



## Adult Hispanic ESL Students and Graded Readers

This study examined the extent to which graded readers vis-à-vis scaffolded silent reading (ScSR) resulted in increased vocabulary, reading comprehension, and a positive attitude toward reading. A mixed-methods study was administered to two upper-intermediate adult ESL classes at a community college in southwestern Arizona. Both groups took The Vocabulary Size Test and TABE Complete Language Assessment System–English. The treatment group selected and read graded readers, met individually with the instructor, and kept a journal; in addition, several students from the treatment group were interviewed at the beginning and end of the study. Descriptive statistics were used on the pre- and posttests. The findings were promising and showed some growth in vocabulary and reading comprehension for both the treatment and control groups. Furthermore, participants of the treatment group expressed a positive attitude toward reading graded readers through scaffolded silent reading. As a result, this study demonstrated that graded readers used with scaffolded silent reading show promise with this student population.

*In an ideal world, are there any reading teachers who would not want their students to (a) read a great deal and (b) enjoy reading?*  
(Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 4)

**A**s of July 2015, Hispanics comprise 56.6 million or 17.6% of the nation's total population. Of these, 63.9% are of Mexican origin. The majority of Hispanics live in one of the following eight states: California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, and Colorado, with the highest proportion of Hispanics

found along the southwestern border of the US (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Consider an ESL program at a community college whose branch campus is on the US-Mexico border. There, the lingua franca is Spanish while English is usually limited to the classrooms. The community college's ESL program consists of four levels that range from lower-beginning to upper-intermediate. Each level includes courses that are divided into three subject areas: grammar, listening/speaking, and reading/writing. When ESL students complete their fourth level, they take two placement tests; one is in English, and the other is in reading. The majority of the ESL students place into English 80, which is the lowest developmental (precollege) course offered. As for reading, they tend to place at the lowest developmental course offered, Reading 93; it is for students who read at a fifth-grade level (J. Mattes, personal communication, March 24, 2011). As such, low reading scores prevent ESL students from taking the courses they want until they are reading at a college level. What can be done to help these students become proficient readers of English?

Vocabulary knowledge is the crux of reading (Eskey, 2005). Nation (2001) has written extensively of the need for a reader to have a large vocabulary in order to comprehend a text. He notes that 19 out of every 20 words, or 95% of the text, need to be comprehensible. By this estimate, the reader would need to know 10,000 independent word meanings to process a typical college-level text (Nation & Wang, 1999). For a reader to know 98% of the words in a text, however, the reader would need to know 291 to 294 words out of every 300 (Grabe, 2009). This would require a vocabulary of 20,000 words, which is the number of words that typical native English speakers can read when they complete high school (Nation & Wang, 1999).

How can ESL students learn so many words? Vocabulary instruction is one way; however, the number of words a student can learn in a semester or academic school year is minimal (Nation 1999; Grabe 2009). Students can learn more words if they do so incidentally. For Day and Bamford (1998), Eskey (2005), Grabe (2009), Krashen (2004, 2009), Nation (1990, 2001), and Waring (1997), incidental vocabulary learning occurs through extensive reading. Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009) describe extensive reading as a process in which "... learners [read] as much as possible, for the purpose of pleasure or information rather than learning particular language features, and usually self-selected" (p. 383). The key is that students begin reading extensively at their independent level; this may be below the reading course level they are taking (Krashen, 2009).

Aside from magazines, newsletters, and high-interest texts writ-

ten for ESL/EFL students, graded readers can also be used for extensive reading.<sup>1</sup> Graded readers are available at various levels of proficiency, beginning with the “starter” level, which consists of 250 high-frequency words and a total of 1,540 words. These words are recycled and appear at the next level along with additional high-frequency words and a total of 5,200 words. This continues until the last level, in which there are 2,500 high-frequency words and a total of 30,000 words; the plot and grammar also become more complex at the higher levels (The Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011). As Wan-a-rom (2012) explains, “One of the main functions of graded readers is to create a series of stepping stones for second language participants to eventually read unsimplified materials” (p. 51).

To demonstrate the effectiveness of graded readers, a mixed-methods study was implemented over a 14-week period. The following research questions guided this study.

1. To what extent does extensive reading through the use of graded readers lead to an increase in vocabulary growth in English?
2. To what extent does extensive reading through the use of graded readers lead to an increase in reading comprehension in English?
3. What are the reactions of the participants of the treatment group to scaffolded silent reading (ScSR)?

### **Literature Review**

The first seminal work on extensive reading was Elley and Mangubhai's (1983) “book flood” studies;<sup>2</sup> the participants were elementary schoolchildren in Fiji, and the treatment groups read high-interest books. The results demonstrated that the treatment groups scored higher in reading comprehension than the control group; furthermore, the findings served as a rationale to use extensive reading with different age groups.

Since then, numerous studies have been conducted on extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 1998; Jacobs, Renandya, & Bamford, 2000; Robb and Kano, 2013). The majority of these studies were conducted overseas, particularly in Asia. The findings showed the benefits of extensive reading in terms of fluency, comprehension, vocabulary growth, reading speed, and positive attitude toward L2 reading. However, the majority of these studies did not use graded readers.

One of the first studies using graded readers and ESL or EFL adults was performed by Mason and Krashen (1997). They conducted four experiments on postgraduate Japanese students to determine if

extensive reading was viable in a foreign language setting. They also wanted to know if extensive reading had a positive effect on reluctant readers. All of the groups that engaged in extensive reading outperformed the control groups on reading comprehension, writing, and reading speed. Furthermore, the teachers noticed that the graded readers were very popular with the participants. According to Mason and Krashen (1997), “Extensive reading allowed ‘reluctant’ students of EFL to catch up to traditional students, and worked in a variety of EFL situations” (p. 101). They concluded that extensive reading can work in the EFL classroom.

Similar positive outcomes were found by Walker (1997), Renandya (2007), Yamashita (2004), Askildson (2008), and Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009). Walker’s (1997) participants found the graded readers beneficial while Renandya, Rajan, and Jacobs (1999) found that graded readers motivated reluctant readers. Moreover, they found that graded readers could be used with older learners. In the case of Al-Homoud and Schmitt (2009), they studied Saudi male EFL students at a Saudi university. The researchers were surprised that graded readers were viewed positively because pleasure reading is uncommon in that EFL environment. They concluded that extensive reading is a viable approach, particularly in a challenged environment such as the Saudi EFL classroom. Finally, as for vocabulary growth and/or reading comprehension, the groups that engaged in extensive reading outperformed the control groups (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Horst, 2005; Hsu & Lee, 2009; Lee, 2007; Poulshock, 2010; Robb & Kano, 2013; Walker, 1997).

In contrast to the previous studies, Askildson’s (2008) study took place at a US university; the study involved four groups. One of the groups engaged in extensive reading (ER) while another group engaged in reading while listening-extensive reading (RWL-ER). The findings indicated that compared to the control groups, the RWL-ER group along with the ER group showed significant improvement with “incidental vocabulary acquisition, grammatical learning, gains in reading attitudes/affects and long term gains in reading” (Askildson, 2008, p. 242).

### ***The Argument for Scaffolding Silent Reading (ScSR)***

Extensive reading, which includes graded reading, was traditionally done through sustained silent reading (SSR). Despite the benefits of extensive reading, the practice of SSR has drawn criticism from the National Reading Panel (NRP), a group of 14 scientists charged by the U.S. Congress to evaluate studies on reading in grades 1-12 (NICCHD, 2000). They examined only a total of 10 experimental and

quasiexperimental studies on sustained silent reading. The results of these studies, the panel concluded, were not statistically significant or "... mixed in terms of effects on outcome assessments, such as word reading, vocabulary gains, or comprehension" (as cited in Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008, pp. 194-195). Steven Stahl along with the NRP described the lack of interaction between teachers and students as a major limitation of SSR (as cited in Reutzel et al., 2008, p. 195). This same concern has been expressed by others; the most notable is William Grabe (personal communication, November 6, 2011), who is at the forefront of second language reading and a proponent of extensive reading.

To counter this criticism, Reutzel et al. (2008) proposed the practice of scaffolded silent reading (ScSR). It shares the same characteristics of sustained silent reading except one: The teacher plays a more active role. For example, the teacher provides students with strategies to select books. The teacher also holds brief five-minute conferences with individual students. Finally, students read aloud from their books, answer comprehension questions, and complete a book project or two. Reutzel et al. (2008) found that when classroom teachers monitored their students' silent reading through brief interactions and accountability conferences, the most disengaged students in class remained on task for up to three weeks (as cited in Reutzel et al., 2008, p. 195). In her dissertation, West (2010) found

the Scaffolded Silent Reading students improved their genre knowledge more than the Sustained Silent Reading plus control group students with a degree of statistical significance, their reading achievement was higher than the control group, but their reading attitudes were not statistically significantly different from the Sustained Silent Reading plus control group. (p. 115)

One limitation of ScSR is that it has mainly been used with elementary school students who are native English speakers. How adult ESL students respond to ScSR is examined in the present study.

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

The sample for this study consisted of a group of adult Hispanics who were studying English as a second language at a community college in the rural Southwest. They were in one of two intermediate level 4 reading and writing ESL classes. Initially, it was thought that each class would have between 20 to 25 students. In reality, one class had

only 13 students while the other class had 25 students. Twelve of the 13 students agreed to participate in the study. They were the treatment group, which was based at the San Luis branch of Arizona Western College.<sup>3</sup> The control group consisted of 23 students at the main campus, which was approximately 30 miles away.

### ***Scaffolded Silent Reading (ScSR)***

With ScSR, the classroom teacher assisted the participants in selecting graded readers, monitored their progress, and provided them with feedback. For accountability, participants were asked to maintain a reading log and write three journal entries. In the end, the goal was for participants to finish a graded reader and select another one each week.

### ***Instrumentation***

Participants in both the treatment and control groups took The Vocabulary Size Test. Created by Paul Nation and David Beglar (2007), it consisted of 14 levels with 10 multiple-choice items at each level; as such, 140 items were assessed. The goal of this test was to measure the amount of receptive vocabulary each participant possessed at the outset of the study.<sup>4</sup>

On the following day, all of the participants took the TABE-CLAS-E (The Test of Adult Basic Education-Complete Language Assessment System-English), which is a standardized reading test geared for adult ESL students.

During the study, participants in the treatment group completed three journal entries; they also kept a reading log. Furthermore, four participants were interviewed twice during the study. At the end of the study, all of the participants retook the Vocabulary Size Test and the TABE CLAS-E level 4.<sup>5</sup> Scores from the pre- and posttests were given to the participants at the end of the study along with an explanation of what the scores meant.

### ***Reading Log***

Participants in the treatment group kept a reading log; it provided the instructor a means to keep track of what and how often a participant read a graded reader. Participants also could provide brief opinions on what they had read.

### ***Journal***

For the journal, each participant was asked to write three one-page entries at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. Among the questions asked were the following:

1. What did you like or dislike about the graded readers?
2. Was it helpful when your teacher spoke with you individually during silent reading?
3. Compared to the beginning of the semester, do you think your vocabulary stayed the same or improved? Why?
4. Compared to the beginning of the semester, do you think your reading comprehension stayed the same or improved? Why?

### ***Interviews***

The researcher selected four participants from the treatment group based on their pretest scores. They were interviewed twice: toward the beginning of the study and then toward the end. For the first interview, they were asked to share their experiences of learning to read in Spanish. For example, the participants were asked who had read to them and what their family's attitude toward reading in Spanish was. They were then asked to comment on their experiences learning to read in English. For the second interview, participants were asked to comment on the study they participated in. For example, they were asked how their vocabulary and reading comprehension had changed since the start of the study, what they had learned from reading these types of books, and how their view of reading had changed from the beginning of the study.

## **Findings**

### ***Research Question 1***

*To what extent does extensive reading through the use of graded readers lead to an increase in vocabulary growth in English?*

An examination of Figure 1 shows that the posttest scores of the treatment group were lower with the exception of participant number 26 (see also Table 1). All of the participants from the treatment group, except number 26, ran out of time. Furthermore, two of the participants (participant numbers 29 and 31) arrived late on the day of the posttest. As such, they did not have the full 40 minutes to complete the posttest while participant number 34 was absent.

In contrast, the control group was able to complete the posttest within the time limit (see Figure 2 and Table 2). Nine of the participants scored higher on the posttest compared to the pretest. Four scored the same while seven scored lower on the posttest.

**Another Way of Analyzing the Data.** An alternative was proposed to avoid penalizing the participants in the treatment group who did not complete the test. This involved examining the number of words correct over the number of items completed on the vocabulary pre- and posttests. What emerged was the following (see Figure 3).

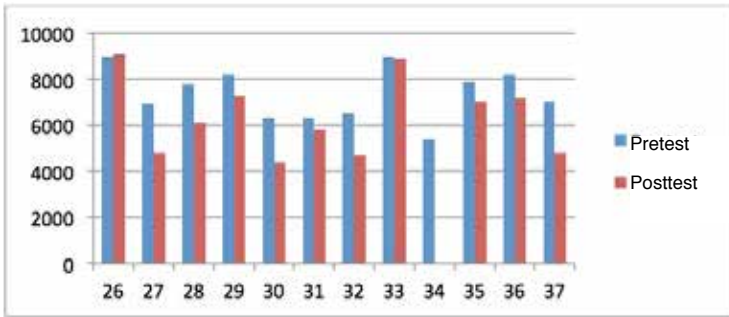


Figure 1. Scores on vocabulary pre- and posttests for treatment group. The numbers on the vertical axis are words known while the horizontal axis are identifying numbers for each participant. Number 34 took only the pretest.

**Table 1**  
**Measures of Central Tendency**

<i>Treatment group</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>
Pretest	7,308	7,400	8,200
Posttest	6,120	5,950	4,800

*Note.* The numbers above indicate the number of words known. The possible scores range from 100 words (the lowest) to 10,400 words (the highest). For the posttest, the mean was 19% lower than the pretest while the median was 24% lower.

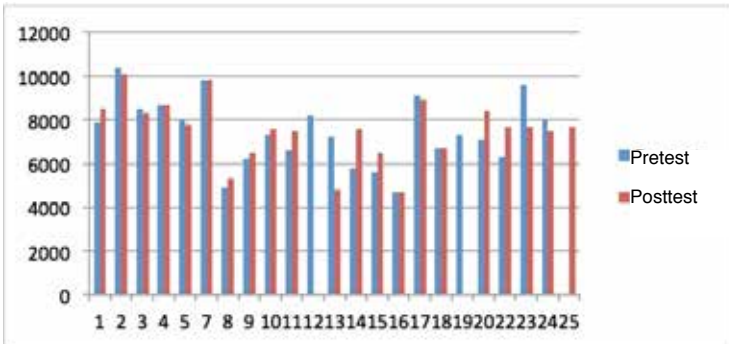
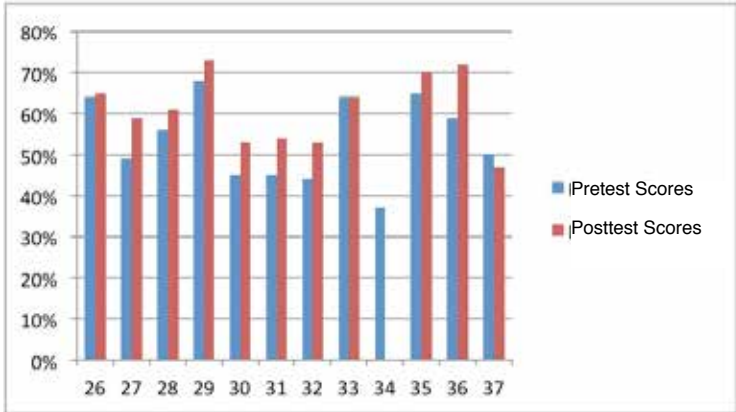


Figure 2. This figure shows the number of word families that participants in the control group know receptively in the pre- and posttest. The control group was able to complete the posttest within the time limit. Nine of the participants or 41% scored higher on the posttest compared to the pretest. Four scored the same while seven scored lower on the posttest. The mean for the pretest was 7,043 (word families) with a standard deviation of 1,339; the mean of the posttest was 7,226 (word families) with a standard deviation of 1,500.



**Table 2**  
**Measures of Central Tendency**

<i>Control group</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>
Pretest	7,043	7,100	8,000
Posttest	7,226	7,220	8,000



*Figure 3.* Percent of vocabulary words correct for treatment group. Numbers 29 and 36 scored the highest with more than 70%. Number 37 scored the lowest with approximately 48%. Number 34 did not take the posttest; however, he scored the lowest on the pretest with 35%.

Nine participants in the treatment group scored higher on the posttest. One scored the same as in the pretest while one scored lower on the posttest. These differences are also reflected in Table 3, where the percentages were slightly higher on the posttest with the exception of the mode.

**Table 3**  
**Measures of Central Tendency**

<i>Treatment group</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>
Pretest	54%	53%	54%
Posttest	56%	60%	53%

As for the control group, 10 participants scored higher on the posttest than the pretest while three had the same score on the pre- and posttests (see Figure 4). Nine scored lower. An examination of

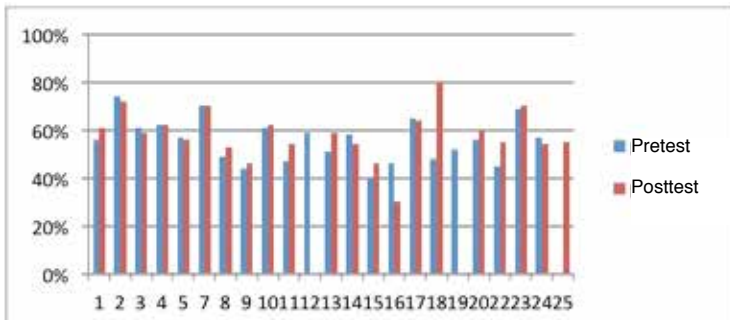


Figure 4. Percent of vocabulary words correct for control group. As noted earlier, numbers 12, 19, and 25 took only one test.

the measures of central tendency for the control group shows that the results indicated that there was no significant change in pre- and post-test scores (see Table 4).

**Table 4**  
**Measures of Central Tendency**

<i>Control group</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>
Pretest	53%	52%	48%
Posttest	52%	54%	

In comparing both groups, the following results emerged. Eighty-two percent of the participants in the treatment group scored higher on the posttest than the pretest. In contrast, just 48% of the participants in the control group scored higher on the posttest compared to the pretest. The mean and median were higher for the treatment group than the control group. The exception was the mode, which was slightly higher for the control group.

**Research Question 2**

*To what extent does extensive reading through the use of graded readers lead to an increase in reading comprehension in English?*

**Self-Reports.** In their last journal entry, participants from the treatment group reflected on the extent to which their reading comprehension had grown. All but one provided positive responses. That lone negative response came from Gerardo,<sup>6</sup> who admitted that his view of reading had stayed the same: He did not like to read very much. Other participants reported improvement in varying amounts. Rafael thought his comprehension had increased “a little” while others, such as Yolanda, a 35-year-old high school graduate from Mexico,

found her comprehension had increased a lot. Yolanda said, “I understand many more things.” Many participants expressed a similar view. For Juanita and Gina, better reading comprehension meant they were able to understand the plots of the stories they read.

### ***Results from the TABE-CLAS-E Reading Test***

According to the TABE-CLAS-E test manual, pre- and posttests can be administered across levels. Since several participants from both groups had near-perfect to perfect scores on the level 3 TABE-CLAS-E, level 4 was administered for the posttest.

The scaled scores distorted the results because the pre- and posttests were based on two different numerical scales. To rectify this, the scores were converted to proficiency levels, which ranged from 1 to 6 (see Table 5).

**Table 5**  
**Levels of ESL Proficiency**

<i>ESL proficiency levels</i>	<i>Student performance level</i>
Level 1-Beginning ESL Literacy	0-1
Level 2-Low-beginning ESL	2
Level 3-High-beginning ESL	3
Level 4-Low-intermediate ESL	4
Level 5-High-intermediate ESL	5
Level 6-Advanced ESL	6

**Note.** Source: TABE: TABE-CLAS-E Scoring Tables Forms A & B, 2008, p. 7.

These converted scores provide a more accurate representation of how the participants performed on both tests. The results indicated that only one participant from the treatment group rose from a level 5 (high-intermediate ESL) to a level 6 (advanced ESL) while three participants stayed at level 6. Five participants scored at level 5 on the posttest. Only one participant dropped one level; he scored a level 3 or high-beginner on the posttest. In all, 9 out of 10 participants scored at the high-intermediate or advanced reading comprehension levels.<sup>7</sup>

**The Treatment Group.** In Figure 5, the results show that four participants in the treatment group scored higher on the posttest. These data are misleading because they show that some participants rose from a level 5 to a level 6. In fact, some participants were functioning at a level 6 on the pretest, but the highest score they could get on the pretest was a 5+.

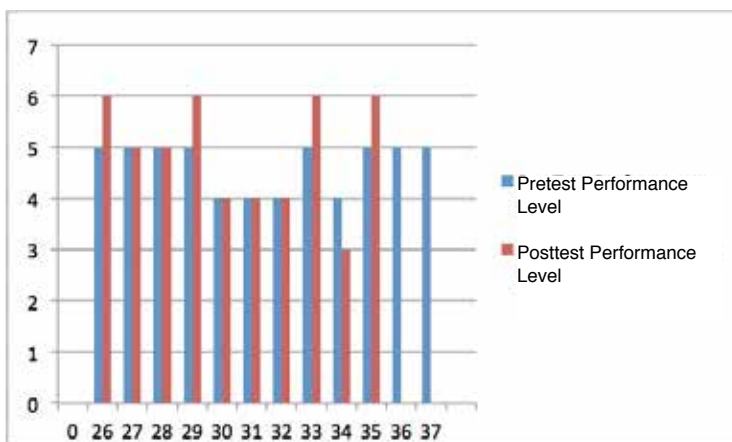


Figure 5. Four participants or 33% scored higher on the posttest. They scored at the advanced ESL level. Two scored at the high-intermediate ESL level while three scored at the low-intermediate ESL level. One scored lower on the posttest (high-beginning ESL) while two did not take the posttest.

**The Control Group.** In the control group, there were six participants whose scores appeared to have risen: participant numbers 2, 3, 4, 7, 17, and 23. They obtained a score of 5+ on the pretest and a score of 6 on the posttest. In fact, their scores stayed the same; that is, they were functioning at an advanced level on both tests. There were only five whose scores actually rose: numbers 1, 9, 14, 15, and 16; of these, participants 1 and 15 jumped two levels (see Figure 6).

### Research Question 3

*What are the reactions of the participants of the treatment group to scaffolded silent reading (ScSR)?*

Despite lasting 14 weeks, the graded reader project had an impact on the participants of the treatment group. All of the participants said they like the graded readers because of the variety of topics and levels. They did not find the graded readers difficult or boring. For example, a couple of participants from the treatment group said that the graded readers were interesting, as in the case of Linda. She commented that the graded readers were more entertaining than watching television. Furthermore, those who were reluctant readers at the beginning of the study, such as Abril, changed their views toward reading once the study ended (see Figure 7).

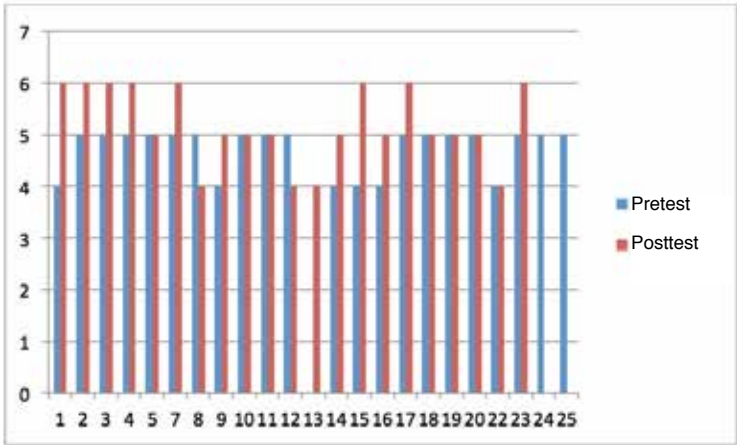


Figure 6. Eleven of the participants or 50% scored higher on the posttest than the pretest. Eight scored at the advanced ESL level. Nine scored at the high-intermediate ESL level. Four scored at the low-intermediate level, and two did not take the posttest.

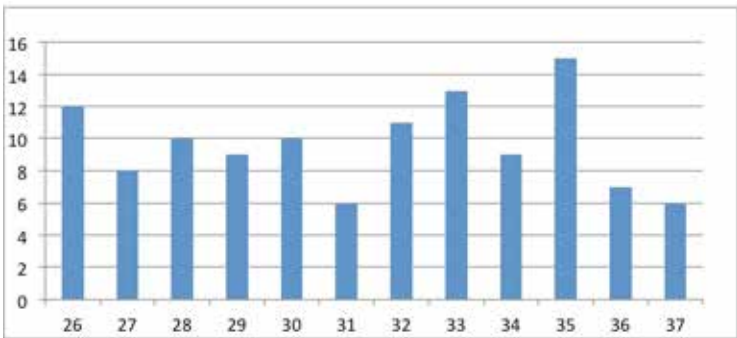


Figure 7. This figure shows the number of graded readers that each participant from the treatment group read. The highest was 15 while the lowest was 6.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Vocabulary Growth

What are the implications of the different sets of data presented on the vocabulary pre- and posttests? The raw scores imply that the control group outperformed the treatment group. However, when the percentage of correct answers over completed items is examined, the results for both groups are close. These results may be a better representation of the extent of vocabulary growth for the participants from each group.

Self-reports have been another way to determine whether vocabulary growth occurred. At the end of this study, the participants of the treatment group were asked whether they thought their vocabulary had increased. All but one said, "Yes." The participants' positive self-reports were substantiated by their final grades for the ESL reading and writing course. The participants earned either an "A" or "B" in the course. Those who earned an "A" were also the ones who scored the highest on the vocabulary and reading comprehension pre- and posttests.

### ***Reading Comprehension***

At the end of the study, participants from the treatment group were asked if they thought their reading comprehension had increased or not. All but one, the self-identified nonreader, indicated that it had.

What do the results from these two groups mean? First, they reveal how levels can be heterogeneous within a single ESL class. Participants from both groups fell into one of three reading levels: lower-intermediate, high-intermediate, or advanced. With such mixed-level classes, different reading materials are needed to assist those functioning at the lower-intermediate level. The use of one reading text could prove to be boring for the advanced students, while the lower-intermediate students might struggle to understand what they have read. What is the solution?

Reading materials such as graded readers can enable a participant to read at his level. Furthermore, he can read about a topic that interests him. There is also a means to assess whether an individual understood the graded reader he read. Participants can take a short comprehension test for a variety of graded readers at the following website: <http://mreader.org>. Through this website, a teacher can determine the extent to which students have comprehended a particular graded reader. Furthermore, the teacher can determine if the student is ready to read at a higher level or not.

### ***Graded Readers and Scaffolded Silent Reading***

There was a pedagogical side to the graded readers. As stated earlier, the majority of participants from the treatment group self-reported that their vocabulary and reading comprehension had increased. This could be attributed to reading much more than they usually do in a level 4 ESL reading and writing class. As such, scaffolded silent reading (ScSR) through graded readers has a place in the adult ESL classroom.

As the researcher, I was able to see the power of graded readers firsthand. At least once a week, I would go to the site where the

study was being conducted to bring graded readers or ask the teacher how the class was going. Before class started, I would see Linda, one of the participants, sitting outside of the classroom, hunched over an iron picnic table reading a graded reader. On more than one occasion, I walked by and Linda did not notice me. While Linda was silently reading, I could see her eyes focused exclusively on what she was reading. I saw this same behavior when I observed the participants in the treatment group in their ESL reading and writing class. At the start of the class, the teacher went over the day's agenda, and then he told the students that they had 20 minutes to read. The graded readers came out. The room was silent as participants read. I could see their eyes darting over the pages. Several were mouthing out what they read and pointing as they moved across a page.<sup>8</sup> All of them appeared focused on what they were reading. At the same time, the teacher was moving around the classroom conferencing with each participant. The teacher later affirmed that the behavior I had observed was what typically happened during the 20-minute reading period (J. Thomas, personal communication, April 14, 2013). I also asked the four participants I interviewed whether their classmates were reading during the 20-minute sessions. Juanita stressed that when they had group share, they did not have time to read silently, which was unfortunate. She actually wished that there were more time to read silently.

In my observations of the class, I noticed that after conferencing, the teacher sat at his desk and read one of the graded readers for the remainder of the time left for silent reading. As such, his behavior implicitly told the participants that reading silently was important. Later, when the participants would share what they read, the instructor also shared his impressions of a book he was reading at the time. In one instance, he was so intrigued by a story a participant had recounted that he later checked out the graded reader in which the story was found.

In my interview with the teacher, I asked him what struck him about ScSR. He said,

As a teacher, I have really enjoyed the books. They are very interesting, and there are so many themes and so many books to select that everybody finds something to read. And it's kind of curious to me. Some people would stick to the nonfiction. Some people would stick with biographies, and some would read a certain type of fiction.

### **Final Thoughts**

Participants in the treatment group viewed the combination of graded readers with scaffolded silent reading positively. Although

they had read vignettes from textbooks in previous reading classes, this was the first time they had read stories that were longer than three pages. Reading longer texts in a set block of time (20 minutes) provided them with the opportunity to come across more vocabulary and hone their reading comprehension. The fact that they read a book also served as a motivator to read more and enter Nuttall's (1996) Virtuous Circle.

This study's findings are promising for a student population that has not been mentioned before in the literature. They show some growth in vocabulary and reading comprehension in both groups. Of course, these are not conclusive statistical results from which broad generalizations can be made. Nonetheless, several tangible results emerged. First, graded readers motivated a group of adult Hispanic ESL students to read books of different genres inside and, more important, outside of the classroom. Second, and most surprising, is that participants read without the incentive of a grade or extra credit. Furthermore, about four participants took the initiative to write summaries of the stories they had read. Most of the summaries were in English. Finally, the participants readily discussed the books they had read.

In closing, the results support the use of extensive reading. Just as Nation (2001) has stated, both intensive and extensive reading are needed in an adult ESL reading program. The uniqueness of graded readers is that they offer ESL students the opportunity to read about topics they are interested in. Furthermore, they can find graded readers at their independent level. Once-reticent readers might become hooked, which leads to their becoming "committed readers": "those who seek to read whenever they get an opportunity at any time in the day" (Millard, 1997, p. 40). In the process, their reading proficiency increases, and they are able to make the transition to reading authentic academic texts.

With the above in mind, one sees the need for further studies of a longer duration with adult Hispanic ESL students who live on or near the US-Mexico border. They may statistically confirm the viability of graded readers for this particular student population. Furthermore, they could reveal the most effective ways to use graded readers through scaffolded silent reading with adult Hispanic ESL students. As a result, the findings would contribute to the literature on extensive reading in general and graded readers through scaffolded silent reading, specifically.



## Author

Dr. Liza E. Martinez has had the privilege to teach English to speakers of other languages in the US, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In December 2013, she obtained her doctorate from Northern Arizona University. She is a professor of ESL at Arizona Western College.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>According to Waring (1997), “A key link between graded and extensive reading is that graded reading uses specially prepared materials while extensive reading can, but need not do so” (para. 2).

<sup>2</sup>It was given this name because participants had access to a large number of high-interest reading books.

<sup>3</sup>This site is one mile north of the US-Mexico border.

<sup>4</sup>A person may be familiar with a word without using it in spoken or written language.

<sup>5</sup>They took TABE CLASS-E level 3 for the pretest.

<sup>6</sup>Pseudonyms were used.

<sup>7</sup>Two participants did not take the posttest.

<sup>8</sup>I realize that these are habits of novice readers and should be addressed in the college’s ESL reading program.

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