CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

A COURSE IN TRANSITION: ACHIEVING STUDENT SUCCESS BY ADDRESSING THE LACK OF READING AND WRITING PROFICIENCY AT THE GRADUATE LEVEL

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Educational Psychology

By

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Robert and Kareen Hartwig and Carrie Rothstein-Fisch.

Mom and Dad: Thank you for all of your constant love and support.

Carrie Rothstein-Fisch: You saw a need and acted to help others succeed. You are inspiring and will continue to inspire me throughout my life as an educator.
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Completing this thesis would not have been possible without so many wonderful and supportive people in my life.

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ABSTRACT

A COURSE IN TRANSITION: ACHIEVING STUDENT SUCCESS BY ADDRESSING THE LACK OF READING AND WRITING PROFICIENCY AT THE GRADUATE LEVEL

By

Danielle Hartwig

Master of Arts in Education,

Educational Psychology

First semester graduate students are expected to write with technical proficiency; yet many do not have the necessary skills and writing competency to achieve this expectation (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009). Over the past five years, students enrolled in their first semester in the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education program at California State University, Northridge were becoming less and less successful at meeting the high demands of graduate level work. Therefore, an existing course in language and cognition was modified to meet the needs of first semester students transitioning to graduate school, specifically to provide support and strategies for improving graduate students’ reading and writing abilities and strengthening study skills. In this thesis, the planning process, content of the course and assignments will be discussed. A sample of eight first year graduate students will be examined through multiple data sources, such as pre and posttests and written assignments. Additionally, four students will be highlighted in the results to demonstrate individual differences in
knowledge and skills and how these students evolved over the course of the semester-long class. Themes, implications, limitations and future research will also be addressed.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"Being a successful academician is a challenging endeavor that typically includes reading, understanding and articulating theory and research, [and] writing on a mature academic level”

(Hadjioannou, Shelton, Fu & Dhanarattigannon, 2007, p. 174).

Writing at an articulate academic level consumes a graduate student’s time, effort and focus (Ross & McClafferty, 2001). Graduate classes are intensive and heavily loaded with writing assignments and numerous papers (Hadjioannou et al., 2007; Wasley, 2008). The skill of writing at a graduate level is the very thing that causes graduate students to feel stressed, overwhelmed, and fearful (Salas, 2009; Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009). Graduate school faculty often believe that incoming graduate students have the skills and ability to write at a higher level than undergraduate students because of their previously earned degree and prior experiences. Singleton-Jackson and Lumsden (2009) argue that “higher education operates based on the assumption that students entering graduate school should be more proficient writers than they were upon entering college for the first time” (p. 3). This assumption may be nothing more than just that…an assumption.
Statement of Need

One example of the lack of students’ writing skills at entry to graduate school was seen at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). CSUN is a large, diverse University located in the Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley with over 36,000 students, approximately 5,000 of whom are graduate students (http://www.csun.edu/~instrsch/index.html, 2012). First semester graduate students enrolled in the Master of Arts program in Early Childhood Education are required to pass a class titled Educational Psychology and Counseling (EPC) 632: Issues in Early Childhood Education during their first semester with a grade of B or better. In the fall of 2011, 40% of the 20 graduate students enrolled in this course (EPC 632) received a B minus or lower grade. Students who do not receive a B or better must retake the class for a passing grade of a B. Accordingly, almost half of the class was unable to meet the reading, writing and studying demands of the class. Table 1.1 shows the five-year trend in unsuccessful students (Rothstein-Fisch, 2011).

Table 1.1. Five-year trend in unsuccessful students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of students enrolled</th>
<th>Unsuccessful – grades &lt; B, WU, Incomplete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 earned Cs, 1 incomplete (student has not returned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 dropped out, 2 earned Ds, 1 earned F, 1 Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 earned C grades, 3 WU, 1 Incomplete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1The course contains many supports for students, such as Writing Guidelines, explicit assignments with examples, and mentors to help read drafts of papers. The course has not changed (other than updated readings) and the instructor has been a constant.
Over the past five years, except for 2008, there was an increasing trend in students failing to earn a B or better in EPC 632. As a result, it was determined that something needed to be done to provide first semester graduate students with the skills they needed to succeed.

**Purpose and Goals of the Study**

Dr. Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, the coordinator of the Master’s Degree in Early Childhood Education at CSUN, saw the increasing trend of unsuccessful graduate students and proposed the idea of establishing a class to improve the success rate. She wanted to create a course for first semester graduate students focused on their transition to graduate school. The course would have an emphasis on graduate students’ reading and writing abilities, in hopes that this would increase the number of successful first semester graduate students enrolled in writing intensive courses, such as EPC 632.

For this purpose, Dr. Rothstein-Fisch updated the content and format of an already existing course (EPC 634), which in recent years was an on-line, hybrid class about the language and concept development of children. The course was revamped to also include an emphasis on the language and cognition of graduate students, in hopes to provide students with the necessary skills and support to succeed in graduate school. Ultimately, EPC 634 was modified and designed to achieve a variety of goals: 1) to provide specific content information on language and concept development in the early years drawing heavily on the California Early Learning and Development System, 2) to support and meet the needs of first semester students transitioning to graduate school, and 3) to provide support and strategies for improving graduate students’ reading and writing.
abilities and strengthening study skills. The course was highly recommended for first year MA Early Childhood Education students and mandatory for students who did not receive a B or higher in the previous year’s core classes.

The purpose of the current study is to: a) examine the extent to which language and concept development knowledge was gained, b) evaluate if taking a class such as EPC 634 in conjunction with other first year core classes would produce a cohort with a higher passing rate in EPC 632, and c) determine the key variables related to student success.

**Significance of the Study**

The current study will contribute to the understanding of the transition to graduate school with a special emphasis on describing some of the key variables related to student success. The goal of the study was ultimately to improve the success rate (using EPC 632 as a proxy measure) of graduate students with the rigors of reading and writing at the graduate level. Specifically this pilot course will focus on specific content areas: language and cognition in children, the California Early Learning and Development System, and reading and writing skills. Education professors can learn what features of the course were successful at promoting and impacting students’ reading and writing skills. The study can also help uncover key variables that may have been a hindrance to student success. Several case studies will highlight the experiences of first semester students and suggest ways to support and meet the needs of first semester students transitioning to graduate school.
Terminology

*Academic writing at the graduate level:* A complex and increased level of skill, which calls for new insights and a “diverse range of writing demands (article critiques, academic papers, grand writing)” (Lavelle & Bushrow, 2007, p. 807).

*American Psychological Association (APA) Writing Guideline:* Style guidelines for formatting and crediting sources set forth through the APA manual (Sallee, Hallett & Tierney).

*English Language Learner:* A person “attending school in the United States who come from a home where a language other than English is spoken” (CDE, 2009, p. 125).

*Non English-speaking backgrounds and cultures (NESBC):* Students with a background from a non-English speaking culture who may have structural and linguistic difficulties writing in English for an academic audience (Blicblau, McManus & Prince, 2009).

*Peer mentoring:* Members function as a support system for each other, providing both academic and social support. Members help one another acquire the discourse and social skills necessary for their particular discipline (Hadjioannou et al., 2007).

*Reading comprehension:* The ability of a reader to efficiently integrate “previously acquired knowledge with information provided in a text” (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2002, p.879).

*Reading thoroughly:* Reading a text word for word to gain knowledge and insight (McMinn et al., 2009).

*Skimming:* A professional survival skill with which a student does not read a text word for word, but gains knowledge and insight (McMinn et al., 2009).
Successful academician: “A challenging endeavor that typically includes reading, understanding and articulating theory and research, writing on a mature academic level, [and] conducting rigorous research” in higher education (Hadjioannou et al., 2007, p. 174).

Writing proficiency: The ability to 1) use proper basic elements of writing including grammar and syntax, 2) recognize writing errors, and 3) use the proper meaning of language (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009).

Writing workshop: Distribution of student work (in a small or large group) to be read aloud, assessed and discussed in a respectful atmosphere to improve one another’s work (Rose & McClafferty, 2001).

Preview of Thesis

The following chapter (Chapter Two) will review relevant literature organized into seven sections. These literature topics include: the challenges of becoming a graduate student; reading and reading comprehension in graduate school; writing proficiency and writing approaches in graduate school; the writing process for students from NESBC; and current graduate level writing courses. In Chapter Three, the methodology of the class will be discussed, including the overall class demographics as well as the subset group of the current study. The information regarding the specific content of the class and instruments used as data and for assessment are also included in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four will review the results of the students’ pre and posttest scores, improvements in understanding and paraphrasing research abstracts and personal
reflections about learning strategies over the course of the semester. Finally, Chapter Five will address findings, implications and suggestions for topics for future studies.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will discuss literature regarding graduate school students’ experiences and in particular their reading and writing ability. The chapter will begin by reviewing an article describing the transition to graduate school and the common challenges that graduate students face when they move from undergraduate to the demands of graduate education. The reading habits, techniques and reading comprehension skills of graduate students will also be examined. Next, the writing proficiency and writing approaches of graduate students will be discussed. The challenges that nonnative-English speakers face in academic writing will also be examined. The last part of the chapter will explore courses created at two universities designed to improve the writing proficiency of graduate students.

The Challenges of Becoming a Graduate Student and the Role of Peer Mentors

Using a self-examination research design, Hadjioannou, Shelton, Fu and Dhanarattigannon (2007) discuss two main topics: 1) the common challenges and struggles graduate students face, and 2) the function of peer mentoring and support groups in graduate school. Throughout the study, the authors’ focus is on doctoral students but acknowledge that the information discussed is inclusive of all graduate students, such as those in a master’s program (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). The authors sought to describe the overall experience of graduate students and wanted to shed light on the challenges these students face. Hadjioannou et al. (2007) also wanted to determine if
creating a mentor/support group would address and help to resolve the challenges faced by graduate students.

Sample

The sample consisted of five females, four graduate students enrolled in a doctoral program in education and one mentor professor at a large university in the United States in the fall of 2000 (N= 4 graduate students and 1 mentor professor). Two graduate students were characterized as mature, both previously having rich teaching careers in the United States. The two other graduate students were described as international students, one student from Thailand and the other from Cyprus. All four students were described to be struggling to balance career, family, academics and personal lives while trying to earn a living (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). The professor was described as having graduated from a small, intimate doctoral program and was assigned as a mentor for this group of doctoral students.

Instruments

Hadjioannou et al. (2007) gathered information through individual and group reflections (written and verbal), e-mail correspondence and personal observations. Each participant documented the feelings and experiences she had before and after the formation of the group. The five-member group held weekly self-regulated meetings, although the professor was not always in attendance. The meetings ranged from one to two hours long and were held at an off campus location. At the meetings the students shared their readings, writings, research and asked one another questions (Hadjioannou et al., 2007).
Results

Hadjioannou et al. (2007) found that some common challenges graduate students face consisted of: high academic demands, conflicts between various personal and academic responsibilities, and financial struggles. High academic demands included reading, writing, and discussing using a “more academically mature type of thinking that analyzes, synthesizes, judges, and creates fresh connections and ideas” (Hadjioannou et al., 2007, p. 161). Maintaining a balance between personal and academic responsibilities was viewed as a constant struggle for the student participants in the study, each having a family, career and school work that needed their attention and time. Financial obligations were also a hindrance for the students in this study. Three participants needed to work during graduate school in order to afford the tuition. The one participant who did not work explained that she and her husband were extremely anxious and stressed about family finances, indicating that finances were still a source of stress (Hadjioannou et al., 2007).

These various challenges were found to create high levels of stress, anxiety, and confusion for these graduate students. The graduate students also expressed feeling isolated and lonely during their academic experience before the formation of the group (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). On top of these challenges, the two international students expressed feelings of uncertainty, inadequacy, and frustration due to cultural differences, writing challenges and the lack of social support that was physically around them (Hadjioannou et al., 2007).

The professor initially formed the group for two reasons. First, she knew because of her demanding professional responsibilities she would be unable to give the sufficient
amount of attention and time the students needed on an individual basis. Second, the professor valued the small, self-formed community peer group she was a part of during her own graduate school experience (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). She attributed much of her success in graduate school to this group and wanted to create this type of support network for her own students.

Hadjioannou et al. (2007) found numerous benefits of the mentor group. Overall, the mentor group acted as a source of support and information. Students gained both academic support and emotional support through participation in the group. The students were able to help one another to deal with the stress, academic demands and struggles of balancing personal and professional responsibilities. Another benefit of the group was being able to empathize with one another, which created a sense of community and decreased the feeling of loneliness and isolation that is sometimes felt by graduate students (Hadjioannou et al., 2007).

Hadjioannou et al. (2007) expressed that another major benefit of the group was writing support. As previously stated, many graduate students struggle with academic writing and few graduate programs teach academic writing. The members of this group were no exception, especially the two international students. Writing support was an integral part of the group meetings; the students were able to read and discuss each other’s work and give suggestions for editing and revision. Group members were able to give and receive honest but respectful feedback, enabling them to improve their papers and become aware of recurring mistakes in their writing (Hadjioannou et al., 2007).

The professor was able to help the graduate students’ orientation and socialization into the professional community by guiding them to participate in professional
development opportunities outside of school. The professor also used her influence to connect her students to important professionals already working in the field (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). Through these experiences, the weekly meetings of the group and classes with one another, the group members became a small, close-knit community of writers and learners.

Hadjioannou et al. (2007) concluded that “student-led groups have the potential to become powerful social structures that provide a potent means of counterbalancing the academic challenges, the stress, and the overwhelming isolative atmosphere of most universities” (p. 174). However, Hadjioannou et al. (2007) also advise that mentor faculty members must be sensitive and understanding to the needs, challenges and struggles that graduate students have during their academic career.

**Reading in Graduate School**

McMinn, Tabor, Trihub, Dominguez and Taylor (2009) conducted a study investigating graduate students’ reading behaviors, particularly in clinical psychology doctoral students. McMinn et al. (2009) explained that reading in graduate school is essential, “both in providing students with foundational knowledge in the discipline and in helping students learn the methods of acquiring information to remain competent throughout their careers” (p.233). However, little research has focused on graduate student reading behaviors. The purpose of this study was to shed light on reading issues involved in graduate school and explore the overall reading behaviors of graduate students (McMinn et al., 2009).
Sample

A sample of 744 students (80% female) participated in the study, 67% were enrolled in PhD programs, 31% in PsyD programs, and 1% in EdD programs. All programs were APA-accredited and located in the United States. Participants were 82% European American, 6% Hispanic/Latino, 4% African American, 4% Asian American, 2% Native American, and 2% international non-American. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 60 years old, with the average age of 27 years. Twenty-eight percent of the sample were in their first year of graduate school, 24% were in their second year, 19% in their third year, 15% in their fourth year, 8% in their fifth year, and 5% in their sixth year or more (McMinn et al., 2009).

Procedure and Instruments

The researchers were able to contact training directors from 190 APA-accredited doctoral programs in clinical psychology through email. The email requested that the directors email their students a link to the study’s online questionnaire. A total number of 1,117 students visited the site, however only 744 completed the online questionnaire (67% completion rate). The online questionnaire gathered information about the participants’ demographics, the particular reading assignments in their academic programs and their personal reading habits (McMinn et al., 2009). The students were also asked to describe how much assigned reading they complete and the amount of time they spend reading each week. Participants used a Likert-type scale to rate what items motivated and hindered them from completing their reading assignments. At the end of the questionnaire the students were given the opportunity to provide qualitative feedback.
and go into further detail about a specific item or question on the survey (317 individuals provided this feedback) (McMinn et al., 2009).

Results

Results indicated that graduate students were assigned on average 330 pages of reading each week and students read about one half of the pages thoroughly. First-year students reported the highest amount of assigned reading (384 pages per week) and each year following there was a slight decrease in the number of pages assigned (second-year 340 pages, third-year 299 pages, fourth or more years 284 pages) (McMinn et al., 2009). McMinn et al. (2009) also found that amount of pages assigned, year in the program and amount of time students spent in their practicum placements had a significant negative impact on the percentage of reading done thoroughly (reading word for word). Students further along in graduate school reported reading less material thoroughly, skimming more and leaving more assignments unread compared to first-year students.

The age of the students was found to be a positive predictor related to the percentage of reading done thoroughly; younger students completed readings more thoroughly than older students. Also, participants who indicated that they enjoy reading for leisure were found slightly more likely to complete assigned readings thoroughly and less likely to leave assignments unread compared to those participants who indicated that they do not enjoy reading for leisure (McMinn et al., 2009). Through qualitative feedback, students expressed that they were more motivated to read assignments if they felt the assigned reading was important to their professional work, current and accurate and they had interest in the material. Students also reported being more motivated to read assignments if they were going to have to write a paper or take an exam on the material.
Participants explained that there were numerous obstacles that hindered them from completing all assigned reading, for example: other responsibilities (personal, professional or assignments in another class); if the reading assignment was repetitive; having no time; and fatigue/being mentally exhausted (McMinn et al., 2009). McMinn et al. (2009) found that some participants thought it was impossible to stay current with the assigned readings due to these previously stated obstacles.

Furthermore, the authors found that if the amount of reading is smaller, less repetitive and meaningful, more students will be motivated to complete the reading. McMinn et al. (2009) express “there is a small but significant relationship between the amount of reading and how much is read, with a greater amount of reading being related to a smaller percentage of reading being completed” (p.283). With that in mind, McMinn et al. (2009) recommend that professors create clear and reasonable expectations with regards to reading assignments in their classes. Professors can also communicate with one another to eliminate repetitive reading assignments and collaborate to create classes that assign readings that complement one another, which could have an overall positive impact to the particular graduate program. McMinn et al. (2009) express that a professor who creates a concise but powerful list of reading assignments shows the students the importance of reading and may result in a higher number of students thoroughly reading all of the assignments.

McMinn et al. (2009) underscore the importance of reading behaviors in graduate school for two reasons. Reading is a primary source of essential information and the habits in graduate school continue throughout one’s professional life. McMinn et al. (2009) explain how professors can directly help their students by making reading
essential and important. The study identifies that professors can motivate students by assigning papers and quizzes that accompany the reading materials.

McMinn et al. (2009) discuss that in addition to deeming reading essential, professors must also help students gain the reading skills needed to make them successful graduate students. In graduate school, skimming is a vital and crucial skill when the amount of reading is large and amount of time is small. McMinn et al. (2009) ask “why not offer this skill to students?” (p.238) through direct instruction. Professors can also guide students to the use of technology, such as audio books or podcasts that are increasingly available. With new technology, professors can find alternatives to their students only reading printed materials (McMinn et al., 2009).

Limitations

McMinn et al. (2009) list a few limitations of their study: 1) a precise response rate cannot be computed because the amount of directors who sent the survey invitation email is unknown; 2) the Likert-type scale used is a convenient rating scale, and compromised some precision; and 3) it is impossible to know if the reported behaviors are participants’ actual behaviors. McMinn et al. (2009) are aware that “people tend to over report their virtues and under report their shortcomings” (p. 238) and believe that this should be taken into consideration when viewing the study. The actual reading rates of the participants may be lower than reported, but there is no way of truly knowing.

McMinn et al. (2009) conclude their study by expressing the importance of reading current literature, in graduate school and beyond. McMinn et al. (2009) also suggest that further research and conversation on this topic is needed. Given the importance of reading, and the obstacles cited above, what is the level of comprehension
of graduate level material? The following article will focus on graduate students’ reading comprehension.

Graduate Students’ Reading Comprehension

According to Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2002) reading represents the most important skill in college and many students are often overwhelmed by the amount of reading they are assigned. The authors acknowledge that reading during the primary, secondary and even undergraduate levels has been a focus of many previous studies and research. In examining these previous studies Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2002) found that “students identified as good readers in early grades became better readers as they progressed through school with the converse being true of poor readers” (p.879) (known as the Matthew effect in reading), which shows the essential role and impact of initial reading levels on one’s later reading abilities.

Finding little research on the reading abilities of graduate students, Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2002) conducted a study examining the reading comprehension and reading vocabulary of graduate students. Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2002) theorized, “This inattention probably stems from the fact that educators, in general, assume that this group of students, who represent the upper echelon of academic achievers, have adequate reading skills” (p.880). Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2002) wanted to shed light on the area of graduate students’ reading abilities compared to undergraduate students.
Sample and Instruments

A sample of 59 graduate students, enrolled in three sections of an introductory educational research course at a southeastern university participated in the study (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2002). The Nelson-Denny Reading Test-Form G was administered to the graduate students. The test measures reading comprehension, reading vocabulary and reading rate, however reading rate scores were not utilized in the study (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2002). The Nelson-Denny Reading Test-Form G was used because of its widespread use over many years, its reliability and validity, and the large amount of normative data that is available regarding it (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2002).

Results

Results indicate that graduate students on average had higher scores on both the reading comprehension and reading vocabulary sections of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test-Form G than a normative sample of 5,000 undergraduate students from 38 institutions (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2002). Although this information may seem obvious, Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2002) noted that some graduate students had extremely low reading comprehension and vocabulary scores. These low scores were in the 14th and 24th percentile with respect to the normative undergraduate students’ scores.

Lack of reading skills in postsecondary education is a problem, this is even a greater problem in graduate school where reading is not routinely assessed, and these problems can go unidentified and undiagnosed. Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2002) state that “the reading skills of graduate students should not be taken for granted” (p.881) and one cannot assume every graduate student is able to read the amount and at the level that is expected of them in graduate school. Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2002) do not make
any inferences about what influences the reading abilities of graduate students, but suggest further research to find the factors that predict graduate students’ reading comprehension. The authors also suggest an examination on whether reading comprehension is actually a significant predictor of educational and academic success in graduate school.

Connecting reading with comprehension now seems to be a somewhat false assumption made for graduate students. This topic will be addressed in the current thesis when looking at the sample of first year graduate students. Next, the topic of writing will be explored.

**Writing Proficiency at a Graduate Level**

Singleton-Jackson and Lumsden (2009) conducted a study examining the writing proficiency of higher education graduate students. The authors argued that even though graduate school programs are writing-intensive, most graduate programs having no mandatory writing instruction courses, because it is assumed that graduate students should be writing at a higher level and proficiency. Graduate school professors may incorrectly assume that students who have completed a bachelor's degree program have had sufficient writing experience in undergraduate school to make them competent writers (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009). The purpose of their study was to explore this assumption by examining graduate students’ writing proficiency. Singleton-Jackson and Lumsden (2009) defined writing proficiency as a graduate student's ability to: “1) control basic elements of written English (e.g., grammar, word choice, syntax, 2) recognize writing errors in usage and structure, and 3) use language with sensitivity to meaning” (p. 5).
Sample

A sample of 97 graduate students (65.6% female) enrolled in at least one Higher Education course participated in this study. The participants qualified as a graduate student if they were either in a Masters in Higher Education program (29.8%) or a Doctorate in Higher Education program (70.1%). The sample was selected from seven different public universities in the United States. English was the first language of 91.7% of participants.

Procedure

Singleton-Jackson and Lumsden (2009) enlisted participants in two ways. First, they contacted professors at institutions of higher education and asked if they would be willing to recruit volunteers for this study. Seventy-three participants were recruited in this way and asked to fill out data collection materials administered by the recruiting professor, which were sent back to the researchers. Secondly, the other 24 participants responded to an email sent to them by graduate student coordinators or graduate student organizations requesting volunteers. These students received a packet of data collection material to fill out and mail back to the researchers, including a Statement of Honesty, which they were asked to sign. All of the participants were given three documents, one that explained the requirements of participation, one that instructed how to complete the instruments, and one that informed the student how to withdraw from the study at any time (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009). Each student was also offered a copy of the findings when the study was completed. The data collection materials were coded with a three-digit number for confidentiality.
Instruments

The SAT II: Writing Test, Part B was the instrumentation used in this study. The participants took the SAT II: Writing Test, Part B, which "is a timed, 60-item multiple-choice test developed by Educational Testing Services" (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009, p.16). The test was used to measure one’s ability to recognize usage and structure mistakes and one’s ability to use correct language meaning.

Students recruited by a professor were administered the test by the professor and the completed instruments were sent back to the primary researcher for analysis (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009). Students who were recruited through email administered the test for themselves and signed a Statement of Honesty, which stated that they took 60 minutes to complete the test. The students mailed their completed tests to the primary researcher as well.

Results

The researchers used parametric tests between Analyses and Variances and independent t-tests to evaluate group differences. Results indicated that the sample of graduate students did not score significantly higher on the SAT II: Writing Test, Part B than the population mean, which consisted of typical high school seniors whose scores fall into the norm group ($z=0.295$, $p<0.38$) (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009). Two significant differences were found through this study. A gender difference was found; females were found to have a higher average score than males. Also, participants who completed the data collection materials individually compared to a group with a professor proctoring, were also seen to have significantly higher scores.
Limitations

One limitation of the study is that a convenience sample was used. Around 25% of the sample population were volunteers and around 75% of the sample were recruited by graduate faculty members (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009). If the volunteers had a personal interest in writing this could in turn skew the results. Another limitation of the study is only using the SAT II: Writing Part B as the instrumentation. This particular test measures the technical aspects of writing, however the authors question whether technical aspects of writing are the same as actually using and generating technically and proficient quality writing (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009).

Singleton-Jackson and Lumsden (2009) concluded “that being a graduate student does not equate with writing proficiency adequate for graduate level study” (p. 33). One’s bachelor degree may not be enough to truly prepare one for the intensive writing required for the graduate program in which he/she is enrolled.

Overall Singleton-Jackson and Lumsden (2009) found that graduate students’ writing abilities were extremely similar to high school seniors with the possible mediator variable of gender with women scoring higher than men. These findings lead Singleton-Jackson and Lumsden (2009) to express that to help graduate students, more proactive measures should be set in place to help writing proficiency, such as required writing courses or workshops addressing writing issues that they may find in graduate school (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden, 2009). In turn, these interventions may actually help improve graduate school writing proficiency, ease the fear and stress some students have about writing and create an appreciation for writing and the field of higher education.
Further evidence to support the need for instituting courses to improve writing proficiency at the graduate level will be discussed in the next section. The following article will also examine the writing process of graduate students and highlight strategies professors can utilize to teach writing at the graduate level.

**Graduate Student Writing Approaches**

Lavelle and Brushrow (2007) conducted a two-part study examining the writing level, process, and writing approaches of graduate students: Study 1 examined the graduate writing process through an inventory survey given to the sample and Study 2 examined the graduate writing process through each student’s experience of producing a research paper. The authors explained that there are two basic approaches writers take: 1) a deep writing approach, which consists of making new and complex meanings or 2) surface writing approach, which consists of listing and ordering information (Lavelle & Brushrow, 2007). Writing at the graduate level creates high-level and complex demands on students. Graduate students are expected to be able to write a variety of texts (academic papers, literature reviews, article critiques) and be able to express and synthesize complex meaning through their writing. Lavelle and Brushrow (2007) state that “the goal of the study was to develop a writing process model based on the graduate students’ beliefs and strategies” (p.810) because little is known about what graduate students think or do when faced with academic writing challenges.
Sample (Phase 1)

A two-phase study was conducted to develop the authors’ desired model. The first phase consisted of a sample of 421 graduate students (73% female) who were enrolled in a required course for their master’s degree in education at a large Midwestern university. Forty-three percent reported they were aged 20-30, 29% were 31-40, 15% were 41-50 and 10% reported that they were over 50 years of age (Lavelle & Brushrow, 2007).

Instruments and Procedure (Phase 1)

The researchers used a 76 force-choice itemed survey as their instrument. The survey, called the Inventory of Graduate Writing Processes, was the combination of the Inventory of Processes in College Composition which consisted of five items: 1) elaborative, 2) low self-efficacy, 3) reflective revision, 4) spontaneous-impulsive, and 5) procedural and 11 questions from Torrance et al.’s (1994) questionnaire survey, which added more specific questions about graduate writing (Lavelle & Brushrow, 2007). The Inventory of Graduate Writing Processes was administered during regular schedule class time. The graduate students were read the directions aloud and asked to fill out a scantron sheet using a four-point Likert scale. The survey took about 13 minutes to complete and participation in the study was voluntary.
Results (Phase 1)

Based on the survey, results indicated the factors for a deep writing approach consisted of: having a personal investment in writing, being able to visualize his/her writing, having a well-formed plan of writing, and being able to create a rough draft to be refined later (Lavelle & Brushrow, 2007). Having low self-efficacy and low confidence in writing, not revisiting or revising work and adhering to rules of writing without giving oneself opportunity for self-expression were factors identified to hinder a deep writing approach.

Sample (Phase 2)

Phase two participants consisted of 58 graduate students (master’s level degree) studying educational psychology in a large Midwestern university. All 58 students were also part of the sample of Phase 1. The sample completed the Inventory of Graduate Writing Processes (comprised of the 67 items which were found to account for the 36% of variance in Phase 1 results) during regular class hours (Lavelle & Brushrow, 2007). Participants were also asked to answer three demographic questions as well. Overall, this survey took approximately 12 minutes to complete.

Instruments and Procedure (Phase 2)

The participants were also asked to produce an academic research paper on a topic of their choice relating to learning and teaching in the classroom. Students were given assignment objectives, a brief review of the paper components and functions of the paper. The instructor approved each participant’s topic before the writing process began. Papers were written over the course of the semester and instructors provided no feedback.
to students. Two raters were trained to use the rubric and an inter-rater reliability of $r=.87$ was established and considered acceptable (Lavelle & Brushrow, 2007).

**Results (Phase 2)**

The strategy of “intuitive” was found to be a predictor of the quality of academic writing in this study (Lavelle & Brushrow, 2007). Intuitive is described as a writer being “in touch with the pace and flow of writing on “another” level, or beyond the cognitive plane” (Lavelle & Brushrow, 2007, p. 816) and is not found in the undergraduate population. This finding indicates that it would be highly worthwhile for instructors and professors to acquaint students with the pace and flow of academic writing by providing models and sample texts.

A few other implications are provided in the discussion of the study. Lavelle and Brushrow (2007) suggest that graduate students should become familiar with the role of voice and audience in academic writing. It is also important that graduate students revisit and revise their drafts. Lavelle and Brushrow (2007) explained that most graduate students in the sample were “teaching or working full-time, often also raising children, and forced to deal with the complexities of young-mid adult life in an increasingly complex society” (p. 817). However, according to the authors this does not excuse graduate students from revising and editing their academic work.

**Limitations**

Lavelle and Brushrow (2007) acknowledge that their study is only a first step in uncovering and understanding the process of graduate students’ writing. The study’s sample was limited to only master’s degree students from one university. The authors suggest that future research could include a larger and more diverse sample. For
example, using multiple methods, case studies and interviews could produce more information and data about this topic.

Lavelle and Brushrow (2007) conclude that far too often professors assume that graduate students are familiar with academic writing and the academic genre when this is not always the case. Lavelle and Brushrow (2007) state the “idea of providing a graduate writing course may by valid, or at least including writing instruction within the context domain at the graduate level” (p. 817). The authors also suggest that providing peer review opportunities will enhance their academic writing.

Thus far, each article reviewed has only touched on English Language Learners and their specific writing process, needs, challenges and abilities. The following article will examine the experience of two graduate students from non English-speaking backgrounds and cultures (NESBC) who are expected to write academic papers about their postgraduate research.

### The Writing Process of Graduate Students From NESBC

Academic writing in graduate school for a native-English speaker can be an overwhelming and anxiety producing experience. Students from non English-speaking backgrounds and cultures (NESBC) can be especially challenged when attempting to write at a graduate academic level. According to Blicblau, McManus and Prince (2009) some of the challenges they face are: being unfamiliar with academic English language; having little or no experience writing for an academic audience; being unable to identify academic requirements; having difficulties adjusting to expectations; and having difficulties understanding the structure/context of academic writing.
Sample

Blicblau et al. (2009) conducted a study examining the process of two postgraduate supervisors mentoring two NESBC postgraduate students to write, edit, restructure and reorganize their conference papers (CP), research articles (RA) and theses. The researchers collaborated to provide assistance clarifying the academic research writing process for the two NESBC students. The study took place at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia. The participants consisted of two academic supervisors (SV1 and SV2), two NESBC postgraduate students (PG1 and PG2), and one language and academic skills supervisor (AL). SV1 and SV2 both had backgrounds in engineering. The AL had a background in applied linguistics and previously had experience working with both students.

Instruments

Blicblau et al. (2009) used interviews with PG1 and PG2 to collect information on their revisions and entire writing processes. The interviews utilized the form of a “think-aloud”, which enables a “student to verbalize their internal thoughts while building an understanding of what they are writing and reading” (Blicblau et al., 2009, p.199). “Think-aloud” interviews were also recorded among SV1, SV2 and AL. These interviews captured the reasoning behind the changes and suggestions that SV1 and SV2 made to PG1’s and PG2’s academic papers.

Blicblau et al. (2009) aspired to provide meaningful mentoring interactions between each supervisor and graduate student. Each graduate student had their supervisor and AL review drafts of their academic writing. If an area of the paper was unclear, they would then sit together and discuss the area in question. Supervisors would
guide student writing with questions and less through formal, explicit instruction (Blicblau et al., 2009).

**Results**

Through the meaningful, sensitive mentoring interactions between supervisors and graduate students, the NESBC postgraduate students were able to successfully complete and publish major research articles. Throughout this process, the supervisors were aware that this was both a teaching and learning process for their graduate students. Giving NESBC students the role of active learner and researcher enhanced their students’ academic skills and experience for future academic writing and reading (Blicblau et al., 2009).

The major findings of this article include: 1) an enormous amount of support is needed to help NESBC students; 2) creating an environment of respect where students are able to experiment with writing is necessary; and 3) mentors should create interactions where NESBC students are active learners and researchers. Successful academic mentoring is defined as “providing new research students with the opportunity of becoming active learners through writing in the genres, and being sensitive to the cultural assumptions NESBC students may bring to writing in an academic framework” (Blicblau et al., 2009, p. 199). The authors suggested that there should be a balance between giving support and letting the student be the active learner and researcher of their work (Blicblau et al., 2009).

The following two articles examine two different graduate level courses created and implemented to improve writing proficiently of graduate students at two separate
universities. The overall class structure, goals, outcomes, implications and limitations will be discussed in detail for each of the graduate level writing courses.

**Anatomy of Graduate Level Writing Courses**

**A Focus on Writing in a Graduate Qualitative Research Class**

Sallee, Hallett, and Tierney (2011) stated that if graduate school programs “expect students to master the content of courses, they should also be expected to demonstrate proficiency at expressing their ideas in writing” (p. 67). However, graduate students’ writing abilities and competencies differ dramatically and seeing the need for graduate writing support, Sallee et al. (2011) established a class in the fall of 2007 incorporating writing into a course on qualitative research. Adding a new and separate writing class was not a realistic option for this graduate program, therefore, the researchers explained that “given the focus of qualitative research on writing, this course provided a natural way to introduce writing into the curriculum” (Sallee et al., 2011, p.67).

The overall purpose of the class was to expose students to research/data collection while shedding light on the writing process. Five specific goals of the class were to: 1) make research/writing more manageable by dividing the research process into smaller sections, 2) encourage students to support each other, 3) focus on any aspects of writing for which students needed more support and direction, 4) model the writing process, and 5) invest in the students by spending the time/effort to the give appropriate feedback and support (Sallee et al., 2011). Some of the areas addressed in the class were punctuation, American Psychological Association (APA) style guidelines, and chunking the research process into more manageable pieces (Sallee et al., 2011).
Sample

The initial course was taught by a professor and two teaching assistants to a group of Student Affairs master’s students at one research university. The professor and the two teaching assistants equally shared the course responsibilities. Students were informed they would be able to seek out assistance from any of the three instructors with whom they felt most comfortable or could choose to interact with all three (Sallee et al., 2011). A semester-long research project was the central focus of the class. The course required three papers: the first paper focused on participant observation, the second paper focused on analysis of data gathered through an interview, and the third paper focused on data collection by all group members. The three papers were then combined to form a complete research paper (Sallee et al., 2011).

Structure of Course

Throughout the semester, the students collected data, analyzed data, wrote and received feedback and support from the professor and teaching assistants. Utilizing the Comment function in Microsoft Word, two instructors were able read each of the students’ papers and made an average of 30 comments per five pages of writing (Sallee et al., 2011). Instructors stressed that the feedback that students were given should be revisited before continuing the writing process. The instructors spent a significant amount of time and effort reviewing their students’ papers in hopes that their students would use the feedback and suggestions to improve their future papers and overall writing abilities (Sallee et al., 2011).

The class was taught in various forms over the next three years. One variation of the course was taught to encourage but not demand students to turn in rough drafts of
their papers for feedback. Many students declined to take advantage of this offer, but those who did showed significant improvement from their first rough draft to their final paper. Throughout the semester, students were also able to meet with instructors outside of class in a one-on-one setting to address individual questions or needs. Optional workshops addressing areas such as APA and grammar were also created for the students to attend and acquire knowledge (Sallee et al., 2011).

**Results**

Sallee et al. (2011) explain that instructors find that their “students’ writing competencies differ dramatically” (p. 67); some students are able to submit well-written papers and others submit papers with numerous errors. The authors argued that even the best writers can benefit from the additional practice taking place in a graduate level writing course.

Sallee et al. (2011) having now taught this class several times, offer three main ideas. First, having a professor who is committed to improving his/her students’ writing abilities is extremely important to the class. Without a strong, committed, and supportive professor the class would not be effective. Second, offering a writing class, such as this one identified in the study, early in one’s graduate studies could prove most effective. The researchers explain that many students suggested that this course would have been more helpful during their first semester of graduate school. Finally, incorporating writing instruction into a class about qualitative research was beneficial, and the authors suggest that adding a similar focus of writing into any graduate level course would provide students with the support and guidance they need to become more proficient graduate level writers (Sallee et al., 2011).
Limitations

A limitation to creating a similar course could be the availability of graduate assistants to help with course responsibilities. Not all universities incorporate graduate assistants into teaching and only have one professor teaching each course. Having multiple instructors gives a variety of points of view for feedback, and each instructor has his/her own strengths to add to the overall course. Having only one instructor reading and reviewing student work has a direct increase on the amount of time the instructor needs to invest in providing feedback, because the amount of time is no longer divided equally among multiple instructors (Sallee et al., 2011).

The study did not measure or assess if students used the feedback they were given in their future writing assignments, but this would be a possible avenue to examine in future research. The final article will review a professional writing class that was developed and implemented based on the need of graduate students.

A Professional Writing Class at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Rose and McClafferty (2001) discussed the academic writing class for graduate students that Rose began in 1996. The course was originally designed to help overcome some of the challenges faced by graduate students and was part of the Social Research Methodology Division of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA. These included: students being new to the field and new to writing about that particular field; students who were unfamiliar with discussing and organizing data/information; students with anxiety about writing; and students who are unsure about the rules of grammar. Another challenge, found among students who were not native English speakers, was their fear of writing in English.
Since its creation in 1996, several faculty members in addition to Rose have
taught the professional writing class, however each time it is taught the structure
remained the same (class structure will be explained in the next section). The demand for
the class was consistent each year it was offered and often extra sections were opened to
accommodate all the students who registered for the professional writing class. The class
was open to all students in graduate school, first-year students through those writing their
dissertation (Rose & McClafferty, 2001).

Structure of Class

The class was set up as a writing workshop, where the students’ writing was the
central text. There were a few assignments in the class, but most assignments were ones
that students were working on in other classes. Rose and McClafferty (2001) described
the atmosphere as “rigorous and considerate” (p.28). The professors created an
environment that was respectful and safe, where students were able to share, critique and
edit one another’s writing samples.

Through written student evaluations and comments of the class, Rose and
McClafferty (2001) identified six themes consisting of: “the interrelation of formal and
rhetorical elements of writing; writing as craftwork; writing as a method of inquiry;
audience; becoming a critic; and writing and identity” (p.28) (see Table 2.1). The topics
at hand were interconnected and were discussed throughout the academic quarter.
Working on basic writing skills (such as grammar and syntax), structuring and
organizing, and writing to a specific audience were all addressed during the class time.
Student discussion and questions led the professor to take the class in the direction that
the students needed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Thematic Strand</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Interrelation of Formal and Rhetorical Elements of Writing</td>
<td>The idea that the topics of grammar, style, logic and voice are all interconnected. A discussion about one topic can lead the group to discuss about another topic, for example “from an attempt to revise an awkward sentence comes a question that reveals confusion over a paper’s key concept” (p. 28).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing as a Craftwork</td>
<td>Students gain the understanding that writing is something you can work on, for example moving parts of the sentence around to make the message clearer for the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing as a Method of Inquiry</td>
<td>Writing can be a vehicle to help one think through a problem. “Writing becomes a means to articulate thought and test it” (p. 29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>When a student becomes aware of who his/her audience is and tries to “communicate his or her ideas more clearly and with less jargon” (p. 30) for the particular audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a Critic</td>
<td>Students become more confident in their own writing and therefore become “co-instructors” (p. 30) giving advice and guidance to other students about their writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and Identity</td>
<td>Graduate students begin to form their scholarly identity “through their choices about what they research, whose work they cite, and how they communicate their own ideas” (p. 30).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Rose and McClafferty (2001) explained that the class was initially difficult to establish because of the need for funding, finding the right educators who were passionate about teaching writing, and getting faculty approval for the course. However, this class has demonstrated staying power and the demand for the class is continually seen each academic quarter it is offered. Many students register for this course more than once, which gives them additional writing experience and the support that they need.

“Writing, really thinking about writing and practicing its craft, demands a slowing down, a deliberation, and students – we all need a place in our professional lives for that” (Rose & McClafferty, 2001, p. 32), and this place at UCLA is the professional writing class. This course has also provoked other professors and faculty to become aware of the complexity of graduate students and their writing struggles and abilities.

Limitations

The students in the course are extremely diverse, many students coming from different areas of study (Rose & McClafferty, 2001). Expert knowledge is required in academic writing and most peers in the course would not be able to give the necessary feedback to a classmate in another area of study. Each student in this diverse population brings with her/him multiple varied expectations. Meeting everyone’s needs and desires can be difficult and not always possible to accomplish.

An additional weakness of this course is that the class focuses on three to five pages of a student’s writing at one time, which could possibly take away from the overall continuity of a student’s work. Rose and McClafferty (2001) explained that UCLA classes run on an academic quarter system (10 weeks in length total) and the quarter goes
by too quickly to accomplish all of the students’ writing goals. Course instructors encourage the creation of writing groups that go beyond the academic quarter and to take the course again, but the instructor does not have the ultimate control over either of these outcomes.

This chapter discussed the literature regarding graduate school students’ experiences, as well as their reading and writing abilities. The following chapter will introduce methods of the current study including the sample population, the procedures and instruments of the study. In addition the overall content of the class will be discussed.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Recognizing the increasing need to support first semester students’ reading and writing skills (see Table 1.1 for rates of decline in successful achievement in the entry class EPC 632: Issues, Theories, and Current Practices in Early Childhood) a hybrid class, EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years was developed. This course was implemented to address some of the most pressing needs, such as reading comprehension and APA style writing. In addition to assignments and class activities to support improved reading and writing, the developmental progression of the students was noted both in a pretest and posttest comparison as well as through scores of assignments over time. Teaching Assistant (TA) journals and students’ grades were also used as data sources.

Sample

The sample population consisted of 23 female graduate students, working on a Master’s Degree in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education, who were enrolled in the re-conceptualized EPC 634 course. The 23 students were randomly divided into two groups. Approximately half of the class (12 students) was assigned to Group 1 with the TA Danielle Hartwig and the other 11 students were assigned to Group 2 with the TA Aura Perez. Although 12 students were assigned to Group 1, for the purpose of this study the main focus will be the eight students who were in their first semester of graduate school (4 students were in their second semester or higher of graduate school).
The following section will describe the sample population (N=23), and will include information about students’: ethnicities, ages, home languages, undergraduate grade point averages, semesters in graduate school and their current work settings. The entire sample is described to highlight the diverse population of graduate students enrolled in EPC 634.

**Ethnicities, Ages and Home Languages**

Ethnicities of the participants consisted of 8 Latino/Hispanic, 6 White, non-Hispanic, 4 African American, 4 students who considered themselves multi-ethnic and 1 Armenian (see Table 3.1). The ages of the graduate students included 10 aged 21-25 years, 4 aged 26-29 years, 3 aged 30-33 years, 1 aged 34-37 years, 1 aged 38-41 and 4 aged 50-54 years (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.1. Ethnicities of students enrolled in EPC 634 fall 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-ethnic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2. Ages of students enrolled in EPC 634 fall 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, 30% (7 students) of the sample population identified themselves as learning English as a second language. Spanish was the primary language used during childhood for 6 students, while 1 student spoke Armenian growing up. Twelve students identified that the primary language spoken in their home growing up was English only. Two students spoke both English and Spanish growing up and 2 students were trilingual (English, Spanish and a third unidentified language) (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Primary language growing up of students in EPC 634 fall 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Language Growing up</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish only</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English &amp; Spanish</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English, Spanish &amp; a 3rd language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Undergraduate Grade Point Averages and Semesters in Graduate School

The undergraduate grade point averages for the sample population varied considerably: 3 students earned a 3.8-4.0 GPA, 7 students earned a 3.5-3.7 GPA, 5 students earned a 3.2-3.5 GPA, 5 students earned a 2.9-3.1 GPA, 2 students earned less than 2.9 GPA, and 1 student’s GPA was unknown (see Table 3.4). The sample consisted of 16 students in their first semester, 3 students in their second semester, 2 students in their third semester and 2 students in their fourth semester of graduate school (see Figure 3.1).

Table 3.4. Undergraduate grade point averages of students in EPC 634 fall 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cumulative Grade Point Average</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.8-4.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5-3.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2-3.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9-3.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Number of semesters in graduate school for EPC 634 fall 2012 students
Work Settings

During the semester of this research, 10 students were working in a preschool setting full time, 4 students were working in an educational setting part time, 2 students were teaching full time in a kindergarten-3rd grade setting, 1 student was a family care provider, 1 student was working with children with special needs, 3 students were working full time in a job unrelated to education, and 2 students were unemployed (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5. Work settings of EPC 634 fall 2012 students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Employment</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool (full time)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Setting/working with children (part time)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Full time (Unrelated to Education)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-3 (full time)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Care Provider</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with children with special needs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Planning Process

Spring 2012: Seeding the Idea of Change

Though the new course would not be implemented until fall 2012, the planning process to re-conceptualize the EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years class began in the spring 2012 semester and was discussed in tandem with the core required class, EPC 632: Issues, Theories, and Current Practices in Early Childhood. The following section will describe the chronology of events that occurred in sequence.

With funding from the Judge Julian Beck Learning-Centered Instructional Project Grant, Dr. Rothstein-Fisch was able to assemble a team of five advanced graduate students to help re-conceptualize the class, EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years in the 2012 spring semester. The graduate students were all females ranging in age from 25 to 27 years. Four identified themselves as European American and one identified herself as Latina. The team was asked to align and create relevancy and connections between the EPC 634 and another class EPC 632: Issues, Theories, and Current Practices in Early Childhood that many first semester students would be taking simultaneously.

This group of graduate students had previously taken EPC 632, received an A in the class, and was familiar with the assignments, readings and materials incorporated in the class. Dr. Rothstein-Fisch would be the professor teaching both of the classes, both on Tuesday evenings (EPC 632 from 4:00-7:00pm and EPC 634 from 7:00-10:00pm). The graduate students discussed and determined which course each of them were
interested in supporting as a TA, yielding the current researcher and one other student working in EPC 634 and the other three in EPC 632.

The six-member group (the professor and five graduate students) met twice during the 2012 spring semester, approximately five months before the course would begin. During the second meeting each of the five TAs was assigned the task of finding research on graduate level writing abilities, the graduate school experience and what has been implemented to help graduate students succeed. They shared their research findings through email to ensure they were not reading the same articles.

The group also met to share the articles they read and further discuss their findings, several of which were discussed in Chapter Two. After discussing the research, the idea of a New Student Orientation was discussed. The group determined that a New Student Orientation would be very helpful to set the tone and ease the transition to graduate school. The orientation was planned for June 30, 2012 on CSUN’s campus.

**Summer 2012: New Student Orientation**

The New Student Orientation was designed as a mix of social and academic activities. The students were able to meet the new members of their cohort, as well as their TAs and professors through a variety of icebreakers. The students were informed of program information, such as fieldwork responsibilities, scheduling, and class expectations. Students were able to ask questions and voice any concerns before the fall 2012 semester began. Students were also encouraged to attend the Back-to-School brunch before their first class.
Summer Meetings

During the summer group meetings, the group of teaching assistants invented assignments, piloted assignments to see how they worked and discussed concerns about the workloads and the scheduling of assignments. Proposed assignments were field-tested by at least one TA and subsequently brought back to the group for feedback. Assignments that were deemed too vague, too difficult/easy, or would overload the students were discarded. The group created and revised the materials for both classes, which included the syllabi, calendars and assignment materials. Numerous drafts of the class materials were sent through email, with each member of the group providing feedback until everyone was in agreement and satisfied with the final product. Because this was an experimental, first attempt at the “new” EPC 634 with additional goals, acknowledging that this class was a work in progress had to be disclosed to the students, both verbally and in writing. Therefore, the class calendar states in writing that the “schedule may be subject to change as deemed necessary by the professor” and students were also verbally introduced to the course as being a pilot class. The final version of the class syllabus can be found in Appendix A and the class calendar can be found in Appendix B.

The planning group also discussed the annual Back-to-School Brunch for M.A. in Early Childhood Education Students in great length. Each team member talked about her past experiences at the event and suggested improvements for the 2012 gathering. The Back-to-School Brunch was scheduled for August 26, 2012 a few days before the first class of the semester.
**Back-to-School Brunch**

During the annual Back-to-School Brunch, which is held at one of the professor’s homes, new students were given the opportunity to socialize with other new students entering the program as well as current students and alumna. The students met together in both large group and small groups. In the large group the students were able to formally introduce themselves to one another. At this time the professors and TAs were also able to discuss any program changes since the summer orientation and offer any other new or helpful information. The students were then divided into cohorts and met with a professor able to discuss materials vital to their upcoming year in the program.

**Fall Semester**

The class began in the fall semester, on August 28, 2012. The students in EPC 634 were randomly divided into two groups and were either assigned Danielle Hartwig or Aura Perez as their TA for the semester. The class continued until the end of the semester and the final class met on December 11, 2012. The entire planning process is summarized in Table 3.6.
Table 3.6. Chronology of planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Steps of Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Spring 2012  | - Selection of teaching assistants  
- Team building  
- Research (topics included: graduate level writing abilities, the graduate school experience and what has been implemented to help graduate students succeed)  
- Planning to support students and collaborating on potential assignments. |
| Summer 2012  | - Discussed research.  
- Developed, implemented and evaluation of a first time New Student Orientation.  
- Back-to-School Brunch, which is a standing tradition on the weekend before school begins, takes place (TAs help to set agenda and provide support).  
- TAs select the class they would like to help with over the fall 2012 semester.  
- Assignments were finalized.  
- Class materials are edited and finalized.  
-Human Subjects Protocol Submitted |
| Fall 2012    | - Class begins (August 28, 2012).  
- Students are randomly divided between the two teaching assistants (Danielle Hartwig and Aura Perez).  
- Class ends (December 11, 2012). |
| Spring 2013  | -TA and professor evaluation of the course  
-Analysis of outcomes |
Content of the Course

There were four main components central to the content of the course: 1) California’s Early Learning and Development System with particular emphasis on language and cognition, 2) metacognitive skills, 3) reading comprehension, and 4) writing. Each of the four components will be further discussed in the following section.

Content Knowledge: Children’s Development of Language and Cognition

As previously mentioned, the content knowledge of the course drew heavily on the California Early Learning and Development System. This included the California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations, which describes “the competencies infants and toddlers typically attain during birth-to-three-year period” (CDE, 2009, ix). The course focused on the cognitive, language and social/emotional developmental domains of infants and toddlers through the information found in the California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations. The students were also shown a video titled California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations, which enabled the students to see children in action. A large group discussion about infant and toddler language and cognitive development followed the video.

The California Preschool Learning Foundations Volumes 1 and 2 were also used as a source of content information. The domains of language/literacy, English-language development (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and mathematics were highlighted topics. The Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning was introduced to the students as a wealth of information about children who are English language learners and how to support these students and their
families (CDE, 2009). The class also touched on the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework Volumes 1 and 2*, the Early Childhood Educator Competencies, and the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP).

**Metacognitive Skills**

Another consideration of the class was metacognitive skills, which enabled students to become aware of their strengths and areas that need further development. Students were assigned two small (approximately 3-5 pages) reflective papers. The first assignment was the Strengths Finder paper (see Appendix C). Students were asked to take an online survey ([http://www.viame.org/survey](http://www.viame.org/survey)), which identified their top character strengths (VIA Me, 2011). The students were assigned to write a paper reflecting on their top 3-5 character strengths and how these strengths could help them be successful in graduate school. Students discussed their Strengths Finder papers in a small group with their assigned TA. A few examples of characters strengths that were identified were: appreciation of beauty and excellence, curiosity, love of learning, and forgiveness.

The second assignment was the Metacognitive Strength paper (see Appendix D). Students were provided with the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI), which consisted of 52 true/false questions, and the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory Scoring Guide (Schraw & Dennison, 1994). After scoring their MAI and identifying their strengths, the students were asked to write a paper reflecting on their top strengths and how these strengths can help them in graduate school. The students were also asked to reflect on what areas on which they feel they need to work and how they intend to accomplish this growth.
Reading Comprehension

The course also included approaches and recommendations to reading graduate level material (e.g., research articles) through class discussion and explicit instruction. In one instance, students were asked to read a small section from the Mathematic Foundations (*California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volumes 1*) and mark it up for key points or questions. Working in small groups the students discussed what they thought was salient and why. The professor and TAs observed a variety of reading skills in action.

Key vocabulary related to language and literacy, English-language learners, and mathematics was emphasized for the students’ reading clarity and comprehension. The vocabulary words came directly from the *California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations*, the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Volume 1*, and the *Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning*. For the list of vocabulary words emphasized refer to Appendix E.

Approaches to reading graduate level materials were explicitly addressed through the Understanding Research Abstracts assignments, which scaffolded a deeper and intentional reading of professional journal abstracts. Students were explicitly shown how to read a complex sentence, clause by clause to decipher and decode to check for understanding and comprehension. Discussions on the use of headers and other organizational schemes found in professional writing were also offered to support students’ reading strategies.
The particular abstracts that were used for this assignment were selected from the *Early Childhood Education Quarterly*, a peer reviewed journal of empirical studies from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (see Appendix F). The studies contained new vocabulary that signaled how to understand new words such as “cardinality” and “juxtaposing” (Mixa, Sandhofer, Moore & Russell, 2012) and “response timing” and “explicit instruction” (Hong & Diamond, 2012). Students not only gained knowledge about how to read and understand an abstract, they were also introduced to current, scholarly information about their field.

**Writing**

Students were encouraged to take what they had learned from the Understanding Research Abstracts assignments and class discussion on organizational schemes found in academic writing throughout the semester and incorporate it into their writing. Students were expected to use headers, focus on one idea in each paragraph and use examples when introducing a new concept or vocabulary word to their audience.

Students received feedback on their writing, both suggestions to improve their writing and areas of strength. Students were given the option of handing in a rough draft of the two writing assignments and receiving feedback from their TA before the assignment was due. On final drafts, students received feedback from the TA and professor about their writing. Additional feedback came from one-on-one short meetings during class with the professor or TA. During brief meetings, most students were able to receive clarification on specific problems or writing challenges they were facing during the semester. Common errors students made and aspects of writing that a majority of the
class needed to practice were addressed through class discussion. Some topics included: word choice, redundancy, punctuation, and APA.

The topic of APA referencing, an important graduate level writing skill, was addressed through an APA workshop. The workshop consisted of a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation of 25 slides (see Appendix G) by Aura Perez (the second TA for EPC 634). The presentation touched on aspects of APA, such as writing style, grammar, in-text citations, paraphrasing and reference lists. The class held a lively discussion after the presentation, where many students were helping one another to find answers they had about APA.

Procedure

Human Subjects Protection

The appropriate documentation was submitted to the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in August 2012 (see Appendix H). The committee found the research exempt and no real risk was associated with the study. During the first class meeting, students enrolled in EPC 634 were explicitly informed about the research that was taking place as part of the class. Students were also informed that participating in the study was voluntary and at any time they could opt out of participating in the study by notifying any member of the research team (professor or TAs). Students were also told they had the option of completing the course as required in the syllabus, but having their data expunged from the research if they chose not to participate in the study.

Every student voluntarily chose to sign the Consent to Act as a Human Research Participant form and participated in both the class and the study (see Appendix I). The consent form explained the purpose of the study was to revise an existing class, EPC 634
and use it as a vehicle to improve graduate students’ reading and writing skills. It also explained that a variety of data sources would be collected as part of the course and also used for data as research in the study.

The consent form also informed the students about the confidentiality measures that would be put in place. These included: all identifiable information collected will be removed and replaced with a code; the codebook would be kept separate from research data; research data would be stored electronically on a secure computer with password protection; and only the researchers listed on the form will have access to the study’s information. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include any identifiable information about participants. Any identifiable information will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without separate consent from the individual participant.

**Communication Among the Teaching Assistants and Professor**

The three TAs assigned to EPC 632: Issues, Theories, and Current Practices in Early Childhood and the two TAs assigned to EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in Early School Years made it a goal to have open communication about the students in order to guide, help and maintain consistency between the two classes. This communication was also an opportunity for the TAs to help one another and discuss students shared in common. For example, if one TA had a helpful strategy with a particular student, she could pass along the technique to the other TA working with the same student. Communication about students was strictly confidential and only shared among the TAs and professor.
Data Sources

Beginning with the summer of 2012 through the end of the fall 2012 semester, several sources of data were collected for the study. Written assignments, quizzes, exams, and attendance were collected, processed and analyzed throughout the semester in order to keep track of each student’s progress in the class. In December 2012 students’ final grades in the course were calculated and submitted to the university. The process of reviewing, analyzing and organizing the data collected for the study began in January 2013.

As previously mentioned, the current sample used for this thesis is limited to those students in one TA’s group and also limited to only those students in their first semester of graduate school (n=8). Therefore, data sources collected and discussed will be from these eight first semester graduate students.

Instruments

Many instruments were used to collect data from the students regarding their learning process and the success of the course, however only 10 data sources will be examined for the purpose of this study. For a complete list of data sources collected in EPC 634 refer to Appendix J. The 10 instruments utilized for this study are listed in Table 3.7. The following section will briefly mention each instrument that was used to collect the data discussed in the research.
Table 3.7. Instruments used for data collection, with descriptions and dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPC 634 Intake Form</td>
<td>Student information, such as contact information and class schedule was collected.</td>
<td>8/28/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPC 634 Pretest</td>
<td>Exam – 12 questions focused on California’s Early Learning and Development System &amp; 13 questions asking students to assess their strengths (not scored for students’ grades).</td>
<td>8/28/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Research Abstracts Pretest</td>
<td>Designed to assess students’ knowledge of abstracts entering the class.</td>
<td>9/4/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Semester Feedback Form</td>
<td>Used to gather data from students about how they felt the class was going and how to improve the course.</td>
<td>10/9/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Research Abstracts Quiz # 2 (Posttest)</td>
<td>Used as a posttest to gather data about the knowledge the class had about abstracts after weeks of practicing reading journal abstract.</td>
<td>11/20/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA (6th Edition Manual) Pretest and Posttest (Perez, 2012)</td>
<td>Used to gather data about the knowledge of APA students had entering the class and knowledge they had after a presentation and discussion about it.</td>
<td>10/30/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Study (Ona, 2012)</td>
<td>Demographic information on students.</td>
<td>11/3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment</td>
<td>Students were asked 13 questions reflecting on how their habits/skills have changed from the beginning of the semester.</td>
<td>11/27/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPC 634 Posttest</td>
<td>Exam – 12 questions focused on California’s Early Learning and Development System</td>
<td>12/11/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA Journals</td>
<td>Teaching assistants wrote in a journal to document the process of developing and helping to instruct EPC 634.</td>
<td>5/2/12-12/11/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**EPC 634 intake form.** The EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years Intake Form (see Appendix K) was filled out by each student during the first class. An intake form is a standard form EPC students are asked to fill out at the beginning of each semester. The form gathers the information necessary to contact students and gain information about them. On this intake form, students were asked to provide their contact information, class schedule, and employment information. They were also asked to identify what they feel are their strengths and provide information about how they manage their study time.

**Mid-Semester feedback form.** Data was collected through a Mid-Semester Feedback Form (see Appendix L). The feedback form was worth no points and was a source of reflective information for the research. Students were asked what skills they would like to continue to work on and what suggestions they had for better supporting their learning.

**Demographic data.** Demographic data was obtained through a questionnaire administered by Ona (2012) as part of her Master’s Thesis that focused on learning challenges of graduate students. This questionnaire was part of Ona’s (2012) thesis, however it also provided demographic, education, and employment information about the students of EPC 634. It was collected as another data source with permission from the author.

**EPC 634 pretest.** The EPC 634 pretest incorporated 12 questions focusing directly on California’s Early Learning and Development System, including questions about the *California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations* and the *California Preschool Learning Foundations Volumes 1*. In addition, students were asked
to answer 13 questions assessing their own strengths, (both academically and professionally) note taking abilities, learning strategies, and current English vocabulary (see Appendix M). The additional questions also asked students to rate their listening, time management, writing, and study skills. The 13 reflective questions were not graded and were only used as qualitative data.

The first 12 questions of the pretest were evaluated with a rubric (see Appendix N). Each question was worth 3 points, with the exception of Question 11, which was worth 4 points. Spelling and clarity was worth 3 points, making the assignment worth a total of 40 points. The pretest was not scored for use in students’ final grades, however it was assessed by the professor to use as a data source to show a baseline of content knowledge of California’s Early Learning and Development System.

**EPC 634 posttest.** The posttest included the same 12 questions focusing on California’s Early Learning and Development System as the pretest (see Appendix O). Several weeks before the end of the semester, a handout with the exact 12 questions were given to the students as a template to prepare for the posttest.

The posttest was scored with the same rubric as the pretest. Each of the questions was potentially worth 3 points, with Question number 11 being worth a potential of 4 points and 3 points awarded for spelling and clarity. Partial credit was given if necessary. Students were also able to earn extra points on any questions where they exceeded the target information asked, and further demonstrated knowledge about the concept bringing their level of thinking to a higher depth. In other words, the students were demonstrating Lavelle and Brushrow’s (2007) deep writing approach that focused on making new and complex meanings. The posttest was worth 40 points.
Posttest take home reflective assignment. In addition to the in-class EPC 634 posttest, students were required to complete the Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment (see Appendix P) to work on at home as a qualitative reflective practice opportunity to review their learning during the semester. The Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment consisted of the same 13 questions on the second section of the EPC 634 Pretest, but also added an element of reflecting on how their habits/skills have changed from the beginning of the semester. The EPC 634 posttest and the Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignments provided opportunities for students to show what they have learned, reflect on the material discussed throughout the semester and discuss their current strategies/habits after their first semester of graduate school.

APA pretest and posttest. Students were administered an APA pretest designed by Aura Perez, with 14 multiple choice questions and 1 true/false question (for a total of 15 questions) that focused on topics such as headings, tone, direct quotations, and in-text citations. The APA pretest gathered data about the knowledge of APA students had coming into the class.

As previously mentioned, students attended a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation of 25 slides by Aura Perez. The presentation touched on aspects of APA, such as writing style, grammar, in-text citations, paraphrasing and reference lists. The APA Posttest was administered directly after the presentation and consisted of the same 15 questions that were on the APA pretest. Students’ posttest scores were analyzed to determine the knowledge students had after the presentation of APA. The scores of the APA pretest and posttest were not scored for use in students’ final grades; however they were used as
data in the study and a guide to inform the instructors of the areas of APA where students need continued help and support. For the APA pretest and posttest see Appendix Q.

**Understanding research abstracts assignments.** The Understanding Research Abstracts assignments were designed to give students practice interpreting the complex ideas found in the short overview of the research in a scholarly journal, a necessary skill for graduate school. An abstract pretest was administered to determine the baseline knowledge and scored with a rubric which consisted of: 5 points for paraphrasing correctly, 2 points for correct reference, 2 points for grammar and syntax, and 1 point for spelling. The pretest scores were not calculated into students’ final grades.

After the baseline was established, the professor provided a model of how to intentionally look at key words that might be difficult to understand (such as, cardinality of number) as well as how to read a complex sentence, clause by clause to decipher and decode and ultimately paraphrase to check for understanding before reading the next clause. Students practiced with three different research abstracts from the *Early Childhood Education Quarterly* with support from the instructors.

The Understanding Research Abstracts posttest was administered and scored using the same rubric as the pretest. However, the posttest score was used as a part of the students’ final grade for the course. The posttest provided information about the knowledge students had on APA referencing, paraphrasing, and writing mechanics (see Appendix R for abstract assignment materials).

**TA Journal.** The final data source was the TA journal, a reflective writing piece that was part of each of the TAs’ responsibilities as a TA for the class. Each week the two TAs in EPC 634 wrote down her experiences, thoughts, concerns and ideas about the
class. The journal entries included experiences with individual students, areas of success or concerns and suggestions they had for the future of EPC 634.

The following chapter will examine the results of the study. The chapter will focus on the entire group of eight students and also highlight the results of a few students individually.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of the modified EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years class was multifaceted. It was originally designed to provide specific content information on language and concept development. In this regard, the California Early Learning and Development System (CDE, 2008) was emphasized as a framework for understanding this content in language, dual language and math specifically for preschool age children and the California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations (CDE, 2009) were also used to address those themes related to language and cognition/problem solving. In addition the modified class built on strategies and activities to ease the transition to graduate school, specifically to improve reading and writing at the graduate level, and strengthen study skills for students’ success.

While data exists for the entire class (N=23 students), the two TAs divided the students into approximately half, a group of 12 students and a group of 11 students. The chapter would normally focus on the 12 students in the authors’ group. However, four of the students from the group were not first semester graduate students. Two students were taking the class in their second semester and two students were in their fourth semester of graduate school, therefore the sample of eight students (n=8) who were in their first year of graduate school are the focus of the data analysis presented in this chapter. Although there are numerous data sources as described in Chapter Three, only a subset of these will be utilized in the current study. The data sources highlighted in this chapter include: EPC
634 pretest and posttest, the Understanding Research Abstracts pretest and posttest, students’ final grades, and the author’s TA journal (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Data Sources Highlighted in Chapter Four

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPC 634 Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Research Abstracts Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Research Abstracts Quiz # 2 (Posttest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPC 634 Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Final Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA Journals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chapter will examine the data sources listed above for the sample of eight students in their first semester of graduate school. The first section will examine the results from three different sources: 1) the EPC 634 pretest and posttest scores, 2) scores from the Understanding Research Abstracts pretest and posttest, and 3) students’ final grades for the course. The concluding section will highlight a few students individually. For confidentiality, pseudonyms were given to the students discussed in further detail in this chapter.

**Results**

**EPC 634 Pretest and Posttest**

**Pretest.** The pretest consisted of 12 questions focusing directly on California’s Early Learning and Development System and targeted the themes of language and cognition (see Table 4.2 for topics addressed in each question). Students took the pretest during the first class session of the semester. They were instructed to identify the key, sweeping and most salient aspects for each topic in 5-7 bullet points as they relate to
language and cognition. The students were informed that the pretest was not point-bearing, but that it would be best to complete the pretest with sustained effort. Students had as much time as they needed to complete the pretest, which served as a baseline for the professor and TAs to determine what students knew about language, cognition and the California Early Learning and Development System. Many students left questions blank on the pretest; on average students left 5.5 questions unanswered out of the 12 questions.

The second section of the EPC 634 pretest asked students to answer 13 questions reflecting on their own strengths (both academically and professionally). Topics included: note-taking abilities, learning strategies, time management, current English vocabulary, and listening, writing, and study skills. The results of the reflective piece of the pretest will be further discussed in the Individual Case Narratives in this chapter.
Table 4.2. EPC 634 pretest and posttest question number and topic description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Topic of Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Key features of California’s Early Learning and Development System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>California Preschool Learning Foundations Volumes 1 Language and Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>California Preschool Learning Foundations Volumes 1 English Language Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>California Preschool Learning Foundations Volumes 1 Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>California Preschool Learning Foundations Volumes 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Children with Special Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Language, Culture and Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Key features of the California Preschool Curriculum Frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>California Early Childhood Education Competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pretest results.** The EPC 634 pretests were scored for the information they provided, and were not included in students’ final grades. The scoring rubric consisted of: Questions 1-10 and Question 12 were worth 3 points, Question 11 was worth 4 points and 3 points were awarded for spelling and clarity. Partial credit was given if necessary. Results indicated that students were most familiar with Question 2 (Infant/Toddler Foundations) (M=.875, 29.1%), Question 7 (Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2) (M=.688, 22.9%), and Question 8 (children with special needs) (M=.750, 25%).
Students seemed to be least familiar with the California Early Childhood Education Competencies (Question 11). Six out of 8 (75%) students left this question blank on the pretest, not attempting an answer, and those who did answer it did not do so correctly. Students also seemed to be unfamiliar with the key features of the Preschool Curriculum Frameworks (Question 10) as all eight of the students left this question blank on the pretest. Another unfamiliar item on the pretest was English language development (Question 5) with only one student providing a response, which earned partial credit (M=.125, 4.1%) (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. EPC 634 pretest and posttest average scores for each question

Posttest. The EPC posttest consisted of the same identical 12 questions as the pretest, which focused directly on California’s Early Learning and Development System and the integration of learning. The exact test was offered to them as a study guide weeks prior to the actual posttest and students were encouraged to work in study teams of their own choosing to prepare for the posttest.
Students were given the posttest at the end of the course and were again instructed to identify the key, sweeping and most salient aspects for each topic in 5-7 bullet points in relation to language and cognition. Students were given as much time as they needed within the three hour class period.

The posttest was scored with the same rubric as the pretest. Students were also able to earn extra points on any questions where they exceeded the target information asked, and further demonstrated knowledge about the concept bringing their level of thinking to a higher depth. Students were informed that the posttest exam would be worth 40 points towards their final grade in the class. Ultimately, every student attempted to answer each question on the entire exam, except for one student who left two questions unanswered.

In addition to the in-class EPC 634 posttest, students were required to complete a Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment to work on at home as a qualitative reflective practice opportunity to review their learning during the semester. The Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment consisted of the same 13 questions on the second section of the EPC 634 Pretest, but added an element of reflecting on how their habits/skills have changed from the beginning of the semester. The results of the Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment will be further discussed in the Individual Case Narratives in this chapter.

**Posttest results.** Scores dramatically improved from the pretest to the posttest. On the posttest, items that scored the highest points were Question 11 (California Early Childhood Education Competencies) (M=5, 125%), Question 4 (Preschool English Language Learners Guide) (M=3.875, 129%), and Question 7 (Preschool Learning
Foundations, Volume 2) (M=3.625, 120%). Items that earned the lowest scores on the posttest were Question 9 (language, culture, and diversity) (M=2.438, 81%) and Question 10 (key features of the Preschool Curriculum Frameworks) (M=2.75, 91%).

On average, students showed a dramatic improvement and exceeded expectations on the amount of knowledge they gained specifically with regard to the Preschool English Language Learners Guide and the California Early Childhood Education Competencies. The scores for these items increased significantly from the pretest to the posttest. Scores on Question 11 (California Early Childhood Education Competencies) increased an average of 5 points and scores on Question 4 (Preschool English Language Learners Guide) increased an average of 3.563 points from the pretest to the posttest. More information on the pretest and posttest results follows (see Figure 4.1).

**Pretest and posttest comparisons.** Figure 4.2 and Table 4.3 show the pretest and posttest scores for each student demonstrating that all students’ scores increased from the pretest to the posttest. The average pretest score was 5.56 out of a possible 40 points. The average posttest score was a 43 out of a possible 40 points with extra points given to answers demonstrating a higher level of thinking and depth yielding in some cases, scores well above 40 points. Between the pretest and posttest there was an average of 37.44 increase in students’ points or 94% increase in grade earned. Therefore a gain in content knowledge of California’s Early Learning and Development System was consistently seen for every student. However, this ranged from an increase of 46.5 points to a low of only 18 points.
Figure 4.2. Student’s EPC 634 pretest and posttest scores

![Bar chart showing pretest and posttest scores for 8 students]

Table 4.3. Students’ EPC 634 pretest and posttest scores in a table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Gain Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>46.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>41.5</td>
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<td>46.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>45.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>37.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding Research Abstracts Assignments

The Understanding Research Abstracts assignments were designed to give students practice interpreting the complex ideas found in the short, concise overview of the research in a scholarly journal, a necessary skill for graduate school. The assignment consisted of three abstract quizzes (a pretest, quiz 1, and a posttest quiz). There was also
a practice/discussion abstract deconstruction during one class period in preparation for quiz 1. The Understanding Research Abstracts pretest and posttest scores will be discussed in this section to show the range between the initial pretest (baseline) and the final posttest quiz (see Table 4.4 and Figure 4.3). The abstracts were drawn from recent issues of *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* to control for level of scholarship in a peer-reviewed national journal. The scoring rubric consisted of: 5 points for a clear and concise tell-back of each sentence, 2 points for correct grammar, 2 points for the correct APA reference, and 1 point for spelling (a total of 10 points).

**Understanding research abstracts pretest and posttest results.** The average score on the pretest was a 5.88 (59%) out of a total of 10 maximum points and the average score on the posttest was a 9.13 (91%) out of 10 points (see Table 4.4 and Figure 4.3). On average students gained 3.25 points from the pretest to the posttest. The greatest number of points gained from the pretest to the posttest was Student 5 who gained a total of 5.50 points, however Student 8 only gained 1 point from the pretest to the posttest. It can be presumed that students gained knowledge in the area of understanding abstracts because each of the students gained points from the pretest to the posttest assessing their knowledge about scholarly research journal abstracts.
Table 4.4. Abstract pretest and posttest scores and gain scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Abstract Pretest</th>
<th>Abstract Posttest</th>
<th>Gain Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>9.25</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>9.13</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3. Abstract pretest and posttest scores
Final Grades

All eight students earned a grade of A for the course. The total number of possible points for the class was 100. Students 5 and 7 earned 94 points (94%), Students 2 and 3 earned 95 points (95%), and Students 1, 4, 6 and 8 earned 100 points (100%). It should be noted that many reasons exist which may have contributed to such unanimous success. These will be uncovered through some of the narrative cases below and speculated about more in Chapter Five.

Individual Case Narratives

The following section will highlight four individuals out of the sample of eight students. These students were selected for different reasons. Balancing personal and academic responsibilities was seen has an enormous challenge for graduate students as discussed in the reviewed literature; and so Samantha (Student 5) was selected because of her excessive personal responsibilities at home, including being the mother of two children (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). Kate (Student 1) was selected because of the large course load (a total of four classes) she was taking during her first semester of graduate school. It is generally recommended to enroll in only two classes per semester.

Wendy (Student 3) was selected because she had the highest EPC 634 pretest score, meaning she had the most prior knowledge of the California Early Learning System. The last student highlighted, Jennifer (Student 7), was selected because her undergraduate GPA was the lowest out of the sample. Jennifer was also selected because English is her second language; she grew up in a home speaking only Spanish until she was approximately 10 years old and may have had different challenges throughout the semester than other students whose first language is English.
Samantha’s Story

Samantha (Student 5) is a full-time preschool teacher in her early 50’s who describes herself as European America. Samantha is a mother of two and was enrolled in a total of three EPC core classes in the 2012 fall semester. Her grade point average as an undergraduate was in the range of 3.5-3.7.

EPC 634 pretest. Samantha’s EPC 634 pretest revealed that she was among those who had the least amount of knowledge of language and cognition in young children as evidenced by her score on the pretest of .5 (the lowest score out of the entire group) and leaving 6 questions blank. On the reflective piece of the EPC 634 pretest, Samantha expressed that it takes her a longer time to study and retain information than the average student and she wanted to focus on editing and articulating information in her writing.

Abstract pretest. Samantha’s Understanding Research Abstracts pretest score was a 4 (the lowest score out of the entire group) out of 10 points. Her score was 1.88 points below the average (M=5.88). From her pretest scores (EPC 634 pretest and Understanding Research Abstracts pretest), Samantha’s goals for the semesters needed to focus on increasing her knowledge of language and cognition and her ability to write at a college-level.

Insight from TA journal. Samantha did not send a rough draft of the first writing assignment (Strengths Finder) and earned 4 out of 5 possible points (80%). However, Samantha was provided with feedback both in writing (pointing out areas of improvement on the first paper) and in person answering questions she had about the
following writing assignment. She earned the full 5 out of 5 (100%) points on the second writing assignment (Metacognitive Paper).

**EPC 634 posttest.** Samantha’s EPC 634 posttest score was a 42 (105%), a gain of 41.5 points from her pretest to posttest. Samantha earned two extra points on Question 2 (Infant/Toddler Foundations) and Question 6 (mathematics) for demonstrating an exceptionally high level of thinking and depth of insight for these questions (see Figure 4.4). Samantha’s posttest score of 42 was actually under the class average (M=43) by 1 point.

On the Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment, Samantha identified the area where she felt she improved the most was her management skills. Samantha also identified that she wants to continue to work on improving her writing abilities.

**Abstract posttest.** Samantha’s Understanding Research Abstract posttest score was a 9.5 (95%), which was an improvement of 5.5 points. Samantha was above the class average (M=9.13) by .37 of a point.

**Final grade.** Samantha earned 94 points out of the possible 100 points. Her final grade was an A (94%).
Kate’s Story

Kate (Student 1) works full-time in an educational setting and has a part time job on weekends unrelated to education. She identifies as multi-ethnic and is in her early 30’s. Kate’s grade point average as an undergraduate was in the range of 3.5-3.7. During the fall 2012 semester, Kate was enrolled in a total of three EPC core classes and was also taking statistics at a local community college.

**EPC 634 pretest.** Kate’s EPC 634 pretest revealed that she was among those who had the least amount of knowledge of language and cognition in young children as evidenced by her score on the pretest of 1 (tied for the second to lowest score out of the group). She left four questions completely blank. On the reflective piece of the EPC 634 pretest, Kate wrote that she procrastinated often, wanted to improve her spelling, learn more vocabulary and make her writing more clear and “on topic.”
**Abstract pretest.** Kate’s Understanding Research Abstracts pretest score was a 5 (tied for the third lowest score out of the group). Her score was .88 of a point below the average (M=5.88).

**Insight from TA journal.** For each of the two writing assignments due in class (Strengths Finder and Metacognitive Paper), Kate emailed me questions to clarify the assignment instructions. Kate and I email each other 4-5 times before the two assignments were due. I instructed her to send me a rough draft of each paper and gave her extensive feedback. I focused on deleting unnecessary wording and encouraged her to make more precise word choices. After providing a few examples of clear sentence structure and removing unnecessary words, I would highlighted sentences for her to work on alone. Kate earned the full 5 out of 5 (100%) points on the both of the writing assignments.

**EPC 634 posttest.** Kate’s EPC 634 posttest score was a 46 (115%), a gain of 45 points from her pretest to posttest. Kate’s posttest score was 3 points above the class average (M=43). She earned 6 points over the 40 points the test was worth, because of the extra points given to answers demonstrating a higher level of thinking and depth of reasoning and integration of concepts. Kate gained 1 extra point on six questions: Question 2 (key features of California’s Early Learning and Development System), Question 3 (language and literacy), Question 5 (English language development), Question 6 (mathematics), Question 7 (Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2), and Question 12 (DRDP) (see Figure 4.5).
On the Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment, Kate identified the areas where she felt she improved the most: editing, knowledge of APA referencing, and time management skills.

**Abstract posttest.** Kate’s Understanding Research Abstracts posttest score was a 9.75 (97.5%), which was an improvement of 4.75 points from her pretest score. Again, Kate’s posttest score was above the class average (M=9.13) by .62 of a point.

**Final grade.** Kate earned 100 points out of the possible 100 points. Her final grade was an A (100%).

Figure 4.5. Kate’s EPC 634 pretest and posttest scores for each question
Wendy’s Story

Wendy (Student 3) worked as a substitute teacher in a few elementary school settings, however, half way through the fall 2012 semester she received a job as a full-time kindergarten teacher. She identifies as multi-ethnic and is in her late 20’s. Wendy’s grade point average as an undergraduate was in the range of 3.2-3.4. During the fall 2012 semester, Wendy was enrolled in a total of three EPC core classes.

**EPC 634 pretest.** Wendy’s EPC 634 pretest revealed that she was among those who had the most amount of knowledge of language and cognition in young children as evidenced by her score on the pretest of 20 (the highest of the entire group). On the reflective piece of the EPC 634 retest, Wendy wrote that she wanted to expand her vocabulary and work on rewriting and editing her written work.

**Abstract pretest.** Wendy’s Understanding Research Abstracts pretest score was a 5, which was .88 of a point below the class average (M=5.88).

**Insight from TA journal.** Wendy did not turn in a rough draft of the first writing assignment (Strengths Finder). However, Wendy did contact me through email to help her edit a rough draft of her second writing assignment (Metacognitive Paper). I was able to make edits and focus her attention on rereading her work out loud for clarity while she was in the editing process. Wendy was also advised that using examples in her writing would provide more clarity to the reader.

Wendy earned 3.75 out of 5 possible points (75%) on the first writing assignment (Strengths Finder) and a 3.5 out of a possible 5 points (70%) on the second writing assignment (Metacognitive). When grading the final Metacognitive Strengths Paper that Wendy turned in, it was apparent that many of the suggestions and edits that were
recommended were not changed from the first draft to the final draft that was submitted for grading. Some suggestions included: keeping a consistent tense throughout the paper and adding definitions for clarity.

**EPC 634 posttest.** Wendy’s EPC 634 posttest score was a 38 (95%), a gain of 18 points from her pretest to posttest. However, out of the eight students in the sample she scored the lowest on the posttest. Wendy’s posttest score was 5 points below the class average (M=43). Wendy lost points on six questions: Question 3 (language and literacy), Question 6 (mathematics), Question 7 (Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2), Question 9 (language, diversity and culture), Question 10 (key features of the Preschool Curriculum Frameworks), and Question 12 (DRDP) (see Figure 4.6).

On the Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment, Wendy identified the areas she felt she improved the most were her time management skills and being more aware of including examples in her writing.

**Abstract posttest.** Wendy’s Understanding Research Abstracts posttest score was a 10 (100%), which was an improvement of 5 points from her pretest score. Wendy’s score was above the class average (M=9.13) by .87 of a point.

**Final grade.** Wendy earned 95 points out of the possible 100 points. Her final grade was an A (95%).
Jennifer’s Story

Jennifer (Student 7) works full-time in an early childhood education setting. She identifies herself as Latina and is in her late 20’s. Jennifer’s grade point average as an undergraduate was less than a 2.9. Jennifer was originally enrolled in a total of three EPC core classes, however, half way through the semester Jennifer had to drop one course (EPC 632) due to her work schedule.

EPC 634 pretest. Jennifer’s EPC 634 pretest score of an 8 was the third highest of the sample. Her score was 2.44 points above the average (M=5.56). Jennifer did not leave any questions blank and attempted to guess on every question. On the reflective piece of the EPC 634 pretest, Jennifer wrote, “English is my second language making my past tense a problem and spelling. I need to type to help me catch my errors and give to someone else to read,” identifying the area she would like to improve is her writing strategies and abilities. Jennifer also identified that she would like to improve her
vocabulary in Standard English and explained that she believes it is limited because she went to low-income schools during her middle school and high school years.

**Abstract pretest.** Jennifer’s Understanding Research Abstracts pretest score was a 7, which was 1.12 points above the average (M=5.88). From the pretests (EPC 634 pretest and Understanding Research Abstracts pretest), Jennifer’s knowledge of language and cognition and her ability to write at a college-level were goals that both needed to be focused on throughout the semester.

**Insight from TA journal.** Jennifer sent me a rough draft of the first writing assignment (Strengths Paper). I was able to help her correct the tense as it often fluctuated between present tense and past tense. I also suggested that she take out words that were not adding meaning to the sentence and point she was trying to make to the reader. Jennifer earned a 4.75 out of the possible 5 points on the Strengths Paper. For the Metacognitive Paper, Jennifer did not send me a rough draft and earned a 3.75 out of the possible 5 points.

After examining Jennifer’s pretest, I knew that she used the strategy of asking others to read her work and I recommended that she use her classmates as another resource. As the semester continued, Jennifer informed me that this was a great tool for her. She was able to work closely with another student to share information and study for the posttest.

**EPC 634 posttest.** Jennifer’s EPC 634 posttest score was a 39 (97.5%), a gain of 31 points from her pretest to posttest. Jennifer’s posttest score was 4 points below the class average (M=43). Jennifer lost points on five questions: Question 1 (key features of California’s Early Learning and Development System), Question 5 (English language
development), Question 8 (children with special needs), Question 9 (language, culture and diversity), and Question 12 (DRDP). Jennifer also lost one point for spelling and clarity.

However, Jennifer demonstrated higher-level thinking and gained extra points on the following questions: Question 3 (Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 1–language and literacy), Question 4 (Preschool English Language Learners Guide), Question 7 (Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2) and Question 11 (California Early Childhood Education Competencies) (see Figure 4.7).

On the Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment, Jennifer wrote that she still had a lot of work to do to improve her writing, but was more aware of common mistakes she made while writing. She thought that the abstract assignment was helpful to summarize and check her comprehension of the academic material she was reading. Jennifer also thought that the feedback the TAs and professor gave were great insights to her writing, but wanted the class to have a stronger focus on writing.

**Abstract posttest.** Jennifer’s Understanding Research Abstracts posttest score was an 8.25 (82.5%), which was an improvement of 1.25 points from her pretest score. Jennifer was again below the class average (M=9.13) by .88 of a point.

**Final grade.** Jennifer earned 94 points out of the possible 100 points. Her final grade was an A (94%).
Figure 4.7. Jennifer’s EPC 634 pretest and posttest scores for each question

Conclusion

The data sources that were reviewed, compared and analyzed throughout this chapter showed that each of the 8 students gained a significant amount of knowledge about language and cognition in young children. This is evident from the improved scores from the EPC 634 pretest scores at the beginning of the semester to the EPC 634 posttest scores at the end of the course. Evidence of students improving their approach to reading graduate level materials, specifically their approach to reading abstracts, was also evident from the data collected and reviewed in this chapter.

Four individual students’ stories were highlighted to give the reader a deeper look at the first semester graduate students enrolled in EPC 634. Students were given the opportunity to give the professor and TAs feedback about their learning and the class overall. The following chapter will go into greater detail about this feedback. The following chapter will also discuss possible reasons for the success of the class,
limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research of graduate students’ reading, writing and transition to graduate school.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

EPC 643, introduced in fall 2012, is a modified and experimental course designed to achieve a variety of goals. The goals of the course were to provide specific content information on language and concept development in the early years and provide support and strategies for improving graduate students’ reading and writing abilities while strengthening study skills. Eight out of the 12 students in the author’s group were in their first semester of graduate school. The other four students, not in their first semester of graduate school, enrolled in the course for various reasons. Three students were recommended for the course by the professor to give them additional help with writing. One student simply enrolled because she was interested in the topic.

The eight students discussed in Chapter Four will be the same students highlighted and discussed in this chapter as well. This chapter will begin by discussing the data (see Table 4.1), which consist of the EPC 634 pre and posttest, the abstract pre and posttest, students’ final grades and the TA journals, including a summary of the results. Next, the chapter will discuss the orientation and transition process to the program. The different types of relationships that were formed during the study and the impact of these relationships will be examined as well. The next part of the chapter will review and discuss the current study in comparison to two past studies: Rose and McClafferty (2001) and Sallee, Hallett, and Tierney (2011). Additionally, the chapter will address the limitations of the study and recommendations for future semesters of
EPC 634. Finally, suggestions and recommendations for future research studies will be discussed.

**Summary of Findings**

**Language and Cognition**

First semester graduate students under my teaching assistantship (M=8) gained knowledge in the area of language and concept development as evidenced by comparing their EPC 634 pretest and posttests. Specifically in content knowledge of California’s Early Learning and Development System, scores changed from an average of 5.56 (14%) to one of 43 (108%). Five out of the 12 questions on the posttest specifically targeted the topic of language (English Language Learners, oral, written and listening), while the remaining seven questions focused on concept (math, perceptual/motor development, health and visual and performing arts) and ancillary topics (DRDP, California Early Childhood Education Competencies).

**Language.** Students made significant gains on questions about language development from the EPC 634 pretest to the posttest. For example, on Question 4 (Preschool English Language Learners Guide) the student average was a .31 (10%) on the pretest and the posttest average was a 3.87 (129%). Students gained an average of 3.56 points from the pretest to posttest. Significant learning was also seen on Question 5 (English language development), where students’ pretest scores averaged .12 (4%) and increased to an average of 3.43 (114%) on the posttest scores. Students gained an average of 3.31 points on this question from the pretest to the posttest. It can be presumed that the students gained knowledge in language development and about English language learners because of the dramatic increase in scores from the pretest to the posttest.
**Concept development.** Questions addressing concept development, such as math, perceptual/motor development, health, and visual and performing arts were also areas where significant gain was noted. Out of the concept development questions, students made the most significant increase from the pretest to the posttest on Question 6 (mathematics). The average pretest score for Question 6 was a .31 (10%) and the posttest average score was a 3.5 (116%), an average gain of 3.19 points. It can be presumed that the students gained knowledge of how children develop mathematical skills, such as reasoning due to the significant increase in scores from the pretest to the posttest on Question 6.

**Reading and Writing**

Approaches to reading graduate level materials were explicitly addressed through the Understanding Research Abstract assignments. Not only were the students exposed to the important concept of research in a very abbreviated way, but they also learned key vocabulary that would likely be found in reading throughout the program and ultimately leading to a deeper and intentional reading of professional journal abstracts. Students were explicitly shown how to read a complex sentence, clause by clause to decipher and decode to check for understanding and comprehension with each clause. Features of citations were noted as well in terms of how to reference each abstract correctly.

Through the Understanding Research Abstracts pretest and posttest scores, it was apparent that students gained strategies, experience and techniques on how to read and comprehend complex journal abstracts. The average pretest score was a 5.88 (58%) and the average Posttest score was a 9.13 (91%) on a 10-point scale. On average, students gained 3.25 points from the pretest to the posttest.
**Additional reading and writing elements.** As previously mentioned, the particular abstracts that were used for this assignment were selected from the *Early Childhood Education Quarterly*, a peer reviewed journal of empirical studies from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Students not only gained knowledge about how to read and understand an abstract, they were also introduced to current, scholarly information about their field.

In addition to the Understanding Research Abstracts assignment, class discussion included the topics of organizational schemes found in professional writing, such as the use of headers, how each paragraph focuses on only one idea, and the importance of using examples when introducing a new concept or vocabulary word to their audience. The students were encouraged to use these strategies and organizational schemes in all of their writing, not only in this class but all future work in their graduate program. In addition, a specialized workshop lead by the other TA targeted the correct use of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual style.

**Metacognitive and Study Skills**

The Strengths Finder paper and a Metacognitive Strength assignment were the first two writing assignments. They focused on discovering the individual strengths and areas of improvement needed by each student. These assignments were designed to make students more aware of the areas in which they need to improve, for both personal growth and academic writing growth. Completing these assignments in the beginning of the semester helped the students become aware of how they learn and the common types of challenges they will encounter in graduate school.
Implications

Cross Over Effects to EPC 632

As previously mentioned, EPC 634 was developed because of the increased need to support first semester students’ reading and writing skills. Evidence of the need came from the decline in successful achievement of students in the required first-semester class EPC 632: Issues, Theories, and Current Practices in Early Childhood, an intensive writing course (see Figure 1.1). In 2011, 40% of the students (N=20) were not able to successfully pass the course with a grade of a B or higher. EPC 634 was implemented to address some of the most pressing needs, such as study, writing and reading techniques to be successful in graduate school.

Table 5.1 displays the sample of students’ percentage grade and letter grade they earned in EPC 632. Five students earned an A, one student earned an A-, one student earned a B-, and one student withdrew from the EPC 632 class mid-semester due to her work schedule. The Master’s program in Early Childhood Education requires students to earn a B or higher to successfully pass and earn the credits for the course. Therefore, six students out of the eight students who were enrolled in EPC 632 passed and earned the credit for the course. Student # 7 withdrew from the class and student # 5 earned a B-, both of these students will have to retake the class and enroll for the entire semester to earn credit for the course.

Although the students who were in the other TA’s section were not included in the current thesis, it is important to note that of her number of students (n=11) all who were enrolled in EPC 632 earned the following grades: 10 students earned A’s and 1 student earned a B- (all 11 of her students were enrolled in EPC 632). Therefore, a total
of three students (13%) out of the total 23 students enrolled in EPC 632 and EPC 634 were unsuccessful at passing EPC 632 with a B or better. It should be noted that the eight students discussed in the current study are included in the total number of students (N=23). The rate of unsuccessful students was 13%, an improvement of 27% from the previous year. Thus the overall effectiveness of the class may have been stronger than that which is limited to the current sample.

Ultimately, the 2012 cohort was more successful in passing the writing intensive class, EPC 632 than the previous year’s cohort. The question then becomes: What made this cohort more successful than those in years past? It should be noted that the assignments in EPC 632 did not change nor did the writing rubrics associated with the assignments, thus EPC 632 can be considered a control. However, before any relationship between the newly re-conceptualized class and the core reading and writing class (EPC 632) can be suggested, other mediating (or confounding) variables should be considered. These are described in the next section.
Table 5.1: Students’ Grades in EPC 632 and EPC 634 (fall 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Number</th>
<th>Percentage EPC 632</th>
<th>Letter Grade EPC 632</th>
<th>Letter Grade EPC 634</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Withdraw</td>
<td>Withdrew from class due to her work schedule.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion of Mediating Variables

Orientation Events

The new first year graduate students were invited and encouraged to attend two different types of events focused on becoming oriented to their selected Master’s Program. The New Student Orientation, which took place for the first time ever in the summer of 2012, addressed numerous aspects of graduate school and demystified what was to come in the fall. Anxiety and fear are used to describe experiences of graduate students and one of the main goals of this particular event was to ease the fears new students have about the program (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). During the New Student Orientation, students were informed of class scheduling, books and resources needed, topics about which they would be learning, and graduate school expectations. Students were introduced to the professors and TAs, and were able to ask questions as well.
The second event was the Back-to-School Brunch, held the weekend before the fall 2012 semester began, which has been a long standing tradition in the program. The brunch took place at Dr. Rothstein-Fisch’s house and was a larger gathering of new students, current students and even alumna. New students were introduced to current students which enabled them to get a sense of the program’s culture. At the Brunch, new students were involved in discussions in the larger community and also gathered together in a smaller group consisting of only new students to further discuss concerns and questions. Interestingly, this Back-to-School Brunch was very well attended, better than any previous Brunch.

This was the first year a New Student Orientation was held for new entrants. The orientation was created and designed with the new students’ concerns, interests and potential questions in mind. In past years, new students were only oriented to the program during the Back-to-School Brunch where all students’ needs are addressed. Having two different orientation experiences for new students (one focused directly on their needs and the second including them into the larger program in an informal and inviting situation) could have had a positive effect on producing a more successful cohort.

These events provided new students with an orientation into the program, but meeting multiple times before the beginning of the semester may have also established a sense of community. They were a “family” as a cohort and part of the larger community as graduate students in the Master’s Program as well. Hadjioannou et al. (2007) expresses that orienting experiences, providing students useful contacts and “encouraging and supporting a sense of community” (p.163) are key components to successful graduate
students. The two events in which the new students took part touched on each of these aspects: 1) the events oriented the students to the program by providing them information and answering questions; 2) the students met the professors, teaching assistants and their peers who are all useful and important contacts; and 3) each event created a sense of community by answering questions, getting to know one another through ice-breakers and trying to make the atmosphere open and accepting.

**Transition Specific Skills**

EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years was offered in the fall semester, the first semester of graduate school for the students in the cohort, which could have had a positive impact on the graduate students’ success. Students were able to start graduate school with a course focused on helping them to transition to graduate school and designed to integrate strategies for the overall success of the graduate students, including the areas of time management, studying, reading and writing techniques. The course was designed taking into consideration the common challenges that graduate students face. According to Hadjioannou et al. (2007), these challenges consist of high academic demands, conflicts between various personal and academic responsibilities, and financial struggles.

The very first class meeting focused on time management and initiated the conversation about the transition to graduate school. Explicitly describing the stressors they might be facing may have helped the students understand the expectations and demands of graduate school. Discussing and giving suggestions on how to prioritize responsibilities may have guided students to plan appropriately as the semester continued.
A strong emphasis was also made on communicating obstacles and problems with the teaching assistants and the professor.

**Relationships**

The following section will discuss the types of relationships that transpired throughout the 2012 fall semester in EPC 634. There are three unique types of relationships that formed: professor-student relationships, teaching assistant-student relationships, and student-student relationships. Each of these relationships will be discussed further and reviewed as they may have had a positive impact on the students’ success in their first year of graduate school.

**Relationships with the professor.** Hadjioannou et al. (2007) express that the “negative aspects [loneliness, isolation, confusion, fear] of the graduate school experience can be significantly counteracted through robust, supportive relationships” (p. 162) with faculty members. Dr. Rothstein-Fisch teaches each class with a goal of creating and maintaining strong relationships with students and EPC 634 was no exception. During the New Student Orientation, Dr. Rothstein-Fisch created a warm and respectful atmosphere answering questions and expressing her commitment to each student. This seemed validated by the second year students (the five TAs for the two first semester classes taught by Dr. Rothstein-Fisch). Throughout the semester this atmosphere was also evident in EPC 634. Commitment and support was observed by staying late to answer questions each night of class, changing office hours to meet the needs of students, meeting students one-on-one, celebrating student achievements, assisting students with both academic and personal demands, and being accessible and available for students at their times of need.
Building and maintaining strong relationships with students plays an important role in graduate student success, which is consistent with Hadjioannou et al. (2007) findings that “graduate students felt that their relationships with faculty were vital to the quality of their graduate experience” (p. 162) which expresses the value placed on this relationship. The professor-student relationship appeared to be respectful and dynamic. For example, in addition to the feedback on all assignments from the TA, the professor provided students with written feedback on papers, verbal feedback and individualized strategies to use in writing, editing and various other areas. The amount of her commitment was evident through the extensive feedback she gave on papers targeting areas for growth and including encouraging support noting specific areas of improvement.

Feedback to improve the class was also solicited by the professor. The professor collected students’ suggestions on how she could improve the class, on which topics students wanted more clarification and how to better serve the students. Feedback from students was asked for both verbally and in written format on a Mid-Semester Feedback form. Students were given the option to remain anonymous and were not asked to put their name on the feedback form.

The work of both Sallee et al. (2011) and Rose and McClafferty (2001) express the need for instructors of courses, such as EPC 634, to be interested and fully invested in developing and teaching graduate students to improve their writing. Dr. Rothstein-Fisch’s interest and investment was evident through her many actions. She saw the need for this class, wrote a grant proposal, developed a group to re-conceptualize EPC 634, and throughout the semester focused on the needs of the students in the class. As an
aside, in the anonymous student evaluation of the class, student ratings indicated on a 1-5 scale with 5 most strongly agreeing: “The professor is open to students asking questions during the class” (M=5, median=5, SD=0), “The professor encourages questions and discussion” (M=4.9, median=5 and a SD=.3), and “The professor treats students with respect” (M=5, median=5, SD=0). Thus, there is evidence that the relationship with the professor was well established.

Whereas the professor’s teaching may be a constant in the program (as evidenced by her teaching evaluations which are consistently high) the fact that students had twice the amount of contact with her during this experimental semester may have made the bond between them that much stronger. Instead of seeing the students 3 hours per week, the contact was 6 hours per week. That afforded not only more formal in-class contact time with students, but also allowed for an increase in time for informal conversations where the professor could check in with students.

Relationships with teaching assistants. Students were provided with two TAs for the course and divided into two groups between the TAs. The two groups of students were able to seek out help from either of the TAs, creating a larger team of three people to guide and help them through the semester. The instructor to student ratio was lowered with the addition of the two TAs and this lowered ratio could have added to the success of students for multiple reasons.

Students were able to have more one-on-one time and support by having three people to interact with instead of only one. TAs may also have been seen as a less intimidating figure to approach with questions or smaller details of the class. The TAs also took care of the smaller details (e.g. attendance or mass informative e-mails to
students) in order to keep the class flowing and freeing the professor to take care of larger
details and tasks. During the class discussions, the students were able to divide into
smaller groups, either in half with each TA leading a discussion or even into smaller
groups with the professor and TAs each taking a section. Smaller group discussions
meant more time for individuals to speak, discuss and bounce ideas off one another.

The TAs were, at one time, new students themselves and therefore took on a
uniquely different role and relationship with the new students than the professor. Having
been in the same position, the TAs were not only able to empathize but also provide the
new students with practical assistance, including techniques that worked for them during
their first year in the program. Techniques consisted of helpful writing hints, tips on
studying for the posttest, advice about other courses’ assignments, how to handle stress
and various responsibilities. The assistance the TAs provided did not strictly pertain to
the course. In some cases, the TAs were sought for information about other courses in
the program, financial aid, or other career topics, which eased the transition and may
have possibly helped new students overcome fears of entering a new program.

Additionally, Hadjioannou et al. (2007) discuss that family and friends of
graduate students may only have a small view into the pressures students are faced with,
leaving students feeling lonely and isolated during their time in graduate school. The
connections the new students had formed with the TAs could possibly have counteracted
these feelings of isolation. The TAs acted as another source of support and guidance
during the students’ first semester of graduate school.
**Relationships with classmates.** The relationships students had with one another may have also contributed to their overall success in their first year of the program. There was a strong sense of camaraderie between students, helping one another by answering questions and giving advice, and it was apparent that friendships were forming throughout the semester. Numerous articles (Hadjioannou et al., 2007; Sallee et al., 2011) stressed the importance of support systems between peers, offering feedback to one another, and working together to succeed in graduate school. Together, each of these likely contributed to the sense of community, which is suggested and greatly encouraged by research on the experiences of graduate school students (Hadjioannou et al., 2007).

The relationships between graduate students were a vital resource for them, whether they were aware of it or not. First and foremost, the students were able to understand the pressures and experiences of graduate school as they were experiencing it firsthand. Although friends and family may be supportive, because they do not have the firsthand experience they do not truly understand the exact pressures and stress (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). Having the support system of a classmate, going through the same graduate school experience can be a source of motivation and knowledge for students. They are able to share tips that save time, help one another edit assignments, and give one another advice, whether about graduate school or balancing other life responsibilities.

Hadjioannou et al. (2007) explained, “the boarders between age, positional status, nationality, and culture melted away” (p. 175) as the peer support group described in the study continued to work with one another. This description can be used to directly explain the connections and friendships that were made during the 2012 fall semester in
EPC 634. Many students made friends with people outside of their demographic and ethnicity. It is likely that the common experience of graduate school was a key factor in the formation of these friendships and connections.

There are a few reasons one can speculate how this sense of camaraderie and overall close connection between this cohort was established. Students were able to meet and get to know one another at two orientation events (New Student Orientation and the Back-to-School Brunch) prior to beginning the fall 2012 semester. Previously new students only attended one orientation event and the event was not focused on their needs exclusively. Another reason for the close connection may have been related to the number of classes in which the cohort was enrolled in the fall semester. The students were enrolled in three classes, whereas previously students only took two classes their first semester of the program. Students were together three more hours each week than previous cohorts. Whether the camaraderie and increased contact among students was due to implementing the New Student Orientation, having three versus two courses their first semester, or a combination of both of these factors, the camaraderie was evident and was likely to have had a positive effect on motivation and time on task.

Reconsidering the Literature on the Transition to Graduate School

This section will review and discuss the current study in comparison to two past studies: Rose and McClafferty (2001) and Sallee, Hallett, and Tierney (2011). Both of the past studies have numerous similarities to the current study and to each other as well. Four similar themes in each of the studies will be reviewed, including 1) the creation of courses, 2) the focus of the courses, 3) feedback, and 4) support and investment.
Following the review of these themes, differences between the courses and possible suggestions to further improve EPC 634 for the future will be discussed.

**Creation of Courses**

The two graduate level writing courses described in the past studies (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011) were formed for the exact reason that EPC 634 was redesigned and implemented: to address the needs of graduate students. Specifically, the classes were designed to address and improve the quality of writing among graduate students, a skill that directly impacts the success of students in graduate school because students are “expected to demonstrate proficiency at expressing their ideas in writing” (Sallee et al., 2011, p. 67). Meaning, if one cannot proficiently express their ideas they will not be successful in graduate school.

Sallee et al. (2011) discuss that graduate school instructors assume that students previously learned basic writing skills, perhaps in high school or during their years as an undergraduate. However, the authors feel that this is truly just an assumption. Graduate students’ “writing competencies differ dramatically” (Sallee et al., 2011, pp. 66-67) and most students do not enter graduate school with all of the knowledge of writing they need to be successful in graduate school. Therefore, there is a need to help graduate students gain this writing proficiency to improve their change at success in school. Sallee et al. (2011) designed their writing course for this specific reason, helping graduate students gain writing proficiency; this was a key goal of EPC 634 as well.

Rose and McClafferty (2001) state “the irony here is the quality of scholarly writing is widely bemoaned, both inside and outside of the academy” (p. 27) yet they found little research on systematic ways of addressing the need for improving graduate
students’ writing. This is the reason the course was created in 1996: to create a systematic way to help graduate students improve their quality of writing. To summarize, each of the courses described (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011; and EPC 634) were all created to address the need to improve writing proficiency and increase the success of graduate students. In the current study, it remains to be seen if the course will have enduring effects on the students’ writing over the next two years of their graduate study. However, it is hoped that the other faculty will build on the foundations established in the first semester and informal observations and discussions will likely target the lasting effects of the experimental course.

**Focus of Courses**

The focus of each of the courses was extremely similar in that they focused on all aspects of writing (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011). Through discussions and activities EPC 634 also addressed improving all aspects of writing about which students were curious or with which they needed more practice or information. Discussions focused on such topics as APA, the use of headers, and the proper use of vocabulary, syntax, and academic semantics.

Rose and McClafferty (2001) and Sallee et al. (2011) explain what aspects of writing they addressed throughout the courses. Rose and McClafferty (2001) express the course addressed a wide variety of topics, some of which include: mechanics, grammar, organization, style, audience, and research design. Sallee et al., (2011) state that the course “focused on all aspects of the writing process, from working on outlines to the nitty-gritty of punctuation” (p.68).
EPC 634 also focused on different challenges students were having while writing, such as APA, grammar and punctuation. Many of these topics, however are covered more fully in another course in the program, EPC 632. Two extremely helpful documents were distributed to the students at the start of that course: the Writing Guidelines (Rothstein-Fisch, 2012) and a Writing Checklist (Rothstein-Fisch, 2012). The Writing Guidelines (Rothstein-Fisch, 2012) articulates to students that their writing needs to be clear and orderly for their reader. It addresses how to order one’s ideas, how to make writing contain smooth expression and even offers ways to improve one’s writing. The Writing Checklist (Rothstein-Fisch, 2012) provides information to help students with self-editing on mechanics and style. These two documents, distributed in the other course (EPC 632) could have been easily incorporated into EPC 634 as useful informational resources and tools to use while writing.

**Feedback During the Course**

Feedback was a major theme found in the two studies (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011) and there were a variety of different types of feedback: instructor-to-student feedback, student-to-instructor feedback, student-to-student feedback. Throughout the semester in EPC 634, the same types of feedback were apparent.

**Instructor-to-student feedback.** In each of the courses described in the past studies (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011), instructors gave students feedback, both written and orally, and encouraged students to use these suggestions to make improvements to their next writing assignments. EPC 634 followed this model of
feedback as well, providing students with the feedback and encouraging them to use it to improve future writing assignments.

Papers were graded in a timely fashion and included extensive editing from both the TA and the professor. The comments on papers included “excellent word choice” or “nicely transitioned” as well as “not clear?” or in some cases whole sentences were taken out. While there was an attempt to provide equal amounts of positive and constructive criticism, the comments were always authentic and mindful of what students most needed to work on for the biggest improvements.

**Student-to-instructor feedback.** The courses described in the Rose and McClafferty (2001) and Sallee et al. (2011) studies have been offered numerous times. The courses have grown and changed as a result of feedback and evaluations from students taking the course, therefore, student-to-instructor feedback is also a key component of these courses (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011). Student-to-instructor feedback was also a key theme throughout EPC 634, because the professor asked for mid-semester evaluations and an end of the year reflection. Throughout the semester the professor was also involved in continued discussions with the two teaching assistants about how to meet the needs of her students in the course. At the end of a few class sessions, the professor also asked the students directly about how she could better meet their needs and proposed that students email her if they felt more comfortable communicating that way, rather than speaking in a large group.

The feedback received from the students in the first, experimental course of EPC 634 will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the future of the course. The student-to-instructor feedback will help to change the course to better meet the needs of graduate
students entering the program. Just as the two courses described in the studies (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011) changed as a direct result of student feedback and reflection of the course, so too will EPC 634. Ongoing discussions are currently underway with a group of teaching assistants.

**Student-to-student feedback.** Students were given the opportunity to provide one another with feedback during class discussions and activities in each of the studies (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011) and so too in EPC 634. Students practiced providing feedback to one another and through this gained “confidence in their ability to talk about writing” (Rose & McClafferty, 2001, p. 30). The student receiving feedback was not the only one to benefit from this interaction: the student giving the feedback benefitted as well. Student-to-student feedback plays an important role in helping students become more comfortable discussing writing and also develops confidence in one’s writing skills.

One lively example of this was during the APA workshop. What could have been a boring presentation became a heated and lively discussion as students debated and challenged where certain punctuation marks go in citations, the use of different levels of headers, and specific rules of capitalization. Both the TAs and the professor were quite stunned by how engaged the students became during the discussion. This was brought out in their evaluations of the value of the class, highlighting the workshop as one of the three main benefits of the course.
Support and Investment

Instructor. The theme of support and investment is discussed throughout each of the studies (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011). Rose and McClafferty (2001) explain that instructors must “have a professional interest in developing and teaching a graduate level writing course” (p. 32), thus emphasizing the close connection and investment an instructor must have to truly develop a successful course in helping graduate students improve their writing proficiency. Instructing a class on professional writing is not an easy task and instructors who have a large personal connection to this topic will be more motivated to help students improve their writing abilities. The professor of EPC 634 had a deep connection and professional interest in developing and teaching a graduate level writing course to address the needs of her students. Seeing the declining passing rate of a core class that was writing intensive (EPC 632), the professor wanted to invest and support her students thereby creating EPC 634 in hopes to help these students be more successful.

Support and investment is also seen through the significant amount of time instructors use to provide students with feedback about their writing (Sallee et al., 2011). Instructors invest time and energy to support students in hopes that they will learn from and use the feedback as a guide for future writing assignments. This was also the case in EPC 634; each of the three instructors invested a great amount of time providing written and verbal feedback to students. This included feedback on topics such as APA referencing (e.g., how to write in-text citations), word choice (substituting the word “so” for the word “therefore”), and use of headers (e.g., first level headers are centered,
boldface, use both uppercase and lowercase letters). The instructors also gave praise for deeply considered thoughts and ideas.

**Students.** Each of the courses described in the studies (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011) also promote the sense of students supporting and investing in one another. Sallee et al. (2011) explain that the creation of research and writing groups “created a network to provide feedback on drafts of writing” (p.68). Rose and McClafferty (2001) used a writers’ workshop design to promote students working in smaller groups to talk about their writing and give one another feedback, promoting a supportive environment. In EPC 634, the theme of students supporting one another was also promoted and apparent. Students were encouraged to work together during class activities and discussions, give feedback to one another, and study in groups to prepare for the posttest.

**Difference in the Courses**

Each of the courses reviewed (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011) and EPC 634 have a variety of differences among them. No course can be exactly the same due to the instructor, differences of students enrolled, and the list is endless. One select difference will be highlighted in this section in relationship to possible suggestions to improve EPC 634.

**Assignments.** The required assignments of each course differed. Rose and McClafferty (2001) explain that “the primary text for the course are student writing, and, while there may be one or two initial common assignments, most of the course is spent focusing on the writing students are doing for a range of courses and a range of purposes” (p.27). Sallee et al. (2011) discuss there were three papers assigned which taught
“students how to go through the entire research process” (p.67). Rose and McClafferty (2001) chose to use student work from other classes as the material addressed, while Sallee et al. (2011) had specific class assignments for the course. The goal of both classes were extremely similar, however the materials each of the courses used to review, discuss and learn from differed greatly.

EPC 634 had its own common assignments required from students, including two 5-page papers, quizzes and tests. After reviewing the Rose and McClaffery (2001) study, EPC 634 could utilize the strategy of focusing class time on students’ writing for other classes. This will be discussed in greater length in the Recommendations for Future section of the chapter.

Limitations of Study

There are a variety of limitations of the study. One limitation of the study is the sample population was extremely small (n=8). Also, not every first semester graduate student was examined throughout the study. The results of the study may not have been representative for the entire course and there is no ability to generalize this study because of the sample being extremely small.

Sallee et al. (2011) state, “given the limited flexibility with the graduate program, coupled with the need to avoid extending the length of time to degree, creating a stand-alone writing course was unrealistic” (p.67). The professor and TAs were able to implement EPC 634 with transition goals in mind, however there are many questions surrounding the goals and content of the course. The class focused heavily on the California Early Learning and Development System, but perhaps EPC 634 should focus
more on writing and the transition into graduate school. This will be further addressed in
the following section.

**Recommendations for the Future**

**Clear Objectives of Class**

Reviewing professor, TA and course evaluations, some of the common areas of
improvement to consider consist of the need for clearer objectives and assignments, as
well as quizzes and exams that more closely match the content of the class. Because this
was an experimental first course, these suggestions will be reviewed and incorporated
into the goals of EPC 634 for the future. The objectives and assignments of the course
were established before the course began, hoping to address the needs of the students and
the goals of the class, which consisted of content knowledge of language and concept
development and providing graduate students with strategies for overall success,
including the areas of time management, studying, reading, and writing techniques.
Overall more precise objectives should be developed and a more overt content/structure
would be valuable.

Ultimately, it seems as though the goal of the class to have students gain content
knowledge about language and concept development was achieved. There may have
been a significantly larger portion of the class time focused on California’s Early
Learning and Development System and less on student writing. Student writing may be
addressed more proportionally if writing is a clear objective of the course and students
are provided with allocated time for in-class writing and discussion of writing. Students
could provide one another with feedback on their writing, which will hopefully
encourage growth, learning and promote knowledge as a result.
Assignments

EPC 634 had its own common assignments required from the students, including two 5-page papers, quizzes, and tests. After reviewing the Rose and McClafferty (2001) study, EPC 634 could utilize the strategy of focusing class time on students’ writing assignments for other classes. Some of the time could be spent reviewing, discussing, and editing writing assignments for the writing intensive course, EPC 632, in which students were previously failing to earn a grade of B or better. Perhaps, students could work in small groups or even pairs to give one another feedback, discuss and evaluate their writing together. Several students have already expressed an interest in the peer-review process as one way to improve student writing before submitting drafts to the TAs.

Reading Skills

Reading was addressed in EPC 634, but there is room to make an improvement on this aspect of the course as well. McMinn et al. (2009) express that “it may be useful for students to learn principles for effective skimming” (p.238) which is an important skill in graduate school when students have large quantities of reading each week. EPC 634 could address more types of reading skills than it did in its first semester. The course could also provide more examples of professional writing for students to examine in different sized groups. Reading comprehension and skills are interrelated to writing abilities and both should be focuses of EPC 634. This may be especially important to address as the new group of incoming fall 2013 students seem to have lower grade point averages than the current cohort.
Focus on Revision Process

Lavelle and Bushrow (2007) explain that because “graduate students often do not have the writing habits as an ongoing and evolving enterprise, professors must encourage planning, teach revision, and stress relevance” (p. 817). This suggestion could be incorporated into EPC 634 for future versions of the class. Reviewing, editing and revising work is a large portion of the writing process and many students do not spend enough time on this process. Some students did not even fix repeated errors that were pointed out to them in rough drafts, let alone read over their draft to fix errors about which they were not given feedback. Modeling and scaffolding the process of editing and revision is something that could positively impact the future students of EPC 634. The goal of developing students with good editing habits could be a worthwhile addition to the goals of EPC 634. This skill is certainly something that is valuable and will be useful to students throughout graduate school and beyond.

Future Research

As demonstrated by the need to create EPC 634, the other two courses described throughout this chapter (Rose & McClafferty, 2001; Sallee et al., 2011), and the literature review in this study (Chapter Two), there is an enormous need for graduate students to gain the reading and writing proficiency skills that they are assumed to have when entering graduate school. Informal conversations with the professor indicate that she is often asked to provide templates, such as the Writing Guidelines she created to support professors across campus. If the current class is revised and long-lasting benefits emerge with respect to reading and writing, then the class could be used as a model for the College of Education and if successful, for the entire University.
Perhaps there is a need for graduate schools in the entire United States to implement and invest in academic writing courses for their students. If the students are not entering graduate school with all of the writing skills they need to be at the graduate level, universities need to provide them with the skills necessary for their success. Research into professional writing courses and the various ways in which they are designed should be a point of future research and review. Future research should also address what types of assignments and activities are most effective for these types of courses.

What began as an attempt to increase student success seems to have been highly successful in ways both expected and unexpected. One thing is for certain: mastery of learning (through reading) and communicating (through writing) are essential requirements for professional life. If this class contributed in a very small way to helping students become better educators and advocates for children and families through learning the fundamentals about language and cognition, and if the course positively impacted the students’ reading and writing abilities in any way our mission will have been accomplished.
REFERENCES

Austin, A. (2002). Preparing the next generation of faculty: Graduate school as socialization to the academic career. The Journal of Higher Education, 73, 94-122.


California Department of Education. (2009). *Preschool English learners, principles and practices to promote language, literacy, and learning, a resource guide.* (2nd ed.). Sacramento: California Department of Education.


APPENDIX A

Syllabus—

EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years

Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, Ph.D. Danielle Hartwig and Aura Perez, TAs
Tuesdays 7:00 - 9:50 pm

Catalog Description
Prerequisites: EPC 430. A study of research and current theoretical positions in language and concept development with major emphasis on the implications for learning in the school setting.

Michael D. Eisner College of Education
California State University, Northridge

Conceptual Framework
Regionally focused and nationally recognized, the Michael D. Eisner College of Education is committed to Excellence and Innovation. Excellence in the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions is evidenced by the growth and renewal of ethical and caring professionals – faculty, staff, candidates – and those they serve. Innovation occurs through collaborative partnerships that represent communities of diverse learners who engage in creative and reflective thinking. To this end we continually strive to achieve the following competencies and values that form the foundation of the Conceptual Framework:

Excellence in professional collaborative partnerships and academic preparation
Evidence of growth and renewal
Ethical and caring professionals

Communities of diverse learners
Creative and reflective thinking

Course Objectives and Content Summary
This course explores language and cognition from the dual perspective of what young children need to thrive with regard to language and cognitive skills and what graduate students in Early Childhood Education need to know to help them become leaders and advocates for children learning these skills. Without the appropriate language and metacognitive skills (thinking about one’s own thinking) it is nearly impossible for advanced early childhood educators to foster optimal skills in children. This realization
is made even more clear with regard to recent research\(^2\). In addition, new standards from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC – Advanced Standards) and California Early Childhood Educator Competencies (California Department of Education, 2011) make the core knowledge of language and cognition essential.

Using the Department of Education (CDE) initiatives, students will learn about language as a symbol system and forms of cognition while exploring why a deep understanding of language and thinking is an integral part of human development.

Readings

**Texts – Required**

All from California Department of Education – 1-800-995-4099 sales@cde.ca.gov

Each is downloadable.

1. Preschool English Learners – (2\(^{nd}\) Ed). (2009) Item 001703 ($ 15.95)
2. California Early Childhood Educator Competencies (2011) Item 001719 ($ 24.00)
4. California Preschool Learning Foundations (Vol 1 & 2) Items 001681 and 001708 (both $ 19.95) order Vol. 3 when it becomes available

Reading for the Desired Results Developmental System at:

**Important Recommended Reading:**


Class Decorum

Turn off all cell phones or other electronic devices that make audible sounds that are distracting from learning. This includes computer sites such as checking your Facebook page that pull you away from the discussion in class. Remember, when you are off task, you jeopardize yourself, as well as the children, families, and communities that will rely upon you as a professional.

As a graduate seminar this course requires the active contributions of each member as we seek to understand, utilize and synthesize the broad concepts in early childhood education. This is completely dependent upon your effort to help the whole class succeed. Class attendance is required. One absence may affect your grade; and more than that may result in the grade of "U" (unauthorized incomplete). In addition, student tardiness and leaving early will also affect your grade. However, if you should need to miss one class or know you will have to be late on a specific day, please contact the teaching assistant or the professor, otherwise, we’ll worry about you!

In this seminar, you are encouraged to develop new language skills. For quiet students, this may involve participating verbally. There are no stupid questions, and we want to hear from YOU! For students who tend to participate extensively, this will be an opportunity to develop active listening skills: looking at the speaker, focusing on the other person's point of view, avoiding interruptions, and refraining from lengthy remarks that may not be pertinent to the whole class. Some students may be naturally reluctant to participate, and you will learn about potential reasons for this in our class. We will try to provide an array of participation levels so that each student is fully engaged in the class at the “just right” level.

Assignments

Strengths Finder – Handout provided. 5 points
In this assignment, you will be provided with a link to an on-line website (viacharacter) that will allow you to complete a 240 item survey about your strengths. It’s fun to identify your personal strengths! There are three questions to answer in a well-crafted, error-free paper of approximately 2-3 pages.

Metacognitive Strengths paper – 5 points
Complete the Metacognitive strengths checklist and identify the areas you most wish to improve. Write a short 2-page paper identifying three metacognitive skills you want to
target and how you plan to work on each. Relate one targeted area to how you might develop the same kind of skill in a young child. Identify (the real or fictitious child) by age and language/culture. How would you help this child specifically?

Understanding Research Abstracts 5 points + 10 points = 15 points

As a graduate student, understanding research is critical. In a small way, this begins with understanding complex ideas in a short, concise “abstract” that is generally 5-7 sentences and provides an overview of the research in a scholarly journal. We will introduce this concept to you during the semester (including how to use appropriate APA referencing) and then offer you two opportunities to demonstrate your burgeoning skills. Once for 5 points, and then, as you hone your skills, for 10 points. Consult the class calendar for more information.

Language and Cognitive Vocabulary Skills 3 x 5 = 15 points

Without the proper vocabulary skills, it is impossible to know how to understand the complexities of language development and cognition. The Early Learning Foundations and Preschool English Language resources from the Department of Education are outstanding resources for learning new terms to broaden your knowledge and fine-tune your learning and teaching strategies. Please refer to the class calendar for these three quizzes and study with the knowledge that you will be much more skilled as a result of knowing more about language and cognition through an enhanced vocabulary.

Early Childhood Educator Competencies - Handout will be provided 25 points

During the semester, a handout will be provided to help you target three early childhood competencies. You will produce a scholarly paper that integrates the competencies with the Early Learning and Development System. Thus you will weave a paper that looks recursively at teacher knowledge and skills (Competencies) and how these relate to children’s learning in language and cognition. (Demonstrate your desire to achieve MASTERY by looking up the word recursive to better understand this assignment). The paper is due November 13.

Posttest 25 points

At the beginning of the course (first night) we will take an inventory of what you already know about the Early Learning and Development System in California along with a self-report of your skills regarding studying, reading, writing, etc. This is intended as a baseline of your knowledge and will allow us to pinpoint the areas of strengths (to leverage these in our class) and areas to be developed (perhaps spending more time to
grow knowledge and understanding in these areas). In addition, it is a point of reference for the overall learning that will be taking place this semester through a posttest. The posttest will be an in class opportunity to show what you know and to reflect on this semester’s learning. The posttest will be comprehensive across the course, so knowing this ahead of time will help you use a variety of learning techniques such as underlining in your books, taking notes in class, producing review syntheses throughout the semester. EPC 634 provides a base of knowledge and a set of skills needed for Early Childhood Education mastery. You will receive a copy of the exact test two weeks prior to the in-class posttest so you will be ready to show all you know – without any mysteries! Study with a friend!

**Evaluation**

The professor and the teaching assistants will review your papers extensively. Be certain that you are providing the highest level of work possible. Remember, your written work is a permanent display of your dedication to professionalism. The investment of time to develop strong writing skills will fortify your academic success and ultimately successful advocacy for children, youth and families. Moreover, begin immediately to develop the skills you will need for all future graduate work and henceforth as an expert in early childhood education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All written work must be neatly typed (double spaced, with wide margins, standard 12-14 point font), proofread, and turned in on time.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All work must adhere to the APA Publication format – that is why your purchase and consistent use of the APA Manual is critical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Late papers may not be accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A cover sheet is required with a creative and interesting title. The template for cover sheets will be provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Papers must be clearly written, well organized, and follow a logical development of your ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing Guidelines will also be provided to help you fine-tune your writing and you are expected to use these Guidelines as a checkpoint for every written assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic honesty is strictly adhered to in this course. Any evidence of plagiarism (using other's work and not citing the reference), fabrication or cheating of any kind will be prosecuted to the fullest extend and will result in failure of this course. Please read the CSUN Catalog for specific definitions and details. You are responsible for upholding the academic integrity and quality of this institution.

All CSUN students are required to have a csun.edu email account and to check it daily for updates. This is especially critical for our class because assignments may need clarification, readings may require some assistance.
However, we do encourage discussing the readings and assignments with your classmates outside of class, and we recommend that you find a study group or study-buddy to help proof read your work before turning it in. Study groups can even be done on-line, if you are pressed for time or have problems meeting with fellow graduate students outside of class.

If you are having any problems keeping up with the readings or assignments, or if you have personal questions, please discuss these with the professor or teaching assistant. Your comments will be confidential and we will be very pleased to help you. Communication is critical!

**GRADING SCALE**

100-94 = A ♥  93-90 = A- ♣  89-87 = B+ ♦  86-83 = B ♠

We both look forward to learning more together about bridging theory and practice in early childhood education.

“The single thing which makes any person happiest is the realization that he (she) has worked up to the limits of his (her) ability and capacity. It’s all the better, of course, if this work has made a contribution to knowledge, or toward moving the human race a little farther forward.” (adapted from Neil Armstrong – American Astronaut, first person on the moon, as cited in the *LA Times*, August 26, 2012)
## APPENDIX B

### EPC 634– Calendar for fall 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 28</td>
<td>Overview of the California Early Learning System</td>
<td>Time management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 4</td>
<td>Infant-Toddler Foundations - video</td>
<td>Infant-Toddler Foundations</td>
<td>Strengths Finder paper (see handout)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 11</td>
<td>Review Infant/Toddler Foundations on Cognitive Development</td>
<td>Infant Toddler Foundations on Cognitive Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 18</td>
<td>Early Language Development</td>
<td>Metacognitive Strength paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 25</td>
<td>(Yom Kippur) – (no class meeting)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2</td>
<td>Preschool Foundations – Volume 1</td>
<td>Preschool Foundations – Volume 1</td>
<td>Preschool Foundations – Volume 1, Vocabulary of Key Terms related to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Research Abstracts – what are they?*

*How infant-toddler foundations can apply to learning in graduate school*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
<th>Language and Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 9</td>
<td>Writing <em>Using headers and other organizational schemes to deepen understanding</em></td>
<td>Preschool English Language Learners Guide (2nd ed.) <em>Good-bad words and phrases</em></td>
<td>Preschool English Language Learners Guide (2nd ed.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| October 16 | Preschool Foundations – Vol 1 Mathematics  
Number Sense, Algebra and Fractions, Measurement, Geometry, Mathematical Reasoning  
*The ‘Formula’ for a great paragraph* | Preschool Foundations – Vol 1 Mathematics | Preschool Foundations – Vocabulary of Key Terms related to English Language Learners |
<p>| October 30 | Language, Culture, and Diversity – revisited <em>Abstract practice in class</em> |                                                                                   |                                                                                       |
| November 6 | VOTE                                                                 | Curriculum Frameworks related to Language and Cognition                           | Curriculum Frameworks related to Language and Cognition                              |
| November 13| Early Childhood Educator Competencies                                  | On line: Early Childhood Educator Competencies                                    | Competencies Paper                                                                   |
| November 20| Assessing Language and Cognition using the Desired Results Development System |                                                                                   | Understanding Abstracts                                                               |
| November 27| The Desired Results Developmental System – part 2 – Families and the Environmental |                                                                                   | Review DRDP website                                                                  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scales</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 4</td>
<td>Making meaning of the Early Learning and Development System</td>
<td>Posttest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 11</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Schedule may be subject to change as deemed necessary by the professor
APPENDIX C

EPC 634          Strengths Finder         Getting to Know Yourself
Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, Ph.D.                                                                                     Fall 2012

Due September 4            Points: 5

Please go to the VIA Institute website: http://uat.viachara cter.org/

Once you are registered, the website will automatically take you to the survey page. Take the VIA Survey of Character (VIA-IS), it's 240 quick questions. Once you are finished, it will give you an instant readout of your character strengths. Think of this as a reflection on your growth and values!!

Then, please write up a short, personal reflection that answers the following questions...

1) Introduce the exercise – In undertaking the task to find my strengths, I explored a website (cite reference) that included 240 items. The assessment took about 20 minutes and … Add one paragraph that includes some details about the content and method of the assessment.

2) What were your top character strengths (you can decide if you want to address the top 3 - 5 items)? To what extend did this ring true to you? In other words, how anticipated was your response? To what extent did it surprise you? Why? One paragraph for each strength and begin by describing the strength and then giving some details about why it might have popped up – be reflective!

3) In what ways might your strengths be used to be a successful graduate student in Early Childhood Education? Specifically, identify skills that you can build upon and how they might relate to new skills you want to learn in either content or process or both.
**APPENDIX D**

**EPC 634 Metacognitive Strengths Paper**

**Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI)**

Check True or False as appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I ask myself periodically if I am meeting my goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I consider several alternatives to a problem before I answer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I try to use strategies that have worked in the past.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I pace myself while learning in order to have enough time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I understand my intellectual strengths and weaknesses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I think about what I really need to learn before I begin a task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I know how well I did once I finish a test.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I set specific goals before I begin a task.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I slow down when I encounter important information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I know what kind of information is most important to learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I ask myself if I have considered all options when solving a problem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I am good at organizing information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I consciously focus my attention on important information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I have a specific purpose for each strategy I use.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I learn best when I know something about the topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I know what the teacher expects me to learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I am good at remembering information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I use different learning strategies depending on the situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I ask myself if there was an easier way to do things after I finish a task.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I have control over how well I learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I periodically review to help me understand important relationships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I ask myself questions about the material before I begin.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I think of several ways to solve a problem and choose the best one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>I ask others for help when I don’t understand something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I can motivate myself to learn when I need to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I am aware of what strategies I use when I study.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>I find myself analyzing the usefulness of strategies while I study.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>I use my intellectual strengths to compensate for my weaknesses.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>I focus on the meaning and significance of new information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>I create my own examples to make information more meaningful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>I am a good judge of how well I understand something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>I find myself using helpful learning strategies automatically.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>I find myself pausing regularly to check my comprehension.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>I know when each strategy I use will be most effective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>I ask myself how well I accomplish my goals once I’m finished.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>I draw pictures or diagrams to help me understand while learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>I ask myself if I have considered all options after I solve a problem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>I try to translate new information into my own words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>I change strategies when I fail to understand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>I use the organizational structure of the text to help me learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>I read instructions carefully before I begin a task.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>I ask myself if what I’m reading is related to what I already know.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>I reevaluate my assumptions when I get confused.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>I organize my time to best accomplish my goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>I learn more when I am interested in the topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>I try to break studying down into smaller steps.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>I focus on overall meaning rather than specifics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>I ask myself questions about how well I am doing while I am learning something new.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>I ask myself if I learned as much as I could have once I finish a task.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>I stop and go back over new information that is not clear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>I stop and reread when I get confused.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI) Scoring Guide

Directions -- For each True on the MAI give yourself 1 point on the following charts. For each False, give yourself 0 points in the Score column. Total the score of each category and place in box.

### KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COGNITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Declarative Knowledge</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. I understand my intellectual strengths and weaknesses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I know what kind of information is most important to learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I am good at organizing information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I know what the teacher expects me to learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I am good at remembering information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I have control over how well I learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I am a good judge of how well I understand something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. I learn more when I am interested in the topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedural Knowledge</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditional Knowledge</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56. I understand when and why to use learning procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. I have control over when and why I use learning procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. I understand when and why I use learning procedures when certain conditions are presented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I try to use strategies that have worked in the past.</th>
<th>15. I learn best when I know something about the topic.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I have a specific purpose for each strategy I use.</td>
<td>18. I use different learning strategies depending the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I am aware of what strategies I use when I study.</td>
<td>26. I can motivate myself to learn when I need to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>I find myself using helpful learning strategies automatically.</td>
<td>29. I use my intellectual strengths to compensate for my weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35. I know when each strategy I use will be most effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4</strong> Total <strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Regulation of Cognition

## Planning
--Planning, goal setting, and allocating resources *prior* to learning

## Information Management Strategies
--Skills and strategy sequences used to process information more efficiently (e.g., organizing, elaborating, summarizing, selective focusing)

## Comprehension Monitoring
--Assessment of one’s learning or strategy use

## Debugging Strategies
--Strategies used to correct comprehension and performance errors

## Evaluation
--Analysis of performance and strategy effectiveness after a learning episode

### Information Management Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I slow down when I encounter important information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I consciously focus my attention on important information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>I focus on the meaning and significance of new information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>I create my own examples to make information more meaningful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>I draw pictures or diagrams to help me understand while learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>I try to translate new information into my own words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>I use the organizational structure of the text to help me learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>I ask myself if what I’m reading is related to what I already know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>I try to break studying down into smaller steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>I focus on overall meaning rather than specifics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Comprehension Monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I ask myself periodically if I am meeting my goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I consider several alternatives to a problem before I answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I ask myself if I have considered all options when solving a problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I periodically review to help me understand important relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>I find myself analyzing the usefulness of strategies while I study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>I find myself pausing regularly to check my comprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>I ask myself questions about how well I am doing while learning something new.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 10

---

**Score:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I pace myself while learning in order to have enough time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I think about what I really need to learn before I begin a task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I set specific goals before I begin a task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I ask myself questions about the material before I begin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I think of several ways to solve a problem and choose the best one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>I read instructions carefully before I begin a task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>I organize my time to best accomplish my goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 7

---

**Total:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I slow down when I encounter important information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I consciously focus my attention on important information.</td>
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<td>30.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>I draw pictures or diagrams to help me understand while learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>I try to translate new information into my own words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>I ask myself if what I’m reading is related to what I already know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>I try to break studying down into smaller steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>I focus on overall meaning rather than specifics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 7

---

129
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Debugging Strategies</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. I ask others for help when I don’t understand something.</td>
<td></td>
<td>7. I know how well I did once I finish a test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. I change strategies when I fail to understand.</td>
<td></td>
<td>18. I ask myself if there was an easier way to do things after I finish a task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. I stop and go back over new information that is not clear.</td>
<td></td>
<td>36. I ask myself how well I accomplish my goals once I’m finished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. I stop and reread when I get confused.</td>
<td></td>
<td>38. I ask myself if I have considered all options after I solve a problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. I ask myself if I learned as much as I could have once I finish a task.</td>
<td></td>
<td>49. I ask myself if I learned as much as I could have once I finish a task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 5

---

Reflection and Writing Prompt:
In the last paper you identified your top five strengths. What were they? Now consider your metacognitive strengths. What five statements on the MAI do you feel are your top strengths? How will these help you be the best graduate student/educator you can be? On the other hand, please identify two statements/qualities do you feel you need to work on to be the best student/educator? How will you accomplish this? Consider and reflect on how your strengths specifically will help you develop new skills for learning in graduate school.

Remember to have a separate cover page and reference page.
*(Reference is located under inventory statement # 52.)*

If you would like your TA to read a rough draft, E-mail her no later than Saturday, September 15, 2012 by midnight.

Final Drafts:
Please E-mail your final copy to your TA by 7:00 PM (the beginning of class) Tuesday, September 18, 2012.
APPENDIX E

Vocabulary

Language and Literacy Vocabulary

(Calendar Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 1)

Contextualized language

Decontextualized language

Onset

Orally blend

Phonological awareness

Productive language

Receptive language

Rime
English Language Learners Vocabulary

(Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning)

Chunks
Code-Switching
English Learner
Formulaic Speech
Morphology
Phonology
Pragmatics
Semantics
Sequential Bilingualism
Simultaneous Bilingualism
Syntax
Telegraphic Speech
Utterance
Math Vocabulary

(California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 1)

Attribute
Cardinality
Classification
One-to-one correspondence
Simple repeating pattern
Subitize

3D Shapes:
Cone
Cube
Cylinder
Pyramid
Rectangular Prism
Sphere
APPENDIX F


Two approaches to teaching young children science concepts, vocabulary, and scientific problem-solving skills

The present study examined the efficacy of two different approaches to teaching designed to facilitate children’s learning about science concepts and vocabulary related to objects’ floating and sinking and scientific problem-solving skills: responsive teaching (RT) and the combination of responsive teaching and explicit instruction (RT + EI). Participants included 104 children (51 boys) aged four to five years. Small groups of children were randomly assigned to one of the two intervention groups (RT, RT + EI) or to a control group. Responsive teaching (RT) reflects a common approach to teaching young children, and the combination approach (RT + EI) includes explicit instruction as well as responsive teaching. The two planned interventions were implemented with preschool children and provided evidence that (1) young children learned science concepts and vocabulary better when either responsive teaching or the combination of responsive teaching and explicit instruction was used; (2) children in the combined intervention group learned more science concepts and vocabulary and more content-specific scientific problem-solving skills than children in either the responsive teaching or control groups. Limitations, future directions, and implications for practice are also discussed.
Instruction in Spanish in pre-kindergarten classrooms and child outcomes for English language learners
Margaret Burchinal, Samuel Field, Michael L. López, Carollee Howes, Robert Pianta

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationships among proportion of instruction in Spanish, observed classroom quality, and preschool-aged children’s academic skills. Study participants included 357 Spanish-speaking 4-year-old children who attended state-funded pre-kindergarten programs in 11 states that participated in one of two studies: the National Center for Early Development and Learning’s (NCEDL) Multi-State Study of Pre-Kindergarten (Multi-State Study) and the NCEDL-NIEER State-Wide Early Education Programs Study (SWEEP Study). Children’s spring language, reading, and math scores were analyzed using multi-level models to test whether amount of instruction in Spanish and the observed classroom quality predicted skill levels at the end of pre-kindergarten. Spanish-speaking children’s reading and math scores were higher when they received more instruction in Spanish in classrooms with more responsive and sensitive teachers. These findings suggest that the provision of instruction in Spanish in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs appears to enhance acquisition of academic skills for Spanish-speaking children who enter pre-kindergarten with limited English.
Activity settings and daily routines in preschool classrooms: Diverse experiences in early learning settings for low-income children

This paper examines activity settings and daily classroom routines experienced by 3- and 4-year-old low income children in public center-based preschool programs, private center-based programs, and family child care homes. Two daily routine profiles were identified using a time-sampling coding procedure: a High Free-Choice pattern in which children spent a majority of their day engaged in child-directed free-choice activity settings combined with relatively low amounts of teacher-directed activity, and a Structured-Balanced pattern in which children spent relatively equal proportions of their day engaged in child-directed free-choice activity settings and teacher-directed small- and whole-group activities. Daily routine profiles were associated with program type and curriculum use but not with measures of process quality. Children in Structured-Balanced classrooms had more opportunities to engage in language and literacy and math activities, whereas children in High Free-Choice classrooms had more opportunities for gross motor and fantasy play. Being in a Structured-Balanced classroom was associated with children’s language scores but profiles were not associated with measures of children’s math reasoning or socioemotional behavior. Consideration of teachers’ structuring of daily routines represents a valuable way to understand nuances in the provision of learning experiences for young children in the context of current views about developmentally appropriate practice and school readiness.
We investigated whether specific input helps 3-1/2-year-olds discover that the last word in a count represents its cardinal value (i.e., the cardinal word principle). In Study 1, we contrasted four training approaches. The only approach to yield significant improvement was to label a set’s cardinality and then immediately count it. This training is consistent with previously hypothesized mechanisms based on juxtaposing a set’s cardinal label with its count in close temporal contiguity (e.g., Klahr & Wallace, 1976; Schaeffer, Eggleston, & Scott, 1974), as well as general theories of comparison and categorization (e.g., Gentner, 2005). In Study 2, we asked parents to read picture books to their preschool children and found that they rarely provide cardinal labels immediately followed by counting, even when asked to read a book about number.
APPENDIX G

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA): Formatting, Style, & Crediting Sources

Why Do We Need It?

- The APA citation style is the most commonly used format for the social sciences
- APA regulates
  - Format
  - Writing style
  - In-text citations
  - Reference List
- Why do we need it?
  - Helps establish your credibility as a researcher

APA Manual History

- Started in 1929
- Wanted to establish style rules that would systemize scientific writing, in order to increase reading comprehension
- Uniform style helps readers easily find key points and findings

General Essay Format

- Preparing Manuscript for Submission: 8.03
  - Typed, double-spaced, and printed on 8.5\" x 11\" paper
  - 1\" margins on all sides
  - 12 pt. font, Times New Roman
  - Number pages and include a running head/beginning with the first page ("running head" only on title page)
  - Headers are highly recommended
- Spacing after Punctuation Marks: 4.03
  - Insert one space after: commas, colons, semicolons
  - Insert two spaces after: punctuation marks at the end of a sentence

Heading Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Heading Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Centered, boldface, uppercase and lowercase method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush left, boldface, uppercase and lowercase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph ending with a period; question mark or abbreviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indented, boldface, italics, lowercase paragraph ending with a period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Indented, italics, lowercase paragraph ending with a period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heading Style (continued)

- Methods: Level (1)
  - Site of Study: Level (2)
- Participants: Level (2)
- Teachers: Level (3)
- Students: Level (3)
- Results: Level (1)
- Spatial Ability: Level (2)
- Tool use: Level (3)
- Teachers in Training: Level (4)
- Test Two: Level (3)
- Kinesthetic Ability: Level (2)

(American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 86-89)
Writing Style

- Tone - 3.07
  - Present ideas in an interesting and compelling style
  - Yet in a professional, noncombative manner
  - Correct: Fong and Niidomi did not address...

- Economy of Expression - 3.08
  - Say only what needs to be said. Change based on the fact that to become, at the present time to now, and for the purpose of to simply yes or to...
  - Avoid redundancy

[American Psychological Association, 2010, pp. 96-97]

Writing Style

- Precision and Clarity - 3.09
  - Word choice must be exact
  - Avoid this, that, these, and those when they refer to something or someone in the previous sentence

- Linguistic Devices - 3.10
  - Avoid clichés
  - Attracting attention to words instead of ideas is inappropriate for scientific writing

[American Psychological Association, 2010, pp. 98-99]

Grammar and Usage

- Verbs - 3.08
  - Use the active rather than the passive voice
  - Correct: Gosling (2010) conducted the surveys...
  - Incorrect: The survey was conducted...

- Select tense carefully
  - Correct: Parker (2010) presented similar results
  - Incorrect: Parker (2010) presents similar....

[American Psychological Association, 2010, pp. 77-79]

In-Text Citations

- Direct Quotations of Sources - 6.03
  - If the quotation is less than 40 words, incorporate it into the text
  - If quotation is more than 40 words, use a free standing block by starting the quote on a new line and indenting half an inch from the left margin

[American Psychological Association, 2010, pp. 103-104]

In-Text Citations

- One Work By One Author - 6.11
  - Thomas (2009) found that...
  - Each author results in a more severe course (Thomas, 2009).

- One Work By Multiple Authors - 6.12
  - If there are two authors...
    - As Walker and Allen (2003) demonstrated...
    - ...the results show a five-point increase (Walker & Allen, 2003).

[American Psychological Association, 2010, pp. 74-75]
In-Text Citations

- **Secondary Sources**
  - Use secondary sources sparingly.
  - Cite the secondary source in the reference list.
  - Insert name of the original work and give a citation for the secondary source.
- Example: Racial injustice is one of the ecological risk factors for child psychopathology, according to Cosa et al. (cited in Greenhaw, Dominitz, & Bordenberger, 2000).

(American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 179)

Paraphrasing

- **Paraphrasing Material**
  - Include author and year at the end of the sentence in parentheses.
  - Include another form of social cognition in self-efficacy (Thomas, 2005).

(Purdue Owl, 2012)

In-Text Citations

- **Signal Words**
  - Use signal words like:
    - Acknowledged
    - Cited
    - Maintained
    - Responded
    - Reported
    - Argued
    - Concluded
  - Ex: Thomas (2005) concluded that...

(Purdue Owl, 2012)

Reference List

- **Title**
  - Order of References in the Reference List - 6.25
  - Order entries alphabetically by last name.
  - Last Name, First initial. Middle initial.
  - (Ex: Bradley, B.W.)

(American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 810)

Reference List

- **Title**
  - Capitalize only the first letter of the first word of a title and subtitle, the first word after a colon or a dash in the title, and proper nouns.
  - Do not capitalize the first letter of the second word in a hyphenated compound word.
  - Ex: Childhood poverty: Implications for school readiness and early childhood education.

(American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 819)
References


APPENDIX H

Faculty and Student Researcher
HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTOCOL APPROVAL FORM
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

1. Title of research  Preemptive Action Against Graduate Student Underachievement: The Effects of a Graduate Level Reading and Writing Course on First Year Graduate Student Academic Achievement

2. Principal Investigator  Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, Professor
   Major or Department Educational Psychology and Counseling - Early Childhood Education

3. Campus Address:  2227 College of Education  Mail drop  8265  Campus Extension 2529
   Email Address  carrie.rothstein-fisch@csun.edu

4. Co-Investigators:  1. Aura Perez  Student: xx  Faculty:
   2. Danielle Hartwig  Student: ☒  Faculty: ☐

5. Name of Faculty Advisor  Dr. Carrie Rothstein-Fisch  Faculty Advisor ext. 2529
   Faculty Advisor email address:  carrie.rothstein-fisch@csun.edu

6. Projected Dates of Data Collection:
   Begin Subject Recruitment/Data Collection: 08/2012  End Data Collection: 12/2012

7. Course prefix and number for thesis/grad. project  EPC 698C (for Perez & Hartwig)  Course title Thesis

8. Check one:  ☐ Unfunded  ☒ Funded  Name of Funding Source: Beck Grant  Date (to be) submitted fall 2013

9. History of Protocol:  ☒ New  ☐ Continuing (Previous Approval Date ________)

10. Existing Data: Will this study involve the use of existing data or specimens (Data/specimens currently existing at the time you submitted this project)? No  xxYes
    If Yes, attach documentation indicating the authorization to access the data if not publicly available and if accessing from an agency outside of CSUN.

11. Subjects to be recruited (Check all that apply)
    a. ☒ Adults (18+ years)
    b. ☐ Minors specify age: _____
    c. ☐ Cognitively or Emotionally Impaired Persons
    e. ☒ CSUN Students
    f. ☐ Others (describe) __________________________
    g. ☐ Using existing data

12. Data will include (check all variables that apply): You must specify all of this information in the Project Information form.
    a. ☒ names of people  h. ☐ marital status  o. ☐ zip code
    b. ☐ email address  i. ☐ income  p. ☒ other, specify: assessment scores and narratives on assignments, TA journals, statements
    c. ☐ street address  j. ☐ social security number
    d. ☐ phone numbers  k. ☐ job title
    e. ☒ age  l. ☐ names of employers
    f. ☐ gender  m. ☐ types of employers

143
13. Will subjects be identified by a coding system (i.e., other than by name)? YES ☒ NO ☐

14. Is compensation offered? YES ☐ NO ☒

15. If yes, describe (e.g., gift cert., cash, research credit). ________________________

16. Number of Subjects: 29

17. Method of recruiting (elaborate in Section 2 of Project Information Form): CSUN graduate students enrolled in EPC 634

18. Will there be any deception (that is, not telling subjects exactly what is being tested)? YES ☐ NO ☒ (Provide justification for deception and explain how subjects are debriefed in Section 2 of the Project Information form)

19. Potential Risk Exposure: ☐ Physical ☒ Psychological ☐ Economic ☐ Legal ☐ Social ☐ Other, specify: no real risk is associated with this research

   (Elaborate in Section 4 of the Project Information Form)

20. Data Collection Instruments (Check all that apply) 21. Recorded by (Check all that apply)

   a. ☒ standardized tests a. ☒ written notes
   b. ☒ questionnaire b. ☐ audio tape
   c. ☒ interview c. ☐ video tape/film
   d. ☐ other (specify) d. ☐ photography
e. ☐ observation e. ☒ observation

22. Administered by (Check all that apply) 23. Findings used for (Check all that apply)

   a. ☒ in person (group setting) a. ☒ publication
   b. ☒ in person (individual) b. ☒ evaluation
   c. ☐ telephone c. ☒ needs assessment
   d. ☒ text message d. ☒ thesis/dissertation
   e. ☐ email/website e. ☐ other (specify): ________________________
f. ☐ mail
g. ☐ other (specify): ________________________

24. Are drugs or radioactive materials used in this study? YES ☐ NO ☒

   If yes, then list the drugs or radioactive materials used in Section 1 of the Project Information form and provide a detailed description of each, with justification for its use.

25. Are any medical devices or other equipment to be used in this study? YES ☐ NO ☒

   If yes, describe in detail the medical devices or equipment to be used in Section 2 of the Project Information Form.

26. Did you attach a copy of any questionnaire(s), survey instrument(s) and/or interview schedule(s) referred to in this protocol? YES ☒ NO ☐

27. Is a letter of permission for subject recruitment attached (if recruiting from an organization outside of CSUN)? YES ☐ NO ☒

28. SIGNATURES:

   **All Signatures must be obtained prior to submission. Student projects must have faculty advisor’s signature.
Faculty signature on this Protocol Approval Form indicates that:

- You and your student are familiar with the regulations for human subject research as defined by California State University, Northridge's Standing Advisory Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (SACPHS) and you and your student intend to follow those regulations when conducting this study. You have reviewed and approve of this Protocol Approval Form and accompanying documentation.
- You approve of the manner in which human subjects will be involved in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Faculty Advisor</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Student Investigator's Signature (Graduate Student)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**FOR SACPHS AND RESEARCH OFFICE USE ONLY**

- [ ] Noted, exempt
- [ ] Approved, Minimal Risk
- [ ] Approved, Greater than Minimal Risk
- [ ] Approved, Expedited Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chair, SACPHS</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>date received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expedited Reviewer(s):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

California State University, Northridge
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Preemptive Action Against Graduate Student Underachievement: The Effects of a Graduate Level Reading and Writing Course on First Year Graduate Student Academic Achievement

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM
Faculty Researcher and Graduate Students

Dr. Carrie Rothstein-Fisch
Early Childhood Education, M.A. Program Coordinator
Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling
Early Childhood Education
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330-8265
(818) 677-2529
carrie.rothstein-fisch@csun.edu

Aura Perez, Thesis Student
Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling
Early Childhood Education
(818) 665-6871
aura.perez.874@my.csun.edu

Danielle Hartwig, Thesis Student
Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling
Early Childhood Education
(610) 715-3819
danielle.hartwig.140@my.csun.edu
PURPOSE OF STUDY
In the fall of 2011, 40% of the students in their first semester of the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education were unable to pass a required course with a passing grade of B or better. This represents a trend that has increased dramatically over the past five years and with that in mind, a Beck Instructional Improvement Grant was secured by the Principal Investigator (Dr. Rothstein-Fisch) to create innovations in teaching and learning about reading and writing at the graduate level. Entering and struggling graduate students in the Master of Arts program in Early Childhood Education were strongly encouraged to enroll in an existing class (an elective that emphasizes language and cognition for children – EPC 634) as a vehicle for targeted assignments that are likely to improve the students own language and cognition skills. Thus the purpose of the study is to examine a variety of data sources collected as part of the course for insights into the challenges and strategies for success first-semester graduate students face. The data consists of class assignments, exams, surveys, and the teaching assistants’ journals as they support their fellow students’ learning throughout the semester.

SUBJECTS
Inclusion Requirements
You are eligible to participate in this study if you…
- Are at least 18 years of age or older
- Are a CSUN graduate student taking EPC 634 – Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years

Exclusion Requirements
You are not eligible to participate in this study if you...
- Are not least 18 years of age or older
- Are not a CSUN graduate student taking EPC 634 – Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years

Time Commitment
This study will not involve any time in addition to that already required as part of EPC 634

PROCEDURES
The following procedures will occur: You will be enrolled in EPC 634 and you will complete all the course assignments.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include those normally associated with any course: fatigue, boredom, mild emotional discomfort,
embarrassment. However, no additional risk is involved that goes beyond a normal, first-semester graduate level course.

Plan for minimizing risks identified:
Participant information will be confidential. Students in EPC 634 can opt out of the research if desired.

This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in any graduate level course.

**BENEFITS**

*Subject Benefits*
The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study include an increase in reading comprehension, improved writing skills, improved metacognition, improved time management skills, and improved knowledge of language and cognition in children.

*Benefits to Others or Society*
The possible benefits to society include an increased awareness of how to improve graduate school preparedness and how to initiate academic achievement with at-risk students.

**ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION**
The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate as part of the data base. This would allow students to complete the course as required in the syllabus, but ask to have their data expunged from the research. Otherwise, all students enrolled in EPC 634 will have their assignments included in a combined data base (data will be aggregated and not identified with any specific student).

**COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT**

*Compensation for Participation*
You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

*Costs*
There is no cost to you for participation in this study.

*Reimbursement*
You will not be reimbursed for any out of pocket expenses, such as parking or transportation fees.
WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES
You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately. The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not complete the course.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Subject Identifiable Data
- All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed and replaced with a code. A list linking the code and your identifiable information will be kept separate from the research data.

Data Storage
- All research data will be stored electronically on a secure computer with password protection.

Data Access
The researchers named on the first page of this form will have access to your class records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

Data.
- The researchers intend to keep the research data for approximately 10 years and then it will be destroyed.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS
If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT
You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep.
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University,
Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

This participation represents your willingness to be used as part of the research about graduate students. You are not released from any assignments normally required for the class, but you may choose to be excluded from the research about the course and how students learn.

*I agree to participate in the study.*

___________________________________________________  __________________
Participant Signature  Date

___________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

___________________________________________________  __________________
Researcher Signature  Date

___________________________________________________
Printed Name of Researcher
### List of All Data Source Collected in EPC 634

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPC 634 Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years Intake Form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPC 634 Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years –Pretest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength Finder paper (written assignment)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Metacognitive Strength paper (written assignment)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Quiz # 1 (Language and Literacy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Quiz # 2 (English Language Learners)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Quiz # 3 (Mathematics)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding Research Abstracts Pretest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding Research Abstracts Quiz # 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding Research Abstracts Quiz # 2 (Posttest)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Semester Feedback form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Proposal</td>
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<td>Ona (2012) Questionnaire</td>
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<td>EPC 634 Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years –Posttest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Posttest Take Home Reflective Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA Journals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX K

EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early Years

Please provide alternative addresses (permanent and local) and all email addresses (csun.edu and otherwise)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City, zip code</th>
<th>Emails</th>
<th>Cell phone</th>
<th>Home phone</th>
<th>Work phone</th>
<th>Fax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In what courses are you currently enrolled?

Are you currently working: Yes  No

If yes, where, for how long, and in what capacity?

Do you have access to a laptop that you can bring to class on specific evenings?

Yes  No

Does it have high speed internet capabilities? Yes  No

What are your strengths?

How do you manage your “study” time?

When is your birthday? (You don’t have to add the year if you don’t wish to do so)
APPENDIX L

Mid-Semester Feedback Form
EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years

Name ________________________ (optional) Date _________________

What are the 3 most important things you have learned so far? Explain the importance of them.

What are 3 or more things you would like to learn or skills you would like to work on as the class continues?

Do you have any suggestions on how we can better support you and your learning?

Who is your T.A.?

Do you feel like you are being supported by your T.A. academically? How so? If not, how can your T.A. be of further assistance?

Have you become more in tune with your metacognitive skills as a result of this class? If you have not, what are some of your suggestions on how we can heighten this skill?

Have your time management skills changed?

Do you think your writing skills have improved as a result of this class? If you have not, what are some of your suggestions on how we can heighten this skill?

How are you managing your reading for the course? Do you generally read online materials only from the computer or do you print things out? Why?

Please rate: The instructor presents meaningful learning experiences in class – circle one
5 – Wow. I am inspired
4 – Yes, I am learning important information
3 – Sometimes yes, sometimes no
2 – Occasionally
1 – Zzzzz
Comments:
APPENDIX M

EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early Years – Content Pretest
Identify the key, sweeping, and most salient aspects for each topic in 5-7 bullet points in relationship to language and cognition. You may need to leave sections blank, and that’s fine. You are here to learn… you will repeat this test at the end of the semester and will have much more to say about each section! However, do try your best to provide as much detail and specific examples as possible. What can you say about the following content areas? Be sure to identify if you KNOW (K) these answers or are SPECULATING (S) about them. Put a K or S out to the left side of the margin to identify what is known versus what you are hypothesizing.

1. What are the key features of the California Early Learning System?

2. What are the Infant-Toddler Foundations? What are the principles and domains of development with some specific examples from each domain?

3. Describe the content of the Preschool Learning Foundations Volume 1, Language and Literacy.

4. What are the 10 Principles Described in the Preschool English Language Learners Guide?

5. Describe the content of the Preschool Learning Foundations Volume 1, English Language Development.

6. Preschool Learning Foundations Volume 1, Mathematics – what are the strands and sub-strands of the Math Foundations.


8. Children with Special Needs – what are some of their challenges and how would you mitigate them with regard to language and cognition?

9. Language, Culture, and Diversity – what is their relationship to each other?

10. What are the key features of the Curriculum Frameworks?

11. What are the 12 areas contained in the California Early Childhood Education Competencies? Which two competencies are your strongest? Which two are your areas of greatest growth potential? Give examples.

12. What is the Desired Results Developmental System? What are the components? How are children assessed? What is the purpose of gathering the data?
Reflective Questions (second section of pretest)

Language and Cognition in Graduate Education

1. How well do you manage your time?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score?

2. How well do you listen (pay attention and tune in with concentration) in class?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score?

3. How well do you take notes in class?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score?

4. How well do you write a sentence?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score? In other words, what do you consider elements of a well-written sentence?

5. How well do you write a paragraph?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score? What makes a paragraph succeed from a reader’s standpoint?

6. How would you describe your vocabulary in Standard English? Large, limited, very limited? Why?

7. What organizational schemes and learning strategies do you use to deepen your understanding while reading?

9. What is a research abstract?

10. What are the differences between primary and secondary sources?

11. Describe your most successful studying strategies. What time, place, supplies, etc. are most helpful?

13. What do you consider to be your personal strengths academically and professionally?
The final score for the Post Test will be 40 points based on the following rubric.

3 points for spelling and clarity –
• 1 points for spelling
• 2 points for clarity of answers

3 points for Question # 1-10 and # 12
• 5-7 bullet point answers
• Providing complete explanations and descriptions of concepts
• Providing examples

4 points for Question # 11
• Explanation of concept
• 2 strengths and 2 areas of growth

[Partial credit is given if necessary. Extra points can be earned on any questions where students exceed the target information asked and further demonstrate knowledge about the concept bringing their level of thinking to a higher depth.]
EPC 634: Language and Cognition – Posttest
The goal is to show your depth of understanding these ideas. Generate about 5-7 key points that can be bulleted to save space, reflecting every concept indentified (definition, key vocabulary with definitions associated with the theory, nuances regarding applications). Save one bullet point for synthesis of the grand idea in merging each week’s topics – this is the “so what” concept. Use only the class readings to draw from.

1. What are the key features of the California Early Learning System?

2. What are the Infant-Toddler Foundations? What are the principles and domains of development with some specific examples from each domain?

3. Describe the content of the Preschool Learning Foundations Volume 1, Language and Literacy.

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6. Preschool Learning Foundations Volume 1, Mathematics – what are the strands and sub-strands of the Math Foundations.


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12. What is the Desired Results Developmental System? What are the components? How are children assessed? What is the purpose of gathering the data?
APPENDIX P

EPC 634 – Posttest – Take home reflective assignment 10 points.

This is a take-home reflection on how your learning strategies have changed over the semester. We want elaborated, precise responses with as much specific detail as possible. We want to learn from your learning!! Please carefully consider each of the questions below. Submit the responses on or before November 27 to your TA. Keep in mind your well-considered responses will help Aura and Danielle for their theses, it will also influence us in our new curriculum as we move forward.

THIS TEMPLATE SHOULD BE COPIED INTO A WORD DOCUMENT TITLED; (YOUR NAME, POSTTEST REFLECTIONS). Use as much space as you wish to provide elaborated and thoughtful comments! You can earn extra credit points for putting thoughtful reflection and critical ideas into the mix!

Language and Cognition in Graduate Education – Metacognitive Skills and Strategies.
Part I – About You

1. How well do you manage your time now?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score?
   C. Do you think it has changed since the beginning of class? How and why? Be very specific.

2. How well do you listen (pay attention and tune in with concentration) in class?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score?
   C. Has this changed over the semester? If so, why? If not, why not? Be very specific.

3. How well do you take notes in class?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score?
   C. How helpful were your notes during your preparation for the posttest? Why? What did you learn about your notetaking?
   D. Has your notetaking improved? Why or why not? Be very specific.
4. How well do you write a sentence?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score? In other words, what do you consider elements of a well-written sentence?
   C. What have you learned about sentences this semester? What are some specific new concepts or “dos” you have incorporated in your writing? Where and how have you learned these? In other words, through what experiences? In what classes? Using what techniques?.
   D. What are some “don’ts” you still need to work on?

5. How well do you write a paragraph?
   A. Circle one: 5 = very good  4 = good  3 = ok  2 = bad  1 = very bad
   B. Why did you give yourself that score? What makes a paragraph succeed from a reader’s standpoint?
   C. Looking back on your papers, what have you learned about paragraphs? Be honest!

6. How has your vocabulary in Standard English changed over the semester? Why?

7. What organizational schemes and learning strategies do you use to deepen your understanding while reading? Have these changed at all over the semester? Why or why not?

8. What is a research abstract?

9. What are the differences between primary and secondary sources?

10. Describe your most successful studying strategies. What time, place, supplies, etc. are most helpful? What has been added to your successful strategies? Have you replaced obstacles in your life that have prevented you from dedicating yourself to studying?

11. What do you consider to be your personal strengths academically and professionally? Have these changed over the semester?

Part II – About your TAs
In what ways did Danielle or Aura provide assistance? Please comment on all that apply and pair the comment with the specific TA. If you worked with only one TA, highlight her name.

Part III – About the Class and Instructor
1. What have been the greatest benefits of this class for your writing and/or reading?

2. What suggestions can you offer to improve the class? Be specific and honest!
3. Looking back, which topics seemed most interesting to you and why?

4. What were the best parts of class? What were the worst?

5. What should Dr. Rothstein-Fisch do to improve?

6. What should Dr. Rothstein-Fisch continue to emphasize or use as a teaching strategy?
APPENDIX Q

APA Pretest

EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years
Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, Ph.D. & Aura Perez, TA

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA): Formatting, Style, & Crediting Sources

1) Which format does the APA NOT prefer?
   A) Typed, double-spaced, and printed on 8.5” x 11” paper
   B) 1” margins on all sides
   C) 12 pt. font, Times New Roman
   D) Insert one space after: punctuation marks at the end of a sentence
   E) Insert two spaces after: punctuation marks at the end of a sentence

2) Match the following heading descriptions with the appropriate heading level.

   - Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase 
     Level 4
   - Flush Left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase 
     Level 3
   - Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph ending with a period. 
     Level 1
   - Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph ending with a period. 
     Level 2

3) True or False? The APA manual says you should avoid this, that, these, and those when they refer to something or someone in the previous sentence.
   A) True
   B) False

4) Which tone does the APA prefer?
   A) Fong and Nisbett did not address….
   B) Fong and Nisbett completely overlooked….
   C) Fong and Nisbett failed miserably to prove….
   D) Fong and Nisbett formed a rockband….

5) Which tense is correct?
   A) Parker (2011) presented similar results
   B) Parker (2011) presents similar results
   C) Parker (2011) had presents from her birthday
6) If you use a direct quotation, and if it is more than 40 words, what should you do?
   A) Incorporate it into the text
   B) Use a free standing block by starting the quote on a new line and indenting half an inch from the left margin
   C) Forget using it because it bogs down the reader and interferes with the flow of the paper
   D) Just copy the quote and pretend you made it up yourself

7) Which first time in-text citation is correct, if there are three, four, or five authors?
   A) Sparrow, Coleman, Walker, Monte, Sparkler, Donuts, and Fandago (2007)…
   B) Sparrow, Coleman, and Walker (2007) found…
   C) Sparrow et al. (2007)

8) Which first time in-text citation is correct, if there are six or more authors?
   A) Jolly, Walker, Bradley, Coleman, Berrios, & Pattinson (2008) found….
   B) Jolly, Walker, Bradley, Coleman, Berrios, and Pattinson (2008) found….
   C) Jolly et al. (2008) found….
   D) Jolly et. al. (2008) found…

9) According to the APA manual, which in-text citation option is correct when paraphrasing material?
   A) Trick question – you only have to include the reference in your reference list
   B) Include the author and the year at the end of the sentence in parentheses
   C) Include the author and the year at the end of the sentence in brackets

10) According to the APA manual, which reference list format is correct?
    A) “References” should be centered and in bold at the top of the page
    B) Reference list should be double spaced and the entries should have a hanging indent
    C) Order entries alphabetically by first name
    D) All of the above

11) Which article title is correctly formatted, according to the APA?
    A) Childhood Poverty: Implications For School Readiness And Early Childhood Education
B) Childhood poverty: implications for school readiness and early childhood education
C) Childhood poverty: Implications for school readiness and early childhood education

12) Which reference is correct for an edited book?

13) What does DOI stand for?
A) Digital Obscure Information
B) Digital Object Identifier
C) Digital On-line Information

14) When citing a journal article, when do you include the volume number?
A) If each issue of a journal begins on page 1, give the issue number in parentheses immediately after the volume number
B) If a journal is paginated continuously throughout all issues, give the issue number in parentheses immediately after the volume number
C) If each issue of a journal begins with an x, give the issue number in parentheses immediately after the volume number

15) Which reference if correct, when there is no author for a web page?
APA Posttest

EPC 634: Language and Concept Development in the Early School Years
Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, Ph.D. & Aura Perez, TA

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA): Formatting, Style, & Crediting Sources

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   B) 1” margins on all sides
   C) 12 pt. font, Times New Roman
   D) Insert one space after: punctuation marks at the end of a sentence
   E) Insert two spaces after: punctuation marks at the end of a sentence

2) Match the following heading descriptions with the appropriate heading level.
   - Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Level 4
   - Flush Left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Level 3
   - Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph ending with a period Level 1
   - Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase paragraph ending with a period Level 2

3) True or False? The APA manual says you should avoid this, that, these, and those when they refer to something or someone in the previous sentence.
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6) If you use a direct quotation, and if it is more than 40 words, what should you do?
A) Incorporate it into the text
B) Use a free standing block by starting the quote on a new line and indenting half an inch from the left margin
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   D) Jolly et. al. (2008) found…

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   C) Include the author and the year at the end of the sentence in brackets

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    A) “References” should be centered and in bold at the top of the page
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    C) Order entries alphabetically by first name
    D) All of the above

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C) If each issue of a journal begins with an x, give the issue number in parentheses immediately after the volume number

15) Which reference is correct, when there is no author for a web page?
APPENDIX R

What Can you Learn from a Research Abstract?
EPC 634  fall 2012 Rothstein-Fisch

1. Cite the reference in APA style

2. Write a short summary of what you think each sentence tells about the study
   1)

   2)

   3)

   4)

   5)

   6)

3. What words are challenging for you because they are unfamiliar?

4. What words have you learned this semester that make your reading easier or enhance your understanding?

5. What would you like to know more about in this study? Why?
Scoring Rubric for the Deconstruction of Abstracts
Carrie Rothstein-Fisch  fall 2012  EPC 634

The final score for the abstracts will be 10 points based on the following rubric. For the intermediary assignment for 5 points, cut each section into half with regard to the number of points that can be earned. Feel free to give .25 points too. Begin with full credit and then subtract .25 points for each error.

2 points for the correct reference –
• 1 point for getting all the correct information in the right order
• 1 point for all the right punctuation in the right spot

5 points for paraphrasing correctly
• Roughly one point for each tell-back sentence that is clearly correct in demonstrating understanding of the sentence.
• Take off .25 points when a sentence has a section that is ambiguous, when it is not accurate, when it fails to contain vital information.
• If it misses the whole idea, it’s minus 1 for that sentence.

2 points for correct grammar, syntax in the tell-back
• Take off .25 points for each tell-back sentence that is incomplete
• Take off points for spelling errors, grammar, and syntax

1 point for spelling
• Take off .25 points for each misspelled word.

Be sure to write comments at the end of the paper with the strengths you see and the areas you want the student to develop.