Developing vocabulary to support writing: a study of EAL learner

Jasen Booton

A Research & Development Project Submitted for the MSc in Learning & Teaching 2019

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Developing Vocabulary to Support Writing: A Study of EAL Learners

Abstract

Limited research exploring the writing process for EAL children, both within the UK context and internationally (Murphy, 2014), prompted this study of vocabulary development and use in narrative composition. The current dissertation details the stages of conducting an exploratory sequential mixed methods design, focusing on Year 4 second language learners in two West Midlands primary schools. The study placed significant importance on developing EAL children's vocabulary depth to support written production, exploring teacher practice supplementing dictionary use within an intervention (Smith & Murphy, 2014; Webb & Nation, 2017). This study showed the positive effect of EAL pupils learning target vocabulary in formulaic chunks and set phrases, namely collocations or multi-word vocabulary (units), boosting language and literacy skills (Wray, 2002; 2008; Cameron & Besser, 2004). The findings propose the explicit teaching of thematic sets of formulaic phrases (Cameron & Besser, 2004) to support vocabulary acquisition for written production in a narrative composition, showing a marked development in cohesion and expression of creative ideas in text. The improvement is attributed to a blended, integrated and contextualized pedagogical approach, with frequent multi-modal exposure to target multi-word vocabulary (Lee & Muncie, 2006) aligning to the school curriculum content and design. The results suggest that specific instruction for EAL pupils to use target vocabulary in their writing (Lee & Muncie, 2006) led to greater control of sentence structure, showing elaboration and a sense of flair (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015).

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1 INTRODUCTION

Learning to read and write are crucial elements of primary school literacy education. In the primary school setting where I teach and advise, over 80 percent of the school population comprises children with 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL). With the population of EAL pupils enrolled in UK schools steadily rising (NALDIC, 2019; DfE, 2018), it has been argued that more research needs to focus on language and literacy development for second language learners as a matter of social justice, in order to improve academic outcomes, equity and future life chances (NALDIC, 2019).

In my school context, assessment upon entry data show that over 90 percent of four year old children starting Reception class have weak levels of English language and literacy, with low scores on vocabulary measures, and are therefore vulnerable to underachieving in reading and writing. As a primary school practitioner and adviser for English, I am passionate about the development of children's language and communication skills, especially for linguistically diverse pupils facing the challenge of learning English as a second language. As a member of the Oxford Researching English as an Additional Language group (REAL), I have deepened my understanding of the complexities and barriers to language learning faced by EAL children, appreciating specifically the importance of developing vocabulary knowledge to support spoken and written communication (Nation, 2013).

My Part 2 assignment focused on spoken vocabulary development in Early Years EAL pupils, influenced by studies showing that children require sufficient vocabulary to cope with the pedagogical demands of the school curriculum

(Baumann & Kame'enui, 2004; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002; Nagy, 2005), and that vocabulary knowledge is crucial to reading development, especially comprehension skills (semantic processing) (McKeown & Beck, 2004). It is important to recognize that historically research has focused more on the development of reading comprehension, with far fewer studies concentrating on writing development (Murphy, 2014). For children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL), this distinction is even greater, with a paucity of studies exploring the writing process for EAL children, both within the UK context and internationally (Murphy, 2014). This limitation in literature was a motivating factor in designing a study to explore the development of vocabulary knowledge to support writing for young EAL learners.

Data highlight that many EAL children face challenges with their written compositions (Cameron & Besser, 2004), and that the writing attainment gap between children whose first language is English and EAL pupils persists in state-funded schools in England (DfE, 2019). It is therefore important to identify practice that supports children with EAL to make gains in their writing. A recent UK study comparing narrative writing for native-speaking and EAL pupils highlights that children with EAL face particular challenges with cohesion and expression of creative ideas in text (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). The study places significant importance on developing EAL children's vocabulary as a means of improving writing skill.

With the intention of improving vocabulary knowledge and writing outcomes for EAL pupils in school, and in turn lifelong opportunities and social mobility (Marulis & Neuman, 2013), I decided that the aim of the practitioner research

study would be to investigate how learning vocabulary supports writing for EAL learners in a primary school setting. In order to inform and shape the study questions for enquiry, I identified several issues to explore in the literature review. The key issue related to locating empirical research studies that explored strategies and teaching techniques employed by practitioners to develop vocabulary knowledge to support the writing process. A separate issue was to identify key concepts and theoretical perspectives aligning to vocabulary development, and the writing challenges and potential barriers for EAL learners, that would influence the study focus and design.

2 A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It is important to recognize that historically few studies have focused on direct vocabulary learning interventions (EEF, 2017), let alone vocabulary development in an EAL context.

With a paucity of EAL studies, the aim of this literature review is to first examine the research and conceptual framework corresponding more generally to vocabulary acquisition and its influence on language learning for primary age pupils, and then to examine the literature aligning more specifically to word learning and the writing process for children with English as an additional language.

2.1 Closing the word gap

Despite evidence of positive gains in vocabulary knowledge from targeted intervention, Biemiller and Boote (2006) suggest that the word gap between

children from socially disadvantaged families (low SES) and their more affluent peers is unlikely to close. This claim is corroborated by the meta-analytic studies of Mol et al. (2008), suggesting that children from high SES families often make gains in word learning at a faster rate than children from low SES homes, when receiving class based intervention; Stanovich (1986) describes this dispiriting challenge in closing the word gap as the 'Matthew effect'. Regarding the intervention school setting, with a high proportion of EAL pupils living in low SES families, practitioners are highly motivated to at least narrow the word gap and accelerate word learning for linguistically diverse pupils, based upon evidence of positive gains in similar school contexts (Neumman & Roskos, 2012; Marulis & Neuman, 2013).

2.2 The importance of systematic and direct teaching of vocabulary

The seminal theories of Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) support the argument for the direct teaching of vocabulary, with further studies arguing in favour of explicit and systematic programmes of vocabulary intervention (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2000; Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998). Storybook sharing, frequent encounters of targeted vocabulary and child-friendly definitions were highlighted as effective explicit teacher practice in the research of Hamilton and Schwanenflugel (2011), claiming that six-year-old children vulnerable to underachieving linguistically were a month ahead of peers in comparison groups. This concurs with evidence from two randomized control trials, examining the impact of vocabulary interventions for socially disadvantaged three- to six-year-old children living in the Mississippi Delta (Hamilton & Schwanenflugel, 2011; Schwanenflugel et al.,

2010). However, the inclusion of phonological skills development may have influenced improvements in vocabulary (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987; Goswami & Bryant, 2016; Rack et al., 1994). Several academics posit that deliberate, teacher scaffolded social interactions are crucial to vocabulary building interventions (Neuman & Dwyer, 2011; Dickinson & Porche 2011). This leads me to discuss some of the key theories influencing pedagogical practice and intervention design in developing vocabulary knowledge to enhance children's progress in language and literacy.

2.3 The influence of spoken language and oral vocabulary development on literacy achievement

A growing number of studies highlight the importance of spoken language and oral vocabulary in supporting children's achievement in reading, which may have a further influence on writing proficiency (Fricke et al., 2013; Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Catts et al., 1999). Muter and colleagues (2004) argue that early attention at Reception Stage in primary schools given to spoken language and oral vocabulary development is a likely determinant of children's later reading skills; a claim corroborated by the findings of 2-year longitudinal study of 90 British children starting school at 4 years 9 months old (Muter et al., 2004). Evidence from a randomized controlled trial of 180 children from 15 UK nursery schools claims that even earlier spoken language intervention has positive effects on the literacy skills of 3 and 4 year olds (Fricke et al., 2013). A growing body of research suggests that three key components of oral language development impact on young children's progress in reading (Nation & Snowling, 1998; Muter et al., 2004; Zipoli et al., 2011); evidence reveals the positive effects on reading from teaching

children phonological, grammatical and comprehension skills (Muter et al., 2004; Nation & Snowling, 1998; Zipoli et al., 2011). It is the comprehension domain that comprises vocabulary knowledge and semantic processing, and is therefore of particular significance in this study (Muter et al., 2004; Nation & Snowling, 1998; Zipoli et al., 2011).

Arguably, government policy has steered teachers in England to place more attention on the phonological development of spoken language, with influential reporting by Ofsted highlighting the teaching of phonics as exemplary practice for reading development (Ofsted, 2010). Rose (2006) argues that reports such as 'Reading by Six: How the Best Schools Do It' (Ofsted, 2010) have perhaps misguided teachers into thinking that the teaching of phonics is the key component of early reading development. Despite much research describing the effects of phonological skills on children's ability to decode written text (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987; Rack et al., 1994; Goswami & Bryant, 2016), importantly several studies, including a meta-analysis by Gough, Hoover and Peterson (1996), argue that phonological development is not a significant contributor to a child's reading comprehension (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). With the current primary curriculum in England placing emphasis on deep learning and mastery (DfE, 2013), several theorists posit that a child's vocabulary knowledge plays a vital role in the development of metacognitive skills and conceptual understanding (Biemiller & Boote, 2006).

Having personal experience of teaching in New Zealand primary schools with a large proportion of EAL pupils, it is interesting to recognize that the explicit and systematic teaching of vocabulary through spoken language is advocated in

government policy (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009). New Zealand Ministry of Education policy states: "We think and learn through language - oral language is the basis for all thought and communication" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 11). It is clearly evident that New Zealand's education policy encourages teachers to focus on spoken vocabulary development as critical pedagogical practice, explicitly linking 'speaking and listening' with reading comprehension, cognitive development and written expression.

2.4 Developing word consciousness

The seminal findings of Scott and Nagy (2004) theorize that fostering a greater interest and curiosity of words is a crucial element of an intervention for vocabulary development, encapsulating the concept in the expression 'developing word consciousness'. Scott and Nagy (2004, p. 201) define word consciousness as the: "Knowledge and dispositions necessary for a student to learn, appreciate, and effectively use words", thus highlighting the importance of teachers supporting pupils to ponder on the meaning of words, develop a greater awareness, and make connections to their own world experiences (Stahl, 2005). Blachowicz and colleagues (2006) argue that the main aim of developing word consciousness is to promote pupil motivation and agency in developing a breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge. Some scholars have argued against a direct and systematic approach for the teaching of vocabulary, claiming that pupils need to be at the right developmental stage: 'The Teachability Hypothesis' (Pienemann, 1985), however several studies have contested this (Elgort, 2011; Ellis 1990). Scott and Nagy (2004) posit that interventions for vocabulary growth need to have relevance and a

sense of authenticity for learners, arguing that these qualities lead to a desire to learn new words.

The findings of Baumann, Kame'enui and Ash (2003, p. 778) advocate the direct teaching of vocabulary, stating that effective pedagogical practice needs to: "help students to develop an appreciation for words and to experience enjoyment and satisfaction in their use". In addition, further studies claim that teachers play a crucial role in fostering a curiosity of words for their pupils, stating that practitioners need to model their love of language and fascination with words in the classroom (Graves, 2006). Concurring with this hypothesis, research conducted by Baumann, Ware and Edwards (2007) shows a significant improvement in pupils' motivation to learn new vocabulary when teachers create a climate of curiosity for words in their settings. However, it is important to appreciate that the findings of Baumann, Ware and Edwards (2007) highlight the importance of daily vocabulary intervention over a period of twelve months. This concurs with the findings of Graves (1987) who argues that teachers need to encourage word consciousness on a daily basis in order for pupils to be aware of the effects of their words. This continuing drive to develop metalinguistic awareness is crucial in supporting children's social interactions and discourse with adults and peers (Graves, 1987).

This leads me to discuss the literature pertaining to the theoretical framework and empirical research for EAL language learning that influentially helped shape the questions for enquiry for this masters study.

2.5 Language development for learners with EAL

It is important to acknowledge that a review of literature reveals the complexity of

classifying EAL learners (Murphy, 2014; Nation, 2013). Murphy (2014, p.75) offers an explanation that aligns to the context of the schools in this study, referring to a pupil's home language as the 'minority language' (L1), and the dominant language spoken in society as the 'majority language' (L2). EAL pupils in the UK are therefore children for whom English is the majority language used as the medium for learning and instruction in school, but speak another language in their home setting. With respect to this study it is recognized that the categorization of EAL pupils is broad, with the cohort of second language learners comprising both bilinguals and emergent bilinguals. It must be acknowledged that the grouping of pupil participants from such a wide range of home language experiences is a potential limitation of this study, which will be discussed further in the methodology section.

With EAL learners in UK primary schools comprising approximately 20.1 percent of total pupil population (DfE, 2018), it is concerning that the achievement of children with EAL is often much lower than native-speaking English peers (Burgoyne et al., 2009).

Studies frequently cite reading comprehension as an area of weakness for EAL learners, with lower levels of vocabulary contributing to a language development gap (Hutchinson et al., 2003; Lesaux et al., 2007). Several studies make reference to the links between weaker vocabulary knowledge and poorer reading comprehension occurring at Year 4 in the primary school years, when the reading curriculum moves more from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn', with greater emphasis on inferential reading skills and abstract concepts, as opposed to phonological awareness (Bialystok, 2007; Chall, 1983). This is corroborated by

several studies conducted in Canada, North America and the UK revealing that EAL pupils' word decoding skills compare favourably with their monolingual peers, indicating that disparity in language development does not directly relate to poor phonological awareness (Hutchinson et al., 2003; Lesaux, Orly & Siegel, 2006; Lesaux, Rupp & Siegel, 2007; Lesaux et al., 2008; Nakamoto, Lindsey & Manis, 2007). It is important to recognize that young EAL learners can potentially mask weak reading comprehension by compensating with strong phonological decoding skills (Hutchinson et al., 2003; Leach, Scarborough & Rescorla, 2003). Interestingly, the research of Bialystock (2011) suggests that bilingualism may in fact increase phonological sensitivity, possibly affirming the need to focus on the development of language comprehension for EAL pupils.

2.6 A theoretical framework framework for EAL language development

It is important to recognize that written texts tend to contain more complex academic vocabulary, which typically requires a level of language comprehension far beyond that exhibited in EAL children's daily spoken language (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010). Cummins' (1994) theoretical framework for EAL language development offers an explanation for the linguistic difficulties encountered by children with EAL, explaining the distinction between EAL children's social and academic language development. Language proficiency development is positioned on a framework with two bisecting axis of difficulty continua. One axis represents the degree of cognitive involvement required with the other axis representing the amount of context (Cummins, 1979). Cummins (1979; 1994; 2000) posits that an EAL learner develops sociocultural language in advance of cognitively demanding academic language. Cummins (1979; 1994;

2000) describes an EAL child's social language as "basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)", and their cognitively demanding language as "cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)". Cummins (1979) argues that developing BICS supports young children with EAL to communicate and interact socially in a range of school contexts, such as the playground, classroom or dinner hall. It is important to recognize that Cummins (1979) included prosodic features, such as gesture, pitch, facial expression and tone as elements of BICS, that arguably support spoken language comprehension (Mancilla- Martinez & Lesaux, 2010). It is important to note that studies by Cummins (1994) reveal that BICS usually takes about 2 years to develop for EAL pupils, whereas CALPS can take 5 to 7 years. When defining the BICS/CALP framework, Cummins (1979) refers to BICS as contextualized language learning and CALP as decontextualized. Cummins (1979) asserts that social language learning requires a context, and is consequently less cognitively demanding than decontextualized word development. In essence, Cummins argues (1979) that the more context provided in a situation, referred to as context-embedded, the greater number of clues an EAL learner has to decipher and infer meaning. A further study by Snow and colleagues (1995) concurs with Cummins (1979), highlighting the more cognitively demanding and abstract nature of context reduced language development. For the purpose of this study, Cummins' (1979) theoretical model provides valuable insight into why EAL pupils might perform well in context-embedded scenarios, but may struggle in context-reduced situations. The concept of context-embedded language development was significant in shaping the intervention design in the current study and will be discussed further in the methodology section.

Cummins (2000) also posits that sophisticated and more abstract vocabulary (CALP) learned in the home language transfers more easily to English as the second language. Cummins' (2000) theory of language transference is corroborated by several studies (Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005). However, it is interesting to consider Aukerman's (2007) challenge to Cummins (1994) BICS/CALP distinction, with Aukerman (2007) claiming that vocabulary and language structures commonly associated with BICS are not necessarily basic and cognitively undemanding. Aukerman (2007) states that young EAL learners might encounter considerable cognitive demand when faced with certain social interactions, perhaps when requiring a degree of empathy. The studies of Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002) concur with Aukerman's argument showing that children with EAL were able to learn sophisticated social language vocabulary such as 'embarrassed, regret and admire', and express the words in different contexts. This concurs with Vygotsky's hypothesis that learning is a social process (Vygotsky & Kozulin, 1986) suggesting that social interaction and discourse is a significant influence in learning both basic and sophisticated vocabulary. Interestingly Aukerman (2007) claims that Cummins (2000) made revisions to his original theory, with Cummins (2000) acknowledging that cognitive language development is socioculturally shaped, therefore casting doubt on the original assertion regarding clear boundaries between BICS and CALPS.

2.7 Developing word knowledge for children with EAL: the distinction between receptive and productive language

Acknowledging that different interpretations exist in the field of linguistics, Nation

(2013) provides a useful distinction between receptive language and expressive (productive) language. Nation (2013) suggests that receptive language refers to reading or listening - receiving language, with the intention of comprehending it, whereas productive language refers to writing and speaking with the intent of communicating a message (Nation, 2013, p.46-7). It is worth noting that several academics argue that productive vocabulary, rather than receptive vocabulary, determines an EAL learner's level of comprehension (McKendry, 2013; Hutchinson et al., 2003). However, a review of literature reveals a paucity of research specifically focusing on productive vocabulary development for children with EAL, especially in the context of language used for written production (Murphy, 2014). Influenced by the literature, I became interested in exploring the development of both receptive and productive vocabulary that supported the writing process for EAL pupils, with several studies pointing to the productive use of words as indicative of deeper conceptual understanding (McKendry, 2013; Hutchinson et al., 2003).

2.8 The vocabulary gap for children with EAL and their monolingual peers

Several studies show that EAL pupils in pre-school and early years settings have lower vocabulary scores (size) in both their home (L1) and L2 language compared to their native speaking peers (Pearson, Fernandez & Oller, 1993). A more recent UK study corroborates this claim, with evidence collected from young EAL children aged 3-5 years from a London borough, where the L1 home languages included Bengali, Turkish, Sylheti and Amharic (Dockrell, Stuart & King, 2010). It is concerning that a UK study indicates that the vocabulary gap between EAL pupils and their native English speaking peers can continue to the end of Key Stage

2 (Cameron, 2002), pointing to language issues possibly impacting on the transition to secondary school. However, McKendry (2013) suggests that it is problematic generalizing across different EAL populations in UK school settings due to the diversity of language skill. Nonetheless, acknowledging the heterogeneity of the UK EAL population (Strand, Malmberg & Hall, 2015), the growing evidence from international research identifying a vocabulary gap supports the need for further empirical study regarding vocabulary acquisition for children with EAL (Proctor et al., 2005; Nakamoto, Lindsey & Manis, 2007; Verhoeven & van Leeuwe, 2012; Kieffer & Vukovic, 2013).

2.9 Identifying pedagogical features of vocabulary interventions influencing EAL language development

My review of literature acknowledges that historically the majority of vocabulary studies emanate from North America, with Spanish as the predominant first language of EAL participants. Caution must therefore be given to the interpretation of EAL language and literacy research from the USA, recognizing that UK schools have a more linguistically diverse population of children with EAL (Murphy, 2014). Accepting that cultural and pedagogical differences may also limit the transferability and generalizability of evidence, I still felt that the long history of studies from the USA provided valuable insight to build upon, providing examples of interventions and teacher practice to develop children's vocabulary knowledge. This leads me to identify and summarize key findings from empirical studies pertaining to pedagogical features of vocabulary interventions

cited in the body of international research, with reference to theoretical argument in the field of language and literacy development for second language learning.

2.9.1 Reading stories aloud

There is evidence advocating reading stories aloud to both EAL and monolingual English speaking children to develop vocabulary knowledge; a claim which concurs with a meta- analysis of 31 studies of storybook word building (Mol, Bus & De Jong, 2009). However, the impact of single storybook sessions has been questioned (Justice, Meier & Walpole, 2005), with many academics arguing for multiple exposure to a text and repeated readings of a story to develop a depth of vocabulary knowledge over time (Collins, 2010; Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Penno, Wilkinson & Moore, 2002). Adding to the body of research, Bolger et al. (2008) make a convincing case for planning for word development activities after reading a story, stating that children's vocabulary knowledge strengthens through teachers scaffolding dialogic reading, and planning for children to revisit words across the curriculum (Bolger et al., 2008). The argument for a frequency of contextualized word encounters alongside storybook reading is corroborated in several empirical studies (Nagy & Scott, 2000; Marulis & Neuman, 2013; Perfetti & Stafura, 2013). A growing body of research strongly supports systematic and direct teaching interventions for vocabulary development involving the reading aloud of children's narratives (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002; Neuman & Roskos, 2012). A convincing argument is made for targeted vocabulary interventions that incorporate storybook reading and contextual word building across the curriculum (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002). Beck and colleagues (2002) advocate targeting read aloud words for intervention that are sophisticated, yet within children's

conceptual understanding, and then planning for their frequent exposure in classroom discourse (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002).

2.9.2 The influence of drama on vocabulary development for second language learners

The seminal research of Kao and O'Neill (1998) focuses on the impact of drama on second language learning, positing that the process of pupils actively interacting with target vocabulary leads to deeper understanding, arguably a pedagogical factor that would support productive vocabulary knowledge necessary for effective writing. Kao and O'Neill (1998, p.4) assert that 'Drama does things with words. . . The language that arises is fluent, purposeful and generative because it is embedded in context'. The recent work of Dobson and Stephenson (2018) corroborates the findings of Kao and O'Neil (1998), arguing strongly for drama to be an integral part of the writing process for both children with EAL and their monolingual peers.

The influence of context and social construction on language learning has been theorized by several pioneering academics (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Vygotsky & Kozulin, 1986; Bruner, 1990) with language argued to be the 'cornerstone' of drama (O'Neill & Lambert 1982, p.4). A study of 38 Hong Kong primary schools (Lai-wa Dora To et al., 2011) corroborates the importance of word learning (L2 English) through drama, stating that drama provides contextualized situations to apply language, beyond merely drilling grammar. The research has particular resonance as the study collected qualitative data regarding the views of practitioners, pupils and parents, examining perceptions of pedagogy and practice

included in an intervention. The importance of collecting and analysing participant perception data in a language learning intervention is corroborated by the research of Henriksen (2019), which was influential in shaping a question for enquiry and the methodology in this study.

Despite much evidence highlighting the short term effects of drama on language learning (Stinson & Winston, 2011), it is important to note that there are far fewer longitudinal studies exploring the long-term impact of drama pedagogy on EAL word development (Stinson & Winston, 2011). With respect to empirical research into drama and vocabulary acquisition, it is also important to acknowledge the pivotal findings of Podlozny (2000), whose seven meta-analyses of 80 studies (predominantly US), point to insufficient methodological detail in data collection and analysis, raising questions about the robustness of authenticating results for replication. Nonetheless, Podlozny's (2000) study provides sufficient evidence to show a significant causal link between drama and language acquisition, providing impetus for further research in this field. Regarding this masters project, Podlozny's analysis (2000) has particular resonance and influence regarding teacher practice within an EAL vocabulary intervention, as her measures include oral and written measures of narrative comprehension, spoken language development, vocabulary acquisition and written production. The influence of these measures in second language word learning will be discussed further in the review of literature and also in the methodology section. It is interesting to observe that a more recent study of primary school learners of Welsh (L2) advocates the use of drama for vocabulary acquisition (Kalogirou, Beauchamp & Whyte, 2017). Despite an L2 focus of Welsh, not English, the Welsh government's current drive for effective, research informed curriculum design

(Donaldson, 2015) highlights the importance of evidence based language practice in bilingual or possibly multi-lingual educational settings (Donaldson, 2015).

2.9.3 The argument for semantically connected words: grouping related vocabulary vs random assignment of words

With respect to this current masters project, I gave much thought to how semantic processing of vocabulary impacts on language comprehension (Nagy & Scott, 2000). The seminal work of Stahl (1999), in formulating his COBUILD approach of grouping semantically connected word families, significantly influenced the pedagogical design of this study. The concept of clustering vocabulary to support EAL learners' language and literacy development forms the basis of several academic studies (Beck, Perfetti & McKeown, 1982; Gairns & Redman, 1986; Seal, 1991). However, there is some debate regarding the most effective approach to clustering vocabulary for language intervention, which I will discuss further, as this is significant to the study.

The term semantic cluster refers to when words sharing similar semantic (word meaning) and syntactic (grammatical arrangement) characteristics are grouped together (Gairns & Redman, 1986). Several academics have considered how to organize and present L2 vocabulary, having explored the impact of grouping words in semantic clusters (Beck, Perfetti & McKeown 1982; Gairns & Redman, 1986; Seal 1991). Tinkham (1997) argues that semantic clustering aligns well with the pedagogy of second language learning. Tinkham's (1997) 'learner-centred' approach focuses on the communicative needs of L2 learners, organizing words

according to activities, situations, ideas and functions. Interestingly, Tinkham (1997) found that words were easier to learn if they were linked as though by a narrative thread, for example, 'dog', 'nasty', 'growl', 'child', 'scream'.

Several researchers posit that semantic clustering facilitates vocabulary acquisition (Channell 1981; Seal 1991; Wharton & Race, 1999; Jullian, 2000), with Gairns and Redman (1986) claiming that semantic clustering is a fundamental construct, providing a useful and necessary framework to guide learners to where meaning overlaps. This idea is corroborated by Seal (1991) asserting that semantic clusters support EAL pupils to learn one word in a group, which then leads to the learning of another related word. Evidence from a study conducted by Hashemi and Gowdasiaei (2005) also concurs with the argument for providing language learners with a set of related words (lexical set), with students learning up to 100 new words more easily when presented in semantic clusters. However, it must be noted that this study focuses on young adult students, therefore caution needs to be taken in generalizing the findings to primary school pupils. It is also important to recognize that despite many researchers arguing in favour of lexical sets, several studies claim that semantic clustering may detract learners (Tinkham 1993; 1997; Waring, 1997; Erten & Tekin, 2008). Evidence from a recent study by Karabulut and Dollar (2016) also questions the impact of providing clusters of words to EAL pupils, however participants (L1 Turkish) were in pre-school settings which may limit the ability to generalize findings to Key Stage 2 pupils. Despite several scholars arguing against clustering words semantically, Tinkham (1994) stated that insufficient evidence existed to suggest that grouping words into similar sets restricted the learning of L2 words. With an intention of this project to focus on Year 4 EAL pupils, a study by Hippner-Page (2000) is of particular interest, as this

focuses on children with EAL from 3rd, 4th and 5th years. This quasi-experimental study compares interventions teaching different approaches to clustering words for L2 learners, with results revealing that different forms of clustering words supports vocabulary development. With the findings of Hippner-Page (2000) advocating a variety of approaches to presenting lexical sets, I was particularly interested in exploring the concept of semantically connected vocabulary as an intervention element in this masters project. With the range of participants in Hippner-Page's study (2000) aligning closely to the profile of learners in this masters close to practice research, I was significantly influenced by the research design chosen, which I will discuss further in the methodology section of this dissertation.

2.9.4 Sentence combining: a means of providing vocabulary for sentence construction

A pivotal piece of writing research relating to Key Stage 2 EAL pupils from English primary schools shows that the quality of second language learners' writing is often limited by poor control of verbs in clause and sentence construction (Cameron & Besser, 2004). My review of literature reveals a corpus of over 80 studies advocating a writing process called 'sentence combining' as a means of improving sentence construction for weaker writers in both primary and secondary schools (Combs, 1975; O'Hare, 1973; Saddler & Graham, 2005). One of the aims of sentence combining is to support pupils to craft more complex, higher quality sentences by manipulating and joining short sentences or fragments (Combs, 1975; O'Hare, 1973; Saddler & Graham, 2005). Despite many academics viewing sentence combining as a grammar exercise to strengthen pupils'

knowledge and control of ordering words (syntactical knowledge) (Combs, 1975; O'Hare, 1973; Saddler & Graham, 2005), I was drawn to the work of Melvin (1983) and Gebhardt (1985) who argue that sentence combining allows practitioners to provide targeted content for writing exercises. Interestingly, Gebhardt (1985) posits that providing vocabulary in short sentences or kernels, might reduce the competition for working and short-term memory, thus enabling pupils to focus their effort on sentence construction and revision. More recent studies reveal that sentence combining may improve the quality of story writing for young learners (Saddler, 2005; 2007), which has particular resonance for this practitioner enquiry.

With respect to this study, I viewed the process of sentence combining to be a suitable element to include in a word building intervention, as the target vocabulary could be provided for EAL pupils to manipulate in sentence construction practice. The process of learning new words and writing them in sentences was established practice in the intervention study school (School, 2018), however the exercise of sentence combining was viewed as a different technique to potentially develop vocabulary depth and support written production for children with EAL (School, 2018).

2.10 The importance of vocabulary breadth and depth for EAL learners

Previous research highlights weaker development in EAL children's breadth of vocabulary knowledge as a limiting factor in both reading comprehension and writing composition (Bialystok et al., 2010). More recent research claims that EAL pupils need to develop vocabulary depth as well as breadth (Smith & Murphy, 2015); specific mention is given to the importance of learning strings of words that

co-occur, namely multi-word vocabulary (units), collocations and figurative lexical items in boosting language and literacy skills. This builds upon the earlier work of Wray (2002), who posits that children develop language through learning formulaic chunks and set phrases for future use. A significant UK study analyzing standards in EAL pupils' writing at the end of the primary school phase corroborates this claim, suggesting that children with EAL might benefit from learning certain words as collocations, especially prepositions, as part of formulaic phrases (Cameron & Besser, 2004). The findings of Cameron and Besser (2004) also propose the explicit teaching of thematic sets of formulaic phrases to support vocabulary acquisition for written production. It is important to note that challenges presented in measuring the effect of multi-word vocabulary knowledge on children's linguistic ability have possibly contributed to little research in this area (Smith & Murphy, 2015).

2.11 Writing development for EAL learners

The complexity of writing is captured in Ravid and Tolchinsky's (2002) conceptual theory of linguistic literacy, which identifies the language development process required for a learner to express ideas in writing. Ravid and Tolchinsky (2002) argue that a linguistically literate pupil has the ability to both select vocabulary and apply grammar knowledge to compose writing for a range of genres and different audiences with different communicative purposes. Studies show that by the end of Key Stage 2 in primary school phase, native English speaking pupils have typically learnt how to control a range of linguistic forms, such as different sentence lengths and types in their writing (Perera, 1984;

Cameron & Besser, 2004). However, evidence suggests that children with EAL often struggle to master the writing skill of crafting more complex, multi-clause sentences (Cameron & Besser, 2004). The influential findings of Cameron and Besser (2004) will be discussed further in this review of literature, as they cite key barriers to young EAL learners' writing proficiency.

Recognition is given to the interaction of spoken and written language and how these two constructs influence each other. From personal experience, using talk to support writing is a familiar process in UK primary school settings, however instruction may often be procedural, with pupils lacking the depth of vocabulary and grammar knowledge to be classed as linguistically literate (Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002). Ravid and Tolchinsky (2002) also posit that vocabulary and language structure may be transferred through reading written texts into spoken language, thus suggesting the importance of both reading and speaking for the writing process.

Evidence from the study of first language children shows that more formal grammatical structure and choice of vocabulary, i.e. formal register, develops over a long period of time, continuing into secondary school (Berman, 2004), thus concurring with research highlighting the challenge of formal writing for children with EAL (Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002). Acknowledging, the additional cognitive challenge required for EAL pupils to control register, I decided that this study would focus on the genre of narrative writing, with the intention of limiting an extra layer of complexity (Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002). It is important to recognize that the grammar structures required for written production differ from the grammar of spoken language, with learning to write involving a depth of

grammatical knowledge necessary for the production of larger and more complex phrases and language units (Cameron & Besser, 2004).

2.11.1 EAL pupils' barriers to written text quality at the end of primary school phase

For the purpose of this study the term *written text quality* will be used synonymously with *writing quality and writing proficiency*, defined as: the appropriate choice of vocabulary for the desired effect on the reader (tone/mood), reflecting a depth of lexical (vocabulary) knowledge, applied in sentence writing with grammatical accuracy, i.e. correct punctuation and word order (syntax); aligning to the study conducted by Murphy, Kyriacou and Menon (2015).

Importantly, this masters study aims for decisions regarding the appraisal of written text quality to relate to pupils' choice of vocabulary in order to shape the written composition and control the audience effect, thus supporting writers to express creative ideas (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). In my professional experience, I have often observed teachers express the term 'composition and effect' with perhaps only a surface understanding of these complex concepts. In an attempt to explore EAL pupils' quality of written text, this study aims to explore the extent to which vocabulary development can support children with EAL to overcome typically experienced writing challenges (Murphy, 2014), in order for these pupils to achieve the nationally required standard for writing in England (STA, 2018).

My review of literature reveals very few studies analyzing EAL pupils' proficiency and standards in writing, particularly for second language learners in the primary school years. Accepting that literature focusing on EAL writing development is

limited, my search for empirical evidence identified a significant piece of research conducted by Cameron and Besser (2004), which provides valuable insight into the writing challenges faced by children with EAL at the end of Key Stage 2, corroborated by the findings of more recent research (Smith & Murphy, 2015; Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). The study identifies how young EAL writers apply knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in English to their narrative writing. Despite the lack of more recent EAL writing research (Murphy, 2014), the findings of Cameron and Besser (2004) chime with my own observations in schools and significantly influenced the design of this study, pointing to barriers in EAL writing proficiency that I considered interesting and worth exploring further. I therefore feel there is value in discussing the key barriers identified in the report that may limit the chances of EAL pupils meeting the expected standards for writing at Key Stage 2 in primary schools in England. It is worth noting that all of the findings discussed relate to narrative writing and show a level of significance after conducting statistical tests. The findings compare examples of story writing elicited under the same test conditions for EAL and monolingual Y6 pupils (10 and 11 year olds) in primary schools in England.

2.11.2 Cameron and Besser study (2004): identifying limitations in EAL pupils' quality of written text

Adverbial phrases and clauses

A significant finding was that EAL stories showed fewer words used in the construction of adverbials phrases and clauses, indicating that EAL pupils provide less detail in their story writing to describe time, manner and place. A later study corroborates the claim that children with EAL often lack the vocabulary

knowledge to compose more complex sentence constructions (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015).

Interestingly, my review of literature seems to point to an emerging consensus of academic opinion, with several scholars suggesting that teaching chunks of words might support EAL pupils to provide more detail in their writing and therefore create greater clarity for the reader (Wray, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004; Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). The argument for teaching groups of words to be applied in clause and phrase construction has particular resonance for this masters study, as the Year 4 (8 and 9 year old) EAL participants are required to have fluency in the use of fronted adverbials, in order to meet the year group writing standard set by government national standards (STA, 2018).

Verbs

Findings revealed that lower achieving EAL writers in particular had not mastered the grammatical control of verbs, with frequent errors in subject-verb agreement, verb tenses and endings. Recognizing that a knowledge of verbs is crucial to sentence and clause grammar, the evidence suggests that a focus on developing a control of verbs would support written production.

Prepositions

Cameron and Besser's (2004) research findings also revealed that EAL writing included a higher number of errors regarding use of prepositions, with prepositions both incorrectly used or omitted. The study also favours the teaching of prepositions not as singular words, but as groups of words (units) in phrases,

suggesting that teachers support EAL pupils to notice and remember the words that co-exist with prepositions.

Punctuation

The study also highlighted that EAL pupil's narrative writing frequently contained punctuation errors, with full stops and commas often wrongly used or omitted, again indicating a weaker control of more complex sentence writing. The findings state that sentence and clause grammar needs direct instruction, and that the correct use of punctuation is integral.

Composition and effect

The study found that composition and effect was limited by a lack of development of setting, character and plot. This concurs with a more recent study, stating that young EAL writers have difficulty expressing creative ideas (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015).

2.12 Developing vocabulary knowledge for EAL learners and the teaching of multi-word units

With respect to vocabulary knowledge and application, the study found that overall there were no significant differences in the richness of vocabulary use between EAL and monolingual children's writing. This however raises questions over the comparison of terminology used by academics, as Murphy (2014) argues that depth of vocabulary is significantly weaker for second language learners of English. Nonetheless, the studies of Murphy (2014) and Cameron and Besser

(2004) both identify errors in EAL writers use of formulaic phrases, i.e. knowledge of words that have a tendency to flow and be bound together. The term formulaic phrase is often used interchangeably with the terms: lexical string or bundle, fixed phrase, multi-word unit, idiom or collocation. For the purpose of this study the term multi-word unit is favoured, as this seems to be more commonly used in current research to reflect words that generally occur together (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). The argument for teaching multi-word units is compelling as theorists posit that learning groups of words as whole units results in fewer grammatical errors, thus increasing writing fluency (Wray, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004; Nation, 2013; Smith & Murphy, 2015; Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). However, it is important to note that if phrases are not learned as whole units and have to be formulated, the sometimes random and arbitrary pattern of words may result in errors, especially in the case of metaphorical idioms where word order and choice is often more restricted (Cameron & Besser, 2004).

2.13 A summary of literature shaping the questions for enquiry

My review of literature clearly shows a greater focus historically on the development of reading comprehension for EAL children, with a paucity of studies exploring the writing process for young second language learners (Murphy, 2014). Recognizing that a writing attainment gap exists between monolingual English speaking children and their EAL peers (DfE, 2019), and with several theorists positing the importance of developing vocabulary knowledge as a means of improving writing skill (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015), I decided that my study focus would be given to exploring word building practice that would support

EAL pupils' writing proficiency.

My review of literature points to studies highlighting a range of pedagogical practice enhancing receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, and written production, including reading stories aloud (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002; Mol, Bus & De Jong, 2009; Neuman & Roskos, 2012), drama (Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Podlozny, 2000; Stinson & Winston, 2011; Lai-wa Dora To et al., 2011; Dobson & Stephenson, 2018), semantic clustering (Beck, Perfetti & McKeown, 1982; Gairns & Redman, 1986; Seal, 1991; Tinkham, 1997; Hippner-Page, 2000), and sentence combining (Combs, 1975; O'Hare, 1973; Melvin, 1983; Gebhardt, 1985; Saddler & Graham, 2005). I decided that all of these elements were interesting pedagogical features to explore in an empirical study, as they align to the influential concept of word consciousness and its relevance to developing vocabulary knowledge (Scott & Nagy, 2004; Stahl, 2005; Blachowicz et al., 2006). The elements also correspond with the seminal theoretical model argued by Cummins (1979) which emphasizes the importance of providing context-embedded scenarios for EAL language learning.

It is important to note that qualitative interview data from the first phase of the study (discussed later in the methodology) facilitated a further review of literature which pointed to the teaching of multi-word units as a means of enhancing vocabulary depth and writing fluency (Wray, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004; Lee & Muncie, 2006; Nation, 2013; Smith & Murphy, 2015; Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015), generating an important question for enquiry.

The writing challenges faced by EAL pupils are clearly reported in the research of Cameron and Besser (2004), highlighting the links between vocabulary knowledge

and written production, corroborated by the more recent research of Murphy, Kyriacou and Menon (2015).

Influenced by the study of Lai-wai Dora To and colleagues (2011) and the research of Henriksen (2019), I was interested in building a rich data picture by exploring the perceptions of teachers and EAL children regarding pedagogical practice in a language learning intervention.

The literature review confirmed an interest in investigating systematic processes of vocabulary development (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2000; Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998) and helped shape the following questions for this masters research and development project:

Central Question:

What kinds of teacher practice within an intervention helps to develop children's receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing?

Sub-questions:

How does children's vocabulary knowledge impact on the quality of their written text?

To what extent does the teaching of multi-word units contribute to the development of children's vocabulary depth and their production of written text?

What are the perceptions of practitioners and pupils regarding systematic and direct teaching interventions for vocabulary?

This leads me to discuss the methodological design of this empirical study.

3 METHODOLOGY

In the following section I aim to explain the rationale pertaining to the intervention study, providing justification for the methodological design and data collected to best answer the research questions. I will refer to key literature previously cited that supports the design of the research strategies. I will give consideration to the choice of participants, the different research phases, ethical questions faced and limitations in methodological approach and data analysis. I will also examine detail of collaboration, and give due regard for the insights and feedback which significantly influenced and shaped this study.

The goal of this second language practitioner research is to explore how developing vocabulary for EAL children supports the writing process, with the central question of enquiry: *'What kinds of teacher practice within an intervention helps to develop children's receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing?*'. In the following discussion I aim to explain how the research design aligns to the pursuance of this central question, and the sub-questions generated thereafter.

3.1 Research design

Mackey and Gass (2016) highlight that recent second language research often combines quantitative and qualitative data in mixed method studies in order to triangulate data and offer rich insights. Regarding this masters study of young EAL learners, I felt that a mixed method study would provide opportunity to explore

different perspectives of both teachers and pupils and cultural influences in real-life contexts. Utilizing this multiple methods approach would allow for the intentional integration of quantitative data from intervention trials and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, capitalizing on the strengths of these different methods, and in turn minimizing the limitations of both approaches (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

For the purpose of this study, I employed a three-phase exploratory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018); I will now provide a rationale for selecting this specific core mixed method design. With the central question framed on exploring teacher practice within an intervention, I felt that a three-phase exploratory sequential mixed method design would allow qualitative interview data to be initially collected and analyzed on vocabulary development practice, which would then identify a feature to be tested in an intervention, and lead to the testing of this feature in the third quantitative phase. I deemed the design appropriate as it allows ideas and perspectives to be explored, gathered and analyzed from a small sample of participants in the first instance, and an instrument to be developed so that a quantitative phase can then test possible new variables in an intervention trial. With deficiencies in the literature cited earlier regarding vocabulary development supporting writing for EAL pupils, the design provides opportunity to analyze the qualitative data and develop new variables that may not exist in published studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I felt that combining data types would enhance utility, potentially providing more useful insights for practitioners to adopt in future practice (Mackey & Gass, 2016). I also felt that the sequential nature of the design would allow a more complete picture to

be built over the course of the academic year, enabling a further review of literature and purposeful collaboration to ensue (Mackey & Gass, 2016). An additional benefit of the design was that sub-questions could be generated in response to the exploratory qualitative data phase, enhancing and strengthening the enquiry, and valuing the diversity of views (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

In the following section I aim to describe, explain and offer rationale for the specific nature of the exploratory sequential mixed method design used in this masters study, and provide detail regarding the intervention trial. In order to support clarity of the various stages of the project, I will provide a graphical representation of the design (see Figure 1) (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Capitalization (QUAL and QUAN) denotes that both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis are given equal weighting in this research project (Mackey & Gass, 2016; Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006), as the Phase 1 qualitative interview data significantly shaped the intervention trial, generating an influential sub-question to explore regarding the teaching of multi-word units to develop vocabulary depth. Table 1 provides clarification regarding the mapping of instrument measures onto research questions (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

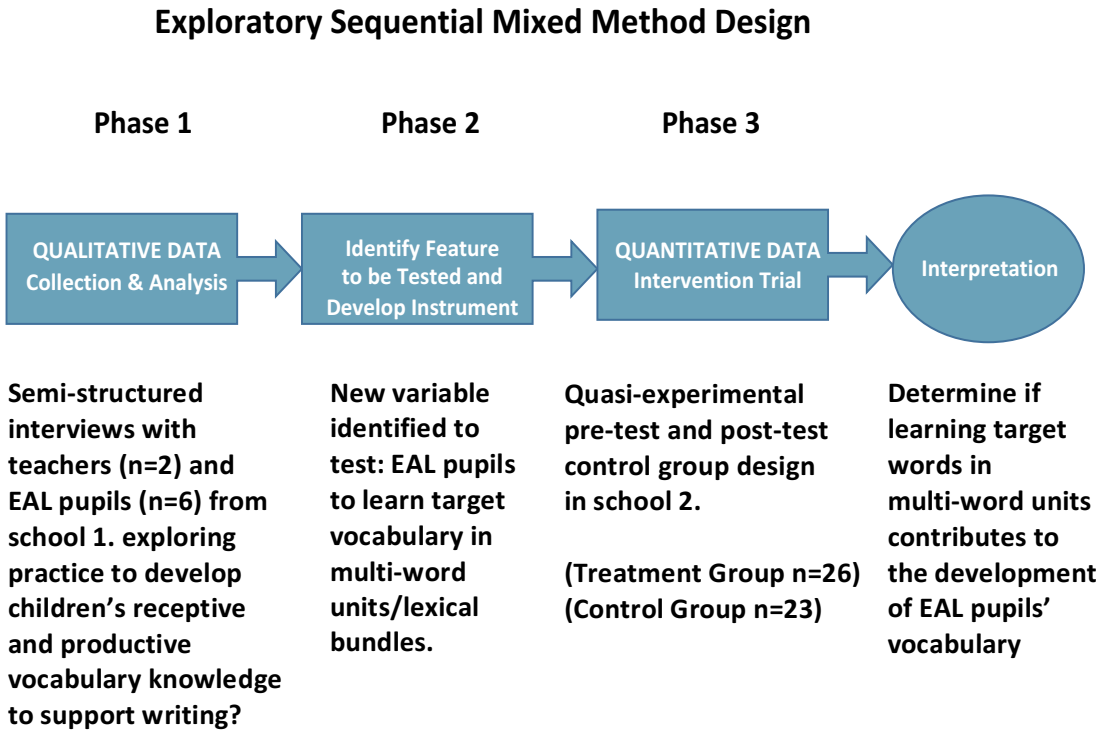


Figure 1.

Research Question		Instrument Measures
Central Question	What kinds of teacher practice within an intervention helps to develop children's receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing?	* Semi-structured interview * Receptive vocabulary test/BPVS format * Receptive vocabulary test/Zone of relevance * Productive vocabulary test/Synonym test * Productive vocabulary test/writing elicitation task
Sub-Question	How does children's vocabulary knowledge impact on the quality of their written text?	* Semi-structured interview * Productive vocabulary test/writing elicitation task
Sub-Question	To what extent does the teaching of multi-word units contribute to the development of children's vocabulary depth and their production of written text?	* Semi-structured interview * Productive vocabulary test/Synonym test * Productive vocabulary test/writing elicitation task
Sub-Question	What are the perceptions of practitioners and pupils regarding systematic and direct teaching interventions for vocabulary?	* Semi-structured interview

Table 1. Mapping instrument measures onto research question

3.2 Participants

Influenced by the work of Bialystok (2007) and Chall (1983) which identified weaker vocabulary knowledge impacting on the language and literacy development of Year 4 pupils in primary schools, I decided that pupil participants for the masters study would comprise Year 4 EAL children (8-9 year olds). Adhering to the methodological procedures subscribed by Creswell and Creswell (2018), completely different samples were used for the qualitative (first) phase and the quantitative (third) phase, from two different primary schools in the West Midlands. Both samples were drawn from similar populations of linguistically diverse second language learners, but I recognized that confounding factors would be introduced if the same participants used to help develop an instrument in the first qualitative phase were then surveyed in the quantitative intervention trial (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The two schools chosen for the study shared similar profiles: both schools were inner city, two-form entry, with a high proportion of pupil premium (both 60 percent), indicating low social economic status. School 1, participating in Phase 1, had a high proportion of pupils with EAL, approximately 80 percent, whereas School 2, participating in Phase 3, had the higher proportion of EAL pupils, approximately 95 percent. All pupil participants in Phases 1and 3 were classed as EAL. Both schools were equally linguistically diverse with a similar range of languages (L1) spoken at home: Arabic, Urdu, Spanish, Somalian, Pashtu, Dutch, Punjabi, Mirpuri, French, Kutchi, German, Romanian, Polish and Farsi. Teacher participants also shared similar characteristics; both schools had parallel Year 4 classes, one taught by an experienced female class teacher (average 6 years teaching) and one taught by a recently qualified female teacher.

3.3 Identifying target words

In order to identify target words for the study, I recruited a group of 6 lead literacy teachers and accredited writing moderators and asked them to locate interesting, rich, sophisticated words in a range of narrative text. Influenced by the studies of Beck and colleagues (2002), criteria for selecting targeted words stated that vocabulary needed to be adventurous, but within children's conceptual grasp (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002). In collaboration with the lead teachers I decided that focus would be given to a range of storybooks typically read in Key Stage 2, with lead teachers identifying words frequently encountered across the text describing the actions of characters (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002). The decision to focus on language to support characterization in writing was influenced by the findings of Cameron and Besser (2004) and Murphy, Kyriacou and Menon (2015), which both identified that children with EAL often have difficulty expressing creative ideas and crafting the development of character and plot. This decision was corroborated by participant teachers, with formative and summative classroom assessment showing that Year 4 EAL pupils had weaker language control when describing characters in their own stories. With practitioner assessment also revealing that children found difficulty in controlling the tense of a sentence, corresponding with the findings of Cameron and Besser (2004), I decided to target verbs as the word class. Interestingly, a review of literature showed little reference to the choice of word class for vocabulary knowledge development; a study worth noting conducted by McDonough and colleagues (2011) identified that children often found nouns as a word class easier to access, however I decided that this study would align to the teacher assessments and barriers to achievement in order to sustain a genuine collaborative enquiry

(Priestley et al., 2012). Influenced by the findings of Hashemi and Gowdasiaei (2005), I decided that a lexical set of four target verbs would be compiled for the study, with the intention of presenting a semantic cluster of words relating to the actions of a scared character. This decision was influenced by participant teachers, with assessments revealing that Year 4 EAL pupil writing showed weak language choices in the dilemma section of narrative writing. The lexical set of four target verbs chosen for the study corresponded to the actions of the legs, lips, eyes and body of a scared character: bolted, shrieked, glanced and trembled.

3.4 Phase 1: Qualitative data collection and analysis (School 1)

School 1 was selected for the first phase of qualitative data collection and analysis as school leadership felt that the shorter timescale required for qualitative data capture would not create excessive demands on teachers and conflict with a tightly planned curriculum schedule (BERA, 2018). The intention of Phase 1 was to explore practice to develop children's receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing, in order to analyze responses and develop an instrument to administer and test in School 2 (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data collection of the perceptions of practitioners and pupils was integral to this phase with the aim of collecting different perspectives in a real-life, naturalistic school setting (Mackey & Gass, 2016). An important element of the study design was to explore how teachers conceptualize their practice, to prompt teachers to discuss possibly tacit experienced-based aspects of learning and teaching (Borg, 2003). Borg (2003) argues that this focus on teacher cognition is crucial in order to appreciate any potential tension between theory and practice, re-inforcing the importance of collecting teachers' points of view in this practitioner research

study. The need for teacher cognition research relating to vocabulary learning and teaching is asserted by Henriksen (2019), who argues that a richer picture of the language learning phenomenon is captured. The initial review of literature previously cited identified several key findings from empirical studies pertaining to pedagogical features of vocabulary interventions. The key findings of these studies were summarized as points of reference for the participant Year 4 teachers, with the following aspects identified as evidenced practice supporting the development of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge: reading stories aloud; drama, semantically connecting words and sentence combining.

An initial meeting in September 2018 involving the two Year 4 participant teachers, English Subject Leader and myself as practitioner researcher was arranged to discuss the central question for enquiry: *What kinds of teacher practice within an intervention helps to develop children's receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing?* and the two sub-questions: *How does children's vocabulary knowledge impact on the quality of their written text? What are the perceptions of practitioners and pupils regarding systematic and direct teaching interventions for vocabulary?* Teachers were asked to identify barriers to language learning for Year 4 EAL pupils with specific reference to areas of weakness in writing referring to end of Year 3 assessments and Year 4 baseline assessments. This commentary was then used to inform the process for identifying target vocabulary conducted by the lead literacy teachers.

A further meeting was arranged in October 2018 involving the Y4 teachers and myself to share and discuss the summary findings of the pedagogical features of vocabulary interventions and the target vocabulary selected. The teachers' request

to explore word learning practice within their planned curriculum framework was fully respected, appreciating the workload pressures of participants (BERA, 2018). Teachers agreed that the target vocabulary aligned to the class text theme and would not add an extra burden (BERA, 2018).

Qualitative data relating to the central question and sub-questions referred to earlier were collected using a semi-structured interview approach (Bryman, 2016), affording flexibility in the sequencing of questions and opportunity to explore and expand upon teacher and pupil responses. Interviews were conducted in November, after classes had completed a three week narrative unit of work, involving the two Year 4 teachers and six Year 4 pupils. Considering the young age of the EAL children and respecting the possible limitations in language, children were given the choice to be interviewed in pairs or alone; all children decided to be interviewed with a peer. Each pair comprised a boy and girl randomly selected from a pool of children representing a range of home languages from both classes. It was agreed that this was the most efficient way of collecting data from a small representative sample of the year group population (Bryman, 2016). This leads me to discuss Phase 2 of the design.

3.5 Phase 2: Identify feature to be tested and develop instrument for intervention

The findings of the first database were hugely significant in identifying a new variable to be tested; analysis of the data will be discussed in detail later in the findings and discussion section. However, it is necessary to point out that responses from the semi-structured interviews led to a further review of literature,

highlighting the significance of collocations and multi-word units in second language vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2013; Smith & Murphy, 2015; Wray, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004), leading to the generation of a third sub-question, integral to the intervention study: *To what extent does the teaching of multi-word units contribute to the development of children's vocabulary depth and their production of written text?* This leads me to discuss the relevance of this third sub-question to the methodological design of Phase 3.

3.6 Phase 3: Quantitiative data intervention trial (School 2)

School 2 was selected for the third phase of quantitative data collection and analysis as school teachers were interested in participating in an intervention study, and felt that the project aligned well to their school development priorities to develop vocabulary and raise achievement in writing (School, 2018); therefore teachers felt that no undue time and effort was being enforced (BERA, 2018). Collaborating with teachers, I decided that a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control-group design would be implemented. Teachers felt that this design, over a short period of four weeks, would minimize potential harm to second language learners that were assessed as making slow progress in language and literacy (BERA, 2018). Teachers and I decided that any positive outcomes from the study would be shared with the comparison group immediately after data collection, ensuring that no child was at risk of being educationally disadvantaged (BERA, 2018). The treatment group involved twenty-six Year 4 EAL pupils and the control/comparison group comprised twenty-three Year 4 pupils; both groups were similar in profile regarding linguistic diversity.

The sub-question: *To what extent does the teaching of multi-word units contribute*

to the development of children's vocabulary depth and their production of written text? generated in Phase 2 was pivotal in identifying the new variable to test in the intervention. I decided that an integrated skills approach to teaching vocabulary would be trialled in the study (Lee & Muncie, 2006), as this would utilize the pedagogical features cited in Phase 1: reading aloud (see Appendix C), drama, semantically connecting words and sentence combining, however the key change of Phase 3 would focus on the learning and teaching of multi-word units containing the target verb. I decided that the control group would introduce the target words as individual verbs, using typically available monolingual dictionaries, and then write sentences of their choice; this was routine classroom practice, whereas the experimental group would explore the pedagogical features discussed earlier introducing the target words in multi-word units or lexical bundles, supplementing typical dictionary use. The study conducted by Hippner-Page (2000) was highly influential in the design of Phase 3, as it involved a sample of linguistically diverse pupils and explored the effects of presenting target vocabulary in multi-word units. The Hippner-Page study (2000) inspired an innovation for this masters study involving the creation of a tactile resource resembling a frightened character. The resource was called the 'action figure' (see Appendix D) and prompted children to make semantic links and learn target vocabulary in lexical bundles. The multi-word units related to the actions of the legs, lips, eyes and body and in three instances consisted of a verb and a preposition (phrasal verbs), as these aspects of word class were highlighted as challenging for EAL pupils in the findings of Cameron and Besser (2004). In collaboration with the lead literacy teachers referred to earlier in the identifying target words section, I decided that the multi-word units to be trialled would be:

‘bolted towards; shrieked like a; glanced back, trembled with fear’.

Pre and post-tests were conducted to assess pupils’ receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of the target vocabulary. In order to measure children’s receptive language relating to the target word, the principles and format of the British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) test were followed (Murphy, 2014, p.81), using four images – one corresponding to the target verb and the other three used as distractors (see Appendix F). The findings of Elleman and colleagues (2009) suggest that more specific measures, as opposed to general standardized measures, are better suited for short term targeted vocabulary intervention. In addition, an innovative word selection test was created and administered to provide a richer picture of receptive vocabulary knowledge using an emoji picture cue (Sadoski, 2005); target words placed onto the frightened emoji face indicated receptive vocabulary knowledge. In order to measure children’s productive language relating to the target words, two recognized measures were administered: a writing elicitation task utilizing cartoon images (see Appendix E) and a synonym test (see Appendix H) (Nation, 2013; Castillo & Tolchinsky, 2018). Aligning to the methodology of Lee and Muncie (2006), pupils were prompted to use words they had learned in the study in the post-test writing elicitation task.

Despite the design planned initially as three phase, further advice and reading suggested that employing interviews post intervention would provide a richer picture, illustrating participant cognition and viewpoints (Henriksen, 2019). With the intent of gaining insight into the efficacy of the intervention practice (Henriksen, 2019), I decided to focus on the views of the experimental group, conducting a semi-structured interview with the teacher and a separate focus group

interview with a representative sample of 6 pupils. I felt that a pupil focus group would facilitate ease and flexability of discussion and group interaction (Bryman, 2016). Also, in order to determine the longer-term effects of treatment, a delayed post-test was conducted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) for the writing elicitation task involving the experimental group; I will discuss this in greater depth in the findings and discussion section.

3.7 Data analysis and integration

In this exploratory sequential mixed methods design the findings from the exploratory database were used to build into a feature that was analyzed in the quantitative phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As previously discussed, careful attention was given to the qualitative data analysis which resulted in the critical third sub-question relating to vocabulary learning and multi-word units, which became an important variable explored in this intervention study. In order to maximize inter-rater reliability, two accredited writing moderators were recruited to maintain a consistency of measures when analyzing the pupils' elicited writing in the pre and post-tests (Bryman, 2016). This leads me to discuss the key ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Much attention was given to ethical issues in conducting this second language study, with some considerations already cited with respect to teacher workload, and potential risks and benefits regarding assignment to an experimental or control group (BERA, 2018); university CUREC approval was granted before any data collection. Importantly, written informed consent to conduct the study was granted by the head of school (see Appendix 1), with teachers given the option to

participate, assured that data would remain confidential and anonymous (BERA, 2018). Recognizing the potential for conflicts of interest, consideration was also given to my dual role as practitioner and researcher (BERA, 2018). Initial sessions were conducted with teachers and leaders to provide information about the procedures and purposes of the research, explaining methods for assigning pupils to groups, potential risks and benefits, and steps to ensure that identities were not revealed; no information was withheld (BERA, 2018; Mackey & Gass, 2016).

In this second language research it was crucial that the aims of the study were made clear and transparent to parents and pupils, using written and spoken English language that was accessible, with the option to contact myself as the researcher, or to talk to a language assistant in school in the home language (Mackey & Gass, 2016). It was important to explain how data would be used, stored and potentially published, explaining the steps taken to maintain anonymity, respecting that immigrant and refugee populations may be nervous of how information may be disclosed to the authorities (Mackey & Gass, 2016). Parent consent was obtained for pupil participation, with due regard for the young age of the children, explaining that participation was voluntary and that children could withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences (BERA, 2018).

3.9 Key limitations of the study

In accordance to Creswell and Creswell (2018, p.166), a true experiment involves participants being randomly assigned to treatment groups, therefore a potential limitation of the study is the adoption of a quasi-experimental design. As only the experimental group receives the treatment, there is a potential threat to internal validity regarding ‘compensatory rivalry’ (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.166),

with pupils in the control group feeling less valued. Efforts were made to counteract this by explaining to children that the ideas for good learning would be shared with them after a short period of time. A threat to external validity relates to the small sample size of the intervention groups, and possibly narrow characteristics of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.172). I accepted that findings about groups could not be generalized to a wider population, and that replication of the study might be necessary in the future to determine if similar results reoccurred with a larger sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.172). I also felt that the small sample size did not warrant tests of statistical significance, therefore raising further questions about threats to external validity. I also acknowledged that the level of teacher expertise varied between the study groups, potentially adding a level of bias.

3.10 Collaborations

It is important to acknowledge the highly collaborative nature of this study and the benefits that this afforded to the rigour of the intervention project. Clearly the key collaborators in the study are the participant schools that supported the enquiry as part of their curriculum development. The Oxford University Researching English as an Additional Language (REAL) group were instrumental in shaping the methodological design, offering critical feedback, with Victoria Murphy providing suggestions about how the project could be developed and shared further. Norbert Schmitt and Brigit Henriksen of the British Association for Applied Linguistics Vocabulary Special Interest Group also provided advice on methodology, specifically on the importance of exploring teacher cognition. Collaborating with lead literacy teachers and writing moderators supported the research design and

helped minimize threats to validity. I will now present and discuss findings of the mixed methods study below.

4 FINDINGS FOR THE THREE PHASE EXPLORATORY SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHOD DESIGN

4.1 Phase 1 qualitative data findings (School 1)

Qualitative data were collected to investigate the perceptions of practitioners and pupils regarding the kinds of practice within an intervention helping children to develop receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing. A semi-structured interview was conducted separately with two Year 4 teachers (n=2), and three pairs of Year 4 EAL pupils (n=6) (see Appendix A), allowing opportunity for flexibility and elaboration (Bryman, 2016). A key consideration was to focus on a few questions in the interview guide (Bryman, 2016) with the intention of capturing insightful responses through an open engaging discussion.

Interviews were recorded using an iPad and then transcribed after the session. Transcripts were reviewed and emerging concepts identified, following Charmaz's approach to qualitative interviewing (Charmaz, 2002; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). An initial open-ended question was posed to prompt previous experience of vocabulary learning practice, followed by a range of intermediate questions (Charmaz, 2002) to elicit discussion on perceptions regarding the efficacy of the vocabulary development practice explored over a three week narrative unit of work. An ending question (Charmaz, 2002) was then posed focusing the participants to discuss possible iterations and next steps.

The following data findings were selected to provide evidence of key emerging

ideas regarding practice that participant teachers (T1 & T2, School 1) and pupils (P1 & P2; P3 & P4; P5 & P6, School 1) perceived were effective in supporting word learning for story writing in an EAL context.

4.2 Phase 1 qualitative data findings: teachers (T1 & T2, School 1)

Qualitative data reveal key insights to consider regarding practice to develop EAL children's receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing. Data collected from practitioner interviews show that both teachers, T1 and T2, typically use dictionaries and thesauruses for word teaching: dictionaries are used for finding definitions and checking meanings, whilst thesauruses help children develop vocabulary knowledge by providing synonyms.

Both teachers place importance on oral rehearsal prior to writing for second language learners, indicating that this is typical practice:

We do a lot of talking. (T1, School 1)

I use a lot of discussion. (T2, School 1)

T1 explains that her own educational philosophy for teaching words values repeated exposure to vocabulary. Interestingly, T1 advocates a range of multi-modal approaches to scaffold word learning, citing the use of story maps, pictures and diagrams.

Regarding the effective pedagogical elements highlighted in the review of literature, all four features: reading aloud, drama, making semantic links (semantic clustering) and sentence combining are cited by teachers as useful strategies for developing vocabulary knowledge. A response by T1 reveals that the familiar and

embedded technique of drama is viewed as a fundamental element of vocabulary development for EAL learners, citing its importance for writing different genres in literacy lessons:

We wrote newspaper reports recently and they interviewed each other as eye witnesses - they acted out the scene - that was crucial to their newspaper report writing. So without dramatization it's not real for them. (T1, School 1)

Despite both teachers describing all four elements positively, some discrepancy in the data exists with reading aloud and drama techniques given most emphasis by T2, the less experienced teacher, and semantic linking and sentence combining described as the most useful practice by T1, the more experienced teacher. It is interesting to observe that T2 did not explore sentence combining during the study period, stating that the children in her class were not keen to write:

Children just enjoy doing anything that's not necessarily writing. (T2, School 1)

T1 is seen to reflect on her teaching experience and makes links to prior knowledge, describing the benefits of semantic clustering using the action figure, as it mirrors her previous practice; she also confidently offers suggestions for improvement:

It's not far from what we already do - it's a bit like role on the wall. If I were going to develop this, I think this side needs more structure - maybe sub-headings within the boxes. (T1, School 1)

Response from T1 reveals that the practice of sentence combining is seen as a useful technique to learn target verbs and transfer them to writing. T1 describes how sentence combining aligns well to the Year 4 grammar objective of teaching fronted adverbials and is therefore seen as a new technique worth implementing. However, it is interesting to note that T1's discussion indicates a pragmatic approach to vocabulary development, revealing the need to make sure that any new

practice adopted should enhance the current curriculum requirements:

Because the curriculum is so wide you couldn't justify spending three weeks on four words - but if you were focusing on fronted adverbials for half a term, you could change these words to be fronted adverbials and then it links to the grammar. (T1, School)

A sense of pragmatism is also reflected in T2's comments, citing the usefulness of practice aligning to the already planned curriculum:

The target words linked well with our book - they fed in quite naturally. (T2, School 1)

Most significantly, both teachers give great importance to the learning of words in context, with T1 and T2 favouring a blended teaching approach. T1 describes combining reading aloud and oral rehearsal with contextual reading, whilst T2 discusses the use of exemplar text and discussion as useful blended practice:

I might use an exemplar piece of text and include some interesting vocabulary - showing children words in context. It's more of a visual exemplar coupled with discussion and practice of using it. (T2, School 1)

It is interesting to note the strong emphasis that T1 gives to contextualized word learning, showing a firm belief in this practice:

For EAL learners words without context are just totally meaningless - there's no point teaching words without context in my opinion. You need something to anchor it to in reality. (T1, School 1)

An enlightening response is given by T2, explicitly stating in her own words the need to teach vocabulary as multi-word units, expressing her confident belief in

this practice, and revealing a new aspect to investigate; it is interesting that this insight is clearly articulated by the less experienced teacher:

You don't teach the single word - you have to teach it as a phrase. (T2, School 1)

4.3 Phase 1 qualitative data findings: pupils (P1 & P2; P3 & P4; P5 & P6 (School 1)

Data collected from Year 4 EAL pupils mirror the teacher responses, citing the use of dictionaries and thesauruses as regular word learning practice. Several responses describe dictionaries as useful for checking the meaning of words, but interestingly, one pupil states a preference for using a thesaurus, making reference in their own words to the listing of synonyms:

A thesaurus is more useful than a dictionary as it gives you the word in a sentence and it gives you other words. (P6, School 1)

Responses also highlight the learning of spellings as typical vocabulary development practice, with pupils describing word learning at home and having tests at school, involving writing the word in a sentence. However, there is some discrepancy in the pupil response data regarding the usefulness of spelling tests for word building, with one pair of pupils explaining emphatically that the spelling test format in their class did not involve learning the meaning of target words:

(Interviewer: Do you have to learn what the words mean in a spelling test?)
NO! (P3 and P4, School 1)

Regarding effective pedagogical practice cited in the literature review, it is interesting to note that only one pupil, P5, explicitly mentions reading aloud as a

feature that their teacher used to help them learn the target words, with no pupils directly citing drama as a technique, despite reference to the use of these elements in teacher data. Pupil data clearly show that the innovative approach of using the action figure to make semantic links was viewed as a useful and more memorable strategy for learning the target verbs and different verb forms, with several pupils describing the positive effects:

She gave us the body (action figure) *to help us learn words.* (P2, School 1)

It (action figure) *is very helpful - we learned that glance is just like look.* (P1, School 1)

We used the scared character (action figure) - *it helped a lot.* (P3, School 1)

4.4 Phase 1 qualitative data findings: key insight: pupils and teachers (School 1)

An extremely valuable insight is gleaned from pupil and teacher data, with responses stating that focus should be given to learning target verbs as part of groups of words or in phrases:

So if someone doesn't know what the word means, but there are other words around it - it helps them to know what it means. (P5, School 1)

I didn't focus just on the word glanced - I taught phrases, because it puts it in context. (T2, School 1)

This data response was highly influential in Phase 2, identifying multi-word units as a new variable to test, leading to a deeper review of literature, and the generation of a new sub-question to explore in the Phase 3 intervention study: *To what extent does the teaching of multi-word units contribute to the development of children's vocabulary depth and their production of written text?*

4.5 Phase 3: quantitative data findings (School 2)

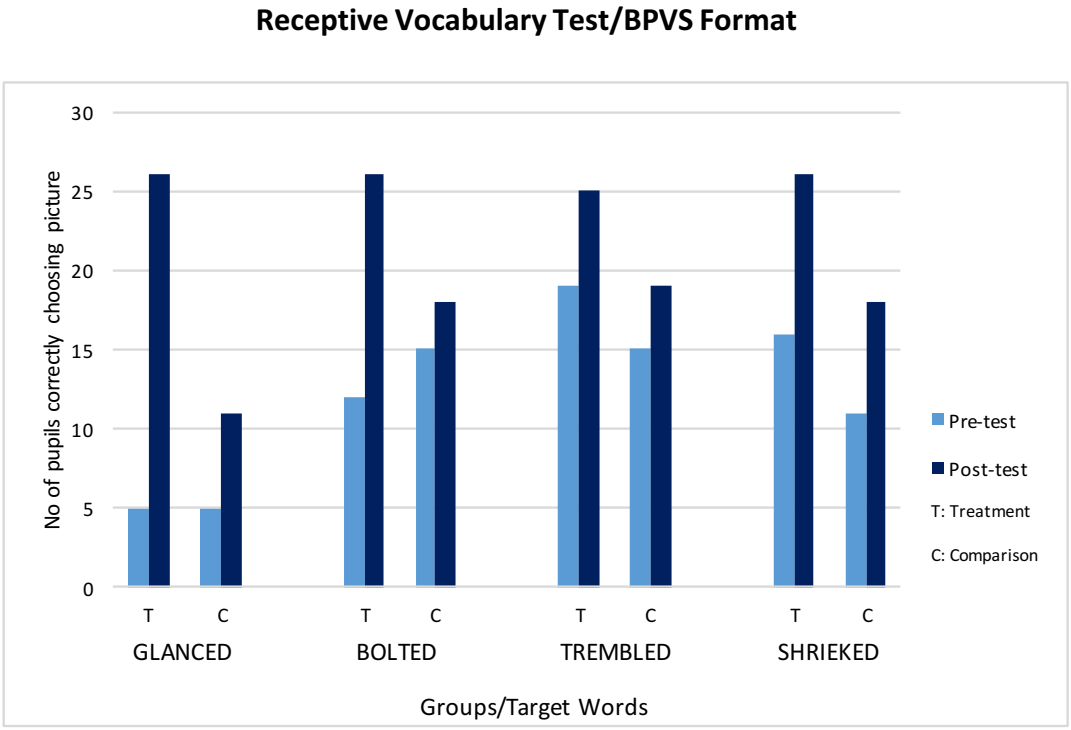


Figure 1

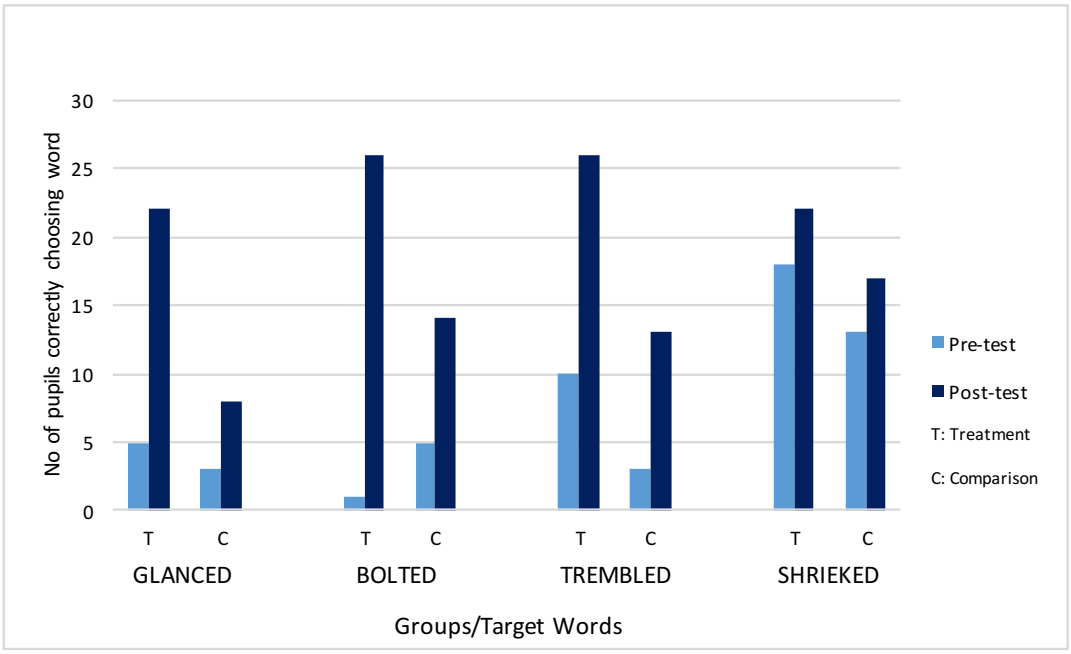


Figure 2

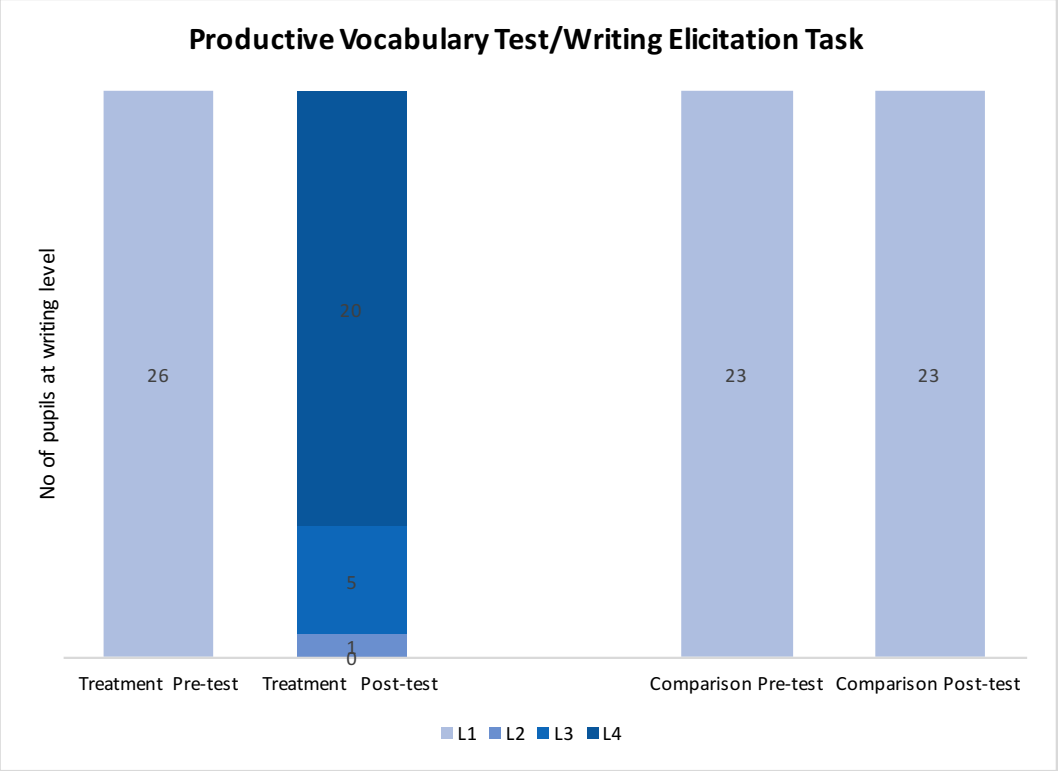


Figure 3

Coding		Written Text Quality Descriptor
L1	Yet to learn/apply – unknown/not secure	Word/phrase/multi-word unit not included in writing
L2	Novice – not confident – not mastered	Word/phrase/multi-word unit included in writing – but incorrect usage/error with tense/syntax error interferes with meaning
L3	Fluent – confident – shows mastery	Word/phrase/multi-word unit used correctly in writing – mirrors language learned - correct syntax & appropriate usage
L4	Flair – shows greater depth	Word/phrase/multi-word unit used appropriately in writing – evidence of sentence revision/manipulation beyond language learned – explain adaptation – explain effect on reader/audience

Table 1 Writing level descriptors to accompany Figures 3 and 5

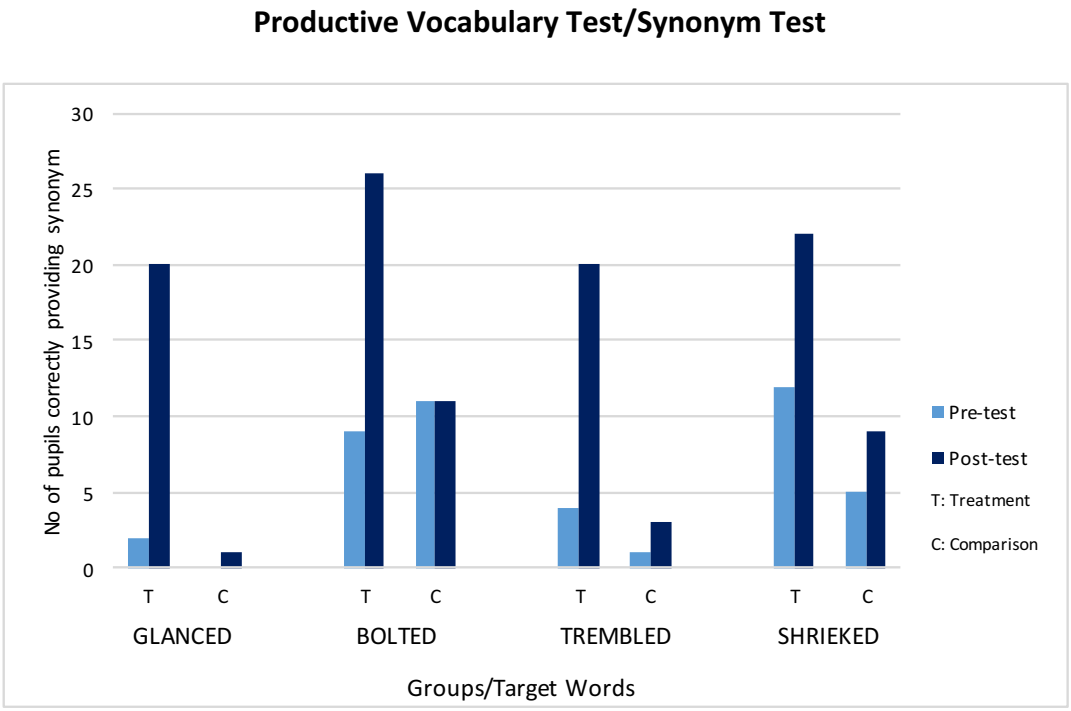


Figure 4

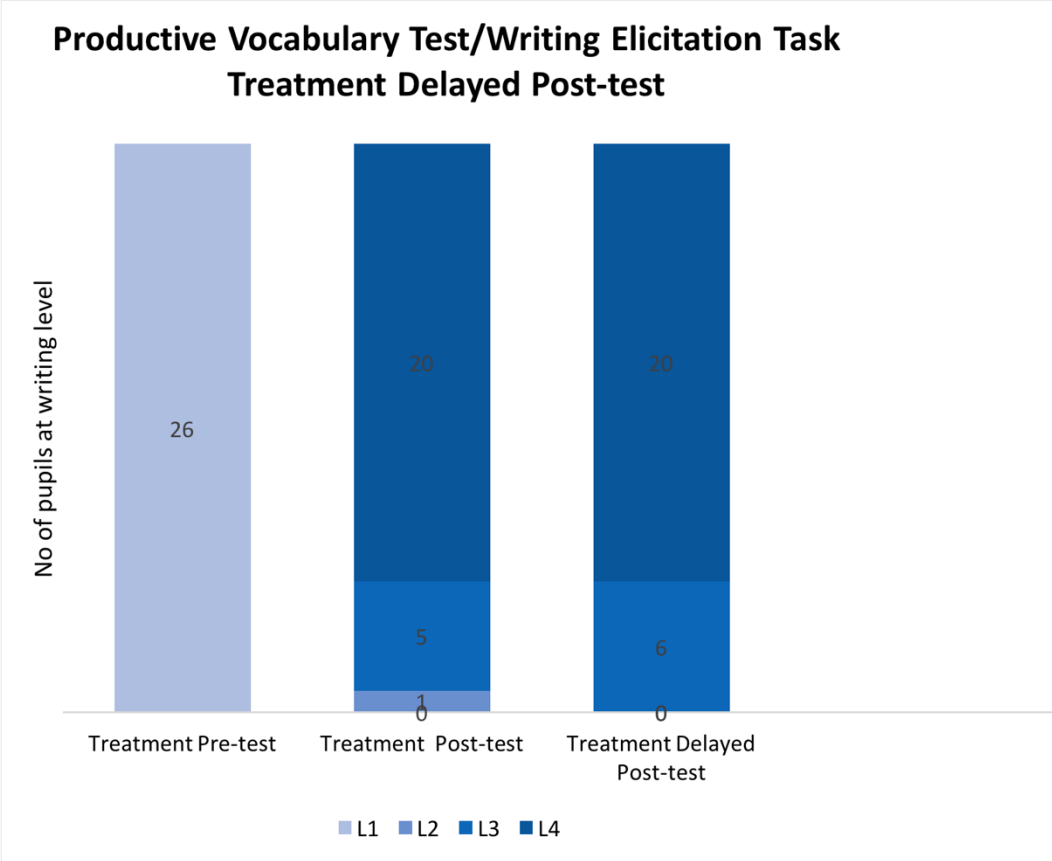


Figure 5

4.51 Phase 3 quantitative data findings (School 2)

Quantitative data show that the intervention had a positive effect on developing receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing for EAL learners (see Figures 1 to 5). In relation to the target verbs, 'glanced', 'bolted', 'trembled' and 'shrieked', the data reveal that both the experimental group and control group make gains in receptive vocabulary knowledge, with the experimental group making greater gains for the verbs 'glanced' and 'bolted' (see Figures 1 and 2).

Most strikingly, the data clearly show that the intervention had a positive effect on developing productive vocabulary knowledge, with the experimental group significantly outperforming the control regarding both synonym production and writing quality (see Figures 3 and 4). It is interesting to note the marked increase in the number of pupils in the treatment group that are able to provide synonyms for the target verbs post-intervention, especially for the verbs: 'glanced', 'bolted' and 'trembled' (see Figure 4). Data clearly show little increase in the number of pupils in the control group able to provide synonyms for the target vocabulary, with no change for the verb 'bolted' (see Figure 4).

The writing elicitation task data show a dramatic increase in the number of pupils in the treatment group that include the target words or multi-word phrases in their writing post-intervention (see Figure 3). Data show that almost all of the treatment group pupils are able to apply the word/multi-word units in their writing using correct verb tense, with only one pupil showing syntax error interfering with meaning. Noticeably, over three-quarters of the treatment group sample are able to adapt the word/multi-word units learned and explain the desired effect on the

reader (see Figure 3). By stark contrast, data show that none of the pupils in the control group use the target word/multi-word phrase in their writing post-intervention (see Figure 3).

Data from the delayed post-test also reveal the positive longer term effects of the treatment for the experimental group, with a slight increase in the number of pupils using and adapting the word/multi-word unit in their writing, two months after the post-test. Delayed post-test data clearly show the influence of teaching multi-word units on EAL children's depth of vocabulary knowledge supporting production of written text (see Figure 5).

The following key qualitative data findings were collected to provide practitioner and pupil perceptions regarding the pedagogical elements of the intervention, post analysis of the quantitative data findings (School 2) (see Appendix B).

4.6 Post-phase 3 key qualitative data findings: teachers and pupils (School 2)

Qualitative data reveal key insights regarding the perceptions of the treatment group teacher and pupils with respect to the vocabulary teaching elements explored in the intervention.

Data collected from pupil and teacher interviews show that all four pedagogical elements: reading aloud, drama, making semantic links (action figure) and sentence combining are perceived as useful in supporting word learning for writing.

Data collected from pupils show that reading aloud and drama are viewed as techniques aiding memory retention and recall of vocabulary:

Reading out loud, you remember it - reading quietly, you forget it. (Pupil A, School 2)

When I am doing the actions, the words come into my head, when I'm doing them. (Pupil F, School 2)

It is also interesting to see a pupil response suggesting that drama supports word comprehension:

When we glanced back I could see how to do it and learn more about it. (Pupil E, School 2)

Pupil data reveal that semantic linking using the action figure is perceived as a useful element supporting word learning and comprehension. Responses show that the action figure is viewed as a strong visual prompt for the target vocabulary:

When you don't know a word or what it means, you look at the words on the action figure and you can see what part of the body it comes from - when you shriek - that's like scream - that shows it's the mouth - it's very helpful. (Pupil E, School 2)

When we look at the action figure, when my teacher takes it out, I always remember the words and the feelings. (Pupil F, School 2)

It is interesting to see that the teacher views the action figure as a vehicle for developing a range of writing skills, including punctuation:

When we taught them how to use the action figure we emphasized capital letters, comma, fronted adverbial, the full stop - so the punctuation improved - even though we were focusing on the verb. (Teacher, School 2)

Teacher and pupil data show that sentence combining is viewed as a useful strategy to support writing quality, describing how the technique helps develop an understanding of different verb tense and sentence variety:

I learned that I can use the -ed and -ing; you can write glanced back or glancing back. (Pupil A, School 2)

So that was embedding the Year 4 target of varying sentence openers and using fronted adverbials. (Teacher, School 2)

Pupil and teacher data reveal that the learning of multi-word units is viewed as a practice impacting positively on writing quality. Teacher responses indicate that the intervention elements had a greater effect on developing writing quality compared to previous classroom practice of dictionary use:

I think it's better with the whole phrase - it gives you more ideas than just using one word. (Pupil A, School 2)

The writing was more cohesive - one of the reasons was, especially for the middle and lower attainers, they were more confident about what they wanted to write about - they had the words. (Teacher, School 2)

I would say in my years of teaching there have been many occasions where we have asked children to define a word using a dictionary - and they could define words and they could tell you the meaning - however then using these words in their writing was very unlikely. (Teacher, School 2)

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Critical analysis of evidence

The aim of this masters study is to explore how learning vocabulary supports writing for EAL learners in a primary school setting, with the central question for enquiry: *What kinds of teacher practice within an intervention helps to develop children's receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing?*

The exploratory sequential mixed method design followed in this study allows rich qualitative data to be initially collected and analyzed, and for the findings to be used to develop a new feature to be tested in an intervention (Creswell & Creswell,

2018). This leads me to begin discussions by analyzing the findings of the qualitative, phase 1, interview data.

5.2 Phase 1 qualitative interview data

Pupil and teacher interview data show that all four of the pedagogical elements cited in literature for vocabulary and writing development: reading aloud (Mol, Bus & De Jong, 2009), drama (Kao & O'Neill, 1998), making semantic links (Tinkham, 1997) and sentence combining (Saddler, 2005; 2007), are viewed as having a positive effect on learning words to support writing for EAL learners in the study. It is interesting to note some key interview data that influenced the inclusion of the elements in the intervention design, with reference to aligning literature:

> *I feel that unless you can speak out loud, in context, the oral rehearsal, there's no way they'll be able to write it because it's not in their vocabulary - until you've said something it can't be in your whole vocabulary. If you've written something that's fine. If you can spell something that's fine. If you can read something that's fine. But if you can actually use it out loud, then that's where that word becomes secured in the child's mind. So I would never ever teach words without context or without oral rehearsal, because I don't think that's the full picture for them really.* (Teacher 1, School 1)

Teacher 1 (T1) highlights the importance of reading aloud, stating that 'oral rehearsal' is fundamental in developing a depth of vocabulary knowledge, concurring with the findings of Mol, Bus and De Jong (2009). It is interesting to see T1 argue that the practice of spoken language is a crucial pre-cursor to written production, asserting that the process of saying a word out loud secures it in the child's mind. Acknowledging that several academics posit the link between spoken language and children's progress in reading (Fricke et al., 2013; Biemiller

& Slonim, 2001; Catts et al., 1999), the paucity of studies connecting the influence of oral language on EAL writing proficiency (Murphy, 2014) suggests T1's claim is not sufficiently supported by empirical evidence. T1 clearly advocates the process of speaking out loud to be contextualized, suggesting that the two aspects are linked. The importance of context-embedded language learning for EAL learners is argued for strongly in the influential theoretical work of Cummins (1979). T1's firm belief in the benefit of spoken language supporting written production, coupled with the limitation in literature, made this an interesting concept to explore in the intervention.

T1 also asserts the importance of drama in supporting a depth of understanding, arguing that this practice is crucial for EAL children's ability to write:

I think it's crucial to writing, especially if children have limited experience - there's no way they can write about things until they've at least had a go at role play, or had a go at the drama side of it, because they have more things to draw upon. (Teacher 1, School 1)

I think the drama is a visual and auditory memory for them. They're getting that multi-sensory thing, which I think is the most important thing and then they naturally begin to apply it. (Teacher 2, School 1)

The claims made by T1 and T2 that drama and role play support vocabulary development and writing align to the recent findings of Dobson and Stephenson (2018), which reveal the effect of using drama techniques to develop narrative structures through the exploration of emotional literacy, linking with the study focus of learning language to describe the actions of a character in a story. It is worth noting that the findings of Cameron and Besser (2004) identify the writing skill of character development, i.e. characterization, as an area of weakness in EAL narrative writing. With T1's assertion that drama aids written production for EAL

learners supported by the recent study of Dobson and Stephenson (2018), I decided that drama was also an interesting element to investigate.

Interestingly, it is the pupil interview data from School 1 that reveal most the positive view of using the action figure resource to make semantic links on word learning, corroborating the research of Hippner-Page (2000), which argues for the use of lexical sets to enhance vocabulary development:

(Interviewer: How did the action figure help you to learn what words mean?)

His mouth looks like he's screaming. (Pupil 4, School 1)

(Interviewer: What's another word for scream?)

Shrieked! (Pupils 3 and 4, School 1)

Shriek is shout - a scared shout. (Pupil 3, School 1)

(Interviewer: Did the action figure help you to learn any other words?)

Yes - yes. (Pupils 3 and 4, School 1)

Trembling is when your body does this - like when you're cold, but trembling means you're scared. (Pupil 4, School 1)

Bolt is like when you look at a ghost and you're scared and it makes you run away. (Pupil 3, School 1)

You can see that his face is very scared - so right away you know the right words to describe him because of the emoji. He looks terrified - the emoji really helps. (Pupil 3, School 1)

The data clearly show that both pupils advocate the practice of making semantic links to develop vocabulary knowledge, enhanced by the visual emoji cues on the action figure, aligning to the thinking of Sadoski (2005) on dual coding. The responses show a growing depth of vocabulary knowledge, with the pupils confidently unpicking the meaning of the connected target words presented as a lexical set (Hippner-Page, 2000). The pupils clearly perceive the action figure to be a useful vehicle for the pedagogical element of semantic clustering, aligning to

Tinkham's (1997) 'learner-centred' approach for second language learners arguing for words to be organized by function and activity. The positive pupil responses and signs of vocabulary development prompted my decision to explore the concept of semantic clustering in the intervention.

Teacher and pupil data show that sentence combining is viewed as a useful element to support the learning of different target verb forms which strengthened the use of adverbial phrases in writing. It is worth highlighting that a weak control of adverbial phrases is cited as an area for improvement in the EAL writing research of Cameron and Besser (2004). The participant data concur with the study findings of Saddler (2005; 2007), showing that sentence combining may lead to improvements in the quality of narrative writing for primary school learners:

For me, this was the most beneficial, because part of the curriculum in Year 4 is to teach fronted adverbials - this fitted in nicely across the board because they could apply this in a lot of different contexts. It was a good way of showing how the -ed form of the verb could change to the -ing form and be used at the front of a sentence and become a fronted adverbial. (Teacher 1, School 1)

We changed -ed to -ing for the words: bolted, bolting; trembled, trembling. (Pupil 1, School 1)

It is interesting to note that T1 positively views the element of sentence combining as a practice that allows vocabulary to be learned through a frequency of exposure and application, concurring with the studies of Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002). I decided to include sentence combining in the intervention as I viewed it as a technique that supported Year 4 curriculum requirements for writing (STA, 2018).

Most significantly, data reveal that participants view learning target vocabulary as multi-word units helpful in developing vocabulary knowledge, aligning to several studies (Wray, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004; Nation, 2013; Smith & Murphy, 2015; Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015):

I didn't focus just on the word glanced - I taught phrases, because it puts it in context. (Teacher 2, School 1)

Don't teach the single word - you have to teach it as a phrase. You tremble from the cold, or some people tremble with excitement. So putting it into different contexts, so the children are trying to come up with another phrase. (Teacher 2, School 1)

So if someone doesn't know what the word means, but there are other words around it - it helps them to know what it means. (Pupil 5, School 1)

It is interesting to note that T2 offers two examples of multi-word units incorporating the verb 'tremble', one using the preposition: *from*, and the other using the preposition: *with*. T2's response resonates with the findings of Cameron and Besser (2004) which identified preposition knowledge as a barrier to EAL writing proficiency. Influenced by the seminal work of Wray (2002), I felt that there might be a benefit in pupils learning the target verb and appropriate preposition as a multi-word unit, leading to the inclusion of some verb-preposition (phrasal verb) multi-word units in the intervention.

Importantly, the Phase 1 qualitative data was used to inform the design of the Phase 3 intervention trial; I decided that all four pedagogical elements cited would be included in the intervention, with the teaching of multi-word units identified as an interesting new variable to explore the development of vocabulary depth and production of written text for EAL learners. This leads me to discuss the

quantitative findings of the Phase 3 intervention trial.

5.3 Phase 3 quantitative intervention data (School 2)

When comparing treatment and comparison groups, BPVS format data indicate that the intervention had a positive effect on EAL children's receptive vocabulary knowledge for all four target verbs: 'glanced', 'bolted', 'trembled' and 'shrieked' (see Figure 1). It is important to note that the number of pupils making correct picture choices corresponding to the target verb increased from pre-test to post-test for both the treatment and comparison group. With much evidence to suggest that receptive word knowledge develops in advance of productive word knowledge (Griffen & Harley, 1996; Laufer & Goldstein, 2004; Mondria & Wiersma, 2004; Webb, 2009), the data suggest that typical classroom practice of using monolingual dictionaries, as demonstrated in the control group, might be sufficient to support receptive vocabulary development for the target words. However, the data show a marked improvement for the target verbs 'glanced' and 'bolted' for the treatment group, with values revealing less of an effect for the comparison group. The data suggest that the intervention noticeably helped develop EAL pupils' receptive vocabulary knowledge for specific verbs, but not all, indicating that the intervention had no greater effect overall on building receptive language than typical classroom practice for some verbs. These findings are corroborated by the receptive vocabulary-zone of relevance comparison and treatment group data (see Figure 2), with a similar pattern in size of effects, indicating a degree of triangulation (Bryman, 2016). However, it is important to note that the zone of relevance assessment is not considered a universally recognized measure of

receptive vocabulary knowledge, compared to the more robust BPVS format test (Murphy, 2014). With several academics theorizing that productive language use requires a knowledge of receptive language (Griffen & Harley, 1996; Mondria & Wiersma, 2004; Webb, 2009), the data suggest that both the treatment and control groups have a level of receptive word knowledge to build upon, potentially leading to productive learning of vocabulary.

Interestingly, synonym test data show that the intervention had a marked effect on EAL children's productive vocabulary knowledge (see Figure 4), with comparison group values revealing limited or no effect for three of the four target verbs. With several academics positing that productive vocabulary measures indicate an EAL learner's level of comprehension (McKendry, 2013; Hutchinson et al., 2003), data suggest that the treatment had a positive effect on developing vocabulary depth for EAL pupils (Nation, 2013).

The most striking intervention effect is seen in the writing elicitation task data (see Figure 3), with over three-quarters of the treatment group sample showing a dramatic improvement in the quality of writing, progressing from the lowest to the highest writing level, from pre-test to post-test. Significantly, data reveal that the quality of writing remained at the lowest writing level for the entire comparison group sample, from pre-test to post-test, suggesting that typical classroom practice in the trial had little effect on word learning supporting improvement in written production of text. The treatment group data concurs with a body of evidence, suggesting that the intervention elements had a marked effect on improving EAL pupils' writing proficiency, with treatment pupils' writing showing evidence of

sentence revision, adaptation of target language learned and a control of grammatical construction (Wray, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004; Nation, 2013; Smith & Murphy, 2015; Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). It is important to highlight that the writing elicitation task utilized a holistic measure of written text quality (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015), and therefore is limited in its scope to provide a detailed breakdown of the specific aspects of syntax and word class reported in the study of Cameron and Besser (2004). Accepting this limitation, analysis of treatment group writing seems to indicate that learning multi-word units comprising verb and preposition (phrasal verbs) may result in a more accurate use of prepositions: this is an interesting observation as preposition knowledge was identified as a barrier to writing in the findings of Cameron and Besser (2004). However, it is important to highlight that preposition use was not planned as a specific intervention measure, and therefore claims of improved preposition knowledge can not justifiably be made, but is possibly a valuable insight worthy of further study.

It is noticeable to see that treatment group data from the delayed post-test writing elicitation task (see Figure 5) show that gains in writing quality have been maintained, showing a slight improvement, suggesting that the intervention has lead to longer term effects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) on children's control of language expressed in writing. However, it is worth noting that the delayed post-test was conducted two months after the intervention, and therefore limitations regarding the threat of maturity might have had some influence on the sustained gains (DeForge, 2010).

It is important to highlight that the study has obvious limitations in its absence to

control for the range of variables in the intervention trial (Bryman, 2016), and therefore it is not possible to pinpoint, and argue strongly for one particular aspect of teacher practice supporting the improvement in vocabulary depth and writing (Ravid & Tolchinsky, 2002). Despite the intention to follow a three phase mixed method study design, I decided to further collect and analyze qualitative data to provide a richer picture of the intervention effects (Henriksen, 2019); I therefore conducted interviews with the teacher and a sample of pupils from the treatment group, after the delayed post-test. This leads me to discuss the additional qualitative interview data, as a means of triangulating data further (Bryman, 2016; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011), with the intention of gaining richer insight regarding systematic and direct teaching interventions for vocabulary.

5.4 Key qualitative interview data post phase 3 supporting interpretation: teacher and pupils in treatment group (School 2)

Reading out loud, you remember it - reading quietly, you forget it. (Pupil A, School 2)

If you do the action, you remember it straight away - because you did it and you talked about it. (Pupil B, School 2)

Doing the acting and learning the words helped me to use good words in my writing and my writing got better. (Pupil C, School 2)

When they read out the words and acted them out they had a greater understanding of what the words meant and they were able to apply them into their writing. (Teacher A, School 2)

Teacher and pupil data show that the intervention pedagogical elements of reading aloud and drama are viewed positively for developing receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, supporting the writing process, corroborating the recent findings of Dobson and Stephenson (2018). The teacher response proposes a

blended, multi-modal approach combining reading out loud and drama, concurring with the findings of Lee and Muncie (2006).

You learn a sentence to go with the action figure - a dictionary just tells you the meaning. (Pupil A, School 2)

It helps because it told us the actions - the dictionary doesn't quite tell us the detail - it doesn't tell us the actions - only the words about the meaning. (Pupil B, School 2)

What was particularly useful was that when they realized that if they want to create a story that was scary - everything has to match - everything has to show that they are scared - so it's scared face, scared arms, scared body, whereas in the past, before the study, they would talk about being scared, but they wouldn't link everything together. So I thought that this was useful in getting that cohesion. (Teacher A, School 2)

Participant data show that the use of the action figure to make semantic links is viewed as intervention practice positively impacting on written text quality, showing a marked development in cohesion and expression of creative ideas (Cameron & Besser, 2004). Data reveal that pupils in the treatment group perceive dictionaries to have limited use in supporting the writing process, favouring the scaffolding of language afforded by the multi-modal context of the action figure (Lee & Muncie, 2006; Dickinson & Porche, 2011). It is interesting to see that the pupil responses indicate a view that dictionaries are useful in providing word meaning, but feel that the action figure is a greater support for sentence construction. It is worth noting that Webb and Nation (2017) argue that EAL pupils with a low vocabulary size should use a bilingual dictionary in advance of using a monolingual dictionary. Webb and Nation (2017) also state that EAL pupils require motivation and training to use a monolingual dictionary effectively, concurring with the studies of Laufer and Hadar (1997). With the control and treatment groups typically using monolingual dictionaries in the study, it is

interesting to consider how access to bilingual dictionaries may have impacted on the data.

In terms of the -ing and -ed clause, combining the sentences, the higher ability were able to use the -ed and then move to the -ing and make that change in their writing and the writing sounded different, so it wasn't always starting the same way. (Teacher A, School 2)

I learned that I can use the -ed and -ing; you can write glanced back or glancing back. (Pupil A, School 2)

I learned glanced and glancing back - it helped me to write different sentences. (Pupil B, School 2)

Teacher and pupil data reveal that the intervention practice of sentence combining is viewed as strengthening a knowledge of verb tenses and endings (morpho-syntax) which helps develop children's control of sentence variety and structure (Lee & Muncie, 2006; Cameron & Besser, 2004). It is interesting to see that the process of sentence combining is viewed as a support for the construction of adverbial phrases and clauses, identified in the findings of Cameron and Besser (2004) as a limiting factor in EAL writing proficiency. The responses also indicate a view that sentence combining may support the development of vocabulary knowledge to compose more complex sentence constructions (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015), and improve the quality of story writing for young learners (Saddler, 2005; 2007).

Because we used more words - like phrases - we could use them in sentences. If you just look in a dictionary, you don't know what to write. (Pupil A, School 2)

It's much better to have the word in a phrase because when you want to write something, you know how to use it and what to write with it. (Pupil B, School 2)

Glancing back over your shoulder - it's better to learn it as a phrase because when you glance over your shoulder, you can do the action and you can remember the word with the phrase. (Pupil C, School 2)

I think that once the children have started using one of these phrases - like glanced back, they then have to write something interesting to carry that on. It's almost like the starting point for them and it allowed them to keep going with that theme. That's what they needed. (Teacher A, School 2)

Data clearly show participants' preference for learning vocabulary as multi-word units, described by the teacher and pupils as phrases, to support sentence writing and cohesion, corroborating the findings of several studies (Wray, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004; Nation, 2013; Smith & Murphy, 2015; Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). It is interesting to see that the teacher response suggests that learning multi-word units supports pupils to develop the writing skill of cohesion, which is also cited in the findings of Cameron and Besser (2004) as a limiting factor for EAL writing quality. It is worth noting that Pupil C describes the benefit of a blended word learning approach, suggesting that drama and multi-word unit knowledge enhance and compliment each other (Lee & Muncie, 2006).

In summary, the qualitative data findings regarding participants in the intervention trial corroborate the quantitative Phase 3 study findings, providing interesting insights regarding pupil and teacher cognition (Henriksen, 2019). Through further triangulation of data (Bryman, 2016), the argument for a blended, multi-modal teaching approach for vocabulary development, focusing on multi-word units, is made more convincingly (Lee & Muncie, 2006).

6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A concerning body of evidence shows that EAL pupils often lag behind their monolingual peers in the number of words they know in the majority language, with the likely effect of limiting progress in reading and writing (Bialystok et al., 2010; Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2014; Murphy, 2014; Pearson, Fernandez, & Oller,

1993; Spencer & Wagner, 2016).

Historically, EAL language research has focused more on the development of reading comprehension, with far fewer studies investigating writing construction for second language learners (Murphy, 2014).

With a paucity of studies examining direct vocabulary learning interventions in an EAL context in the UK (EEF, 2017), this practitioner enquiry aims to explore systematic processes of vocabulary development supporting the writing process (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2000; Snow, Burns & Griffen, 1998; Murphy, 2014).

Central question:

What kinds of teacher practice within an intervention helps to develop children's receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to support writing?

This study explores a range of practice within an intervention, identifying pedagogies that develop EAL pupils' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge to assist written production.

The triangulation of qualitative interview data and quantitative intervention data provides an illuminating insight into the teaching and learning elements supporting the acquisition of vocabulary and its transference to narrative writing. The qualitative data helps create a picture of teacher cognition (Henriksen, 2019; Borg, 2003) which in this study was a vital component in shaping the enquiry.

This study suggests that the blending of pedagogies has a positive effect on the development of EAL vocabulary knowledge (Lee & Muncie, 2006). Aligning with the thinking of several linguistic theorists, the intervention practice in this study of

reading aloud (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002; Mol, Bus & De Jong, 2009; Neuman & Roskos, 2012), drama (Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Podlozny, 2000; Stinson & Winston, 2011; Lai-wa Dora To et al., 2011; Dobson & Stephenson, 2018), semantic clustering (Beck, Perfetti & McKeown, 1982; Gairns & Redman, 1986; Seal, 1991; Tinkham, 1997; Hippner-Page, 2000) and sentence combining (Combs, 1975; O'Hare, 1973; Melvin, 1983; Gebhardt, 1985; Saddler & Graham, 2005), are all viewed to help children improve receptive and productive use of target language.

The pedagogies explored in the intervention also appear to connect theoretically with the concept of word consciousness and its positive influence on developing vocabulary knowledge (Scott & Nagy, 2004; Stahl, 2005; Blachowicz et al., 2006). In addition, the pedagogical elements seem to link with the seminal theoretical model argued by Cummins (1979), as the features provided context-embedded scenarios for EAL language learning.

The findings of this research project suggest that monolingual dictionary use is a likely support for receptive vocabulary learning (Bruton, 2007; Laufer & Hill, 2000; Peters, 2007, Webb & Nation 2017). However, evidence from the study implies that monolingual dictionaries may have limitations in developing productive vocabulary knowledge, especially when monolingual dictionaries are used as the dominant or sole means of word-building instruction, with perhaps little training (Webb & Nation, 2017). As receptive vocabulary knowledge is posited by many theorists to develop in advance of productive vocabulary knowledge (Griffen & Harley, 1996; Laufer & Goldstein, 2004; Mondria & Wiersma, 2004; Webb, 2009), the findings of this study suggest that pedagogical

practice in addition to dictionary use is of benefit to children with EAL, helping pupils progress from receptive to productive use of language.

Sub-questions:

How does children's vocabulary knowledge impact on the quality of their written text?

The intervention findings of this study suggest that the pedagogical elements explored had a dramatic effect on developing vocabulary knowledge supporting EAL pupils' writing proficiency. Evidence shows improvement in pupils' capacity to utilize vocabulary learned in order to revise sentences, adapt target language and control written grammatical construction (Wray, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004; Nation, 2013; Smith & Murphy, 2015; Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015).

Regarding the quality of pupils' written text, evidence points favourably to the intervention practice of sentence combining in particular. It appears that the practice affords a frequency of encountering and applying vocabulary in context (Cummins, 1979) which supports a knowledge of verb tenses and endings (morpho-syntax) and improves pupils' manipulation of sentence structure (Cameron & Besser, 2004). The study findings also suggest that applying word knowledge with sentence combining strengthens children's construction of adverbial phrases and clauses (Cameron & Besser, 2004) and ability to shape more complex sentence constructions (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). Qualitative and quantitative evidence points positively to the blending of pedagogies (Lee & Muncie, 2006) supporting vocabulary development and written production.

Semantic clustering using the innovative action figure appears to marry particularly well with the practice of sentence combining, enhancing the composition and effect skills necessary for Year 4 learners' narrative writing (Saddler, 2005; 2007).

To what extent does the teaching of multi-word units contribute to the development of children's vocabulary depth and their production of written text?

Findings from the study highlight the influence of collocations and multi-word units in developing EAL vocabulary depth (Nation, 2013; Smith & Murphy, 2015; Wray, 2002; Cameron & Besser, 2004), leading to a greater control of cohesion and creative expression in writing (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015). Evidence suggests that using the action figure as a vehicle for teaching multi-word units helps improve children's written development of character in narrative, an aspect identified in the study of Cameron and Besser (2004) as a barrier to EAL story writing progress.

Acknowledging that written text quality measures are holistic in this study, and do not specifically quantify the different aspects of word class, it is worth drawing attention to an interesting observation regarding multi-word units comprising verb and preposition (phrasal verbs). Interestingly, analysis of children's writing suggests that a focus on phrasal verbs possibly strengthens EAL pupils' knowledge and application of prepositions, another barrier to writing quality identified in the work of Cameron and Besser (2004).

What are the perceptions of practitioners and pupils regarding systematic and direct teaching interventions for vocabulary?

Qualitative interview findings in this study have enabled valuable and enlightening pupil and teacher perspectives to be collected in real-life, naturalistic school settings (Mackey & Gass, 2016). Teachers have been encouraged to conceptualize their practice and discuss often tacit experienced-based domains of vocabulary learning and teaching (Borg, 2003; Henriksen, 2019).

An emerging pattern is revealed in the study findings showing a collective view that vocabulary learning is optimized in context-embedded practice (Cummins, 1979). Teacher responses specifically cite the importance of providing a context in word learning interventions for children with EAL, with pupils often describing in their own words, the benefit of contextual clues as an aid to vocabulary acquisition (Webb & Nation, 2017).

Findings from the study highlight that practitioners and pupils view a repertoire of pedagogies to be useful in the systematic and direct teaching processes of word building, with participants describing the benefit of combining pedagogical elements and techniques (Lee & Muncie, 2006). By exploring practitioner cognition (Henriksen, 2019), this study points to the positive word learning effects of following a blended teaching approach (Lee & Muncie, 2006), utilizing and merging perhaps new ideas and techniques, such as using the action figure to support sentence combining.

The study findings show that both teachers and pupils perceive the process of multi-modal word exposure (Lee & Muncie, 2006) to be an advantage to learning vocabulary. Pupils clearly view the different modes of accessing vocabulary helpful, with responses suggesting that a range of textual experiences helps reduce the level of difficulty in learning words (learning burden) (Webb & Nation, 2017), supporting the knowledge and transference of target words into writing. The use of a scared emoji on the action figure is a clear example of multi-modality viewed positively by pupils in the study, concurring with the theoretical thinking of Sadoski (2005) on dual coding.

A contentious finding in the study relates to the use of monolingual dictionaries to support vocabulary knowledge, with pupils in the treatment group perceiving monolingual dictionaries as having limited use in supporting word building for story writing. Evidence from the study clearly points to monolingual dictionaries supporting some receptive vocabulary growth (Webb & Nation, 2017), however pupil perceptions align with intervention data, indicating that additional pedagogical practice is a likely requirement to assist with written production of text.

6.1 Implications

The findings of this study have implications for my own ongoing professional practice, and have the potential to support and shape the continuing development of practitioners teaching in linguistically diverse school settings. A summary of the research has been shared with teachers and leaders at the study schools, with

English subject leaders using findings to inform whole school literacy practice. I feel that the evidence in this study may also be of interest to UK teacher educators and researchers working in the field of second language learning and multi-lingualism, and perhaps to professional learning communities internationally. I have been asked by the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) to submit an article on my study for publication, and write a teaching resource for the mini-book series.

Having shared findings with members of the Oxford REAL group, and presented a workshop at the 2019 UKLA International Conference, I am mindful of the limitations of this investigation, but also aware of the valuable insights and scope for further research.

Recognizing the heterogeneity in the EAL samples of this study, mirroring that of the EAL population in the UK at large (Strand, Malmberg & Hall, 2015), I appreciate that this research cannot claim to show how the intervention pedagogies impact on individual pupils with different home languages. I am therefore interested in conducting a more detailed study, plotting data for individuals and different groups of L1s (home languages), with the intention of gaining insight into the effect of different pedagogical elements on children with different first languages.

Acknowledging that this study suggests positive effects from teaching a range of blended techniques to support vocabulary development, an interesting future study might aim to help teachers understand specific variables for success, or distinct combinations of pedagogies. Perhaps a more detailed examination of how the use

of the action figure supports sentence combining and written production might provide a better understanding of how word building pedagogies coalesce.

The current study provides insight into a repertoire of vocabulary development practices that teachers might employ in an intervention or perhaps sequence of learning to support EAL pupils' narrative writing. Evidence in this investigation clearly points to the positive language effects of frequently exposing children with EAL to multi-word units, supporting the case for future study.

This masters research project illustrates how a framework for integrating pedagogies may strengthen EAL pupils' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, enrich teacher practice, and support young second language learners to make progress in the quality of their writing.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Phase 1 qualitative data findings (School 1)

(Teachers 1 & 2 and Pupils P1 & P2; P3 & P4; P5 & P6 (School 1)

Key responses/insight from first teacher (T1) interview (School 1)

Open-ended question data

Int (interviewer) Tell me about how you taught vocabulary in the past?

T1 (interviewee 1) I would typically use dictionaries and thesauruses for definitions and synonyms. We would do a lot of talking.

Intermediate question data

Int Tell me about the principles you follow for vocabulary learning?

T1 I believe in repetition of vocabulary, using story maps - pictures, diagrams - oral rehearsal before writing.

Int What do you feel about learning words in context?

T1 For EAL learners words without context are just totally meaningless - there's no point teaching words without context in my opinion. You need something to anchor it to in reality. In my previous school we followed a scheme called 'talk for writing' - you did a lot of oral rehearsal and learned words in context.

Int What do you feel about reading aloud as a way of helping

EAL children learn words?

T1 I feel that unless you can speak out loud, in context, the oral rehearsal, there's no way they'll be able to write it because it's not in their vocabulary - until you've said something it can't be in your whole vocabulary. If you've written something that's fine. If you can spell something that's fine. If you can read something that's fine. But if you can actually use it out loud, then that's where that word becomes secured in the child's mind. So I would never ever teach words without context or without oral rehearsal, because I think that's the full picture for them really.

Int What are your thoughts on drama to support word learning?

T1 I think it's crucial to writing, especially if children have limited experience - there's no way they can write about things until they've at least had a go at role play, or had a go at the drama side of it, because they have more things to draw upon. We wrote newspaper reports recently and they interviewed each other as eye witnesses - they acted out the scene - that was crucial to their newspaper report writing. So without dramatization it's not real for them.

Int What did you think about using the action figure to help children learn words?

T1 It's not too far from what we already do - it's a bit like role on the wall. If I were going to develop this, I think this side needs a bit more structure - maybe some sub-headings

within the boxes.

Int What do you mean by sub-headings?

T1 So, this box was for trembling for the body, so I might have something that says: what might my hands be doing? What might my legs be doing? Just to structure it a bit more.

Int A prompt for the verbs.

T1 Exactly. What does this character's feet do when he's scared? Or for the lower achievers: does this character stay still or does he bolt?

Int What are your thoughts on sentence combining as a practice to help children learn and use words in their writing?

T1 For me, this was the most beneficial, because part of the curriculum in Year 4 is to teach fronted adverbials – this fitted in nicely across the board because they could apply this in a lot of different contexts. It was a good way of showing how the -ed form of the verb could change to the -ing form and be used at the front of a sentence and become a fronted adverbial. The thing they found tricky was putting the other clause in. So, I might have a selection of clauses that could be added onto the fronted adverbial. They found the first clause quite simple, but they struggled to write the second clause - they couldn't think of the last bit to write, because it was a new idea for them.

Int That makes me think of the smaller steps towards this - the scaffolding.

End question data

Int	Is there anything else you'd like to discuss - any suggestions for development?
T1	Because the curriculum is so wide you couldn't justify spending three weeks on four words - but if you were focusing on fronted adverbials for half a term, you could change these words to be fronted adverbials and then it links to the grammar. That's something you could think about - does it have to be verbs or can it be other word types as well? So you can do it in more areas - more frequently.

<u>Key responses/insight from second teacher (T2) interview (School 1)</u>

Open-ended question data

Int (interviewer)	Tell me about how you taught vocabulary in the past?
T2 (interviewee 2)	I use a lot of discussion. We use a thesaurus to develop vocabulary and a dictionary to check the meaning of the word.

Intermediate question data

Int	Tell me about the principles you follow for vocabulary learning?
T2	I might use an exemplar piece of writing and include some more interesting vocabulary - showing children words in a written context. It's more of a visual exemplar coupled with discussion and practice of using it. I make sure that

the word is discussed in context.

Int What practice helped the children to learn the target words?

T2 The target words linked well with our book - they fed in quite naturally.

Int How did drama help?

T2 We acted the words out - who can show me what glancing looks like? We do that regularly.

Int How about the action figure?

T2 I gave them glanced, trembled, shrieked and bolted to start with - I gave the children ten minutes to find as many different words as they could for these words. It really got them thinking about the words and that's when we had the discussion on vibrate. Is vibrate something that people do, or is that something that your phone does? If it's a competition they really get into it. Children just enjoy doing anything that's not necessarily writing.

Int What about the sentence combining?

T2 We didn't move onto that - I felt that the children had got enough of the vocabulary understanding and use primarily doing the reading and the drama to transfer in their writing - because I was seeing it in their writing. We were doing narratives and descriptions last week and children were using bolt and shriek and glance - not really trembling - definitely bolted - they were all obsessed with the word bolt - I don't know why? It's that word bolt - he could bolt - he could bolt across. I think the drama is a visual and auditory memory for them. They're getting that multi-

sensory thing, which I think is the most important thing and then they naturally begin to apply it.

End question data

Int	In the study we focused on the target verbs.
T2	I didn't focus just on the word glanced - I taught phrases, because it puts it in context.
Int	That's a really significant insight. If we were advising other teachers - what would you say helps children to learn words to use in their writing?
T2	Don't teach the single word - you have to teach it as a phrase. You tremble from the cold, or some people tremble with excitement. So putting it into different contexts, so the children are trying to come up with another phrase.

<u>Key response/insights from first pupil interview pair: P1 and P2 (School 1)</u>

Int	How do you usually learn words?
P1	We take spellings home. Our teacher gives us spelling tests and puts the word into a sentence.
P2	We usually use dictionaries. If I don't know what it means I look in a dictionary.
Int	How did your teacher help you to learn the target words? What can you remember doing in class?
P1	She gave us a piece of paper with with the character looking scared.

P2	She gave us the body (action figure) to help us learn words.
Int	Is this a helpful way to learn words?
P1	It is very helpful - we learned that glance is just like look. Our teacher makes us use posh words!
Int	How about writing sentences?
P1	We changed -ed to -ing for the words: bolted, bolting; trembled, trembling.
Int	How did that help you to learn words to use in your writing?
P1	If you know trembled is a word, then it's good to learn that trembling is a word too. You learn more suffixes and prefixes.
Int	I am interested to know if you can use those words in your writing.
P2	I used these words in my writing.
P1	I would write it on a piece of paper 20 times.
Int	Is there anything else you want to say about learning words to use in writing?
P2	Your teacher helps you to use a dictionary.
P1	Screamed is like a normal word, but shrieked is a posher word.

Key responses/insights from second pupil interview pair: P3 and P4 (School 1)

Int	How do you usually learn words?
P3	We look in a dictionary to find the meaning.

P4	We do spelling tests every Friday.
Int	Do you have to learn what the words mean in a spelling test?
P3 & P4	NO!
Int	How did your teacher help you to learn the target words? What can you remember doing in class?
P3	We used the scared character - it helped a lot.
P4	Yes - a lot.
Int	How did the action figure help you to learn what words mean?
P3	You can see that his face is very scared - so right away you know the right words to describe him because of the emoji. He looks terrified - the emoji really helps.
P4	His mouth looks like he's screaming
Int	What's another word for scream?
P3 & P4	Shrieked!
P3	Shriek is shout - a scared shout.
P4	It's a scared scream.
P3	I think it could be a screech.
Int	Did you the action figure help you to learn any other words?
P3 & P4	Yes - yes.
P4	Trembling is when your body does this - like when you're cold, but trembling means you're scared.
P3	Bolt is like when you look at a ghost and you're scared and it makes you run away.

Key responses/insights from third pupil interview pair: P5 and P6 (School 1)

Int	How do you usually learn words?
P5	We have spelling lists and we use thesauruses.
P6	A thesaurus is more useful than a dictionary as it gives you the word in a sentence and it gives you other words.
P5	A dictionary helps you to find out what a word means.
P6	A dictionary helps you to spell.
Int	How did your teacher help you to learn the target words? What can you remember doing in class?
P5	We read the story out loud.
Int	Let's have a look in the story - I'll read it out loud. Troy bolted towards the hollow tree… (deliberate pause)
P5	Glancing back over his shoulder.
P6	Glancing is a quick look back - it's like spying.
P5	Glanced means you don't really want to see it - so you look back.
Int	If we were going to come up with an even better way to learn words - what would you suggest, say to someone? You see here we have the word shrieking - and you see here we have the words shrieking like a…
P5 & P6	Frightened animal.
Int	That's interesting. Do you think it's better to give children the word shrieking on it's own?
P5 & P6	No!
Int	Or do you think it's better to give the word with other words

around it? Shrieking like a frightened animal?

P5 Put it with other words.

Int Tell me why?

P5 So if someone doesn't know what the word means, but there are other words around it - it helps them to know what it means.

Int I'm going to quiz you then. If I said 'she glanced' - what are the other words that you would use in your writing?

P5 She glanced with fear, looking around her.

P6 I would write - he glanced like…like…a very…a very fierce pirate…or something.

Int He glanced (prompts with drama).

P6 Back over his shoulder.

P5 Oooooooohhhhh!

Int Is that more memorable?

P5 & P6 Yes!

P5 I think that's good.

P6 That makes more sense - he glanced back over his shoulder.

P5 Yes - he glanced back over his shoulder.

Appendix B

Post Phase 3 qualitative data findings

(Teacher A and Pupils A, B, C, D, E & F, School 2)

Key pupil focus group interview data response findings

(A, B, C, D, E & F, School 2)

Reading aloud

Reading out loud, you remember it - reading quietly, you forget it. (Pupil A)

Reading silently you might forget it. (Pupil B)

When I read the story aloud I could tell what the words meant and I knew what you could use them for. (Pupil C)

If someone reads aloud, you can easily find the words you don't know, and think what might be the meaning? (Pupil D)

Drama

When you act it out, it's more helpful and you use it more in your writing to make a story. (Pupil A)

If you do the action, you remember it straight away - because you did it and you talked about it. (Pupil B)

Doing the acting and learning the words helped me to use good words in my writing and my writing got better. (Pupil C)

If you act it out, you get a better idea of what the person is doing in the story. (Pupil D)

It made me picture it more in my mind - I was acting it out and I felt the emotion and now I know the emotion is really strong. (Pupil D)

When we glanced back I could see how to do it and learn more about it. (Pupil E)

When I am doing the actions, the words come into my head, when I'm doing them. (Pupil F)

The action figure - making semantic links/semantic clustering

You learn a sentence to go with the action figure - a dictionary just tells you the meaning. (Pupil A)

When you look at the actions one by one and do it again and again, you'll understand the words. (Pupil A)

It helps because it told us the actions - the dictionary doesn't quite tell us the detail - it doesn't tell us the actions - only the words about the meaning. (Pupil B)

In a dictionary - it only tells you the definition - here it tells you more information. (Pupil C)

It helps me to know what each part of the body does. (Pupil C)

You point to the body and remember what to say. (Pupil D)

When you don't know a word or what it means, you can look at the words on the action figure and you can see what part of the body it comes from - when you shriek - that's like scream - that shows it's the mouth - it's very helpful. (Pupil E)

When we look at the action figure, when my teacher takes it out, I always remember the words and the feelings. (Pupil F)

Sentence combining

I learned that I can use the -ed and -ing; you can write glanced back or glancing back. (Pupil A)

I learned glanced and glancing back - it helped me to write different sentences. (Pupil B)

Preposition choice

Int If you had a choice of writing trembled in fear or trembled with fear - what would you choose?

P Trembled with fear. (Pupil A)

Multi-word units

I think it's better with the whole phrase - it gives you more ideas than just using one word. (Pupil A)

Because we used more words - like phrases - we could use them in sentences. If you just look in a dictionary, you don't know what to write. (Pupil A)

It's much better to have the word in a phrase because when you want to write something, you know how to use it and what to write with it. (Pupil B)

The phrases make the story interesting. (Pupil C)

If I only had one word, I wouldn't have remembered it. (Pupil D)

Selecting words for effect

You say glanced back when something is scary and if you say looked, it's like you looked at someone but it doesn't feel like you're scared. (Pupil A)

Trembling with fear - it's a good phrase to use when a person is scared and they're shaking. (Pupil B)

If you write shrieking like a frightened animal, the reader will understand what you mean by that. (Pupil B)

Trembling with fear - I wanted the reader to feel that the person is nervous in the story - the person is shaking. (Pupil C)

Bolting towards - it creates more… a bigger picture in the reader's mind - it shows it's 'show not tell'; I wanted the reader to see a better image. (Pupil D)

Glanced back - I want you to picture that the character is looking behind him and sees a shadowy figure. If you stare, the old woman might come after him because he's taking too long - he might get captures and go back to the foster home. (Pupil E)

Glanced back - is a quicker movement - if she glanced back she could run, but if she just looks at it, the tiger could easily come to her and eat her. (Pupil F)

A blended approach

Showing the story and the action figure together, I think I know it's 'bolted towards', not 'bolting to'. (Pupil A)

Glancing back over your shoulder - it's better to learn it as a phrase because when you glance over your shoulder, you can do the action and you can remember the word with the phrase. (Pupil C)

Key teacher interview data response findings (Teacher A, School 2)

Reading aloud

First of all the reading aloud was definitely essential because the children needed to know what the words sounded like.

Drama

I felt that the drama was good because that made it fun.

The reading aloud got them used to the words, but the drama allowed them to play with the words and use them in their writing accurately.

When they read out the words and acted them out they had a greater understanding of what the words meant - and they were able to apply them into their writing.

The action figure – making semantic links/semantic clustering

What was particularly useful was that when they realized that if they want to create a story that was scary - everything has to match - everything has to show that they are scared - so it's scared face, scared arms, scared body, whereas in the past, before the study, they would talk about being scared, but they wouldn't link everything together. So I thought that this was useful in getting that cohesion.

For me the greatest achievement was that they were able to show that the character was scared through the body. They wrote a whole story where the character was scared without saying he was scared.

Sentence combining

In terms of the -ing and -ed clause, combining the sentences, the higher ability were able to use the -ed and then move to the -ing and make that change in their writing and the writing sounded different, so it wasn't always starting the same way. So that was embedding the Year 4 target of varying sentence openers and using fronted adverbials. Through the study it was more clear where the fronted adverbial was, through the action.

Blended approach

I didn't necessarily go through all four elements every day - the reading aloud and the drama I did - the action figure and sentence combining - it depends if we were going to write about that particular part that day.

For the first few days I stuck to the reading and the drama of the words - I thought before they begin to use the words in context, they need to understand what the word means and get that understanding - for the next few weeks we did all four elements, and then afterwards we would pick the ones that were relevant for that particular session.

Multi-word units and cohesion

The writing was more cohesive - one of the reasons was, especially for the middle and lower attainers, they were more confident about what they wanted to write about - they had the words.

I think that once the children have started using one of these phrases - like glanced back, they then have to write something interesting to carry that on. It's almost like the starting point for them and it allowed them to keep going with that theme. That's what they needed.

Selecting words for effect

I would say in my years of teaching there have been many occasions where we have asked children to define words using a dictionary - and they could define words and they could tell you the meaning - however then using these words in their writing was very unlikely. In this study not only are they reading the words and understanding them, but they are applying them to make their story interesting - so not only are they applying them, but they realize the impact of the words. I think that's the biggest difference. Dictionaries are important because they need to know the meaning. In terms of getting that quality writing - to get them to become better writers they need to know how to use them in context, see them being played out and then have a go at actually using them in their writing, because too often, too many words are looked at in the dictionary and then that's it - they're never to be written about again - so it's worth it.

Punctuation

They were able to write without thinking too much and then they could think more about the other elements of writing like structure and punctuation.

When we taught them how to use the action figure we emphasized capital letters,

comma, fronted adverbial, the full stop - so the punctuation improved - even though we were focusing on the verb.

When they read sentences out loud they would show with their hands where the comma would be and do the sound ‘mmmmm’ - so just doing that meant that when they were writing it was automatic, whereas in the past that wasn’t always easy to teach. So now we have a new strategy for teaching punctuation - it’s quite interesting.

Quantity of target words

Teaching writing is a difficult process and it’s not just about giving them a whole bank of words - sometimes you need to give them fewer words - get them to learn how to use these words, which is what we’ve been doing and then seeing that in their writing - so I think it’s the best way. It’s not just about teaching those four words and phrases - it’s teaching them the impact - your teaching them to make their writing interesting. They’ve got that starting point and then they elaborate on it. It’s not just learning those four words and phrases - there’s so much more that they’re doing with those words - the fact that they’re using them is great.

Appendix C

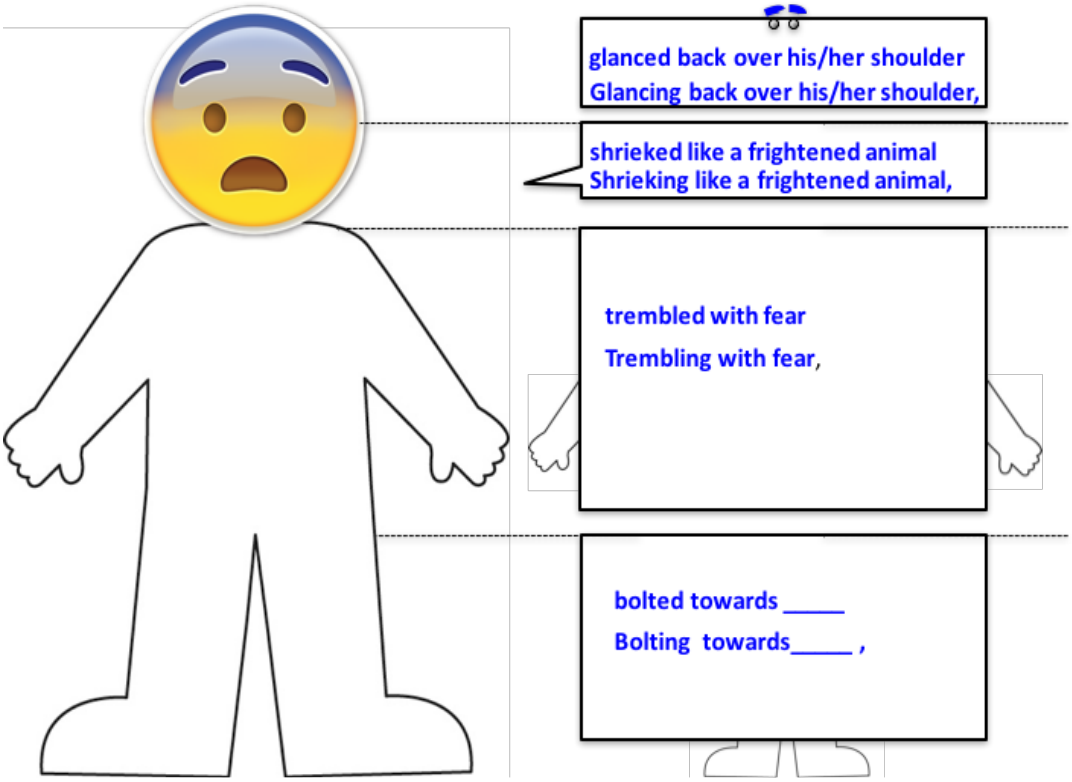
Reading text aloud pedagogy

(Phase 3 treatment group - including target vocabulary multi-word units)

The snorting grew louder and louder and the whole wood seemed to be closing in on him. **Shrieking** like a frightened animal, Troy **bolted** towards a hollow tree to hide in. He **glanced** back over his shoulder and saw two fiery eyes staring straight at him. Troy's whole body **trembled** with fear as he crawled inside the tree trunk, listening to the noises outside. For the moment he was safe… or was he?

Appendix D

The action figure - resource for semantically connecting words and sentence combining



What do scared legs do? What do scared lips do?

What do scared eyes do? What do scared bodies do?

Appendix E

Writing elicitation task: productive vocabulary measure

- narrative picture prompts



Appendix F

Receptive vocabulary task example - BPVS format





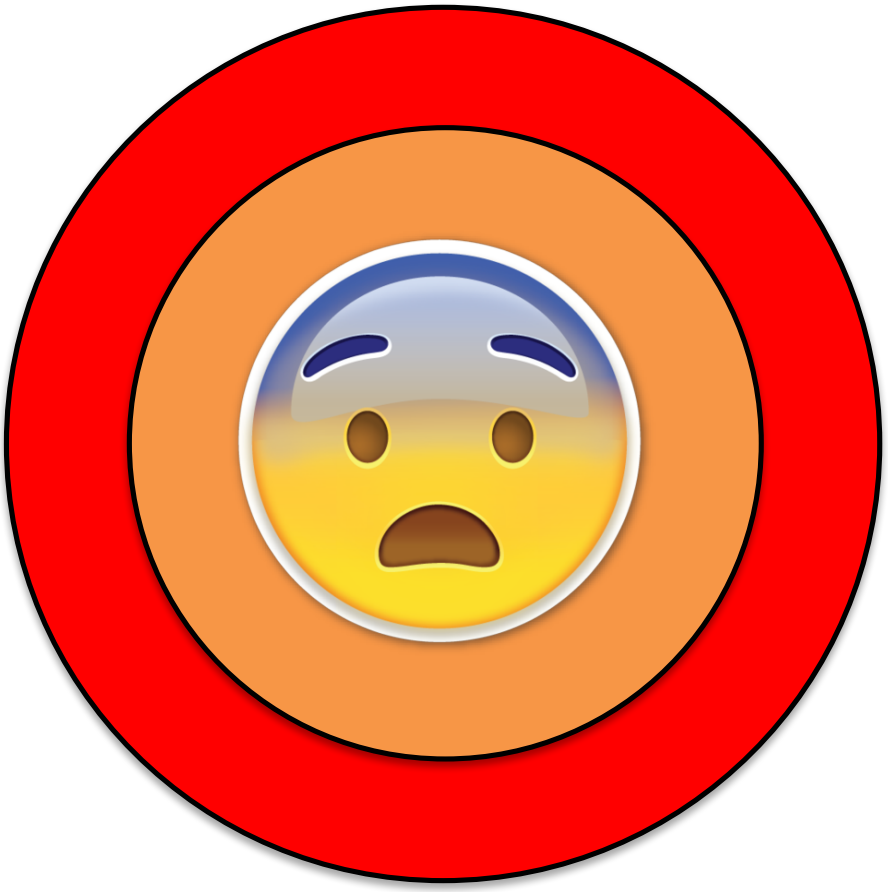




Appendix G

Receptive vocabulary task – emoji zone of relevance and word list

(Target word placed on emoji face indicates receptive vocabulary knowledge)



glanced
glared
gazed
wept
shrieked
bellowed
chuckled
sighed
trembled
clenched
tingled
hunched
bolted
stomped
ambled
trudged

Appendix H

Productive vocabulary task - writing synonyms

Can you think of another word which means the same as:

Glanced…….

Shrieked……

Trembled…….

Bolted…….

Appendix I

CUREC approval: example of written informed consent forms granted by heads of school: Phase 1 & Phase 3 study schools

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Tel: +44(0)1865 274024 Fax: +44(0)1865 274027
general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk

Director Professor Jo-Anne Baird

[redacted]

27.07.18

Dear [redacted],

I am writing to enquire about conducting research in [redacted] this academic year. As you know, I am studying for the Master's in Learning and Teaching at Oxford University, supervised by [redacted] [redacted]. In my final research project "Developing Vocabulary to Support Writing: A Study of EAL Learners" I will explore how learning vocabulary supports writing for EAL learners in a primary school setting.

The research in school will take place with two Year 4 classes and will focus on pupils' learning vocabulary and transferring it to their writing, and how teachers can develop this. [redacted] has agreed to collaborate with me on this.

By participating in the research, the school would be contributing to a project that will deepen our understanding of vocabulary learning for EAL students, and so contribute towards developing ways of improving attainment for similar pupils in the school in the future. It will also contribute to language education more widely.

I hope to conduct this research between September 2018 and June 2019. I would interview and audio-record pupils in small group discussions, take notes and photocopy some students' written work. I would also conduct interviews to explore practitioners' and parents' point of view regarding practice.

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures on conducting ethical research, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. The University also recognises, however, that my study is a piece of practitioner research, and that schools already operate with the highest ethical standards. Therefore only your formal consent as Head of School [redacted] is necessary, and not that of individual parents or staff. However, throughout the research, students and other teachers will be able to refuse to participate in any research activities at any time.

All participants, including students, teacher and the school, would be made anonymous in all research reports. The data collected would be kept strictly confidential, available only to my supervisor [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]@education.ox.ac.uk and me, and only used for academic purposes. It will be kept for as long as it has academic value.

If you are happy for me to proceed with this study, please confirm that using the attached reply form. If you have any concerns or need more information about what is involved, please contact me or my supervisor. Further, if you have any questions about this ethics process at any time, please contact the chair of the department's research ethics committee, though: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Developing Vocabulary to Support Writing: A Study of EAL Learners

[redacted]

University of Oxford, Department of Education

[redacted]

[redacted]

☐ We do not wish to participate in this project.

☐ We would like to find out more about this project.

☑ We would like to take part in this project.

[redacted]

Head of School's signature

Please return this form to me.

Thank you for your help.