Word-Study for Arabic Speakers to Read English

by

Rachel Dawn Keller

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Josephine Peyton Marsh, Chair
Mirka Koro-Ljungberg
Amy Markos

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ABSTRACT

Learning to read in English is difficult for adult English language learners due to their diverse background, their level of experience with literacy in their first language, and their reason and desire for wanting to learn to read in English. Teachers of adult language learners must consider the educational and language experiences of adults enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in order to provide adequate learning opportunities for a diverse student body. Promoting learning opportunities for adult Arabic speakers was an area of interest for me when I first began teaching adult English language learners six years ago. The purpose of my action research study was to provide the adult Arabic speakers in my classroom with strategies they could use in order to read accurately in English. Current research used to guide my study focused on the difficulties Arabic speakers have with the orthographic features of the English language. As I conducted various cycles of action research in an ESL reading class, I developed an intervention to support adult Arabic speakers gain an understanding of the sound spelling system of the English language inclusive of instructional strategies to support accurate word reading. Data was collected to identify the individuals experience in learning to read. I included a pre and post miscue analysis to help identify the common error patterns of the participants of my study. Over an eight-week period, I followed a constructivist approach and facilitated word sorts to help students identify common sound spellings found in the English language. Instructional strategies were included to help the participants decode multisyllabic words by bringing awareness to the syllable types found in the English language. The findings of my study revealed that Arabic speakers

benefited from an intervention focused on the sound spellings and syllabication of the

English language.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my loved ones who have been by my side since day one. Without their endless love and encouragement, I would never have been able to complete my work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

Reading is not a simple process, but a complex, multi-component skill that

involves an intricate combination of many lower- and higher-level cognitive, linguistic,

and non-linguistic skills and subskills (Nassaji, 2013).

Action research is a systematic and cyclical inquiry conducted by teachers,

administrators, counselors, or others with a vested interest in the teaching and learning

process or environment for the purpose of gathering information about how their

particular schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn (Mertler, 2014).

Through action research, a practitioner can further study his or her own classroom and

students in order to make instructional changes to the current method of instruction. The

process of action research is conducted through the following four steps: identifying an

area of focus, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting the data collected, and

developing a plan of action that can improve the overall effectiveness of their instruction

and student learning. Specifically, for my project, action research allowed me to address a

problem I faced when teaching adult Arabic speakers to read English.

Arabic speakers face many challenges in learning to read English due to the

differences in how the Arabic and English languages are written and how they are read.

Arabic is a phonetic language, which makes it easy for Arabic speakers to sound out and

read Arabic writing. In contrast, the English language is inclusive of many sound-

spellings that do not directly correspond to individual letters. For Arabic speakers, this

makes it difficult for them to read English accurately. Thus, I designed a word-study

intervention for adult Arabic speakers enrolled in an English as a Second Language (ESL) reading class. This intervention included instruction in identifying sound-spelling patterns found in English in order to promote accuracy when reading in English. It also included instruction on the six syllables types and common division patterns for syllabication of the English language to the existing curriculum of an adult (ESL) reading class offered at a local community college in Arizona.

Rationale

I recently held a position as an ESL adjunct faculty at a local community college in Arizona. For six years, I taught English as a Second Language (ESL) courses in reading, writing, grammar, and listening and speaking to adult students who were invested in learning English as an additional language. The ESL classrooms at the community college were made up of adult English language learners (ELL) with diverse backgrounds, which include differences in their cultural beliefs, primary language, age, educational experiences, and their motivation for learning English.

My observations of the Arabic speaking students and the errors they made when they were asked to read in English influenced my decision to focus my action research study on the Arabic speaking students who were enrolled in my ESL reading class. Many of the Arabic speakers enrolled in the ESL reading classes were considered to be Non-Roman alphabet literate, which means they are proficient in a language that is derived from a non-Roman alphabet. Arabic speakers have been exposed to learning to read in a language that does not use the same sound symbol relationship found in English. Based

on my observations of the Arabic speaking students, I found that many students did not apply a systematic approach to decoding unknown words when they read English.

Many of the Arabic speaking students in my class were able to read many words in English because they had memorized a majority of the English high frequency words they encountered when reading English. On the contrary, when an unknown word was presented in the text, many of the Arabic speaking students were not able to read the word accurately. They appeared to have a limited understanding of the alphabetic principle: that letters (graphemes) have associated sounds (phonemes) that need to be accurately decoded (apply letter-sound relationships to pronounce written words) (Bear et al., 2016). The recognition of common letter patterns as well as the correct spelling of words plays a crucial role in accurate word reading.

In order to further understand the challenges Arabic speaking students faced when reading English, I began my cycles of research as an observer in an ESL reading classroom. As an observer, I was invested in further understanding the difficulties that Arabic speaking students faced when they read in English. While listening to students read aloud as well as independently, I noted most of the Arabic speaking students in my reading class made significant errors when they read unfamiliar text in English. The students generally read without an awareness of the errors made while reading in English. For example, when listening to an Arabic speaking student read aloud, the student substituted the word "teacher" for the word "theatre." The students also made significant errors with the vowels in the words presented. They substituted short vowel sounds in place of long vowel sounds. For example, for the word "scene" where the long *e* sound is

pronounced, the student read the word as "scen*,"* pronouncing the word with a short

vowel sound. Another student read the word as "sken*,"* pronouncing the word with a hard

c sound for the soft *c* sound represented by the letters *ce*. Although students were able to

read most of the words found in the text, it was evident that they relied heavily on

memorization of familiar words. Errors were mostly noted when the words presented had

unfamiliar sound-spelling patterns or when the words in print had multiple syllables. In

addition to Arabic speaking students having difficulty pronouncing words with unfamiliar

sound patterns, many students did not know how to divide or chunk the word into

syllables or parts to read the words accurately. When the students encountered an

unknown word, I noted that some of the students either skipped over the unfamiliar word

or substituted an incorrect word in its place. Other students skipped over words entirely

or mumbled through longer multisyllabic words without an awareness of how to decode

the unfamiliar text. While the students completed reading assignments in class, they

looked up words on their phones to hear how the word was pronounced rather than

employ decoding strategies to read the word accurately.

In sum, it was evident to me that most Arabic speaking students I observed did

not have an understanding of the alphabetic principle, or an understanding of the

systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and the sounds they

represent. Overall, most of the students I observed did not apply a systematic approach to

decoding the unknown words. Based on my classroom observations, my cycles of

research, and my understanding of the importance of the alphabetic principle, I designed

a word-study intervention as the focus of my action research project.

Research-Based Rationale

When Arabic speakers first learn to read English, they are exposed to a new linguistic system which includes phonological and syllabic structures far different from the Arabic linguistic system. Due to the differences in the orthographic system, which is the conventional spelling system of a language, their ability to read English accurately may be hindered due to the irregularities of both orthographies. In sound-based writing systems, the phonemes (sounds) are represented by graphemes (letters). Although both English and Arabic languages are derived from a sound-based writing system, there are significant differences between the two orthographies. The English and Arabic writing systems are based on sound-symbol associations in which phonemes are represented by graphemes. To further understand the challenges that Arabic speaking students face when learning to read English, it is important to understand the differences between the orthographic systems of both the English and Arabic languages.

The English language alphabet has 26 letters that are used singly and in combination to represent about 42 to 44 different sounds, or phonemes (Honig et al., 2018). The sounds of the English language are organized into two different groups: consonants and vowels. There are about 25 consonant phonemes in the English language. Some phonemes such as the sound of *j* is represented by two distinct sounds. The sound of *j* can be written as a letter j or a letter g depending on the vowel sound that is heard after the *j* sound. The English language also includes 18 vowel phonemes that are made up from the vowels of the English language which are a, e, i, o, and u. Vowel phonemes, such as the vowel letter followed by the letter r, are considered consonant-influenced

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vowels. An English reader must be aware of the sound-spelling associated with these vowel spellings. Another issue can be the vowels with ambiguous sound-spelling patterns that can be represented by more than one sound.

The vowel sounds represented in English words are dependent on their placement within the syllable and the letters that precede the vowel in each syllable. As noted in the example, English graphemes make reading difficult for native and non-native speakers due to the irregularities in phonemes and graphemes. This is especially true for ELL students because of the inconsistency of the sound-spellings associated with graphemes and phonemes in the language they are learning.

The Arabic system is consonantal and comprised of 28 graphemes that are not part of the Roman alphabet. There is more consistency in the graphemes and phoneme correspondences in Arabic writing than compared to English writing. There are 32 consonant sounds in Arabic and eight vowel letters which make up three short vowel sounds, three long vowel sounds, and two diphthongs (sounds formed by combining two vowels). In Arabic writing, the three short vowels are not part of the Arabic alphabet. Instead of using letters to represent short vowels, a diacritic (a small mark below or over the consonant letter) is included to take the place of the vowel. Diacritics or symbols are only found in the early stages of teaching literacy to help the reader understand the orthographic patterns of Arabic writing.

 In English orthography, both short and long vowel sound-spelling patterns are used. Words can begin with vowels or consonants, whereas Arabic words begin with consonant letters. Some long vowels in Arabic are also considered consonants. Arabic

speakers also have trouble with pronunciation of some English sounds. For example, the sounds of *p* and *b* are not easily distinguishable for Arabic speakers since the sound of *p* is not a sound used in the Arabic language.

Individuals who learn to read in Arabic become accustomed to reading without the vowels present in text. A phenomenon known as vowel blindness coined by Ryan and Meara (1991), which was mentioned in a study by Alsadoon and Heift (2015), hypothesizes that "Arabic learners of English transfer their L1 habits of decoding and encoding Arabic words by relying heavily on consonants and giving little attention to vowels" (p. 57). The vowel blindness phenomenon is attributable to critical differences between two languages' orthographies (Alsadoon & Heift, 2015, p. 57). A study by Saigh and Schmitt (2012) (as cited in Alsadoon and Heift, 2015) affirmed vowels as a problematic area of learning for Arabic ELL learners. The use of the short vowels is omitted as they represent more of a grammatical feature of the language. In Arabic writing, the words do not display their full phonetic value. When Arabic speakers write, they do not include vowel letters in written text. A diacritic is used to represent the short vowels in the word. For example, in Arabic writing, the letters k, t, and b are a triconsonantal root found in words that are associated with the word "write." To read the word in Arabic correctly, the reader must have an understanding of the derivative, which is the combination of the letters and the placement of the diacritics as they are used to change the meaning of the root. The word *kataba* is read as "he wrote" whereas *katabat* is read as "she wrote." An Arabic reader would rely on the diacritic to read the word with the correct masculine association. Whereas in English, the reader would rely on looking

at the entire word and how it is spelled as one applies knowledge of sound-spelling patterns inclusive of the vowels. This leads us to the phenomenon known as vowel blindness which is attributed to the error's Arabic speakers make when reading in English. A lack of attention to vowels will lead to reading difficulties, as the vowels play a crucial role in reading words in English.

The vowel blindness phenomenon hypothesizes that Arabic students use the same strategies they use when reading in their primary language as they do when reading English, which I have found is problematic due to the distinct linguistic features of each written system. The results of a study by Alsulaimani (1990), cited in Alsadoon and Heift (2015), demonstrated that Arabic readers relied on consonantal information to read words in English; they were also the slowest performing groups to perform the task of the study. Alsadoon and Heift (2015) state that "Arabic speakers will rely on their primary language habits of decoding when they read English by relying on the consonant letters and giving less attention to the vowels" (p. 57). Studies conducted by Randall and Meara (1988) (as cited in Saighh & Schmitt, 2012, p. 26) also found that native Arabic speakers attempted to read Roman letters the same way they would read Arabic writing. The study of Arabic learners and textual input by Alsadoon and Heift (2015) found that textual input enhancement was an effective strategy for reducing vowel blindness. The findings of the study further led to suggest that pedagogical interventions in the form of vowel attention-attracting strategies to assist Arabic ESL learners in noticing and successfully decoding English vowels was a beneficial instructional approach. Boween's study (as cited in Alsadoon & Heift, 2015) also states that word segmentation in addition to repetition of

sounds and auditory discrimination may assist learners in the phonetic coding of phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

Burt et al. (2003) believe that adults learning English should receive instruction in phonological processing and orthographic decoding skills. Various interventions have been suggested for teaching adult ELL students. Of the suggestions that have been used to guide my study, a research study by Alsadoon and Heift (2015) suggested incorporating an intervention that supports Arabic ELL students in noticing and decoding English vowels.

Phonics instruction provides students the basic tools necessary to decode most single-syllable words, while explicit instruction in recognizing syllables and morphemes can provide students with additional strategies they could use for reading longer words (Honig et al., 2018). A student's orthographic processor must learn to "see" common letter patterns and word parts (Moats, 2005). Instruction in decoding multisyllabic words using one of three research-based approaches has also been suggested for teaching students how to read multisyllabic words: using syllables types and division principles, identifying affixes or word parts, and using flexible syllabication strategies (Archer et al., 2003).

The approach for syllable types and division principles emphasizes identifying and reading the six common types of syllables found within English words. According to Moats (as cited in Honig et al., 2018), "by teaching these principles, a teacher is able to help a novice reader to see the chunks, or patterns of letters, in multisyllabic words and guide correct punctuation" (p. 264).

Instruction that focuses a student's attention on identifying root words and affixes to decode multisyllabic words supports the student's ability to read longer words with accuracy. This strategy is helpful in teaching students how to pronounce the affixes accurately.

Flexible syllabication instruction involves teaching students to break the word into spoken syllables, matching the spoken syllables to their spellings, and then blending the segments into a recognizable word (Honig et al., 2018, p. 267). Adams (1990), as cited in Honig et al., (2018), states that "skilled readers' ability to recognize a long word depends on whether they can chunk it into syllables in the course of perceiving it" (p.260).

According to Huang and Nisbet (2014), studies show that skilled readers use a variety of strategies, while unskilled readers use fewer strategies when reading. This finding supports my intervention model in providing my students with instructional strategies they could employ when reading unfamiliar text in English.

In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP), conducted a comprehensive review of reading research and determined that phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction were all essential components for teaching reading. Research by Tindal and Nisbet (2010) recommended that teachers incorporate the five components of reading when teaching adult ELL learners. Phonics awareness refers to the ability to focus and manipulate phonemes in spoken words. Phonemic awareness instruction helps students in their reading as they apply their understanding of sounds when they read. Phonics is a method of instruction that teaches students the

systematic relationship between the letters and letter combinations in written language and the individual sounds in spoken language and how to use these relationships to read and spell words (Honig et al., 2018, p. 8). Fluency is made up of accurate reading of text at a conversational rate, prosody, and expression. Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and what the words mean, while comprehension is the process of extracting and constructing meaning from written text.

Tindal and Nisbet (2010) state, "Reading words requires a number of word identification strategies such as phonics, onset/rimes, morphemic analysis, and contextual analysis" (p. 3). Phonics instruction teaches students the relationships between phonemes and graphemes to decode words. This type of instruction occurs at the beginning stages of learning to read and is generally not part of the curriculum of the adult ESL reading courses, but it is necessary instruction when the students do not have an understanding of the sound-spelling correspondences found in English. Incorporating phonics instruction can support students' understanding of how sound and letters correspond together to promote reading and spelling in English. Going back to my observations while teaching Arabic speaking students to read English, I did not observe many students apply a systematic approach to decode unknown words.

Word-study intervention is a method of instruction for teaching orthography by training learners to examine, discriminate, and make judgments of speech sounds, word structures, spelling patterns, and meaning of words. In sum, word-study provides learners with the opportunity to investigate and manipulate word parts through explicit and systematic instruction. As stated in Shaw 2008 study, this type of learning increases both

general knowledge of orthography and specific knowledge of word patterns which in turn impacts word recognition. Their study included participants from an adult literacy center. The intervention included a focused instructional approach to increase spelling and word recognition. The participants were identified as low ability reading level and eligible for the intervention. The students received focused instruction in basic phonics skills such as word families and consonant digraphs. The results of the study showed that the participants made remarkable progress in aligned letter sound correspondences. Three dominant themes were found at the completion of the study: an awareness of phonics, a heightened sense of self-efficacy, and an appreciation of the methods that were taught. One particular study participant stated that the patterns helped him generalize the larger words as he engages in active strategies to attack multisyllabic words (Shaw & Berg, 2008).

Shaw (2014) conducted a word-study intervention on adult ELL learners' spelling and reading. In his study, he implemented a word-study intervention as his instructional approach while working with ELL learners. The results of his study showed significant growth for the adult participants in the area of spelling and reading. The participants also reported positive results towards the instructional strategies. One participant reported the intervention supported her understanding of sounds used to spell and read words as she was more able to recognize them. The purpose of Shaw's 2014 research was to investigate whether a word-study intervention is an effective way of instructing ELL students. Word-study was used in Shaw's study as an instructional approach to strengthen the adult ELL student's pronunciation, decoding, and encoding. The word-study

intervention included sorting words, discussing the meaning of words, using words in sentences and in conversation, pronunciation of words, and writing words. Quantitative and qualitative data were both gathered and analyzed. Shaw's findings reported that students felt the instruction was necessary as it provided them with an understanding of the rules for reading English. The quantitative results showed that students consistently made greater improvement on the spelling and reading assessments given when instruction focused on word-study.

The research reviewed above further supports my observations of adult Arabic speakers and contributes to my rationale for conducting my action research project which focused on sound spellings and syllabication in reading instruction for adult Arabic speakers enrolled in an ESL reading class.

From my observations through multiple cycles of research, Arabic speaking students made far more mistakes in reading accuracy than any other group of ELL students in my ESL reading classes. Similar to Deacons' 2016 study, the Arabic speakers in my class made more significant errors in spelling than any other ELL group. They also exhibited poorer reading and writing skills than any other ELL group. For this reason, my word-study intervention focused on instruction of the six syllables found in the English language along with learning activities that included word sorts for words with short and long vowels, consonant-influenced vowels, and vowels with ambiguous sound-spelling patterns. In sum, the overall focus of my intervention was to provide adult Arabic speaking students with instruction on sound-spelling patterns, rules of syllabication, and

routines that support students' learning on how to manipulate sounds in syllables to promote English reading accuracy.

Significance of Study and Research Questions

As I conducted my research, I discovered that there is limited research on adult education that focused on teaching basic reading skills to adult ELL students. As a result, this study has the potential to broaden the scope of potential strategies available to practitioners when teaching adult ELL learners how to read English in the future.

My action research study was guided by the following research question. What happens when adult Arabic English language learners engage in a word-study intervention focused on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication as part of the regular classroom instruction in their English as a Second Language reading course?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND GUIDING RESEARCH

In this chapter, I present a review of the literature that supports the implementation of a word-study intervention grounded in adult learning theory inclusive of self-directed learning, constructivist theory, and social learning theory. To provide basic literacy instruction for ELL adult learners, it is important to identify how adult students learn.

Adult Learning

Adult learners are students who have a wide range of educational and life experiences, cultural backgrounds, and family responsibilities. For many adults, returning to school provides them with opportunities to assimilate into a new culture, gain employment, or advance in their careers. For many ELL students, this is an opportunity to learn the target language before advancing in their education and seeking employment. To further understand how this population of students learn, I researched theoretical approaches that support how to best meet the educational needs of adult learners in the classroom.

Andragogy is an adult-focused teaching approach. The term "andragogy" was first introduced in the early 1970s by Malcolm Knowles. He stated that andragogy is "…a process of learning on a continuum from teacher-directed learning to self-directed learning" (Ross-Gordon et al., 2017, p. 219; Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Knowles focused his ideas about andragogy on five assumptions in regard to how adult students learn. It was one of the first models of learning that identified characteristics of adults (Merriam & Bierema, 2013).

Knowles' first assumption was based on the notion that as an individual matures, they become more independent and self-directed (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Self-directed learning states that the individual learner takes the initiative to learn with or without the help of others (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Adults should be able to plan, carry out, and evaluate their own learning experiences. In Knowles' work with adult learners, he believed the learners become more self-directed as they matured. Self-directed learning expands on the idea that learning occurs as part of the adults' everyday life.

In self-directed learning, adult learners are responsible for constructing their own understanding of what they are learning. They are able to develop a relationship between new knowledge and previous experience. Self-directed learning can be troublesome for adults with low-level literacy skills because they do not possess the necessary skills to build upon their ideas. For adult individuals who find themselves in a new learning experience, they tend to depend on the teacher for guidance and instruction. Adults who engage in self-directed learning tend to enroll in educational programs where the teacher is able to adjust the instruction with a variety of teaching techniques to further support students who are motivated to be self-directed learners. The goal of self-directed learning should focus on the learners' ability to learn without the guidance of the teacher (Merriam, 2001). For ELL students, they need the scaffolded instructional support that the teacher can provide as they gain an understanding of the language.

Knowles' second assumption of adult learners focuses on the adult learner's experience (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Because adults define themselves by their

experience, they have a deep investment in its value. Adult learners use their previous learning experiences to support them in learning new concepts. This assumption presumes that an adult's prior knowledge and past experiences have an influence on the focus of learning, the motivation to learn, and how they process the new knowledge and skills (Ross et al., 2016). Adults view their life experiences as a means of connecting to new learning experiences. Because of their extensive experiences, they are better equipped to self-monitor and critically think through what they are learning. For teachers, the students' experience should be viewed as the starting point for instruction in which the teacher helps the learners connect their experiences to new concepts (Merriam & Bierema, 2013).

The third assumption according to Knowles is related to their readiness to learn (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). For adult learners, they become ready to learn when they experience a need to learn it. The role the learner is experiencing in their family, career, and community triggers a need for seeking educational opportunities offered at colleges to meet the demands of adult learners. For ELL students, learning the target language is necessary if they are looking for career opportunities and advancement (Burt, Peyton, Adams, 2003). It is necessary for adapting to and living in a new environment where their primary language is different from that of the community of which they are now a part. Readiness to learn for ELL students comes into play when they find it necessary to learn the language.

Knowles' fourth assumption of adult learners is orientation to learning. Adults are problem centered and seek to immediately apply what they have just learned (Merriam &

Bierema, 2013). Adults tend to seek out learning experiences for immediate application. Adults engage in learning as a response to pressures they feel from their current life situation, and therefore, education is viewed as a process for improving their ability to cope with current life problems. For adult ELL students, the problems they face can include limited opportunities for employment or advancement because they do not speak the language. Not being able to communicate with others is also a barrier that interferes with their ability to interact with individuals who speak the target language. For these reasons, adults enroll in educational courses that will provide them with learning opportunities that they can immediately use in their daily life.

The final assumption made by Knowles is based on the adult's motivation to learn (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Whereas children have more of an extrinsic motivation to learn, adults are more focused on the intrinsic value of learning. Some intrinsic motivators for adults can be self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as a desire for a better quality of life. If adults understand why it is important to learn something before the instruction actually begins, their motivation to learn increases (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Self-actualization or self-discovery of one's potential is the overall goal of learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2013).

Constructivist Theory

According to Bada and Olusegun (2015), "Constructivism is an approach to teaching and learning based on the premise that cognition (learning) is the result of "mental construction" (p. 66). The theory of constructivism suggests that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences. Learning is active as learners

take what they are learning and apply it to their current experiences. If the learning is inconsistent with what they already know, they will adjust what they are learning to accommodate their prior knowledge (Bada & Olusegun, 2015, p. 67). Adult learners benefit in a classroom where a constructivist approach to learning and teaching is applied (Bada &Olusegun, 2015, p. 67). The learner has many life experiences as well as prior knowledge that they can use to help them understand new learning. Allowing students time in the classroom to collaborate with their peers provides them with opportunities to support each other in their pursuit of knowledge. It provides students opportunities to share their experiences and learn from each other as they use their experiences to construct new meaning.

Crotty (2010) states that "according to constructionism, we do not create meaning. We construct meaning" (p. 44). In other words, learners are active participants in the learning environment as they construct an understanding for what is presented. For example, an adult learner, according to Knowles, uses their own life experiences as they grow older to support learning of new information.

In a constructivist classroom, the learners are transformed from a passive recipient of information to an active participant in the learning process. For example, ELL students use what they know about their primary language to help them learn a second language. In the classroom, learners are provided with learning opportunities in which they are encouraged to remain active in the learning process by applying their understanding to what they already know. Students play an active role in learning and building on their understanding. Knowles' assumption of learners relates to that of

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experience. He believes they use their own personal experiences to better understand what is being presented in the classroom.

In the constructivist learning environment, the knowledge is shared between the teachers and students. The teacher's role is to act as the facilitator of learning that encourages learners to draw on their previous experiences rather than dispense information to the students that they must memorize (Bada & Olusegun, 2015, p. 67). Students are encouraged to work independently or in heterogeneous groups to apply the new learning to what they already know. In developing learning experiences for adult learners, the teacher must be cognizant of the educational needs of the students by developing learning opportunities that are relevant to the learners and take into account each individual student's needs and desires for wanting to learn. This ties into Knowles' assumption as it relates to the adult's readiness and desire to learn and their ability to use past experiences to make meaning of new learning as new ideas are constructed.

The constructivism approach to instruction is based on the notion that learners are constructing an understanding as they interact with their peers. Constructivism promotes social and communication skills by creating a learning environment that promotes collaboration among the students as they articulate what they are learning (Bada & Olusegun, 2015, p. 67).

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's social learning theory integrates both behavioral and cognitive theories of learning. According to Bandura (1977), learning occurs through a process of observing and imitating others. Bandura's learning theory stresses the importance of the

learner engaging in observation, imitation, and modeling which in turn influences learning. Bandura's social learning theory proposed that learning can occur by observing the actions of others. Bandura's research on the principles of social learning theory emphasized the following: individuals cannot learn if they are not focused on the task, individuals retain what they are learning if the information is internalized, individuals can reproduce what is learned at a later time when it is required, and the individual needs to possess the motivation to want to learn (Bandura, 1977).

 According to Cherry (2019), there are three core concepts at the heart of Bandura's social learning theory. The first idea is that people can learn through observation. Observational learning encompasses learning inclusive of hearing verbal instructions, reading, listening, and observing actions. Observational learning occurs in cooperative learning environments where learners are encouraged to collaborate with their peers about the learning. Bandura's social learning theory (1977), assumes learning experiences are influenced by the environment, the behavior of the learner, and cognition of the learners.

The second idea, according to Cherry (2019), is the notion that internal mental state such as intrinsic motivation is an essential part of the process of learning. Since adults enroll in college courses for advancement, they tend to be intrinsically motivated with a desire to learn.

The third idea of social learning theory recognizes that observation doesn't always lead to learning – they have to want to learn at the time of observation. And

further, if they have learned something, doesn't mean they will change their behavior –

maybe the desire to want to change also lies here as well.

Putting it Together

My word-study intervention was built on theories of andragogy, constructivism,

and social learning. These theories were used to guide my instructional strategies to

address the needs of my participants. Andragogy or adult learning theory was aligned

with the notion of a constructivist learning environment as well as social learning theory,

in that each theory supported the adult learner by providing an instructional framework

promoting constructed learning opportunities. The theories integrated were inclusive of

modeling and imitation, learners constructing new knowledge for immediate application

as well as collaborative opportunities to connect to prior learning experiences.

The focus of my intervention was to provide the participants with instructional

strategies they could apply when reading English. I created a collaborative classroom

environment focused on the idea of social learning theory in which learners are provided

with the opportunity to not only observe others but also imitate what they are learning as

they apply it to new learning experiences. Learning is internalized when individuals are

able to reproduce what they are learning. This idea connects to the assumption of adult

learners who seek to apply what they are learning immediately. Through collaborative

learning groups, the participants were able to make connections to previous experiences

and new learning as they applied what they were learning in the intervention to reading

English. Constructivist classrooms assert that a learner constructs knowledge based on

experience and learners will take what they are learning and apply what they are learning

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to construct new experiences. This idea connects to the findings of adult learners in which learners are not only motivated to learn but are also likely to apply their new learning.

Banduras social learning theory states that learning can occur by observing the action of others. Direct instruction was included during the onset of the intervention to support the participants understanding of syllable types. Through modeling and peer groupings, the participants of my study were provided with opportunities to learn from one another as they constructed their own understanding of the sound spelling patterns of English during the word-study intervention. Instructional strategies were also included to provide opportunities for students to interact with their peers as they discussed their learning and understanding of the sound-spelling patterns that were introduced in each class session. Through collaborative learning groups, students were encouraged to engage in dialogue with their classmates as they built on previous learning to help them construct their own understanding and development of spelling rules associated with various sounds found in English. Social interactions provided the students opportunities to build on their understanding of the new information about letter-sound relationships and syllabication. Learning opportunities were embedded in the intervention to promote self-directed learning. Knowles assumption of adult learners includes the idea of adults being self-directed which led into the theory of constructivism in which the learner is an active participant of their learning. Self-directed learners in a constructivist classroom are encouraged to construct an understanding of the new information that is presented. These instructional approaches led the participants to engage in a collaborative learning

environment as they were encouraged to construct their own understanding as they examined speech sounds, words structures, and spelling patterns to formulate their understanding of English speech sounds and spellings.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

According to Rossman and Rallis 2017, "qualitative research is a complex field of inquiry that draws on many diverse assumptions but embraces a few common characteristics and perspectives" (p.10). Action research takes place in the field and relies on multiple methods for collecting data as well as the need for reflective practice by the researcher. (Rossman and Rallis, 2017 p.10) My action research project was implemented in an adult ESL reading class at a local community college in Arizona during the spring 2019 semester. Following the cyclical process of action research, I was able to implement multiple cycles of action research which led me to identify my problem of practice. Rossman and Rallis 2017 stated, "Qualitative research begins with questions; its ultimate purpose is learning" (p.3). The cycles of action research helped me narrow my focus as I identified the reading struggles of adult Arabic speakers. Through multiple cycles of research, I was able to narrow my focus on addressing the need for instructional approaches to support reading accuracy by teaching the students sound spelling patterns and syllabication.

As part of my cycles of research, I incorporated a variety of instructional strategies in an ESL reading class to support adult language learners in reading English. Through the cycles of active inquiry, I continuously collected and analyzed data on adult Arabic speakers who were enrolled in ESL reading classes. Through the implementation of various cycles of research, I was able to refine my problem of practice as I

continuously investigated and refined my instructional strategies and approach to help me narrow the focus of my intervention.

In this chapter, I describe previous cycles of my action research that led me to identify the specific problem of practice and innovation. I also describe the context of the study, the participants, the intervention, and the data sources used to complete my study.

Cycles of Action Research

As will be described below, I conducted multiple cycles of action research focused on reading with Arabic speakers which led me to narrow my problem of practice and refine my intervention. The cycles of research I conducted throughout my study were continuously aimed to provide adult English Language Learners (primarily adult Arabic speakers) with strategies to support reading. Through each cycle of research, I continued to refine my focus as I began with a focus on comprehension that eventually led to an intervention focused on sound-spelling patterns, rules of syllabication and routines that support students learning how to manipulate sounds in syllables to promote their reading accuracy in English. The table included below includes the cycles of action research that led to the development of my intervention. (Table 1).

Table 1

Previous Cycles of Research

Implementation Cycle	Description
Cycle 1: Spring of 2017	Cycle 1 of my research was an intervention which focused on metacognitive strategies and comprehension for ELL adult learners enrolled in an ESL reading class over a six-week period.
Cycle 2: Fall of 2017	Cycle 2 of my research led to the development of an intervention focused on vocabulary instruction using direct instruction which was implemented over a six-week period in an ESL reading course.
Cycles 3 and 4: Spring of 2018	Cycles 3 and 4 were conducted in an ESL reading course during a 15-week semester. Each cycle was conducted over a six-week period. The intervention included direct instruction of syllabication and sound-spelling patterns. Collaborative learning was introduced in Cycle 4.
Cycle 5: Fall of 2018	Cycle 5 was conducted over an eight-week period of an ESL Reading class. Refinements were made to the intervention to include more collaborative learning strategies and spiral reviews of previously taught skills. Students were also given a one-minute reading assessment for miscue analysis at the beginning as well as the end of the intervention to determine if the

Implementation Cycle	Description
	intervention was effective in improving reading accuracy.
Dissertation Cycle: Spring Semester of 2019	The intervention was conducted in an ESL reading class. The intervention model was similar to intervention models used in Cycles 3, 4, and 5. It included a background survey and semi-structured interviews at Weeks 4 and 8 to gather the participants' perception of the intervention. Pre- and post-miscue analysis were used to determine the types of errors the students made at the beginning and end of the intervention. A constructivist approach to learning was implemented using word sorts to teach sound-spelling patterns to improve reading accuracy.

Cycle 1

Cycle 1 was implemented in the spring of 2017 in an adult ESL reading class. One of the first observations I made when I began teaching adult students in the ESL reading class was many students did not understand the text they were expected to read from their course textbooks. As I began Cycle 1, I focused my instruction on teaching my students metacognitive strategies. I used direct instruction to teach the students the various strategies readers use to make sense of what they are reading. The instructional strategies I incorporated in the lessons were designed to help students become aware of their own thinking as they made sense of what they were reading. This was done through the implementation of think aloud activities, graphic organizers, and modeling. After I

taught the strategies, I modeled how to use them while reading. I modeled how to self-monitor while I read the text aloud. My instruction included modeling how readers stop periodically to monitor their understanding. Students were given graphic organizers to write down what they were thinking. For example, one of the readings the students did was on superstitious athletes. While modeling strategies for self-monitoring, I asked students to stop and think about what they had read when they came to the end of the paragraph. I modeled how to self-monitor by thinking aloud and asking myself the follow question: "Do I understand what it means to be superstitious?" Through guided practice, students were encouraged to "read with a pencil"; in other words, students were taught how to use stop-think-write during reading to support comprehension. Periodically throughout the reading, I would stop and ask students to write down what they were thinking, to make connections to what they were reading, or post questions they had on their graphic organizer.

Students were taught how to use their prior knowledge and experiences to understand new topics from their textbook. To introduce new topics from the textbook and to provide the students with the background knowledge needed to understand the topics, students completed KWL charts (Ogle, 1986) to activate prior knowledge of what students already knew about various topics. Prior to reading the text, the students were provided with a KWL graphic organizer. The students were asked to write what they knew about the topic in the K portion of the graphic organizer. Students then shared what they knew in small groups and then whole group discussions. For the W section, students were then asked to write down ideas and what they would like to know about the new

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topic. At the end of the reading, students reflected on what they learned and completed the L section of the graphic organizer. If the student did not have prior knowledge about the topic, they were encouraged to research the topic to further support their understanding of the unknown topic. For example, one of the readings we did in class was about the Nazca lines. Many of the students stated they did not know what they were, so I modeled how we could use the internet to search for the information in order to provide the students with a general understanding of the topic presented. Students were also taught how to preview the text to gain an understanding of what the reading was about, and they encouraged to visualize what they were reading to further aid in their understanding of the text.

During this cycle of research, I spent time observing students when they read independently. I noted many students were not applying the strategies I had previously introduced and modeled as part of the classroom instruction. Many students read through the text without stopping to monitor their understanding of what they were reading. Overall, the students were successful in using the strategies when the support and guidance was provided but did not use them when they were reading independently. Asking students to construct mental images of what they were reading was difficult for many students because there were many words in the readings of which the students did not know the meaning. Throughout the course, students frequently voiced their frustrations with the text. Many students stated the text was too difficult to understand because they did not know the meaning of the words. When I read the text with the students, I included instructional strategies to support understanding of unknown words. I

provided student-friendly definitions with visuals to support vocabulary acquisition.

Before each reading, I previewed the vocabulary words with them and provided them

with visuals which made it easier for them to comprehend the text. The strategies I taught

my students were important strategies that readers use to support comprehension, but

they did not come naturally to the students as the semester progressed. From my

observations, the students either were dependent on me walking them through the

readings or quick to translate the text into their primary language. After I analyzed the

feedback and read through my observation notes, I identified that there were significant

underlying issues that were not addressed as part of my intervention. Moving forward

with my research, I decided to incorporate a cycle of research focused on vocabulary

instruction since it appeared to me that students were really struggling with word

meaning.

Cycle 2

Reflecting on what I had observed in my previous cycle of research and what my

students shared with me after the completion of my Cycle 1 research, I implemented an

intervention cycle focused on vocabulary instruction. My instructional focus was aimed

at providing students with instructional strategies they could use when reading English in

order to support their understanding of unknown words presented in the text. I

incorporated instructional strategies in morphemic and contextual analysis. Instruction

included teaching students how to look for clues in the word to derive meaning of the

unknown words by looking at the word in parts. The instruction included asking students

to identify whether the word presented had a prefix or suffix and how that changed the

meaning of the base word. Through modeling and guided instruction, the students were

also taught how to figure out the meaning of unknown words by using context clues.

Students were provided with instruction on how to identify the types of clues authors use

as well as the signal words that are used to help them understand the meaning of the

unknown word. The vocabulary strategy the students were taught focused on looking at

the word in the context and looking for signal words and word parts to help them

discover the meaning of the word. Each passage from the student's textbook included a

set of vocabulary words that were included in the passage. For instructional purposes in

teaching students how to derive meaning of unknown words, I presented the words to the

students as they appeared in the text. The students were asked to read the sentence and

first look for any signal words the author used. If a signal word was found, we would

discuss its purpose in helping us discover the meaning. For example, if the author

provided a synonym clue of the unknown word, the students would identify words such

as "likewise," "resembling," or "similarly" to determine the meaning. The students were

also asked to identify the base word and any known prefixes or suffixes in the word. If a

word was found to have a prefix or a suffix, we would discuss the meaning of the prefix

or suffix and address how it changed the meaning of the base word. For each word, we

would discuss its meaning and discuss how the word could also be used outside of the

context of the text they were expected to read.

 During this cycle of research, I incorporated two assessments to measure their

learning. The first assessment I gave students required them to match the word to the

meaning. For these assessments, the students were successful in matching the word to the

meaning. I believe this was because the students memorized the exact definitions or parts of the definition to help them match the word to the correct meaning. I observed a student read through the list of definitions and underline key words in each definition then go back through the word list and match the words. On one assessment, the students had to match the word "shiver" to the accurate definition. I asked the student how he matched the word to the definition, and he said he looked for the word "movement" in the definition. He proceeded to do this for each word presented, but I really did not feel he really understood the word meaning; it appeared to me that this was a strategy he used to help him match the words without really focusing on what the words meant.

A second assessment was given to the students at the completion of the unit which included words from the three readings that were found in each unit. To assess the students' understanding and their ability to explain the meaning of the words, the students were asked to read a sentence with the word embedded in the sentence. Students were then asked to provide a definition or explanation of the word using their own words. Most students were not successful in this assessment. Some of the students wrote one key word from the definition I had previously provided.

What I found through this cycle of research was that most students could figure out the meaning of the word, but they were not able to do it alone. If I incorporated guided practice and walked them through the strategies, they were able to identify the meaning of the words. When they were reading independently, they did not use context clues to help them understand the meaning of the words unless I guided them through the sentence.

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As I reflected on the data that I collected during Cycle 2, I found that students continued to struggle with comprehension. With guidance, modeling, and thinking aloud, I felt the students understood what they were reading, but they were not demonstrating their ability to use the strategies on their own to figure out the meaning of the words. If I stepped back and asked them to figure out the word independently, many students would quickly take out their cell phone to look up the word. The students were dependent on looking up the word on their phones or translating it to understand the word rather than employing the strategies I taught them. The students relied heavily on the use of technology to help them with unknown words. Some students would also translate the entire passage into their primary language in order to understand the reading. As I reflected on the performance of my students and began talking more with them about their struggles in reading, it was apparent to me that they would benefit in instruction that focused on lower-level processing skills, which is instruction in basic decoding of print that includes word recognition rather than higher-level processing skills focused on comprehension. At this point, I had come to the conclusion that the interventions I had implemented in the first two cycles were not addressing the problems my students continued to face. The problem at this point was that students were not able to read accurately. They did not have the skills necessary to accurately read words.

I began thinking about my experience in teaching children how to read and the stages of learning to read. It was at this time that I finally identified the underlying challenges my Arabic speaking students were faced with as they tried to read English. Without basic reading skills, they were not able to engage with the text to build

understanding. Without reading accuracy, they could not use context clues when they were reading because they were not reading the words correctly. Most importantly, the students were unaware that they were reading the words incorrectly and they were in need of instruction that supported them in being able to read words accurately.

It was evident in my observations and the questions I asked that many of the students did not have a systematic approach to decoding unfamiliar words. This was more commonly noted in the Arabic speaking students in the class. I found myself in an ESL reading classroom where students were not able to accurately read the textbook they were expected to read. I was dealing with students who were exhibiting a deficit in basic reading skills. With the diversity of students in my classroom, I noted significant differences in the students' performance. One thing that was common among the students enrolled in my class was that many could not comprehend the text. The amount of errors they made when they read interfered with their ability to use the comprehension strategies that I had taught them to support their comprehension. If I read the text to them, they were able to understand the passage, which showed they had listening comprehension, but reading comprehension was lacking due to the errors they were making in reading. It was when they were asked to read independently that I noticed they really did not understand what they read.

Moats (1998) states that "automatic word recognition, which is dependent on phonic knowledge, allows the reader to attend to the meaning; likewise, slow belabored decoding overloads short-term memory and impedes comprehension" (as cited in Carnine et al., 2004, p. 329). This is what I identified to be problematic for my Arabic speakers.

Many of the students enrolled in my class made significant errors when they read and were unaware that they were making errors that impeded their comprehension of the text. Many students skipped over words that were unfamiliar, while other students tried to sound out the word or they substituted a word in place of the word they were attempting to read. Overall, the Arabic speaking students made more errors when they read in English than the other ELL students in the classroom.

After thoughtful reflection of my findings and my experience in teaching struggling readers, I decided to focus my intervention on providing my students with instruction that supports reading accuracy. Prior to teaching at the college level, I worked with struggling readers in a primary and junior high school setting. Without focusing on the age discrepancy between the two groups of students I had previously taught, I decided a focus on sound-spelling patterns could possibly support my current student population in becoming accurate readers. Both groups of learners had a limited understanding of sound-spellings and syllabication of words in English. One of the observations I made was the students were not able to decode long words. They did not know how to divide the words into syllables to read them accurately. It was at this point in the action research process that I began to think about how children learn to read and wondered if the same instructional approaches used with teaching children how to read would help the adult Arabic speaking students as they took reading classes. I was curious to know if the same instructional strategies I used to teach in primary school could, in fact, be an effective instructional strategy for teaching adult ELL students who do not have an understanding of the sound-spelling patterns of the English language.

My role in the primary and junior high school was to provide small group interventions to struggling readers. When reflecting on my training and professional development on the big five areas of reading instruction, I noticed that the adult ELL students showed deficits in the area of phonics which includes the association between sound-spelling patterns and the sounds that represent each spelling pattern. Reading fluency and comprehension would continue to be an area of weakness if they were not able to accurately read. The following cycles of research were derived from my experience in working with struggling readers.

Cycle 3

I approached my third cycle of action research with a focus on building new knowledge for ELL students by providing them with an intervention that focused on sound-spelling patterns of the English language as well as instruction in syllabication rules. The intervention focused on teaching students how to employ knowledge of sound-spelling patterns and syllabication rules in order to improve reading accuracy. I primarily used direct instruction as my instructional approach and modeled how to accurately divide words into syllables or parts to support reading accuracy. The intervention included attention to particular sound-spelling patterns, instructions on how to divide words into syllables, and dictation of words with the sound-spelling pattern the students had previously learned. For example, after a sound-spelling pattern was taught, I assessed the student's ability to apply the sound-spelling they had just learned to written words. When students learned about words with silent e, I dictated eight words that included the sound-spelling rule. The words I dictated were words single syllable words. To practice

syllabication, I provided direct instruction and guided practice that focused on using syllable rules and patterns to read the vocabulary words of the text. Once the students learned how to read the words accurately, I provided them with a definition of the word to support comprehension. I made sure to pay special attention to the vowels in each syllable to support the deficits I had observed to be problematic for Arabic speaking students whose linguistic system is not focused on vowels. Students were instructed to count the number of vowels in the unknown word to help them identify how many parts the words had. To help them understand how to divide words into parts, I introduced them to the most common syllable division patterns. Through modeling and guided instruction, the students learned how to spot the vowels in the word, look between at the consonants and divide the word accordingly. During this cycle of research, I incorporated a lot of direct instruction and modeling of instructional strategies I wanted the students to use when they read. For example, the students were asked to divide the word "entertainment" into syllables. First, the students were asked to count the vowels in the word. After they counted the vowels, the students were instructed to spot the vowels in the word, look between them, and divide the word into parts using the common syllable division patterns. After the word was divided, we went back to the beginning of the word and students were asked to read the word in parts. After the word was read in parts, I asked the students to put all the parts together and read the word. A reference page was given to students to help them divide the words. The reference page included the division patterns along with the steps for dividing words (spot the vowels, look in between, and cut it), reading it in parts, and then reading it as a word. This was a strategy I

incorporated into the beginning of each class meeting. With time, I began to notice that the students were able to divide words into syllables as they read them with minimal support. The vowels continued to be problematic for students. There were many sound-spelling patterns that were not familiar to them. As I continued in this cycle of research, I began introducing sound-spelling patterns by drawing attention to the vowels in each syllable or part before they were asked to read through the word parts. This scaffolded instruction was necessary to ensure the students would produce the correct vowel sound in each part.

Cycle 4

Cycle 4 was completed during the same semester in which I implemented Cycle 3; therefore, the same students who received my Cycle 3 intervention continued with me for Cycle 4. I continued to focus the instruction on sound-spelling patterns and reading words in parts as I incorporated a collaborative approach to my intervention. I wanted to provide my students with the opportunity to dialogue with their peers about the instructional strategies they were learning and using while they were presented with unknown words. One of the major changes between Cycle 3 and Cycle 4 was the delivery of my instruction. During Cycle 3, I included direct instruction and modeling of the instructional strategies I wanted the students to use when decoding words. During Cycle 4, I encouraged more independent and collaborative learning opportunities for the students. Rather than walk the students through the process of breaking words into parts, I provided the students with a list of three to five words from the text they were expected to read at the beginning of the intervention. The students then worked independently to

break the word into syllables. They were encouraged to use their notes while breaking the

words into syllables. After they divided each word into syllables, they had to write down

what type of syllables made up each word. After the students completed the independent

assignment, they were put into groups of two to discuss how they broke the word into

parts and what types of syllables they identified in each whole word. The students took

turns explaining what they did and then they compared their work together. After the

word work instruction, the students were expected to read the text independently. I

encouraged the students to read with a pencil in their hand. While the students were

reading, they were able to write in the textbook and break unknown words into smaller

parts so they could visually see the small word parts that made up the whole word. I

found this to be an effective strategy for the students as I began to notice that they were

making less errors when they read. As the semester progressed, the students displayed

more confidence when they read. They no longer used their cell phones when they were

reading. They relied on the strategies they learned to read words. The students were also

able to verbalize the strategies they were using and how they knew what sound to give

the vowel in each syllable.

Cycle 5

Cycle 5 was conducted during the fall of 2018 with a new group of ELL students

who enrolled in an ESL reading class. During this cycle of research, I combined the

instructional approaches I used in Cycle 3 and Cycle 4 into one cycle of action research.

Since the course objectives included vocabulary development, I continued to teach the

syllabication routines using the vocabulary words that were embedded in the text. During

Cycle 5, I incorporated a one-minute miscue analysis assessment and spiral reviews. I included the miscue analysis assessment to help me identify the types of errors the students made when they read in English. From the assessment data, I was able to identify which students skipped over words, substituted words, made errors in vowels, or attempted to decode the word. I included spiral reviews to support student understanding of the sound-spelling patterns and syllabication routines the students had learned previously. Spiral reviews are intentional repeated exposure to skills that students have previously learned with the intention of supporting students in internalizing what is being taught. The spiral reviews provided the students with opportunities to strengthen their understanding of skills previously introduced during the intervention.

Another change I implemented during this cycle of research was an interactive instructional approach to promote more communication among the students and their peers as well as the students and myself. Most of the instruction I provided my students up to this point supported the students' receptive language skills. For example, instruction was delivered using a direct approach in which students listened to the language and used what they knew about English to make meaning of the instruction. Adding a collaborative approach to the instruction helped students to develop their productive language skills. Productive language skills are developed when students are provided with opportunities to practice using the target language. To support productive language skills, I grouped the students with a partner who did not speak their primary language in order to encourage the students to speak in English during the collaborative group time. During this time, the

students were able to discuss with their peers about the strategies they used when they decoded words.

During the lesson, I modeled the strategies and asked students to explain the strategies they used to decode unknown words. This was done through the use of questioning strategies such as asking students to verbalize how they divided words into syllables as well as asking students to explain what they knew about sound-spelling patterns they used to read the word in parts. I was invested in understanding how the students were using the instructional strategies I taught them in the classroom when they came across unknown words in the text.

The collaborative learning opportunities during this cycle of research provided students with the opportunity to practice speaking in English, share what they were learning with their peers, as well as an opportunity to learn from each other. Rather than passively receive information through the use of direct instruction, the students were responsible for constructing knowledge and verbalizing their understanding. Throughout the intervention, students were placed into groups to discuss their understanding of what they learned about breaking words into smaller parts in order to read the words with more than one syllable.

The students also received word-study journals to write and reflect on their learning. While talking with a small group of students regarding the instruction they had received, one student stated she had never received instruction that focused on how to read the word by breaking into smaller parts. This led to many students making the same claim. One student said she had never been taught to focus on the vowels in the words to

determine how many parts the word had. Other students said they did not know the difference between vowels and consonant letters. They did not realize that certain letters placed together in words represented certain sounds. One student said she learned about letters and sounds when she attended a school in the United States as a child but never received instruction that focused on sound-spellings and syllabication as an adult.

Although fluency and comprehension continued to be an issue for the students, it was apparent from my observation and conversation with students that they were making sense of the learning and they felt it was helping them become readers. This was evident when they read aloud in class, when I listened in on their conversations with their peers, and when I read their reflections in their word-study journals.

Dissertation Cycle

During the fall semester of 2018, my action research proposal was accepted, and I conducted my action research dissertation study during the spring semester of 2019. Although the word-study intervention was taught to all students enrolled in the ESL reading class, I solely focused my data collection and analysis on the Arabic speaking students enrolled in the class. At the start of the semester, I identified the Arabic speakers who enrolled in the class and invited them to participate in my study.

Out of the ten Arabic speaking students who enrolled in the course, all agreed to participate in the study. Prior to starting the intervention, I completed a background interview on each participant. The purpose of the interview was to gain an understanding of the educational experiences of each participant as well as their perception of learning to read English. I also conducted a miscue analysis assessment on each participant. A

miscue analysis is described as a form of assessment that is used to identify how a reader processes print by analyzing the oral reading errors made by the reader. In order to identify the participant's strengths and weaknesses in reading English, each participant was asked to read a passage from the course assessment textbook. While the student read the passage, I documented the type of errors the student made. The miscue analysis provided me with authentic information about each participant's English reading skills.

At the start of my action research study, each student was given a word-study journal to document notes, reflections, and word activities the students would be completing in class. The students were encouraged to use their notes throughout the intervention to support their understanding as we began focusing on reading multisyllabic words. Through direct instruction of the syllable types found in the English language, I was able to provide the students with the background knowledge they needed in order to understand how to break apart words. Students created a graphic organizer in their word-study journals to use as a reference while reading. The research I found on Arabic speakers learning to read English identified vowels as problematic for Arabic speakers; therefore, I made sure to address the importance in being able to identify the correct sound of the vowels in each syllable.

Our initial meeting began with instruction on the six syllable types: closed, vowel silent e, open syllable vowel team, r-controlled, and le syllables. After direct instruction of the syllable types, I continued to use spiral reviews of the syllable types in my instruction to further support the students in identifying syllables to support reading words accurately. The spiral reviews provided my students with multiple opportunities

throughout the intervention to revisit skills they had previously learned. Using the words

from the textbook the students were required to read, we were able to revisit the skill of

breaking words into parts and applying the correct sound spelling to each syllable or part.

Each week a reading from the textbook was introduced to the students. Prior to reading

the text, I used the vocabulary words that were included in the reading along with other

words found in the text that had more than one syllable. This would provide the student

with the opportunity to read the words accurately before they read them in the text.

Through guided practice, I asked the students to count the number of vowels in the word

to identify how many parts the word had. Then they used their syllable division chart to

divide the word into parts. After that, we read the word in parts and then read it as a

whole word. Over time, I eliminated the guided practice and encouraged students to do it

on their own without support. Students were asked to use what they had been learning

about syllable division patterns and sound-spellings to divide the word into syllables. The

students then identified the syllable types that made up each word.

I incorporated word-sorts to introduce common sound-spelling patterns in each

class meeting. The students completed two word-sorts each week. The first one

introduced the sound-spelling and the second word-sort was to reinforce what they had

previously learned. A word-sort is an instructional strategy that organizes words into

groups based on similarities in their spelling patterns. Word-sort activities were

incorporated to lead the students into understanding the various sound-spellings found in

English. I incorporated word-sorts on a weekly basis to bring awareness to the sound-

spelling rules of the English language.

The observations I made in my previous cycles of research influenced the intervention I implemented during my action research study. The purpose of my dissertation study was to provide my students with instruction that focused on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication in an attempt to improve their reading accuracy. From my findings in previous cycles, I determined my students needed additional support in basic word-study skills. The study was developed to provide students with strategies they could use to decode multisyllabic words while applying knowledge of sound-spelling patterns taught during the study.

Context of the Study

The Site

The research study took place during the first eight weeks of the spring 2019 semester at a local community college in Arizona where I taught English as a Second Language (ESL) courses to adult language learners. Arizona's public community colleges are one of the major access points for students looking to further their education. For adults whose primary language is not English, they must complete ESL courses to strengthen their ability to read, write, listen, and understand as well as speak English before they are able to enroll in general education courses geared towards the degree plan of their choice.

The college is one of ten community colleges throughout Arizona that offers a variety of ESL credit and non-credit courses for students who want to improve their English skills. Students can enroll in non-credit classes to support their development of communication in English. For students who are looking to excel their English skills for

employment purposes or to further their education, they can enroll in ESL credit classes.

Before students are eligible to enroll in an ESL credit class, they must take the Combined

English Language Skills Assessment (CELSA) placement test. The test is a timed 75-

question computerized multiple-choice exam written in English. The purpose of the exam

is to assess their understanding of the English language. The assessment results for the

students are then used to accurately place the student in one of four ESL levels offered by

the college. Students whose score is between 0-15 are placed in a basic one or two level.

These are courses that focus on phonics and help build the foundation for learning to read

in English. These courses are the prerequisites for the ESL courses offered at four

instruction levels. Student who score between 16 and 66 are placed into one of four levels

of reading, writing, grammar, and listening and speaking. If the student scores a 67 or

more, they are eligible to take another assessment to determine a starting point for

reading and writing courses outside of the ESL courses. The scores of the assessment are

used to determine a starting point for each individual student based on the language

abilities they demonstrated in the assessment. The instructional focus for Reading English

as a Second Language level one is to develop an understanding of sound symbol

relationships, teach essential vocabulary for daily communication in isolation and

context, and the development of reading comprehension skills. Reading ESL level two,

which is the level I used for my action research, continues to develop the student's

vocabulary and comprehension skills. The focus of Reading ESL level three is to provide

students with instruction in more advanced vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Reading ESL level four focuses on the continued development of advanced vocabulary,

comprehension skills, and a development for culture awareness. In each of the four levels, a textbook is used to support the development of the skills the students should learn at each level. Supplemental instruction is often necessary to meet the individual needs of the diverse ELL students in the classroom.

Student Participants

A purposeful sampling process was employed to select the participants for my study. Purposeful sampling is used when the researcher wants to intentionally study a specific phenomenon (Ivankova, 2015, p. 183). In the case of my action research study, I was solely interested in understanding how an intervention in word-study impacted reading accuracy for adult Arabic speaking students enrolled in an ESL reading class.

The participants of my study were ten Arabic speakers who were enrolled in a Level 2 ESL reading class during the spring 2019 semester. Ten of the students enrolled in the course were from the Middle East and spoke Arabic as their primary language while the other six students (not research participants) were from various parts of Mexico and Spanish was their primary language. Although all students enrolled in the class received the intervention, my study only represented data from ten Arabic speakers who agreed to participate in the study.

There were three men and seven women who initially agreed to participate in the study. Of the ten students who participated in the study, most were enrolled in their first ESL reading class. The participants of the study also reported living in the United States between two to eight years. To protect the identity of each participant, I assigned a pseudonym to each participant to report my findings in the following chapters. Of the ten

participants who agreed to participate in the study, I used the data from nine of the participants. One of the participants of the study who I will refer to as Mark did not attend the last two weeks of the study, and therefore, the data collection was not completed for him.

Participants Background Information

Aria is an Arabic speaker who has been living in the United States for eight years. She was enrolled in her fourth semester of ESL classes. This was her first time taking an ESL reading class. When I asked her what she does when she is not able to read a word, she said, "If the word is big, I try to sound out the word slowly but sometimes I don't know if the word is right." Ida was also enrolled in her first semester of ESL classes. This was also her first ESL reading class. When I asked her to tell me what she does when she does not know a word, she responded, "If I don't know the word, I use my phone for Google Translate to listen to the word." I followed up by asking her, "What if you don't have your phone available, what do you do?" she responded by informing me that she does not read the word. Adam, Wanda, Maggie, and Larry have all been living in the United States for four years. Larry was enrolled in his second semester as an ELL student at the local community college. Larry was also enrolled in his first ESL reading class. Of the ten participants I interviewed, he was the only one who had a college degree in his country. When asked about the strategy he uses to read unknown words, he responded by stating, "I know many words, sometimes I don't know the word, but I can read it. I don't know I do it." Wanda, who was enrolled in her second semester at the local community college was also enrolled in her first ESL reading class. When I asked

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her about reading unfamiliar words, she also said she uses Google Translate to hear the word. I asked her what other strategy she uses, and her response was, "I don't know what else to do." This was a common response for 60% of the participants. When they were asked about strategies they use to read unknown words, they all informed me that they use Google Translate to hear the word. Adam and Maggie were both enrolled in their fourth semester at the local community college. Mark and Annie are both Arabic students who have been living in the United States for three years. Both students were enrolled in their second semester of ESL classes at the local community college in Arizona. Mark was enrolled in his second ESL reading class, while Annie was enrolled in her first ESL reading class. Meg and Irma had both been living in the United States for two years. This was Meg's second semester enrolled in ESL classes and her second ESL reading class. This was Irma's fourth semester enrolled in classes at the local community college and her second ESL reading class.

Teacher Participant and Researcher

I conducted the study as the teacher and the researcher. As the teacher, I provided students with direct instruction in teaching the six syllable types with common syllable division patterns with emphasis on the role of the vowel in each syllable. I included word-sorts to help students identify common patterns found in words to improve accuracy in reading unfamiliar words. I engaged in dialogue with the students throughout the study to understand how they were applying the strategies they were learning when they were reading context inside and outside of the classroom.

As the researcher, I was invested in understanding whether a word-study intervention that focused on sound-spellings and syllabication would increase reading accuracy among Arabic speakers reading English. I was responsible for collecting and reporting the data collected throughout the qualitative research process. I interviewed the participants to gain an understanding of the strategies students currently used when decoding unknown words and to find out about their educational and literacy learning backgrounds. I administered a pre-and post-miscue analysis assessment on each participant. The collection of data informed me of the impact of the intervention and an ongoing assessment about how students' knowledge of sound-spelling patterns increased over time.

The Intervention

Participants enrolled in an ESL reading class for the spring 2019 semester attended class two nights a week for a total of 16 weeks. Each class meeting was 75 minutes long. Over the course of a week, the participants attended the class for a total of 150 minutes. The intervention was implemented during the first eight weeks of the 16-week semester. The intervention took place during the first 30 minutes of class. All students enrolled in the course received instruction in syllabication routines, instruction in identifying vowel sounds and spellings associated with each pattern, and word-study activities using *Words Their Way: With English Learners Word-Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* (Bear et al., 2016). The daily lesson plan included an introduction to the word sort, collaborative discussions, review of the findings and

rule, syllabication routines for multisyllabic words and passage reading and discussion.

See Table 2 for daily lesson plan and Table 3 for weekly intervention plan

Table 2

Daily Lesson plan

Introduction to Sound Spelling
Independent Work
Collaborative Work
Review of the Word Sort
Multisyllabic Word Reading Practice
Passage Reading

Table 3

Weekly Intervention Plan

Week	Intervention and Data Collection
Week 1 January 15th	**Intervention:** The intervention during Week 1 was conducted using direction instruction of the six syllable types. Prior to the instruction, the students responded to the following questions in their word-study journal: "What do you know about syllables?" I introduced the six syllables of the English language and the common division patterns associated with syllables through direct instruction during the first week of the intervention. Students developed a graphic organizer as a reference sheet. Students recorded patterns of consonant and vowel letters that made up each syllable type. Attention to the role of the vowel in each syllable type was included to help students focus on the

sound the vowel makes in each syllable part. I included examples of words for each syllable type as a reference.

Data Collection:

During Week 1 of the intervention, the participant signed up for a 10-minute appointment to complete their miscue analysis and background interview. While the participant read aloud, I documented the types of errors (miscues) the student made while reading English. Then I conducted a background interview.

Week 2

January 22nd

Intervention:

During Week 2, the intervention focused on short vowels in syllables. A review of closed syllables was included as part of the instruction. The students were given a word-sort that included syllables and words with one vowel letter. I read the syllables and words aloud to the students. They were instructed to sort the words. Since this was our first word-sort activity, I modeled how to sort the words by explaining how the words could be sorted by spelling or by the sound of the vowel. After the word-sort, the students responded to the following questions in their word-study journal: "What happens when the syllable or word has one vowel letter? What sound does the vowel make? Does focusing on the vowel support you in reading the word part? Explain." After the students wrote in their journals, dictation was included to ensure the students could apply the sound-spellings to written words. After the word-sort activity, I included instruction on dividing words into syllables using the vocabulary words from the text they were going to read. This instruction was included on a weekly basis as the text was introduced for the week. Students used their reference sheet to apply sound-spellings to the syllables as they were asked to read the words with their partner.

Data Collection:

Data collection for Week 2 included observations of the participants while working with the word-sorts as well as their written reflection in their word-study journals. While students were completing the word-sort, I asked some questions of the participants and documented their responses. While students read the text for the week, I observed how the participants were reading through the text and noted the strategies the students used as they read unfamiliar text.

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Week 3	**Intervention:**
	During Week 3, the study focused on words with long
January 29th	vowel sounds. The word-sort presented included words
	with long vowel sounds inclusive of words with silent e
	such as the word "hide," syllables or words that end in a
	vowel with a long vowel sound such as the word "me," and
	words that included two vowels side by side as in the word
	"boat." The words were first read aloud to the students
	followed by the students working independently to sort the
	words. Instruction of silent e syllables, vowel team
	syllables, and open syllables were included in our class
	discussion as students worked in collaborative small
	groups to discuss how they sorted the words. They
	responded to the following questions in their word-study
	journal: "What did you notice about the words you sorted?
	How did you sort the words? What did you learn about the
	sound-spelling patterns? How do you feel about the word-
	sorting activities? Explain. How can you use what you
	have learned so far when you are reading?" Dictation
	included words with short vowels for spiral review along
	with long vowel spelling patterns they used in the word-
	sort activity. While the students read the text, I encouraged
	them to use their word-study journal to document words
	they were not able to read.
	Data Collection:
	Data collection in Week 3 included observational notes on
	the participants as they constructed their own
	understanding of the words with long vowels. While
	students were completing the word-sort, I asked some
	questions of the participants and documented their
	responses. At the end of the week, the participants turned
	in their word-study journal to guide the questions I would
	ask during the semi-structured interviews. While students
	read the text for the week, I observed how the participants
	were reading through the text and noted the strategies the
	students used as they read unfamiliar text.
Week 4	**Intervention:**
	During Week 4, the study continued with a focus on long
February 5th	vowels sounds. The word-sort activity included single
	syllable words with short and long vowels and
	multisyllabic words that included syllables with short and
	long vowels. The students read the words independently

and then sorted the words. Some of the multisyllabic words I used were from the text. Students were asked to identify the vowels in the word parts and identify the sound-spellings represented while they decoded each part of the word presented. The students were asked to identify the number of syllables found in each word and the type of syllables that made up the multisyllabic words. Students continued to work with a partner to discuss how they sorted the words. As part of their written reflection, the students responded to the following questions: "What did you notice about the words you sorted? How did you sort the words? What did you learn about the sound-spelling patterns? What strategies could you use to read multisyllabic words? During the first week of the study, you were asked to write what you know about syllables. Go back to your response and read what you read. Has your understanding of syllables changed? Explain." To scaffold the instruction for the students, we read through the multisyllabic words by reading the word in parts and then reading the word without dividing it into parts. Dictation for this week included words with short and long vowels and words with more than one syllable.

Data Collection:
Data collection for Week 4 included observational notes and a semi-structured interview. While students were completing the word-sort, I asked some questions of the participants and documented their responses. I read through each participant's word-study journal to create questions I would ask of each participant during the interview. While the students were reading the text and responding to questions in class, I spent a few minutes with each participant asking them questions about their perception of their learning thus far. While students read the text for the week, I observed how the participants were reading through the text and noted the strategies the students used as they read unfamiliar text.

Week 5

February 12th

Intervention:
During Week 5 of the study, words with r-controlled syllables were introduced. The word-sorts included words with r-controlled sound-spelling patterns. Students worked in collaborative groups to discuss how they sorted words and constructed a rule for the sound-spelling of r-controlled syllables. Students wrote the sound-spelling

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rules for reading words with r-controlled spelling patterns in their word-study journal and responded to the following questions in their journal: "What did you notice about the words you sorted? How did you sort the words? What did you learn about the sound-spelling patterns? What strategies did you use to divide the words into syllables? How do you feel about yourself as a reader of English?" Dictation included a spiral review of sound-spellings they had previously learned. To focus on reading words with multisyllabic words, the students were given a worksheet, which included various sound-spelling patterns along with words from the text. The students worked with a partner to divide the word into syllables and read the words.

Data Collection:

Data collection for Week 5 continued with observations and written reflections in their word-study journal. While students were completing the word-sort, I asked some questions of the participants and documented their responses. While students read the text for the week, I observed how the participants were reading through the text and noted the strategies the students used as they read unfamiliar text.

Week 6	**Intervention:**
February 19th	During Week 6 of the study, I began with an introduction of words with variant vowel spelling patterns. The word-sorts included words with variant vowel spellings and a spiral review of words with other sound-spellings they have previously learned. Syllables that end in le were introduced and students divided words into syllables with le. As a group, we determined a rule for le syllables and students wrote their observations and rules in their notebook. Students responded to the following questions: "What did you notice about the words you sorted? How did you sort the words? What did you learn about the sound-spelling patterns? What strategies do you use when you read unfamiliar words?" Through guided learning discussion, the rules were identified and further explained to support their understanding of irregular sound-spellings. Diction of words with variant vowels spellings was included as part of the learning. New vocabulary was introduced with attention to syllable types and sound-spellings. The intervention concluded with dictation of

words inclusive of irregular spellings for variant vowel sounds.

Data Collection:
Data collection for Week 6 continued with observations and written reflections in their journals. While students worked in their journal, I asked the participants questions about their sorts. While students read the text for the week, I observed how the participants were reading through the text and noted the strategies the students used as they read unfamiliar text.

Week 7	**Intervention:** Week 7 of the study began with continued instruction on variant vowel spelling patterns and diphthongs. The word-sort for this week had variant vowels and words with diphthongs. Students sorted their words and worked in small collaborative groups to discuss the words and how they were pronounced and sorted. Students responded to the following questions: "What did you notice about the words you sorted? How did you sort the words? What did you learn about the sound-spelling patterns? Explain the strategies you use to read unfamiliar words. How do you feel as a reader of English? Do you feel the word-sorting activities helped you as a reader? Explain." Dictation was included to determine whether students were able to apply the sound-spelling of variant vowels and diphthongs. Reading multisyllabic words was included as part of the focus of the lesson using the vocabulary of the text they were going to read. **Data Collection:** Data collection for Week 7 continued with observations and written reflections. At the completion of Week 7, participants turned in their word-study journal for data analysis. The exit interview questions were created using the participants' reflections and observational notes.
Week 8 March 5th	**Intervention:** Week 8 of the study was a review of sound-spellings and syllables that were taught in previous weeks. The word-sorts included words with various sound-spelling patterns. The students worked in small groups to discuss the word-sorts and how they grouped their words. Reflection questions were written on the board for students to include in their discussion: "What did you learn about the six

syllable types? What strategies can you use to help you read unfamiliar words?"

Data Collection:

Data collection for Week 8 included a post-miscue analysis and an exit interview. The observational notes, journal reflections, and the pre- and post-miscue analysis assessments were used to complete an exit interview of each participant. The questions on the exit interview helped inform my understanding of each participant's perception of the learning. Participants looked at their pre- and post-miscue analysis assessments and were asked to share their observation of themselves as a reader.

The instruction included an emphasis on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication using direct instruction, collaborative learning opportunities, and word-sorts. The intervention model was designed to address both the constructivist and social learning views and how they relate to adult learning.

Prior to the start of the intervention, each participant participated in a background interview. The interview provided me with the opportunity to talk one on one with each participant to learn how each participant learned to read in their primary language as well as English. I also learned how each participant viewed themselves as a reader of English and how they felt about reading in English. The one-on-one interviews also provided me with an opportunity to address any questions or concerns the students had regarding the study.

The participants were also given a miscue analysis assessment while they read aloud. The purpose of the assessment was to identify the types of errors the students made while reading in English. While each student read aloud, I recorded the student reading and completed an analysis on the error patterns the student made. The recordings

for each participant were later shared with the student at the end of the study to encourage

the student to reflect on their reading. Once data was collected on each participant, I

began the intervention.

Direct Instruction

The students were given a word-study journal to document their learning

throughout the course of the study. To begin with, a pre-assessment was given to identify

what students knew about syllables. As I walked around to assess what students wrote, it

became apparent to me that many students did not know what a syllable was, and many

left the page blank. Some students verbalized that they did not know what I was asking

them while a select few wrote down that they were parts of words. From their written

responses, it was evident to me that the students had little to no prior knowledge of

syllables. I describe my specific instructional plan below.

I started the intervention with direct instruction in the six syllable types of the

English language. Direct instruction is straightforward teaching using explicit teaching

techniques to teach a specific skill. It is a teacher directed modeling, meaning the teacher

is providing the students with the information necessary to learn the concept, skill, or

idea. This instruction included a focus on the vowels as the students were taught the

difference between short and long vowels. I also included the most common syllable

division patterns of English. Students created graphic organizers in their word-study

journals to use as a reference guide throughout the study. Through a quick formative

assessment, I learned that most students did not know the difference between consonant

letters and vowel letters, nor did they know the difference between a short and long

vowel. I used direct explicit instruction to provide students with an understanding of the six syllable types found in English while explaining the role of the vowel in each syllable. Students were first taught that a closed syllable is the most common syllable type that accounts for about 43 percent of all syllables. Students learned that a closed syllable has a short vowel sound. They were provided with examples of words with short vowels using single syllable words. Students learned that vowel- consonant-e or silent e syllables are known as the magic e syllable that follow a VCe pattern that contain long vowel sounds spelled with a single vowel letter, followed by a consonant letter and a silent e. Students were provided with example words to include on their graphic organizer following the VCe pattern. Students were provided with examples of words referred to as open syllables which end with a long vowel sound spelled with one vowel letter. Students learned that there is no consonant to close the syllable, so the vowel sound is open and says a long vowel sound. Students learned of vowel team syllables which consist of two or four letters representing one vowel phoneme within a syllable. Vowel team syllables represent long, short, or diphthong vowel sounds. To help students identify the differences among the syllables, I provided them with word examples. Students learned that r-controlled syllables can look like a closed syllable but follow the er, ir, ur, ar, and or spellings. In an r-controlled syllable, the students were taught that the vowel sound is neither short nor long as the r controls the sound of the vowel. Students were provided with examples of words which are considered r controlled. They also learned that ir, ur, and er all represent the same sound regardless of spelling. Finally, students learned of the le syllable which is only found at the end of multisyllabic words. Students learned that

the le syllable is said to "bring a friend" as the le takes the consonant letter found before the le and together it becomes one syllable. While I used direct instruction as the method for delivering the information to the students, they were encouraged to create a graphic organizer or visual that they could use when reading words. For each syllable type, the students were provided with an explanation and examples of words that follow the specific syllable type.

Dividing words into syllables continued to be an ongoing activity that was part of the daily intervention routine. As students came into class, they were asked to write the list of words that were written on the board into their word-study journal. After they wrote the words down, they were asked to divide the words into syllables and practice reading the words independently. The students were encouraged to use the following steps; identify and label the vowels, look at the pattern of the consonants and divide the word, identify the syllable types, blend each syllable part, and finally read the whole word. the students worked independently, I walked around and observed how the students were breaking the words into parts or syllables. After the independent practice, the students were asked to join a classmate to discuss how they divided the words. To encourage students to share their learning in English, the students were encouraged to sit with a partner who spoke another language. Students were partnered up with another classmate for this activity. The students each took turns sharing how they divided the word and read the word to each other. The students then compared their work. After the groups shared how they divided the words, we came back together as a group to read

through the words fluently. I then provided them with student friendly definitions to support their comprehension.

Word-Sort Activities

The word-sort activities were used to help students construct an understanding of spellings and the sounds associated with the spelling patterns. When students sort words, they are engaged in active learning as they compare, contrast, and analyze words as they begin to identify similarities and differences in words they read. According to Bear et al. (2016), "word-sorting offers the best of both constructivists learning and teacher-directed instruction" (p. 51). Each week, students were given a word-sort focused on either short vowels, long vowels, or variant vowel sounds. During sorting activities, students were encouraged to look for sound-spelling patterns in words to determine sound-spelling rules of the English language. The word-sorts were intended to help students construct meaning of the sound-spelling patterns. To first introduce word-sorts, I began with giving the students a list of about 20 words. Some of the words had a short vowel sound and some words had a long vowel sound. When the students were first asked to sort the words, they did not know how to sort them. I had to prompt them and model what I was asking them to do. The students then sorted the words between words that had one vowel letter and words that had more than one vowel. They were then prompted to look further at the words with more than one vowel letter and sort them according to spelling. As they first sorted the words, the students had a few words with ai and a few words with ay. The students were then asked to turn their desk to their partner and talk about the patterns and what they noticed. They were then asked to identify the rule of the ai and ay spellings.

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Through guided prompts and support, the students were able to identify what spelling to use when the long a sound was heard in the word. Students then wrote their reflection in their word-study journal. Students were instructed to write the rule they discovered regarding the ai and ay spellings.

Students had the opportunity to engage in learning opportunities inclusive of working independently as they constructed an understanding of the word-sort, cooperative groups in which they shared their understanding with their classmates, and whole group instruction and discussions that promoted social interaction. Once the sound-spelling pattern was identified, students used their word-study journals to document their learning. Word-sorts allow students the opportunity to use what they know about words to form generalizations as they learn to read new words (Bear et al., 2016, p. 51). Dictation of words with the sound-spelling practiced were included to assess the student's ability to connect the sound-spelling patterns we used to read unfamiliar words and writing. For example, when the sound-spelling pattern for words with silent e was introduced, I would say a word out loud and the students would write the word they heard using the sound-spelling patterns they had just worked with during word-sorting activities.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning provides students with an opportunity to teach each other by addressing misunderstandings and clarifying ideas (Cherry, 2019). Throughout the intervention, students were given ample opportunities to engage in discussion with their peers. During this time, students were prompted to discuss their understanding of the

instructional strategies they were learning. Through guided discussions, the students discussed the patterns they identified in the word-sort activities and supported each other's understanding of syllabication routines and sound-spelling patterns. See Table 3 for a detailed description of the eight-week intervention.

<div align="center">**Data Sources and Collection**</div>

During the intervention, data was gathered from each participant to address the research questions that guided my study: (1) What happens when adult Arabic English language learners engage in word-study intervention focused on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication as part of the regular classroom instruction in their English as a Second Language reading course? (1a) How do the students who participated in the study perceive the value of the word-study intervention?

I collected primary and secondary data for analysis. The primary data sources included a pre- and post-miscue analysis, word-study journal reflections, observations, a semi-structured interview, and an exit interview. A secondary data source for my study was a background interview which was given to each participant at the beginning of the intervention.

Pre- and Post-Miscue Analysis

A miscue analysis was conducted at the beginning of the intervention and once again at the end of the study. During the first week of my study, I spent some time with each participant to complete a miscue analysis. The miscue analysis was used as a primary data source to help me identify the types of errors each participant made when they were asked to read aloud. While each participant read, I documented the types of

errors each student made while reading aloud. Since the students are expected to purchase a reading textbook that is appropriate for this level, I used a reading passage from the student's textbook for the miscue analysis assessment. As the participants read aloud independently, I identified the types of errors (miscues) each student made while they read aloud. While the student was reading aloud, I followed along with the same text the student was reading from and wrote notes of each student's reading performance. The miscue analysis assessment informed me of the strategies the student currently used to read as well as the types of errors the participant made when they were asked to read in English. At the completion of the study, each participant was given a post-miscue analysis. Of the ten students who participated in the study, one student did not complete the post-miscue analysis due to excessive absence in the final two weeks of the study. The findings of the post-miscue analysis suggest that most participants were applying strategies to decode unfamiliar words.

Word-Study Journal Reflection

As part of the intervention, the students were provided with a word-study journal which served as a primary data source for my study. Formative assessments using written reflections in the students' word-study journal were used to assess the students understanding of the sound-spelling patterns they were learning. Students documented their reflection in their word-study journal and responded to reflection questions I posted after they completed the word-sorts. As part of the word-study intervention, I dictated

words with the spelling patterns they had learned. As words were dictated, students were

asked to write the words applying the strategies they learned. As they wrote the words, I

walked around and noted whether students were sounding out the word and applying the

correct sound-spellings to the words. The words that were dictated to the students were

also recorded in the student's word-study journal for data analysis. The students' written

responses included reflections of their learning. The purpose of using the journal was to

help me gain a sense of the students' daily thoughts, perceptions, and experiences of the

classroom instruction. Students wrote daily in their word-study journals. They were

encouraged to document new learning, examples of sound-spellings we reviewed, and the

dictated words, and write the sound-spelling rules they identified from the word-sorts.

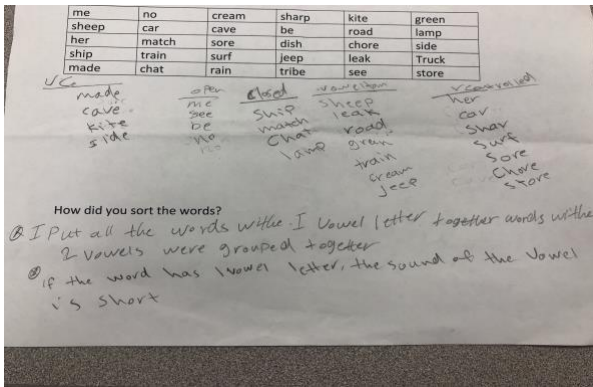See Figures 1 through 4 below.

Figure 1

Wanda Word-Study Journal
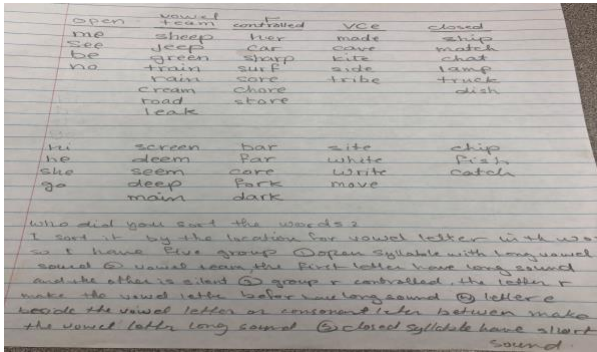
Figure 2

Larry Word-Study Journal
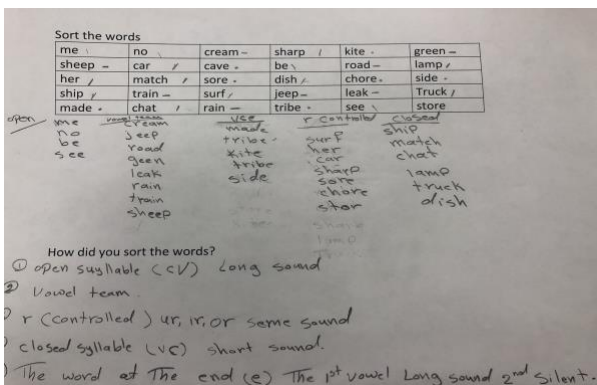

Figure 3

Aria Word-Study Journal

Figure 4

Meg Word-Study Journal

me	no	cream	sharp	kite	green
sheep	car	cave	be	road	lamp
her	match	sore	dish	chore	side
ship	train	surf	jeep	leak	Truck
made	chat	rain	tribe	see	store

VCe — made, cave, tribe, side, kite
"r" controlled — her, car, sharp, surf, sore, chore, store
open — me, no, be, see
vowel team — cream, road, leak, jeep, train, sheep, green
closed — ship, match, chat, lamp, dish, truck

How did you sort the words?
By Spelling
I sorted the words by spelling
1- VCe
2- "r" controlled
3- open (CV long vowel song)
4- vowel team
5- closed (VC short vowel song)
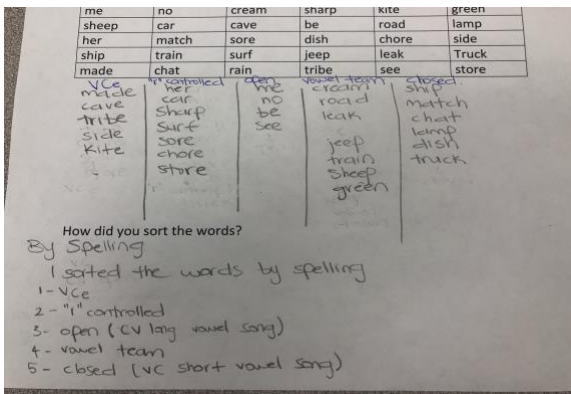
Observations

As the researcher and teacher of the intervention, I spent time during the intervention making observational notes on the participants of my study. Observations involved me watching carefully and systematically recording what I saw and heard as I facilitated instruction by walking around the classroom as students participated in word-study activities, interacted with each other, and responded to questions I asked. The observations I made along with the participant reflections in their word-study journals were used to create the questions I asked during semi-structured interviews in Week 4 and also helped guide my questions for each participant in Week 8. My classroom observations were recorded in the form of field notes. While students were working independently or with a partner, I made notes of the interaction between the students and participants. I asked questions to prompt students to reflect on their learning and share what they were doing when they were asked to read. The observations helped me as a teacher to identify whether the students were applying the strategies and were able to articulate the process they used to read the word accurately. These observations were used to guide my next steps in the delivery of the intervention. I documented the interaction between the students, primarily focusing on the participants and their

perception of what they were learning. The observations helped me understand how students were making sense of the interventions purpose.

Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was administered at Week 4 and Week 8 of the intervention. The interview at Week 4 was conducted using what I had observed at the midpoint of the study and the reflections the students had included in their word-study journals. Prior to the fourth week of the study, I collected the students' word-study journals and my observation notes to create questions I would ask during the semi-structured interviews. Collecting the journals gave me an opportunity to gain an understanding of each participant's experience thus far in the study. The semi-structured interview allowed me to ask the participants questions about the strategies we were using. The questions encouraged the students to reflect and share what they had been learning.

Exit Interview

The exit interview (see Appendix C) was administered to the participants at the end of the intervention. The exit interview allowed me to gain an understanding of the students' perception of their learning. This exit interview also allowed the student to view themselves as a learner and provide a more in-depth reflection of what they had learned and their perception of the learning that occurred during the intervention. During the exit interview, the participants had the opportunity to listen to the recording of their pre- and post-reading used in the miscue analysis and respond to five questions that would help me gain an understanding of their overall learning experience.

<div align="center">

Secondary Data Source

</div>

Background Interview

Participants who enrolled in my ESL Reading level 2 course participated in a background interview (see Appendix B). This interview served as a secondary data source to gather baseline data on each participant. The questions asked during the interview provided me with information about the student's primary language, their educational background including how he or she learned to read in Arabic, their experience in learning to read in English, the strategies they currently use when they encounter unfamiliar words when reading English, and the number of years or semesters they have spent learning to read in English.

<div align="center">

Reliability and Validity

</div>

A researcher should strive to report findings that are trustworthy, credible, and believable based on a set of standard practices (Lather, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). First, to ensure the reliability and validity of my study, I collected various forms of data on the participants of my study. My data collection included background interviews on each participant, miscue analysis, observations, written reflections, a recorded semi-structured interviewed, and an exit interview at the completion of the study. Member checks were used to review the data I collected and responses the participants gave during the interviews and observations. As I was both the researcher and teacher of my study, the major threat to the validity of my study was through the Hawthorne Effect. When individuals know they are being studied, they have the tendency to change the way they behave. As both the teacher and researcher, I spent a substantive amount of time observing the actions of my students. While I was engaged in the learning environment, I

was cautious when I took notes of the participants. I noticed students would act a certain way when they saw I was writing down information or taking pictures of their journals.

When I first began my study, I made it clear to all participants that their participation was strictly on a voluntary basis and, regardless of their participation, I would still implement the instructional strategies planned. They were reminded that their participation would not affect their grade if they chose to withdraw from the study and that I was solely using my study to improve my instruction. I was afraid my students would feel inclined to respond in a particular way or behave in a particular manner. When I asked my students questions, I was concerned with the way in which I presented my questions and was cautious not to ask questions that would sway the students to respond in a particular way. I was invested in learning about the participants of my study, so that my findings would truly reflect each participant as an individual. Throughout the study, I encouraged them to be honest and reflective and reminded them it was okay not to have the correct response. Throughout the study, the students responded to questions in written form. This helped to ensure that their perception of what they were learning was documented and written in their own words. The journal provided me with an understanding of how they were constructing meaning of the activities that were included in the intervention. I recorded the interviews I held with each participant to ensure that I had word-for-word accounts on how they responded to the questions I asked during the background interview, the semi-structured interview, and the exit interview. In qualitative research, the primary criterion is the credibility of the study (Lather, 2007). To ensure credibility during the interviews that I conducted, I listened closely and documented how

students responded to the questions. I relied on both verbal and non-verbal communication when I took notes. After the participant responded, I conducted member checks to allow participants to elaborate on their responses as a way of ensuring I understood their response and captured their perception. For example, when students responded to the questions I asked, I paraphrased their responses and stated them back to the participant to ensure I captured their ideas.

To ensure the trustworthiness of my understanding regarding the participants' data, I was consistent in my administration of the assessments given to the participants of the study. When I administered the miscue analysis, I used the same assessment on each individual participant for the pre- and post-assessment. Each student who participated in the study was asked to read from the same passage at the pre and post stage of the study. This ensured that all students had a fair opportunity to read the same level of text complexity. Prior to reading the text, each participant gave written permission which allowed me to record them as they read the passage aloud. While each participant read aloud, I documented the errors they made on a copy of the passage the student was reading. The recording allowed me the opportunity to go back and review the reading and ensure I had properly documented the reading errors of each participant.

The hard copies of the data I collected were scanned and saved on my personal password secured laptop computer. The recordings were also stored on my personal computer. The data collection was used to compare how and if the students' reading accuracy changed over time as the intervention was implemented. Data collection

throughout pre- and post-test, observation notes, and responses to the interview questions were used to gain an understanding of the types of errors the student made when reading.

As the researcher of my action research project, I was interested in finding out if the instructional strategies I taught the students for reading multisyllabic words would make students more aware of their reading and lead to them becoming accurate word readers. I was also invested in learning if the participants felt the added instruction helped them improve in their ability to read unfamiliar words and changed their perception of themselves as readers of English.

To enhance the credibility of the data I collected during my study, a triangulation approach was used. I included multiple sources of data collection to help me understand whether the participants perceived the instructional strategies to be beneficial to them in reading English accurately (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of my qualitative action research study was to explore the impact of adding a word-study intervention focused on sound-spellings and syllabication routines into an adult ESL reading class as well as gain an understanding of the participants' perceptions of the intervention. This chapter includes the key findings related to the research question that guided my action research study: (1) What happens when adult Arabic English language learners engage in word-study intervention focused on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication as part of the regular classroom instruction in their English as a Second Language reading course? Prior to presenting the results of my data, I present a review of my data sources and collection and a description of my data analysis procedures.

My qualitative action research study included multiple sources of data to capture the learning of the participants of the study. A background interview at the beginning of the study provided me with an opportunity to build a relationship with the participants. The questions I asked helped me better understand their experiences in learning to read as well as their perception of themselves as readers. A pre- and post-miscue analysis assessment was given to each participant. The miscue analysis at the beginning of the study helped me identify the types of errors each participant made while reading. The purpose of the post miscue analysis was to identify whether the intervention impacted their reading. Throughout the study, the participants documented their learning in a word-study journal. I also used the journals for discussion points during the interviews.

Observations occurred daily as I focused on how the participants were adapting to the learning strategies. Interviews were conducted at Week 4 and Week 8 for students to have the opportunity to talk about their experiences and perception of the learning and intervention. One of the participants dropped the course, and therefore the data of nine participants is represented in my findings.

Data Analysis

An inductive approach to research is concerned with generating theory from analyzing the various forms of data collected. According to Parson and Brown (as cited in Mertler, 2014), the process of qualitative analysis is a means of systematically organizing and presenting the findings of the action research in ways that facilitate the understanding of the data. A three-step process for analyzing data which includes organization, description, and interpretation was used to analyze the data collected from my action research study.

Organization

Parsons and Brown (2002) states that "the first step in analyzing qualitative data is to organize the data" (p. 55). Due to the excessive amount of data that is collected in a qualitative study, Parson and Brown (2002) suggest the researcher reduce the data collected by using a categorization system that allows the researcher to further understand the results of the study. To organize the various pieces of data I collected, I created categories as they related to each data source collected. From the background interview, I grouped students into categories by their experience in taking ESL classes and the strategies they stated they used when reading unfamiliar words. Looking at the pre-

miscue analysis, I grouped students by the types of errors they made when the intervention started and ended. Finally, I looked at the data from the background interview, the Week 4 interview, and the Week 8 exit interview to see how their perception of reading in English changed over the course of the intervention.

Description

The second step of analyzing data in a qualitative study is the description stage. According to Parson and Brown (2002), the action research should describe the salient features or characteristics of the study after the researcher organizes and classifies the data (p. 56). It is in this stage that the data begins to take shape (Parson & Brown, 2002). I organized the data by participant. I used the data from the background interview, pre-miscue analysis, and post-miscue analysis to sort my data. It was easier to identify the common issues found among the group of students who participated in the study. I organized the data by focusing on the first research question. I listed each student and included their experience in taking ESL classes and what they stated during the background interview regarding the strategies they said they use to read words they do not recognize. I then looked at the data from the pre-miscue analysis and wrote down the error patterns noted for each participant. I also looked at the post-miscue analysis and wrote notes regarding the observations I made during the post-reading. I identified students who could not use word attack skills and those who relied on other means at the beginning of the study, and then I identified students who demonstrated their ability to decode words in the post-miscue analysis assessment. I used a large white board to

organize my data by using colors for the pre- and post–results, or the miscue analysis (see

Figure 5).

Figure 5

Data Collection Process
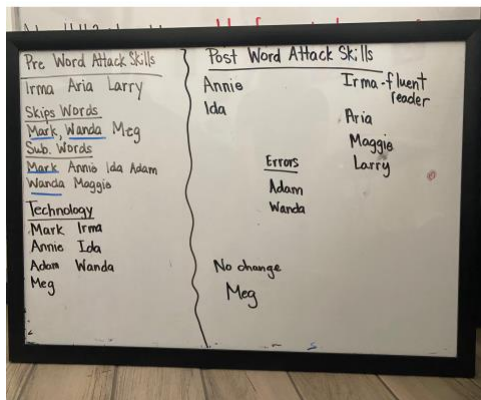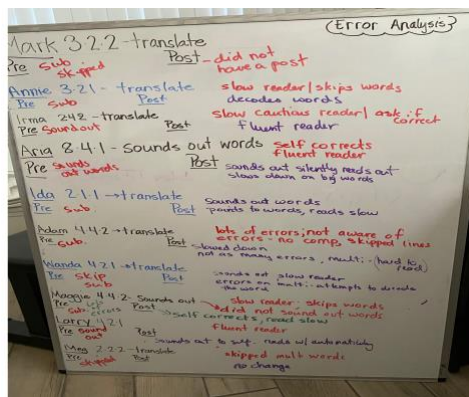
Interpretation

The final step for the action researcher of the qualitative study is to offer an

interpretation of the findings (Parson & Brown, 2002). In this stage, it is imperative for

the researcher to share the findings as they emerge from the data. According to Parson

and Brown (2002), this is when the researcher looks for surprises or unexpected

outcomes (p. 58). I reflected on the past research I used to guide my study and looked to develop my own conclusions of the Arabic speakers in my study. To help me interpret the results of my data, I spent some time reading through the notes I had compiled and listening to the recordings I had for each participant. As I listened to the recordings, I found that the majority of the participants did not have word attack skills. I looked at the data written on the white board and compared it to what I heard in the recordings. I reviewed the data to identify what the participants do to help them read unknown words. I found that six students stated they use their phone to help them read in English. This once again confirmed what I found in the recordings; these students did not display an awareness of how to read unfamiliar words. I was aware that most ELL students I had worked with in the past relied on their cell phone for translation, but I did not realize they were dependent on it to help them read words they did not recognize. Before I implemented my study, I had each week planned out ahead of time. I had not accounted for the time I would need to scaffold and model the learning strategies for students. I thought the students would be able to complete the word sorts without difficulty, when, in fact, this was not something they felt confident doing until they were provided with more instructional support. I continued to interpret the findings of my data as I worked through the drafts of writing my dissertation. I also found it helpful to talk about my study and its results. Talking about my study helped me narrow down my findings. Throughout the process of writing my dissertation, I listened to the audio recordings to help me highlight what I gleamed of my participants. I added to the white boards where I first recorded my data to help me find commonalities among the participants. Each time I wrote, I found

that I was becoming more focused on what the participants were learning and how the study supported them as readers. The key findings of my study are described below.

Study Findings

The Reading ESL classroom in the spring of 2019 was made up of students from various cultural backgrounds. As I awaited the arrival of the students, I was aware that many students were enrolled in their first ESL class and others were returning students. As the students walked into my class, they quickly made their way over to sit by students of the same culture. As I made my way to the front of the classroom at the start of class, I noticed an imaginary line that divided the two cultures that made up my class. After welcoming all the students to class, I knew that I had to address the seating arrangements. For the time being, I allowed students to remain in their seats as I wanted them to feel comfortable in the classroom. As I began class, I celebrated their commitment to learn English and applauded them for coming to school. I stressed the importance of speaking the target language in class.

To establish a safe and welcoming learning community, we began with our first activity. I strategically grouped students into small groups from both cultural backgrounds that represented the classroom community and asked them to spend a few minutes getting to know their classmates. As I walked around and listened in on their conversations, I observed the body language of the students and noticed they began to relax and look comfortable as they talked with a student from another culture. I was pleased to see the students interact with one another as they did their best to speak English while introducing themselves and sharing interesting facts about their culture.

After the small group discussions, we came together and established classroom norms for participation, acceptance, and learning. We talked about the differences between the cultures and the importance of treating all individuals kindly in and outside the classroom. We discussed the background knowledge and previous experiences that would contribute to how students would participate and learn in the classroom. I also challenged students to step outside their comfort zone and sit by others who did not speak their primary language.

I shared my teaching experience with my students and introduced my action research study to all the students enrolled in the class. At the end of class, I asked students who spoke Arabic if they would be interested in participating in my study. As we met after class, I shared the purpose of my study and the reason for inviting this particular culture to participate. I wanted my students to feel valued as learners, and I wanted them to understand that I was truly invested in helping them become accurate readers. Ten Arabic speaking students agreed to participate in the study. The findings of my action research reflect the perception of nine students as one student had to drop the class because of a family emergency. My students felt appreciated as many said, "Thank you for helping us."

To promote the use of English in the classroom, I created a classroom environment that encouraged students to sit with a partner who did not speak their primary language. Although I had given students assigned seats, they tried to sit with students from their own culture as they walked into class. The participant referred to as Larry was the only student in the class who had a college degree from his country. He

also spoke and understood English fluently, which is why I believe the Arabic speaking students wanted to sit by him. He was such an asset to have in my classroom and I often asked for his support when students needed information translated in Arabic. He spoke English in class at all times and rarely spoke to his classmates in Arabic. He truly embraced the idea of "English only" in the classroom. For the most part, he only spoke Arabic when I called on him for help. He was supportive of his classmates and encouraged them to speak English. He was older than most of the students; he was like the dad or teacher of the group, and they all went to him for help. I was grateful to have him in my class.

For the first two weeks, I policed the door and directed students to their seats as they entered. As the classroom became a more collaborative learning environment, the students grew more comfortable around each other and the need for ensuring students were at their assigned seats was no longer required. The learning environment was made up of ten Arabic speakers and six Spanish speakers. The dynamics of this classroom made it easy to create dyads and small, collaborative learning groups. As a class, we all committed to make English mandatory and only resorted to speak in Arabic and Spanish when students asked for permission to translate information into their primary language. By the second week of the intervention, I had to enforce a no cell phone rule because students would use their cell phones to hear how words were pronounced, look up the meaning of words, and translate words into their primary language. I wanted them to use the strategies they were learning, but the cell phone was a barrier for practicing the skills. I could see how dependent the students were on using the applications to help them with

English. Over the course of the intervention, the classroom went from two groups of learners to a classroom of unified learners who were engaged in the learning and supported each other along the way.

The study findings are organized by the two research questions that were used to guide the study. The guiding question is as follows: What happened when adult Arabic English language learners engaged in word-study focused on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication as part of the regular classroom instruction in their English as a Second Language reading course?

RQ: What happened when adult Arabic English language learners engaged in word-study focused on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication as part of the regular classroom instruction in their English as a Second Language reading course?

Key finding 1: The focus on sound-spelling patterns in word sorts was challenging for the participants at the onset of the innovation.

At the beginning of the study, I conducted a background interview on each of the participants. Each participant was asked to talk about the strategies they use to read unfamiliar text. Most of the students did not understand the question, so I wrote the word "contemplate" on paper and asked the student to show me how they would read the word. Annie stated she could not read the word. She said, "If I have to read this word in my story, I will spell it on my phone and listen to the phone say the word for me." Meg took out her phone and said, "I use this application and I type the word and then I hear it." When I asked Wanda to tell me what she does to read words in English, she told me she

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translates the page to Arabic so she can read it. If the word doesn't translate, then she listens to the pronunciation of the word on her phone. From the responses and my observation of students reading during the onset of the intervention, it was evident they did not possess these kinds of word attack skills.

Each participant was also given a pre-miscue analysis assessment at the onset of the study. I analyzed the data collected from the pre-miscue analysis for each participant and found that many participants skipped over words, substituted words in place of other words, and also left the endings off of some words. There were only three participants who were able to sound out most of the words in the passage while reading.

For the most part, students substituted words without an awareness of the errors they made. I noticed the participants were not listening to themselves read aloud, therefore they did not notice when the word they substituted did not make sense in the reading. While Adam was reading the following sentence, "It is convenient to leave the pooch at home during the day," he read, "It is convert to leave the push at home during the day." As he continued to read the passage, it was evident he did not understand the passage was about day care for pets. He was able to read most high frequency words with automaticity, but he did not appear to have a systematic approach for reading unfamiliar words. For example, when he came to the word "fascinating," he mumbled through the word without attempting to decode it. Another participant, Ida, who read at an extremely slow rate and was enrolled in her first ESL reading class, substituted many multisyllabic words during the pre-miscue analysis. For example, she read "future" for "furniture" and "fishing" for "fascinating." She also made many errors on single syllable words such as

"leave" and "shoe." Maggie, who had been taking classes at the local community college for four semesters, had a limited understanding of English. When she read aloud, she read at a really slow rate and also made many errors which led me to believe she did not have much experience in reading in English as she also did not apply a systematic approach for reading words that appeared to be unfamiliar to her. For example, she substituted many words without an awareness that she was making errors as she read aloud. It appeared she was only focused on the first letter of the word and she was not focused on meaning. Some of her errors were reading "begin" for "being," "great" for "greet," and "closing" for "clothing." Meg was a participant who was enrolled in her second semester of ESL reading class. Meg read, "Dogs are not enjoying the benefits of doggie day care" as "Dogs are no enjoy benfit of dogs day car." This demonstrated to me that Meg recognized some words like "dog" and "day" but left off endings of words like "enjoying" and did not include the vowel sound in the middle syllable of "benefit."

During Week 2 of the intervention, I gave the students directions to complete a word-sort activity sorting words with short vowel sounds and the long a vowel sound spellings ai and ay. The purpose of using word sorts was to encourage students to construct their own understanding of the sound spellings found within the words they were asked to read and sort.

The students were asked to read the words and sort them into lists or categories by listening to the sound of the vowel in each word and the sound spellings of each word. Ideally, the students would have identified three columns or categories for the words presented. One category would include words with short vowel sounds which would be

the words with one vowel letter, another category would include words with the long a spelling of ai, and the final column would include words with long a spelling of ay.

I walked around the room and observed the students as they attempted to complete the word sort. It was at this moment I realized the students did not understand what to do with the words. Students were not reading the words nor were they listening for the distinction between the short and long vowel sound in the words. I noticed Aria had listed all the words with the vowel letter a, which included the ai and ay spellings, into one column and the rest of the words were grouped by the vowel letter in each word. From my observation of her categories, she was not focused on the sound of the vowel as she grouped the words by similar graphemes or letters. Annie had three columns on her paper and was randomly writing the words in each column without an awareness of the vowel letter or sound. At this point, I panicked a little and felt that my intervention was not going to warrant the results I was hoping to see.

My vision of using the word-sort included students sorting words by spelling patterns and identifying sound-spelling rules through self-discovery. I sensed confusion by zeroing in on the participants' body language. They looked around at each other and appeared confused. When this activity proved to be unsuccessful and challenging for the students, I found it necessary to change my instructional approach.

What was challenging for the students was they did not initially know the difference between vowels and consonant letters. They also did not have an awareness of when a word should be read with a short or long vowel sound. Although this was discussed during my direct instruction lesson, the participants required more support in

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understanding the differences between the letters and the sounds they represented in words.

Key finding 2: The focus on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication became less challenging as participants began to work collaboratively with their peers.

At the beginning of the study, the participants were hesitant to engage in conversations with students who did not speak their primary language. As the participants were supposed to be engaged in collaborative learning groups, I circulated around the room and observed most participants were hesitant to engage in conversation. I walked around and supported the discussions by prompting them with questions and asking them to explain their sort to their partner. To further support the conversations and encourage students to share their thinking and learning with their partner, I wrote sentence frames on the board to help students facilitate their partner discussions and provide them with a starting point for leading the discussion. For example, when the students completed a word sort, I wrote the following on the board to help facilitate the discussions: "When I sorted the words today, I noticed…" "Can you explain how you sorted the words?" and "Can you show me how you sorted the words?" I observed students looking to the white board to read the sentence frames as they began their conversation with their partner.

With time, I observed the students becoming comfortable with each other as they became more confident with what they were learning. For example, I noted the students were more willing to help each other when it appeared their partner was struggling. I heard the students ask each other for help and I also heard them offer each other support. I observed Annie talking with her partner before class about the homework assignment. It

was interesting to hear her speak so comfortably with her partner. During a class observation, I sat with Maggie and her partner and listened to them as they discussed their word-sort. Maggie explained her process of sorting the words to her partner by stating, "I read the words. If I heard a short vowel, I put the words here, if I heard a long vowel, I put the words separate." Her partner said he noticed a new pattern of the silent e. At this point, Maggie said, "Wait, the long vowel sound is different in the spelling. The word 'pain' and 'made' both have long vowel so they are different." I then observed her erase the words and create a new column. As she walked out of class, she turned to her partner and thanked him for his help.

The collaborative learning provided the participants the opportunity to talk about what they were learning in a small group. The students were invested in learning and supporting each other. They saw value in sharing their learning with their partner and asking their partner for help. This was evident in the way the students interacted with each other as the study progressed.

Key finding 3: Modeling and scaffolding were added to the innovation to support the participants.

At the onset of the study, I assumed the learning would be easy for the students, but I actually found that they struggled and depended on me to scaffold and model the instructional strategies I incorporated into my study. A modeled approach was implemented that included think-alouds to show the participants how to complete the word-sort activities and syllabication strategies.

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At the beginning of the intervention, I scaffolded the instruction to support the participants in learning how to sort words and identify the sound spelling patterns presented in the sorts. I continuously reminded the students to spot the vowels in the words as they worked on the sorts and syllabication.

I modeled using a think-aloud to show the participants how to sort the words. I explained how some words had a short vowel while others had a long vowel. I grouped the words for students by short and long vowels. Maggie was the brave one in the bunch; she often stayed after class to ask questions, so it did not surprise me when she raised her hand and asked me to help her put the words into the correct column. I had her say the words on the list to herself and listen to the vowel sound in each word. This would lead her to separate the words by long and short vowel sounds. As she read the words "hat" and "plain," she was able to put them into the correct column.

To further support their understanding, I created two columns and labeled one short and one long. I read the words aloud to the students and asked them to identify whether the vowel sound was long or short. We did this together for the first ten words, then the students successfully completed the rest of the words on their own. Adam said, "I have to put all the words the same together to know the sound to make, but I just have the short and the long vowel." Since I originally stated we would have three columns, he did not understand why we only had two columns. I asked the students to look at the words they listed under long vowels and think about how they could further group the words by looking at the spellings of the vowel letters. The students were asked to talk with their partner and share what they noticed about the spelling for long a. Aria said,

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"For the long vowel, we have to use the spellings in the word that have ai and ay because those are the same but different."

I then asked the students to write the rule they learned about the ai and ay spelling. "Teacher, what do you mean?" Maggie asked. I prompted the students to think about when ai was used and when ay was used. Aria said, "'Play,' 'stay,' and 'pay' you hear 'a,' so this is the last one and 'maid,' 'laid,' and 'paid' it's not the last so use the other letters." At this time, Meg raised her hand and asked, "Is this the closed syllable like this?" as she pointed at the column with short vowel words. She had taken out her reference sheet she created in Week 1. After this, all the students took out their reference sheets and together we wrote the rule of the vowel in closed syllables, then we wrote the rule for the ai and ay spelling.

As we continued to work on word sorts as part of the intervention, I gradually removed the scaffolded support. In the beginning, I assigned the word sort and read the words aloud to the students. I told them how many categories they would make for the words. I also continuously reminded them to look for the vowels in the words. I noticed Maggie would underline the vowel letters in each word and then begin each sort. Thus, through guided practice, like described above, we sorted a few words together before they were asked to complete the word sort alone.

Over time, I began to notice the students were able to complete the word sorts with a deeper understanding of what they were required to do with the word sorts. Many of the participants began sorting the words without the scaffolded support. I observed the students as they created columns on the worksheets provided and grouped words by

sound spellings. I also observed most participants would sort the words by short and long vowel sounds first and then add columns if needed as they sorted the words by sound spellings of each word.

To practice syllabication, I modeled the strategies for decoding multisyllabic words by using words from the students' textbook. First, we counted the number of vowels in the word to help the students identify the number of syllables in the word. I reminded the students to spot the vowel, look in between, and separate the word into parts. Some participants underlined the vowels in the words before separating them into syllables. I restated the steps multiple times to help the students read the multisyllabic words. The students were constantly reminded to pay close attention to the vowel in each word part. The students then blended the parts to read the word. Through repeated practice, the students became more aware of the strategies they could use to read words. This was noted in the way the students would mark the words in their textbook as they read the passages.

Throughout the course of the intervention, I was aware the students struggled when they read words they did not immediately recognize. I quickly identified the need for scaffolded instruction to support my learners and provided instructional strategies to support their understanding. My approach to teaching sound spellings and syllabication was new learning for many of the participants. This was evident to me in our first week of class when I taught the students about syllables. Through the implementation of scaffolded instruction, the students began to understand how to read the words by breaking them into smaller parts instead of skipping the word or substituting with another

word. The participants began to display an awareness of the vowels in words as they were able to decode words with more accuracy. With support and repeated practice, the students were successful in reading words.

Key finding 4: Participants changed their habits of skipping over and substituting words when they read.

In order for students to read multisyllabic words, they should possess prerequisite skills such as knowing the difference between short and long vowels as well as an understanding of how words are made up of syllables. Looking at the pre-miscue analysis data I collected, I found that many students either skipped or substituted multisyllabic words and many errors were made on words with variant vowel spellings. The intervention focused on providing the participants with instructional strategies to decode multisyllabic words by breaking the word into syllables or parts and once again focusing on the vowel letters in each syllable or part.

The students were expected to come into class and copy a list of words in their word-study journals and then apply syllabication strategies to break the word into parts. During the first week of the study, the students were introduced to the six syllable types along with the most common syllable division patterns. As the students wrote the words, I reminded them of the steps they were supposed to use by focusing on the vowel letters to help them identify the number of parts each word had. I did this to continuously bring attention to the vowels.

As the study came to an end, the post-miscue analysis demonstrated most participants were no longer skipping over words, nor were they substituting words. The

participants appeared to be more aware of what they were reading, and most students appeared to be focused on reading the words correctly by applying the strategies they were learning. For example, while Ida was reading the textbook, she drew division lines on words like "fragile" and "eager" and was able to read them accurately. Annie also had markings in her book that showed she was dividing words she could not read into syllables. Some of the participants pointed at the words as they read aloud, which is something they did not do during the pre-miscue analysis. During the post-miscue assessment, Aria read the passage fluently and read the majority of the words accurately. Comparing her pre- and post-reading, I noticed she was able to read fluently. She sounded out words such as "fascinating" to herself and then pronounced it correctly as she continued to read aloud. She slowed down and was able to read through most words correctly. I noted she also self-corrected herself when she read the word "social" with the hard c sound. Irma was also able to sound out words when she read during the pre-miscue analysis. During the post-assessment, she read slowly and did not make many errors. She sounded out words and asked if she was correct when she read the words out loud. Adam began with many errors that included substituting words for other words, skipping words, and even skipping through a few lines as he read aloud. During the post-assessment, he pointed at each word as he read aloud. He no longer skipped over words. Although he was not able to read all the words accurately, he demonstrated his understanding of using strategies to sound out words. For example, he was able to count the number of vowels in the word "flexible" and divide the word into parts as he attempted to read the word accurately. When looking at the results from Maggie's post-miscue analysis, a few things

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stood out to me. During the pre-test, she read a little faster than she did when she read during the post-miscue analysis. In the middle of the post-test, we had to stop the recording and start over because she could not stop laughing at herself. I provided the students with the same reading passage they used for the pre-miscue analysis. I did this to compare their ability to read the same words in the beginning and at the end of the study. As she started reading her second sentence in which the word "pet" was used, she read the word and then stopped and put her face in her hands and started laughing. I asked her why she was laughing, and she said, "This word is 'pet,' when I read this last time, I said 'Pete.' When I was reading it, I was confused about Pete." As she continued to read, she would chuckle every time she read the word "pet." One of the changes I noted during the pre-test was she would look up at me if there was a word she could not read, but when she read during the post-assessment, she was able to sound out the word and read most words correctly. Over the course of the intervention, Annie went from substituting words to decoding the words she originally skipped over or read incorrectly.

Students were given time in class to read the passage before we focused on the comprehension strategy that was included in the textbook. While students read, I spent time walking around listening, and I also sat and observed the students read. Listening to Adam read, I noticed he circled a lot of words in his book. I asked him why the words were circled. He said he finds the words and practices reading them before he reads the page. Ida drew lines through the multisyllabic words to help her read through the words correctly.

The students read the textbook while applying syllabication strategies to multisyllabic words in the passages. Rather than skipping over words, the students slowed down and used the strategies they learned to read the words. I noticed students used their word-study journals as they followed the directions to break words into parts. During the post-miscue analysis assessment, I noted many students were no longer skipping words, but they were now using their strategies to read the words accurately.

What I observed of my students changed over time. Participants began to use the strategies without guided support. While I observed the participants read, I noted they were using the strategies I taught them in class. As students read the textbook in class, I noticed some participants were able to use the strategies when they read independently. I noticed the participants began marking the words in the textbook to help them read the words correctly.

Key finding 6: Participants perceived the instruction as beneficial in learning how to read unfamiliar words.

The data collected includes a semi-structured interview at Week 4 and a final interview at Week 8. During Week 4 of the intervention, each participant was interviewed to help me gain an understanding of their perception of the intervention and their learning thus far. While interviewing Wanda, she stated, "I am so confused and nervous about my class, but now I feel better. I don't know about all these words in the first week. I don't know syllable and I don't know about vowels. When the words are on the paper, I don't know the difference in the letters." Annie spoke of how she felt about herself as a reader by stating, "I know how to read the words now. I learned to know if

the vowel is short or long when I read." Adam was eager to share how he enjoys reading at home and practices daily. "I can read at home now. Every day I practice the words to read them."

When I compared the responses of the background interview in which participants talked about their experience in learning to read and the strategies they learned over the course of the intervention, it was evident the participants felt the strategies they learned helped them become better readers. They spoke with confidence about themselves as readers. They were eager to describe the strategies they learned and expressed how they were able to read words after the intervention ended.

The semi-structured interview and the exit interview provided me with an opportunity to gauge the participants' learning. The interview questions were developed to provide students with an opportunity to share their learning experience and how the instructional strategies supported them as readers. Responding to the questions, participants shared what they had learned throughout the intervention. During the exit interview with Larry, he spoke of the importance of learning to read the words. "I used to be able to read all the common words, now I can read all the words." He stated there was value in knowing how to put the words into syllables to then read them. Ida spoke about the strategies she had learned and how this helped her when she read at home. Wanda said she was able to use what she was learning to help her son with schoolwork. Annie asked if we would continue to study words now that my study was completed, and we still had six weeks left in the course. Aria shared her perception of the intervention by stating, "This is helping me more. This is the first time I know about vowels and

syllables. I know to divide the words. I learned about what to do when I see two vowels. I learned about the rules to know the sounds to say." Maggie stated, "The vowels are hard because they have too many spellings and I don't know when to make a different sound. In my country I don't learn about this. This makes me to practice every day." Adam said, "This makes me learn about the way to write the word. Now I see the letter and I read it, before I go to read, and I don't know the word." Larry also shared he had never learned to read by looking at syllables and spelling patterns. He said the following:

Now when I am reading, I am always looking at the big words, and I can put them into syllables. I think I know how to read good, but this is important to help me when I don't know some words. There are some letters when I see them, I don't know why we make the sounds and now I know.

Maggie said she can read more words and tries to make time to read more at home. She shared the following:

First, I didn't know. I look at my paper and I don't know how to look at the words, then you showed us. I didn't know about vowels because I didn't know the name of different letters and this was hard. Then I start to look at them and now I see them in many words. I know many sounds and I try to remember them to read them.

Likewise, Annie said the intervention was beneficial:

This is my first reading class and my first time to do this with words. It is hard first because I didn't know and many words I can't read. The big words are hard because there are many letters and pronunciations are hard. Now I know about the

rules for making the words smaller into parts. I know the sounds to make and I can take my time to read it. I need to keep learning this to be better. When I read at home, I practice reading the words. Every day I have to read to be fast.

She continued to share how she noted changes in her reading in English after the intervention when she listened to an audio recording of her pre- and post-miscue analysis. She noted, "First I read fast and many mistakes, then I read slow and I know the words. I said 'Pete' because I don't know about the vowels and then I learned and now I know." Ida said, "My experience is good. I'm happy and relaxed because this help me. It is easier to know how to read the words."

Wanda also stated how the intervention has helped her. While she originally struggled during the background interview to share the strategies she used to read words, she was able to articulate a response at the end of the interview:

> If the word is hard, I know how to divide the word. I can divide the words with the syllables. When I see the vowels, I know how many syllables. If I see the vowels together, I know about the long vowel. If I see one vowel, I know about the short sound.

While we looked at her word-study journal, she reflected on what she learned about r-controlled syllables:

> I learned about the rules to know the sounds and the spelling. If I hear the sound "or" in the middle of the word, I write "or," but if I hear it at the end then I write "ore." If the syllable ends with vowel, I know long sound. This helping me more my first time to know about vowel and syllable.

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After she listened to herself read for the pre- and post-miscue analysis, she noted a difference in the way she read at the beginning of the study and what she was able to do at the end. During her first reading, she made many errors on multisyllabic words, whereas during her post-reading, she was able to read through the multisyllabic words with accuracy.

Ida shared how the intervention helped her learn about syllables and the importance of looking at letters. She was particularly excited to share the following:

> Now I can help my son to read in school. I cannot read new words. After the class, you learned me how to do the syllables and the vowels to make the sound, now I can see many syllables and look at letters.

Larry shared the following when he was asked to share his perception of himself as a reader of English:

> The first time we did this in the class, I didn't know what to do. I was very confused because I didn't know how to look at the words in groups. Now I can look at the letters and put them together. Then I can see the sound to make. I know the rules of the syllables we learned, and this helps me make the sound right. Now I know all the words, thank you my teacher.

The participants found that the study of sound spellings with attention to the vowels and syllables was beneficial to them as they were learning how to read English. Over the course of the intervention, the instructional strategies used were intended to support the students by providing them with tools they could use when reading English.

The participants became confident as readers and learned to use the strategies to read.

The participants spoke of their ability to use the strategies in class and in their daily life.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into four sections. I first address the discussion of my findings, followed by the limitations of the study, the implications for future practice as I continue to work with the adult population of ELL students in the community college, and my final thoughts of the research process.

During my six years teaching adult ESL classes at a community college in Arizona, I had the opportunity to work with a diverse population of students. The challenge of learning a new language proficiently is a challenge for most individuals. The greatest challenge for me as an ESL educator is teaching a group of adult learners who have a wide range of language and academic needs. With these challenges comes the struggle of incorporating the right resources and strategies to support the students and the limited amount of research I was able to find regarding teaching basic reading skills to adult ELL students.

During the spring semester of 2019, I incorporated an intervention using the theory of adult learning, social learning theory, and constructivist theory which focused on sound spellings and syllabication in an adult ESL reading class at the community college. The purpose of my action research study was to investigate what happened when adult Arabic English language learners engaged in word-study focused on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication as part of the regular classroom instruction in their English as a Second Language reading course. My action research study was developed on the principles of adult learning theory, constructivist theory, and social learning theory.

Through the use of direct instruction, the participants had the opportunity to observe and engage in the learning environment to create their own understanding to the sound spellings introduced. A collaborative learning environment was included to ensure the participants were speaking English in the classroom. The word sort activity allowed the participants to construct their own understanding of the sound spelling found in English as the students worked in small groups to support each other's learning. Gradually the focus was on self-directed learning as I scaled back on the amount of scaffolded instruction provided.

The study included the following data sources: a background interview, a pre- and post-miscue analysis on each participant, observation notes I collected throughout the study, written reflections of the participants, a semi-structured interview, and an exit interview for each participant of the study. At the beginning of the intervention, I collected data on each individual student with the background interview and miscue analysis. The purpose of the miscue analysis was to identify the types of errors the students made while reading in English. A post-miscue analysis was given at the end of the study to identify whether the student was able to apply the strategies they had been learning during the intervention. Throughout the course of the intervention, I collected data on the participants which was used to guide the semi-structured interview I conducted during Week 4 of the intervention. At the completion of the study, the students participated in a final interview and had the opportunity to share their perception of themselves as readers of English and their perception of the intervention.

As I completed the cycles of action research, I identified the following key findings after evaluating the data sources collected. First, the focus on sound-spelling patterns in word sorts was challenging for the participants at the onset of the innovation and the participants lacked the necessary skills needed to decode unfamiliar text. Burt et al. (2003) believed adult language learners should receive instruction in orthographic decoding skills. As stated in my research-based rationale, Arabic speakers learning English are exposed to a new linguistic system which includes phonological and syllabic structures that are different from the Arabic linguistic system. Ryan and Meara (1991) first coined the term "vowel blindness" which was a huge factor in ensuring the students were focused on the role of the vowel in reading words. To help students draw attention to the vowel, it was important to model and continuously remind the participants to spot the vowels as they learned to read words.

At the onset of the intervention, the students were dependent on me to provide them with the instruction to understand the objectives of the learning activity. Research by Alsadoon and Heift (2015) hypothesized the notion that Arabic learners of English transfer the habits they use when reading in their primary language to reading in a new language. This was an issue for my participants as they were not able to transfer what they do in their primary language to English because of the vowel being present in English words.

The focus on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication became less challenging as participants began to work collaboratively with their peers. Adult learners benefit in learning when a constructivist approach to learning and teaching is implemented (Bada &

Olusegun, 2015). In a constructivist classroom, students are encouraged to be active participants in the learning environment. As the students were asked to engage in discussion with their peers, they began to construct an understanding of the new learning through peer interaction.

Participants changed their habits of skipping over words when they read and were more attentive to the words on the page. Knowles' fourth assumption of adult learners states that adults seek to immediately apply what they have just learned (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). From the observations conducted in class and listening to the students as they read in the post-miscue analysis, I observed the students were able to apply what they were learning when they were asked to read the textbook in class. Some of the participants also stated they are able to use what they learned to read at home and support their children with schoolwork. It is evident in my findings that the students were not only using the skills they learned in class, they were also using them outside of the learning environment. As I analyzed the data from the pre- and post-miscue analysis, it was evident the students were using the strategies when they read.

The innovation gave them confidence. As Knowles' fifth assumption relates to the intrinsic motivators such as self-esteem and self-confidence, it was evident in listening to conversations between the participants and their responses in the interviews that the students were confident in sharing what they were learning. The participants were eager to share what they were learning with each other. They raised their hands, answered questions, and no longer waited on me to provide the answer.

Participants perceived the instruction as beneficial in learning how to read unfamiliar words. The exit interview provided the participants with the opportunity to reflect on themselves as readers of English and as they shared their perception of the intervention and its impact on showing them how to read. Although my initial approach for the study had to be changed to meet the needs of the students, it was through constant observation and talking with the participants that I was able to address the needs of the learners. As they reflected on what they learned, I also reflected on what I gleaned from my study. It was important for me as the teacher and researcher to understand how my instructional approach to teaching sound spellings and syllabication promoted reading accuracy. The participants were appreciative of the experience and opportunity to participate in the study. The students found value in the strategies they learned.

Research Limitations

The focus of my dissertation study was to understand how a word-study intervention focused on sound spelling and syllabication supports reading accuracy among Arabic speakers learning English. My biggest obstacle as I began this research study was finding research studies on teaching reading to adult students who are language learners.

Although I was focused on the accuracy of my participants, I did not collect quantitative data that reflected each participants' reading accuracy rate at the start and end of the study. If I were to replicate this study in the future, I would use a mixed-method approach. A mixed method approach would provide me with both quantitative data and qualitative data on my students. A mixed method approach would allow me to

triangulate different data sets that would allow me to produce an understanding to validate my findings.

Discussion of Limitations

In sum, my study shows that adult Arabic speakers can learn to focus on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication through the implementation of a word-study intervention. Through the implementation of the cycles of research, I came to find that this type of instruction has to be scaffolded for diverse learners who lack the experience of learning to read with a focus on sound-spelling patterns and syllabication.

One limitation I found was the amount of time I dedicated to each class period for the intervention. The time I originally set aside for the intervention was not sufficient for my students. To allow them time to engage in the discussions and share what they were learning, more classroom time was necessary which would warrant the need for adding a few more weeks to the study. There were times I felt I neglected the course objectives because I was focused on the word-learning activity. If the study were extended through the semester, the instructional strategies could have been more scaffolded and there would have been less confusion from the participants at the beginning.

Language was another limitation for some of the participants. Although all the participants were enrolled in the same ESL level, the language barriers for some students proved to be an issue when language was used with which they were not familiar. This leads me to address the importance of teaching the students the academic language of the classroom to ensure they understand the content.

The design of my intervention as I mentioned was focused on collecting data on Arabic speakers. The classroom environment included Spanish speakers which led me to ask several questions as I analyzed the data. Collaborative groups were established to promote the use of English between the two cultures in the classroom. I wondered how the data collection might have been influenced by the Spanish speaking students. Would the conversations among learners be similar? What would the results look like if I only had Arabic speakers in the classroom? What would the observations look like during collaborative groups?

Overall, the limitations could be addressed in future cycles of action research to ensure success from day one. The limitations of time can be dealt with by extending the duration of the study. This would allow for a more scaffolded approach to instruction as well as more time to engage in the word-sort activities.

Implications for Practice

Learning to read consists of developing skills in two critical areas. According to the simple view of reading by Gough and Tunmer (1986), learning to read is inclusive of word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension. To develop as readers, students need teachers who provide instruction that supports both word recognition and language comprehension.

From my experience in teaching adult ESL reading classes, the instruction and course objectives focus on vocabulary and comprehension and do not address word reading instruction. The implementation of my study led me to realize the importance of modeling and scaffolding instruction for diverse language learners at the word level. It is

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imperative for reading teachers to understand that, in order to create competent readers, instruction in both word recognition and language comprehension must be fostered in the classroom.

As an ESL instructor, I will continue to include instructional strategies that provide students with learning opportunities to support word recognition and decoding. Instruction in word recognition and decoding will help ensure the students are able to read the text accurately. As I spent the past six years working with adult language learners, I consistently saw a need for providing adult language learners with instruction that focused on instructional strategies to support reading accuracy. My instructional approach provided the Arabic speakers with focused instructional practices that were intended to help them focus on the sound spellings associated with the vowel letters in English.

Closing Thoughts

Writing my dissertation has been one of the most demanding, time consuming, exhausting, yet rewarding experiences of my life. I have learned from this process that the road to success is not easy to navigate. There were many times throughout the past few years where I found myself wondering what I had gotten myself into. I doubted my study would warrant the results I wanted to see. Most importantly, I did not want to fail my students. I wanted them to walk away from this experience with the tools they needed to become better readers.

Through this process, I have seen myself grow as an educator. The process of conducting action research in my classroom has taught me the importance of being

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reflective in my teaching practice. I have learned the importance of the cyclical process of instruction to support diverse learners. It was through the process of identifying, planning, implementing, and evaluating data that I was able to feel successful in meeting the needs of my students. Although this experience has come to an end, I will continue to be relentless in my effort to meet the instructional needs of diverse students in the classroom.

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APPENDIX A

INDEPENDENT WORD-STUDY FORM

NAME _____   DATE_____

(This is a replica of what students created in their word-study journal.)

WORD SORT

Generalizations Made: Students wrote down their constructed learning ideas here.

_____

_____

_____

Spelling Pattern: Students wrote down the rule associated with the sound spelling

learned.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

BACKGROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participant Name:

1. What is your primary language?

2. How long have you been studying English in a community college setting?

3. How many reading classes have you taken? Which courses have you completed?

4. What is your educational background?

5. Tell me about how you learned to read in your primary language.

6. Tell me about when you first starting learning English.

7. What strategies do you use when you come across an unfamiliar word?

8. What is difficult in learning to read in English? What causes trouble for you?

9. What is your perception of yourself as a reader of English?

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTIRED INTERVIEW FOR WEEK 4

During week 4 of the intervention, the participants were asked to participate in a semi structured interview. Some of the questions asked were based from the notes the students had written in their journal.

1. How do you feel about yourself as a reader of English?

2. Tell me about the strategies you have learned.

3. In your word-study journal, you stated you did not know what a syllable was. How would you answer that question now?

4. Can you talk me through how you knew to divide the following word in your journal? (The journal was used during the interview to ask students specific questions about words or notes they wrote.)

APPENDIX D

EXIT INTERVIEW

For the final interview, the participants were given a post-miscue analysis in which

I recorded them while they read aloud. As part of the final interview, the participants

had the opportunity to listen to their recordings of their pre and post read aloud. The

following questions were asked of each participant.

1. Tell me about the instructional strategies you learned.

2. Tell me your approach for reading unknown words.

3. Can you walk me through the process of dividing a word into parts?

4. What is your perception of yourself as a reader of English?

5. After you listened to yourself read, what did you notice about yourself?

6. Tell me how this intervention impacts you as a reader.

APPENDIX E

EXEMPTION GRANTED

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Josephine Marsh
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe 480/727-4453
josephine.marsh@asu.edu

Dear Josephine Marsh:
On 10/16/2018 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review: Initial Study	
Title: Word Study Instruction for Arabic Speakers Learning to Read in English	
Investigator: Josephine Marsh	
IRB ID: STUDY00009056	
Funding: None	
Grant Title: None	
Grant ID: None	
Documents Reviewed:	• Semi Structured Interview , Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Background Interview Questions, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB For ASU , Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment Form , Category: Consent Form;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (1) Educational settings, (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 10/16/2018.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Rachel Keller Rachel Keller

Josephine Marsh