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Overview of Study**

This study was intended to support offering Standard Academic English (SAE) services to students to African American preschool students to facilitate learning in the SAE curriculum. The purpose of this study was based on the need to support students who could benefit from targeted SAE instruction and support. This research offers English language assessments and intervention to African American preschool students to identify strengths and areas of improvement to increase English language skills. In this chapter, the findings will be discussed as they relate to the data, focusing on language development at home and the importance of preschool instruction. Based on the outcomes from this study, there will be a recommendation for practice regarding language proficiency screening and direct English instruction. At the conclusion of this chapter, there is a reflection on action research and the selected methodology, and a discussion on the limitations of this study.

#### **Problem of Practice**

The problem of practice identified in this study is the need of targeted English language instruction for all preschool students. The problem of practice recognizes all students could benefit from SAE instruction in a small group setting or targeted English language instruction. Targeted English language instruction/intervention is not provided

to dialectally diverse students, including AAE students, who might need and benefit from English language services.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions were the following: (1) How can a specialized English language intervention be utilized to identify the strengths and areas of improvement for African American preschool students? (2) Does the English language intervention influence skill development in African American Students in the areas of past tense verbs, regular plurals, and personal pronouns? (3) How do African American parents influence the English Language development of students preparing to enter kindergarten?

### **Overview of Methodology**

An action research study was designed to offer SAE services to African American preschool students. The students received 30 minutes of language services on listening, speaking, reading, and writing in SAE. The students were taught in small group (four students) pullout sessions with the focus on grammar and expressive and receptive language. The students were administered pre-and post-test assessments to address the research question.

The subjects allowed to participate in the research study were four- and five-year-old African American students attending a private, faith-based preschool academy. Prior to intervention services, the subjects were administered an English Language screener used to identify students who are not proficient in English. All the students who participated in the research study were English proficient at the beginning of the study.

Of the eight students allowed to participate, there were four whose parents elected to participate in the parent survey. The parents responded to questions about language

exposure at home, direct language instruction (including code-switching), and about preschool instruction. The major findings of this study are the improvement of scores from the pre-assessment and post-assessment data, as well as the collective responses from the parents.

### **Results and Findings**

There are two main finding from this study: one related to the subject performance on pre- and post-assessments, and the other from the parent responses during the survey. The subjects showed growth from specific language intervention on the pre- and post-assessment data. That is consistent to the general knowledge base regarding small group language intervention. Specifically targeting language skills in a small group setting is considered best practice for intervention (Stockman, 2010). At the beginning of the study the subjects were administered an English Language Proficiency screen. All the subjects were considered proficient for English language at the preschool level. The data collected from the pre- and post-intervention assessments showed all students either made growth or maintained mastery of the English skills. There was growth in each area, as follows: regular past tense, regular plurals, and pronouns, and all students demonstrated mastery (with seven of the eight students scoring perfect) on word order/subject-verb agreement. The data collected from the students' scores from pre- and post-intervention assessments show growth in the targeted skill area over the course of the intervention period.

The following five themes emerged from the parental survey: (1) Parent-subjects understood the importance of modeling appropriate communication at home, 2) Parent-subjects capitalizing on the home as a place of learning. (3) Parent-subjects understood



the importance of preschool. (4) Parent-subjects encouraged their children and provided rewards for targeted behavior. (5) Parent-subjects understood the difference between language spoke at home and the language spoken at school. The parent-subjects provided rich details about their language expectations at home and use around their children. The parents target direct language instruction, modeling, and correction at home. These findings relate to the general knowledge base and existing literature to some degree; however, the parent-subjects indicated more intentionality, structure, and importance of teaching SAE at home. Generally, the parent-subjects placed a critical importance on the preschool education experience. In addition to recognizing the importance of the preschool experience, the parents have a high confidence in their own ability to educate their children. While most parents value education, these parents demonstrated a higher value of education and high expectation of the preschool experience, including their own expectation to provide meaningful language instruction at home.

Looking at the performance of the students as well as the confidence and expectations of the parents, it can be interpreted that the parents are intentionally preparing the students to be successful in education and value the role SAE has in the curriculum. The parent-subjects modeled SAE, directly taught SAE, and chose a preschool with an academic focus. The student subjects' language proficiency can be interpreted to be a result of the parents' intentional language choices both at home and choice of preschool education.

When asked about code-switching and modeling, the parents indicated they did both explicitly, or would directly teach code-switching to the students when they were older. During the intervention window with the students and the observation of the

students in the preschool classroom, the students spoke SAE. The student subjects would use more familiar language when playing with each other during centers, however it was observed in the typical range for language development for prekindergarten language. The students were able to recognize the times to use familial language and when to use the SAE expected by the teacher.

The involvement and the high priority placed on language development by the parents appeared to present itself in the strength of the language ability and confidence of the students. Parental involvement seems to have a positive implication on language development, and research on parental involvement has correlated this result (Trotman, 2001). There is also a positive relationship for African American students' success in academics and parental involvement in school (Bodovski, 2010). The parents in the study valued a preschool with an academic focus, and they have high expectations for the school and the preparedness of the students for kindergarten. The results from the study and demonstrate the importance of preschool for African American students and students in general (Bodovski, 2010). Preschool prepares students by preparing young learners for the academic demands of grade school, and students who have participated in a vigorous preschool learning program show strengths in their kindergarten readiness skills (Trotman, 2001).

### **Limitations**

The purpose of this study is the use of English language assessments and intervention services provided to African American prekindergarten students to identify strengths and areas of improvement to increase Standard Academic English (SAE) language skills. The problem of practice recognizes all students who could benefit from

SAE instruction in a small group setting do not receive the services. This study had several limitations. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, public schools did not allow any outside personnel to work with students. Daycare centers and preschools were also asked to participate, but again, due to COVID-related restrictions, the Department of Social Services would not allow daycares to let outside personnel work with students. That greatly diminished the access to prekindergarten students who might have qualified for the study based on language development needs. The preschool academy that allowed the research to occur with the students is a private Christian academy. All the students who were allowed to participate were African American, English proficient prekindergarten students.

This study was designed to reach African American preschool students with a variety of dialectally diverse backgrounds to determine if targeted language instruction would increase SAE skills. A critical piece of this study is the initial English language screen. A direct limitation for this study is the student subjects allowed to participate were all proficient English speakers. The suggestion from one element of the project is that all students entering public school should have a SAE language screener. The current process only requires a language screener for any student that has a Home Language Survey indicating they speak a language other than English. However, alternative dialects like AAE are not used to include students for a language screening. “AAE is a Black-oriented English that is intimately connected with a history of oppression, resistance, and rich linguistic and literacy achievement in African America” (Paris, 2009, p. 430). It must be strongly recognized that being African American does not equal being an AAE speaker (Craig et al., 2009). Not all African Americans speak AAE, nor do they need

language services. For the children who do, and might need help accessing the SAE curriculum, there needs to be a way to help (Craig et al., 2004). We cannot target African Americans with a lens of deficit perspective due to a dialectal difference (Godly & Escher, 2012; McBee Orzulak, 2015). Therefore, all students should be screened to make sure students who need SAE intervention receive the services to access the SAE curriculum and be successful.

Another limitation surrounds the identification of AAE. There is a 400-year history of deficit perspective of African Americans and AAE. Through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), educators recognize and value dialectal differences. AAE is slowly being recognized as an English dialect. Through generations, AAE has been diminished and delegated to “broken English” and insulted as unintelligent and uneducated by the hegemony. There is so much work to be done to reduce the harm this caused to AAE speakers. Dialects such as AAE must be accepted and valued. “This work requires teachers to validate their students’ linguistic resources, and to engage students in building a multilingual community of practice, pulling from multiple linguistic and academic funds of knowledge” (Morales & Hartman, 2019, p. 238). CRP can help teachers value the home language of their students and distinguish the need for SAE for school purposes (Gay, 2002). Because of the inconsistency and lack of appreciation, the differentiation of home and school language in the AAE community can be challenged. AAE dialect must be recognized from a non-deficit perspective.

### **Action Research for Social Justice**

The professional value of the research centers on equitable access to the curriculum. SAE is the language of the American School system, and all students need

the opportunity to be proficient SAE speakers to find success with the curriculum (Stockman, 2010). SAE does not belong to one race, sex, or socio-economic level, but is the language of American public schools (Immaculate, 1991). Educators can do more to help all students be successful in schools and part of that is valuing and recognizing diversity among student home dialects and languages, while providing everyone the SAE skills to be successful.

### **Implications and the Importance of Preschool and Parental Involvement**

The parent-subject data highlighted the importance they have for a strong preschool setting. The preschool the parents selected offers an academic foundation in the prekindergarten classroom. The parents were clear in the importance of academic language being used in the classroom setting. They shared their beliefs on the importance of SAE being modeled in the classroom and providing the students the language base they need to be successful in future academic settings. Parents who prioritize prekindergarten and encourage their students to be academically successful influence the success of their students (Mashburn et al., 2009).

The parent-subjects also choose to be involved in the academic life of their children. The parents intentionally engage in conversation with their child. They provide feedback, examples, and opportunities for their children to learn SAE at home. Another way the parent-subjects choose to be involved is by thoughtfully and intentionally choosing a preschool that offers an academically rigorous prekindergarten class. The parents have confidence in the school and the curriculum to provide their students the building blocks they need in language skills (and other academic areas). Students from

home with high parental involvement can have more success throughout their academic careers (Roberts et al., 1991).

The study highlights the importance of preschool and parental involvement for SAE development. The student subjects included in this study have access to both an academic prekindergarten classroom with high expectations and parents who value a strong academic foundation. The parents have provided the language tools and models for the students to be successful with SAE. The parents also provide access to a prekindergarten classroom that models their expectations and priorities. Parental involvement for African American students has been found to be a contributing factor in the success of African American students in the early childhood classroom (Pungello et. al., 2009).

### **Implementation and Further Implications for Future Research**

The information gained from this research will be shared with curriculum resource specialists and district-level English Language Arts curriculum development team. The results from this study showed improvement on SAE skills from targeted, specific language instruction. This information could inform teaching strategies for early childhood teachers with students entering kindergarten with limited fluency with SAE. This research also recognizes direct English language instruction by appropriate modeling and language expectations. Early childhood teachers should model and correct SAE language development in a way that validates language diversity. The population sample used in this research (eight student subjects) makes the results non generalizable. A similar study could be completed at a kindergarten level with more students in the population and more information about SAE language experience could be collected.

## **Summary**

Broadly, the suggestion from this study involves recognizing the demands on students to be proficient in SAE to reach the SAE curriculum. Students beginning school as dialectally diverse speakers and limited SAE need language assistance to have equitable access to the curriculum. The current system identifies ELL students to receive language services due to speaking a foreign language from an ESOL teacher, and the system recognizes students with speech/language impediments to receive speech language services from a licensed Speech Language Practitioner. However, there exists a group of dialectally diverse students that do not have SAE proficiency and do not have a speech language impediment that do not receive language services to be successful within the SAE curriculum.

A suggestion would be to extend the design of this study to a traditional public school kindergarten program, and all students identified without having SAE proficiency would receive SAE services. Dialectally diverse students would be provided the SAE language skills through direct, small group instruction. The students would receive direct instruction on language use and code-switching in an affirming environment that values language diversity. Teachers and parents are encouraged to support the students' language diversity and ability to communicate skillfully in a variety of ways.

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## APPENDIX A

### PARENT LETTER

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Trent Rogerson. I am a doctoral candidate in the Education Department at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of dissertation for my doctorate degree in education, and I would like to invite you and your child to participate.

I am studying standard English language acquisition in preschool children. If you allow your child to participate, your child will participate in a small language enrichment group. We will work on speaking, listening, reading, and writing for 30 minutes/4 days a week for 8 weeks. The small groups will meet in the mornings from 9:00-9:30 AM or 9:30-10:00 AM.

The children will be asked to participate in language development activities such as listening to a story and responding to questions, language games and storytelling. The sessions will take place at the Brookland Baptist Child Development Center (BBCDC).

If you decide to participate in the research study, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview about your child's language development and school readiness.

You will be asked questions about your child's communication skills, language development, home language use, and readiness for kindergarten. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The meeting will take place at the BBCDC and should last about 30 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded so that I can accurately transcribe what is discussed. The tapes will only be reviewed by members of the research team and destroyed upon completion of the study.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of South Carolina. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed. Results of your child's activities will be shared with you. Not participating in the study will not affect your relationship with BBCDC.

We will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at 803.354.1175 and [tgmtgm@live.com](mailto:tgmtgm@live.com) or my faculty advisor, Dr. Yasha Becton at [YYJONES@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:YYJONES@mailbox.sc.edu).

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please return the attached documents to the BBCDC or contact me at the number listed below to discuss participating.

With kind regards,

*Trent Rogerson*

Trent Rogerson  
803.354.1175  
tgmtgm@live.com

APPENDIX B  
CHILD-SUBJECT PARTICIPATION FORM

Research Study Participation

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not want my child to participate in the research study on standard English language acquisition in preschool children.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like my child to participate in the research study on standard English language acquisition in preschool children.

Name of Child:

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please return the completed form to the Child Development Center.*

APPENDIX C  
PARENT-SUBJECT PARTICIPATION FORM

Research Study Participation

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not want to participate in the research study on my child's language development.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to participate in the research study on my child's language development.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me at \_\_\_\_\_  
to schedule the appointment.

*Please return the completed form to the Child Development Center.*

## APPENDIX D

### PRESCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCREENER

<b>PRE-KINDERGARTEN LANGUAGE SCREENING TOOL FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND BILINGUAL STUDENTS</b>		
<b>Directions:</b> The initial portion of this screening can be performed in an informal format, such as when you are walking down the hall towards the office or as you greet the child; or, in a more structured format, seated at the table in a testing situation. To decrease anxiety on the part of the child and parent, it is suggested to use the informal format when possible. <b>If the child fails to answer the first three questions in English, discontinue the test.</b> If the child is unresponsive due to fear or reservation, the test can be performed after a few weeks into the school year.		
	Yes	No
1. <b>What is your name?</b> <i>The child should be able to say at least their first name, and possibly their last name.</i>		
2. <b>How old are you?</b> <i>The child should state their age. If they only show their fingers to identify their age, ask "How many is that?"</i>		
3. <b>What are your favorite toys?</b> <i>The child should be able to list at least two or three of their favorite toys. If they need prodding, you can ask: "What do you like to play with at home?" Or, "What do you like to play with outside?" If the child fails to answer the first three questions in English, discontinue the test.</i>		
4. <b>Tell me about your _____</b> (use one of the toys he/she mentioned). <b>What is it like?</b> <i>The child should be able to give you 2 or 3 characteristics about the toy.</i>		
5. <b>What are some of your favorite animals?</b> <i>The child should be able to name 3-5 animals.</i>		
6. Can the child follow simple directions such as: "Put the pencil on the table." "Put the book under the table." <i>Include prepositional words such as on and under.</i>		
7. Point to the child's eyes, ears, nose, hair, legs, arms, hands, feet, fingers, knees, head, or toes and ask "What is this?" <i>Can the child name at least 6-8 of them?</i>		
8. Ask the child to draw a picture for you. When the child is finished, say "Tell me about your picture." <i>If child needs encouragement, you can say: "Tell me about this part of your picture."</i>		
9. <i>When the child talks about their picture, does the child include endings on their words such as s, ed, or ing as in the words: playing, balls, rolled?</i>		
10. <i>Does the child use complete sentences with at least 3 or 4 words?</i>		
Total the number of items you answered "yes" .....		
Total the number of items you answered "no" .....		
<b>Scoring instructions:</b> Proficiency is 70% or 7 out of 10 items. For students who are unable to answer 7 of the 10 questions, they qualify for ELL services and qualify for "bilingual count." If you discontinued the test after the first three items because of incorrect responses, the child qualifies for ELL services.		

July 2015

## APPENDIX E

### PRESCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR SCREENER: REGULAR PLURALS



## Regular Plurals

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*Example:*

Here is one umbrella.



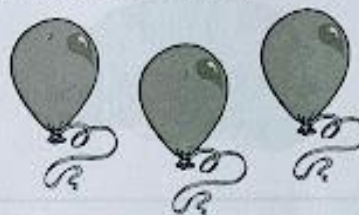
Here are two umbrellas.



1. Here is one balloon.



Here are three \_\_\_\_\_.



2. Here is one banana.



Here are two \_\_\_\_\_.



3. Here is one button.



Here are two \_\_\_\_\_.



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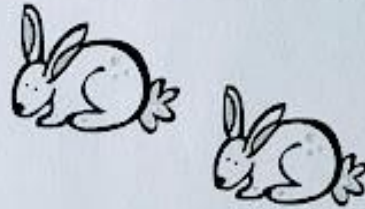
## Regular Plurals, Pg. 2

© 2000... John Snyder

4. Here is one rabbit.



Here are two \_\_\_\_\_.



5. Here is one couch.



Here are two \_\_\_\_\_.



6. Here is one bell.



Here are two \_\_\_\_\_.



7. Here is one sock.



Here are some \_\_\_\_\_.



## Regular Plurals, Pg. 3

© 2014, Natalie Snyder

8. Here is one bee.



Here are three \_\_\_\_\_.



9. Here is one bed.



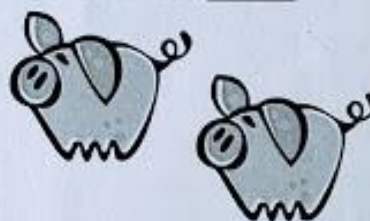
Here are two \_\_\_\_\_.



10. Here is one pig.



Here are two \_\_\_\_\_.



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www.teacherspayteachers.com/store/NatalieSnyder

Figure E.1 Preschool English Grammar Screener: Regular Plurals

## APPENDIX F

### PRESCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR SCREENER: REGULAR PLURALS RECORD



Regular Plurals

## Grammar Progress Monitoring Record

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

SLP: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes : \_\_\_\_\_

Regular Plurals	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
1. balloons				
2. bananas				
3. buttons				
4. rabbits				
5. couches				
6. bells				
7. socks				
8. bees				
9. beds				
10. pigs				
<b>Total</b>	___/10 ___%	___/10 ___%	___/10 ___%	___/10 ___%

www.teacherspayteachers.com/store/NatalieBryden

Figure F.1 Preschool English Grammar Screener: Regular Plurals Record

## APPENDIX G

### PRESCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR SCREENER: REGULAR PAST TENSE

## Regular Past Tense Verbs

*Example:*

They are painting.

Yesterday, they painted.



1. The girl is working.

Yesterday, the girl \_\_\_\_\_.



2. They are waiting.

Yesterday, they \_\_\_\_\_.



3. The man is shouting.

Yesterday, the man \_\_\_\_\_.



## Regular Past Tense Verbs, Pg. 2

© 2004, Natalie Snyder

4. The boy paints.

Yesterday, the boy .....



5. The people are talking.

Yesterday, the people .....



6. He is kicking.

Yesterday, he .....



7. The kids are playing.

Yesterday, the kids .....





## Regular Past Tense Verbs, Pg. 3

© 2015, Julie Snyder

8. The dog **barks**. Yesterday, the dog \_\_\_\_\_.



9. She **is washing** her face. Yesterday, she \_\_\_\_\_ her face.



10. The man **is listening**. Yesterday, the man \_\_\_\_\_.



Figure G.1 Preschool English Grammar Screener: Regular Past Tense

## APPENDIX H

### PRESCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR RECORD: REGULAR PAST TENSE

Regular Past Tense Verbs

## Grammar Progress Monitoring Record

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School Year: \_\_\_\_\_  
 SLP: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes : \_\_\_\_\_

Regular Past Tense Verbs	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
1. worked				
2. waited				
3. shouted				
4. painted				
5. talked				
6. kicked				
7. played				
8. barked				
9. washed				
10. listened				
<b>Total</b>	___/10 ___%	___/10 ___%	___/10 ___%	___/10 ___%

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www.teachcompa/teachers.com/NevadaState

Figure H.1 Preschool English Grammar Record: Regular Past Tense

## APPENDIX I

### PRESCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR SCREENER: PERSONAL PRONOUNS

# Personal Pronouns

© 2014, Natalie Snyder

*Example:*

What is going on here?

He is blowing out candles.



1. What is going on here?

\_\_\_\_\_ is talking.



2. What is going on here?

\_\_\_\_\_ is waving.



3. What is going on here?

\_\_\_\_\_ are painting.





## Personal Pronouns, Pg. 2

© 2014, Jan Stricker

4. What is going on here? \_\_\_\_\_ is running.



5. What is going on here? \_\_\_\_\_ is reading.



6. What is going on here? \_\_\_\_\_ is reading.



7. What is going on here? \_\_\_\_\_ is cooking.



## Personal Pronouns, Pg. 3

© 2014 Natalie Snyder

8. What is going on here? \_\_\_\_\_ is painting.



9. What is going on here? \_\_\_\_\_ are making a snowman.



10. What is going on here? \_\_\_\_\_ are talking.



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Figure I.1 Preschool English Grammar Screener: Personal Pronouns

APPENDIX J

PRESCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR SCREENER: PERSONAL PRONOUNS

RECORD



Personal Pronouns

## Grammar Progress Monitoring Record

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

SLP: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes : \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Pronouns	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
1. she				
2. he				
3. they				
4. she				
5. she				
6. he				
7. he				
8. she				
9. they				
10. they				
<b>Total</b>	___/10 ___%	___/10 ___%	___/10 ___%	___/10 ___%

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[www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Notable Systems](http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/NotableSystems)

Figure J.1 Preschool English Grammar Screener: Personal Pronouns Record

## APPENDIX K

### PRESCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR SCREENER: WORD ORDER

# Word Order & Subject Verb Agreement

*Example:*

Tell me about this picture.

The kids are playing with  
their new cars.



1.

Tell me about this picture.



2.

Tell me about this picture.



# Word Order & Subject/Verb Agreement

pg. 2

© 2014, Krista Wallden

3.

Tell me about this picture.



4.

Tell me about this picture.



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# Word Order & Subject/Verb Agreement

pg. 3

© 2004 by Linda Ward Beech

5.

Tell me about this picture.



6.

Tell me about this picture.



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Figure K.1 Preschool English Grammar Screener: Word Order



## APPENDIX L

### PRESCHOOL ENGLISH GRAMMAR SCREENER: WORD ORDER RECORD

**Word Order & Subject  
Verb Agreement**

**Grammar  
Progress  
Monitoring  
Record**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ School Year: \_\_\_\_\_  
 SLP: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Notes : \_\_\_\_\_

© 2014 Natalie Snyder

Write student's responses below. Give the student a + or - in the word order (WO) and subject verb (S/V) column for each sentence.	Date: _____		Date: _____		Date: _____	
	WO	S/V	WO	S/V	WO	S/V
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
<b>Total:</b>						

[www.teachemupayteachers.com/stories/NatalieSnyder](http://www.teachemupayteachers.com/stories/NatalieSnyder)

Figure L.1 Preschool English Grammar Screener: Word Order Record

APPENDIX M

PARENT SURVEY

Parent Survey

Thank you for your participation. I would like to learn more about you and your child's language experiences at home and school. Please answer each question as thoroughly and thoughtfully as possible. All information is appreciated, and I value your thoughts and experiences!

How likely is your child to follow simple instructions?

Very Likely  
Likely  
Neither Likely nor Unlikely  
Unlikely  
Very Unlikely

How likely is your child to speak clearly?

Very Likely  
Likely  
Neither Likely nor Unlikely  
Unlikely  
Very Unlikely

How likely is your child to sit still while listening to a story?

Very Likely  
Likely  
Neither Likely nor Unlikely  
Unlikely  
Very Unlikely



How well do you think your child communicates when telling you what he or she did during a visit with a friend?

Extremely Clearly  
Very Clearly  
Somewhat Clearly  
Not so Clearly  
Not at all Clearly

How well do you think your child communicates when telling you what he or she did at school?

Extremely Clearly  
Very Clearly  
Somewhat Clearly  
Not so Clearly  
Not at all Clearly

How well do you think your child communicates when telling you about something about a family event?

Extremely Clearly  
Very Clearly  
Somewhat Clearly  
Not so Clearly  
Not at all Clearly

In general, how confident are you in supporting your child's learning at home?

A Great Deal  
A Lot  
A Moderate Amount  
A Little Amount  
Not Confident

Do you think the school staff and the school materials (curriculum) are inclusive for all students?

Your answer

Do you recognize or notice a difference in the school's academic language and curriculum and the social language students use with peers?

Your answer

Do you specifically teach or model a language difference between social or familial language and the school/curriculum language (Code Switching)? Was that (Code Switching) modeled for or explicitly taught to you?

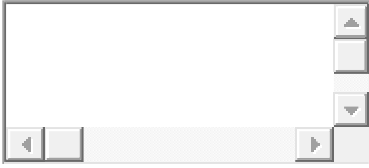
Your answer

Share your thoughts about preschool education and language instruction. How critical do you think a strong academic preschool is for language development?

Your answer

Based on your experiences, what do think is the most critical part of modeling language use for your child?

Your answer



What do you think is critical to be included in every child's academic preschool experience?

Your answer



What do you do to help your child build self-confidence in communication?

Your answer



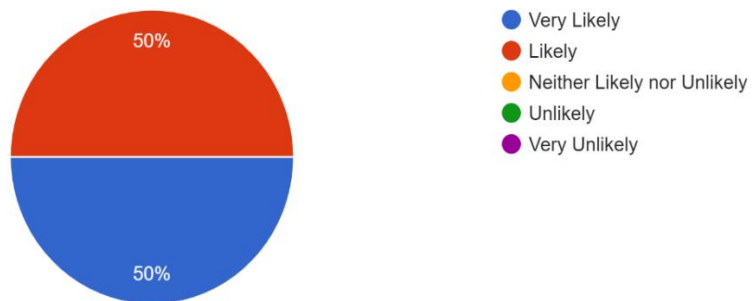
Submit

## APPENDIX N

### PARENT CONFIDENCE SURVEY RESPONSES

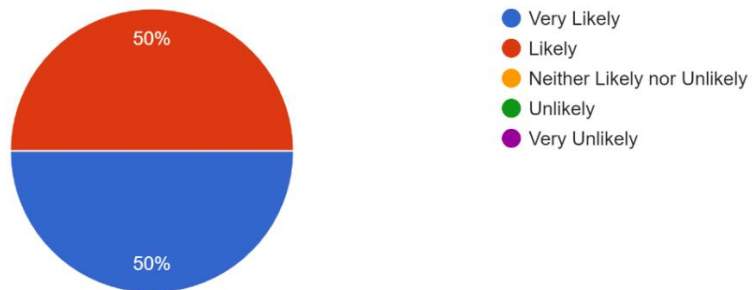
How likely is your child to follow simple instructions?

4 responses



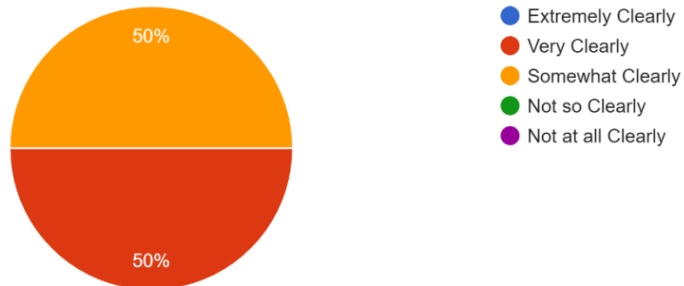
How likely is your child to speak clearly?

4 responses



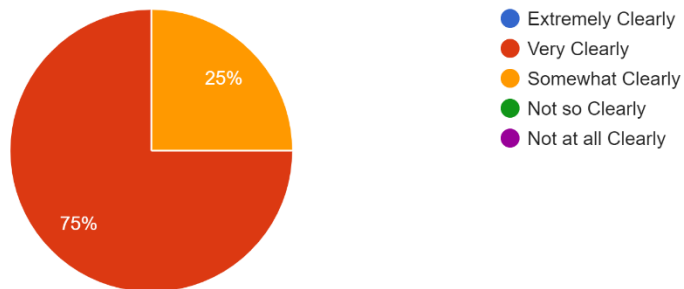
How well do you think your child communicates when telling you what he or she did during a visit with a friend?

4 responses



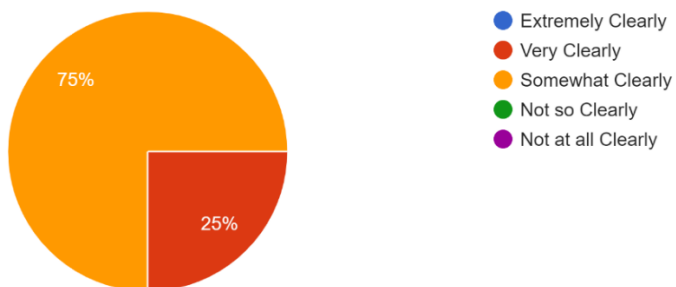
How well do you think your child communicates when telling you what he or she did at school?

4 responses



How well do you think your child communicates when telling you about something about a family event?

4 responses



In general, how confident are you in supporting your child's learning at home?

4 responses

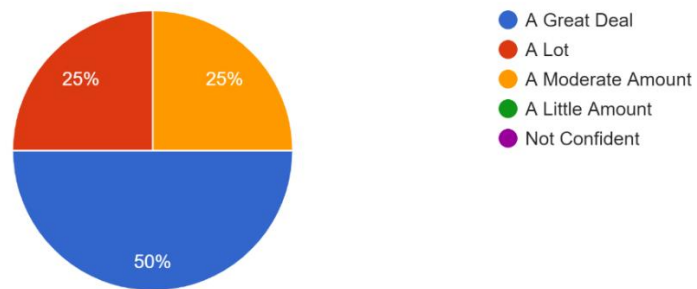


Figure N.1 Parent Confidence Survey Responses

APPENDIX O

STUDENT WORK 1

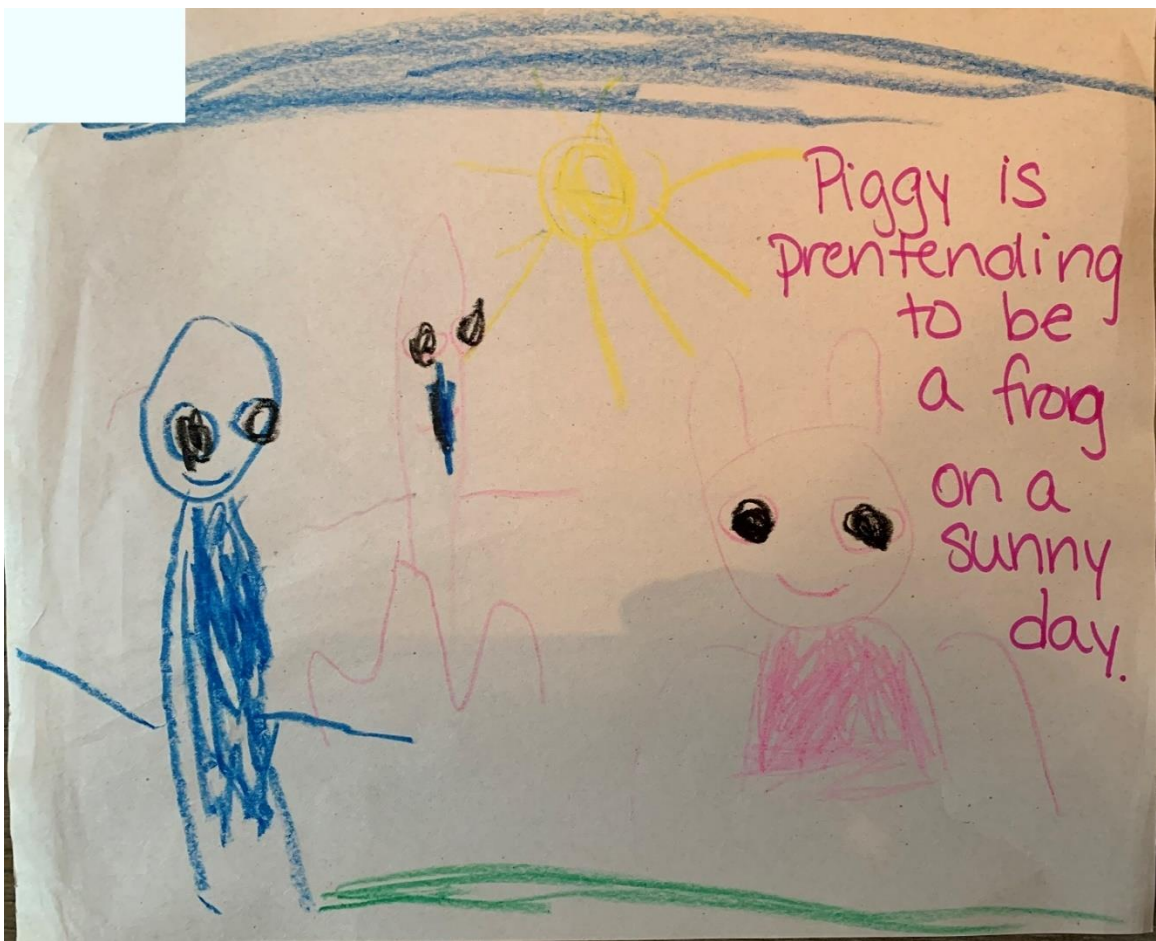


Figure O.1 Student Work 1

APPENDIX P

STUDENT WORK 2

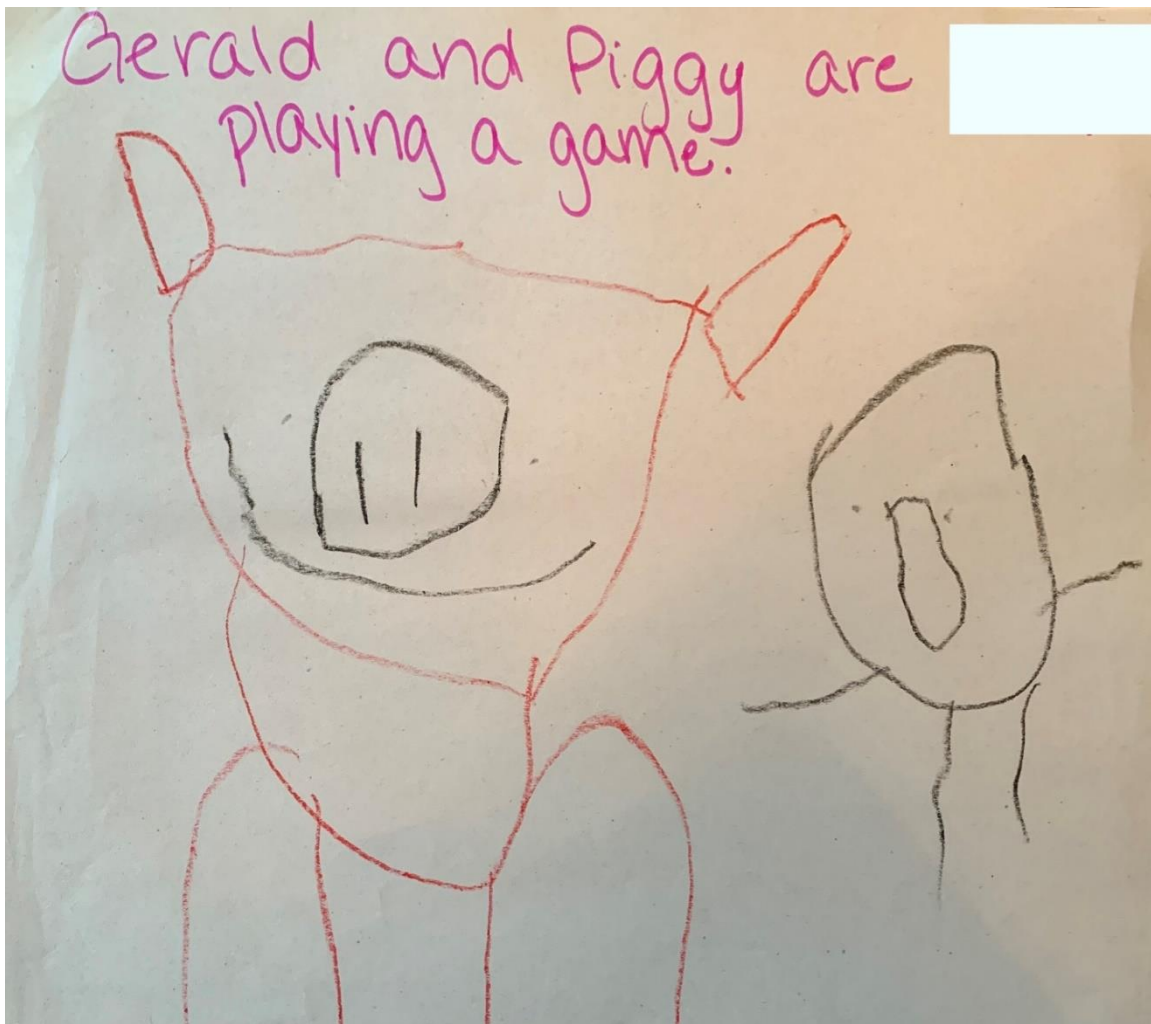


Figure P.1 Student Work 2



APPENDIX Q

STUDENT WORK 3

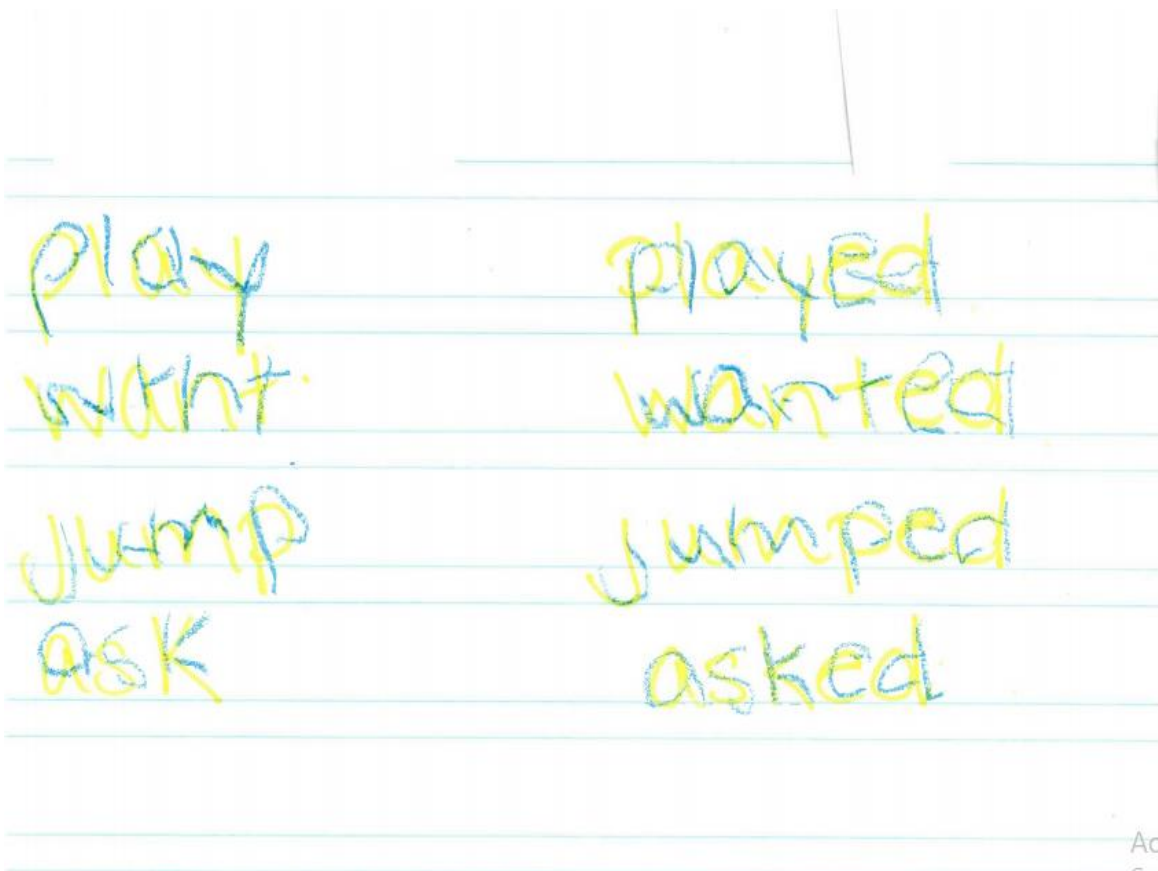


Figure Q.1 Student Work 3

APPENDIX R

STUDENT WORK 4

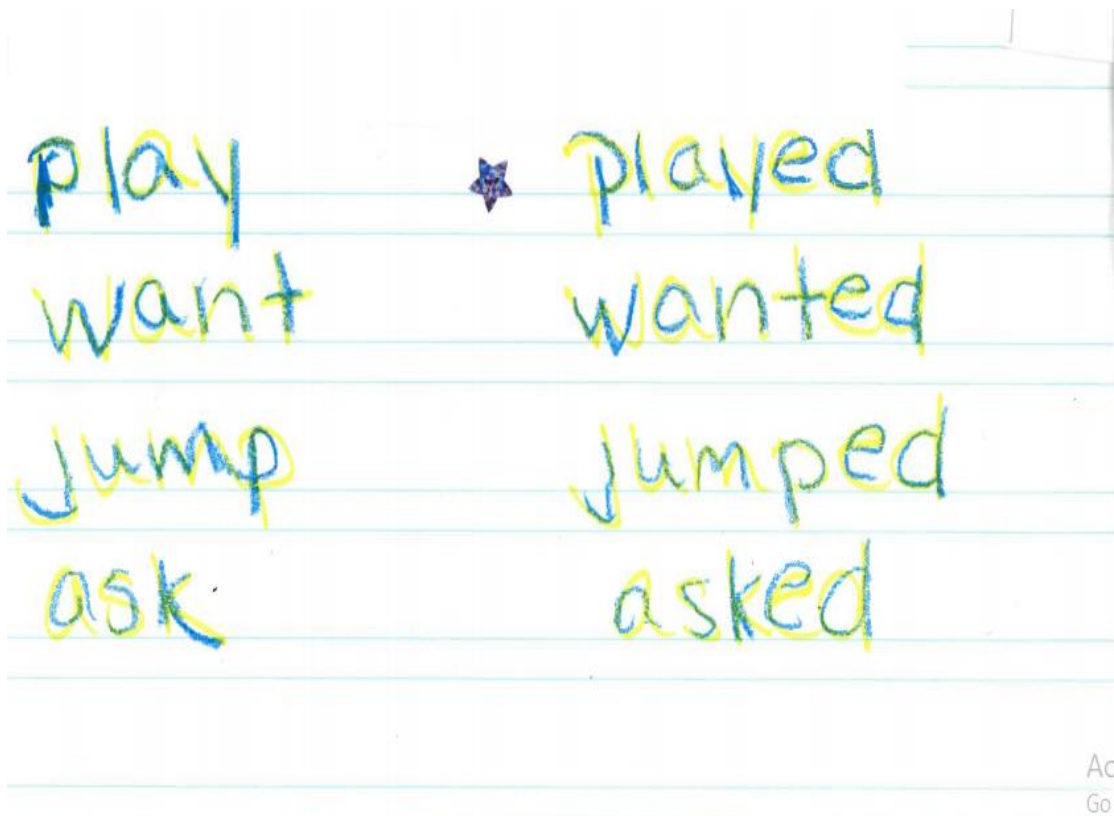


Figure R.1 Student Work 4

APPENDIX S

STUDENT WORK 5

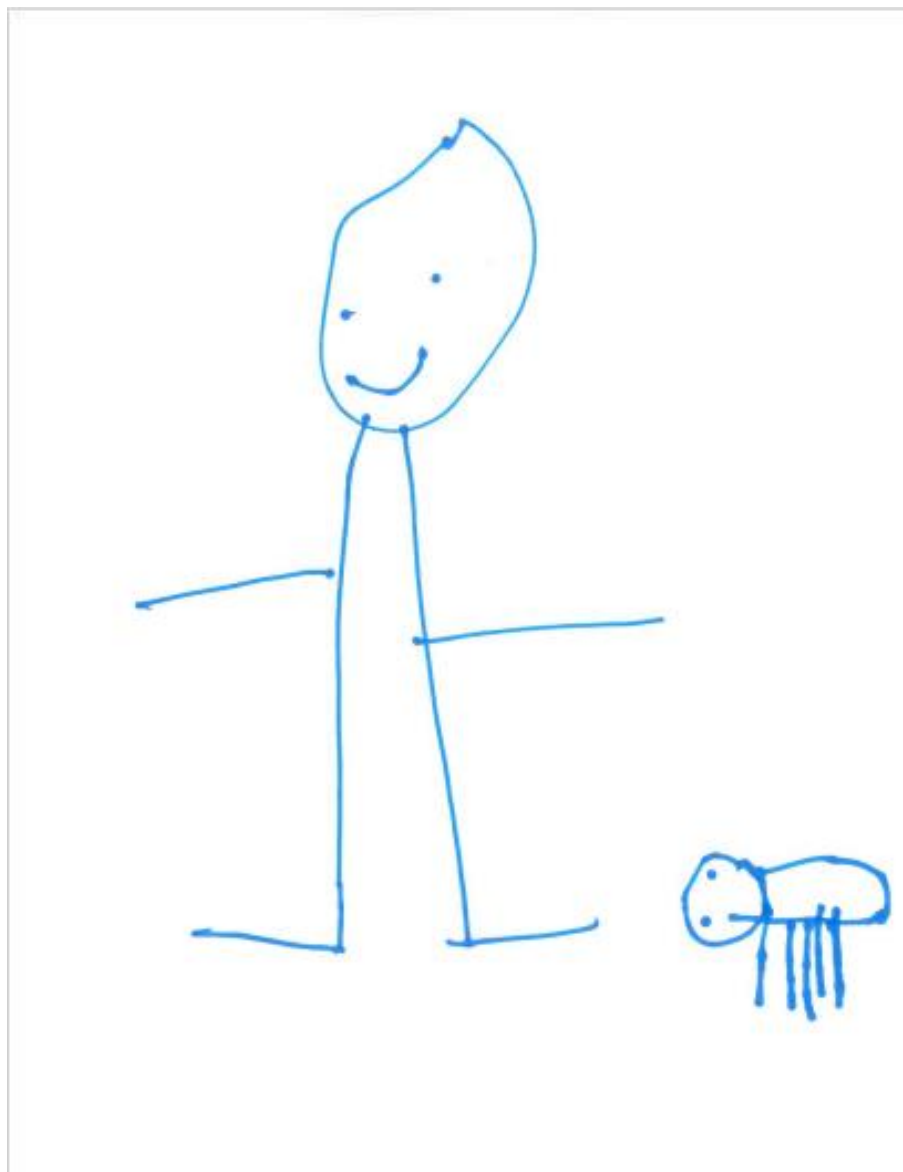


Figure S.1 Student Work 5

APPENDIX T

STUDENT WORK 6



Figure T.1 Student Work 6

APPENDIX U

STUDENT WORK 7



Figure U.1 Student Work 7

APPENDIX V

STUDENT WORK 8



Figure V.1 Student Work 8

APPENDIX W

SMALL GROUP AGENDA

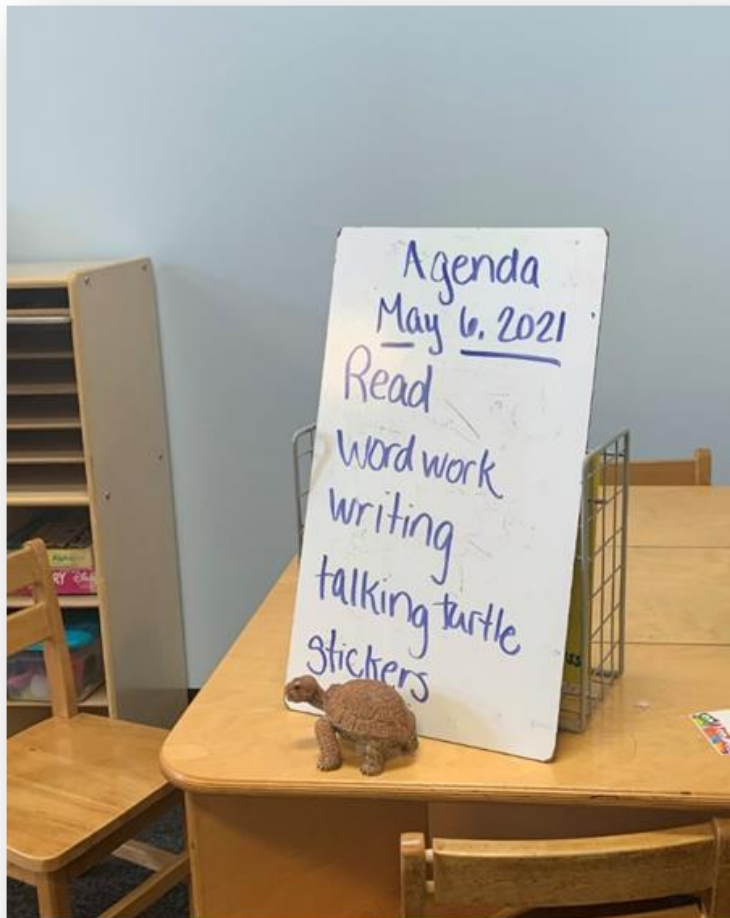


Figure W.1 Small Group Agenda



APPENDIX X

STUDENT SMALL GROUP WORK

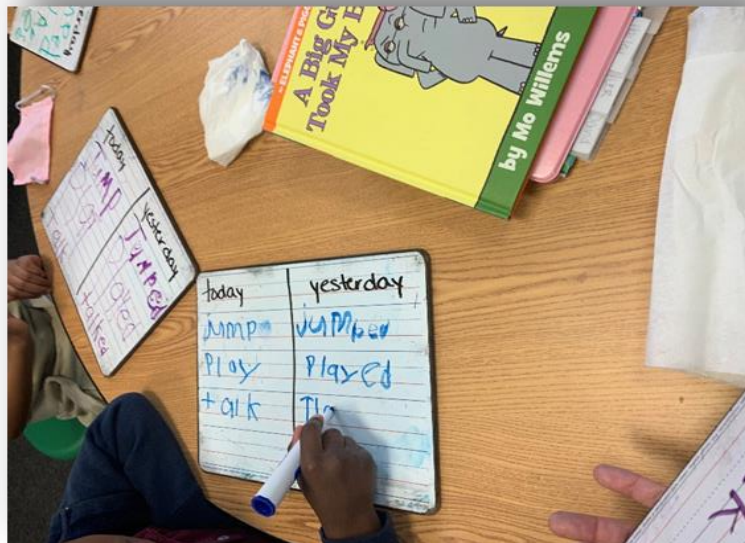


Figure X.1 Student Small Group Work