This research investigated reading support and book preferences of fourth grade English language learners (ELLs) who were struggling readers. This qualitative research focused on three case studies. Interviews were conducted to explore ELLs' perceptions on reading motivation, reading programs, and types of support they received. Descriptions of book preferences based on library records were reported. Findings revealed students were motivated to choose books peers recommended. ELLs' preferred to read graphic novels and fiction books, but had negative feelings toward reading programs, despite the increased amount of reading the programs encouraged. The ripple effect of increased reading would be growth in both language and reading abilities.

ELLs' Perceptions of Reading Support

Many educators have faced the challenge of students who struggle with reading. With the growing population of students whose first language is not English, these English language learners (ELLs) have represented a high number of readers who struggle. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of ELLs regarding their self image as readers, their teacher support preferences, as well as their book preferences to inform teachers about ways to encourage their ELL students in reading improvement. With an increase in reading ability and motivation, ELL students will acquire a greater conceptual knowledge, which can help lessen a gap between ELLs and native English speakers. This gap has created a need for educators to obtain a skill set to support the growing number of ELLs in classrooms in the United States. Teachers would benefit from research that suggests best practices to support ELLs' reading and motivation. We know that when students read more frequently, their vocabulary and their reading and writing skills improve, which would also benefit ELLs' English language growth.

Review of Literature

The literature reviewed in this study presented various aspects of ELLs' reading characteristics, support received, and their preferences. The first section of the review focused on common gaps seen in achievement between students' learning in a second language compared to those learning in their native language. The second section looked at common methods and their effectiveness used by teachers to support ELLs. The final section reviewed studies about ELLs' preferences in regards to what kinds of reading support they preferred.

ELLs' Struggle with Reading

ELLs have been charged with the challenge of mastering the same expectations as their native speaking counterparts since the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The result was a focus on monitoring the academic progress of students that struggled in school, which
revealed a disproportionate amount of students learning in a second language dominate the amount of students who struggled in reading.

In Verhoeven's (2000) study among students in early elementary grades in the Netherlands, researchers found that non-native speakers’ vocabulary was significantly below that of the native speakers and this impeded their reading ability and comprehension. Verhoeven held that native speakers’ reading comprehension is related to both decoding and vocabulary knowledge, and he advocated that vocabulary knowledge may have an even greater effect on second language learners (Verhoeven, 2000). In an Ontario secondary school, Cheng, Klinger, and Zheng (2007) compared English as a second language (ESL) students’ and non-ESL students’ standardized test results which showed that the ESL population had lower overall performances in reading, particularly when it came to vocabulary. Bialystok, Luk, Peets, and Yang (2010) reported a large-scale analysis of data that found vocabulary knowledge predicted academic achievements and literary acquisition.

The vocabulary challenges cited in these studies made reading in a second language difficult. Students who learned in a second language were challenged with the extraordinary task of learning a new language while simultaneously learning designated curricula in that language, just as the educators who were responsible for accommodating these students had to find ways of supporting their language acquisition and learning processes.

**ELLs’ Reading Support**

Research on a variety of strategies that supported ELLs’ reading success in English was reviewed. In Verhoeven’s (2000) research and the Cheng et al. (2007) study discussed previously, ELLs’ vocabulary knowledge contributed to their struggle. To support ELLs’ reading, teachers addressed their weaker vocabulary in English in a variety of ways, as seen in the following studies. In addition, other strategies that support ELLs reading skills were discussed.

Many researchers agree that vocabulary is fundamental to the reading comprehension of second language learners. Taboada and Rutherford (2011) found that ELLs were more successful with content vocabulary when words were explicitly taught using methods such as flashcards and target vocabulary, rather than with implicit instruction, which activated background knowledge and used student questioning and graphic organizers. However, students who received implicit instruction had a greater conceptual knowledge and were more successful at comprehension and inference activities. Taboada and Rutherford proposed that explicitly taught students obtained a more superficial learning and that ELLs benefited from both comprehension strategies (e.g., inferencing, checking for understanding) and cognitive strategy instruction (e.g., teachers explained the reasons behind the learning) (Taboada and Rutherford, 2011). Clearly, educators need to find the right balance of strategy instruction, conceptual knowledge, and academic vocabulary to support ELLs’ reading.

In addition to vocabulary support, ELLs
need other types of reading support. Researchers Santoro, Jitendra, Starosta, & Sacks (2006) studied second grade ELL students who struggled with reading and found that participation in a systematic and explicit commercial reading curriculum focused on beginning reading skills, such as phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, was a beneficial intervention. Educators supported comprehension instruction, in addition to decoding training to develop successful readers. Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, and Ungerleider (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 26 studies and found that systematic phonics instruction and cooperative reading instruction were two frameworks that improved English literacy in ELLs. The researchers suggested directing attention to classroom-based interventions rather than pull out models (Adesope et al., 2011). In McElvain's (2010) mixed methods study with fourth through sixth grade ELLs, transactional literacy circles improved reading ability by using collaborative conversations and deliberate strategy instruction. In her study, meta-cognition, (e.g., learning about learning) when included in reading strategy instruction, significantly improved most ELLs' comprehension (McElvain, 2010).

Meaningful literacy events were important in second language learning and literacy acquisition, as well as decoding instruction. Fluent readers benefited from comprehension activities that were engaging, interactive, and purposeful. Knowing what ELLs needed to be successful, however, was only part of the challenge. Finding out what actually worked and what ELL students preferred was another challenge educators faced.

**ELLs' Perceptions of Reading Support**

Motivated and engaged readers are more likely to read more often, and this improves their reading ability. Educators have considered ways to motivate struggling readers.

Taboada, Kidd, and Tonks (2011) held that understanding ELLs' motivation for reading was as important as improving their cognitive skills. In their study, students expressed a positive correlation between autonomy practices and learning. The power of choice motivated students. Student-generated questioning steered learning in the direction of the ELLs' interests, which was necessary for their autonomy. The researchers recommended a balance between structure and scaffolding to allow student choice yet progress toward a desired goal (Taboada, Kidd et al., 2011). In addition to autonomy, other factors contributed to the motivation of ELLs' reading. Cho, Xu, and Rhodes (2010) found that desire to read story content motivated students rather than linguistic simplicity. Collaborative discussion, high interest, and teacher quality, attitude, and expectations all affected motivation and prompted student interaction, which encouraged more language experimenting by ELLs. The more prepared teachers were with background knowledge, the more they could engage students. Instructors that were passionate about reading had a positive effect on students (Cho et al., 2010).

In McElvain's (2010) study on the use of transactional literature circles, she found that explicit connections between literacy
activities and the students' lives yielded an increase in student interest and involvement. Comprehension and motivation improved, as well as self efficacy due to the nature of literacy circles when meta-cognition was included (McElvain, 2010). Taboada and Rutherford (2011) established that providing choice and fostering relevance predicted students' positive feelings about school. The use of meaningful cognitive choices was important to students and student autonomy led to engagement of ELLs (Taboada and Rutherford, 2011). Choice was important to many participants in these studies. ELLs were engaged in reading and motivated to read in English when teachers had high expectations and planned those meaningful activities.

Language and reading achievement were both improved upon when students were motivated. Motivation was fostered through cognitive student choices, autonomy, interactive activities, and teacher attitude. These studies suggested strategies that fostered motivation in ELL readers.

The literature reviewed showed that many ELLs struggled with reading. Vocabulary instruction, fluency practice, specific reading strategy instruction, and meaningful literacy events were all successful methods of improving ELLs' reading abilities. Using autonomy and self efficacy motivated ELLs to be involved with reading activities. I wanted to conduct this action research study to discover the perceptions of my ELL students regarding their preferences in book choice, teacher/parent support strategies, and their self images as readers in order to foster and enhance their motivation.

Methods and Procedures

Participants and Setting
This case study action research was conducted in my ESL classroom at an elementary school in the southwestern United States with three of my fourth grade ELL students. I have worked closely with these students and their families since their enrollment into the ESL program. The three fourth grade students chosen for this study were identified as limited English proficient on the oral language proficiency test our district used. The students have participated in an ESL program to support their developing language skills for the past two to three years. These students were identified as struggling readers based on the ITBS language test, a nationally-normed skills assessment. Of these three students, two of them were Spanish speaking females who immigrated to the United States from Mexico. The male student's home language was Hindi and he moved to the United States as a baby.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews.
I interviewed the three selected ELLs in my classroom, inquiring about their reading preferences, after obtaining permission from the students, their teacher, and their parents. Each interview lasted between twenty and thirty minutes and was recorded. The interviews took place during the regular school day and the ELLs did not miss any organized activities during the interview. The first part of the interviews focused on the students' literacy history about learning to read and their reading habits at home. Questions about
how the students choose their books and how they feel about the support they receive followed. Finally, the students were asked to talk about their feelings regarding the reading programs in which they participated. My goal for the interviews was to find out why the students read, what motivates them to read, and how teachers could better support ELLs’ reading development.

The interviews were accurately transcribed and carefully analyzed. First, recurrent themes were color coded and highlighted in the interview transcripts. These themes were organized into the categories of preference, motivation, support, programs, and self image and color coded by student on a large chart. I underlined and circled trends that were common and important information. The charts were used to write case study summaries for each student.

**Library Records.**

The students have weekly visits to the library and are allowed to check out three books at a time. Records of the students’ check out history for this school year were provided by the school librarian. This data was intended to support the findings of the interviews and to guide the direction of this report.

The programs that the students participated in were Accelerated Reader and Texas Readers are Leaders. Accelerated Reader (AR) is an online program consisting of comprehension quizzes on a wide array of leveled books available in the school library. The teachers set weekly goals and requirements for the students to read a certain amount of books and take quizzes. The book levels were assigned based on the students’ independent reading ability, as designated by the program. Texas Readers are Leaders is a program designed to expose students to the different sections of the library and familiarize them with the Dewey Decimal System. The students had a set number of books they must read and take an AR quiz on from each section of the library. At the time of this study, the students had completed the Texas Readers are Leaders program. Records of the students’ progress in these two programs were printed out to analyze.

The library records were coded in several ways. First, books that were on the AR and Texas Readers records were highlighted. Then, all books were labeled according to the Dewey Decimal System. The students marked each book with either a smiley face if they liked the book, a sad face if they did not, an X if they did not read the book, a question mark if they could not remember, or marked assigned reading as such. Tables were created for each of these analyses. Triangulation was used to compare the trends seen in the interviews and the findings from the library book data in order to establish the results.

The students were also trained to make use of an online library interface called Destiny’s Quest as a tool to choose their school library books. No records of this program were used, but the students reference this during the interviews.

**Results**

The focus of this research was to find out more about ELLs’ perceptions on reading and reading support so that teachers could help them improve their English lan-
guage proficiency and their reading skills. I was interested in finding out what motivated ELLs to read so that I could improve my own teaching practice and other teachers could use similar strategies.

**Interviews**

**Alexis.**

Alexis, who just turned ten, immigrated to the United States from Mexico when she was six years old. She enrolled in our school in the middle of her first grade year, although she had not yet been in first grade in Mexico. Upon enrollment, she was identified as non-English speaking, according to an oral language test, and began receiving ESL support. When I first met Alexis, she did not speak much English and she could not read in English or in Spanish. Since then, Alexis has improved her oral language score to fluent in English speaking, however test scores and assessments show that she struggles in reading and written language. Our interview began as Alexis describes learning to read.

**Literacy History.**

Alexis learned to read in English first, even though her first language is Spanish. In her first days of school in the United States, she could read simple words if she knew the meaning of the word. She relied heavily on support from her teacher and a bilingual classmate. The teacher put the bilingual classmate to good use by pairing the two up often and letting them practice reading together. By the time Alexis was in second grade, she could read in English and she mostly received ESL support for expanding her vocabulary.

At home, Alexis was encouraged and learned to read in Spanish, too. She has a variety of books both in Spanish and English, although she prefers to read in English. Her book collection consists of many mystery books, a Junie B. Jones collection, and books about dogs. Alexis also has a Kindle that she uses for reading.

**Preferences.**

Alexis enjoys reading, depending on what the book is about. She reads the first ten pages, looks at the cover, or reads the summary on the back to see if the book is something she would like to read. If she has trouble understanding the book, she may get bored or decide not to read that book. Books that are mysteries and books about dogs or arts and crafts are her favorite types. She avoids science books and some picture books. Alexis enjoys using technology, like a Kindle, that has audio, especially the technology where you can flip the pages, and prefers this type over a traditional book.

**Support and Motivation.**

Alexis prefers to read out loud in order to practice reading. An effective strategy Alexis’s mother uses to encourage her to read more often is to give her money. Goal charts, stickers, and rewards motivate her to read, as well as her teachers, parents, and friends. Alexis uses Destiny’s Quest and recommendations from friends to find books in the library. These recommendations encourage her to read more often, especially when a book is popular among several friends.

When reading, if Alexis needs help understanding words, she asks the teacher or her parents or looks it up in the dictionary. Her teacher usually tells her the meaning, but her parents have her look up the word in the dictionary. Alexis points...
out that whoever helps her says the word out loud for her to hear. If no one is around to help her, she skips over the word and tries to figure it out using context clues. Alexis finds highlighter tools and audio support helpful when using technology. Alexis also works in small groups at school to become a better reader. She is familiar with scripted, scientifically based reading curriculum in a small group intervention and considers it helpful.

Programs.

Alexis has completed the Texas Readers are Leaders program and is involved in Accelerated Reading. Finding enough time to meet the goals required in these programs was challenging for Alexis and she felt these programs did not encourage her to read because she would rather just read for fun than participate in programs like these.

Lina.

Lina, an eleven year old fourth grader, came to the United States two years ago from Mexico and enrolled in second grade at my school. In the private schools in the area of Mexico Lina was from, most students were a year older than their American counterparts. Lina had just completed first grade in a private school in Mexico, therefore she enrolled in second grade, even though she was more than a year older than her American peers. Lina was identified as being limited English proficient (LEP) on an oral language proficiency test and started to receive ESL support. Lina's scores in reading and written language were below grade level and reading support was appropriate. Lina could read in both English and Spanish when she first moved to our school. She could speak and understand a little bit of English, also. In her interview, Lina described learning English and learning to read before moving to the United States.

Literacy History.

Lina was about five years old when she learned to read in Spanish. Her older twin sisters worked with her on sounding out words. A few years later, they also worked with her on learning to read in English. In first grade, in Mexico, Lina took an English class, where she practiced speaking and reading English. At the time of our interview, Lina reads fluently in both Spanish and English. She prefers to read books in English and reads in Spanish when emailing friends in Mexico. Lina does not have much of a book collection at her home and she relies on the school library for most of her reading.

Preferences.

Lina enjoys reading, she said, "because it takes you to adventures." She prefers to read fantasy books and biographies and chooses books that are about girls close to her own age. Recommendations from the school librarian and friends perk her interest in biographies. Lina avoids reading other non-fiction books, though, especially books about history. Lina browses through the fiction section of the school library and reads the summaries on the backs of books to choose her next adventure. Lina sometimes uses technology, such as an iTouch, to read, but does not have a preference one way or the other when it came to choosing to use an electronic device or a traditional book.

Support and Motivation.

Lina's parents encourage her to read at home. Her dad instructs her to read a set
amount each day and her parents take away electronics if she does not spend enough time reading. Lina understands their reasoning and at times, even chooses to read rather than use the computer or watch television so that she is not looking at a lit screen too often. When reading, if Lina struggles with a word, she asks for help. Her dad tells her the word and what it means if he knows and they look up unfamiliar words together. Lina’s teacher helps her with pronunciation and tells her the meaning of words. Lina receives reading support in a small group and feels this helps and encourages her to read more. Lina enjoys getting help understanding words, learning English, and improving her reading. She is very appreciative and accepting of the support she receives at school.

**Programs.**

Lina completed Texas Readers are Leaders and participates in Accelerated Reading. She feels these programs encourage her to read more. She states that she read more “Dewey decimals”, or non-fiction books, because of the Texas Readers program.

**Sai.**

Sai moved to the United States from India when he was a baby and began attending our school in kindergarten. At home, Sai speaks to his parents and is spoken to by his parents exclusively in Hindi. He speaks English and Hindi equally to his younger brother and friends. Although his tutor speaks Hindi, she works with him on his schoolwork only in English. Sai’s oral language test score was limited English speaking and he was identified as limited English proficient and receives ESL services. Sai’s reading scores on the standardized test were average, but his written language understanding was below grade level. Sai received language and reading interventions for several years. Although he is familiar with me because we have worked together in a small group, he does not open up very much during our conversations.

**Literacy History.**

Sai’s memory of when he learned to read was limited. He remembers his mother teaching him to read in English before he started school but could not elaborate on this experience. He has brief memories of learning to read in kindergarten and first grade, working with the alphabet, sounding out words, and learning to write. Sai speaks and understands Hindi, but cannot read it. He tells me about his shelf of books in his house and quickly recalls that one book is about origami and that he has several of the Diary of a Wimpy Kid books in the series. Most of the books are novels, or chapter books, as he calls them, and he struggles to describe his book collection in any more detail.

**Preferences.**

Sai thinks of reading as fun and enjoys the learning experience. However, Sai would rather play outside, watch television, or play video games than read. Graphic novels, like Garfield, are his favorite types of books because they are “funny and good to read”. Sai avoids reading lengthy books and books that have hard words. Sai chooses books by reading the summary on the back and enjoys reading mysteries, as long as they are not too long. He describes Harry Potter as a book that is too long and Diary of a Wimpy Kid as a good length. Sai uses online tools to search
for books, based on friends' recommendations. He visits familiar sections of the library such as the "Garfield" and the section with "I Spy" books. Sai enjoys interactive books where you have to find listed items in the picture. He uses an iPod and an iPhone to read books, but does not have a preference for electronic devices over traditional books.

Support and Motivation.

Sai's mother and teachers encourage him to read. His mother makes him read thirty minutes every weekday to make him a better reader. Sai finds long words challenging and he uses a dictionary to look up words. If he does not know how to pronounce the word, he tries to figure out the pronunciations the best he can, otherwise he asks his mother to say the word. She tells him the word, but not what it means, which he finds helpful. At school, his teacher pronounces the word and tells him the meaning. Often, when Sai struggles with reading, he skips the troublesome spot. Sometimes he asks a friend to tell him a word but he feels concerned that his friends or his teacher might lose their concentration if he interrupts them. Sai works on reading in small groups and thinks this helps him become a better reader, but it does not motivate him to read more. He appreciates strategies such as underlining while reading and states that this helps him. Although he has experience with electronic devices, their use does not motivate him to read more.

Programs.

Sai completed the Texas Readers are Leaders and participates in Accelerated Reader. He does not like these programs because of the quizzes involved and thinks it is hard to read the expected amount required. He feels these programs make him want to read less.

Observation

Library Check Out Habits.

The percentages of each type of book the students checked out according to the Dewey Decimal System were calculated and arranged in Table 1. Fiction books were the most frequently checked out, followed by books from the Arts and Recreation section, including graphic novels. Alexis also checked out geography, biography, and animal books often, which supported her statements in her interview about what types of books she enjoyed. Students checked out books from a variety of sections of the library, even when it was not a requirement as in The Texas Readers are Leaders program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Percentages of Books Students Checked Out From Each Section of the School Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>Fiction 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lina</td>
<td>Fiction 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sai</td>
<td>Fiction 87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students' feelings about why they checked out each book were organized into Table 2. Alexis and Lina enjoyed most of the books they checked out. Alexis had a significant amount of books she did not enjoy, yet this was less than the amount she enjoyed. Sai did not enjoy most of the books he checked out, which was consistent with his statement in his interview that he would rather do other activities than read. The amount of books the students read as an assignment for the reading programs or for class was also significant. Twenty four to thirty percent of the books Lina and Sai read were for an assignment. Alexis' percentage of assigned reading was much lower because of the timing of her intervention schedule.

The books the students enjoyed were compared with the section of the library the books came from in Table 3. All three students enjoyed reading fiction books and books from the Arts and Recreation section, which were mostly graphic novels. Consistent with her interview, Alexis also enjoyed books on pets and animals. Lina enjoyed poetry, plays, jokes, and riddle books and Sai enjoyed books about armed forces.

Table 4 displays the results of types of books students did not enjoy compared with sections of the library and were quite different for each student. Alexis disliked books on language and grammar. Out of all of the books Lina read, there was only one book that she disliked, which came from the graphic novel section. Most of the books Sai did not like were fiction books. This was surprising because he enjoyed fiction books most frequently, too. This may demonstrate that Sai needs addi-
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Table 4
Types of Books Students Did Not Like

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Fiction</th>
<th>UFOs, Aliens, Bigfoot</th>
<th>Philosophy, Optical Illusions</th>
<th>Religion, Mythology</th>
<th>Social Science, Holidays</th>
<th>Armed Forces</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Science and Math</th>
<th>Animals, Transportation</th>
<th>Arts and Recreation</th>
<th>Graphic Novels</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Geography and History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lina</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sai</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assigned Reading
Accelerated Reading.

Alexis took AR quizzes on a third of the books she checked out, even though she only coded 12% as assigned. The data showed that she took AR quizzes on many more books than were assigned. One possible reason for this refers back to her interview as Alexis describes herself as extrinsically motivated, since the students worked toward points and goals in Accelerated Reader. Lina took AR quizzes on 21% of the books she checked out and Sai, 30%. Both of these percentages were close to the percentage of books that they coded as assigned. This comparison could be interpreted as the idea that using a program as an assignment would increase the amount some students read.

Texas Readers are Leaders.

In the comparison of books required for the Texas Readers are Leaders Program and the types of books the students read, surprisingly, the students read above the requirement in all but one section. This led to the question of the purpose of this program and if students would be aware of these sections without the program.

Discussion

Motivation

Content makes books either enjoyable or not for readers. Just as Cho, et al. (2010) found in their research, content motivated students to read. Students enjoy books that are about topics that interest them, as seen in this research project when students discussed how they selected books from the school library. Reading the summary on the back of books was a very influential factor with the students in their book selection. Relying on recommendations from other students was an often mentioned influence in this study. The students discussed using an online program called Destiny’s Quest to make and view others’ recommendations in order to decide what books to check out. The frequency that this theme appeared during the interviews was significant. Teachers can take advantage of this motivating trend to encourage ELL students to read. Activities could be developed around peers recommending books to each other and student driven discussions could be fostered to encourage ELL students to read. Giving these stu-
dents ownership and fostering autonomy contributes to motivation to read (Taboada, et al., 2011). This study suggests meaningful literacy activities, such as literacy circles and book clubs that would persuade students to read for enjoyment. In turn, ELL students’ reading abilities would improve from these collaborative and deliberate activities (McElvain, 2010).

Preferences

When considering the content of books to motivate students, one must know what it is the students like to read. The students in this study enjoyed reading mysteries and graphic novels the most. In my experience, these genres are not often used by classroom teachers. Since motivation is affected by content and student preferences are mysteries and graphic novels, I recommend integrating this type of book into reading activities to encourage reading. The students also had individual interest in an array of topics. One student liked books about dogs, another enjoyed reading about armed forces. Teachers could use the students’ unique preferences for individualized, student driven projects to encourage autonomy.

Equally important to books students prefer, were the books they avoided. The students often discussed non-fiction books as undesirable. One student disliked science books, another history. Obviously, teachers should not avoid this kind of book. However, teachers can use the results of this study about the types of books students did not enjoy and methods other researchers, such as Taboada, et al. (2011), suggests for motivating students. Teachers should ensure the students are making connections with their reading in order for students to feel positively about their learning (Taboada, et al., 2011). Teachers need to be especially mindful in the case of ELLs with limited background knowledge with history text, when immigrant students struggle to relate to the topic. As Cho’s, et al. (2010) research demonstrated, teacher attitude and expectation affects motivation. Teachers with more background knowledge and passion can engage the students more. Teachers’ attitudes are contagious, and if they are excited about the content and set the stage for the students to be successful, the students will be more motivated about this content.

One of the students discussed avoiding long and difficult texts. This is also important for teachers to consider. ELLs are often busy learning not only grade level curriculum, but also a new language and culture. Overburdening these students that are already carrying a heavier workload than other students can cause a lack in motivation. Scaffolding and support needs to be readily available to keep ELLs motivated and positive. Graphic organizers, audio texts, adapted text, and summaries, are just a few suggestions for scaffolding academic content.

Programs

The reading programs used by this school to encourage reading yielded mixed feelings about reading from the students. The two students who were, in my opinion, more reluctant readers had negative feelings about Accelerated Reader and Texas Readers are Leaders. Alexis stated that she would rather just read for fun, but programs like AR could drive her away
from the goal of increased reading. However, the books read for these programs accounted for about one third of the books the students read. More research would be required to investigate how the amount the students read without programs may differ.

The data from this study showed that the students read more than the requirements from the various sections of the library needed to complete the Texas Readers are Leaders program. It was unclear from the results if the students would have been familiar with these sections of the library without this program, or if the program achieved its goal of educating them to become well rounded library users as a result. Discovering how more of the students felt about this program would be recommended before altering it.

**Support**

In search of what motivated these three ELLs to read, this study revealed that parent expectation was the number one reason they read outside of school. One parent offered rewards, one consequences, and another simply told her child to read for a set time each day. Regardless of the method, it is important to recognize the influence a parent has over a child’s reading and educators should embrace this phenomenon and create a partnership with parents to create avid readers. Most parents know their children should read and what their children’s interests are, and teachers are the experts on appropriate reading levels and goals for their students. Combining these forces would streamline home and school expectations and the children would see a united front.

The ELLs needed additional help with unfamiliar words from both the teacher and their parents and the strategy the students discussed the most was when the teacher or a parent would say the word out loud for them. Often they were either told the meaning of the word or they would look up the meaning. This was a helpful practice for ELLs and should be nurtured, especially since many ELLs may qualify to use a dictionary on standardized testing. Two of the students said they often skipped the unknown word, whether they figured out the meaning with context clues or not. One student’s reasoning was so that he would not bother others. This strategy should not be encouraged and ELLs must be made to feel comfortable using support from others or on their own. Having teachers trained on scaffolding and sheltered instruction for ELLs would benefit the students. Activities that encourage vocabulary growth, partnering with peers, and using graphic organizers are just a few examples of current strategies teachers could use with ELLs in the classroom.

**Conclusion**

The ultimate goal of this research was to learn more about ELLs’ preferences on reading and to consider these findings in making suggestions for teachers that want to encourage and improve reading in their students. By conducting interviews and observing and analyzing library habits of three fourth grade ELLs, it was discovered that peer recommendation of books was an important motivating factor. Previous research correlated content with motivation and in this research it was found that the students had a high interest in fiction
books and graphic novels. The students did not seem motivated by programs such as Accelerated Reader, but the amount of books they read for the programs they participated in was significant. The leading reason the students read outside of school was the parent’s influence. Teachers can use these findings to create a classroom that fosters autonomy and self efficacy, and in turn instill a desire in ELLs to read.

**References**


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