Selecting Vocabulary for Interactive Read-Alouds: Six Intermediate Literacy Collaborative Teachers’ Choices

Dissertation

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Abstract

Vocabulary researchers have shared many guidelines and recommendations for vocabulary instruction for students in elementary school and beyond. These recommendations include encouraging wide reading for students, developing metalinguistic awareness and word consciousness in students, and teaching word meanings to students. With regard to teaching word meanings to students, there are specific recommendations from vocabulary researchers regarding what vocabulary or types of vocabulary should be selected for instruction. However, little is known about the vocabulary teachers select for instruction, how they explain and justify their selections, and whether they use vocabulary researchers’ guidelines and recommendations to guide their selections. Were this information known, it would provide an existential description of the thinking that informs teachers’ vocabulary planning.

This case study describes the vocabulary selections, explanations, and justifications six teachers used when planning interactive read-alouds for intermediate students in Literacy Collaborative© (LC) classrooms. Teachers were interviewed twice about how they would conduct interactive read-alouds with two informational and two narrative texts. Additional data were gathered from discussions of how teachers use their classrooms as captured during classwalks with the teachers after each interview. These data were used to answer the research questions concerning the teachers’ vocabulary selections; the differences in selections from narrative and from informational books; the
justification and explanation of those selections; the similarity between the selections, explanations, justifications, and researchers’ recommendations; and changes to the selections, explanations, and justifications between the two rounds of data collection.

Analysis of interview transcripts and classwalk descriptions revealed teachers’ selections, explanations, and justifications differed for narrative and informational texts, with connections to students’ existing vocabulary knowledge being favored over the development of conceptual vocabulary knowledge for narrative texts, and vice versa. Teachers’ vocabulary selections generally aligned with researchers’ recommendations for word selection, even though the names of researchers or their theories were not mentioned. Furthermore, teachers’ explanations addressed contextual support for vocabulary and development of content vocabulary more frequently in the second round.

Recommendations for future research include observational studies in combination with interviews about vocabulary selection, studies of vocabulary selection involving teachers not receiving LC professional development, studies of vocabulary selection controlling for teachers’ existing familiarity with vocabulary research, and studies relating student vocabulary knowledge with teachers’ selections.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. ii

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ iv

Vita ...................................................................................................................................... vi

List of Tables ................................................................................................................ viii

Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 2: Literature Review ......................................................................................... 6

Chapter 3: Methodology ............................................................................................... 32

Chapter 4: Descriptive Account of Interviews and Classwalks ...................................... 61

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion .............................................................................. 119

Chapter 6: Limitations, Implications, and Recommendations ........................................ 189

References ..................................................................................................................... 197

Appendix A: Interview Questions ................................................................................... 206

Appendix B: Classwalk Questions .................................................................................. 207
List of Tables

Table 1. Vocabulary Selected by Each Teacher, Round 1.................................62
Table 2. Elements of Teachers’ Classrooms, Round 1.................................79
Table 3. Vocabulary Selected by Each Teacher, Round 2.............................85
Table 4. Elements of Teachers’ Classrooms, Round 2.................................108
Table 5. Vocabulary Teachers Selected for Instruction with *Morris Lessmore* ..........120
Table 6. Vocabulary Teachers Selected for Instruction with *The Lotus Seed* ..........121
Table 7. Vocabulary Teachers Selected for Instruction with *My Brother Martin* .......123
Table 8. Vocabulary Teachers Selected for Instruction with *Nelson Mandela* ........124
Table 9. Vocabulary Teachers Selected by Type of Text......................................131
Table 10. Nature of Vocabulary Selected from Narrative Texts..........................134
Table 11. Nature of Vocabulary Selected from Informational Texts.....................140
Table 12. Instances of Teachers’ Explanations Aligned with Vocabulary Research.....159
Table 13. Changes in the Number of Words Selected by Teachers for Each Round.....175
Chapter 1: Introduction

Vocabulary development in the elementary school years is highly consequential for students’ later literacy development. Students’ vocabulary knowledge in infancy and the early elementary grades is correlated with their comprehension in the later elementary school and high school (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Marchman & Fernald, 2008). In the course of adequate literacy development, students benefit from lessons and activities (or educational experiences) that will advance the depth and breadth of their vocabulary knowledge.

Vocabulary has a high correlation with intelligence (this correlation is known as the knowledge hypothesis, Anderson & Freebody, 1981) and a moderate to high correlation with comprehension (Nagy, 2007). The existence of these two correlations suggests vocabulary is an important part of reading and of school success. There is reason to believe the beginning of this success is found in the verbal interactions between parents or caregivers and children or in conversations between children because a child’s neighborhood social networks and home literacy environment play an important role in the child’s vocabulary development (Froiland, Powell, Diamond, 2014). In particular, parents’ or caregivers’ engagement in narrative-based conversations with their children can support vocabulary development (Peterson, Jesso, McCabe, 1999). The importance of home literacy environments and conversations with children or between groups of
children prior to school enrollment reveals the influence of oral language on vocabulary development.

Although children are developing oral language from the first months of their lives, the demands of the language used at school require more than listening to and talking with new words. In fact, nearly all students (95 percent) in third grade can decode more words than they can comprehend (Biemiller, 2012). Furthermore, the expressive and receptive vocabulary of at-risk preschool students is correlated with their oral language and reading comprehension in fourth grade (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). Given this situation, the need for efficacious vocabulary instruction is of paramount importance if students are to be successful in school beyond the third grade because the demands of text complexity continue to increase each school year: students are reading an increasing number of texts, texts of increasing complexity, and texts of different genres (Jeong, Gaffney, & Choi, 2010; Duke & Block, 2012).

Although vocabulary instructional methods are one part of vocabulary as a topic of study, the words that are selected for instruction and how these words are selected must be considered as well. However, there is no research that describes how elementary classroom teachers do select words for vocabulary instruction, though there are recommendations for how elementary classroom teachers should select vocabulary for instruction (cf. Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Biemiller, 2009; Hiebert & Cervetti 2013). If more were known about the actual words teachers select, the nature of those words, the explanations and justifications they give for selecting those words, and whether the words they select align with current recommendations for word selection, it would be clearer how research does or does not inform teachers’ word selection. With
this information at hand, ways to improve teachers’ vocabulary planning could be identified, as well as whether recommended vocabulary selection criteria (e.g., three tiers, words worth teaching, etc.) are influencing teachers’ vocabulary selections, explanations, and justifications.

**Statement of the Problem**

This study investigated how Literacy Collaborative (LC) (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001) teachers select vocabulary words to use in interactive read-alouds in several elementary school classrooms in a large urban Midwestern school district. Describing how teachers make these decisions is helpful because there is no research that directly addresses how teacher select vocabulary for instruction. In fact, it is unclear whether teachers use recommendations from current vocabulary instructional research to inform how they select words for instruction. To determine whether such research has informed their decision making to date, I conducted two rounds of interviews with the LC teachers about what vocabulary they would select and how they explain or justify those selections for two informational and two narrative texts. In the second-round interviews, I sought to identify whether teachers had changed the vocabulary they selected and whether the explanations and justifications they offered had changed as a result of extended implementation of the LC framework and additional professional development within this framework.

**Questions to Guide Research**

This study addresses a gap in the current literature on vocabulary instruction that relates to decisions teachers make about vocabulary they select for instruction. In particular, it focuses on teachers’ decision making relative to vocabulary words in
interactive read-alouds, which comprise part of the LC framework. It does not, however, address whether teachers’ intentions for instruction align with their actual instruction. The reactivity inherent in observing teacher instruction suggests it would be very difficult to obtain an authentic observation of teachers’ vocabulary instruction during interactive read-alouds because they may change their practice due to being observed, especially because they will know that there is interest in their vocabulary selection due to the nature of the study and the content of the interview questions. Thus, my focus is on the vocabulary selections teachers make and the explanations and justifications of those selections when presented with books they may use in their classrooms. These considerations led to the following research questions:

1. When presented with specific narrative and informational books to be used for an interactive read-aloud, what vocabulary do teachers select for instruction?

2. Does the nature of teachers’ vocabulary selections differ for narrative and informational texts? If so, how?

3. How do teachers justify or explain their vocabulary selections for narrative and informational texts?

4. How do teachers’ vocabulary selections compare to researchers’ recommendations for word selection?

5. Do teachers’ selections, justifications, and explanations change from the first round to the second round? If so, how?

**Definition of Terms**
Vocabulary as I consider it for this study refers to the words within texts read aloud to students during the interactive read-aloud of a LC lesson. This definition includes words learned receptively through oral language (i.e., listening vocabulary) and through conversations and discussions with the teacher and with other students during the interactive read-aloud. The goal of the study is to identify how teachers select vocabulary for instruction from books recommended for use in the interactive read-aloud of a LC lesson. The focus of the study is on the vocabulary the teacher selects while planning the interactive read-aloud and why that vocabulary is selected. As mentioned previously, vocabulary development is closely related to oral language development in the years prior to school enrollment (Froiland et al., 2013; Peterson et al., 1999), so my focus is on only one part of students’ vocabulary development.

An interactive read-aloud is part of the language/word study workshop of a LC lesson. It differs from a typical or traditional read-aloud because the teacher pauses periodically while reading to draw students’ attention to certain features of the text and to engage students in brief discussions about these features (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). For example, the teacher might draw students’ attention to the imagery the author’s words create or ask students why they think the illustrator chose to use certain colors on a particular page. Teachers might also discuss the theme of a narrative text or the content of an informational text when conducting an interactive read-aloud. These discussions may include vocabulary; however, focusing on vocabulary is not a requirement of leading an interactive read-aloud. Nevertheless, it provides an opportunity for students to be exposed to vocabulary in texts that are above their reading levels because the teacher is the reader.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Research on vocabulary instruction enjoyed a great deal of attention in the 1980s (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000). Though it has been a topic of research for decades before the 1980s, Graves and Watts-Taffe (2002) note it was not popular enough by 1984 to be included as a topic in the first volume of *The Handbook of Reading Research* (Pearson, Barr, Kamil, & Mosenthal, 1984). The focus of the research at this time was split between recommendations for direct instruction of word meanings to increase depth of vocabulary knowledge and recommendations for wide reading to increase breadth of vocabulary knowledge. The argument for direct instruction holds that the meanings of words students obtain from context are not deep enough to be useful, so direct instruction must be used to ensure students have the depth of knowledge for the words they need to know (Beck et al., 2013). Conversely, the argument for wide reading holds that there are too many words that students must know, so direct instruction does not make a sufficient contribution to the breadth of students’ vocabularies (Nagy & Anderson, 1984). In a sense, the literature on vocabulary instruction from this era can be divided into two categories: instruction intended to deepen or develop knowledge of specific words or instruction intended to help students learn the meanings of new words through generalization (Baumann & Kame’enui, 2003). However, the choice of words that should be used for instruction in the deepening and enriching knowledge of words’ meanings
approach to vocabulary development lacks descriptions of how teachers use this information.

**Differing Views on Vocabulary Development in the Classroom**

**Wide reading.** Proponents of the wide reading perspective reached their conclusion through analyzing corpora of words typically seen by students in the elementary and middle school grades. Their analysis led to an estimate that there are nearly 88,500 words in printed school English (Nagy & Anderson, 1984). This number, if divided across grade levels and days of instruction, suggests a pace of 40 words per day of instruction from first through twelfth grade. This pace is unsustainable and unrealistic (Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985). A more recent estimate puts the number of words in printed school English at 100,000 (Graves, Juel, Graves, & Dewitz, 2010), which only increases the number of words students must learn per day.

Although the number of words students must learn is daunting, it may seem useless to directly teach students the meanings of the words they need to know for reading. The number of words that can feasibly be taught directly across the course of grade one through grade 12 ranges from 3,000 to 8,640 (Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Adams, 2010). However, the knowledge of word meanings students need to have can sometimes go beyond the immediate meaning of a word in a sentence. That is, the meanings of words may be related to conceptual knowledge the student needs for reading (e.g., a book about the water cycle will feature words such as *evaporation*, *condensation*, and *precipitation* that are necessary for comprehending the text). There may also be words worth teaching because they are related to the theme of the text, but do not appear in the text, yet should be included in instruction (e.g., a book about a disagreement
between friends might not feature *compromise*, even though this word is related to the resolution of the plot). Thus, some type of background knowledge that connects these related words is necessary for vocabulary instruction (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). While building that background knowledge, teachers should focus on connecting the meanings of the words conceptually so that students understand how the words relate to each other and to the concepts in the text.

Furthermore, the use of wide reading has some drawbacks in terms of vocabulary development. There are certain categories of words that are not likely to be learned when reading: semantically opaque compound words (e.g., *dashboard*), multiple-meaning, or polysemous, words (e.g., *bank*), proper nouns (e.g., *Amazon*), and idioms (e.g., *between a rock and a hard place*) (Anderson & Nagy, 1992). Although the proportion of words in English accounted for by such words is unknown, their existence poses problems for a program of vocabulary instruction that relies only on wide reading. The case of polysemous words is especially problematic because many of the most frequent words in English have multiple meanings (Carroll, Davies, & Richman, 1971; Biemiller, 2009). Robust instruction of word meanings is thus necessary to disambiguate the meanings of polysemous words and other words that may be closely related in meaning (Beck & McKeown, 2007).

Another issue with the use of context to acquire the meanings of words is that it is insufficient in accounting for the number of words students must learn. One estimate of the percentage of new or unknown word meanings correctly inferred from context is five percent (Nagy et al., 1985). Others range as high as 15 percent (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). In either case, this is a low percentage of new words that are learned from context and it
relies on the reader being skilled enough to read quickly and independently to learn the words. One explanation for this low rate of words being learned is that the contexts where the words are found are not helpful. Contexts have been described in various ways: directive, non-directive, and misdirective (Beck, McKeown, & McCaslin, 1983). In many cases, sentences are non-directive or misdirective. So, to supplement the authors who use advanced words without the consideration of their readers’ ability to interpret word meanings from context, teaching word meanings as an instructional strategy is necessary.

Furthermore, the issue of instructional approaches points to a bigger issue: how we define word (Nagy, 2007). In their analysis of the number of words in English, run, ran, runs, running, and other derived forms of run are tallied as a single word (Nagy & Anderson, 1984). So this total contains many lexical items whose meanings are morphologically transparent. This definition is consonant with later views (Biemiller, 2012; Hiebert & Cervetti, 2013; Graves et al., 2010).

Regarding wide reading as an explanation for vocabulary learning, it is necessary to note the source Nagy and Anderson (1984) used to calculate their number of words in printed school English. The Carroll, Davies, and Richman (1971) list, also known as the American Heritage Word Frequency (AHWF) list was developed based on materials used by third through ninth graders. Although this corpus likely includes words that would appear in texts used by students in grade two and below, this list’s relevance for these learners is not clear. One major problem with word lists is that the order of the words by frequency does not suggest anything about the order they should be taught in, nor does it describe how the words may be related conceptually (McKeown, Beck, & Sandora, 2012). This lack of alignment with the lower grades is significant for the suggestion that
wide reading is a more effective way for students to learn vocabulary than direct instruction. This problem is especially acute for students who come from homes where oral language is not used frequently (i.e., parents making 176 utterances per hour) because these students have even more words to learn during these years than students who come from homes where oral language is used frequently (i.e., parents making 487 utterances per hour) (Hart & Risley, 2003). Students in first and second grade simply cannot read as many texts with as many words as older students can. Therefore, students in grade two and below must learn words from sources such as incidental exposure and interactive read-alouds (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; McGee & Schickedanz, 2007; Silverman, 2007; Collins, 2010). Thus, the wide reading explanation for vocabulary growth cannot explain all of the vocabulary knowledge students need to have, so using other instructional approaches such as having students complete word sorts to develop morphological awareness or metalinguistic awareness and teaching word meanings are therefore necessary.

**Morphological awareness and word sorting.** Morphological awareness is an appreciation of the fact that printed and spoken words are made up of units of meaning known as morphemes (Henderson, 1990; Ganske, 2000). Some morphemes are known as inflectional morphemes, or inflectional endings (Apel & Thomas-Tate, 2009). This class of morphemes includes -ed, -s, and -ing, each in the final position of a word. Inflectional morphemes give information about past tense, pluralization, or present progressive tense of the base word they are attached to. In contrast, derivational morphemes can be more complex (Apel & Thomas-Tate, 2009; Berninger, Abbott, Nagy, & Carlisle, 2012; Nagy, Berninger, & Abbott, 2006). These are morphemes such as -tion, -ous, and -ity, each (in
this case) in the final position of the word. These derivational morphemes give information about the part of speech, quality of, or state of the base word they are attached to. Derivational morphemes can be understood in two additional ways—as free morphemes and as bound morphemes. A free morpheme can stand on its own as a base word (e.g., care in careful or careless). A bound morpheme cannot stand on its own as a base word and needs another derivational morpheme or inflectional morpheme to connect to it (e.g., vis in vision or invisible) (Ganske, 2000).

One instructional method for developing morphological awareness in students is by using word sorts. In a word sort, the teacher selects a set of morphemes, often written on index cards or strips of paper, for the students to sort into categories based on similar features (Ganske, 2000). For example, students working on inflectional morphemes might be given a set of words to sort into categories such as present tense (e.g., run), past tense (e.g., ran), and present progressive tense (e.g., running). A student working on derivational morphemes might sort a set of words such as contestable, credible, available, and sensible into categories that reveal a relationship between the base word and the suffix of each word. (In this case, the base words that are free morphemes go with -able, and the base words that are bound morphemes go with -ible.) The goal of the word sort is for students to correctly categorize the words and to explain the logic of their sorting correctly (Ganske, 2000).

Metalinguistic awareness. Like wide reading and word sorting, metalinguistic awareness instruction does not involve the direct teaching of word meanings. Instead, it involves the teacher bringing attention to the morphology and syntax of words and sentences that students are seeing while they read (Nagy, 2007). Teaching students about
morphemes instead of individual words has the benefit of generalizability (Fukkink & de Glopper, 1998). The morphemes students are taught can be taught be quickly and will likely show up in other words, which makes this method of instruction quite efficient. In comparison, teaching students the meanings of individual words takes more time due to the dependence of the meanings of those words on the context of the rest of the sentence. The knowledge of taught words does not easily generalize to other words either.

Yet, there are limits to the usefulness of morphological awareness instruction because not all words can be decomposed into easily understood and manipulated morphemes. This limitation may be addressed by syntactic awareness, which is another of the constructs that comprises metalinguistic awareness (Nagy, 2007). Teaching students to be aware of how the syntax of a sentence affects the meanings of the words in that sentence may be useful in how students think about the meanings of words. This approach allows students to take context into account when they are reading, and it implies that word meanings are polysemous (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Armed with this knowledge, students may see the potential for having some leeway in how they define words and will know it is not necessary to know a word-for-word definition of each word in a passage.

**Word consciousness.** In later elementary grades, awakening students to the words all around them can be an instructional method in itself. A student who is word conscious inquires about the meanings of words, appreciates the nuances of words, and morphologically analyzes words (Anderson & Nagy, 1992). As with learning from context, word consciousness increases students’ ability to learn word meanings from a text as they are reading (Miller, Gage-Serio, & Scott, 2010; Graves & Watts-Taffe,
One of the ways it does so is by making students aware of the metacognitive demands of reading: they must notice when they do not understand a word’s meaning before they can attempt to infer a meaning for it. Additionally, these students will be motivated to investigate the meaning of the unknown word because their approach to the reading is such that they are curious about unknown words and want to find their meanings (Miller et al., 2010).

Word consciousness is related to metalinguistic awareness instruction in that both deal with attuning students to the words (parts of words in the case of metalinguistic awareness) in their reading. Word consciousness differs from metalinguistic awareness in that it encompasses phonology, syntax, and morphology, as well as the metacognitive demands of vocabulary learning and the affective aspects of enjoying the learning itself (Miller et al., 2010). In addition, words that are used to label objects in the world and in the classroom can be used to expand a students’ vocabulary—not just the words in the texts being read. Word consciousness can also address the sub-word level of meaning for these words as well. However, it is not merely morphological awareness taught outside of a reading lesson. It involves demonstrations of the teacher’s interest in and excitement about words, hence the importance of the affective aspect of learning. A teacher who can model curiosity about words may engender similar feelings in students who may then be interested in reading about these words as well.

Word consciousness is also a beneficial instructional approach because it is generative. That is, it is not limited to the teaching of a prescribed list of words. Instead, the goal of word consciousness is for students to learn to connect their current word knowledge with new words they encounter (Scott & Nagy, 2004; Miller et al., 2010). In
addition to being generative and allowing for independent learning of new vocabulary words, word consciousness has benefits for students who are not exposed to academic vocabulary at home (Hart & Risley, 1995). For these students, the words that are discussed as a result of word consciousness instruction may be the only source of academic language in their lives (Scott, Miller, & Flinspach, 2012). Given the disparity in home backgrounds and the consequences of that disparity for future literacy development, there is a great need for academic language instruction.

With so many words for students to learn, developing word consciousness in students will make it easier for them to expand the breadth of their vocabularies while they are reading (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002). It is even possible that word consciousness provides an explanation for how reading from context works. Students who are thinking about an author’s use of language will be more likely to notice when the author uses a word the student has not seen before. Furthermore, students who are word conscious will not only notice these new words but also they will be motivated to determine the meanings of these words precisely because they are new. This affective aspect of word consciousness instruction is the one that sets it apart from other types of instruction (Scott et al., 2012); students who enjoy working with words will likely notice when they encounter unknown words in text or in conversation. This likelihood of noticing these words presumably makes it easier for students to add new or unknown words to their vocabularies.

**Teaching word meanings.** In contrast to the wide reading perspective is the perspective that vocabulary development happens best through direct instruction of word meanings. A central idea in this perspective on vocabulary development is the concept of
rich and robust vocabulary instruction. However, there is some disagreement about how to decide which words are worthy of extended instruction.

**Rich and robust instruction.** One of the phrases Beck’s group brought to the lexicon of vocabulary research is “rich vocabulary instruction,” which they define as instruction that features repeated exposures to words, extended conversations about words (i.e., sharing a new word’s meaning, then asking students to identify whether the new word is similar or dissimilar to known words), phonological imprints of words (i.e., hearing the words spoken aloud), and clarification of the meaning of similar words (Beck et al., 2013). This instruction can further be characterized as “robust” if the words’ meanings (not their definitions) are discussed directly and these discussions are followed by extended interactions with the words (Beck et al., 2013).

**Selecting Words to Teach**

More recently, research has dealt with which words should be the focus of instruction. Some of these research recommendations are Beck et al.’s (2013) three-tiered hypothesis, Biemiller’s *Words Worth Teaching* (2009), and Hiebert’s (2011) vocabulary Megaclusters. Each of these recommendations divides words into categories to describe the value of selecting certain words for instruction. However, there are disagreements about which words belong in which categories, and thus, which words are selected for instruction.

**Three ways of categorizing words for instruction.** One way of addressing word selection is by dividing the words into three tiers (Beck et al., 2013). In Tier One, the words are commonly used and do not need specific instruction. In Tier Two, the words are uncommon enough to warrant specific instruction, but not so uncommon as to be
obscure or unlikely to be seen again. In Tier Three, the words are too particular to a single domain (e.g., the sciences, literary criticism, finance, etc.) to be of any instructional use because they are too infrequent. They exist more to build content knowledge than to build a general vocabulary of high utility (Beck & McKeown, 2007). Therefore, they should be taught only when relevant to specific content.

In contrast, Biemiller (2009) argues for a specific list of words to be taught at each grade level. These words, like those by Beck et al., (2013) fall into three categories: easy, high priority, and difficult. Within each category, the words can be divided into sub-categories that describe how easily each word can be taught to students. These sub-categories are words with concrete meanings (i.e., words representing objects that can be pointed to or gestures that can be acted out) and words that must be defined verbally (i.e., words representing concepts that are in some way abstract or at least not easily pointed out or acted out) (Biemiller, 2012). High-priority words are the words Biemiller recommends for teaching. These words are known by no less than 20 percent of students in a grade level and by no more than 70 percent of students in a grade level.

A third option is Hiebert’s (2011) vocabulary Megaclusters, which are based on Marzano and Marzano’s (1988) semantic clusters. (There is support for the benefits of teaching vocabulary in conceptual clusters in pre-Kindergarten settings as well: Neuman, Newman, & Dwyer, 2011; Neuman & Kaefer, 2013; Marulis & Neuman, 2010.) Hiebert argues that the vocabulary selections publishers and curriculum planners have made do not take advantage of the interrelatedness of words (Nagy & Scott, 2000). If these groups had considered semantic and morphological relatedness when selecting words for instruction, students would benefit by being able to see the relationships between texts.
and words more clearly. It is not as simple as selecting different words, however. Teachers must also shift their instruction of narratives from focusing on structure to focusing on concepts (Hiebert, 2011). For example, Hiebert argues that teachers’ instruction focuses on plot events more than character development or actions. Thus, students may be missing out on some of the vocabulary authors are using to describe characters’ traits, motivations, and actions. Because similar words are used to describe these features of characters across narratives, shifting to a conceptual stance when discussing narrative texts with students enables them to deepen their vocabulary knowledge of these similar words (e.g., alarm, fright, shock, terror, and desperation) when they appear. In contrast, teaching from a structural stance when discussing narrative text relies on words such as plot, rising action, and tone that are necessary to understand the text but do not appear in the text, and thus cannot be used to discuss conceptually related words.

Despite the similarity in names of Biemiller’s (2009) categories and the tiers of Beck et al., (2013), there is a disagreement about where to divide the first category from the second category. Some of Biemiller’s “high priority” words would be considered Tier One words by Beck’s group (Biemiller, 2011). Therefore, Biemiller uses evidence from classrooms to argue that there are more high-priority words that require teaching than there are Tier Two words (Biemiller, 2012). It is necessary to keep in mind that Biemiller’s words are organized primarily by whether they have been learned (defined as being known by 20 to 70 percent of students in a grade level [Biemiller, 2012]), not by whether they should be taught. The implication is that the words in the high priority category should be taught. Yet, if these words are likely to be known by 20 to 70 percent
of students, it may be the case that these words are learned incidentally, not instructionally. There are words in this list that could be learned incidentally from conversations, television, or independent reading, all of which suggest this word list may be too liberal—many of the words on Biemiller’s (2009) list may not need to be included.

An additional issue with Biemiller’s (2009) list is that it is based on Dale and O’Rourke’s (1981) *Living Word Vocabulary*, which is outdated (Nagy & Hiebert, 2011) and thus biased toward words coined in the 1970s and earlier. Even though Biemiller has empirical data to support students’ ability to learn “high-priority” words, he may be missing out on words that are not on the list. Words coined in the 1980s and later may not be included on Biemiller’s list, which is consequential because there may be many such words that are worth teaching.

A criticism of Beck’s group’s tiered approach to vocabulary instruction is the lack of a list of words for each tier. Although creating such a list would take a large time investment, the lack of such a list has prompted disagreements about which words belong in which tiers, and thus which words become the focus of instruction. To this end, Beck’s group has refused to generate such a list (Beck & McKeown, 2007). Even with a list in hand, teachers may question its utility for instruction. Given that there may be thousands of Tier Two words to learn in elementary and middle schools, it would be necessary to develop some type of scope and sequence for teaching the words. This scope and sequence would be similar to Biemiller’s grade-level categories for words, of course, but even that list is problematic because it does not describe how the words are related conceptually. This quality of interrelatedness of word meanings is one that teachers must take into account when teaching word meanings (Nagy & Scott, 2000). If there is any
merit to the knowledge hypothesis (Anderson & Freebody, 1981), then it would make sense for teachers to have a list of Tier Two words (or their grade-level equivalents in the case of Biemiller’s list) presented in groups of conceptually related words. However, only Hiebert’s (2011) Megaclusters represent words in terms of conceptual relatedness.

If the words in Tier Two are not listed, it is still possible to generate additional descriptive criteria that distinguish them from words in Tier One or Tier Three. The first step in doing so is to narrow the scope of the words that must be taught. To start, Beck and McKeown carve out a section of Nagy and Anderson’s (1984) estimated 88,500 words in printed school English: the 15,000 words that students are likely to encounter most frequently. These are the words that appear most frequently to the words that appear once every ten years. Nagy and Anderson (1984) suggest some words are seen only once every million words, a frequency that corresponds to once in a lifetime; Beck and McKeown’s criterion is several orders of magnitude lower than that figure. From this total, they subtract 8,000 per Nagy and Anderson’s (1984) suggestion that it is reasonable to expect a third grader to know that many words (Beck & McKeown, 2007). The difference, 7,000 words, comprises Tier Two. From there, Beck and McKeown propose teaching 200 words per year to students in Kindergarten through second grade and 400 words per year to students in third through ninth grade. This brings the total to 3,400 Tier Two words that could potentially be the focus of instruction, or less than half of the words they classify into this category (Beck & McKeown, 2007). However, even without a list to reference for these words, it is important to note that not all Tier Two words will be amenable to instruction. To that end, the importance is not so much in correctly classifying a word into or out of Tier Two, but to have teachers discuss the merits of
which words are worthy of selection for instruction. Even with that caveat stated, there are still no studies describing how teachers have used the descriptions of these tiers to select words for instruction.

A further complication with using Beck’s groups’ three-tiered hypothesis is that content-area text (e.g., science and social studies non-fiction or informational text) will feature many Tier Two words that require an increased amount of intensive instruction (Nagy & Hiebert, 2011). Although these words may fit the criteria of Tier Two because they are necessary for comprehension of the text and may have multiple meanings that are relevant in other contexts (Beck et al., 2013), they may also represent challenging new concepts that require not only vocabulary instruction, but content instruction also. In other words, these may be known words for new concepts (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002) and the teaching of the vocabulary words that go along with those concepts is incidental to the teaching of the concepts themselves. Given this increased amount of intensive instruction, these Tier Two words start to become more similar to Tier Three words because they have limited generalizability, or are too specific to the particular context being discussed.

The limitation of certain words being limited to informational or scientific texts also poses problems for Hiebert’s (2011) Megaclusters. In Hiebert’s article, the focus is on how to use these Megaclusters to select words for use with instruction of narrative texts. Due to the differences in kind of the vocabulary in narrative and informational texts (Hiebert & Cervetti, 2013), it is not appropriate to use the Megaclusters as a word selection tool for informational texts because the Megaclusters were developed using only narrative texts. Thus, the differences in vocabulary demands in narrative and
informational texts could lead to the exclusion of words that should have been selected and the inclusion of some words that should have been omitted. Furthermore, because the Megaclusters were based on existing work by Marzano and Marzano (1988), the creation of Megaclusters for informational text would need to use a different source or generate a corpus of informational text vocabulary to begin with.

**Other factors related to word selection.** In addition to these three recommendations for word selection, there are other factors to consider. One factor that may not be helpful to take into account is the word’s frequency. The rarity of a word does not give any indication of its necessity for teaching. Students commonly use rare words such as *mall* and *pizza* in their writing, which suggests rare words are not necessarily difficult to understand (Flinspach, Scott, & Vevea, 2010). On a related note, the frequency of the words does not suggest anything about the sequence they might be learned in. For example, two words may be close to each other in frequency while being unrelated conceptually. The converse is also true; words that may be far from each other in frequency may be closely related conceptually (Beck & McKeown, 2007). Therefore, frequency alone is not an adequate criterion to use when selecting vocabulary words for instruction development. Beyond frequency, teachers must take into account factors such as interrelatedness or polysemy (Nagy & Scott, 2000) or familiarity (Nagy & Hiebert, 2011) so that students may learn the words more easily.

Nagy and Hiebert’s (2011) discussion of the difficulty of using the criteria of familiarity is relevant to teaching word meanings as well. Teachers may wish to teach words that students will be unfamiliar with because these unknown words are necessary for the comprehension of the text or because they may be new to the students. Setting
aside the near impossibility of the latter proposition, it is unclear what metric to use for determining the familiarity or unfamiliarity of a certain word for a student. The closest existing metric is Dale and O’Rourke’s (1981) *Living Word Vocabulary*, which is fraught with problems—mainly that it is outdated. Although considering students’ familiarity with words does seem like a useful idea, it is unclear how considerations of familiarity may be incorporated into instruction.

Because raw frequency may not be a useful feature to use when selecting words and students’ familiarity with certain words is a difficult feature to measure, interrelatedness may be more helpful to consider (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Taking this feature of word learning into account means the words that are selected for instruction are intended to be related to each other, usually as part of words that are featured in a text the students are reading or that have a conceptual relationship to those words. By introducing the words as a set of related concepts, the teacher adds information to the students’ understanding of the meanings of each word. In other words, the meanings of words do not exist in isolation from each other, but as part of the same network of meanings as the concepts in a text or the general concept shared by the word itself. These networks of meaning also explain how words are learned incidentally; when children or students interact with their parents and teachers, they associate new words with the concepts or objects in the environment by fast mapping (Carey & Bartlett, 1978). These associations between words and the objects or concepts they refer to allow the reader to integrate the names of these objects with the other related objects and ideas in the environment, which deepens and enriches their knowledge of the words and the world. By the same logic,
teaching the meanings of words that are related due to their presence in a book may take advantage of the same process of vocabulary learning.

A further reason for the use of direct teaching of word meanings has to do with the incrementality with which words are learned (Nagy & Scott, 2000). This concept of word learning suggests the meaning of a word is not learned all at once, but over repeated exposures. It is not correct to say that simply reading the word and reading its definition numerous times will account for such exposures. Instead, the rich, robust vocabulary instruction Beck’s group (1983, 2013) describes is recommended. With each new exposure to a word, the student adds new information to its conceptual network: a new meaning, a new context, or a new set of related words. These additional exposures allow the student to deepen knowledge of each word and ensure it is included in the students’ vocabulary. A teacher is better suited to provide these opportunities to students than a student reading independently because the teacher can more easily generate synonyms for words being learned or identify texts that contain words students have recently learned. Teachers are also better equipped to enable deep processing, which is one of the hallmarks of rich instruction (McKeown et al., 2012). Deep processing means having extended conversations about the words, conversations that give the students many chances to examine the meaning of the word and articulate their thinking about it (McKeown et al., 2012). In comparison, repeated exposure to a word while reading independently does not allow for the clarifying support and input given by a teacher (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). To determine the meaning of words in these cases, students must rely on authors to write sentences that are full of rich contextual clues, which is not a likely scenario.
Gaps in the Research on Selecting Vocabulary for Instruction

As discussed in the preceding review of the literature on vocabulary instruction, three general ways teachers can identify words for instruction are by genre, by list, or by tier, (Graves et al., 2014). Selecting words by considering genre is similar to acknowledging that there are differences between narrative and informational texts in that each genre of text has different vocabulary, so the selection process for these different genres will also be different (cf. Hiebert & Cervetti, 2013). Selecting words by using a list suggests there is only one decision to make about a word, namely whether it is worth teaching or not (Biemiller, 2009). The compiler of the list decides in advance whether the word should be taught and the teacher has to trust the compiler’s judgment. Selecting words by considering which tier they occupy (Beck et al., 2013) also implies some level of trust in the creator of the tiers. However, in contrast to the actual list shared by Biemiller, there is not a list of words for each tier; there are only descriptions of each of the tiers. Teachers must interpret the descriptions of these tiers for each word they select. Even with this interpretive step between the researchers and the teacher in the tiered word hypothesis, there is still no research that describes how teachers interpret the descriptions of the tiers to select words for instruction.

Although they are not addressing teachers directly, Nagy and Hiebert (2011) offer four factors to consider when selecting words for instruction: the frequency and dispersion of words; the relationships between meanings of words; the students’ knowledge of words; and the importance of words in the lesson. Though these authors consider these factors in detail, they explicitly state that it is beyond the scope of their study to consider how teachers or students select words to use in a lesson. In effect, they
have described only how researchers have discussed theories of word selection, not how teachers may make use of this information for instructional purposes. The authors acknowledge that establishing a theory of word selection is necessary before they may consider how teachers would apply that theory. It remains unclear whether teachers would consider each of the four factors (and each of the factors’ two features) when selecting words.

**Research concerning vocabulary selection.** To better investigate vocabulary selection, I conducted an extensive search of the literature on vocabulary instruction from 2010 to 2014 using research databases, manual searches of journal abstracts, and the invisible college. This date range was selected because it included studies conducted in anticipation of or in the midst of the Common Core State Standards reforms in the United States (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, [NGACBP & CCSSO] 2010). The searches yielded a total of 73 unique articles and reports to review. The majority of the articles (57 articles; 78 percent) were not relevant to vocabulary selection or read-alouds. The remaining 16 articles were concerned with topics ancillary to vocabulary selection; however, there were a few that addressed it more closely than the others.

The relevant articles can be classified into four categories. Most common were intervention studies where researchers selected words for teachers to use for instruction (Gonzalez, Pollard-Durodola, Simmons, Taylor, Davis, Fogarty, & Simmons, 2014; Maynard, Pullen, & Coyne, 2010; Nielsen & Friesen, 2012; Filippini, Gerber, & Leafstedt, 2012; Gonzalez, Pollard-Durodola, Simmons, Taylor, Davis, Kim, & Simmons, 2011; Puhalla, 2011). In these six articles, researchers may have cited
vocabulary research to support the case for selecting certain words, but the teachers were never the ones doing the selecting.

Another approach was to train teachers how to use vocabulary selection criteria generated from existing vocabulary research (Graves et al., 2014; Blamey, Beauchat, & Sweetman, 2012; Wilson, Nash, & Earl, 2010; Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim, & Santoro, 2010). Even though teachers in these four studies received professional development in vocabulary selection (e.g., how to select Tier Two words), the articles did not report on their selections in detail, nor did they describe the justifications and explanations for teachers’ selections. In cases where there were words listed, they were only present as evidence of the fact that the professional development happened. No attempts to describe the nature of the words were included.

Other articles described observation studies involving teachers’ vocabulary instruction (Silverman, Proctor, Harring, Doyle, Mitchell, & Meyer, 2014; Carlisle, Kelcey, & Berebitsky, 2013), sometimes during read-alouds in particular (Kindle, 2010; Watts, 1995). As with the studies of teachers receiving professional development in how to select vocabulary for instruction, the focus of the analysis in these four articles was not the words themselves or why the words were selected. Rather, the instructional sequences teachers used to discuss vocabulary were the focus of the analysis.

Finally, the remaining three articles featured interviews with teachers about vocabulary instruction (Watts, 1995; Corrigan, 2011; O’Leary, Cockburn, Powell, & Diamond, 2010). One article described the relationship between pre-service teachers’ verbal abilities and the complexity of vocabulary they selected for a read-aloud with a small group of first- or second-grade students (Corrigan, 2011). Another featured group
interviews with teachers who discussed the criteria they used for vocabulary selection (O’Leary et al., 2010). Although both of these studies concerned vocabulary selection, the purpose of Corrigan’s (2011) was to determine whether pre-service teachers with higher verbal abilities would also select more difficult vocabulary for their students. The vocabulary selections were analyzed only in terms of their complexity, and there were not descriptions of pre-service teachers’ explanations or justifications for the vocabulary they selected. In O’Leary et al., (2011), the groups of teachers were prompted to discuss vocabulary selection criteria in general; the interviews were not focused on a specific text.

Watts (1995) deserves further discussion as it was the only study to use both observations and interviews. After four months of observations, the six teachers in the study were interviewed to elicit in general terms their purposes for teaching vocabulary. This approach to learning about teachers’ vocabulary selections and instruction is most closely aligned with the current study. However, it bears two flaws: its date of publication and its general prompting for vocabulary selection. Some of the comparatively more recent developments in vocabulary research (e.g., differences between narrative and informational texts’ vocabulary loads, vocabulary selection recommendations, developing word consciousness, etc.) were not included in this study. So, the comparison of teachers’ vocabulary instruction to then-current research does not yield the same insights that could be gleaned from an analysis of current teachers’ vocabulary selections, explanations, and justifications. Furthermore, the prompts for vocabulary selection in the post-observation interviews were general, not specific to the words teachers actually selected. Due to the possibility of interview respondents reporting an idealized version of
their instruction when prompted with overly general questions (Leech, 2002), the explanations of their vocabulary selections may not be as valid as questions about specific words. Thus, the current study is substantively different from Watts (1995) due to its inclusion of questions about specific words, its more current review of vocabulary research, and its inclusion of two rounds of interviews to track changes over time in teachers’ vocabulary selections.

To summarize, there are many recommendations teachers may choose from when selecting words for instruction. However, there is no research that directly addresses how teachers select vocabulary for instruction. The explanations and justifications teachers make when selecting vocabulary are important because vocabulary development is crucial for students’ literacy development. With a better understanding of how teachers select vocabulary for instruction, we can identify how to support these teachers if they are selecting words with the use of unhelpful criteria. Alternatively, if they are using research-supported criteria, we can be secure in the knowledge that vocabulary selection recommendations are making their way into the classroom and can probe further for how students in these classes may be benefitting from this instruction.

Interactive Read-alouds

The sole location where vocabulary is sought in this study is in the interactive read-aloud portion of the LC framework (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). There are many dimensions along which interactive read-alouds can vary, including text selection, preparation, setting purposes, fluency, expression, discussion, and connections to reading and writing (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004). Teachers who use the LC framework to guide their teaching take these dimensions into account during their interactive read-
Furthermore, the implementation of LC across a three-year period in 17 schools across the United States revealed an increase in rates of learning (as measured by average years’ worth of growth in each school) of 16 percent, 28 percent, and 32 percent for the first, second, and third years of implementation (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010). Although these strong, positive results of implementing the LC framework did not measure the influence of teachers’ interactive read-aloud instruction on student learning, the high teacher fidelity to the LC framework suggests teachers were incorporating the many dimensions of interactive read-aloud in their lessons. Other studies of interactive read-alouds conducted outside of the LC framework have shown benefits to students’ vocabulary development (Lennox, 2013; Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002). Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that interactive read-alouds conducted by a teacher who is being trained in the LC framework would have a strong knowledge base for selecting vocabulary during the read-aloud.

**Theoretical Framework**

Nagy and Scott’s (2000) five aspects word knowledge complexity provide a theoretical framing for this study. These aspects are incrementality (i.e., words are learned over time instead of all at once), polysemy (i.e., words have multiple meanings), multidimensionality (i.e., word knowledge includes knowledge of meaning, pronunciation, spelling, frequency, register, etc.), interrelatedness (i.e., words often appear with other words related to them in meaning), and heterogeneity (i.e., some word meanings are easier to grasp than others) (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Though these authors do not directly address the difference in vocabulary demands between informational and narrative texts (cf. Nagy & Hiebert, 2011; Hiebert & Cervetti, 2013), this distinction
follows from the relationship between polysemy and interrelatedness. Conflating the idea that words have multiple meanings and the idea that the meaning of a word is part of a network of meanings of other words, one can ascertain how the vocabulary in an informational text may be different from that in an informational text. That is, *figure* has different meanings depending on whether it appears in a math textbook, an artist’s critique, or in the dialogue of a short story. Thus, this distinction between informational and narrative text’s vocabulary demands forms a sixth aspect of word knowledge.

Furthermore, an extension of the reasoning underlying multidimensionality leads to the closely related concepts of word consciousness and metalinguistic awareness. If word knowledge includes knowledge of spelling and pronunciation, then metalinguistic knowledge must necessarily be part of what one knows about a word. To even consider word and word parts as objects of study also implies the existence of word consciousness. Thus, considering metalinguistic awareness and word consciousness as logical extensions of multidimensionality suggests a seventh aspect of word knowledge.

Although the five aspects of vocabulary complexity (Nagy & Scott, 2000) and the two additional dimensions resulting from combinations and extensions of those dimensions provide a robust theoretical framework to use in data analysis, it is still possible that there are other aspects of vocabulary learning or literacy development that teachers may refer to when discussing their vocabulary selections. Because the extant research on vocabulary selection is written from the researchers’ perspectives, it does not represent teachers’ perspectives and interpretations of vocabulary selection in the classroom. In other words, we know a great deal about how researchers think about vocabulary and how they think it should be applied in the classroom, but we do not know
as much about how teachers think about vocabulary and how it should be taught in the classroom. So, this study focuses on the teachers’ descriptions of their vocabulary selections prior to an interactive read-aloud, or an endogenous description of vocabulary (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) as opposed to the exogenous descriptions of vocabulary researchers. My rationale for obtaining information about teachers’ vocabulary selection processes stems from the importance of vocabulary to literacy development. If we know more about how teachers are selecting vocabulary for instruction, we may be able to identify the need for professional development for teachers as it relates to vocabulary instruction. Such professional development would take advantage of what teachers already know about instruction and may thus be more effective as the professional development can be tailored to the needs of the teachers.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the study’s methodology in terms of its research design, the context of teacher learning, the research setting, the nature of the participants, my role as a researcher, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures.

**Research Design**

This research is a case study (Barone, 2011) of teachers’ vocabulary selection practices for interactive read-alouds in a LC setting. According to the case study research discussed by Barone (2011), the domains along which case studies can vary include questions, purpose, sampling, and data quality. For this study, those domains are aligned with Barone’s (2011) recommendations in the following ways. The initial question that provided the genesis of this study was “How do teachers select vocabulary for instruction?” This question was refined through reflection on the context of the research to include considerations particular to interactive read-alouds, existing vocabulary research, the nature of the words selected, and changes to teachers’ selections over time. As a result, the initial question was revised to encompass the domains covered by the five research questions. The purpose of this case study is to describe teachers’ vocabulary selections, justifications, and explanations in the context of an interactive read-aloud. Although a variety of these aspects have been addressed previously (cf. Watts, 1995; Kindle, 2010), the combination of analyzing vocabulary selections and explanations or justifications of those selections has not been investigated. Thus, this study provides a
description of a unique topic. The sampling procedure for this study includes multiple cases, which provide a means of contrasting the results of different teachers’ responses to identify trends and unique instances. Finally, for data quality, two rounds of two data sources (interviews and classwalks) were collected to ensure the validity of the representation of teachers’ cases.

Teachers were interviewed twice to determine whether there were changes to their vocabulary selections and their explanations and justifications of those selections. Interviews were conducted in teachers’ classrooms, office spaces, or school bookrooms at the beginning of September and the beginning of December 2014. The first round of interviews and classwalks were conducted two weeks after the first weeklong professional development training session. The second round of interviews and classwalks were conducted seven weeks after the second weeklong professional development training session. In the second session, teachers were introduced to word study and morphology and asked to incorporate a word study plan into their teaching. The second round interviews were not conducted immediately after the second training session because teachers needed time to incorporate word study content into their implementation of the LC framework. Although the LC professional development model includes ongoing support throughout the academic year, there was not a third round of interviews and classwalks because the initial delivery of word study and morphology content was likely to have the largest impact on teacher vocabulary instruction in the months after the second professional development session because teachers continue to learn about and incorporate into their teaching the other parts of the framework (e.g., interactive writing, guided reading) later in the year. The additional professional
development across the LC framework is likely to result in a balanced emphasis on all parts of the framework toward the end of the year, thus capturing teachers’ thinking early in the year would reveal more influence of the word study and morphology content.

Another consideration that factored into the interview schedule is the need to develop rapport. I needed to establish rapport with these teachers so that they would be comfortable speaking with me and would readily volunteer information about their thinking during the interviews (Spradley, 1979). My presence during their initial professional development workshops was an opportunity to begin building rapport with the teachers. Had I waited until the first round of interviews to introduce myself to the teachers, I would have been building rapport and conducting the interview simultaneously. Although this is an acceptable, and sometimes even unavoidable, situation in interviewing, the benefits of establishing rapport indicate that getting to know the teachers before starting my interviews with them is preferable. Incidentally, the need to build rapport is also why I chose not to interview them prior to the beginning of the first week of LC professional development in August. If I had chosen that schedule, I would also not have had time to build rapport with teachers, and I may have had difficulty scheduling interviews during the teachers’ summer vacation.

This design includes what Flyvbjerg (2006) terms an “information-oriented” sample selection of extreme cases. The small sample size (only six teachers) necessitated my interviews being as informative as possible, so I chose teachers who are participating in LC training because I know LC to be a pedagogy that involves interactive read-alouds and provides students with a language-rich environment (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). These interactive read-alouds sometimes require teachers to introduce or explain
unknown words. Thus, the interviews were informative because they are with teachers who have to give some thought to the words they are selecting for instruction. As part of being immersed in the LC framework, these teachers were trained to return to their schools as coaches and staff developers. Their status as coaches further supports the idea that they were informative as interview respondents because they were expected to become well-versed enough in the LC framework that they are comfortable training and monitoring other teachers who are learning to use it.

**Literacy Collaborative Framework**

In the LC framework, teachers use balanced literacy: 30 to 60 minutes are spent on language/word study each day, 60 minutes are spent on reading each day, and 60 minutes are spent on writing each day (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). These time periods are flexible in that students do not need to be working on writing content for 60 minutes straight. The goal of LC is to make all students lifelong readers and writers, so the teacher’s role is not to lecture or to directly instruct students on all aspects of the curriculum. Instead, students, especially those in the intermediate grades (three through six), are given the responsibility to be independent learners so that they are able to make plans to read and write even in the absence of the teacher (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Teachers using the LC framework encourage this independence in their students by focusing on learning as a process of inquiry that involves reading, writing, and word study (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Students’ responsibility for becoming independent learners is supported by teachers who scaffold the reading, writing, and word study lessons in ways that are responsive to students’ needs (Biancarosa et al., 2009; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).
During the language/word study workshop, students may complete a variety of activities that address words and language inside and outside of texts and books. One goal of this workshop (among many others) is to focus students’ attention on the tacit knowledge of phonemes, morphemes, and graphemes that they already have (i.e., to develop metalinguistic awareness) so that they can use this knowledge to understand new or unknown words when reading. One method teachers can use to introduce students to their own tacit knowledge of phonemes, morphemes, and graphemes is a word sort. As discussed previously, this instructional method involves introducing students to concepts such as sound-spelling relationships (e.g., final e indicates a long vowel sound), spelling-meaning relationships (e.g., anti means “not” and ante means “before”), and conceptual relationships (e.g., canopy, photosynthesis, and understory are rain forest words). Students explore these concepts independently or in small groups by using index cards or small pieces of paper to sort the words and discuss the categories that emerge.

Another method teachers can use to introduce and discuss language/word study is the interactive read-aloud. In these read-alouds, teachers model the enjoyment of literacy and reading for students and work to expand students’ listening vocabularies by pointing out and discussing interesting features of the text being read. Teachers can use these read-alouds for a variety of purposes beyond introducing or noticing vocabulary words. For example, teachers model fluent reading and might ask students to make predictions about events in the text or to make connections between the text and their lives or other texts. Additionally, teachers are asked to think about selecting tier-two words (Beck et al., 2013) when selecting vocabulary for instruction in any part of the LC framework (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).
Although teachers have many options unrelated to vocabulary to choose from during interactive read-alouds and during the language/word study workshop, the LC framework includes various reasons for the inclusion of vocabulary instruction. One reason to include vocabulary instruction during interactive read-alouds is that knowledge of word meanings exists on a continuum from unknown to fully known, so multiple exposures to the same word are necessary to learn the word (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001), a feature of word learning known as incrementality (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Further, students who come to school having experienced comparatively low levels of oral language in the home will find it harder to learn new words (Hart & Risley, 1995). Therefore, teaching word meanings during interactive read-alouds can increase these students’ oral vocabularies, which will increase their ability to learn new words when reading independently in the future. Thus, vocabulary instruction during interactive read-alouds provides a means for students to catch up to their grade-level peers in oral language and reading. Instructionally, LC teachers’ vocabulary instruction should give new labels to known concepts, take context into account, take polysemy into account, discuss figurative uses of words, and discuss connotations of words (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). These recommendations and the theories that guide them are notable in that they take into account notions of incrementality, interrelatedness, multidimensionality, and polysemy, four of the aspects related to word meaning that Nagy and Scott (2000) note as being important to vocabulary learning. However, as noted with the recommendations from other vocabulary researchers related to selecting words for instruction, the presence of these recommendations in the LC framework does not guarantee teachers take them into
account when planning instruction, so this study investigated how they will use this information when planning interactive read-alouds.

During the reading workshop, students complete guided reading, independent reading, and literature study. When students are working on guided reading, they are working with the teacher in small groups (three to eight students) on the same text. The teacher’s goal in a guided reading lesson is to work with students who have similar needs so teaching can be targeted and efficient. The small groups of students are not fixed throughout the school year; they change depending on students’ needs. For independent reading, students read self-selected books and may complete teacher-created minilessons about the books they read (e.g., recognizing punctuation, predicting, and writing a book recommendation). In literature study, teachers identify a group of students who are interested in a text or topic and form a group without regard to students’ reading ability. As with independent reading, the teacher can lead discussions or create assignments for these groups of students. Overall, the rationale for having an hour of reading every day of the school week is that it is easier to make progress in learning a skill and easier to see how it adds value to life when it is done every day.

During the writing workshop, students complete guided writing, independent writing, and investigation. These three parts of the writing workshop are analogous to the three parts of the reading workshop because both feature guided, independent, and exploratory elements. Additionally, the similar structures to the reading and writing workshops allow teachers to help students see connections between reading and writing, such as how writers select words carefully so the words can have a particular intended effect on readers. And as with the reading workshop, the benefits of writing every day
make it easier for students to see progress in their writing and to see themselves as writers, not just students who complete isolated writing activities. Furthermore, when students write in class, they can take advantage of the teacher’s expertise when they have questions or problems. If students did writing only for homework, they would not have the same access to the teacher’s expertise.

Though it is possible for teachers to include vocabulary instruction in guided reading, this part of the reading workshop is not an ideal place to look for vocabulary selections, explanations, and justifications. Teachers may consider vocabulary during this part of the lesson; however, these considerations would be particular to a small group of students, and may reflect a different decision-making process than the whole-class considerations of an interactive read-aloud. Teachers are also limited by the students’ reading levels when leading guided reading lessons, which may not provide them with as many opportunities to discuss new vocabulary with students. The need to cater to students’ reading levels in a guided reading lesson also suggests teachers of different grade levels would likely select different books for their lessons. Furthermore, the guided reading groups in each classroom could be different during each round of interviews. If I had asked teachers to base their responses in the second-round interviews around plans for the same group of students as they did in their first-round interviews, there would be a chance that these groups would have changed, making the second-round interview data an imperfect reflection of the teachers’ planning for guided reading lessons. Because students’ reading levels are not as large a concern when selecting books for interactive read-alouds, it is likely that teachers of different grade levels may select the same text.
The differences between the selections teachers make for vocabulary instruction during guided reading may be informative but are beyond the scope of this study.

In sum, the LC framework provides a classroom context where teachers consider the meanings of words as part of planning their instruction. Teachers consider their whole class’ current vocabulary knowledge in comparison to the vocabulary in the text when planning the interactive read-alouds because this part of the lesson is the only time when teachers are addressing a whole class with the same text. Additionally, teachers can select texts that are above their students’ reading levels when conducting an interactive read-aloud, which increases the chance that students will be exposed to new vocabulary that the teacher will likely need to include in her plans for the lesson.

**Setting**

This study was conducted in the city of Murleyville (a pseudonym), which is classified as a Micropolitan Statistical Area (population between 10,000 and 49,999 people) (Office of Management and Budget, 2009). The median income in the city of Murleyville is between $20,000 and $35,000 (Ohio Department of Education [ODE], 2014). In the Murleyville school district, there are six elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school, serving more than 4,000 students from pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade (ODE, 2014). The district is classified as urban, with high student poverty and average student population (ODE, 2013). The free and reduced lunch rate (an indirect measure of income) is over 99 percent in Murleyville (ODE, 2014). The population of Murleyville’s school district is 47 percent male and 53 percent female (ODE, 2014). The racial and ethnic distribution of Murleyville school district’s population is 80 percent White, eight percent multiethnic or multiracial, seven percent Black, and six percent
Latino; there are fewer than 10 students of Asian or Native American descent (ODE, 2014). Additionally, 18 percent of the students in Murleyville have a disability (ODE, 2014).

**Participants**

The participants in this study were six teachers in the Murleyville school district. These six teachers were members of the cohort of 17 intermediate LC teachers receiving LC professional development for the 2014-2015 academic year. According to the LC framework, they were considered intermediate teachers (i.e., they teach grades three through six). These teachers began their first year of LC training in August 2014 and completed their training in May 2015. The teachers ranged in experience from five to 32 years of teaching. All six of them had a B.A. or B.S. in Education and five of them had a M.A. or M.Ed. in Education or a specialist certificate (e.g., reading, intervention). Each teacher taught in a different school in the Murleyville school district and all were White and female. Hilary and Zoe taught third grade, Olivia and Vivian taught fourth grade, and Wendy and Judy taught fifth grade. These six teachers were selected from the 17 because they were the largest group of teachers who were receiving LC training and were in the same district.

The teachers selected for interviewing in this study may not be representative of most teachers in the United States because they were participants in the Literacy Collaborative (LC) professional development program at The Ohio State University. However, the benefits of working with teachers who were being trained to use the LC framework offset the constraints on the generalizability of this study. The LC framework includes a language/word study component that features interactive read-alouds. In these
read-alouds, teachers may introduce and discuss the meanings of words in the text, among other activities such as drawing attention to the author’s use of language to create vivid images or helping students identify the theme of the text. Thus, these teachers were creating and teaching in a language-rich environment where word meanings were discussed in the course of a typical lesson. Furthermore, teachers’ participation in the LC professional development involved weeklong training sessions throughout the academic year. Thus, conducting two rounds of data collections allowed for the data analysis to capture how their perspectives on vocabulary change as a result of teaching in the LC framework.

Additionally, the professional development these teachers are receiving is designed to make them LC coaches, staff developers, and change agents in their schools. Their professional development in 2014-2015 comprises their training year, which means they are being exposed to the framework for the first time during the professional development sessions. Over the course of the five-year professional development arc, they take on these additional coaching responsibilities as they develop expertise with the various parts of the framework. The professional development is ongoing and intensive: there are four week-long sessions during the academic year when teachers are asked to attend professional development sessions in person. The professional development has been compared to graduate-level coursework (Biancarosa et al., 2009). Throughout the year, they also have fifteen professional development sessions conducted via videoconference with the trainers and the other teachers.

My Role as a Researcher
As discussed previously, I attended the first week of professional development these LC teachers experienced in August. I also attended the first day of the second week of professional development in October, specifically because I knew from contacting the LC trainers that this day would be focused entirely on word study and morphology. During both of these professional development sessions, I engaged in some of the activities with the teachers as if I were also being trained to use the framework. For example, I listened to multiple interactive read-alouds during the first week of professional development and kept a writing notebook to respond to prompts the teachers were completing. This positioning in the research allowed me to be informed about the LC framework and about the teachers’ specific experiences in being trained to use this framework, notably in the texts they discussed during interactive read-alouds. This information about the texts used helped me to narrow down my selections when considering which texts to use for the teacher interviews.

Some of the lessons I observed during the first week of LC professional development included the modeling of interactive read-alouds by the LC trainers; co-planning of interactive read-alouds by LC teachers; debriefing of the interactive read-aloud once it had been conducted; introductions to LC teachers’ notebooks for keeping track of their progress through the year as coaches; modeling of reading workshop, writing workshop, and poetry workshop; training in use of LC’s Benchmark Assessment System; discussions of how to create a supportive and responsive classroom environment; and a review of any questions the LC teachers still had. These activities and lessons were taught across five days of six- to eight-hour professional development sessions. Teachers often raised questions for the trainers when the trainers were
discussing the theories underlying the activities or modeling the completion of the activities. Teachers also had ample time to co-plan for all components of the LC framework; however, more time was spent on the interactive read-aloud during this first week in August.

During the one-day session in October, I observed as teachers learned about how to use theories about morphology to help their students complete word study activities such as word sorts. For example, one of the LC trainers discussed how phonics, spelling, and vocabulary are all part of word study through a word’s sound, pattern, and meaning, respectively. Teachers discussed examples of how certain sounds can be represented with different spellings, and vice versa. Later in the day, the LC trainers discussed how letter-sound relationships, spelling patterns, high-frequency words, word meanings, word structure, and word-solving actions all play a part in word study. The day continued with the LC trainers recommending the use of an eight-day word study cycle in the teachers’ classrooms. (See descriptive accounts of teacher classwalks in chapter 4 for more information on the eight-day word study cycle.) Teachers noted this shift would likely be difficult for parents to understand, even though the teachers saw how it could benefit their students. Finally, the LC trainers gave the teachers an hour to start co-planning their word study lessons on an eight-day cycle.

Data Collection

The data collected in this study were in the form of interviews and classwalks. During the interviews, teachers read one of two sets of two picture books (one informational text, one narrative text) during the first round and another set of two picture books during the second round. The sets of picture books were counterbalanced between
rounds. During the classwalks, teachers were asked about how the LC framework is visible in their rooms and how they had incorporated student work into their rooms. Second-round classwalks focused only on the new content in the teachers’ classrooms.

**Characteristics of interviews.** All interviews were conducted in teachers’ classrooms, offices, or school bookrooms without other teachers present. Interviews ranged in length from 35 to 75 minutes. Teachers read a book and discussed their vocabulary selections for that book individually before reading the next book. (Interview questions are available in Appendix A.) Interviews were captured with a digital voice recorder and transcribed with Transana software (Woods & Fassnacht, 2012). Additional field notes were recorded after each interview to capture any significant non-verbal activity occurring during the interview. The following are considerations of question type, rapport building, and text selection that informed the interview protocol.

**Type of questions.** Spradley’s (1979) task-related grand tour questions provided guiding principles for the interview questions. The task was planning for an interactive read aloud as part of the LC lesson. My goal was to see how teachers select words, but because there is more to planning an interactive read aloud than selecting vocabulary words for instruction, it was necessary to see how teachers plan the full lesson. Asking them only to select vocabulary for instruction might have resulted in the omission of discussions of vocabulary that arose when considering other parts of the lesson. Additionally, interviewing teachers about a specific text is beneficial because it focuses their responses on a particular task. When teachers are asked to describe their typical or usual instruction (without presenting them with an artifact such as a text to use), teachers tend to misrepresent or misremember their typical planning process (Leech, 2002). The
problem with this potential misrepresentation is that I could not know whether they presented me with an idealized version of their planning process or whether what they could recall without being prompted to complete the full read-aloud planning task is representative of their actual planning. In the four cases where teachers had already used a given text for an interactive read-aloud, I changed the nature of my questions from future tense (e.g., “How would you use this text?”) to past tense (e.g., “How did you use this text?”). If a teacher could not recall how she conducted the interactive read-aloud, I asked her to discuss how she would plan it if she were to use the text again (i.e., with new information about her students available) in the coming days.

The task-related grand tour question (Spradley, 1979) is additionally helpful because I wanted to see how teachers described concepts that might have been familiar to me with words that may not have been familiar to me. As I learned words or language these teachers used to discuss their planning, I was able to ask follow-up questions with increased specificity and authenticity during the interviews because using their everyday language during interviews is more likely to produce honest, informative responses (Emerson et al., 2011). For example, I was interested in what I and other researchers label as “vocabulary words,” but teachers occasionally used another phrase to discuss the words (e.g., flashy word, tough vocabulary, etc.). If I were to have used vocabulary words in my question, then the responses I received may not have been representative of their planning because they would have tried to interpret what I meant by vocabulary words in their responses. This distinction may be slight, but the benefit of reusing respondents’ words instead of reinterpreting or revoicing the words can lead to more honest and informative answers (Emerson et al., 2011; Leech, 2002; Spradley, 1979).
The interviews were semi-structured because I occasionally asked follow-up questions that were based on information I learned from preceding interviews. For example, if the first teacher to read and respond to a book selected a word for instruction, but any of the subsequent teachers did not select that word, I asked the subsequent teachers whether they would select the word. This approach to interviewing meant my intentionality with the second-round interviews was different from the first-round interviews due to the potential for me to prompt teachers to discuss many words they might not have otherwise considered. However, teachers were not prompted with every possible word that they had not selected. Rather, the decision to prompt for words not selected was based on proximity (i.e., the teacher had just finished discussing a word on a page with a word not selected) and previous selections in the same interview (i.e., the teacher had selected one word that is part of a phrase or list but not the others). So even though there was the possibility of prompting teachers to discuss every word that previous teachers had selected, not all words that could be prompted were prompted.

Building rapport. In addition to yielding these type of answers, there was an additional benefit to using the teachers’ words in my questions: maintaining rapport with the teachers. According to Spradley (1979), the first step in establishing rapport is decreasing apprehension. Spradley’s steps are designed for respondents who are completely unfamiliar or unknown to the interviewer. In my case, I had already sat in on or participated in the first week of LC professional development sessions with the teachers. As a result, I was able to build a rapport with these teachers before beginning my first round of interviews with them.
Furthermore, asking interview questions that use the teachers’ language to discuss vocabulary words allowed me to obtain responses that reveal how they were thinking as they completed the task of planning an interactive read-aloud. It was crucial for me to obtain these responses because they helped me understand not only which words teachers selected for their interactive read-alouds, but also the criteria they used to select the words. Specifically with regard to vocabulary research, I was careful to ensure that I did not introduce scholarly jargon such as *Tier Two words, words worth teaching,* or *Communication Megacluster words* in my interview questions because these phrases are clear examples of when I would not have been speaking the teachers’ language. Again, my use of these terms would have likely resulted in inauthentic responses from the teachers. However, if the teachers had been aware of this scholarly jargon, then I would have taken up their use of the words in my follow-up interview questions.

My knowledge of vocabulary also played a role in how I approached building rapport in the interview. I did not know what the teachers knew about vocabulary instructional techniques before I began the interview, so asking about their knowledge of these techniques up front would have been damaging to my goal of maintaining rapport with them. However, I was also able to infer something about their knowledge of these techniques from the responses they gave. So, I struck a balance between acting as though I did not know anything about vocabulary instruction and acting as though I knew everything about vocabulary instruction (cf. Leech, 2002). If I had downplayed my experience, I would have run the risk of the teacher assuming I did not know enough about education or pedagogy to be worthy of the knowledge they had to share. On the other hand, if I had emphasized my credentials as a Ph.D. candidate who is studying
vocabulary, I would have run the risk of intimidating them into thinking I had particular answers in mind, so they may have been unwilling to share their knowledge because they would have been unsure whether it was correct. However, by striking the balance correctly, teachers were willing to share enough information with me about their interactive read-aloud planning process and I was able to ask strategic, descriptive follow-up questions to obtain still more specific information about their thinking as they selected vocabulary words for instruction.

Another factor relevant to building rapport with the teachers was the location of the interviews. In the case of interviews that are focused on a process (e.g., planning an interactive read-aloud), it is often helpful to interview the respondent in a location where that process usually happens (Crang & Cook, 2007). Using a familiar location not only puts the respondent at ease, but also it allows for access to the respondent’s resources, which may be helpful in demonstrating certain aspects of the process. In my case, interviewing the teachers in their classrooms, offices, or school bookrooms allowed me to see how they made use of resources beyond the text when planning an interactive read-aloud (e.g., by gesturing to displays, pulling books off the shelf, etc.).

**Texts.** I read each of the 32 recommended titles for interactive read-alouds for intermediate LC students and selected two narrative texts and two informational texts to use for the interviews. Because there are differences in the vocabulary of narrative text and informational text (Hiebert & Cervetti, 2013), I was curious to see whether teachers’ selection processes were the same for each type of text. To reduce the possibility that the teachers’ vocabulary selections were unique to the book they were reading and the timing of the interview, I counterbalanced the presentation of the texts for each round of
interviews. Each teacher read one informational text and one narrative text during the first-round interview and another informational text and another narrative text during the second-round interview.

The books I used for the grand-tour interviews with teachers were *My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing up with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* by Christine King Farris (2003) and *Nelson Mandela* by Kadir Nelson (2013) for the informational texts, and *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* by William Joyce (2012) and *The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland (1993) for the narrative texts. Students are required to read and listen to both narrative and informational text as part of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), so in addition to observing the vocabulary-related differences between these types of texts, I also wanted to reflect the different types of texts students may actually see in the classroom (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010). With this attention given to the differences between narrative and informational texts and the different types of vocabulary words found in each type of text (Silverman et al., 2014; Hiebert & Cervetti, 2013), teachers needed to select words from each type of text for a complete picture of vocabulary knowledge in their students. Given that there are differences in the types of words that appear in literary and informational texts, I was curious to see whether teachers observed this difference and used different criteria for word selection across each type of text.

In considering books for use in the interviews, I eliminated books for a variety of reasons. For instance, *A Drop of Water* (Wick, 1997) is listed as an exemplar of read-aloud informational text for grades two and three in the CCSS (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010); however, there are many italicized words in the text that call attention to features
of water. Thus, the publisher or author has already selected words for instruction with this textual feature, so it was excluded. Other books, such as *Just as Good: How Larry Doby Changed America’s Game* (Crowe, 2012), *Coming on Home Soon* (Woodson, 2004), *Going North* (Harrington, 2004), *Pennies in a Jar* (Chaconas, 2007), *Each Kindness* (Woodson, 2012), and *The Wall* (Bunting, 1990) were excluded because they were told from the perspective of a child, which limited the author’s use of vocabulary. Initially, many of the narrative, non-fiction texts were excluded due to the need to ensure that fiction was chosen to represent narrative because informational text must be non-fiction. This choice left only *Can We Save the Tiger?* (Jenkins, 2014) and *An Egg is Quiet* (Aston, 2013) as the only options for informational, non-fiction texts. Most of the text in *An Egg is Quiet* (Aston, 2013) is single sentences or captions identifying different types of eggs; the images are emphasized at the expense of the text. *Can We Save the Tiger?* (Jenkins, 2014) has a heavier focus on text, but was judged to be too long for an interactive read-aloud by two pilot teachers who planned with the text before the first round of data collection.

Because neither *An Egg is Quiet* (Aston, 2013) nor *Can We Save the Tiger?* (Jenkins, 2014) qualified for inclusion, I reviewed the list of narrative non-fiction titles once again. I thought back to the texts shared during the interactive read-alouds presented to the teachers during their first round of training in August. Teachers were particularly receptive to *Coretta Scott* written by Ntozake Shange and illustrated by Kadir Nelson (2011). Two of the narrative non-fiction texts on the list of recommended intermediate titles for LC share a connection with *Coretta Scott*. One is *My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers* by Christine King Farris (2003), the older sister of Dr. Martin Luther King,
Jr. The other is *Nelson Mandela* written and illustrated by Kadir Nelson (2013). The content connection between *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2013) and *Coretta Scott* (Shange, 2011) is apt because the teachers had noted during their interactive read-aloud training that they would have paired the text with a text about Dr. King because students would need background information about Dr. King to understand a story about his wife. This text is a better choice than the picture book of Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech because that book does not offer the breadth of background information that King Farris’ book does. The visual connection between *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013) and *Coretta Scott* (Shange, 2011) is through the brush strokes of Kadir Nelson. This feature of *Coretta Scott* (Shange, 2011) was also a point of praise and discussion in the interactive read-aloud during the teachers’ training.

For the fiction texts, I chose *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) because the first sentence says the protagonist “love[s] words,” which I hoped would prompt teachers to think about the words in this text as they used it to plan an interactive read-aloud. The need to balance the length of the texts chosen as well as their genres lead me to select *The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland (1993). If length were not a consideration, I would have chosen *Sky Boys: How They Built the Empire State Building* by Deborah Hopkinson (2012). Other options, such as *I Love You the Purplest* (Joosee, 1996), *Chloe and the Lion* (Barnett, 2012), *The Three Questions* (Muth, 2002), and *Erika’s Story* (Vander Zee, 2013) are excellent choices for imparting lessons about texts or the love of reading, but do not feature strong vocabulary. In the case of *The Three Questions* (Muth, 2002), the issue is that the moralistic focus of the text eclipses the complexity of the words chosen to teach the morals. In contrast, *Erika’s Story* (Vander
Zee, 2013), which tells a young Jewish girls’ story of survival during the Holocaust, requires a great deal of background knowledge and extensive vocabulary instruction about historical topics at the expense of general vocabulary instruction. Due to its average length and the preponderance of general vocabulary, *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) was selected as a text in this study.

All teachers were designated intermediate by LC because they taught grades three through six. However, all of these teachers did not teach the same grade. This situation would pose a problem for readability of the books if the students were reading the books independently. Because they are listening to these books as part of an interactive read-aloud, the reading level was not a deciding factor in selecting the book for instruction. Instead, the criteria for inclusion in the recommended reading list created by LC suggests these books would be able to be used with students who are in any of these grade levels because of the books’ literary qualities.

**Characteristics of classwalks.** Classwalks were conducted the week after the first-round interviews and the day of the second-round interviews. The second-round classwalks focused on only the new content in their classrooms, thus they were shorter and did not require visits separate from the interviews. During the classwalks, teachers shared how they had incorporated the LC framework into their classrooms and shared examples of student work. Photos from the classwalks were captured with a digital camera and supplemented by field notes about teachers’ comments during the classwalk.

The research on classwalks mostly concerns how school principals can monitor their teachers and students on an informal basis, thus the recommendations from this research were adapted as appropriate. Milanowski (2011) suggested the purpose of a
classwalk is dictated by the role of the administrator conducting it. For example, a principal would do a classwalk for the purpose of evaluating a teacher’s classroom management or instructional practices. A mentor teacher or instructional coach would do a classwalk not for evaluation but just to learn more about the context of the classroom to better plan support for the teacher or students. My role in the classwalks was even less intrusive as I am not mentoring these teachers during their LC professional development, so I was sure to clarify that the purpose of my classwalks were not to see whether they were implementing the LC framework with full fidelity.

I modified a few of Walker’s (2005) recommended questions for school administrators to ask teachers during classwalks. In particular, the questions about the classroom environment were most relevant to my needs. These questions concern how the curriculum is manifested in the classroom surroundings and how student work has been incorporated into the classroom. I also asked how they used certain parts of the room if the arrangements of desks or posters were not intuitive. (A list of prompts for the classwalks can be found in Appendix B.)

Data Analysis

My data analysis began as I was transcribing the teacher interviews after each round of data collection. It was clear to me even as I was typing that there were instances of teachers providing explanations and justifications for their vocabulary selections. This superficial analysis is insufficient to answer my research questions, however. I analyzed the interview transcripts and the photos of the teachers’ classrooms I took during their classwalks with the theoretical frame provided by the five aspects of word knowledge.
complexity (Nagy & Scott, 2000), the extensions of those aspects (Hiebert & Cervetti, 2013; Miller et al., 2010; Nagy, 2007), and the LC framework (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

Due to the dearth of research on teachers’ vocabulary instruction selections, there is not a study to reference for the purpose of obtaining data analysis procedures. As a result, I began analyzing the data by using open coding, a practice commonly used with grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Charmaz, 2001; Emerson et al., 2011). I chose open coding instead of relying solely on the theoretical framework discussed previously because teachers’ explanations and justifications may have included ideas subordinate, ancillary, or superordinate to those of existing vocabulary researchers. Additionally, Gibbs (2007) argued that approaching coding tabula rasa is not possible because that degree of objectivity is unattainable. The goal of open coding should then be to minimize preconceptions about the data and to explore what theories emerge from the data. In other words, one does not want to become wedded to one’s initial codes, lest they obscure a deeper meaning of the data yet undiscovered. It is not realistic to think I would be able to refrain from considering the other vocabulary research I know, so my goal was to walk a balance between having these ideas in mind and being open to other vocabulary ideas teachers presented in their responses.

In grounded theory, the researcher typically indexes the data, engages in open coding, engages in focused coding, and writes analytical memos (Emerson et al., 2011). These steps are not discrete, but fluid, meaning the researcher will move from one step to the next and back again as ideas and themes are linked together. In open coding, the researcher initially codes data line-by-line before making additional readings through the text to refine the codes (Emerson et al., 2011). However, even before beginning open
coding of the data, I decided to identify the vocabulary each teacher had selected for instruction during the first round of interviews. As I was reading the transcripts to prepare to conduct the second round of interviews, I noticed which words the teachers were mentioning or not mentioning with each book so I could be prepared to ask about the same words during the second round of interviews if these words were not mentioned during the interview. This informal list I generated while reading the interviews turned into formal lists (see Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 in chapter 5) I kept separate from the codes I generated during analysis of the interviews.

To begin open coding, I printed hard copies of each of the six first-round interviews with a wide right margin to facilitate writing codes by hand, and numbered the lines of the transcript along the left margin. I then randomly selected from the interviews and began coding Vivian’s interview line-by-line while recording the list of codes in my paper notebook for future reference. I followed this list of codes with an analytical memo describing the process of coding, the insights I gained from coding, and emerging connections or relationships between codes. For the next five interviews, I followed this process of coding and memo writing after each interview to track the developments in my thinking. The list of codes after each interview included only the new codes generated from the most recently coded interview, not all the codes assigned to each interview. In total, there were 204 codes after line-by-line coding of the first-round interviews. There were 25 additional codes after line-by-line coding of the second-round interviews, for a total of 229 codes.

Following the generation of these codes, I then needed to arrange them hierarchically to better understand their relationships (Gibbs, 2007). I typed the codes
into Microsoft Word to facilitate categorization, as it was easier to view all codes at the same time on a computer monitor. Once I had entered the codes, I classified the codes into the following broad categories: vocabulary (54 codes), vocabulary-related (16 codes), student (51 codes), teacher (90 codes), book themes (11 codes), familiarity (two codes), junk (three codes), and unknown (two codes). The last three of these codes may require some explanation. The familiarity code indicates whether teachers said they were familiar with a book before the interview, thus there are the two codes of familiar or not familiar. The junk code indicates codes that were assigned to the first two interviews coded (Vivian’s and Wendy’s) that already seemed to be too specific to their interviews to be helpful for further analysis. (As an example, the code callous without reflection from Vivian’s transcript, in reference to her students’ inclination toward cruelty, is better captured by the social aspects code generated from that same interview.) The unknown codes were two codes, accuracy and permission, whose meaning was not clear upon relisting the codes for categorization purposes. The goal of this categorization is to deepen my analysis of the data, so including codes that pertain to ideas unrelated to my research questions or that are about isolated incidents will not help to reach that goal. Thus, my focus shifted to the vocabulary and vocabulary-related codes to see how those could be improved in service of deepening my analysis.

For ease of retrieval, I used Microsoft Word to alphabetize the codes within each category and copied them into my notebook. The ideas behind the codes had existed in my mind as I was coding, but this was the first time I actually defined the codes. This process reinforced how certain codes, such as stopping point: prank or responsible for joy were too specific, and other codes, such as vocabulary choice were too general.
In the next round of coding the first-round interviews, I chose to focus on vocabulary and vocabulary-related incidents exclusively. As I focused the lens I was using to analyze the data, I compensated by increasing the size of the unit of analysis for my codes (i.e., to include only vocabulary or vocabulary-related codes meant I would have to code multiple lines at once instead of coding line-by-line). This shift from line-by-line open coding to focused coding for the second round of coding follows Emerson et al.’s, (2011) guidelines. In changing my focus to only vocabulary and vocabulary-related codes, I also wanted to capture teachers’ elaborated explanations and justifications pertaining to vocabulary.

Following focused coding, I began associating the vocabulary and vocabulary-related codes with the vocabulary teachers had selected. The five aspects of vocabulary complexity (Nagy & Scott, 2000) were coded initially, followed by word consciousness and metalinguistic awareness, vocabulary differences due to text type, and vocabulary categories (i.e., tiers). These codes covered the concepts derived from existing vocabulary research; however, these codes did not account for the majority of the teachers’ explanations and justifications of their selections. Additional codes pertaining to the following concepts were tallied for each vocabulary selection: use of context clues, use of background knowledge, use of content vocabulary, modeling with vocabulary, using vocabulary resource materials, frequency of vocabulary, and illustrative support for vocabulary.

I analyzed the pictures and notes taken during the classwalks with open coding as well. My goal in analyzing the classwalk pictures and notes was to create an idea of how each teacher had set up her room, had incorporated student work into her room, and
whether there was any evidence of vocabulary or vocabulary-related content in her room. The data generated from these classwalks include pictures I took with a digital camera as well as scratch notes recorded immediately following the classwalk. At the end of the day of each classwalk, I transferred the pictures to my computer for ease of access and viewing. I then reviewed my scratch notes while looking through the pictures and wrote field notes to summarize what was in each picture and what the teacher said when we were in that part of the room. My field notes also included a copy of my scratch notes and a brief analytical memo about the classwalk itself.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology of the study in terms of its research design, context for teacher learning, setting, participants, my role as a researcher, data collection, and data analysis. The research design was a case study, derived from the recommendations of Barone (2011). These recommendations include considering the questions, purpose, sampling, and quality of a case study. The context for learning was the LC framework, which entails language/word study workshop, reading workshop, and writing workshop. The interactive read-aloud portion of the language/word study workshop was the principal context of the study. My role as a researcher included observing and participating in the early stages of professional development in using the LC framework. The participants of the study were six intermediate LC teachers from the city of Murleyville who were being trained as LC coaches during the study. Data were collected in the form of two interviews and two classwalks with each teacher in September and December. Teachers read two picture books (one informational text and one narrative text) during each interview. Finally, these data were analyzed using a
combination of grounded theory and the aspects of word complexity discussed by Nagy
and Scott (2000). The following chapter describes the content of the interviews and
classwalks.
Chapter 4: Descriptive Account of Interviews and Classwalks

In this chapter, I describe the results of the first- and second-round interviews and classwalks with the six participants. The first-round interview results are presented in alphabetic order by teacher name for each group. These results show the words teachers would select for instruction as well as the explanations and justifications for selecting those words. The first-round classwalks are presented in the same order as the interview results. The second-round interview and classwalk results are presented in the same order as the first-round results. The second-round interview results include words teachers would select for instruction, as well as the explanations and justifications for selecting those words. The texts each group of teachers read were counterbalanced between rounds (i.e., sets of teachers got different pairs of books during each round), so their vocabulary selections are described in depth for both rounds. In contrast, teachers were in the same classrooms during both rounds, so only the new content in their classrooms are discussed in the second-round classwalks; however, teachers discussed some of the same elements in both rounds of classwalks. This chapter is entirely descriptive, so codes generated during data analysis are discussed in response to the research questions in the following chapter and do not appear in this chapter.

**Round One**

The first round of interviews began on September 2nd and ended on September 8th. Teachers were randomly assigned to each group and interviews were scheduled
based on teacher availability. Group one teachers (Wendy, Vivian, and Hilary) read and discussed *My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers* (Farris, 2003) and *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) during their interviews. Group two teachers (Zoe, Olivia, and Judy) read and discussed *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) and *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013) during their interviews. All interviews were conducted in teachers’ classrooms, offices, or school bookrooms. Interviews were captured by audio recorder. Any non-verbal or inaudible information teachers shared was captured in scratch notes after the interview, out of each teacher’s sight. An analysis of the first-round interview transcripts revealed words the teachers would select for instruction (Table 1).

Table 1

*Vocabulary Selected by Each Teacher, Round 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hilary</th>
<th>Vivian</th>
<th>Wendy</th>
<th>Judy</th>
<th>Olivia</th>
<th>Zoe</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers</em></td>
<td><em>The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese checkers</td>
<td>bigotry</td>
<td>bigotry</td>
<td>bittersweet</td>
<td>happenstance</td>
<td>amiable</td>
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<tr>
<td>indignity</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>hatred</td>
<td>festive squadron of flying books</td>
<td>nested</td>
<td>blew</td>
</tr>
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<td>segregation</td>
<td>chifforobe</td>
<td>turn this world upside down</td>
<td>happenstance</td>
<td>squadron</td>
<td>happenstance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinkertoys</td>
<td>marches</td>
<td>nourishing</td>
<td>prizes</td>
<td>segregation</td>
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<tr>
<th><em>The Lotus Seed</em></th>
<th><em>Nelson Mandela</em></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>clamored</td>
<td>blinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>marched</td>
<td>clamored</td>
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<tr>
<td>plucked</td>
<td>dormant</td>
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Continued
Table 1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>scrambled</th>
<th>emperor</th>
<th>golden dragon throne</th>
<th>conquered</th>
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<tr>
<td>throne</td>
<td>family altar</td>
<td>hair combs</td>
<td>elect</td>
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<td>unfurling</td>
<td>lotus</td>
<td>mother-of-pearl</td>
<td>fertile</td>
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<td></td>
<td>plucked</td>
<td>scrambled</td>
<td>fortnight</td>
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<td></td>
<td>silk</td>
<td>speeding</td>
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<td></td>
<td>throne</td>
<td>towering</td>
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**Group one teacher interviews.** For *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003), the only words selected by more than one teacher were *bigotry* (Wendy and Vivian) and *segregation* (Vivian and Hilary). In all other cases, each teacher selected words that no other teacher chose. For *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993), both Vivian and Wendy selected *emperor* and *throne* for instruction. Vivian and Hilary selected *plucked* and *clamored*. All other selections were unique to the teacher.

**Hilary.** In *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003), Hilary’s selections fell into two categories: words students would not know (*Tinker Toys* and *Chinese Checkers*) and words related to the Civil Rights and racial oppression that are central to the text (*indignity*, *segregation*, and *unfair*). Hilary selected *Tinker Toys* and *Chinese Checkers* because she thought the students would not be familiar with them and they were thus necessary to teach. Her plan for how to teach *indignity*, *segregation*, and *unfair* involved discussing the relationships between the meaning of each word and the parts of the words. She chose *indignity* because it would be difficult for her students to understand and she could use word analysis to discuss how the prefix *in-* affects the meaning of the
base word *dignity* to create the meaning of *indignity*. She also later said this word is “what this story is about,” or is central to the text. Hilary mentioned a connection between *indignity* and *unfair* as well. She said that the meaning of *dignity* may still not be clear to her students, so she would need to make a connection between *indignity* and *unfair* to make things clearer to them.

A similar connection applies between *segregation* and *unfair*. Hilary noted that *segregation* was also an important thematic part of the story, though her students may not know the word. Because they might be more familiar with *unfair* and the concept it describes, *unfair* is “a word they would understand more to help them get the meaning of the book” more than *segregation*. She also suggested *separation*, which is not in the book, would be useful to explain the meaning of *segregation*.

In *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993), the words Hilary chose fell into three categories. These words fit into categories of what Hilary called “tired words” (*scrambled*, *clamored*, *marched*, and *plucked*), unknown words (*throne*), and a combination of an unknown word that could be taught through word analysis (*unfurling*).

*Scrambled, clamored, marched, and plucked* are words Hilary said she would use in a “tired words” activity. She explained this activity by describing how she often selects words such as *went, ran* and *walked* that are overused and in need of being replaced with more sophisticated synonyms. The goal of this activity is to introduce these more sophisticated synonyms to students so they can use the new words in their writing. Students work with Hilary individually to make paper wheels that they can use to select sophisticated synonyms for the “tired words” on their paper wheel. For example, *walked* might have options such as *marched* or *scrambled*. Hilary’s purpose in making these
wheels is to “give [students] new words” to use, words that “you know kids don’t say” on their own already.

For throne, Hilary said the students would not know the meaning of the word. She connected the idea of a throne to a local memorial to honor a deceased politician in their town. She contrasted Garland’s (1993) presentation of throne in the two instances in the text: “he abdicated his throne” and “he lost his throne,” which suggested she would use the context to help students define throne. She followed up by saying “a lot of our kids don’t understand what a throne might be,” so even the context may not help in understanding throne.

Finally, for unfurling, Hilary initially selected the word because she liked it and it was, like scrambled, clamored, marched, and plucked, a word the students would not know. Later in the interview, she explained that she would talk students through the morphology of the word by taking off its inflectional ending and prefix to leave the base word. Because the meaning of furl is also unlikely to be known by students, she went back to the full sentence to discern the meaning of the word. “So, ‘unfurling its petals’ (Garland, 1993, unpaged). Let’s look at the illustration. The petals are starting to open, so unfurling would be opening.”

Vivian. In My Brother Martin (Farris, 2003), Vivian’s vocabulary selections fell into the categories of words students don’t know (chifforobe), words that are used in interesting ways to convey the theme of the text (nourishing, marches, prizes, and boy), and words that are “tough vocabulary” (segregation and bigotry).

For chifforobe, Vivian suggested she would need to look up the word to be sure of its meaning and also said students would likely not be familiar with its meaning. She
discussed how she would use the context of the sentence to get an idea of its meaning, but that she would look up the meaning of the word in advance so she wouldn’t give her students “wrong information.” Even though it is a new, descriptive word, she would not use it as part of the “said is dead” or “tired old words” activity because there were not enough other words that would go along with it to be synonyms.

Vivian made a point of discussing *nourishing* as being an interesting use of the word in a scene that was also important to the theme of the text as a whole. She thought Farris’ use of a “neat play on words” with *nourishing* in the phrase “as nourishing as the food in front of us” (Farris, 2003) was something she could use to build a conversation with her students about the Civil Rights Movement. She thought her students would know the sense of *nourishing* in terms of its relation to food, so she would need to stop and discuss how Farris (2003) is using it to refer to nourishing stories of resistance to mistreatment by whites in his life.

The use of *marches, prizes*, and *boy* is similar to the use of *nourishing* in that these words are used in a way that does not match the expectations of readers. Vivian noticed that her students would be familiar with these words, but that she would have to explain the particular meanings they held in this story. For instance, when Farris (2003) relates the use of *boy* by a white police officer who is talking to Martin Luther King Sr., she emphasizes that it is a derogatory term (Farris, 2003). Vivian explained how she would talk students through how the use of *boy* here is “degrading” and “condescending” even though it’s “not necessarily a bad word” in other contexts. Both *marches* and *prizes* qualify as “using vocabulary in a new way” because *marches* here does not match the
military sense of the term she thinks her students will know and prizes is not about “something that’s tangible that we hold in our hands.”

Vivian considered segregation and bigotry to be “tough vocabulary.” For bigotry, she said the word itself is one she is not sure “they’re quite ready for,” but that they are ready for the ideas behind the word. The feelings the word evokes relate to “how you treat people” and the students in Vivian’s class are always giving each other a hard time so she sees a way to connect the way they are “constantly degrading each other” with the idea of “classifying] a whole group of people just because of the way they look.” She says the students are ready for the life lessons in this book even if they are not ready for the meaning of bigotry.

After reading The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993), Vivian chose a total of 14 words for instruction. This total is greater than any other teacher’s for any other book during the first round of interviews. Her reasons for selecting the words fall into the following categories: the discrepancy between a word’s connotation and denotation (emperor, throne), the lack of familiarity with the word (plucked, family altar, silk, lotus, mother-of-pearl, hair combs, clamored, and dormant), and the possibility of using the word in a vocabulary writing activity (clamored, scrambled, blinking, speeding, and towering) such as “said is dead.”

Vivian’s discussion of emperor focused on the contrast between the age and size of the emperor and what the students might expect an emperor’s attributes to be. She surmised that if they knew an emperor was a ruler that he would be of a certain age and not a boy. To emphasize this discrepancy, she would ask, “Do you think you could run a country? Do you think you have enough knowledge, enough going on that you could do
that?” She also connected the age expectations of the emperor to the loss of the throne because the emperor losing the throne is the precipitating event in the story. When she discussed throne, it was not for its meaning but for the meaning of the phrase lost the golden dragon throne. Vivian wants them to understand “Why is he so upset about losing his throne?” The focus is less on the meaning of throne as an object or a metonym but instead on what its loss signifies for the characters in the story.

Words such as plucked, family altar, silk, lotus, mother-of-pearl, hair combs, clamored, and dormant are words Vivian says the students “won’t know” or are “new to them.” She did not offer any further explanation or justification for selecting these words. She simply classified them into the category of words her students will not know and need instructional support for.

For clamored, scrambled, blinking, speeding, and towering, Vivian would use these words as examples of “good adjectives” students can add to their writing to make it more descriptive. This is part of an activity she would do on the second read of the book because she does not want to lose the plot during the first read. She said she would have to introduce and explain adjectives prior to the second reading. Then she would tell students, “We’re going to look for this, raise your hand when you see or hear the adjectives” during the second read. In advance, she would come up with one word for each student (for a total of 16 words). After reading the story, she would have the class co-write a story similar to the one in the book. Vivian would begin the story and ask each student to add a sentence to the story that uses that student’s word. When they have finished writing the story, Vivian would then read the story back to the class to “see what we have using the vocabulary.”
Vivian mentioned *dormant* as a word students would not know, but she also discussed the phrase where it appears as containing a theme that she would discuss with her students. In the story, Garland (1993) uses *dormant* in the following way, “No matter how ugly the mud or how long the seed lies dormant, the bloom will be beautiful. It is the flower of my country” (unpaged). Vivian draws from this passage the idea that “no matter how bad, how ugly, how nasty things are, good things come out of bad things” and that “Sometimes people are in really bad situations and yet they rise above them and become something quite powerful.” In contrast to the other words she has selected for instruction, with *dormant*, she is focusing not on the meaning of the word, but how the sentence containing it conveys something about the meaning of the text overall.

**Wendy.** Wendy’s vocabulary selections for *My Brother Martin* all related to the theme of the text itself. *Hatred* and *bigotry* appear as part of the same phrase; the phrase *turn this world upside down* is central to Farris’ (2003) retelling of her brother’s life story.

Initially, she chose only *bigotry* from the phrase “infused with hatred and bigotry” (Farris, 2003), but when we reviewed the passage further, she said both *hatred* and *bigotry* would be worth teaching. However, she said she would “leave it open-ended and be like, ‘what language to you stands out on this page?’” because she is “sure they would pick out *hatred* and then I would talk, connect it to, ‘that’s next to *bigotry*, so what do we think?’” She chose *hatred* and *bigotry* because she “[knows her] kids would not understand what that means and they’d be like, ‘huh?’”

For *turn the world upside down*, Wendy said this was “a very powerful part” of the story and she would stop to discuss this part of the text. This phrase shows up two
times during the story, once when young Martin tells his mother, “One day I’m going to turn this world upside down” after their white neighbors tell them they can no longer play together because the King family is black (Farris, 2003). The second instance is when Farris (2003) is reflecting on the legacy of her brother’s life and accomplishments. She affirms that he did “dream a dream that turned the world upside down” (Farris, 2003). At the first instance of this phrase, Wendy says she would “stop there and have those kids think about it. ‘What would, what are you thinking? What does that mean to you?’” Her intent is to get the students to “make connections with things that are happening to them” during the read-aloud.

For *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993), Wendy selected vocabulary that would be unfamiliar to her students, such as *emperor, golden dragon throne, altar* and *dormant*. She selected *emperor* because it is a title that does not exist in the United States, so her students would not be familiar with it. It is not only that *emperor* is unfamiliar that makes it worthy of instruction, Wendy says she needs to share its meaning “so they understand the impact of why seeing an emperor cry is so important throughout the story.”

Her rationale for selecting *golden dragon throne* was similar: she did not think the students would be familiar with a *throne*. She mentioned *emperor* and *golden dragon throne* together when she was first discussing how the word and the phrase are ones that students in the United States would not be familiar with. When asked directly about why she selected the phrase *golden dragon throne*, Wendy said her students “probably just don’t know what a throne is.”

For *altar*, Wendy thought her students might not think of “an *altar* at home, they might think of it, when you hear *altar*, you usually think church…. So they probably have
to understand the story a bit.” She would clarify that the family in the story had an altar at home. She did not indicate the meaning of this word would be difficult for her students, however.

*Dormant* was a word Wendy had initially overlooked; she considered it later in the interview and said it was a word her students “probably would not understand. It is important to the meaning of the whole saying or quote.” The quote she mentions here is when the grandmother, bà, says, “No matter how ugly the mud or how long the seed lies dormant, the bloom will be beautiful, it is the flower of my country” (Garland, 1993, unpaged).

**Group two teacher interviews.** For *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012), the only words chosen by all three teachers were *happenstance* and *squadron*. (One of the teachers chose *squadron* as it appeared in the phrase *festive squadron of flying books*.) In all other cases, each teacher chose words that no other teacher chose. For *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013), Judy and Zoe chose *ancestors*, and Olivia and Zoe chose *apartheid, bountiful, fertile*, and *fortnight*. All of teachers’ other selections were unique.

**Judy.** For *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012), Judy’s selections of *Lessmore, happenstance, festive squadron of flying books, and bittersweet* fall into the categories of interesting words, unknown words and vocabulary-dense phrases. Judy chose *Lessmore*, the protagonist’s surname, because she thought it would be necessary to ask “why somebody would be named *Lessmore* or what the name could mean” and “to see if they had any idea about what [oxymoron] might mean.” When she discussed *bittersweet*, Judy mentioned it caught her eye because it was also an oxymoron, so it goes with his name, and that it was interesting.
Judy initially selected *happenstance* because “[she doesn’t] know that they would know what that would mean.” Although students might not know the meaning of the word, she later said she “might not even stop on it” but might say, “‘What do you think that might mean?’ And then read on just so that [she] can help them start thinking about the words around it, the meaning of the story, would help [them] understand that word.” Here, she does not focus as much on how *happenstance* is a unknown word, but that student can possibly use context clues to help them determine its meaning.

When Judy first mentioned the phrase *festive squadron of flying books*, she called it a “powerful phrase.” She said she would ask students “why the author put that phrase in there to help [them] understand what’s going to happen later in the book? To do some predicting.” She elaborated on her description of it as a “powerful phrase” by saying these “could be books that you are drawn to and that could help you fly away in your thoughts,” which she sees as being central to the theme of the book. Further, when asked whether she would isolate *festive* for instruction, she said “putting it all together would be better than just focusing on one word because *festive squadron*, ‘How can a *squadron* be *festive?’” However, she said she might need to talk about *squadron* if students were having a hard time with the meaning of it. She did not seem to think this was a likely possibility because she had recently taught *The Wall* (Bunting, 1990), which features content related to the Vietnam War and which led to a discussion about students’ families’ military connections. So, she reasoned, “they had some language with [war]” that she would be able to use to help them understand the meaning of *squadron*. Even so, her preference would be to discuss the phrase in its entirety because she could then emphasize the contrast between *festive* and *squadron* while also discussing how the
festive squadron of flying books can be used to help students predict what might be coming next in the text.

For Nelson Mandela (Joyce, 2013), Judy’s selections of free at last, ancestors, and cleanse his homeland of hate and discrimination either address the theme of the text as a whole or represent unconventional usage. Judy chose to focus on ancestors because it is used in a way that is different from how the word is usually used. The text reads, “The ancestors sent their daughter, Winnie” (Nelson, 2013, unpaged). Judy said, “Yes, it means older, but you think of your ancestors as being deceased.” She elaborated by saying, “I guess as, other books that we’ve read, I guess ancestors are always somebody that’s extremely far removed from the family. They’re important to the family, they’re who started the family, but maybe not always talked about.” She continued,

They are deceased but yet they’re close to these people. People value them more than what we may value them here in the United States, so it’s more I don’t want to say a religious, just more of their history… I guess their beliefs, they truly believe in what those ancestors have fought for and have passed down to them in their thoughts and so [it is] more talked about in this society than it would be in our society.

Both of the phrases free at last and cleanse his homeland of hate and discrimination relate to the central theme of the text. She emphasized the importance of teaching the phrases instead of teaching them as single words by saying,

This book is written in phrases. The book is a very powerful book and so because of the way it’s written and the phrases. I think it’s as you read it and you
emphasize those phrases… I think that’s what gives the overall meaning of it. I think it’s how you present it.

Judy initially mentioned *free at last* because she said it was familiar to the students from another book they had read. However, she could not remember the title of that book. In discussing *cleanse his homeland of hate and discrimination*, Judy consistently maintained the position that teaching the whole phrase would be preferable to teaching any of the words in isolation. This approach was particularly useful for *discrimination*. When discussing *discrimination*, she said,

*Discrimination* is an overused word and the true meaning of it has been lost and so I think I probably would focus more on *to cleanse his homeland of hate and discrimination* because I think that has a more powerful meaning to it because of the word *hate* in there and him going back to his homeland.

In addition, *hate* alone was not worth teaching because she thought the students were already familiar with its meaning, so it should not be the focus of instruction.

**Olivia.** Olivia’s vocabulary selections for *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) were words used in unusual ways (*happenstance*) and words that support the vivid imagery of the book’s illustrations (*squadron* and *nested*). Olivia began her consideration of *happenstance* by saying there were “not a whole lot of new vocabulary words” in the book, although she noticed *happenstance*. And even though it caught her attention, she said, “If they don’t know what that word means, it’s not going to change the meaning of the story.” She thought students would get enough of its meaning from the rest of the phrase where it appears, which reads, “a happy bit of happenstance came his way”
(Joyce, 2012). The reason it caught her eye is because it was “flashy” and not commonly seen in print by adults or students.

_Squadron_ is a word Olivia’s students “might not know so well,” yet she would have students “look at the picture to try to figure out what a squadron is.” She also said she would “relate it to a squadron of airplanes” if the illustration was not enough. For _nested_, Olivia noticed Joyce’s (2012) use of the word to describe the library where the flying books have led Morris Lessmore. She said the phrase “where the books apparently nested” is one that she would not ask about but that she would share her thinking about. She says she might say, “I notice we have flying books here. The author is using this word that they are nested. It kind of reminds me of birds here and I wonder if he’s comparing them to birds for some reason.”

For _Nelson Mandela_ (Nelson, 2013), Olivia’s two selections fall into the category of words students would not know. When Olivia discussed _apartheid_, she mentioned her students had read, or will soon read, a book about segregation in the United States. She would make a thematic connection by saying to students, “‘It was called _apartheid_.’ and read this sentence, and ‘What’s another name for that? What’s something else we might call it? We don’t call this _apartheid_ in the United States, but we call it something else.’” In addition to being a word with a thematic connection to other texts, _apartheid_ is also a word that “really jumped out at [her]” when she was reading through the text. _Apartheid_ is also crucial to teach because “if they don’t know the meaning of that, it’s going to change everything” about the story itself.

Olivia initially recognized _fortnight_ as being a “word we don’t use a whole lot anymore,” so it is “something [she] would go over” with her students. In contrast to her
approach to teaching *apartheid*, with *fortnight*, she would “just have to tell them what it is.” Later, when asked specifically about how she decided to select *fortnight* for instruction, she said her students were “gonna know it’s for a certain time here,” but that they would not know the amount of time it indicates, and this length of time is a piece of information “[she does] think they do need to understand.”

**Zoe.** Zoe’s selections for *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) were words that reveal the author’s craft (*blew*), words she is not sure of the meaning of (*happenstance*), and words that would be challenging for a third grader (*squadron* and *amiable*). Zoe selected *blew* because the way Joyce (2012) purposely wrote it on the page “caught [her] interest. [She] thought that was really neat.” The page where *blew* appears depicts a scene where a tornado has blown through a town and scattered books everywhere (Joyce, 2012). *Blew* is displayed is letters scattered across the page to match the action in the book. She said, “[she] would have them talk to each other about why the author wrote *blew* that way.”

*Happenstance* is a word that Zoe liked and seeing it prompted her to say she is “not even really sure what that means.” She said it was something she “would want to look into a little bit more, but that’s one of those vocabulary words.” She mentioned that she would use context clues to figure out its meaning.

Both *squadron* and *amiable* are words Zoe thought would be challenging or “more difficult” for her third grade students. If asking students to use their context clues to figure these words out would not work, Zoe would have students “maybe used their resources to try to figure that out” as well. She elaborated that these resources are print and online dictionaries, and occasionally the thesaurus, but that might not be helpful for a word such as *squadron*. She also said, “if [she] see[s] it in any other texts, [she] could
kind of compare it to that as well if [she] were to come across it,” although she did not know of any texts with squadron or amiable.

Zoe’s reading of Nelson Mandela (Nelson, 2013) yielded words that could be classified into the following categories: words that can be taught through context clues (bountiful and fertile), words that are tricky for students (ancestor, apartheid, and elect), words that are important to understanding the text, and one word she does not know (fortnight).

The pair bountiful and fertile appears in the phrase “bountiful, fertile, and rich” that describes the soil in South Africa at the time when Nelson Mandela was sent to be educated (Nelson, 2013). As noted in Olivia’s response, these words may be unfamiliar to students, but they can use the context of the rest of the passage on this page to infer that these words describe a positive state of affairs in the country at the time. Zoe saw this passage as “a great place to teach them about context clues because when you go on it says that ‘they hunted, fished, and raised crops,’ so it gives them those clues right there.” Zoe went on to say conquered could be taught with context clues in this passage as well. In contrast to the prosperous time described with bountiful and fertile, the tone changes to negative with the description “Slowly, the people were conquered. Their land was taken and spirits dimmed” (Nelson, 2013). Zoe said this was also a good place to use context clues because “we can talk about the meaning of conquered and using what we have in the story to help define that.”

In the cases of ancestor, apartheid, and elect, Zoe had two reasons for selecting each word for instruction. She claimed these words are both crucial to understanding the theme of the text and words that students are not likely to know. For example, ancestor is
used in the sentence “Nelson was nine when his father joined the ancestors in the sky” (Nelson, 2013). Zoe said she would have students build a conversation about this phrase and then listen in to ensure they do not miss the meaning of this phrase. It is not just ancestors, but the whole phrase that Zoe saw as being important in setting up Nelson’s eventual voyage to another village to pursue an education. Apartheid is a word that appears repeatedly in the text and the illustrations in the text and is central to understanding the state of affairs in South Africa at the time of the story. Zoe “[thinks] that’s just such a tricky word for them and [she doesn’t] know if it’s something that they would get right away.” She said she would be “blunt with them” and give them the definition of apartheid. For elected, Zoe did not say she would teach it directly, but she said she would “focus on that and how that had changed from the beginning of the book until now.” Her intent is not so much to focus on the meaning of the word for its generalizability to other texts, but how the idea that Nelson Mandela was elected represents a change that is again crucial to students’ comprehension of the text.

Finally, fortnight is a word Zoe said she did not know. She said she “[assumes] that means a night in prison,” but “that’s something that [she] would need to look more into.” She continued, “that’s something that stuck out to me, too because I was even kind of like, ‘hmm, I think that means just one night in prison, but I’m not sure.’”

Classwalks. To contextualize the teachers’ vocabulary selections within their particular setting, I walked through each teacher’s classroom. As we walked, each teacher explained how she used the room, how she incorporated the LC framework into her classroom, whether there was any student work on display in the room, and how she decided what materials made it on to the wall. All areas noted by the teachers are
displayed in Table 2. Because of the focus of this study, vocabulary and word study were added to the table, but no dedicated areas were found for any of the six teachers during the first-round classwalks.

Table 2

*Elements of Teachers’ Classrooms, Round 1*

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<th>Hilary</th>
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*Group one teachers.* Hilary’s, Vivian’s, and Wendy’s first-round classwalks were conducted on September 8th, 10th, and 12th, respectively. Each classwalk took about 30
to 45 minutes and occurred within four to eight days of the first-round interviews. The following are descriptions of each teacher’s room during early September.

_Hilary._ In Hilary’s room, there is ample evidence of the LC framework on the walls and shelves. During the classwalk, Hilary noted that it was early in the year, so there was more blank space on the walls than she would like. She started by explaining the writer’s workshop section of the room. Here, she talked at length about the charts and posters on the bulletin board featuring writer’s workshop content. This bulletin board also includes reading workshop content because Hilary does not have the space to have separate bulletin boards for each type of workshop. There is a reading strategies section on this bulletin board. One of the reading strategies is “SOLVE WORDS: take words apart to gain understanding.” Nearby are the guided reading table and a set of posters describing different genres of text. This area of the room also houses the classroom library. Elsewhere in the room Hilary posted an example reading response journal letter, a list of books she has shared with the class, and the classroom discipline chart.

_Vivian._ Vivian began our classwalk by taking me to the reading circle, which is surrounded by the classroom library. The walls near the library feature a few posters describing behaviors of good readers and a list of the books the class has read. Vivian also discussed the writer’s workshop area, which includes three bins for student submissions as well as drawers and bins with writing supplies for students. Daily learning goals are written on the dry-erase board at the front of the room. One of the goals on the day of the classwalk was “I can sort digraphs by beginning sound.”

On the wall to the left of the dry-erase board is shelving for coats, backpacks, and students’ individual storage boxes. One item in the storage box is the students’ writer’s
notebook. In each notebook is a list of the 1,000 most common words in English. There is a separate worksheet folder with a packet of sheets featuring space for these 1,000 words and the first few for each letter of the alphabet have been filled in already. Vivian said when students do not know a word, she tells them to refer to this list and then add the word they have looked up to their worksheet in the appropriate space. For example, a student who does not know how to spell *mother* would consult the list of the 1,000 most common words in English to confirm the spelling of the word and then write the word on the student’s own list under the *M* heading. Vivian said this list was for vocabulary.

*Wendy.* Wendy began the classwalk by noting that her room is a “work in progress” and that she had not posted all the things she wants to post just yet. She began by talking through the reading area, which is bounded by bookshelves containing the classroom library. On the walls above the bookshelves are posters describing the behaviors of good readers. Nearby, there is a bulletin board Wendy plans to use to display student work, but none had been posted yet. At the front of the room, there is a dry-erase board with a piece of chart paper showing a list of “Books We’ve Shared.” The class had read nine books so far. Wendy explained that once she has read 21 of these books to the class that the students would be creating hand-drawn versions of the book covers. These miniature book covers will then be sorted by genre and posted to the back wall of the classroom so students can have a reference for discussions of genre.

*Group two teachers.* Judy’s, Olivia’s, and Zoe’s first-round classwalks were conducted on September 10th, 12th, and 12th, respectively. Each classwalk took about 30 to 45 minutes and occurred within four to ten days of the first-round interviews. The following are descriptions of each teacher’s room during early September.
Judy. During the classwalk, Judy’s co-teacher was in the room nearly the entire time. Judy was apologetic about the state of the room, saying she feels she could be doing more. She has taught accelerated middle school before, so she is used to having a lot of information and resources on the walls of her classroom. She began the classwalk by discussing the job chart and discipline chart near the dry-erase board. There is a sheet of chart paper clipped to the board with a list of 11 texts she has already read aloud to the class. The guided reading table occupies one corner of the room. There are posters describing behaviors of good readers posted on the walls above it.

The other corner houses the classroom library. Above the library’s non-fiction bookshelf is the Phraseology wall. At the moment, Judy has posted two examples and she will be adding more student suggestions soon. She shared some of the students’ submissions. Judy’s postings were “sick quiet” from the poem “One Lucky Girl” (Lyon, 2000) and “not to be noticed is to look like nobody at all” from Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting (1991). She chose these because they are good examples of the types of phrases she wants her students to post on the Phraseology wall. Each entry is written on a piece of paper cut in the shape of a cartoon speech bubble with a space for the quotation, the title of the text, the author, the page number, and the name of the student submitting the entry. Judy contrasted her selections with some of her students’ selections to emphasize the importance of selecting a phrase that demonstrates “powerful language” to post on the wall. For example, one student chose “He’s peerless in a race” from Zoo Doings (Prelutsky, 1983). Judy said this was not an example of powerful language, so she would not post it on the wall. In contrast, two students had chosen the phrase “Each little thing we do goes out, like a ripple, into the world” from Each Kindness (Woodson, 2012). Judy
said this phrase qualifies as powerful language because it expresses something important about the book’s theme. She also mentioned she had stopped to discuss this phrase during the interactive read-aloud for *Each Kindness* (Woodson, 2012). Another example of a phrase Judy would approve for the Phraseology wall is “Knowledge is like a bee that made the sweet honey. You have to chase it through the pages of the book” in *Thank You, Mr. Falker* (Polacco, 1998).

There were four other examples of students’ Phraseology entries that had been submitted too recently for Judy to evaluate them. The first is from *Up North at the Cabin* and reads “rising in a sea of air-bubble balloons” (Chall, 1992, unpaged). Another is from *Why is the Sky Blue* and reads “you must sit still and listen” (Grindley, 1997, unpaged). A third entry reprises the “He’s peerless in a race” line from *Zoo Doings* (Prelutsky, 1983, unpaged). The fourth entry reads “Don’t stop trying [sic] I told it silently you can get out” from *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1991, unpaged).

Olivia. Olivia’s room is in the center of the second floor of her school. The school was formerly a middle school, so its rooms are larger than the average rooms in the other elementary schools in this district. Olivia has taken advantage of this extra space by arranging her students’ desks in groups in the center of the classroom, which frees up space on all sides of the room. There are no windows in her classroom, so there is more space on the walls than in any of the other classrooms.

Olivia began the classwalk with the read-aloud area. An easel with chart paper displays the books students have read recently. There are five books on this list and there is another piece of chart paper elsewhere in the room that has been completely filled with the titles of books. On the back wall of the classroom, Olivia posted chart paper listing
some of the behaviors of good readers. She also showed me a poster she has not put on the wall yet; it is an example of how students should write a reader response journal. Olivia also talked through other displays in the room, including the school rules, a bulletin board with authors whose books they have recently read, a poster listing the steps in the writing process, and the classroom library.

Zoe. Zoe began the classwalk with the carpeted area that houses the classroom library that she also uses for reading aloud to the class. On the walls above the bookshelves are posters describing behaviors of good readers. At the front of the room, a dry-erase board spans the wall. Across the top of the dry-erase board is a small bulletin board where Zoe has posted an example of Powerful Language from *Each Kindness* (Woodson, 2012), but there are none from students. Zoe says this section of the room is for places in books where students have found passages or ideas that are worth sharing with the class.

Zoe next stepped out of the classroom to discuss the materials she has posted on the hallway walls. These examples were made in response to *Each Kindness* (Woodson, 2012), which Zoe had shared with the students recently. All of the students in Zoe’s class have posted work to this wall. Each student’s entry is on a piece of paper the size of an index card and features a suggestion for how a student can spread kindness each day accompanied by an illustration from the student. Zoe has also included an entry with the quotation “Each kindness makes the whole world a little bit better” from the book (Woodson, 2012, unpaged). Some students’ suggestions include, “say something nice to someone different every day,” “include someone in your game at recess if they are new,” and “helping friends and family at home and at school.” Zoe ended the classwalk by
describing how the teacher who shared the room with her had decorated the inside of the classroom door. This teacher asked students to describe themselves with a single adjective and then posted these adjectives on the door. In the center of the door is the message “BE who you are” with display strips of different colors arranged around the door. Some of these adjectives include the following: funny, generous, unique, organized, helpful, and honest.

**Round Two**

The second round of interviews began on December 8th and ended on December 16th. The group one teachers (Hilary, Vivian, and Wendy) read and discussed *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) and *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013) during their interviews. The group two teachers (Judy, Olivia, and Zoe) read and discussed *My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers* (Farris, 2003) and *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) during their interviews. All interviews were conducted in teachers’ classrooms, offices, or school bookrooms. Interviews were captured by audio recorder. Any non-verbal or inaudible information teachers shared was captured in scratch notes after the interview, out of each teacher’s sight. An analysis of the second-round interview transcripts revealed words teachers would select for instruction (Table 3).

Table 3

*Vocabulary Selected by Each Teacher, Round 2*

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<th>Hilary</th>
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<td><em>The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore</em></td>
<td><em>My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers</em></td>
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<td>amiable</td>
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<td>blew</td>
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Continued
Group one teacher interviews. For *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012), the only word selected for instruction by all teachers was *squadron*. Vivian and Wendy both selected *festive* and *nested* as well. Both Vivian and Hilary selected *amiable* and *bittersweet*. Otherwise, each teacher’s selections were unique. When considering *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013), all three teachers selected *apartheid* and *ancestors* for instruction. All other words these teachers selected were unique.

**Hilary.** While reading *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012), Hilary selected nine words for instruction. Seven of the words were words she was not sure her students would know without further support (*happenstance, bittersweet, Lessmore, stooped, amiable, seldom,* and *squadron*). The other two words she selected were part the same phrase (*comedies* and *tragedies*).

After she finished reading the book, Hilary began to describe how she had not read the book before even though it looked familiar. She then started discussing some of
the features of the text that caught her attention or the words she thought she might teach. This was the first place she mentioned *happenstance*, saying, “I wrote the word *happenstance* because I don’t think our kids would know that word at all and so we would talk about that.” She later explained,

They would understand the word *happen*. *Stance* they wouldn’t, and so we’d have to talk a little bit more about that. We do talk about compound words, so they would probably mention, somebody would mention, it was a compound word. But I think you can also figure out its meaning from context. I think it’s well defined. It says, ‘a happy bit of *happenstance* came his way’ (Joyce, 2012), so it’s almost like a happy bit of luck came his way.

For the other two compound words Hilary identified, *bittersweet* and *Lessmore*, she did not have as much to say. Her discussion of *bittersweet* was only the brief comment, “*bittersweet*... I don’t think they’d know the word *bittersweet* either. I think those are the words I would choose to focus on.” Additionally, she mentioned *Lessmore* only once, saying she was thinking about “the use of his name *Lessmore*. Having less and more. What does that mean and why would the author pick that word, that particular name?”

When discussing *stooped*, Hilary mentioned her students might not pronounce the word correctly due to their developing phonics knowledge. She noted, “*Stooped* might be interesting to talk to them about too because of the -ed... Somebody would probably read that word as *stupid*. If the text was right in front of them, they would say, *stupid* instead of *stooped*."

87
Hilary discussed *amiable, seldom, and squadron* only briefly. For example, with *amiable*, twice she said, “I’m not sure they would know *amiable*” before going on to say, “We’d be taking about the personification piece. We would talk about *amiable* because we’ve also been talking about adjectives and how to describe characters and things, so that would be a word that I would definitely use.” The explanations she gave for the other two words were even shorter. For *seldom*, she said only, “Not sure they would understand the word *seldom*. ‘His tale was *seldom* told.’ We might have to talk about that too.” For *squadron*, it was, “*Squadron* might actually be a difficult word.”

In the text, *tragedies* and *comedies* appear in the same sentence, so Hilary discussed them together as well. Hilary brought up these words when she was considering other words students might not know and said, “I don’t think they would understand what a *tragedy* book was…. Because this is kinda talking about genre in itself… and that is something that confuses them.” She continued to discuss the genre names, clarifying that her students know *comedies* as “humorous books” so she would have to explain how that phrase relates to *comedies*.

For *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013), Hilary selected seven words for instruction. All of the words she selected were words she thought her students would not know. These words were *Europe, European, apartheid, mealies, comrades, protests, and rallies*. Hilary noted in her first impressions about the book that her students would need to build world knowledge before she used the text for an interactive read-aloud. The first instance where this world-knowledge building intersected with vocabulary was with *Europe* and *European*. She noted there would be confusion among her students with phrases such as “‘South Africa belonged to *Europe’” (Nelson, 2013). She continued,
So does that mean the people who were running South Africa were Europeans? Or their government made of European people? I can’t even answer that question. I don’t know because I know not enough about it. And then I thought it was really interesting and again I’ve written apartheid and European because I think European is something, I think they know there’s Europe, but what exactly does that mean? Because… there’d definitely be some social studies issues we’d have to work on.

As Hilary was discussing these proper nouns, she mentioned apartheid as a word her students would need to know to understand this text. Her first comment upon completing the book was, “This book would be really challenging for my kids. They don’t know anything about apartheid or South Africa. Most of these kids don’t even know that [politician] is buried in the [memorial for politician].”

As discussed previously, Hilary referred to her own need to learn more about apartheid before using this book with her students for an interactive read-aloud. In her words,

I don’t know anything about South Africa. I lived at the time when apartheid was big obviously but it was so out of my realm… I don’t have enough background to help make it good for them so I would have to do some research before I could even read this to them so I have some knowledge to help them.

As the interview progressed, she eventually reached the conclusion that she may not even use the book with her class because it would take so much time. When asked if this time commitment was due to the background knowledge involved, she replied, “Yeah, and frankly, I’m not sure I’d use it just simply because it would take me so long.”
Hilary briefly mentioned another word students would not know when she was discussing the book’s content demands. She was commenting on the illustrations of Mandela in prison, and then said, “And this word here, mealies? ‘cold mealies?’ (Nelson, 2013) What are mealies? Are they meals? … Because I thought, ‘I’ve never heard of that word before.’”

The other three words Hilary selected for instruction were also only mentioned briefly. For instance, regarding the selection of comrades, her only comment was “comrades, they won’t know that word at all.” Similarly, rallies and protests came up only when she was scanning through the illustrations and noticed the text on one page, saying, “rallies, protests, I mean those are all words that we would have to go over.”

**Vivian.** As soon as Vivian was done reading *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012), she noted it “has got a lot of opportunities for teaching in it. It’s got some words like amiable, so there’s some vocabulary that can be brought out as well. And there were a couple of more words in the back.” So, from the start, it was clear that Vivian was keen to identify and select vocabulary for instruction with *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012). This was the only instance of a teacher remarking about a book’s vocabulary or vocabulary opportunities prior to being asked any questions. She selected six words for instruction: *amiable, squadron, festive, nested, mysterious, and inviting.*

As noted above, Vivian was quick to select amiable as a word she would talk about with her students. She began by saying, We might talk about some vocabulary if I feel like it’s going to prevent them from understanding the story. I may just allow them to use context clues to figure out what it is, but if there’s a word I think they’re really gonna hafta know to
understand the story then I think I would probably stop. I would probably stop at *amiable*.

When pressed further for her reasoning, she discussed how she would ask her students to use context clues to determine why Joyce (2012) would have described the book as “an *amiable* fellow” and what that might mean for the rest of the story.

When considering *squadron*, Vivian mentioned the support provided by the illustrations on the page. When asked what caught her eye about *squadron*, she replied, “I would say, ‘Look, we’re gonna use the illustrations to probably support us in that. So let’s take a good look at the illustration to see if we can figure out what that word means.’” She thought her students would struggle to figure out the meaning of *squadron* without the accompanying illustration. She added that she would have drawn a picture to help explain it to them if there had not been an illustration on this page.

Due to Zoe’s and Judy’s discussion of *festive* in the first-round interviews, the second-round teachers were asked whether they would select it as well. When asked about *festive*, Vivian replied, “I don’t know, I guess I just glossed over that.” As she continued to consider selecting it, she added “The figurative language in here is wonderful with the adjectives and adverbs so that would be a great way to look at maybe pulling a piece of writing.” She continued to describe how she might use *festive* to help start a writing activity focused on figurative language.

Throughout the interview, Vivian commented on how this book had many opportunities for mini-lessons. So, after we had discussed a few words, I asked whether there were any other examples of how she would use words for mini-lessons. She listed a few words, including *nested*. When she was done discussing the other words, I asked her
about *nested* and how she decided whether it would be worth selecting for instruction. She explained, “I don’t think they’ll know what it will mean so I guess that would be the first thing, so I’d have to talk about ‘What is a *nest*?’” Vivian went on to explain how the illustrator leaves the interior of the library dark, which creates some ambiguity about what Joyce (2012) means by *nested* and allows students to predict how the books might *nest* in the library.

Other words that Vivian mentioned when asked about other examples from the book were *mysterious* and *inviting*. She remarked, “‘The mysterious and inviting room’ (Joyce, 2012). OK, what’s *mysterious*, what’s *inviting* and it’s describing the room? So we could talk about that.” She also noted a later instance where *invitation* appeared and piqued her interest. The phrase “‘Whisper an invitation to adventure’” could be used to discuss “the author’s choice of words and how beautifully written that is” (Joyce, 2012).

She added that not only is this sentence well-written, but also it communicates the idea that books can lead students on adventures as well.

For *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013), Vivian selected five words for instruction. These vocabulary selections can be classified into three categories: two words she is sure her students will not know (*apartheid* and *ancestors*), a word she does not know (*fortnight*), and two words her students know but not in the context they are used in this story (*underground* and *disguises*).

Vivian began her response by describing her plans to use the book and noted it was written as a biography, but did not have some of the hallmarks of non-fiction texts her students might recognize. She was also not sure whether her students would understand what Nelson (2013) meant by the phrase “Nelson was nine when his father
joined the *ancestors* in the sky” (unpaged). After we finished discussing other features of the text that might be difficult for her students, I asked her whether *ancestors* is a word she would select for instruction or if it was the phrase as a whole that she thought was going to present difficulty. She replied, “He was nine, which is perfect because that’s the age of my kids.” As she continued to discuss the difficulty of *ancestors*, she added, “My kids are really low but eager to learn. They’re just very low and have very few life experiences. Very little has been done with them as children. They’re not read to…. Many of them have never left Murleyville.” To help her students with their lack of experiences, she said she would discuss her own *ancestors* and ask if any of her students’ parents knew about their family origins.

For *apartheid*, Vivian’s initial response to the book indicated she would likely need to select the word for instruction. She said she would, “Talk about *apartheid* and that can be compared to what we’ve experienced here in the United States with slavery.” Later in the interview, when discussing specific words, she added more to her explanation, saying,

They will not have heard that word at all. They will not hear that, so we can talk about when they had bathrooms for Whites and Blacks we could with the signs and the drinking fountains…. They will understand that, they feel that. I have a number of black students and that subject has come up, by them sometimes it comes up, maybe with everything in the news perhaps, I don’t know if they’re getting part of that but every once in a while one of them will bring up a comment and I know that that’s on their mind.
Still later, while discussing *fortnight*, she contrasted it with *apartheid*, arguing “I think *apartheid* is good, they could hear that again.” Regarding *fortnight* itself, Vivian’s first impression of the word was that her students “won’t know that, in fact, [she would] have to look it up, it’s been a while.” When asked whether she would select it for instruction, she said she was not sure, “because there’s so many other things and that’s a word that… they’re not going to come across very often… I would just read over and let them get the context from the clues around it.”

Two other words Vivian discussed were *underground* and *disguises*, which she thought her students would know in some contexts, but not in the context they were used in the book. For *underground*, Vivian began by posing the question, “‘When he went underground, what does that mean? Is it similar to the *underground* railroad?’ Which, they will probably pull that out so we can talk about maybe similarities and differences between going *underground*.” Vivian’s first mention of *disguises* implied she was sure her students would know the word, but she continued, “we might want to talk about, infer, ‘how could you *disguise* yourself if you didn’t want to be recognized, what could you do?’” Especially when your life is on the line.” Later in the interview, after she had revisited the other vocabulary she had only mentioned earlier, she was prompted to discuss *disguises* again. She replied, “I think they’ll know it but I wonder if they’ll understand it’s more than just putting on a costume for Halloween, it’s more than that.” She shared examples of prompts and questions she would have asked of her students, such as, “‘This man was worried about his life so he had to do certain things that he wouldn’t look like himself. So what things can you do that you don’t still look weird you don’t want to stand out you want to blend in.’”
**Wendy.** Wendy’s word selections for *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) include *weary, blew, nested, festive,* and *squadron.* She mentioned her students’ low vocabulary knowledge with regard to *weary.* For the other words, she mentioned print-related features or the illustrations as elements she would use to support her students’ understanding of the vocabulary in the text.

Wendy first mentioned *weary* as part of the phrase, “the encyclopedia, *weary* of facts, relaxed with the comic books and fictions” (Joyce, 2012), so I was curious whether it was the phrase containing *weary* or *weary* itself that she would select for instruction. When first asked whether she would select the phrase, and she said, “[She thought] so because… it can be used. [She tries] to point out as much as [she] can but sometimes even the kids will point out words for [her].” Even though she had been asked about the phrase, her response concerned the word, so was asked about the word specifically. She replied, “That’s one [she’d] probably have to point out.”

The use of a phrase instead of a single word was also a feature of Wendy’s discussion of *blew.* At the beginning of the interview, she was asked how she would use the text for an interactive read-aloud and she mentioned *blew.* She explained how she would use the way it is printed to, “talk more about the craft of it like, ‘Why would the author or illustrator do that?’ And talk about the effects of it and ‘How does it make you feel?’ And make that connection.” Here, Wendy focuses on Joyce’s (2012) decision to print *blew* as though it is being blown off the page by the tornado in the illustration behind it. She continued to describe other features of the book she would stop to discuss during the read-aloud. Later in the interview, when asked about selecting *blew* for instruction, she said she would “talk about like ‘Why is that there? Are they really talking
Wendy discussed *nested* throughout the interview. She first mentioned it after her initial discussion of *blew* and described her plans for instruction with *nested* by saying she “would do a lot of it with the craft of the writing.” She came back to *nested* later as she was discussing her chosen stopping points in more depth, and said,

I’d probably have to talk about that to convey the meaning of that. A lot of my students are still like, ‘it is what it is.’ You know what I mean? Concrete, like a nest, like a bird’s nest. Sometimes they have more than one meaning. I constantly have to go over that. Vocabulary is very low, but they’re trying. They try.

In her discussion of *nested* here, Wendy mentions here that the figurative meaning of *nested* may present difficulty for her students. Later on, she reiterated this explanation, and added that she would select *nested* to help students think about how to use multiple-meaning words to improve their narrative writing.

The last pair of words Wendy selected was *festive* and *squadron*, which she always discussed as a pair of words. When first asked about the phrase, she laughed, and then added that she would, “have them try to create the meaning on their own by what they’re seeing and what they’ve noticed because if I think they’re making any connection with the picture then they might be able to make that meaning.”

When reading *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013), Wendy selected the following words for instruction: *bountiful, fertile, rich, ancestors, vision, harmony, brace*, and *apartheid*. Wendy’s explanations for selecting these words included noticing Nelson’s
(2013) use of powerful language, clarifying the use of words with multiple meanings, and identifying words students would now know.

As with festive squadron in Morris Lessmore (Joyce, 2012), Wendy only ever discussed bountiful, fertile, and rich as a set of words. When she had finished reading the book, she explained how it would be a challenge to read this book with her students because the language was “a lot more difficult. ‘The land was bountiful, fertile, and rich.’ I feel like I would need to talk about that.” Wendy continued, “I think it’s important to know because they’re settlers, what do settlers do? Talking about the land and why are they making a point to say the land was ‘bountiful, fertile, and rich?’”

Wendy also mentioned ancestors as a word she would select for instruction. “I think that would be important…. Trying to understand the powerful… way they’re using that…. Also the emotion in the eyes is what I notice a lot in these pictures.” We returned to ancestors later, when Wendy was reviewing some of the stopping points she had identified. She discussed using the text to make predictions and inferences, “especially since it talked about his father ‘joined the ancestors’ and what does that mean? What happened to the father? And then even, it goes back to the ancestors and calling upon the ancestors.” Given that she had discussed ancestors twice already, providing different explanations each time, I was curious to know more about Wendy’s decision to select it for instruction. She described how she would bring it up to her students, saying, “I’d probably just stop and say afterwards and say, ‘the father joined the ancestors in the sky’ (Nelson, 2013). Where did he go? What is [sic] ancestors?”

Wendy initiated our discussion of vision after being asked about why she had selected peace and harmony. She said she would select vision,
Because “What is a vision? Are they really seeing peace and harmony or what are they trying to say? What is the importance of that?” And talking about how that’s where they want to go. That’s what they see in the future. Kind of like “I Have a Dream” kind of speech because we do a lot of talking with that.

When we actually discussed peace and harmony, Wendy leaned toward selecting harmony, but not peace, for instruction. As she explained, “Harmony maybe; peace they know. Harmony they’d probably infer it from peace and making that connection, but I’d probably have to explain it.”

Wendy also mentioned brace in the phrase “brace yourself” as a word she would select for instruction when asked whether there were any stopping points she had not discussed yet. She replied, “I like this page right here and the meaning of it, ‘Brace yourself, my boy. His mother held her tears and said goodbye’ (Nelson, 2013, unpaged). I would have them talk about… what is happening, what is he doing?” Later in the interview, she came back to brace yourself, and continued, “It’s the only scene with the mom and it’s, so it’s powerful…. It makes me wonder if it was that moment that made him go forward, be a lawyer, and stand up for what he believes in.”

Finally, Wendy had not brought up apartheid on her own, but Hilary, Olivia, and Zoe had, so I was curious what she thought about it. Toward the end of the interview, when asked whether she would select apartheid for instruction, she replied, “Yeah, I probably would. ‘What does that mean? What did they fight for?’ Because that’s important. That’s why they’re there.” She elaborated by saying that she is trying to get her students to make inferences about the texts they are reading instead of just relying on
her to give them the answers. In this case, she thought they would have enough information to be able to infer that Nelson and his peers were fighting against apartheid.

**Group two teacher interviews.** The texts group two teachers read for round two were *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003) and *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993). For *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003), the only words selected by all three teachers were *bigotry* and *injustice*. For *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993), all three teachers said they would select *dormant* for instruction. Otherwise, teachers’ selections were unique for both texts.

**Judy.** For *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003), the four words Judy selected for instruction appeared in the story as pairs of words linked by *and*. The first pair appearing in the book, *hatred* and *bigotry* reminded Judy how she often “[hears] a lot of the kids, ‘Oh, I hate that. I hate that.’ ‘But what do you really mean by that? And what do they mean by this?’” She mentioned how Farris’ (2003) use of these words expresses a “more powerful… more intense” meaning than the *hate* her students often mention.

The other pair of words appears in the phrase “It was only a matter of time before the generations of *cruelty* and *injustice* that Daddy and Mother Dear and Mama and Aunt Ida had been shielding us from finally broke through” (Farris, 2003, unpaged). Judy initially “kinda glanced over them” and mentioned them only after being asked about them directly because other teachers had selected them. She thought her students would “even relate that to their own life, the *cruelty* and the *injustice* about what’s happening in certain lives, or what would you do if you were, if you haven’t encountered that, what would you do if you did?”

Judy’s selections for *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) were more challenging to interpret because she had already used the book in her classroom this year, so she did not
read it as part of the interview. Her discussion of this book and the vocabulary she would
or would not select for instruction was informed by her recollection of teaching it. She
did not have access to the notes she had used to plan the lesson she actually taught. As a
result of this attempt to reconstruct her lesson, she selected a word, *heritage*, which is not
actually in the text. She also says she remembered selecting *emperor* and *dormant* for
instruction when she taught the book previously.

Despite it not being in the book, Judy said she would discuss *heritage* with her
students when using this book during an interactive read-aloud. She related *The Lotus
Seed* (1993) to another text she had used previously that described a family immigrating
to the United States through Ellis Island. In both books, she noted the similarity of a
symbol (the seed in *The Lotus Seed* [Garland, 1993]) that connects a character to the
character’s country of origin. Judy said she “just had to tell them because that was so
important, [the seed] was a part of her *heritage.*”

Judy also selected *emperor* and *dormant* for instruction. Her selection of *dormant*
was based on her evaluation of her students’ understanding of the word. She stated that
although they gave the impression that they knew the word, “[she didn’t] really think
they did and so we talked about how something can be appear not to be alive and still
then come back to life when elements that it needs are there.” She also recalled
discussing with students “how [the grandmother’s] feelings were *dormant*… but now that
she has this family and the seed can grow… her family and the kids are growing and will
always hold that family piece and understand why it was so powerful.”

Judy also mentioned she discussed *emperor* with her students during the
interactive read-aloud with this text. She prefaced her discussion of the term with the
caveat, “Since I’ve done so many read-alouds, I’m not focusing on the vocabulary so much anymore.” However, she said she noticed her students were confused at the beginning of the story about why the emperor would be crying and why that would be significant. So she stopped to ask them, “‘Do you know what an emperor is?’ and her students replied, ‘Oh yeah, it’s in our video games.’”

**Olivia.** When discussing *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003), Olivia selected three words for instruction. Two of the words she chose, bigotry and injustice are each one half of a pair of linked words from the text (i.e., hatred and bigotry; cruelty and injustice), as discussed in Judy’s selections for this book. *Nourishing*, the third word she selected, appears in a simile describing Dr. King’s father’s conversations about race at the family dinner table.

Olivia decided to select bigotry for instruction because she thought her students “probably wouldn’t know what bigotry is.” She noted the repetition of the phrase “hatred and bigotry” later in the text and said, “I think when it’s repeated like that too it’s worth taking a look at because obviously it’s a phrase that the author thinks is important” (Farris, 2003).

Olivia initially overlooked injustice, but after my prompting (due to Judy having selected it in an earlier interview), she said, “I think that certainly talking about what’s going on here I think… that that was something that should come up.” Earlier in the interview, when she was discussing her plans for the interactive read-aloud in general, she considered which page to use for a stopping point. She explained how she would use Farris’ (2003) description of the deterioration of the friendship between the King family and a white family “So they can see it as more of an injustice.” Later, she discussed the
scene where Dr. King’s father shares stories of discrimination at the dinner table and remarked, “Kids at this age… those injustices strike them more. They, you know when they see injustices like that they just, they really, they don’t like it.”

As mentioned previously, Olivia said she would stop to discuss the scene at the King family’s dinner table where Dr. King’s father shares incidents of discrimination from his life. Farris (2003) describes the experience by writing, “These stories were as nourishing as the food that was set before us” (unpaged). Olivia mentioned this phrase in her initial discussion of how she would use the book, even before I prompted her to discuss how she would use the book for an interactive read-aloud, let alone which words she would select for instruction. When prompted later, she identified the comparison as a simile and added, “You think of food as nourishing and they’re [sic] healthy for you, if it’s nourishing food, it’s healthy for you, so how are these stories that they’re told healthy for the kids to hear?” She continued discussing the scene later, “that phrase the ‘nourishing as the food,’ the stories being nourishing. Yeah, I could see a lot of discussion coming from that page because kids at this age… those injustices strike them more” (Farris, 2003).

For The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993), Olivia selected three words for instruction (dormant, clamoring, and mother-of-pearl). Her decision to select dormant was informed by her thought that students may not be able to understand the word based solely on the context of the sentence. Olivia decided to select clamored and mother-of-pearl for instruction because these two words are used to describe a pivotal scene in the plot.

In her initial discussion of the text, Olivia mentioned that phrase “no matter how ugly the mud or how long the seed lies dormant, the bloom will be beautiful. It is the
flower of my country” (Garland, 1993, unpaged). As she read the phrase to herself, she noted, “dormant may be, that’s not gonna be a familiar word to them.” When later asked about dormant specifically, she said, “They might be able to get it just by really thinking about that sentence… They might be able to get that it’s not really alive at that point.”

Both clamoring and mother-of-pearl are used to describe the scene where the narrator’s grandmother is fleeing Vietnam for the United States. This scene precipitates the rest of the action in the plot because it is here that the grandmother takes the lotus seed instead of the more valuable mother-of-pearl hair combs (Garland, 1993). Although these words appear in the same scene, Olivia distinguished between them instructionally when she said,

I’d probably have to tell them about what the mother-of-pearl is because I don’t think they’re gonna know that’s something important, that that’s even something nice. So I’d probably have to go over and tell them, we’d probably have to talk about that, that’s not something, a vocabulary they’re just gonna figure out on their own, I’m just going to have to tell them what it is.

Yet she would encourage the use of context for understanding clamoring. She said it would be clear from the context of the sentence that the family was leaving the country in a hurry. As she discussed clamored, she restated the sentence without using clamored by saying, “they were in a hurry, the soldiers are coming around…. you know they’re in a rush.”

**Zoe.** As Zoe read *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003), she created list of vocabulary to use with the book. She remembered from the first-round interview that I was interested in vocabulary and so she created this list to make it easier for her to remember the words
she would like to discuss. The eight words she selected for instruction include *obedient*, *ancestors*, *cruelty*, *injustice*, *segregation*, *hatred*, *bigotry*, and *nourishing*.

Zoe discussed *obedient* and *ancestors* as being words “that [she] just figured that they might not… not all of the kids would know those words, so [she] wanted to focus on those two.” When asked how she decided to select *obedient* for instruction, she replied,

As [she] was reading, [she] noticed it said, ‘but mostly we were good, obedient children and M. L. did learn to play a few songs on the piano’ (Farris, 2003, unpaged). So [she] was going to have them look back at the book and see, kind of focus on the word *but* where it says, ‘but mostly we were good, obedient children’ (Farris, 2003) and talk about how that’s kind of the opposite of the examples they gave here and then even use the context clue *good* right next to it to help figure it out too.

Zoe also discussed context clues to support her selection of *ancestors*. In Zoe’s words, “Being able to use ‘captured in far-off Africa and brought to America as slaves’ (Farris, 2003, unpaged) and make that connection there…. I think knowing the word *ancestors* would help them know that this happened a lot longer [ago].” When pressed further, she replied, “I think just maybe helping them pronounce it as well because I think that’s one of those words that they wouldn’t recognize when they see it and I notice that a lot in my guided reading groups.”

Zoe selected the pair of *cruelty* and *injustice* with this text as well. She mentioned the pair early in the interview when she listed the words she had written on her post-it. Later, she read the sentence featuring both words and then said, “[she thinks] that it’s just
important for the kids to know in this case what that means…. Those were words that [she] didn’t think that they would recognize when they’re reading them.”

Zoe noted early in the interview that “the whole book kind of talks about [segregation], so [she] thought that was important” to include for instruction. When later asked about it specifically, she replied by quoting a sentence in text where it appears. She continued, “context clues are kind of there with the ‘sought to keep black people down’ (Farris, 2003, unpaged) and then just letting the kids kind of think deeply about what’s been happening so far in the book.” She had read this book with her class already this year, so she added, “[she] even had a kid say, ‘What is segregation?’ And so we talked about that… and we used a lot of Martin Luther King, Jr. books and we were able to carry that over with those books.”

Another pair of words Zoe selected for instruction was hatred and bigotry. There are a few instances in the text of these words appearing together, so Zoe started by discussing them as a pair. She said, “They wouldn’t know what bigotry was, but then maybe, I mean they probably know hatred already. I think I just wrote them down because they were beside each other.” She elaborated, “Maybe hatred could help them figure out the bigotry in the sentence.”

I also asked Zoe about nourishing, even though it was not on the list of words she created. (Olivia and Vivian had selected it for instruction during their earlier interviews.) Even so, she still seemed inclined to select it for instruction, saying, “I think that may have come up during my interactive read-aloud as well and that was one where as I was reading it, I thought, ‘should I pick that one?’” She added that she noticed her students did not seem to understand nourishing so she brought up the illustration of the family
eating dinner together (Farris, 2003). She added, “We talked about what it means to 
nourish your body with food and how that can also be done with your brain.”

Zoe created a list of words to teach as she read The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993) as well. She listed six words: imperial, ao dai, clamored, scrambled, dormant, and unfurling. These words are either words she remembers selecting from when she had taught the book earlier in the year, words she thinks can be supported with instruction from the text, and words she thinks students would be better able to understand at this point in the year than they would have earlier.

Zoe was not sure of the meaning of imperial, and said, “that’s a word that I would point out but I would also point out the fact that there’s a capital letter there so it’s a type of proper noun. Focus on that and that it belonged to the emperor.” She clarified that she would have to look up the meaning of imperial before the lesson. For ao dai, Zoe again discussed her own word knowledge as a reason for selecting the word for instruction. She also said her selection was due to there being only a few words from languages other than English in the story. As she tells it, “I always like to have them try if there’s only a few I try to have them figure out what the words from other languages mean, so we’d try to do that with this one as well.” In the case of ao dai, she said she would even model for the students how she looked up the answer.

Both clamored and scrambled appear on the same page in the text, so Zoe’s discussion of these words ran together as well. Regarding clamored, she began, “We would talk about this and what they think it means and kind of using context clues with the soldiers doing that and the bombs dropping, loud noises and I would probably do there.” She continued, shifting her attention to scrambled, “I think that we did talk about
this when we were doing interactive read-aloud the first time… [scrambled] is a better word to use than just ‘they ran into a crowded boat’ because it shows what’s going on.” She also discussed scrambled during the interview in terms of how it contributes to the mood in this scene of the story. She described how Garland’s (1993) words help students to “figure out the mood of the characters, so going along with the Common Core, and we used this page here to show scared and so we talked about the different emotions that the author is showing us.”

Zoe also selected dormant for instruction with The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993). Even though she had used this book before and was familiar with its content, she did not quote from the text while discussing her vocabulary selections until we discussed dormant. She began by reading to herself,

“No matter how ugly the mud or how long the seed lies dormant, the bloom will be beautiful” (Garland, 1993, unpaged). And I think I’d probably have to guide them in figuring out that meaning because it, I mean there’s clues because it’s saying, “the seed lies dormant” (Garland, 1993), but still letting them know that it was like sleeping or whatever and maybe making the connection to dorm for college dorms that you stay in.

The last word Zoe selected for instruction with The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993) was unfurling. Here, too, she discussed how she would use word analysis to help students understand a word. Once we had located unfurling in the text, she told me, “I would talk about the prefix un- in there too and the suffix on the end and putting all of them together and figuring that out.” When asked whether this might be a likely selection for word
study, Zoe said, “Yeah, they wouldn’t know that one. I don’t really, I could figure it out, but it’s one that I even have kind of a harder time with.”

**Classwalks.** The following descriptions focus on the features of teachers’ rooms that have changed since the first-round classwalk in September. Table 4 displays the elements of teachers’ rooms that were present during the second-round classwalks in December. Nearly all of the elements that were present in the first-round classwalks were also present in the second-round classwalks. New elements appearing in the second-round classwalks were vocabulary and word study.

Table 4

*Elements of Teachers’ Classrooms, Round 2*

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**Group one teachers.** Hilary’s, Vivian’s, and Wendy’s second-round classwalks were conducted on December 8th, 12th, and 12th, respectively. Each classwalk took place before or after the teacher’s second-round interview.

**Hilary.** I walked through Hilary’s classroom with her after the second-round interview. The teacher who shared the room with her was in the room but left soon after we arrived. Hilary talked me through the room, highlighting the new elements and pointing out the newly posted student work in the hallway. Other new elements include vocabulary content and word study content, among other literacy elements (e.g., writing posters, daily learning goals, academic standards, etc.).

The word study content in Hilary’s classroom included a list of the eight days of the word study cycle, examples of word study activities, and reminders about spelling patterns. The chart listing the word study cycle was posted on the dry-erase board at the front of the room. Across the eight days of the cycle, students complete the following activities: small group lesson; look, say, cover, write, check; closed word sort; buddy check; making connections; word hunt; extra activity; and buddy test. Next to the first four of these activities we were removable stickers indicating which group is completing the activity on the day of the visit (e.g., group A is on day four). On the wall opposite this list was a sheet of paper with the full, color-coded schedule for the eight days of the cycle.
and brief descriptions of the activities. The descriptions of the activities are identical to those in Zoe’s classroom.

Hilary posted additional examples of some of these word study activities in the classroom as well. The buddy check (day four) and making connections (day five) activities were represented by two worksheets that Hilary has completed to demonstrate how these activities should be done. On the buddy check worksheet, there were three columns students use to practice spelling. One student attempts to spell the word in the first (and, if necessary, second) column, the other student checks the spelling, and the first student spells the word correctly and circles the part of the word that is tricky to spell if it was misspelled. This worksheet was posted next to the list of buddy partners.

Another element of word study content in Hilary’s room was a list of spelling principles for vowels. Different-colored strips of paper indicated the short and long spellings for each vowel. For example, the strip for e read, “Short E (bed) / Long E (e-e, ea, ee, ie, ei, e). These strips were posted on the same wall as the word study activity worksheets.

As for vocabulary-related content, Hilary’s room featured a chart listing differences between informational and narrative texts, which included vocabulary topics. The narrative and informational chart featured the heading, “Readers know how texts are different” with narrative text and informational text sub-headings. Vocabulary-related elements of informational text listed here included glossary and boldface/italics.

Vivian. Before our first attempt at the second-round interview, Vivian and I walked through her room together. Vivian apologized for the messy state of her room, even though, in my view, it was well organized. Along with word study content, other
new elements in Vivian’s room included reading response journal submission trays, examples of student work, and books of poetry on display in the reading circle.

Vivian said the students were confused by the eight-day cycle for word study, so she switched back to a five-day cycle. However, the word study chart displayed on the wall next to the dry-erase board at the front of the room showed eight days in the cycle. The days were not labeled, but the chart read as follows, from top to bottom: small group minilesson; look, say, cover, write check; closed word sort; buddy check; making connections; word hunt; activity; and buddy test. Each row on the chart had four magnets next to it that are used to indicate which students are completing that activity on a given day. There were between one and three students on the magnets next to each of the activities on the day of the classwalk.

On the side of the room opposite the word study schedule were various trays for submitting student work, including one for spelling. Student partners submit their completed tests here after day eight of the cycle. Students’ partner assignments are listed on the dry-erase board at the front of the room.

Wendy. Wendy walked me through her room before we started the second-round interview. She apologized for the room being a mess; aside from one banner having fallen halfway down the wall, the room was tidy. Since the first-round classwalk, Wendy had added vocabulary-related content to her classroom, among other literacy content such as posters describing behaviors of good readers and writers, a list of student rules for interactive read-alouds, examples of student work, and books about poetry.

One piece of vocabulary-related content Wendy added to her classroom included a piece of chart paper that addressed context clues. The chart read, “Readers use context
of the sentences, paragraph, or whole text to help determine the meaning of a word.” This chart was posted above a window and next to two other, similar-sized pieces of chart paper describing behaviors of good readers.

Another place in Wendy’s room where vocabulary content was evident was on a piece of chart paper displaying an excerpt from *Testing the Ice* (Robinson, 2009). Wendy used different-colored markers on the excerpt to highlight *pleaded, beamed,* and *sheepishly.* These were words Wendy selected for instruction with this text. The verbs were selected to show students how to select words besides *said* to indicate dialogue in text. Wendy selected *sheepishly* to call attention to Robinson’s (2009) use of adverbs.

**Group two teachers.** Judy’s, Olivia’s, and Zoe’s second-round classwalks were conducted on December 8th, 8th, and 12th, respectively. Each classwalk took place before or after the teacher’s second-round interview.

**Judy.** I walked through Judy’s classroom prior to our second-round interview as I arrived early and she was out of the room at that time. We had some time after the interview to discuss the new elements of her room that I had seen during my classwalk. The element we spent the most time talking about was word study. We did not discuss the Phraseology wall, but there were 18 examples posted to the wall as compared to the two posted during the first-round classwalk.

On the dry-erase board at the front of the room, Judy’s agenda included a separate word work section. In this section, there was an index card for each of the seven days of the word study cycle. Students move through this seven-day cycle in groups, so there are five smaller cards indicating which day each group is on. For example, on the day I visited, group four was on day one, group three was on day two, group two was on day
three, and so on. No groups were on day five or day six. In case students need a reminder about the activities they are supposed to complete on each day, there was a separate word study display on the bulletin board in the back of the room. A separate sheet of paper represented each day of the cycle. A clothespin with each student’s name written on it is clipped to the day of the cycle he or she is on. These sheets did not, however, describe the activities a student should complete on each day of the cycle. They did reveal that there were four students in each group except group five, which had only two students.

Judy shared one of the word study worksheets her students complete as part of the seven-day cycle. On day one of the cycle, Judy gives students the list of focus words to select from for word study. The directions on their “Word Study Words” worksheet ask them to choose “10 [words] from the list of focus words” Judy has given them and to “choose five from your list of misspelled words.” Students then copy these fifteen words on to the “Word Study Words” worksheet, which they will use as a reference for the rest of the cycle. So, students’ word study includes teacher-selected words (from the list of focus words) and student-selected words (from the student’s list of misspelled words).

To the right of the bulletin board with the word study clothespin chart was the Phraseology wall. The phrases on this wall come from the books students are reading independently or are discussing during interactive read-alouds. Students’ Phraseology entries include the quotation from the text, the title of the book, the author of the book, the page number, and the name of the student submitting the entry. Judy’s two entries from the first-round classwalk were still on the wall, but students’ submissions have been included as well. Some of the students’ submissions duplicate Judy’s entries (i.e., they have posted the same quotation) or duplicate other students’ entries. A range of postings
were submitted by the students. For example, one entry reads, “Knowledge is like a bee that made that sweet honey, you have to chase it through the pages of the book” (Polacco, 1998). This quotation is similar to Judy’s example of “Not to be noticed is to be like nobody at all” (Bunting, 1991) because both quotations feature similes and both concern a book’s theme or lesson. In contrast, one student posted, “I can answer that,” someone interrupted” (Gelsey, 2000) as an example of powerful language. Compared to Judy’s entries or the other students’ entries, this entry does not seem to capture the same features of powerful language. It does not use figurative language, nor does it express a theme or lesson from the book. One student’s entries were comprised of single words (e.g., radiology, absolutely, pendolino), the latter word being a brand of Italian train. This student’s entries did not fit with the purpose of selecting phrases with powerful language.

Olivia. Olivia showed me around her room before our interview. It was before the school day started, so the teacher who shared the room with her was still in the room. The most noticeable difference between the first-round and second-round classwalks is the presence of word study in Olivia’s classroom.

The word study content in Olivia’s classroom was limited to a series of four beige sheets of paper stapled to a bulletin board in the back of the room. These four sheets included a list of the eight-day word study schedule, the members of the five word study groups, and a brief description of five word study activities. The eight days of the cycle were described as follows: meet with Olivia; ABC order with core words; look, say, cover, write, check; buddy check; closed sort in notebook; word hunt; other activity; and buddy test. The five groups were comprised of between two and six students; next to the names of the students in each group is a post-it note indicating which day of the cycle the
group was on. On the day of the classwalk, group two was starting the cycle. The “Day 1” post-it tells students to “bring pencil, index card, planner, and word study folder” to their meeting with Olivia. None of the other post-its have additional writing; however, days four through six were not included on the chart on the day of the classwalk.

Two sheets describe the word study activities for students to complete on day seven of the cycle. These activities included rhyme time, word map, storyboard, rapid write, and word operations. For rhyme time, students write a list of words that rhyme with the words on their word lists and check with a dictionary to see if the words are “real words.” Students use additional handouts for the word map and storyboard activities to show the country of origin for a word or to write and depict a story using six of the words on their word lists. The rapid write activity involves students writing a story using word list words as fast as possible; the story must make sense. Finally, students completing the word operations activity write “word strings” that change one or two letters at a time in a word to form new words (e.g., wish, wise, case, cash).

*Zoe.* Zoe noted she only recently started doing word study with her students, so she said there would not be much word study content featured in her classroom. Although this was true, it was also true that she had vocabulary-specific elements in her classroom as well. These were charts describing context clues and multiple-meaning words. There were also additional entries on her Powerful Language banner that students had posted since the first-round classwalk.

On the dry-erase board at the front of the room, Zoe had taped up a poster describing the eight days of the word study cycle. According to her chart, these days are as follows: lesson with teacher; look, say, cover, write, check; closed sort, buddy check,
making connections, word hunt, other activity, and buddy test. _Making connections_ may be the only activity whose content is not self-evident from its name. On the poster, Zoe described it by writing, “Students will use the special form to generate meaningful connections with other words as they learn spelling principles.” These “meaningful connections” can be due to pattern, meaning, or sound.

Elsewhere in Zoe’s room are four posters concerning vocabulary. The first poster described how students might use context clues to determine the meaning of an unknown word. This poster read, “Use context clues when trying to figure out the meaning.” Below this heading were four bullet points: synonyms (mean the same), explanations, antonyms (mean the opposite), and examples. This poster was above a bulletin board displaying the steps in the writing process (i.e., draft to published product), an example of student work, a progress monitoring chart, and a to-do list for the reader response letters. The wall it was posted on was behind Zoe when she was conducting an interactive read-aloud.

The other vocabulary-related posters in the room were on the wall adjacent to the one just described. The first of these posters described different ways students can infer the meaning of unknown words while reading. It read, “Readers recognize new vocabulary words and work to figure out their meaning by using different strategies.” Below this heading were six methods students can use when they encounter new vocabulary words: breaking the word apart, picture where and when you’d say it, read around the word to find the meaning, dictionaries, ask someone, and use pieces of word to figure out what it means.

To the left of this poster was a poster listing text features of “informational or non-fiction” text. Most of the features listed on this poster were not related to vocabulary
(e.g., heading and subheadings: clues about main idea and text, table of contents, photograph and captions, etc.), yet a few vocabulary-related features were listed as well. These included “boldfaced type: important vocabulary words,” “pronunciation: how to say the word,” and “glossary.”

Below the “informational and non-fiction” poster was a poster concerning multiple-meaning words. It read, “Readers understand that words can have more than one meaning and figure out the meaning used by the author.” Below this heading were examples of the multiple-meaning words lying and stumbled. For lying, the definitions were “not to tell the truth” and “placed on something.” For scrambled, the definitions were “rushing/moving around,” “all over the place,” “way to cook eggs,” “football move,” and “game.” Below these definitions is the suggestion that students “can use clues from pictures as well” when they are trying to figure out which meaning of a multiple-meaning word is intended.

On the Powerful Language banner, students contributed five other hand-written entries to Zoe’s entry from the first-round classwalk. Each entry included the quotation, the book’s title, and the author’s name. The leftmost entry was from My Brother Martin and read, “‘Mother Dear, one day I’m going to turn this world upside down’” (Farris, 2003). The next entry to the right was from The Three Questions and reads, “There is only one important time and that time is now. The most important one is always the one you are with. And the most important thing is to do good for the one who is standing at your side” (Muth, 2002). To the right was a printed version of the quotation from Each Kindness (Woodson, 2012) Zoe had originally posted. This quotation had originally been
posted in the hallway outside the classroom, accompanied by student illustrations depicting examples of kindness from their lives.

To the right of Zoe’s printed entry are the three remaining entries. The first was from *Train to Somewhere* and reads, “Sometimes what you get turns out to be better than what you wanted in the first place” (Bunting, 2000). Next was from *Wonder* and reads, “I won’t describe what I look like. Whatever you’re thinking, it’s probably worse” (Palacio, 2012). Finally, a student has selected a quotation from Michael Jordan; however, no book is listed. The quotation reads, “I failed over and over again and that’s why I succeed.”

**Summary**

In this chapter, the results of two rounds of interviews and classwalks with the six teachers were shared. The results from the interviews were comprised of the vocabulary teachers selected for instruction with each of four picture books. Teachers selected different words for each of the texts and teachers’ explanations and justifications of their selections varied. The results from the classwalks were comprised of descriptions of teachers’ classrooms for both rounds of data collection, with specific attention paid to vocabulary and word study content in the second-round classwalks. Analysis of these data is discussed in the following chapter in reference to the five research questions.
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, the preceding results are discussed in terms of the five research questions. Each question is restated in its section for reference. The questions concern teachers’ vocabulary selections; the nature of those selections; the explanations and justifications of those selections; the connections between selections, explanations, and justifications and current research on vocabulary selection; and changes to selections, justifications, and explanations over time. Discussion of each question follows the response to that question. Common themes that emerged across questions are addressed separately after the discussion of the fifth research question. Responses to all questions are informed by the codes generated during data analysis.

Research Question 1

The first research question was “When presented with specific narrative and informational books to be used for an interactive read-aloud, what vocabulary do teachers select for instruction?” The narrative books are The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore (Joyce, 2012) and The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993). The informational books are My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing up with The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. (Farris, 2003) and Nelson Mandela (Nelson, 2013). In the following tables, teachers’ vocabulary selections are displayed in descending order by frequency of selection for each book, regardless of the round of the interview. Following the tables are discussions of the words selected for each book.
Vocabulary selected for *Morris Lessmore*. Table 5 reveals teachers selected 15 unique words for instruction with *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012). Hilary selected the most for instruction with nine and Olivia selected the fewest with three. Judy selected the phrase “festive squadron of flying books,” (Joyce, 2012, unpaged) which contains two words other teachers had also selected, so it is counted once for festive and once for squadron.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Teachers Selected for Instruction with Morris Lessmore</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hilary</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>squadron</td>
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<tr>
<td>happenstance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>festive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nested</td>
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<td>bittersweet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lessmore comedies</td>
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<tr>
<td>seldom</td>
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<tr>
<td>weary</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

All six participants selected *squadron* for instruction for use with *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012). Judy said she would discuss the phrase where *squadron* appears,
“festive squadron of flying books” (Joyce, 2012), instead of discussing squadron on its own. The next most frequently selected word was happenstance, which four teachers selected. Next most frequently selected were amiable, festive, and nested, each being selected by three teachers. Judy mentioned it as part of the phrase “festive squadron of flying books” (Joyce, 2012). Words selected by only two teachers each were bittersweet, blew, and Lessmore. The remaining seven words were selected by one teacher each.

**Vocabulary selected for The Lotus Seed.** Table 6 reveals teachers selected 21 unique words for instruction with The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993). Vivian selected the most for instruction with 15; both Judy and Olivia selected the fewest with three. Three of Vivian’s selections were compound words or phrases: family altar, hair combs, and mother-of-pearl. Wendy selected the phrase golden dragon throne and Olivia also selected the phrase mother-of-pearl for instruction as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Teachers Selected for Instruction with The Lotus Seed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hilary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clamored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scrambled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plucked unfurling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

121
The word most frequently selected for instruction with *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) was *dormant*, with five of the six participants identifying it as a word they would teach. The next most frequently selected word was *clamored*, with four participants identifying it as a word they would select for instruction. *Emperor, scrambled* and *throne* were the next most frequently selected words; three different teachers selected each of these words for instruction. Wendy said she would discuss the phrase “golden dragon throne” (Garland, 1993) instead of discussing *throne* on its own. Words selected by two teachers include *altar, mother-of-pearl, plucked*, and *unfurling*. For *altar*, Vivian said she would discuss it as part of the phrase “family altar” from the text instead of discussing the word on its own. The remaining 12 words were selected by one teacher each. Judy’s selection of *heritage* is unique because it does not appear in the text; this was the only instance of a teacher selecting a word from outside the text for any of the books.

**Vocabulary selected for *My Brother Martin***. Table 7 reveals teachers selected 17 unique words for instruction with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003). Zoe selected the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>blinking</th>
<th>family altar</th>
<th>golden dragon throne</th>
<th>hair combs</th>
<th>heritage</th>
<th>imperial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>marched</td>
<td>lotus</td>
<td>silk</td>
<td>speeding</td>
<td>towering</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
most words for instruction with eight; Olivia and Wendy selected the least with three words each. One of Wendy’s selections was the phrase “turn life upside down” from the text, which she discussed only as a phrase (Farris, 2003). None of the other teachers selected any of the words from this phrase or the phrase itself as being worthy of instruction. Additionally, Hilary selected for instruction two open compound words describing children’s games, Chinese Checkers and Tinker Toys.

Table 7

*Vocabulary Teachers Selected for Instruction with My Brother Martin*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hilary</th>
<th>Vivian</th>
<th>Wendy</th>
<th>Judy</th>
<th>Olivia</th>
<th>Zoe</th>
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<tr>
<td>bigotry</td>
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<td>nourishing</td>
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<td>segregation</td>
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<td>boy</td>
<td>chifforobe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Checkers</td>
<td>indignity</td>
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<td>Marches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tinker Toys</td>
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<td>prizes</td>
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<tr>
<td>unfair</td>
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The word most frequently selected for instruction with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003) was *bigotry*, which five teachers selected. The next most frequently selected words
were hatred, injustice, nourishing, and segregation, which were selected by three teachers each. Wendy was prompted to discuss hatred because she had read the word aloud during the interview as part of the phrase “hatred and bigotry” (Farris, 2003). She discussed bigotry with reference to this phrase, but not hatred, so I prompted her to discuss hatred because it was not clear whether she was omitting it from discussion because her students would know it. Next most frequently selected was cruelty, which two teachers selected for instruction. The remaining 11 words were selected by one teacher each and were not prompted.

**Vocabulary selected for Nelson Mandela.** Table 8 reveals teachers selected 21 unique words for instruction with Nelson Mandela (Nelson, 2013). Wendy selected the most words for instruction with eight; Olivia selected the least with two. Judy discussed two of her selections as phrases instead of as single words, “cleanse his homeland of hate and discrimination” and “free at last” (Nelson, 2013). No other teacher selected these phrases or any of the words within these phrases for instruction. Wendy discussed “brace yourself” as a phrase instead of as single words and no other teacher selected either word or the phrase for instruction (Nelson, 2013).

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Teachers Selected for Instruction with Nelson Mandela</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hilary</td>
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<tr>
<td>apartheid</td>
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<tr>
<td>apartheid ancestors</td>
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<tr>
<td>fortnight</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

124
The word most frequently selected for instruction with *Nelson Mandela* was *apartheid*, which five teachers selected. The next most frequently selected word was *ancestors*, which four teachers selected. Three teachers, Vivian, Olivia, and Zoe, selected *fortnight* for instruction. Two teachers each selected *bountiful* and *fertile*. The remaining 16 words were selected for instruction by one teacher each.

**Discussion.** An analysis of the words teachers selected for instruction with these four texts revealed four trends related to the words themselves or the teachers selecting them. These trends concern the number of words selected for instruction with a text, the words selected during each round of interviews, the selection of phrases instead of words, and the selection of the same or similar words in different texts.

| Table 8 continued | brace yourself cleanse his homeland of hate and discrimination comrades disguises conquered elect Europe European free at last harmony mealies protests rallies rich underground vision |
For all four texts, Olivia chose the fewest words of any of the teachers. One possible explanation for this trend is that her interviews were the first to be conducted during each round of data collection. In that situation, we can discuss only the words she mentions. Any words I would have prompted her to discuss would have reflected my judgment about which words in the book should have been selected for instruction. Because the focus of this research is on the teachers’ vocabulary selections and their explanations or justifications of those selections, I needed to withhold from prompting Olivia to discuss any of the words I thought were interesting but she did not mention. In contrast, if in a later interview, another teacher did not mention one of the words Olivia had mentioned, then I prompted that teacher to discuss the word. This prompting is based on another teacher’s judgment, not my judgment, which means the focus is still on a teacher’s interpretation of which words should be selected for instruction. My ability to prompt every teacher other than Olivia with words the previous teachers had selected may explain why a different teacher selected the most words for each book. With more chances to prompt for unmentioned words, there are more chances for teachers to select these words once I had mentioned them. Conversely, had Olivia’s interviews been conducted after other teachers’, it is still possible she may have selected the same vocabulary. She may have simply had stricter rules for selecting vocabulary than the other teachers.

Another trend that emerged from my analysis of teachers’ word selections relates to the differences in the words selected in each round of interviews. For The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993), teachers selected throne only in the first round of interviews. These interviews were conducted during the first two to three weeks of the school year. A
possible explanation for this trend could be that the first-round teachers underestimated their students’ vocabulary knowledge because they were still getting to know their students. They may have thought *throne* would be a word students did not know, so they selected it for instruction. In the second round interviews, the other three teachers may not have selected it for instruction because they knew their students would know it.

In contrast to their decision to select *throne* for instruction in round one, none of the first-round teachers selected *injustice* for instruction with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003), but all of the second-round teachers did. In this case, the first-round teachers may have overestimated their students’ vocabulary knowledge early in the year. Alternatively, the second-round teachers could have selected *injustice* for instruction because it can be analyzed as an example of the prefix *in-* being used to change the meaning of the base word *justice*. All teachers received a week of professional development between the two rounds of interviews, and one day of that week was focused on word study, including how affixes can change the meaning or spelling of base words. Additionally, two of the three teachers who read *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003) in the second round selected *cruelty* for instruction, and none of the first-round teachers selected it. This selection may also be due to the opportunity *cruelty* provides for teaching about base words and affixes. Further exploration of the differences in teachers’ vocabulary selections between the first and second rounds can be found in the discussion of research question five.

A third trend that emerged from the analysis of teachers’ selections was that Judy and Wendy occasionally selected phrases instead of single words or compound words for instruction. For *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012), Judy said she would discuss the phrase “*festive squadron* of flying books” with her students. Although other teachers did select
festy or squadron (Vivian and Wendy selected both), none of them discussed the entire phrase where they appear. In Nelson Mandela (Nelson, 2013), Judy said she would discuss the phrase “cleanse his homeland of hate and discrimination” with her students. The two instances where Judy selected phrases instead of words for instruction occurred during the first round of data collection. It is possible that she chose not to focus on phrases during the second round because of how her students had responded to discussions of phrases in the time between the rounds of data collection. If students were not engaged in discussions of phrases as compared to words, then Judy may have changed this part of her read-aloud instruction. Furthermore, classwalks in Judy’s classroom revealed she maintains a Phraseology wall where students can post examples of powerful language they find in books they read. Judy may have wanted to model how to identify powerful language in read-aloud books for her students early in the year (i.e., around the time of the first-round interview). If she thought her students understood how to identify powerful phrases, then she may not have needed to focus on them as much later in the year (i.e., around the time of the second-round interview). So her decision not to select phrases for instruction in the second round might mean that she thought her students understood how to identify powerful language and did not need this process modeled any longer.

Wendy was the only other teacher to identify phrases instead of single words for instruction during the interviews. During the first-round interview, she selected “turn life upside down” from My Brother Martin (Farris, 2003) as a phrase she would discuss with her students. No other teachers selected any of the words in this phrase for instruction. Wendy also said she would select the phrase “brace yourself” from Nelson Mandela
(Nelson, 2013) for instruction. No other teachers selected either word in this phrase for instruction. Wendy read *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003) during the first-round interview and *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013) during the second-round interview. The presence of phrases in both interviews suggests she may not have selected these phrases due to changes in her instructional focus across the beginning of the year. Instead, her selections may have been due to the context where each of these phrases appears in each book. In both cases, the phrases are spoken in a conversation between a mother and son. However, her discussion of each phrase does not indicate that she selected the phrases because they were part of such a conversation. She selected the phrase from *My Brother Martin* (Nelson, 2013) because she thought it was an important quotation. She selected the phrase from *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013) because thought her students could use it to practice making inferences, specifically about why young Mandela would need to brace himself. In both cases, Wendy discusses these phrases in relation to how they communicate something about the plot or theme of the book. She does not discuss the individual words in the phrases as being worthy of instruction on their own. Additionally, no other teacher selected any of these words either, so it may be the case that Wendy’s selection of these phrases has less to do with vocabulary than comprehension of the text as a whole.

Finally, analysis of teachers’ vocabulary selections revealed identical or very similar words selected in different texts. Judy, Vivian, Wendy, and Zoe selected *ancestor* or *ancestors* for instruction with *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013) and Zoe selected *ancestor* for instruction with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003). Vivian selected *marches* for instruction with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003) and Hilary selected *marched* for
instruction with *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993). In *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013), *ancestors* appears in three different parts of the text. In *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003), *ancestors* appears only once. The appearance of *ancestors* more times in *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013) may be why more teachers selected it for instruction with that text than with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003). Teachers’ responses revealed they discussed all instances of *ancestors* appearing in *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013). For *marches*, Vivian mentioned her students would be confused about Farris’ (2003) use of the term in a context other than military marches. Hilary discussed *marched* because she thought it was a more descriptive word than *walked*, which meant Farris’ (2003) word choice could be used to discuss “how [students] can use vocabulary to add meaning to [their] writing.”

Vivian’s and Hilary’s discussions of *marches* and *marched* was the only instance where the words teachers selected were similar or identical across narrative and informational texts. How teachers’ vocabulary selections varied across these text types in general is discussed in more detail in the following section.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question was “Does the nature of teachers’ vocabulary selections differ for narrative and informational texts? If so, how?” A list of words selected by all teachers, categorized by text type revealed teachers selected 36 unique words for instruction for each text (Table 9). The only word teachers selected for instruction for both types of text was *marched* in *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) and *marches* in *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003). Teachers selected *ancestor* or *ancestors* for use with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003) and *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013). Although teachers did not discuss the differences in vocabulary between informational
and narrative texts directly, there were still differences in the nature of the words they selected in terms of the use of context of sentences, the content of texts, and students’ background knowledge. Following the table, these differences are discussed separately for each type of text.

Table 9

*Vocabulary Teachers Selected by Type of Text*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative texts: <em>Morris Lessmore</em> and <em>The Lotus Seed</em></th>
<th>Informational texts: <em>My Brother Martin</em> and <em>Nelson Mandela</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>altar</td>
<td>ancestor(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amiable</td>
<td>apartheid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ao dai</em></td>
<td>bigotry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bittersweet</td>
<td>bountiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blew</td>
<td>boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blinking</td>
<td>brace yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clamored</td>
<td>chifforobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comedies</td>
<td>Chinese Checkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormant</td>
<td>cleanse his homeland of hate and discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emperor</td>
<td>comrades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family altar</td>
<td>conquered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>festive squadron of flying books</td>
<td>cruelty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>golden dragon throne</td>
<td>disguises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair combs</td>
<td>elect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happenstance</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heritage</td>
<td>European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imperial</td>
<td>fertile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inviting</td>
<td>fortnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessmore</td>
<td>free at last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lotus</td>
<td>harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marched</td>
<td>hatred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother-of-pearl</td>
<td>indignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mysterious</td>
<td>injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nested</td>
<td>marches</td>
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<tr>
<td>plucked</td>
<td>mealies</td>
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<tr>
<td>scrambled</td>
<td>nourishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>seldom</td>
<td>obedient</td>
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<tr>
<td>silk</td>
<td>prizes</td>
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Continued
Table 9 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speeding</th>
<th>Protests</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Squadron</td>
<td>Rallies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stooped</td>
<td>Segregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throne</td>
<td>Tinker Toys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towering</td>
<td>Turn life upside down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragedies</td>
<td>Underground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfurling</td>
<td>Unfair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weary</td>
<td>Vision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was only one instance of a teacher, Olivia, discussing the difference between informational text and narrative text in terms of vocabulary. However, her discussion of this difference in text type did not concern a specific word. Instead, as she explained why she selected *happenstance* for use with *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012), she continued by saying, “If I was doing more informational text, I would probably tell them to look at vocabulary a little bit more.” Later in the same interview, she also discussed this difference again, saying, “I try not to focus a whole lot on vocabulary because I think sometimes if you focus a whole lot on vocabulary, within the story, you can take away from the overall meaning. Unless it’s a text that you really have to look at those vocabulary like in an informational text.” In both instances, she was describing why she did not select a word for instruction with *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012); it appears her reasoning is that with narrative texts, students do not require as much vocabulary support as they do with informational texts. Additionally, she argues the structure of narrative texts (i.e., the flow of the plot) can be interrupted by paying too much attention to the vocabulary in the story.

The teachers’ lack of discussion of text-type differences in their explanation of vocabulary selections required further analysis of their explanations. This analysis of
their interview responses yielded various reasons for selecting vocabulary for instruction. These reasons can be classified into various categories. The three categories explaining the majority of the vocabulary teachers selected include background knowledge, context of sentence, and content of story. The category of background knowledge is comprised of the analytic codes *vocabulary: background, new word for known concept, and oral language*. The category of context of sentence is comprised of the analytic codes *vocabulary: context, vocabulary: connotation, and vocabulary: shades of meaning*. The category content of story is comprised of the analytic code *vocabulary: content*.

The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 10 for narrative texts and Table 11 for informational texts. The marks in each column indicate the number of teachers whose responses were classified into that code (i.e., there were four teachers who discussed *dormant* in reference to the content of the story). Words without a code were selected for instruction for reasons other than those listed in the table. Most often, this reason was that the students would not know the word, but there was no accompanying explanation for how the teacher would support students’ learning of the word selected.

**Narrative texts.** The results of Table 10 reveal teachers primarily considered the context of the sentence where words appear when selecting vocabulary for instruction with narrative text. There were 12 unique words selected because the sentence where they appeared provided teachers with an opportunity to discuss the meaning of the word with students. *Happenstance* was the word most frequently selected because of the context of the sentence where it appears. The four teachers who selected *happenstance* for instruction all said they would discuss the context of the sentence where it appears in their instruction with students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Morris Lessmore and The Lotus Seed</strong></th>
<th>Background Information</th>
<th>Context of Sentence</th>
<th>Content of Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>altar</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amiable</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ao dai</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>bittersweet</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>blew</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blinking</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clamored</td>
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<td>XXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comedies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dormant</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emperor</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
<td>XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family altar</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>festive squadron of flying books</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>golden dragon throne</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair combs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happenstance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heritage</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>imperial</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Lessmore</td>
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<td>lotus</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>mother-of-pearl</td>
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<td>mysterious</td>
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<td>nested</td>
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<td>plucked</td>
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<td>stooped</td>
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<tr>
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<td>towering</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tragedies</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>unfurling</td>
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</table>

Continued
Table 10 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>13 (10)</th>
<th>24 (12)</th>
<th>11 (7)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weary</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Context of sentence.** Other words chosen by more than one teacher due to the contextual support available for the words include *clamored, dormant, festive, nested, squadron*, and *unfurling*. Of these words, *clamored* and *unfurling* were discussed only in terms of the contextual support available in the text. Teachers who selected *clamored* and *unfurling* also noted the contextual support offered by the illustrations on the pages where these words appear. It is possible the support provided by the illustrations in combination with the text was sufficient for the teachers to convey the meaning of *clamored* and *unfurling* to their students, thus they would not need to develop students’ background knowledge about concepts related to the word or discuss the word in relation to the lesson or theme of the text.

Both *ao dai* and *marched* were selected by one teacher each, and were selected only because of the contextual support provided by the sentence. For *ao dai*, Zoe said she would select it because it was a word from a foreign language and that she tries to get students to infer the meanings of such words. She argued that the contextual support for *ao dai* was strong enough for students to infer the meaning even though it is not an English word. Although Zoe did not think *ao dai* was a word students would see again in other texts or a word students would need to know to understand the theme of the text, she discussed using it in a lesson, if only to have students practice using context clues.
For *marched*, Hilary focused on how Farris’ (2003) use of a verb such as *marched* affects how students might interpret the sentence differently had Farris used *walked* or *went*. She went on to say it was an example of how students can learn to “use vocabulary to add meaning to [their] writing.” Here, Hilary’s discussion of contextual support provided by Farris (2003) is not limited to teaching students about the shades of meaning in a verb Farris used but also her discussion reveals a connection to writing. By focusing her students’ attention on Farris’ word choice, she can also teach her students to think more carefully about the words they use when they are writing.

Finally, two teachers selected *nested* for instruction because of the contextual support Joyce (2012) provides. In Olivia’s case, she described how she would use the context of the sentence to help her students understand *nested*. As she was discussing her reasons for selecting *nested*, she started sharing her interpretation in a think-aloud. In this think-aloud, she said she would point out the illustrations and how they relate to *nested*, which is usually used to describe birds. For Olivia, considering the context of the sentence led her to also consider how the illustrations support the text as well as how Joyce (2012) used the connotation of *nested* to personify the books.

Vivian also described how she would discuss the connotation of *nested* and the illustrations to help students make a prediction involving *nested*. She specifically invoked the page turn when discussing *nested*. She thought it was clever of Joyce (2012) to have left the location of the nest to the reader’s imagination; it is only clear when the page is turned that the books have nested in a library. This ambiguity provides Vivian the opportunity to have her students work on predicting by trying to determine where the books might be nesting.
Background information. The second most frequently occurring code describing why teachers selected words for instruction dealt with whether the students had background knowledge teachers could use to support students’ understanding of the words. Teachers identified 10 words from narrative texts they would select for instruction for this reason. In three instances, two teachers selected the same word for instruction for this reason. These words were emperor, golden dragon throne, and throne, all of which are from The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993).

Wendy, who was the only teacher who selected golden dragon throne for instruction, discussed the phrase as an entire phrase or discussed throne in isolation. She did not discuss golden or dragon in isolation and no teachers selected either of those words for instruction. Thus, Wendy’s discussion of golden dragon throne was similar to other teachers’ discussions of throne. In both cases, the teachers discussed how students might be able to use their background knowledge of kings and queens from history lessons, books, or games to understand the meaning of throne in The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993).

For emperor, teachers discussed the use of the term as a political title that would be unfamiliar to students in the United States. Judy said she did not need to discuss it with her students when she read the book with them because they knew the word from video games. Both teachers who discussed emperor in relation to their students’ background knowledge thought it would be easy for students to understand once they had made the connection to concepts the students already understood.

Judy also discussed heritage, which does not appear in The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993), in relation to her students’ background knowledge. She said she had recently read
a book about Ellis Island with her students that featured characters who immigrated to the United States. She and her students had discussed *heritage* with regard to the actions of the characters in that book. As a result of that discussion, she thought it would be helpful to discuss *heritage* with *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993), even though it does not appear in the book. This was the only instance of a teacher selecting a word for instruction that did not appear in the text being discussed.

Although Judy’s discussion of *heritage* is necessarily idiosyncratic because it does not appear in the text, there were other instances of words being selected only because of their relation to students’ background knowledge. These words include comedies, throne, and plucked. Hilary selected comedies for instruction because her students already know about humorous as a genre of literature, so it would be easy to connect comedies to students’ background knowledge of humorous. (Wendy’s reasons for selecting throne have been discussed previously and will not be restated here.)

Vivian used just the opposite rationale for selecting plucked for instruction. She said her students would not know it, so she decided to use it with *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993). She did not mention the context of the sentence, the content of the story, nor any of the other, less frequently chosen reasons for selecting words for instruction when discussing plucked. Vivian selected plucked only because her students did not know it; however, she also thought they would not know rattled, but did not select it for instruction. In fact, during the first-round interview, Vivian selected more words for instruction (14) with *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) than any teacher did with any book. Thus, Vivian’s selection of plucked may be due to the timing of the interview; in the
second-round interview, she did not select as many words for instruction with either text, nor did any other teachers select as many words with *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993).

**Content of story.** The third most common reason for selecting a word for instruction was due to the word’s relation to the content of the story. The most frequently selected word for this reason with narrative texts was *dormant* from *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993), which four teachers selected. Those teachers selecting *dormant* for this reason noted the parallel between the life of the lotus seed and the life of bà, the grandmother in the story. In the story, the seed and the person both depart from Vietnam during the U.S. War in Vietnam to resettle and flourish in the United States. Teachers also connected *dormant* to their students’ contributions to class discussions in that the dormancy of some students’ thinking is similar to a seed before it blooms into a flower. These students do not speak up frequently, but when they do speak, it is profound or enlightening. In both instances, the comparison of the seed to bà and the comparison of *dormant* to students’ thinking, teachers discussed the importance of *dormant* to understanding the story. For *dormant* and the other words selected because of their relevance to the content of the story, there were always other reasons teachers had selected those words. It may be the case that teachers select words for instruction because of their relevance to the theme or lesson of the text, but that these words cannot be taught only through telling students the words’ meanings. Instead, teachers need to support students’ understanding of the vocabulary in a text by developing students’ background knowledge or referring to contextual support provided by Garland (1993).

Two teachers discussed the content of *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) to justify their selection of *emperor*. Both Wendy and Judy selected *emperor* for instruction and
both selected it because of the content of the story and its relationship to students’ background knowledge. However, when discussing emperor in terms of the content of the story, both teachers mentioned the confusion about why the emperor crying would be a significant event in the plot of the story. Judy had actually taught The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993) prior to the second-round interview when she discussed it, so she already knew her students had struggled to grasp this plot event and thus she was certain she would select it for instruction if she were to use the text in the future. Wendy had not yet read The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993) to her students, so she was only assuming her students would be confused. If the response of Judy’s students is any indication, then Wendy’s assumption may be correct.

**Informational texts.** The results of Table 11 reveal teachers primarily considered the context of the sentence where words appear when selecting words for instruction with instructional text. There were 19 unique words selected because the sentence where they appeared provided teachers with an opportunity to discuss the meaning of the word with students. Ancestors and bigotry were the two words most frequently selected for instruction because of the context of the sentence where they appear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Vocabulary Selected from Informational Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>My Brother Martin and Nelson Mandela</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of Sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of Story</td>
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Continued
Table 11 continued

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<th></th>
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<td>boy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>brace yourself</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>chifforobe</td>
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<tr>
<td>indignity</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>protests</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>segregation</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinker Toys</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turn life upside down underground</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unfair vision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Instances (Unique Instances) | 19 (15) | 31 (19) | 29 (15) |

**Context of sentence.** The presence of *ancestors* as one of the two most frequently selected words may not be surprising because it appears in both informational texts. Three of the four teachers who selected *ancestors* because of the contextual support
offered by the sentence where it appears did so while reading *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013). Zoe was the only teacher to select it for instruction with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003). Zoe was also the only teacher to select it for instruction with both texts. All three teachers who selected *ancestors* for use with *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013) quoted the sentence “Nelson was nine when his father joined the *ancestors* in the sky” from the text as they discussed it (unpaged). They all noted the figurative language and their students’ lack of knowledge of *ancestors* as reasons they would discuss the word.

Four teachers also selected *bigotry* for instruction due to the contextual support Farris (2003) provides. In the story, *bigotry* appears in the phrase “hatred and *bigotry*” (Farris, 2003), so these teachers claimed their students would likely be able to infer the meaning of the word from this context because many students already know *hatred*. However, they still thought *bigotry* was important enough a word to select for instruction that they did not want to leave to chance whether students would learn it from context alone. Three teachers selected *hatred* for instruction due to the same contextual support. Judy in particular wanted to emphasize the difference between *hatred* and *hate* for her students because she says they use *hate* casually in her class (e.g., “I hate doing this.”) to express mere dislike. Another word selected primarily due to contextual support was *fortnight*. For both of the teachers who selected it for instruction, that the context of the sentence suggested the passage of time was a strong clue about the word’s meaning; yet, both said they would have to clarify that meaning. The ambiguity of the amount of time expressed by a *fortnight* is important to resolve because the text later describes Mandela as being imprisoned for 27 and a half years (Nelson, 2013). If teachers had let this
ambiguity go unresolved, their students may have misunderstood *fortnight* to refer to a much longer amount of time.

**Content of story.** The next most frequently identified reason for selecting words for instruction with informational texts was because the word related to the content of the story. There were 15 unique words selected for this reason. The most frequently selected word due to the content of the story was *apartheid*, which four teachers selected. Three teachers selected *ancestors, bigotry, injustice*, and *segregation* for instruction due to these words’ relationship to the content of the story.

Olivia’s explanation for selecting *apartheid* captures the basic idea all four of the teachers discussed. That is, students need to understand *apartheid*; otherwise, they will miss the meaning of the story of Mandela’s life. Vivian discussed the connection students might make to segregation in the United States, which she said she would use to help students understand how *apartheid* operated in South Africa. Hilary noted the need for students to understand *apartheid* to understand the text, but also said she would not use this text with her current third-grade students because it would be too challenging. She thought it would be better to use with fourth- or fifth-grade students who have had some introduction to Civil Rights in the United States and who would thus know about segregation. Like Vivian, she said she would make use of this connection to discuss *apartheid* in the text.

Three teachers selected *ancestors* for instruction because its meaning is relevant to the meaning of the text as a whole. Judy noticed the two ways Nelson (2013) used the word as being different from the common usage of *ancestors* to mean a very distant relative. Judy interpreted these two instances, “Nelson was nine when his father joined
the ancestors in the sky” and “the ancestors sent their daughter, Winnie,” as examples of ancestors being used figuratively to convey significant events in the life of Mandela (Nelson, 2013). She argued that these instances of figurative language required teaching ancestors because the students might miss the meaning of the text if they were not discussed. Wendy also discussed the phrase “calling upon the ancestors” as being significant for her students to understand (Nelson, 2013). She connected this phrase with Mandela’s calling as a lawyer in that by listening to the ancestors, he set in motion the rest of his life. As with Judy, Wendy’s discussion of ancestors reveals the importance she places on student understanding of ancestors to grasp the meaning of the text.

Three teachers also discussed bigotry. Vivian discussed it as a word students would need to know to understand the text, but also said she was not sure they were ready for the word itself. That is, she thinks her students can grasp the unfairness inherent in bigotry, but the word itself might be difficult. Olivia discussed bigotry as being a word she would introduce to students (along with hatred and segregation) before reading the book. She discussed a brief plan to introduce Civil Rights in the United States to her students prior to the read-aloud so they would have a historical context for the events in the text; these words would be part of that lesson.

The three teachers who selected injustice for instruction due to its relation to the content of My Brother Martin (Farris, 2003) did so straightforwardly. Zoe’s explanation is representative of the other two. In her view, students needed to know the word to understand why the “generations of cruelty and injustice [the elder members of the King family] had been shielding us from finally broke through” describes a significant event in the life of Dr. King (Farris, 2003). Judy, who selected injustice for content reasons, also
said she would try to help her students understand the meaning of *injustice* by having them consider when they had faced *injustice* in their lives. Incidentally, only the teachers who read *My Brother Martin* in the second round selected *injustice* for instruction (Farris, 2003). One possible explanation for this difference between teachers in terms of the rounds of data collection is that the protests over the failure to indict New York City’s police officers for the death of Eric Garner had begun just prior to the second round of data collection (Goodman & Baker, 2014). Both Vivian and Judy mentioned these protests in their interviews, but only Judy had read *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003) during the second-round interview. Her knowledge of these protests may have made her more likely to select *injustice* for instruction. However, Zoe and Olivia did not mention these protests during their interviews, so it is unclear whether they were aware of them or whether their awareness would have influenced their instructional planning.

Vivian, Judy, and Zoe all discussed the content of *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003) as a reason to select *segregation* for instruction. Vivian said *segregation* was a word students would need to know when reading the text. She said there were “lots of lessons” in the text and that learning about the system of *segregation* is one of these lessons. Zoe’s explanation was similar, though less specific. She said the whole book “kinda talks about [segregation]” so it is necessary to teach students about it lest they misunderstand a key part of the text.

*Background information.* The third most frequently identified reason for selecting words for instruction with informational texts was due to the background knowledge students already have of the words. Teachers identified 17 words for instruction for this reason. The most frequently selected words due to their relation to
students’ background knowledge were *ancestors, bigotry, hatred,* and *segregation.* However, in all of these cases, teachers also identified the sentence context or the text content as reasons for selecting the words for instruction. And, in all of these cases, reference to student background knowledge was the least frequently identified reason for selecting said words for instruction. For the most part, teachers’ justifications for selecting words for instruction because of students’ existing background knowledge included references to books the class had already read, the students’ life experiences, concepts related to the words that students knew about already (i.e., the word is a new word for a known concept), or information the students had just learned from an earlier part of the book.

There was only one word selected solely because it was a word that connects to students’ background knowledge. Vivian selected *marches* for this reason, saying she thought her students would think of “marching in the military” when they heard *marches* in the context of Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Her decision to select it for instruction because of background knowledge is thus consonant with other teachers’ reasons for selecting other words because of how the words relate to background knowledge, even though it is the only word selected solely for this reason.

**Discussion.** Only Olivia identified text-type distinctions when discussing vocabulary, and she was not discussing this difference with regard to a specific word, so the analysis of the differences in the nature of the words teachers selected by text type proceeded by other means. Differences between informational and narrative text in terms of vocabulary selected for instruction include the following: many reasons for selecting vocabulary in informational text; more frequent discussion of student background
knowledge, context of sentence, and context of text for informational text; more frequent discussion of content of text than background information for informational text as compared to narrative text; and more total coded explanations in informational text.

One of the main differences in the nature of the words selected across text types is the variety of reasons teachers gave for selecting the same word in informational texts. For example, multiple teachers selected *bigotry* for reasons of context of sentence (four teachers), content of text (three teachers), and student background knowledge (two teachers). *Ancestors, hatred, and segregation* all fit this description as well. In contrast, for narrative texts, only *dormant* and *emperor* were selected for instruction by multiple teachers for more than one reason. *Dormant* was selected for content of story (four teachers) and context of sentence (three teachers); *emperor* was selected for student background knowledge (two teachers) and content of story (two teachers). The same difference in text types holds even when considering words selected for multiple reasons where only one teacher identified one of the reasons (e.g., *chifforobe* was selected for student background information and context of sentence by one teacher each). For informational texts, there were 10 words that fit this description, but for narrative texts, only eight words fit this description.

Other differences between text types were found in the frequency of identifying certain reasons for selecting words. When considering either total instances of a reason being identified for selecting a word or the number of unique words associated with each reason, there were always more instances for informational texts than for narrative texts. A comparison of the most frequently selected reason for selecting a word (regardless of text type) is helpful in this regard. For words selected due to the context of the sentence
in informational texts, there were 19 unique words selected. Multiple teachers have identified this reason for the same word, so there are a total of 31 instances of this reason being cited. In contrast, for narrative texts, there were 12 unique words selected and a total of 24 instances of this reason being cited. This difference between the number of unique words selected and the total instances of a reason being identified holds for the categories of background information and content of story as well.

Although there were always a greater variety of reasons and a greater amount of these reasons identified for informational texts, the amount of the reasons within each type of text was different. The most frequently identified reason for each text type was context of sentence; however, the next most frequent reason identified for informational texts was content of story, followed by student background information. For narrative texts, it was background information, followed by content of story. The implication of this difference is that teachers need to develop students’ content knowledge to help them understand the vocabulary in informational texts. The corollary is that teachers need to make connections to students’ background knowledge to help them understand the vocabulary in narrative texts. Stated differently, the content of narrative texts is likely to be more familiar to students’ everyday experiences, so the vocabulary they need to know to understand these texts may be associated with familiar concepts. The content of informational texts is less likely to be familiar to students from their everyday experiences, so the vocabulary they need to know to understand these texts may be associated with unfamiliar concepts. Students are likely to be learning new content and new vocabulary for that content simultaneously when reading informational texts.
Students are likely to be learning new vocabulary for known content or concepts when reading narrative texts.

One caveat with these findings is that the lower numbers for narrative texts could be due to Judy’s second round interview. In this interview, she did not discuss *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) in the same manner as she did the other three texts; no other teacher discussed any of their texts in this manner, either. Judy had already read *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) by the time the second-round interview was conducted, so she did not actually read the book during the interview. This choice resulted in a superficial discussion of the text, one that was based on her recollection of the lesson she taught with the book. It is possible that had she read the book during the interview and responded fully to the questions and prompts, there would have been more words selected for narrative texts. However, Judy also said during this interview that she does not focus on vocabulary as much as she did earlier in the year. So it is possible that even had she engaged in the interview more fully, she still would not have selected any more words than she did. Thus, the number of words selected and the distribution of reasons given for those selections are likely to be reflective of teachers’ vocabulary planning.

A final difference between the text types was found in the number of words not associated with these three most frequently identified reasons. In Tables 10 and 11, there are words that teachers selected but that were not coded with one of these three codes. For example, blinking, speeding, and towering are uncoded in Table 10 and Europe and European are uncoded in Table 11. (The reason given for selecting blinking and speeding was that these words would be good descriptive adjectives students could use in writing; the reason given for selecting Europe and Europeans was that students would not know...
these words at all, yet they do not need to know these words to understand the content of the text.) In Table 10, there are 16 of 36 (56 percent) words that are uncoded entirely. In Table 11, there are 12 of 36 (33 percent) words that are uncoded entirely. These results indicate yet another difference between text types: there are not many other reasons teachers would give for selecting words from informational texts. That is, student background knowledge, context of sentence, and content of text provide most of the explanatory power behind the teachers’ vocabulary selections for informational texts. Although there are other words selected for instruction, the explanations given for these selections are particular to each teacher rather than being common to all teachers. The difference in the frequency of these reasons between text types also suggests vocabulary is selected for narrative texts for a greater variety of reasons than for informational text. As noted above, Vivian selected blinking, speeding, and towering for instruction because they are the type of words she would like students to use in their writing. This explanation was not part of teachers’ discussion of vocabulary in informational texts. Overall, there is a greater distribution of reasons given for selecting words for instruction with informational texts and there are a wider variety of additional explanations given for selecting words for instruction with narrative texts.

Across both rounds of interviews, it is clear that the nature of the vocabulary selected for instruction is different for informational and narrative texts. For informational texts, teachers are likely to consider, in order of frequency, context of sentence, content of text, and student background knowledge. For narrative texts, teachers are likely to consider, in order of frequency, context of sentence, student background knowledge, and content of text. The sequence of the frequency of these
reasons is not the only difference; teachers cited these three reasons more frequently for informational texts than narrative texts. Teachers were also more likely to cite multiple reasons for selecting a single word when reading informational text. Finally, when considering student background knowledge, content of text, and context of sentence as reasons for selecting vocabulary, there were more words selected for these reasons for informational text than narrative text. This difference implies that there is a greater variety of reasons teachers select vocabulary for instruction with narrative texts. The content of teachers’ explanations and justifications for selecting vocabulary will be addressed in the following section.

Research Question 3

The third research question was “How do teachers justify or explain their vocabulary selections for narrative and informational texts?” The three principal explanations and justifications have been discussed in reference to research question two; however, there are other explanations and justifications teachers offered as well. Beyond considering students’ background knowledge, the context of a sentence where a word appears, and the content of the book being read, teachers’ explanations and justifications of their vocabulary selections also included references to illustrative support (eight instances), word frequency (five instances), the modeling of think-alouds (three instances), and vocabulary reference materials (three instances). Most of the illustration support discussions were in reference to narrative text. None were in reference to Nelson Mandela (Nelson, 2013), even though Zoe and Olivia praised the illustrations in this text and said they had shared other books illustrated by Kadir Nelson with the class.
Illustrative support. One fairly frequent reason given for selecting a word for instruction was because the illustrations provided clues to the meaning of the word. The illustrative support given to squadron was strong enough that four teachers mentioned it in their explanations for why they would select the word for instruction. (All six teachers selected squadron for instruction.) The illustration depicts a character holding various strings that are tied to the spines of open books that flutter like birds (Joyce, 2012). The teachers who referred to the illustrations in their explanation for selecting squadron indicated they would draw students’ attention to the illustration if they were not able to infer the meaning of squadron from the text. Additionally, two teachers said festive in the phrase “festive squadron of flying books” would be easily understood with reference to the illustration as well.

Two teachers also used illustrative support to justify selecting nested, also from Morris Lessmore (Joyce, 2012). Olivia and Vivian noticed how the illustration of open books flying like birds toward the library door was quite a strong visual clue for the meaning of nested (Joyce, 2012). Vivian also noted that her students may have been confused by the use of nested to refer to anything other than birds, so the illustration here provided her with a way of discussing with students how Joyce’s (2012) figurative language could be clarified through the use of an illustration.

Other instances of teachers discussing illustrative support for vocabulary were for emperor, unfurling, and nourishing. Wendy discussed how students might not know the meaning of emperor, but by looking at his clothes in the illustration, they could understand how his formal attire and his demeanor imply a particular social standing or importance. With this information in mind, the students could more easily understand
why it was significant that bà saw the emperor crying. Hilary referred to the illustration of the lotus when it was clear morphology alone would not help her students understand the meaning of *unfurling*. A glance at the image would be sufficient to helping them understand the word’s meaning. For *nourishing*, Zoe said she would draw students’ attention to the image of the King family at dinner to help them understand how food and stories can both be *nourishing* for different reasons. In all three cases, the teachers discussed illustrative support for vocabulary only when other avenues of vocabulary instruction would not have helped their students understand the words.

**Word frequency.** On occasion, teachers discussed the perceived frequency of a word when selecting it for instruction. In these cases, teachers invoked the frequency of a word as justification for selecting (or deciding against selecting) a word for instruction. Vivian’s discussion of *apartheid* is indicative of other teachers’ replies when considering word frequency. When considering it for instruction, she said, “I think *apartheid* is good. They could hear that again.” That is, are worth selecting for instruction if there is a chance that students will see or read them again. On the other hand, Olivia also discussed frequency as a reason against selecting *happenstance* for instruction, saying, “It’s not a word that we hear a lot today.” If students are unlikely to hear or read a word again, then it is not worth selecting for instruction. So, the perceived frequency of a word is a reason to select it for instruction if the word appears to be common. If it may be too rare, then it is best left out of the lesson.

**Modeling think-alouds.** During some of the interview responses, a teacher would shift the tone of her voice to indicate she was modeling how she would think aloud while reading the text to her students. This change in tone signaled the beginning of an
imagined conversation or discussion with her students where she would be modeling how to interpret a word she had selected for instruction. For example, Olivia discussed *nested* in *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) by saying, “I might just say, ‘I notice we have flying books here. The author is using this word that they are nesting. It kind of reminds me of birds here and I wonder if he’s comparing them to birds for some reason.’” Olivia thinks aloud here to model for her students how to make an inference about an unknown word and to call attention to *nested* in particular, as she had selected it for instruction. She also discussed *happenstance* later in *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) and *apartheid* in *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013) with the same type of think-aloud modeling. In these cases, the opportunity to model a think-aloud for students is a reason for selecting that word for instruction.

**Vocabulary reference materials.** Teachers also occasionally discussed the use of vocabulary reference materials (e.g., dictionary and thesaurus) or vocabulary resources (e.g., teacher-made worksheets, glossaries, etc.) when selecting words for instruction. Zoe thought *squadron* from *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) may be too challenging for her students to learn only from context, so she said she would have them use an online or print dictionary for help with the word if necessary. Hilary and Vivian discussed using the dictionary or thesaurus for a vocabulary activity in conjunction with an interactive read-aloud. This activity, called “tired words” or “said is dead” is meant to help students eliminate everyday, non-descriptive words from their writing. Vivian and Hilary identified *scrambled* and *clamored* from *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) as candidates for this activity; Vivian also added *blinking, speeding*, and *towering* as well. In both cases, teachers collect the words for students who then use a worksheet to list a new
word, its dictionary definition, and its synonyms. This list is kept as a reference for students to use with their writing so they can make their language more descriptive.

**Discussion.** Taken together, the explanations discussed in response to research questions two and three capture the majority of teachers’ explanations and justifications for selecting words for instruction with interactive read-alouds. (Additional explanations and justifications involving concepts associated with current vocabulary research will be discussed in response to research question four.) These seven most common explanations and justifications share additional attributes even though they may have been coded differently during data analysis. In general, teachers’ explanations and justifications concerned students’ existing vocabulary knowledge, students’ ability to make inferences, and teachers’ conditional decision-making during the read-aloud.

Teachers referred to students’ existing word knowledge when discussing students’ background knowledge, the content of the text, and the use of vocabulary reference materials. Given that two of these explanations account for most of the words teachers selected, it is fair to say that considerations of students’ existing vocabulary knowledge underlie the plans these teachers make for vocabulary instruction. The combination of these three explanations reveals that teachers might view vocabulary as a means to improve students’ vocabulary knowledge as a means of improving their knowledge in other ways. When teachers discussed content vocabulary that students had to learn so that they would understand the lesson or theme of the text, the implication is that vocabulary is a vehicle of delivering said content knowledge. Further, teachers’ consideration of what vocabulary their students will need to know must be based on their interpretation or evaluation of students’ existing word knowledge prior to reading. In some cases, teachers
referred students to other vocabulary resources, or helped students create their own, to further develop vocabulary knowledge in service of developing content knowledge. For a variety of reasons, students’ existing vocabulary knowledge plays a significant role in teachers’ vocabulary selection.

The analysis of teachers’ responses yielded another set of explanations for vocabulary selections that reveals the importance of students’ inferences about new vocabulary. When teachers discussed learning new words from context, using illustrative support to learn new words, or when they modeled think-alouds to demonstrate how to interpret new words, their vocabulary selections indicated the importance of making inferences in learning new words. In all of these cases, teachers either demonstrated how to reason from incomplete information to determine the meaning of a word or suggested their students would likely be able to do the same. The incomplete information could come in the form of students’ existing vocabulary knowledge, the contextual support in the text, or the illustrative support in the text. Although it was rare for teachers to model thinking aloud when discussing their vocabulary selections, these instances demonstrate most clearly how teachers would combine their background knowledge with the text’s information to make an inference. The purpose of modeling these think-alouds is to have students do the same when they are reading. Thus, vocabulary instruction provides teachers with the opportunity to model for students how they should be making inferences while reading.

Another finding emerging from the analysis was that teachers’ vocabulary instruction was conditional, or based on reactions from their students. For many of these explanations and justifications, teachers also said they would react to what students had
said or done before making the next instructional move. That is, their vocabulary instruction is not always planned out methodically in advance, but sometimes they select words only because they notice students are struggling to understand them. In these cases, teachers said they consider factors such as whether the word is content vocabulary the students need to know to understand the theme or lesson of the text, whether the word appears frequently enough in texts the students will read in the future, or whether the word presents the teacher with the opportunity to model thinking aloud to solve a new word. So, there were times when teachers discussed how they might adapt instructional plans during the read-aloud by reacting to how students were interpreting or misinterpreting the vocabulary in the text. Additional explanations and justifications with reference to current vocabulary research are discussed in the following section.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question was “How do teachers’ vocabulary selections compare to researchers’ recommendations for word selection?” Although there were no instances of teachers identifying vocabulary researchers by name or identifying vocabulary concepts beyond context clues or morphology, the content of their explanations and justifications resonated with current ideas in vocabulary selection research, particularly with regard to categories of words. However, it was more common for teachers’ explanations and justifications to resonate with current ideas in vocabulary research in general, such as complexity of word knowledge and the related concepts of metalinguistic awareness and word consciousness.

Categories of words. Occurring slightly less commonly, teachers discussed implicit categories of words as being worth teaching or not (Beck et al., 2013; Biemiller,
2009; Hiebert, 2011). Although no teacher used words such as tiers or Megaclusters to discuss their selections, the use of flashy or tough to describe vocabulary or a phrase such as “a word they should know” indicate the teacher had an implicit set of criteria in mind that they use to decide whether a word is too easy, just right, or too hard for students to learn from their instruction during an interactive read-aloud.

Two of Vivian’s selections for Nelson Mandela (Nelson, 2013) were due to her consideration of their potential difficulty for students. When discussing apartheid and fortnight, Vivian initially expressed some ambivalence about including them for instruction because there are other words in the text that would be more important to teach. The difficulty of these words as compared to other words in the text made them unappealing as candidates for instruction; however, after considering both words further, Vivian selected them for instruction because apartheid is necessary for understanding the story and fortnight could lead students to misunderstand how long Mandela was imprisoned (Nelson, 2013). So even though she ended up selecting each word for instruction for a different reason, her initial thoughts about them were concerned with whether they were too tough for students to learn. This idea of a word’s difficulty influencing a teacher’s decision to select it for instruction implies the existence of categories of vocabulary arranged by difficulty, which resonates with Beck et al.’s (2013) tiers and Biemiller’s (2009) list of words worth teaching.

In other cases, teachers only discussed briefly how the difficulty of a word influenced their decision to select it for instruction. For instance, Zoe prefaced her discussion of her vocabulary selections in My Brother Martin (Farris, 2003) by saying she reads through a text to find the words she thinks students will find difficult and that
have contextual support from the author. Similarly, Vivian briefly mentioned how *segregation* and *bigotry* were difficult words when considering them for instruction with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003) and Wendy did the same for *bountiful, fertile* and *rich* with *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013). In these cases, as with Vivian’s selections of *apartheid* and *fortnight* discussed previously, the difficulty of a word was not the only factor influencing the teachers’ decision to select a word for instruction. Even so, these instances reveal that teachers discussed, if only briefly, how the difficulty of a word plays a role in their vocabulary selection processes.

It was much more common for teachers’ explanations and justifications to resonate with current ideas in vocabulary research. Issues of vocabulary complexity were apparent in teachers’ responses and will be discussed in the following sections. A frequency count of these instances is displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

*Instances of Teachers’ Explanations Aligned with Vocabulary Research*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Concepts in Vocabulary Research*</th>
<th>Number of Instances of Teachers’ Explanations Aligned with Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interrelatedness</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polysemy</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heterogeneity</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incrementality</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 12 continued

| Word consciousness and metalinguistic awareness | 14 |
| Categories of words | 7 |

*Note.* Nagy and Scott’s (2000) five dimensions of vocabulary complexity are listed first for conceptual clarity.

Complexity of word knowledge. Though teachers did not invoke the language of Nagy and Scott (2000) when discussing their selections, their explanations and justifications sometimes covered the same conceptual territory as the five areas of complexity in word knowledge these researchers discuss. Interrelatedness and polysemy were the most frequently discussed concepts by far (20 and 11 instances, respectively), and multidimensionality (3 instances), heterogeneity (3 instances), and incrementality (2 instances) were much less frequently discussed. Interrelatedness and polysemy were the only concepts where teachers’ discussions mentioned the same word more than once (e.g., two teachers discussed interrelatedness when selecting *squadron*). Even when accounting for multiple instances of the same word being selected, interrelatedness and polysemy were still the most frequently identified concepts (16 and 10 instances, respectively).

Interrelatedness. Teachers who discussed, albeit indirectly, interrelatedness (Nagy & Scott, 2000) as a dimension of word knowledge when selecting their vocabulary referred to the networks of words commonly associated with the word they selected. In particular, their consideration of their students’ word networks played a role in their selection process. For example, Wendy discussed how her students would associate *altar*
with church, so the home altar in *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) might present difficulty for her students. When a word is presented in a context other than the one where students commonly see or hear it, the word might be more difficult for students to understand. Similarly, Hilary noted the conceptual relatedness between *unfair, indignity,* and *bigotry* when discussing her rationale for selecting *unfair* and *indignity.* She said she would be able to make use of students’ knowledge of *unfair* as she helped them construct a word network that also included *indignity* because these words are related in meaning.

Teachers also mentioned interrelatedness (Nagy & Scott, 2000) in reference to figurative language. Vivian and Olivia drew attention to Farris’ (2003) use of metaphor with *nourishing* when they each asked students to compare how King Sr.’s stories could be *nourishing* to his children’s lives in the same way that food can be *nourishing* to the body. This explicit treatment of figurative language clarifies that *nourishing* is a word commonly associated with food; Farris’ (2003) use of it in a metaphysical sense is unusual, so Vivian and Olivia drew students’ attention to it.

Teachers also considered interrelatedness (Nagy & Scott, 2000) when they discussed their own word knowledge. Olivia argued that although the context where *fortnight* was used made it clear the word refers to time, it was not a word that is used much anymore. She shared that she always thinks of Abraham Lincoln when she hears *fortnight.* So because her own word knowledge with *fortnight* indicates a dated, historical term, she knows her students may not know its precise meaning either. Judy’s discussion of *ancestors* revealed a similar way of thinking about interrelatedness. She considers *ancestors* to mean not just older relatives, but ones who have been deceased for a long time. She interpreted the sentence “the ancestors sent their daughter, Winnie” to mean
the ancestors are deceased but still have a way of influencing current events (Nelson, 2013). This use of ancestors conflicts with her conception of the word as strictly genealogical, which implies she thinks of networks of words and how they relate to each other when selecting words for instruction.

**Polysemy.** The next most commonly discussed aspect of word knowledge teachers considered when selecting vocabulary for instruction was polysemy, or multiple-meaning words (Nagy & Scott, 2000). For the most part, these discussions concerned the figurative or poetic use of adjectives and verbs in narrative texts (e.g., scrambled, speeding, dormant, nested, underground). These words were typically discussed in terms of how each word has an additional meaning that students might already know. Wendy’s discussion of nested is typical of the others: she claimed her students have low understanding of vocabulary and would need support to understand how books, and not birds, could have nested in a building. Only Vivian discussed polysemous words in informational texts and as parts of speech other than verbs and adjectives. Vivian also discussed polysemous words more frequently than any other teacher, which may be why her discussions covered both genres and multiple parts of speech.

Vivian provided an elaborated explanation for how she would teach students about the two meanings of disguises in Nelson Mandela (Nelson, 2013). This explanation was in the form of a think-aloud where she asked the students how they would be able to use a disguise to conceal their identities but not draw unwanted attention to themselves. She mentioned the need for secrecy because her students are likely to think of disguises in terms of Halloween costumes. She continued, asking students how they would manage the difficulty of “constantly reinventing” their identities to avoid detection. Her
explanation of the connotation of *disguises* here versus its denotation in relation to Halloween reveals a careful consideration of polysemy in vocabulary selection.

**Heterogeneity.** The aspects of heterogeneity, multidimensionality, and incrementality (Nagy & Scott, 2000) were much less prevalent in teachers’ interview responses. There were only three instances of teachers’ vocabulary explanations that revealed considerations of the heterogeneity of word knowledge (Nagy & Scott, 2000) in their vocabulary selections. When Hilary discussed her selection of *bigotry*, but not *hatred*, she referred to the fact that the words were linked by *and* in the text. This syntactic relationship, she argued, would make it easy for students to realize *hatred* and *bigotry* express the same idea. She contrasted this straightforward relationship between syntax and semantics with the apparently more difficult *segregation*, which she said would require her to explain the word’s meaning in more detail (or compare it to *separation*, as discussed in the following section) before students understood it. So, Hilary’s treatment of *segregation* as a more difficult word to learn than *bigotry* resonates with the idea of heterogeneity as a dimension of word knowledge. In other words, the process of learning a word is different for each word due to factors such as contextual or syntactic support, background knowledge, morphological analysis, or the ease of grasping the word’s meaning.

The only other instance of a teacher addressing heterogeneity was in Zoe’s explanation of why she selected *ancestors* for instruction with *Nelson Mandela* (Nelson, 2013). In this case, Zoe said she would listen in to student conversations to determine whether they were grasping the meaning of *ancestors* when she stopped the read-aloud to have them discuss the text. If she could tell that students did not understand the word, she
would stop their conversations so she could lead the class in a discussion of the word’s meaning. This approach to vocabulary instruction implies there is something about ancestors that makes it difficult to learn. Zoe’s decision to teach only ancestors in this way suggests she has in mind the idea that some words are more difficult to learn than others. This idea is resonant with the concept of heterogeneity, which is that knowing a word means different things for different words.

**Multidimensionality.** The only three instances of teachers discussing multidimensionality were for emperor, segregation, and unfurling. Vivian mentioned her students might struggle with emperor in The Lotus Seed (Garland, 1993) because the emperor is a child or young adult. The implication here is that emperor usually implies an older ruler. That Vivian considered this part of the meaning of emperor suggests she is aware that there are various aspects of a word that can be known. In this case, she has focused on the connotation of emperor as being an older person. Thus, she considered multidimensionality in her selection of emperor for instruction.

Another aspect of word meaning multidimensionality encompasses is the word’s pronunciation (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Hilary discussed the pronunciation of separation and how she would use it to help students understand segregation in My Brother Martin (Farris, 2003). Hilary argues not only does separation sound like segregation, but also the base word separate can be used to help students understand how being physically separate was part of segregation in the United States. Here, Hilary begins by connecting the words through their similar pronunciation and then makes an additional connection between the words with regard to meaning. Both aspects of word meaning are relevant to
Hilary’s consideration of how these two aspects relate further supports her selection of *segregation* for use with *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003).

Hilary again considered the relationship between spelling and meaning in *unfurling*. She began by discussing how it is easy to split the word into morphemes and said she would talk her students through this analysis. When she finished parsing the word and noticed the meaning of the base word, *furl*, was not easy to discern. Despite this setback, she noted her students would be able to pronounce *furl*. So even if the use of morphological analysis does not lead to an easily interpretable set of affixes, base words, or roots, the results of the analysis may still yield useful information. Hilary’s discussion of this outcome again reveals her consideration of multidimensionality in selecting vocabulary for instruction.

**Incrementality.** Incrementality in word learning is another of Nagy and Scott’s (2000) aspects of complexity in word knowledge. There were only two instances of teachers discussing it while making their vocabulary selections. In one case, Zoe discussed how *apartheid* is not a word students would learn after one exposure. She said it was a tricky word and that it might require directly sharing the definition of the term and calling attention to the illustrations in the text before students understood the word’s meaning. By acknowledging that words such as *apartheid* are not learned instantly from mere exposure, Zoe’s explanation aligns with the idea of incrementality in word learning.

Wendy also discussed incrementality indirectly when she explained why she selected *nested* for *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012). She had earlier mentioned the polysemous nature of *nested* as it was used in the text, then added more by explaining that her students struggle with understanding multiple meanings of words in general and
with using words in writing instead of only recognizing words while reading. Wendy referred to these additional ways of using polysemous words as being ways of expanding her students’ vocabulary knowledge. Although Wendy’s comments here concern her students’ understanding of polysemous words, implied these comments is the notion that her students are still learning that some words can have more than one meaning. Thus, incrementality here operates not in reference to a single word with one meaning (cf. Zoe’s students and *apartheid*), but in reference to words in general.

**Word consciousness and metalinguistic awareness.** Teachers also considered the concepts of word consciousness (Miller et al., 2010; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002) and metalinguistic awareness (Nagy, 2007) in their vocabulary selections. These are separate, but related concepts. Word consciousness involves the teacher drawing students’ attention to words as objects of study with the goal of increasing the students’ ability to connect existing word knowledge to newly encountered words (Miller et al., 2010; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002). When students encounter these new words, they may apply their metalinguistic awareness by considering the phonology, syntax, and morphology of the words they are encountering. Thus, any time a teacher discussed words as objects of study or the morphology, syntax, or phonology of words, these discussions were coded as word consciousness or metalinguistic awareness.

Hilary and Zoe discussed *scrambled* from *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) with reference to word consciousness or metalinguistic awareness. In Hilary’s case, *scrambled* (along with *clamored*, *plucked*, and *marched*) is a word students should start using in their writing to replace everyday language such as *went*, *walked*, or *ran*. She described an activity where students create a circle-shaped graphic organizer that is divided into slices
for different words. Toward the outer edge of the slice is the everyday word; further inside are synonyms of that word that are new to the students. Hilary described how she helps the students add to their organizers by calling their attention to new words during read-alouds. She also said the goal is for students to be able to identify words to add to the organizer when they are reading independently. As such, this organizer is a tool students can use to develop word consciousness; Hilary noted *scrambled* would be a great word for students to add to their organizers.

Similarly, Zoe discussed how Garland (1993) used *scrambled* to affect the reader’s interpretation of the degree of urgency in the characters’ actions. Zoe had already used *The Lotus Seed* (Garland, 1993) for an interactive read-aloud, so she recalled drawing students’ attention to *scrambled* because it conveys the mood of the scene better than *ran* would have. (Zoe had also incorporated *scrambled* into a classroom display about vocabulary, as described in the second-round classwalks.) For both Hilary and Zoe, the use of word consciousness to justify selecting *scrambled* is not just for the sake of making students aware of the words they are reading or hearing but also to support their use of descriptive vocabulary in writing.

Zoe discussed *dormant* as a word students would not know, but may be able to determine the meaning of from context. However, she also noted that even though there is contextual support, her students might need to be guided further. She said her guidance would come in terms of a comparison between *dormant* and *dorm* because both relate to sleeping. Here, her explanation of why she would select *dormant* for instruction involves metalinguistic awareness. By drawing students’ attention to the connection between the spelling and meaning of *dormant* and *dorm*, and by discussing how the syntax of the
sentence indicates something about the meaning of *dormant*, Zoe’s instructional decisions here support the development of her students’ metalinguistic awareness.

Further discussion of word consciousness and metalinguistic awareness as justification for vocabulary selections came from Wendy and Hilary who discussed how authors’ word choices impact the interpretation of the text. Wendy did so in reference to *bigotry* and *hatred* in *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003), asking her students which words would stand out on that page or why Farris selected certain words to convey an idea. Hilary thought aloud about Joyce’s (2012) use of *Lessmore* as the title character’s name in *Morris Lessmore*. In both cases, these teachers’ comments reflect an understanding of word consciousness. They consider the influence words have on the meaning of the sentences where they appear, and, furthermore, they consider how their students might interpret these words. Further still, they consider students’ reactions not only to help them select words for instruction but also to help students understand the importance of word choice in writing, which is part of developing word consciousness.

Although this question addresses how teachers’ vocabulary selections were related to current vocabulary research, there was also some resonance between research on word consciousness and the Judy’s Phraseology wall and Zoe’s Powerful Language banner. For both of these teachers, the purpose of including these features in their classrooms was to draw students’ attention to the impact words and phrases can have on readers. Although it was more common for these teachers and their students to post examples of phrases instead of individual words, the purpose of having the walls still supports the idea that students should be conscious of the words authors use in their texts.
As noted in the earlier discussion of heterogeneity and multidimensionality, Hilary discussed *segregation* in *My Brother Martin* (Farris, 2003). Her discussion of *segregation* also featured ideas resonant with metalinguistic awareness. In describing how she would make connections between *separate*, *separation*, and *segregation* for her students, Hilary’s comments reveal how teachers can use metalinguistic awareness to support student vocabulary learning by comparing new words to known words through morphological analysis. She also discussed her decision to select *indignity* for instruction in similar terms. She was not fully sure her students would know *dignity*, but she thought she could at least draw their attention to the prefix *in-* to explain how it changes the meaning of the base word. For both *segregation* and *indignity*, Hilary’s comments resonate with the tenets of metalinguistic awareness instruction.

**Discussion.** The analysis of whether teachers’ responses aligned with current vocabulary research specific to vocabulary selection yielded various findings. As a reminder, none of the teachers invoked the names of vocabulary researchers or the scholarly jargon used to discuss vocabulary development, aside from context clues and morphology. Nevertheless, teachers’ responses featured many ideas that were resonant with current research on vocabulary selection specifically and vocabulary research generally in the elementary school years. Some of the findings emerging from the analysis included common features of words selected due to word consciousness, robust support from one teacher for selecting *segregation*, the co-occurrence of selecting words because of their frequency and because of their difficulty, trends within teachers’ responses, and explanations not associated with particular words that were still relevant to current vocabulary research.

169
All the words teachers selected because of the connection to word consciousness were compound words or words with inflectional endings. This finding may not be surprising because one idea associated with word consciousness is that a students’ knowledge of morphemes can help the student to interpret a new word. All words are comprised of morphemes, so it might seem unremarkable to discuss the features of the words selected because their explanations included discussions of morphology. However, the trend that emerged from this analysis revealed only the simplest instances of morphological analysis being applied in service of word consciousness. It is not difficult to see how the morphemes operate in *indignity*, *scrambled*, *clamored*, *plucked*, *marched*, and *amiable*. Even in the cases of *obedient*, *dormant*, *squadron*, and *Lessmore*, connections to words students already know are quite clear. Thus, the vocabulary teachers selected for reasons of metalinguistic awareness may have been selected primarily because of the ease of applying morphological principles to them. In contrast, no teachers discussed metalinguistic awareness with regard to *ancestors*, *bittersweet*, *happenstance*, *mysterious*, or *apartheid*, possibly because explaining the connection these words’ morphemes and their meanings is not easily done in an interactive read-aloud. Thus, it seems fair to say teachers tend to select morphologically simple words for instruction when considering metalinguistic principles.

Other trends that emerged during the analysis concerned the explanations and justifications of individual teachers. In particular, Hilary’s discussion of why she selected *segregation* was particularly resonant with current vocabulary research. In her discussion, she noted various reasons for selecting *segregation*, including explanations related to interrelatedness, heterogeneity, multidimensionality, and metalinguistic awareness (Nagy
& Scott, 2000; Miller et al., 2010; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002). Even without reference to this particular vocabulary jargon, Hilary’s discussion of segregation reflects an inherent knowledge of these dimensions of word knowledge and features of vocabulary learning. This finding is relevant to a wider discussion of vocabulary instruction because it demonstrates how teachers who have knowledge of vocabulary learning can consider a variety of reasons when determining whether to select a word for instruction for an interactive read-aloud. This flexibility in vocabulary instruction is beneficial to students because it suggests the teacher will be able to make vocabulary instruction purposeful and focused instead of merely reactionary.

The analysis of teachers’ responses also resulted in a finding that concerns the issue of which words to select for instruction (Beck et al., 2013; Biemiller, 2009; Hiebert, 2011). Vivian selected apartheid and fortnight for instruction with Nelson Mandela. When she discussed why she selected these words, she referred to the frequency of these words in texts students will read in the future as well as whether the words were too difficult for students to learn with this text. Vivian selected apartheid and fortnight because these words were neither too common nor too rare and neither too easy (or known) nor too difficult (or unnecessary to know). They represent the middle ground in terms of both frequency and difficulty of the words. This was the only instance of a teachers’ discussion of frequency and categories of words co-occurring. This co-occurrence is significant because it provides empirical support for the existence of tiers of vocabulary words (Beck et al., 2013). A criticism of Beck et al.’s (2013) tiers is that they do not provide lists of words to select from (cf. Biemiller, 2009); Vivian’s selections indicate that even without a list of words (or even knowledge of the tiered system),
teachers are still capable of selecting vocabulary for instruction in a way that combines considerations of frequency and difficulty. Thus, Vivian’s justification of her selections provides support for the lack of a word list in Beck et al.’s (2013) tiered system.

Vivian’s explanations also stood out in the analysis because she had the greatest number of codes associated with her responses. In a sense, this finding simply indicates that Vivian is possibly well-acquainted with vocabulary research, even if she did not mention it. However, more informative is the fact that Judy’s explanations included only one instance of a word being selected due to its resonance with current vocabulary research. The discrepancy between Vivian’s explanations and Judy’s explanations reveals vocabulary knowledge, or at least awareness of scholarly knowledge, is not uniform for all teachers. As with the discussion of Hilary’s comparatively well-developed explanation for selecting *segregation*, this finding also concerns the importance of providing teachers with support for the development of their vocabulary instruction. Moreover, in Judy’s second-round interview, she said she does not focus on vocabulary as much as she did earlier in the year. This declaration provides an explanation for why her responses did not feature very many vocabulary-research-related ideas because she did not engage with the interview enough for them to appear in her response, but it also indicates she may not see the importance of vocabulary for her students’ understanding of the books she is reading. If Judy were to have had more support with how to select vocabulary for instruction, she may have been able to identify additional reasons to select certain words and thus bring more focus to her vocabulary instruction, which could help her students to better comprehend the text.
Wendy offered a comment about vocabulary that is deeply resonant with the idea of metalinguistic awareness and word consciousness, yet did so without reference to a particular word. Because Wendy’s explanation was not in support of the selection of a specific word, it was not included in the preceding analysis. However, it is worth discussing briefly because it establishes how she considers her students’ vocabulary development and it likely informs her vocabulary selections in general. When discussing how she enjoyed the letters in a character’s dress in *Morris Lessmore* (Joyce, 2012) and how there were letters loosely scattered around the illustration on that page, Wendy said, “the letters are just loose and it’s letters form words, which form sentences, which form meaning. It all adds up and it starts with a letter.” The way Wendy scaled up her description from single letters to “meaning” is similar to how metalinguistic awareness and word consciousness are intended to enable students to see how the component parts of a text (e.g., phrases, words, morphemes, letters) each contribute to the meaning of the text. Although Wendy’s inclusion of “meaning” at the end of her list implies that meaning does not arise until texts are interpreted at the sentence level, the reasoning she used to reach that conclusion is nevertheless relevant to the ideas of metalinguistic awareness and word consciousness (Miller et al., 2010; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002; Nagy, 2007). In the following section, changes in teachers’ selections, explanations, and justifications over the course of two rounds of data collection are discussed.

**Research Question 5**

The fifth research question was “Do teachers’ selections, justifications, and explanations change from the first round to the second round? If so, how?” Teachers’ interview responses indicated changes in all of these respects between the first and
second rounds of data collection. Furthermore, teachers’ comments during the classwalks and the content of their rooms during the classwalks also indicated changes in how they viewed vocabulary instruction as well. These changes include the number of words chosen by each teacher, the specific words chosen, the nature of the words chosen, the explanations and justifications for these words chosen, the references to vocabulary research, and the content of teachers’ classrooms.

**Changes in number of words selected.** The total number of words selected by all teachers across all texts increased from 62 words to 68 words between the first and second round. Table 13 displays changes in the number of words selected for each teacher for each round. This is an average increase of one word per teacher between the rounds; however, the increase was not uniform for all teachers. For example, Vivian selected the most words of any teacher in round one (21), but selected only 12 words in round two. This was the greatest decrease in words selected between the rounds. Even so, Vivian’s first-round selections were high enough such that she had the highest number of words selected overall (33). In contrast, Wendy and Judy each selected the same number of words in round one (7), but Wendy selected 13 words in round two, and Judy chose the same number of words in round two (7). Wendy’s increase of six more words selected in round two was the greatest increase between rounds. Additionally, Olivia selected the fewest words in the first round (5) and second round (6) and had the lowest number of words selected overall (11). These results suggest Olivia’s and Judy’s approaches to selecting vocabulary may have changed the least between rounds, but Vivian’s and Wendy’s approaches to selecting vocabulary may have changed a great deal. Zoe’s increase from 11 words to 14 words could have been due to the lists of vocabulary to
select for instruction that she created while she was reading during the second-round interview. This change between rounds also indicates that merely suggesting that teachers think about vocabulary selection prior to conducting interactive read-alouds may make them more likely to do it in the future.

Table 13

Changes in the Number of Words Selected by Teachers for Each Round

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Words Selected, Round 1</th>
<th>Number of Words Selected, Round 2</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hilary</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivian</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>−9</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M = 10.3$</td>
<td>$M = 11.3$</td>
<td>$M = 1.0$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further analysis of the words teachers selected between rounds reveals Vivian considered background knowledge less in the second round than the first round, but considered context clues more in the second round than the first round. This shift in Vivian’s explanations could account for the large decrease in the number of words she selected between rounds because she would have been expecting her students to infer the
meanings of words from context due to an increase in background knowledge between rounds. In other words, she had a better idea of their background knowledge during the second round and knew they would be more capable of making inferences about vocabulary when faced with unknown words.

The change in Wendy’s number of selected words could have been due to increased comfort with the interview itself; during the first-round interview, Wendy’s responses were interlaced with apologies about not knowing what to do and comments that she was unsure of how to respond to some questions. These sort of comments were not present during the second-round interview, which suggests Wendy was more focused on selecting vocabulary and sharing explanations than on wondering about the purpose of the interview.

**Changes in words selected.** Although a comparison of the numerical changes in teachers’ selections provides some indication of change between the rounds, an analysis of the words selected provides additional support for how teachers’ vocabulary instruction had changed. For instance, all first-round teachers selected *throne* for instruction, but none of the second-round teachers selected it. The first-round teachers who selected it (Hilary, Vivian, and Wendy) noted that students would not have *throne* in their background knowledge because it is not a word commonly used in the United States when discussing politics. There are two possible explanations for this difference in teachers between rounds. The simplest explanation is that the difference could be due to the particular teachers and their students (i.e., these teachers would have selected *throne* for instruction even in the second round). Another explanation is that the difference is due to an increase in background knowledge for the students in Judy’s, Olivia’s, and
Zoe’s schools in the three months between the interviews. If students in these schools had learned about world governments in between rounds, then their teachers would not need to select throne for instruction.

Other changes in the words teachers selected across rounds involved increases or decreases on a smaller scale. In the case of unfurling and amiable, one teacher selected each word in the first round and two selected each word in the second round. In the case of fortnight, two teachers selected it in the first round and only one teacher selected it in the second round. The explanation for the slight increase in teachers selecting amiable and unfurling could be due to the professional development session the teachers attended between the rounds of data collection. One day of this session concerned word study and how teachers can help students learn more about words by analyzing the word’s spelling, pronunciation, and meaning. Both amiable and unfurling can be easily parsed into easily interpretable morphemes (furl aside). Olivia and Zoe, who selected unfurling in the second round, both mentioned the use of morphemes in their explanation for why they selected unfurling for instruction, so it seems likely that the word study session during their professional development week can account for this change.

The case for the presence of amiable in the second round is not as straightforward because neither Hilary nor Vivian mentioned morphemes when selecting amiable. Both teachers mentioned context clues and the italicization of amiable in the text as reasons for selecting it for instruction. There was an overall increase between rounds in instances of context clues being cited as an explanation for vocabulary selections, so this change may be a result of that trend.
As for the decrease in the number of teachers selecting *fortnight* between rounds, one possible explanation is that the consideration teachers gave to word frequency increased between rounds. Olivia and Zoe, who selected *fortnight* for instruction during round one, did not mention frequency in their explanations. They mentioned only that their students would not know the word or that they did not know the word. When Vivian discussed *fortnight* in the second round, she mentioned the perceived frequency of *fortnight* as a reason for selecting it. She thought students might see it again in the future, so she selected it for instruction. She also mentioned that defining *fortnight* would help students understand the length of time Mandela was imprisoned, a feature of the word Olivia and Zoe did not discuss. So, the overall increase between rounds in teachers identifying word frequency as a reason to select a word likely accounts for the decrease in teachers selecting *fortnight* between rounds.

**Changes in nature of words selected.** As mentioned previously with regard to *amiable* and *fortnight*, teachers’ explanations also changed between rounds. The explanations pertaining to the nature of the words chosen (student background knowledge, context of sentence, and content of text) all changed over time. There was a decrease in the number of instances where teachers discussed student background knowledge from round one (22) to round two (13). A possible explanation for this decrease is that teachers learned more about their students’ background knowledge between rounds. In the first-round interviews, which occurred during the second and third weeks of the school year, teachers may have erred on the side of caution when justifying their vocabulary selections by referring to students’ background knowledge because they did not know their students very well yet. As the school year progressed, the teachers
likely got to understand their students’ background knowledge better and realized there are fewer potential connections they could make between students’ vocabulary knowledge and the text vocabulary, thus they would identify it less frequently in the second round.

In contrast, there were increases from round one to round two in the number of instances where teachers discussed context of sentence (27 to 39) and content of text (15 to 26). A possible explanation for the increase in consideration of context is similar to that of the decrease in consideration of background knowledge. Early in the year, they may not have had enough information about their students to justify their vocabulary selections by discussing context clues. In the intervening months, two things could have happened that led to the increase in justifications involving context clues. One is that teachers got better acquainted with their students and thought it would be reasonable to discuss context clues more frequently as a result. Another is that they taught students about how to use context clues between the rounds and were thus certain that their students would be able to use them to interpret the words they discussed.

The increase in instances of justifying vocabulary selections due to content of text could be due to teachers compensating for the decreased focus on student background knowledge. If teachers learned more about their students’ background knowledge between rounds and used this information to justify making fewer connections to background knowledge because students have less knowledge than they thought, then teachers may have tried to develop background knowledge through vocabulary instruction between rounds. In other words, teachers think students who have small vocabularies need to increase the size of their vocabularies and one way of making this
change is by selecting words for instruction that are associated with the content students are learning in the read-aloud.

**Changes in explanations and justifications for selections.** Other changes in teachers’ explanations and justifications over time occurred for explanations concerning word frequency, modeling think-alouds, and vocabulary resources. These changes were not in the same order of magnitude as the changes associated with the nature of the words selected. Explanations involving word frequency increased from two instances to four instances between rounds and explanations involving modeling think-alouds and vocabulary resources decreased from three instances to zero instances. Due to the low initial numbers of these explanations and the similarly low change between rounds, it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about what may have led to these changes.

**Changes with regard to vocabulary research.** There were also changes between rounds for explanations associated with current vocabulary research, most notably with explanations involving interrelatedness. The number of instances of teachers’ vocabulary selections that addressed interrelatedness decreased from the first round (15) to the second round (3). This finding is puzzling because other explanations associated with vocabulary research changed very little if at all. For instance, the next largest changes between rounds were a decrease in explanations involving multidimensionality (from three to zero) and an increase in explanations involving tiers of vocabulary (from two to five). All other increases or decreases were by no more than two instances and did not involve more than five instances total. These changes are so small as to be uninterpretable, which suggests there may be something significant about the decrease in explanations involving incrementality between rounds. One possible explanation is that
the decrease is related to the increase in explanations related to context of sentence. In the second round of interviews, instances of teachers discussing the words commonly found in informational or narrative texts, or words commonly appearing near other words were instead interpreted as instances of teachers discussing how they would use the context of the sentence to support a discussion about the vocabulary they selected. Thus, the decrease in instances of interrelatedness over time is better understood as a change in the interpretation of teachers’ interview responses in the second round.

**Changes in classroom content.** Evidence of change in how teachers thought about vocabulary can also be found in the teachers’ classrooms. In the first-round classwalks, no teachers had any content related to vocabulary or word study anywhere in their rooms. During the second-round classwalks, five teachers had incorporated word study content into their classrooms and three teachers had also incorporated vocabulary content. As discussed previously, the presence of word study content is likely due to the word study session teachers had during their weeklong professional development between the first and second rounds. Word study features common to all five classrooms included charts with the word study schedule, lists of student groups for word study, and examples of completed word study activities to use as reference.

There were some differences between classrooms in how teachers incorporated vocabulary content, however. Hilary’s room had a chart describing ways readers solve words and another chart describing how vocabulary is different in informational and narrative texts. Wendy’s room featured a chart describing how students can use context clues to solve unknown words. Her room also had the only example of vocabulary content posted in association with a picture book. On this chart, Wendy had identified a
few speech-related words from a book she had read aloud to students recently. She said these words, *pleaded, beamed,* and *sheepishly,* were words students should think about using instead of *said* when they are writing. Zoe’s room had context clue and text-type charts similar to those in Hilary’s room, but she also had a chart discussing how *lying* and *scrambled* are examples of multiple-meaning words. This chart included brief descriptions of the meanings of these words.

**Discussion.** There were numerous changes in the ways teachers thought about and discussed vocabulary between round one and round two. The changes that appear to hold the most explanatory power are the increase in explanations related to context clues, the slight increase in words selected overall, the apparent decrease in consideration of metalinguistic awareness and word consciousness, and the relationship between the classwalks and interview responses.

The marked increase in the instances of teachers justifying their vocabulary selections due to students’ ability to use context clues indicates various ways teachers, and presumably students, progressed over time. During the first-round interviews, the nature of the vocabulary teachers selected was such that context clues did not figure into their justifications. However, the increase in the number of instances in the second round reveals that teachers may have been more comfortable with explaining to students how to use context clues to support their vocabulary learning. Furthermore, it is also possible that teachers could have been teaching students about the use of context clues apart from interactive read-alouds and that the increase in references to context clues is due to teachers drawing students’ attention to sentences in the text where they can practice using context clues with teacher support. In either case, the increase in references to context
clues in teachers’ second-round responses may suggest teachers are encouraging their students to become more independent in learning new words while reading.

The average number of words teachers selected also increased from the first round to the second round. The increase from 10.3 to 11.3 words per teacher, or from roughly 5 to 6 words per book each round suggests teachers were either more comfortable with including additional vocabulary instruction in their interactive read-alouds or that they were trying to use vocabulary as a means of increasing students’ content knowledge during read-alouds. In the case of the former, teachers may have selected an additional word for one of the texts in the second round because they were developing a talent for conducting interactive read-alouds such that briefly discussing an additional word would not detract from the focus of the lesson or take up too much time. In the case of the latter, teachers may have selected an additional word for the informational text because they were trying to develop students’ background knowledge of civil rights in the United States or apartheid in South Africa (Farris, 2003; Nelson, 2013).

A surprising finding from the comparison of the first- and second-round interview responses is that teachers were no more likely to discuss concepts underlying metalinguistic awareness or word consciousness in the second round. This finding is surprising because teachers had a session focused entirely on word study during the weeklong professional development training that occurred between rounds. Teachers who selected unfurling for instruction in the second round used concepts aligned with metalinguistic awareness and word consciousness to explain their selection of the term; however, other instances of these concepts being discussed with other words were rare. Despite this rarity, Wendy’s second-round response included a comment that nearly
summarizes the tenets of metalinguistic awareness, which indicates that she does consider this concept when selecting words for instruction. It could be the case that teachers need more practice with how to incorporate metalinguistic awareness and word consciousness into their interactive read-alouds; they may be including this content in other lessons.

Along those same lines, the teachers’ classwalks occasionally revealed vocabulary-related information that supported the decisions they made during the interviews. For example, Wendy’s chart with the synonyms for *said* that students should be using in their writing is an example of how students can develop word consciousness. When they see words posted on a chart like Wendy’s, they are being prompted to consider the impact of one word versus another in their writing. The words she selected for this chart also have relevance to metalinguistic awareness because they are all past tense verbs. Students need to consider not only the base word but also the inflectional ending *-ed* when they are writing these new synonyms.

One of Zoe’s charts also had relevance to her discussion of vocabulary in her second-round interview. On her multiple-meaning word chart, she had identified various meanings for *scrambled*. During her discussion of the words she would select for *The Lotus Seed*, she mentioned that *scrambled* conveys the mood of the scene better and is a more descriptive word than *ran*. The presence of *scrambled* on her vocabulary chart and in her interview response indicates she is giving careful thought to vocabulary in various parts of her lesson plans.

**Discussion of Common Themes**

With all five research questions answered, I now turn to the wider themes and trends I have noticed in the data. Most prominent among these trends was how reactive
teachers are to their students when selecting vocabulary for instruction. Another trend that emerged from the analysis was the distinct difference between how teachers selected vocabulary for instruction with narrative text and informational text. It was also encouraging to consider the amount and quality of the words teachers selected for instruction with each text. Finally, the resonance between the teachers’ interview responses and current vocabulary research implied new avenues for vocabulary instruction and vocabulary research.

With all of the teachers’ responses in mind, it is very difficult to imagine how a scripted curriculum with a pre-selected vocabulary word list would ever work in these classrooms. Teachers considered their students’ background knowledge, instructional needs, learning goals, and existing vocabulary knowledge when making vocabulary selections. Although all, or nearly all, teachers selected words such as *squadron*, *dormant*, *bigotry*, and *apartheid* for their respective texts, there were also plenty of differences between the teachers in terms of words selected. It was much more common for teachers to have unique reasons for selecting a word for instruction that no one else had selected. Even when teachers did select the same words, the reasons they identified for selecting it were different, depending on what they knew about their students as well as how they thought they could approach the word instructionally. So, the diversity of words selected and the diversity of explanations given for those selections reveal the idiosyncratic processes involved in planning vocabulary instruction.

One way these selection processes manifested was in terms of the different types of text the teachers read during the interviews. The purpose of selecting two informational and two narrative texts for teachers to read was threefold: these text types
are identified in the Common Core State Standards (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010), which means students need to be familiar with the demands of both types of text; the research design is stronger when the texts, but not the text types, are counterbalanced between rounds; and vocabulary demands are different for each type of text (Hiebert & Cervetti, 2013). This last purpose was borne out by the teachers’ vocabulary selections. Teachers were much more likely to select vocabulary for reasons of content knowledge when reading informational text. Conversely, they were much more likely to select vocabulary for reasons of connecting it to students’ background knowledge when reading narrative text. This distinction provides further support for Hiebert and Cervetti’s (2013) discussion of the vocabulary differences between texts.

The amount of words selected and the quality of those words was also quite closely aligned with current vocabulary research. Beck and McKeown (2007) suggest up to 400 tier-two words should be part of instruction in grades three through nine. Dividing this figure across a school year results in two to three words per day that teachers should be selecting for instruction. In their interview responses, teachers identified five words per book in round one and 5 to 6 words per book in round two. These figures are higher than those recommended by Beck and McKeown (2007), yet reasonably so. Except for the case of Vivian selecting 14 words for instruction with The Lotus Seed during round one, teachers were often close the recommended figures. Furthermore, teachers selected words of good quality as well. Although proper nouns, rare foreign words, and multiple-word phrases did appear in teachers’ selections, these were much less common than the words teachers typically selected. In fact, taking the most commonly selected word for each text (i.e., squadron, apartheid, bigotry, dormant) as an indication of the quality of
the teachers’ selections fairly encapsulates the overall quality of their selections. The words teachers selected were often immediately pertinent to the text, likely to be useful in other texts, and comprised of morphemes students could understand. This combination of features indicates the words teachers selected were of high quality.

Finally, the teachers’ explanations of their selections were strongly resonant with other vocabulary research aside from the examples already cited. Even though words such as *interrelatedness, polysemy, metalinguistic awareness*, and *tier-two* did not appear in the interview responses, they may as well have because the content of teachers’ explanations often aligned closely with these theoretical constructs. The implication of this close alignment is twofold: these teachers would be amenable to professional development in vocabulary selection for interactive read-alouds and future researchers would do well to probe for knowledge of such terms in future vocabulary research with teachers, even if the research is not concerned primarily with selecting vocabulary for instruction. Ideally, both of these strands of thought would be woven together to create a professional development module that measures the development of teachers’ vocabulary instructional knowledge and practices while also measuring students’ vocabulary, comprehension, and writing growth.

In this chapter, the results of the interviews and classwalks were discussed to answer the five research questions. In general, vocabulary selections were different for each teacher, vocabulary selections were different for informational and narrative texts, explanations and justifications of vocabulary selections were different for each teacher and type of text, vocabulary selections, explanations and justifications were generally aligned with current vocabulary research, and vocabulary selections, explanations, and
justifications changed between rounds in a variety of ways. In the final chapter, the limitations, implications, and recommendations of the study are discussed.
Chapter 6: Limitations, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter discusses the limitations of the study’s design and how those limitations lead to recommendations for future research on vocabulary selection. It concludes with thoughts about the study as a whole.

Limitations of the Study

When considering ways the research design of the study is limited, five ideas come to mind. First, there were only six teachers in this study; including additional teachers could have resulted in a clearer picture of how teachers select vocabulary for instruction. Second, there was no method of accounting for teachers’ existing knowledge of vocabulary instruction. Some teachers may have known more than others at the start of the study, but this was only loosely evident in their first-round interview responses. Third, the study only focused on vocabulary selection in interactive read-alouds. There are many other places in the LC framework where teachers’ vocabulary selection occurs that could have been studied. The length of the study is a limitation as well because following these teachers through the whole school year could have resulted in additional changes or growth in their vocabulary selection processes. Finally, the group of teachers may not be representative of the general population of elementary school teachers in the United States because these teachers self-selected into a professional development program.
The study’s first limitation concerns the number of participants involved in the study. There were six teachers in the study because this study was conceived around a population of convenience: the teachers who were receiving intermediate LC professional development in Murleyville this academic year. There were other teachers who received intermediate LC professional development this academic year, but no other district had as many teachers as Murleyville. So, to decrease the possible effects of different districts on the interpretation of the results, the Murleyville teachers were the only teachers considered for inclusion in the study. It is possible that including more, if not all, of the intermediate LC teachers who were trained this year would have led to different results. Furthermore, even though these six teachers are from the same district, they are each from a different school in that district, so it is possible that there were school effects for each teacher’s responses. So, including more teachers in the study may have led to a clearer understanding of school effects and district effects on teachers’ responses and thus aided the interpretation of the results.

Another limitation of the study concerns the lack of control for or measurement of teachers’ vocabulary instructional practices prior to the first round of interviews. As discussed in response to research question five, the teachers’ vocabulary selections, and explanations of selections changed over time. These results also revealed teachers had different selections and explanations at the start of the year. It is difficult to interpret the first-round interview responses in terms of teachers’ prior knowledge of vocabulary instruction because this information is unknown. Had teachers been required to describe current vocabulary practices both during interactive read-aloud and in other parts of their lessons, prior to the first-round interviews, these data could have facilitated
interpretations of these interview responses. This information would have been informative in generating interview questions as well because questions could have been grounded in teachers’ vocabulary instructional practices (i.e., if a teacher noted the use of morphological analysis in her lessons prior to the first-round interview, this topic could have been addressed directly in the interview). Similarly, a description of teachers’ initial vocabulary instruction would have enabled a more thorough interpretation of the second-round interview responses with regard to change over time. It would be easier to identify how teachers’ selections and explanations changed between rounds if teachers had been asked to describe their current vocabulary practices.

This study is also limited in terms of where it looked for vocabulary selection in the interactive read-aloud. As discussed in the description of the LC framework in the methodology chapter, teachers can select vocabulary for instruction in all parts of the framework. Although the interactive read-aloud is the only part of the framework where teachers would be selecting vocabulary for instruction for all students in the class, the inclusion of vocabulary selections teachers made for the other parts of the framework would give a more comprehensive account of their vocabulary selections, explanations, and justifications. Thus, the vocabulary selections, explanations, and justifications described in this study must be interpreted only in regard to how teachers plan for interactive read-alouds in the LC framework, which reflects only one part of teachers’ vocabulary selections in the framework.

A fourth limitation of the study is that it only followed the teachers part of the way into the academic year. The teachers received professional development in word study between the first and second rounds of data collection, so there is reason to believe
this professional development had an effect on their vocabulary selection. The changes in their selections and explanations between rounds reveal this change occurred. However, a third round of data collection at the end of the year could have yielded additional results and led to different interpretations of the first- and second-round interview responses and a better understanding of their selections and explanations overall. Even though the professional development the teachers received after the second round of data collection was not focused primarily on word study or vocabulary, it is possible that their vocabulary selections and explanations continued to develop during the rest of the year. Yet, because there was not a third round of data collection, these changes remained unmeasured and are unknown.

Finally, there is a limitation to the study in terms of the nature of the participants involved in data collection. The teachers in this study self-selected into an intensive three-year literacy-based professional development program. Furthermore, the ongoing, responsive, intensive professional development these teachers received is much different from typical, one-day professional development sessions other teachers may receive. This willingness to become involved in professional development indicates these teachers are different from teachers who would not have sought out this professional development. For instance, they may have known about or have seen the benefits of research-based instructional recommendations previously, so they would be eager to learn more about current literacy research. This attitude toward professional development may indicate a familiarity with current literacy research, so these teachers may have been better informed about vocabulary instruction than a group of teachers selected at random from Murleyville. The randomly selected teachers’ vocabulary selections and explanations
may not have been as resonant with vocabulary research or as fully elaborated as those from the participants in this study.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The limitations of this study are closely related to avenues for future research in vocabulary instruction based on the findings of this study. The first recommendation that comes to mind is to supplement teachers’ interview responses and classwalks with observations and recordings of interactive read-alouds with the books from the interview. By extension, the observations could also address how teachers have incorporated vocabulary instruction into other places in their curricula, such as in guided reading lessons or in writing. Observations and post-observation interviews would also allow for the responsiveness of the teachers to be captured as it relates to vocabulary instruction. A similar study in the future could address how teachers not involved in LC professional development selected vocabulary for instruction. This study could also include a description or measure of teachers’ vocabulary instructional practices prior to the interviews to better understand how teachers’ selections change over time. Finally, including a measure of students’ vocabulary growth over the course of the study, coupled with a control group for comparison, could support the hypothesis that changes in teachers’ vocabulary instruction benefit students’ vocabulary growth.

The inclusion of observations and recordings of teachers conducting interactive read-alouds after having been interviewed about how they plan to conduct the read-aloud would provide helpful insights into how teachers make decisions about vocabulary in the middle of a lesson. All of the teachers noted instances where they would discuss a word with students if it became clear that the students did not understand the word during the
read-aloud. To see how teachers actually provide this instructional support instead of hearing how they think they might provide it would allow for a better understanding of the vocabulary instruction students are receiving. The observations of read-alouds could be further supplemented with observations of other reading lessons, word study lessons, or examples of student writing. In all respects, including observations or recordings of teaching along with collection of student work could provide a clearer understanding of how vocabulary is incorporated into a teachers’ curriculum.

In addition to including observations of the teachers conducting interactive read-alouds, a future study could also incorporate a post-observation interview to discuss the selections teachers made. This approach would allow the researcher to generate the list of vocabulary selected by the teacher and then ask the teacher about why each word was selected instead of asking the teacher to select the vocabulary separate from the context of leading students in an interactive read-aloud. Because teachers’ explanations and justifications indicated they were highly responsive to students’ vocabulary needs, experiences, and background knowledge as reflected in students’ comments and questions during the read-aloud, conducting a post-observation interview would allow this responsiveness to be captured. Given that existing research on vocabulary selection does not describe how teachers should take into account students’ background knowledge, these post-observation interviews could contribute to a better understanding of how teachers’ explanations and justifications are shaped by student factors.

As noted in the discussion of limitations, the fact that all teachers in this study were members of a cohort of teachers receiving LC professional development suggests they may not be representative of teachers in general. Self-selecting into a study,
especially a study focused on professional development, indicates these teachers are invested in developing instructional expertise beyond their own everyday learning and growth. As a result, any interpretation of the teachers’ growth or change over time must be discussed in relation to their experiences in the professional development training. For instance, teachers not in the LC cohort would not have received word study instruction between the two rounds of data collection, so there would be no reason to suspect these teachers to incorporate metalinguistic awareness into their vocabulary instruction. Along the same lines, it would be useful for future research to include a way of measuring or describing teachers’ vocabulary instructional practices or knowledge of vocabulary research prior to the first-round interviews. This measure would allow for initial differences between teachers to be more easily identified. In the case of a study involving LC teachers and non-LC teachers (or teachers involved in any other professional development model), this measure would facilitate comparisons between the groups and could assist with interpreting differences in selections and explanations due to professional development.

Finally, including a measure of student vocabulary growth in a similar study in the future would allow for researchers to determine whether changes in teachers’ vocabulary instruction have an effect on student learning. It is notoriously difficult to show growth in students’ vocabulary on standardized measures (Pressley, Disney, & Anderson, 2007). So, including a measure of student growth could help researchers interpret how changes in teachers’ vocabulary instruction have an effect on student learning, or, more specifically, how particular changes (e.g., more attention to word consciousness, responding to students’ vocabulary needs, increasing content vocabulary
knowledge, etc.) may have an effect on student learning. Learning which instructional moves are most beneficial or even which instructional moves appear to have no effect could contribute to better understanding of how students respond to vocabulary instruction. Furthermore, if students are demonstrating vocabulary growth in ways that are not showing up on standardized vocabulary assessments, then the ways they are demonstrating their growth could be used to design sensitive vocabulary assessments that capture the growth teachers and students are witnessing.

Final Thoughts

Despite its limitations, this study contributes to the current research on vocabulary development and instruction by capturing the selections and explanations of teachers who are engaged in an ongoing professional development program. The results of data analysis reveal that teachers’ vocabulary selections and the reasons behind those selections are supported by current understandings of what makes for good vocabulary instruction. The resonance between teachers’ selections and researchers’ recommendations suggests that the perceived disconnect between theory and practice is not as insurmountable as it may seem. Further studies, augmented with observations of interactive read-alouds, post-observation interviews, and an experimental design that includes student vocabulary measures and control group would bring additional clarity to teachers’ vocabulary selections, explanations, and justifications.
References


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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Initial Statement of Purpose:

I am interested in learning how you prepare to teach an interactive read-aloud.

Questions:

1. What would you do to prepare to teach this book to your class during an interactive read-aloud?
2. How would you use this book as an interactive read-aloud with your students?
3. Now that you have explained how you prepare for an interactive read-aloud, could you explain how you decided which words to select for the lesson?

Follow up questions and prompts:

1. Can you tell me more about that?
2. What makes you say that?
3. You selected word to teach. Can you tell me why you selected it?
4. In cases where teachers have not discussed a word that previous teachers reading the same book had selected: I noticed you did not select word. Could you tell me why you did not select it?
Appendix B

Classroom Walkthrough Questions

*Initial Statement of Purpose:*

I am interested in learning how you have set up your room to support your teaching.

*First-round Questions:*

1. How have you connected the LC framework to your classroom?
2. How have you incorporated student work into your classroom?
3. How do you use the classroom as you teach?
4. What plans do you have for using this room in the coming weeks and months?

*Second-round Questions:*

1. How have you connected the LC framework to your classroom?
2. How have you incorporated student work into your classroom?
3. How do you use the classroom as you teach?
4. What have you added to the room since my last visit?