

Results

After 16 days, the monitoring sheet was collected. Of the 44 participants, 38 turned in the sheet. Of the 38 turned in, 28 of the sheets listed 10 or more words, 7 sheets listed between 2 and 10 words, 3 sheets listed only one word, and 6 sheets were not turned in at all. Overall, students cited using context clues most frequently at 53%. Utilizing word parts was the second most common at 39%. Using reference books was the third common strategy with 8%. Of the 53% of the time students used context clues to determine meaning of unknown words, the meanings were accurate 58% of the time. Of the 39% of the time students use word parts to determine meaning of unknown words, the meanings were accurate 63% of the time. Of the 8% of the time students used reference books to determine meaning of unknown words, the meanings were accurate 96% of the time. However, students were not asked to apply the meanings in more than one outlet. Table A documents results.

Table A

Strategy	Percentage Used	Percentage Used Effectively to Determine Meaning
Word Parts	39%	63%
Context Clues	53%	58%
Reference Book	8%	96%

The results from the monitoring sheets also revealed that students used more than one strategy quite frequently. Students used more than one strategy 54% of the time. Students most frequently combined contexts clues and word parts to gain meaning. Students used this combination 43% of the time at an accuracy rate of 69%. Students also combined context clues and reference books 7% of the time with meaning achieved 74% of the time. Again, it is

important to note that students were not asked to apply meaning. Students combined word parts and reference books 4% of the time with meaning achieved 87% of the time. Table B displays the results from strategies used in combination.

Table B

Strategies Combined	Percentage Used	Percentage Used Effectively to Determine Meaning
Word Parts and Context Clues	43%	69%
Context Clues and Reference Book	7%	74%
Word Parts and Reference Book	4%	79%

Discussion

Results from this short study reveal interesting information about how students learn new vocabulary, what strategies they feel most comfortable utilizing, and the effectiveness of each strategy. From research results and observations, it is noted that students most commonly used context clues whether independently or in combination with another strategy. Prior to teaching any of the strategies, students cited this as one way to determine the meaning of an unknown word. Therefore, showing they have prior knowledge of this strategy and feel more comfortable using this word learning strategy. Despite familiarity and frequency, this strategy used independently did not produce the best results, which is reflective of previous research that argues context clues may confuse meaning or not reveal accurate meaning of a word (Nagy & Scott, 2000; Phillips et al., 2008).

The word learning strategy which yielded the highest percentage of accurate meaning was word parts/morphological awareness with a percentage slightly higher than context clues.

Interestingly, students did not mention this as a way to learn new words when initially brainstorming ideas despite studying Greek and Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes throughout the year. Research supports the use and effectiveness of word parts and argues more time should be spent teaching and developing this strategy (Nagy & Scott, 2000; Rasinski et al., 2011). As evidenced by my students' results, this strategy is effective, but may not be students' first choice.

Additionally, as documented in numerous research studies, the effectiveness of using reference books is difficult to analyze and assess even after teaching this strategy to my students. Students did not choose to use this strategy frequently (Nagy & Scott, 2000; Phillips et al., 2008). The reason for this infrequent use is most likely due to limited resources; we have a short supply of reference books in the classroom and do not have computers for students to access online dictionaries. Additionally, I have noticed that a lot of my students do not like to search for a dictionary or search through it. Word learning strategies and context clues can be used without having to do extra work. However, when students did use a reference book to determine meaning, the accuracy of their definition was the highest. This, of course, is because the dictionary provides a correct definition. The downfall of this study is that I did not ask students to apply the definition or record the context of which the word was used, so I could not check to see if they chose the right definition. If this had been done, results may have been different.

Research studies also highlight the importance of students' possessing the ability and knowledge to use multiple strategies to unravel meaning. Students should not be dependent on one strategy to use for every new word they encounter; this is ineffective (Harmon, 2001). Raising metacognitive awareness teaches students to select and try different strategies until the meaning fits, or makes sense (Spedding & Chan, 1993). Increasing this awareness also reinforces the importance of recognizing when one does not know a word or idea. This is a critical

component of word learning strategies, especially combining word learning strategies because students must continue to reassess vocabulary meaning until they feel they have a true understanding of a word. It makes sense that my research as well as the work of other researchers have revealed that the most effective way to teach vocabulary strategies is to teach students to use a multi-faceted approach and not be solely dependent on one strategy to provide meaning every time (Barton, 2001; Harmon, 2001; Nagy & Scott, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Based on the wealth of research reviewed in this study along with both action research projects, all indicate it to be wise for teachers to model and teach many different strategies for students, varying for age, grade and ability. Much of the research has shown several key points consistently. Teachers must teach students how to use metacognitive skills, which include metalinguistic strategies and self-regulation of their own thinking. Students must be exposed to many different kinds of words and have many meaningful encounters with the words in order to master them in speech and writing. Teachers must teach students that no one strategy will work all of the time, and that any over-reliance upon one in particular will not lead to success; students must learn to be flexible in their thinking and strategy application. The research reviewed and conducted in this paper all supports these valuable statements on how students use word learning strategies in order to gain vocabulary.