Effects of dialogue and journaling on reading comprehension

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The Effects of Dialogue and Journaling on Reading Comprehension

By

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A Graduate Field Experience

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Case Study

Introduction

Background Information of Researcher and Participant

At the start of the case study, I begin my fifth year teaching at private independent school in an urban/suburban area. At this school, I worked as an ELL (English Language Learning) Specialist for the first three years of my teaching career. This is my second year teaching fifth grade Reading. My classes have approximately twenty students each. In our school, middle school starts at grade five, and this is when students begin attending classes with multiple teachers. The student population at our school is 70% Caucasian, the other 30% of the population consists of Middle Eastern, International, Hispanic, Asian, Native American and African-American students. Some are English Language Learners. Financial assistance makes it possible for 51% of our students to attend our school. All forty-four students in my classroom have an opportunity to participate in the study. Thirty-seven chose to participate.

Lilly is an enthusiastic ten-year old who came to our private, independent school in third grade. This year, she is starting fifth grade. From the start of this year, she was an eager student who enjoyed the idea of working closely with me in Reading class. Lilly was always motivated to learn, but sometimes became frustrated when she did not comprehend what was read to her or what she independently read. Many times the amount of text was overwhelming for her, and her confidence wavered. At times, her confidence was connected to her emotional state; when she was feeling down, she was less successful. I was patient and reassured her that she would be able to understand the text when we used strategies and talked with our classmates during the readings. Lilly and I had good rapport, as we had worked together occasionally in third and fourth grade. Lilly’s mother was concerned about her reading difficulty, and we kept in close
contact regarding Lilly’s progress. I continued to give them recommendations of strategies to use at home to support Lilly’s reading growth.

**Lilly’s Strengths and Areas of Need**

After some academic concerns during Lilly’s third grade year, she was tested in a number of areas including reading. This testing revealed that Lilly was strong in vocabulary, visual processing, oral expression, and fair in reading fluency. However, she was behind in letter-word identification, spelling, and more than a year and a half behind in oral comprehension. I will discuss Lilly’s most current testing results in chapter three. While it is not customary for my school to “label” students with a diagnosis, Lilly has a Student Learning Plan (SLP). An SLP is our school’s version of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). While these terms are interchangeable, I will use the term IEP in this document to provide continuity with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and professional articles.

At our private independent school, students receive interventions before testing occurs. Teachers and the Learning Specialists differentiate accordingly, so students are given every opportunity to be successful. Therefore Lilly has received assistance from our Learning Specialist for almost three years even though she was tested two years ago. The Learning Specialist and the classroom teachers modify curriculum based on Lilly’s needs. The challenges indicated in Lilly’s IEP showed up, though inconsistent at times, in my testing.

Since it was identified that Lilly’s receptive skills are an area of challenge, teachers in compliance with her IEP give her extra time to process and comprehend verbal and written instructions and complete assignments. Lilly’s understanding is constantly monitored. She restates all oral and written directions, and practices reading comprehension strategies with the help of her teachers or the Learning Specialist. When appropriate, teachers give her classroom
notes (instead of having her write them), as well as novels for her to pre-read (independently or on audio-books). Additionally she receives reading instruction in small group settings.

**Learning Disabilities and IDEA**

Lilly has been identified as having learning challenges in reading. Since her challenges have been identified, she is protected under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and its six principles. Lilly receives her appropriate education by receiving support from her teachers and Learning Specialist in the private school she attends. This gives her the education she needs.

Lilly’s diagnosis was determined through appropriate and relevant evaluations. She receives educational services and modifications that address her individual needs as stated in her IEP. Since Lilly has challenges in reading, it affects her progress in the general curriculum; therefore, her IEP includes modifications in the general curriculum. She receives additional reading instruction in a small group setting. Her IEP also includes modifications made to the administration of assessments, such as time extensions, or having the material read to her. Lilly receives the majority of her education in the general education class with supportive and supplemental aids. This was determined to be her least restrictive environment (LRE). This allows her to succeed in learning with her peers without learning challenges. The only times she is not in the general education classroom is when she is meeting in small groups for reading instruction with the Learning Specialist. Her mother is very involved, and is also an advocate for Lilly’s needs.

**Connection to Common Core State Standards**

As of June 2, 2010, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction joined the movement of states to have common teaching standards. Throughout this case study, I will refer to the
document called Common Core State Standards for English, Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010). I will refer these standards as CCSS; readers of my case study will keep in mind that I am using the document regarding the English and literacy, not other documents intended for other subject areas.

To help Lilly become successful in the area of literacy in fifth grade, certain CCSS are addressed through her IEP. In this document, I will refer to the standard category, define the standard, and write its number after in parentheses. I will always talk about standards for fifth grade. I have used a table to help illustrate some of the areas where Lilly requires assistance. I will summarize how we address her needs following the table.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Area (5th Grade)</th>
<th>Standard Number and Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Standards for Literature</td>
<td>4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Standards for Informational Text</td>
<td>2. Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Standards: Foundational Skills</td>
<td>3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a. Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.

4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
   a. Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
   b. Read on-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
   c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

**Speaking and Listening Standards**

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
   a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
   b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
   c. Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.
   d. Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

2. Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Lilly receives assistance from her teachers and the Learning Specialist in the above identified content areas. To help Lilly, we guide and encourage her to use the strategies she has learned to figure out the meaning of vocabulary, phrases, and the text as a whole. Determining the importance of events and details, character analysis, and comparing/contrasting points of
view are some skills concentrated on in small group discussions work. These groups help Lilly process what she has read/heard. Sometimes the extra time and the ability to think aloud help her understand more than working alone. The Learning Specialist and Lilly’s teachers are careful to keep her working in small groups to make her feel included. Individual instruction is provided only when necessary, since Lilly has a tendency to depend on the instructor more. In teacher-facilitated, small-group settings, Lilly is more willing think aloud and show independence.

**Overview of Case Study Research**

I created my case study to help Lilly better comprehend the text we read in class. In chapter two, I discuss my theoretical perspective on the best way to teach literacy non-traditional learners like Lilly. I also discuss the research that supports those beliefs and the interventions used in this case study. Many students are like Lilly. I want to learn the best way to help students process and analyze what they have read.

In chapter three, I will present the intervention and the procedures used in the case study. My main questions driving my intervention were: How does dialogue impact comprehension? Can journaling be a form of “inner dialogue” used to help facilitate comprehension? What is the relationship between certain types of journal statements and comprehension scores? In chapter four I will present the data gathered in this case study. Finally in chapter five, I will discuss my findings from this intervention, and how they relate to existing research. I will explain the results of the intervention, including the strengths and limitations of the case study. I will discuss the recommendations for Lilly at both home and at school, and how these recommendations are connected to the CCSS.
Chapter 2: Theory and Research

Introduction

Developing readers with independent comprehension skills is no easy task. Nor is it a one-size-fits-all approach. While working with students, especially those who have reading disabilities, it is important that teachers are aware of the multi-faceted process in which children learn. This process can be through traditional education, however quality instruction encompasses more than just the traditional methods. It is crucial that teachers adjust their instruction and tailor it to the needs of all students.

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to define a theoretical perspective of the deep understanding that teachers must have of reading instruction and the environment in which it is delivered. First, there is an explanation of how to best address the needs of students in the classroom. Second, the findings of several research articles that support those beliefs are reviewed. The final segment covers how this information guided this intervention plan.

Theoretical Perspective

Multiple Facets and Impacts of Reading

Reading is not simply the ability to decode the words on a page. There are many factors that influence the success of students. These include explicitly taught skills and comprehension development (Werderich, 2002), the method in which lessons and assignments are delivered (Willis, 2002; Chamberlain, 2005), and the dedication of time for students to co-construct meaning with their peers and their teacher (Tolentino, 2007; Ruddell & Unrau, 1995; Everson, 1991). Educators can set their students up for success by reflecting on their teaching in order to develop lessons that include the diverse aspects of language comprehension and word
recognition (Scarborough, 2001). Therefore, reflective middle school practitioners have a deep understanding of reading as a multifaceted process, the value of constructing meaning through language, and the impact of the classroom environment on students’ development.

Scarborough (2001) gives teachers a model to evaluate their teaching. Skilled reading is not solely word recognition, nor is it language comprehension alone. These two threads work together in the development of skilled readers (Scarborough, 2001). Many times, middle school teachers only focus on the background and literacy knowledge, vocabulary, and verbal reasoning. They do not focus on higher levels of word recognition that increase automaticity and impact comprehension. Just because students are in middle school, this does not mean their practice of word recognition should end (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1994). Teachers increase students’ chances of success by teaching them to decode by analogy. This practice is especially important because many words in the English language do not follow conventional spelling patterns. The skill of chunking words into smaller parts becomes more essential as middle school students are reading words that are increasingly multi-syllabic. When doing this, students’ automaticity increases because they are no longer decoding letter by letter.

Weaving decoding by analogy into lessons does not have to be in the form of an awkward and isolated lesson. In conjunction with their curriculum, teachers can have mini lessons that focus on skill development, analysis of texts, application of literacy elements, and the study of authors and genres (Werderich, 2002), as well as exposure and practice of vocabulary and the building of background knowledge of the current focus in curriculum (Scarborough, 2001). These mini lessons complement what is being taught in the classroom and show students the multiple facets of reading.
Mini lessons open up the door for construction of meaning through language. Reading is a process in which meaning is negotiated in the classroom (Ruddell & Unrau, 1995). These negotiations occur in small groups of students as well as whole-class discussions (Ruddell & Unrau, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading states that each student comes with his own background, beliefs, and experiences (Rosenblatt, 2005). Therefore, each individual has a different meaning derived from the text. Many individuals’ interpretations of text intersect in group discussions. Together, they collaborate to construe meaning of texts. Giving time for students to talk lets them practice organizing their thinking. Using dialogue students’ thoughts can be formed and reformed (Rosenblatt, 2005; Vygotsky, 1962).

Students’ conversations are important; therefore, teachers need to provide a context and opportunities for these conversations (Tolentino, 2007). Encouraging students to talk about how they read and make meaning is imperative. Since each teacher’s classroom possesses many different levels of students, mini lessons that focus on skills (i.e. decoding by analogy), and promote student discussions benefit all students. When teachers guide these collaborative discussions, they allow students to operate within their zones of proximal development (Everson, 1991), facilitating the co-construction of meaning between peers and teachers.

Even though small group and whole group discussions focus students in their zone of proximal development, negotiation of meaning does not have to solely happen through verbal discussions. Werderich (2002) describes the use of journal letters for students to discuss their reading with the teacher. Through this practice, teachers can guide and challenge students via dialogue journals (Werderich, 2002). These individualized responses give the opportunity for students and teachers to converse about their reading and its connection to mini lessons. This also serves as an outlet for students’ thoughts and allows a place for synthesis and reflection.
about what they read. Journaling is a more private way to record thoughts and questions. As a result, middle school students, who can sometimes be self-conscious, can have a safe place to express their thoughts, and articulate their reading preferences.

In combination with a rubric, these journal entries can be used to assess student growth in comprehension, writing, analysis, and use of critical thinking skills throughout the school year (Werderich, 2002). Before using journaling as an assessment, teachers must model letter formats so that writing is not hindered by format. In addition, rubrics must be carefully crafted to reflect points emphasized in class. Teachers can use journaling as an assessment to inform their instruction as well. For example, if students commonly mix up plurals and possessives, teachers can address this in a mini lesson. Additionally, teachers can see how students comprehend and analyze a text. If there are misconceptions, teachers can resolve them in their mini lesson.

Journaling can be adapted for all types of learners. For instance, students can use a word processor to compose their individualized responses. Another adaptation could be for student and teacher to move to audio letters and responses. Whatever the format, it is important that there is a conversation to help students develop meaning.

Another assessment that can be used in conjunction with journaling is the fourth edition of the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI-4; Leslie & Caldwell, 2006). Like journaling, the QRI-4 works within the students' zone of proximal development. Since it is multi-leveled, teachers can see if students can construct meaning with a text at their level. This assessment can be used to inform instruction. While journaling can help teachers assess grammar and spelling in addition to other skills, the QRI-4 can assess how students read. Analysis of miscues can reveal areas of growth and potential topics for direct instruction. Additionally, the QRI-4 directly
addresses two areas of comprehension. Teachers can see if students are constructing meaning on both explicit and implicit levels.

Effective practitioners are aware of the many influences on meaning construction. Therefore, responsible educators are sensitive to the environment in which they teach. They are careful to practice an intentional set up of a multifaceted classroom that is respectful to all cultures. Ruddell and Unrau (1995) argue that the meaning negotiation process occurs among students and with their teacher. Since each student and the teacher bring different viewpoints, beliefs and opinions to the classroom, it is reasonable to say that the classroom environment impacts student learning. The way teachers structure their class can promote student learning. For instance, teachers can create contexts for students to have conversations with their peers (Tolentino, 2007) about texts. Additionally teachers can incorporate time for individualized response journaling to allow time for expression and self-discovery (Werderich, 2002).

Since reading and writing are reciprocal in nature, one can suggest that the student and their task environment have an impact on reading, just like it influences writing (Hayes, 2004). Thoughtful educators are aware of reading as a naturally social activity. People read for communication, some cultural groups more than others (Hayes, 2004). Furthermore, the media in which they read should be taken into consideration. Some students may read and comprehend well on the computer, while others do best in a more traditional format. Genres can also impact students’ ability to effectively read. All of these things in the classroom environment must be taken into account when planning lessons.

Another facet of setting up a classroom is being sensitive to classroom culture. Teachers play a key role in the success of students by being aware of and sensitive to the needs of all students. Teachers must intentionally construct and maintain a safe classroom climate. Without
this practice, teachers are susceptible to teaching to the dominant culture and may unintentionally hinder the learning of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Willis, 2002; Chamberlain, 2005). It is imperative that teachers are aware of the many cultural and linguistic factors that impact their students’ learning. This awareness must be used when creating and modifying lessons, assignments and assessments. In addition to modifying existing curriculum to fit the needs of their students, responsible educators are aware and respectful of students’ home culture. Since classrooms are an intersection of many cultures, students experience a school culture that is different from their culture at home. It is paramount that teachers maintain high expectations while delivering instruction and differentiating instruction as needed (Chamberlain, 2005). High, attainable expectations show students that teachers believe that they are capable students. In addition to maintaining a safe culture in the classroom, teachers must recognize and honor students’ home cultures. They should not be expected to abandon their home culture (Chamberlain, 2005).

Reflective middle school teachers have an understanding of the multiple facets of reading, take into account all factors in creating a supportive classroom environment, and emphasize the value of constructing meaning through language. Educators must practice explicit teaching for skill and comprehension development (Werderich, 2002). The skills practiced in class can be assessed by the QRI-4 and journaling rubrics. Additionally they must take into account their method in which lessons and assignments are delivered as well as the culture unique to their students (Willis, 2002; Chamberlain, 2005). Dedication of time for students to co-construct meaning with their peers and their teacher is essential for them to grow as learners (Werderich, 2002; Tolentino, 2007; Ruddell & Unrau, 1995). By looking at the many aspects
that go into reading comprehension, middle school teachers can help their students be more successful.

Research

Introduction

Several areas of concern were taken into consideration while developing the reading intervention plan for my student and her classmates. These concerns were extracted from several factors: first, from previous work with my student and her classmates; second, from discussions with her mother, teachers, and learning specialists regarding her reading difficulties and the diverse needs of her peers; and third, from pre-assessments given to the student and her peers.

Based on these factors, it was evident that my student’s greatest deficiency was in reading comprehension. This deficiency made reading and completing assignments a struggle, because she could not remember what she read. In addition to understanding the text, her mother mentioned that she has difficulties decoding independently (vowels and vowel digraphs specifically), and needed help with reading at home. Additionally, her teachers and learning specialist mentioned that she had a hard time understanding what she has read and expressing (orally and on paper) the parts she understood. When I worked with her in fourth grade, in small group settings, I noticed that she did have the ability to decode words. She just needed to relax and take her time. When she was given time to decode and talk about what she read, her comprehension increased. I knew that other students would benefit from conversations about the text. It was from here I gathered research to construct an intervention that could be differentiated for the variety of levels in my classroom.

The following segments will discuss the eight research studies that led to the formation of the student’s intervention plan. First, is the discussion of the connection between written
narrative and reading comprehension. Second, is a research study that explores using extra-curricular activities as an opportunity to improve student reading. The third study studies the role of think alouds to increase high school reading proficiency. The fourth study focuses on comprehensive reading instruction. Next, I review a study on written dialogue between peers. The sixth study explores peer-led discussions of text. The seventh study reviews the presence of reading comprehension instruction in special education classroom. The final segment describes how teachers use computer assisted strategic reading to improve students’ reading.

**Written Narrative and Reading Comprehension**

Cragg and Nation (2006) investigated the link between students with poor reading comprehension, despite fluent and accurate reading, and their written narratives. The groups of participants of this study were Primary Year 5 (9-10 years old) and Primary Year 6 (10-11 years old). The researchers screened a total of 165 children, excluding those with known sensory disorders. The students’ school serves predominantly white lower middle class neighborhoods in the United Kingdom. All students were native speakers of British English.

When screening participants, the researchers examined two key components of literacy, decoding and reading comprehension. The Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA-II; Neale 1997) was used to assess text reading accuracy and comprehension of text. From the sample, 11 students were identified with poor comprehension abilities. Nineteen children were also selected as part of the control.

After the initial screening process was completed, the researchers used the Test for the Reception of Grammar-2 (TROG-2; Bishop, 2003) to measure spoken language comprehension. The results of this assessment showed that the low comprehension group scored significantly lower than the control group. Another post-screening assessment was the Wechsler Objective
Reading Dimensions (WORD; Rust, Golombok, & Trickey, 1992). WORD assesses spelling, and asks children to spell words of increasing difficulty. The scores for the low comprehension group and control group were very similar.

The instrument to evaluate written narrative was the Expression, Reception and Recall of Narrative Instrument (ERRNI; Bishop, 2004). Students were shown a series of pictures from which they composed a lengthy written narrative. After 15-30 minutes of unrelated activities, students were asked to recall what they’ve written without pictures. Following the surprise recall of the story, students were asked to look at the picture book again and answer 10 inferential questions. The written narratives were later analyzed for story length, syntactic complexity, story content, and global structure.

At the end of the study, the researchers compared the assessment results of the control and the low comprehension group. In both groups, the results of the spelling assessment were similar. Therefore it can be concluded that students’ ability to spell did not impact their comprehension. When comparing the different measures of the narrative, there were some similarities and significant differences between the control children and the low comprehension group. There was no difference in story length or syntactic complexity. However, when looking at the content of the narratives, the control group had included more main ideas and used more sophisticated story structure. Similar results were found in the spoken recall assessment. Length and syntactic complexity were similar, but the control children scored higher in terms of story content and global structure. In the story comprehension assessment, the control children performed better than the low comprehension group.

This study connects students’ ability to comprehend written language with their ability to produce written language. If a student has a limited ability to comprehend written language,
their abilities to produce written language may be compromised regardless if they are competent of spelling and decoding. This directly connects to my case study, where my student has difficulties with comprehension of written language and production of written language. This study suggests that teachers should take a better global view of each student. Spelling and decoding may not be the only influences on comprehension and quality of writing.

**Giving Outside Opportunities for Reading Improvement**

Barden (2009) considered the impact neurological impress method plus (NIM+; Flood, Lapp, & Fisher, 2005), modified for small group work, on an 18-year-old student with dyslexia. This student was identified with dyslexia while in primary school with average intelligence and updated assessments throughout her schooling confirm the diagnosis. Heidi (a pseudonym) came from middle-class background and was aware of her reading challenges. She expressed concerns about learning and memorizing her lines quickly enough for her drama class, as she did not want to disappoint her classmates. Heidi became one of six participants to complete two years of NIM+ instruction. This workshop of students focused on reading skills to improve their performance as drama students.

The teaching intervention used in this small group of students was the NIM+, modified for small-group work. The NIM+ “derives from the idea that word memories are impressed, or etched, into the brain using natural, multi-sensory language feedback processes” (Baren, 2009). During instruction, teacher and student hold the text together, with the student sitting slightly in front of the teacher, so that the student may hear the teacher speak in their dominant ear. Student and teacher track words with their finger, reading fluently and simultaneously. Initially fluency is emphasized, but comprehension is practiced and measured through classroom discussion of the text. The readings in this study were student-selected and could include drama scripts,
THE EFFECTS OF DIALOGUE AND JOURNALING

novels, quiz books, and poetry. The drawback of this method is that the student teacher ratio is one to one. Barden (2009) modified this procedure by having a learning support assistant (LSA) model fluent reading while he sat with each of the other three students from the group of four. The LSA was moved to another post after 12 weeks, after which the researcher circulated among all four students. The groups completed one 90-minute session per week for 30 weeks. Later in the program students would also focus on writing and composition skills.

Data on the group’s reading comprehension and fluency were collected pre and post intervention using the Gray Oral Reading Test-Fourth Edition (GORT-4; Lee Wiederholt & Bryant, 2001) and the Gray Silent Reading Test (GSRT; Wiederholt & Blalock, 2000). These assessments were composed of readings and multiple-choice questions. The group wrote narratives and was interviewed regarding the relationship between reading and their identity.

The results of the study found that Heidi’s GSRT score improved 10 standard points. This brought her silent reading comprehension score within the average range, matching her IQ score. She was more confident reading aloud. While her GORT-4 score remained below average, she improved from reading 14 words per minute to 65 words per minute over the seven-month period. The other students in this group also made similar improvements. However, the researcher expresses caution because this is a small-scale study.

While Heidi had many successes in her reading, the Barden (2009) notes that her shift to a more positive identity is just as interesting. Her narratives show that the outcomes of her reading difficulties are not negative. She allowed her own self-perception to include an actor that is accomplished and admired. Heidi was a very positive student, worked hard, and read a lot for pleasure. While not measurable, these factors impacted her success. As I look at my case study participant, I am reminded that there are many things that impact score that cannot be
measured. My participant’s potential in my classroom is impacted by her emotional state. Realizing that she is 10 years old, I know that I must reassure her that she can do the things that are expected in class. When she is positive, she can reach her full potential. This connects to my sociocultural perspective that the student’s identity, shaped within and outside of school, is part of the learning experience. Attending to this is important if I want to help her learn best.

**Role of Think-alouds to Assist with Proficiency in High School Reading**

Caldwell & Leslie (2003) conducted a study to see if proficiency in middle school reading promises proficiency in high school reading. Is proficiency in high school reading a realistic expectation for incoming freshmen? If students encounter difficulties, what strategies would make them successful? In addition to connections between middle school and high school reading proficiency, the researchers examined a possible role of think-alouds as a strategy to help with assignments that involved difficult readings. Besides reading strategies, there are other variables that impact reading comprehension. The researchers discuss the influences of retelling vs. answering comprehension questions, strategy modeling by teachers, text difficulty, text structure, and text familiarity.

The participants in this student were eight eighth graders. Six were girls, and two were boys. These students attended private suburban (six students) and urban public (two students) schools and were all proficient readers according to their academic performance, an informal inventory, and standardized test scores. The researchers also indicate that these were motivated students based on their willingness to undergo a lengthy assessment process.

During the assessment process students were individually audiotaped for transcription. First, students were assessed for prior knowledge. In this step, students explained four or five concepts that are important in the reading selection. Students were awarded 0-3 points based on
the attributes of their responses. A score of 3 is given for definitions, 2 reflects one important attribute of the concept, and 1 was awarded to a general statement about the concept, but could be applied to other concepts.

After the assessment of prior knowledge, students chose a selection that they would like to read first. Each selection was divided into three sections. These sections each contained about 300-1,200 words. The students read the first section silently and then retold what they could remember. Afterwards, the students answered ten comprehension questions (factual and inferential) without looking back at the text. The students were only allowed to look back in the text if the answers were unknown or incorrect. These questions were scored as either correct/incorrect and no partial credit was given. Each student was given two scores: correct without look-backs and correct with look-backs. The students’ total comprehension score was the sum of these two scores.

The same procedure was used for the second section of the chosen text. However one thing was changed. The examiner modeled the think-aloud process and encouraged the student to contribute his or her own thoughts. Eleven types of think-alouds were modeled. In the third section of the reading, the student independently offered his/her own thoughts whenever they came to the word stop embedded in the text. Later on these think-alouds were coded and grouped for similarity and frequency was examined. The students’ statements were divided into 12 different categories ranging from connections to prior knowledge to using inferences/conclusions to state understanding.

The results of the study suggest that proficient middle school readers may not always read high school text successfully. Text difficulty and structure and comprehension measurement methods have influence over the readers’ scores. The impact of these variables was impossible
to isolate. However the researchers stress that text familiarity was a great contributor to the
success of the reader. These findings suggest that teachers should stress global concepts instead
of specific ones. In addition to looking at global concepts that can be used in a variety of
subjects, think-alouds, a strategy that can be used with a variety of texts, seemed to have a more
of an influence on less difficult text. It appears that students who thought out loud answered
more questions than those who did not. However, in difficult texts, thinking aloud may not have
an impact on comprehension. This was suggested from the subjects’ uniformly poor
performance of the study’s most difficult text. Therefore as a teacher, I must choose texts that
are appropriate for the level of explicit instruction I intend to give. The more difficult the text,
the more responsibility I have as a teacher to scaffold strategies for my students. In my study I
intend to use discussion to help me scaffold for my students.

**Comprehensive Reading Instruction**

Like Caldwell & Leslie (2003) discussed teaching a specific strategy to students to aid in
their comprehension, Guthrie, McRae, Coddington, Lutz Klauda, Wigfield, and Barbosa (2009)
also investigated teaching comprehension strategies to students. The researchers, however,
structured this study differently to include comprehensive reading instruction taught over a 12-
week period. The researchers note that many studies have been conducted by teaching
comprehension strategies, content knowledge, inferencing, word recognition skills, fluency and
motivation to read in isolation. These studies rarely encompass all of the previously mentioned
components. Therefore the researchers developed a study to encompass the multi facets of
reading. Guthrie et al. compared the effects of Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI)
with Traditional Instruction (TI). In addition to comparing the performance of CORI students
and TI students, the researchers also tracked their students in two sub-groups: low-achieving students and high-achieving students.

The 156 fifth-grade students in the sample were drawn from three different Mid-Atlantic schools. The 94 CORI students came from a total of six classrooms in two schools. The TI students (62 total) came from three classrooms in one school. It is also important to note that classrooms with a large proportion of English language learner (ELL) students and students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) for writing (who could not fully participate in the reading program) were omitted from the analyzed sample.

Both groups of students were pretested and posttested in the areas of word recognition, passage oral reading fluency, inferencing, motivation (motivation questionnaire) the Gates-MacGinite Reading Comprehension Test (MacGinite, MacGinite, & Dreyer, 2000), or the fluency subtest of the Woodcock-Johnson III Diagnostic Reading Battery (Schrank, Mather, & Woodcock, 2004). According to these pretest measures, the two groups were not significantly different. Additionally the two treatment groups were comparable in demographics. The low-achieving students were defined as students scoring below the median of all scores (level 4.0) on the Gates-MacGinite Reading Comprehension Test. Those students that scored 4.0 and above were considered high-achieving students.

After the initial tests were completed, the teachers of three classrooms of the TI group instructed reading and language arts as they normally would. This instruction included the used of basal materials, trade books, and vocabulary books. The researchers did not provide teachers with any professional development or other teachers. Daily 90-minute instruction included work in a basal reader, word recognition and fluency activities, guided reading in groups,
comprehension lessons with writing, and writers’ workshop (story writing). The TI students were also given time, twice a week, to independently read novels of their choice.

To prepare for the study, the CORI teachers participated in 3-day summer workshops, monthly follow-up workshops, and mentoring throughout the 12-week period. During this professional development, teachers were shown examples of instruction, performed reading strategies, discussed motivational practices, constructed reading/science curriculum integrations, reviewed books for instructing students, and adapted a teachers’ guide provided by the researchers.

Like the TI students, CORI students received 90-minute blocks of instruction. The instruction provided was consistent with the district’s instructional goals. The CORI curriculum was designed for on-grade and above-grade students. The classroom teacher and the reading specialist provided lessons 3 days and 2 days a week respectively. Students were taught to monitor their comprehension. Fix-up strategies, main idea identification, and drawing inferences were teacher modeled and then practiced during guided reading. The low-achieving readers were provided with additional fluency practice, word recognition strategies, and more explicit instruction on inferencing.

As a whole group, students received the same 90-minute instructional sequence that included: 20 minutes of science goals (hands-on or content) or fluency activities (read aloud or paired reading), 10 minutes of a whole group lesson followed by 30 minutes of guided reading in leveled small groups (low-achieving readers received guided reading instruction lessons), writing exercises that included summaries, narratives, charts, graphic organizers, and narratives relating to the students’ texts, and independent reading of thematic stories, novels, and informational
books. CORI teachers provided students with as many choices as possible to promote student motivation.

Motivational practices were another aspect the researchers stressed. These practices included: giving students as much control as possible with text selection, connecting readings to hands-on experiences in class, allowing students to be successful by reading texts at their level, providing opportunities for students to collaborate with their peers on a daily basis, and instruction in a thematic unit which allows students to become “experts” on the subject of their theme.

The goal of the researchers was to provide a comprehension instruction that included the many facets of reading. At the end of the study, the CORI students showed more improvement in comprehension, ecological knowledge, inferencing, and word recognition when compared to the TI group. The students in the CORI group not significantly increase scores on fluency. The researchers state that fluency is regarded secondary to comprehension and thus was given less instructional time. When it comes to motivation, students did not significantly increase their scores, although scores for perceived difficulty and avoidance decreased.

This study is interesting because it is common to see strategies tested/written about/taught in isolation. It shows that reading can be taught as it is, a multi-faceted process. This relates to my case study, because, while I am aiming to improve comprehension, I am approaching it in a multi-faceted manner through students’ dialogue with each other as well as a writing component when students can reflect and record their observations and inner dialogue.
**Written Conversation in the Classroom**

When creating this case study, I approached dialogue as not only something spoken, but also something that could be written. The following case study explores the use of written dialogue in the classroom of a teacher-researcher.

Bintz and Shelton (2004) investigated the impact of written dialogue’s role in supporting reading comprehension in two language arts classrooms: one seventh- and eighth-grade combined class of 24 students and the other with only eighth-graders (23 students). The teacher, Karen Shelton, divided these students into pairs based on gender, ability, and discipline. One classroom had one group of three. Both classes were held during a 55-minute period. The teacher’s lessons took almost the entire period. At the end of the study the researchers collected a total of 23 sets of written conversations.

To collect the data, the researchers divided the students (as described above). Each pair shared a notebook and the students read or listened to the text. There were two ways of doing this strategy. In both strategies the teacher or students decided where they would stop reading to write down their conversation. This could happen multiple times depending on the length of the text. After the stopping points were decided, the teacher reads the text aloud or the students read the text to themselves. Other than reading the text, there was no other talking. In this study, the teacher read orally and stopped to give the students time to have a written conversation. Each student wrote during this time. When these conversations were finished, the researchers categorized the patterns they found in student journals to see the different strategies and processes students used. These patterns included: making predictions, drawing an inference, making a personal connection, taking a position, asking a question, and detecting an anomaly.
I see a real connection between this study and my case study. The researchers and I both viewed learning as more than just an individual activity. To engage students, approaching learning through a social engagement lens was crucial. In this study, students were conversing through writing as they listened to the text, much like my students had an oral conversation during their reading as a group. Each student in the study had a chance to express their thoughts on paper; similarly my students expressed their own thoughts in a private journal. In addition to the social and written aspects of this study, I also felt that it was pertinent to my case study because of teacher analysis of the students’ written dialogue. The researchers and I both analyzed students writing for types of statements, including but not limited to predictions, questions, opinions, and inferences.

**Peer-led Discussions of Text**

Researchers Berne & Clark (2008) also investigated students using discussions to promote learning. This study wanted to investigate whether students would use comprehension strategies during peer-led discussions.

In this study, the 29 ninth-grade students of economically diverse, but ethnically homogeneous backgrounds, had significant experience working in small groups for numerous tasks in this Midwestern classroom. Small group experiences were in addition to numerous whole-group, teacher-led discussions of literature. With this foundation in place, the researchers prepared the students for the study to help them form a framework in which they may be able to work productively. Preparing students for the study involved the teacher describing the “form and purpose of literature discussion groups” (Berne & Clark, 2008). After describing the purpose and form, the researchers then gave examples of comments and questions that could be present in a rich discussion. The researchers then modeled a discussion in their small group.
They also featured role-played examples of productive and unproductive talk, and desired/undesired behaviors. While this modeling occurred, students analyzed the above conversations and behaviors. After modeling, the entire class debriefed to ensure that everyone understood the expectations and was ready to try their own peer-led group discussion.

Following this modeling, students took a class period to independently read a short story. The next class period, after reminders of sought-after discourse and behavior, students took 20 minutes to discuss in groups of four or five. The groups were formed by the teacher and were heterogeneous in both gender and reading ability. The discussions were observed by the researchers and audiotaped for transcription.

After the students’ discussions were recorded, the researchers coded the students’ dialogue for comprehension strategies and nonstrategic comprehension-related talk, and other talk. Comprehension strategies included: comparing/contrasting, contextualizing, questioning, searching for meaning, noting author’s craft, interpreting, engaging in retrospection, stating confusion, and inserting oneself in the text. Nonstrategic comprehension-related talk consisted of students clarifying meaning or sharing text-explicit information. Other talk referred to talk at the beginning, middle, and end of the conversation (i.e., “Who wants to talk?”, “What do you think about…”?, “I think we’re done”) as well as off-task comments.

The results found that the majority of conversation about the text was comprehension-related. The lowest group had 72% comprehension related-talk compared with the highest group of 94% comprehension-related talk. Non-strategic talk segments that involved sharing text-explicit/implicit information ranged from 18% to 33% of the groups’ discourse. The researchers also note that these were a result of successful and explicit instruction of how to appropriately engage in dialogue about a text. This skill involves listening to others’ ideas and questions as
well as acknowledging and thoughtfully responding to the contributions of their group members. Having this skill allows the instructor to hold students accountable for their participation. An equally important and explicitly taught skill is the ability to exercise comprehension strategies when reading a text. This allows group members to help themselves and their peers as they wade through more complex pieces of text. These two explicitly taught skills help students reach their full potential in comprehending texts in a discussion.

Caldwell & Leslie (2004) and Bintz & Shelton (2004), had students discuss their thinking after reading the text. These discussions varied in time after the readings: Caldwell & Leslie (2004) and Bintz & Shelton (2004) had students discuss immediately after their reading while the students in the Berne & Clark (2006) study discussed the next class period. Regardless of the time variants, the students examined facts/misconceptions, as well as expressed their thoughts, ideas, and questions. These studies are closely related with my study that involves both verbal discourse and individual written dialogue. Berne & Clark’s (2006) study’s intentions are similar to mine, where I hope to increase reading comprehension through group discourse and independent written dialogue.

**Promotion of Reading Comprehension in Special Education.**

Klingner, Urbach, Golos, Brownell, & Menon (2010) investigated ways special education teachers promote reading comprehension in their classrooms. This study was part of a larger two-year investigation on the relationship between special educators’ instruction in reading and student achievement. This larger study involved 98 teachers across three different states and focused on the ways special education teachers typically teach reading comprehension. This study did not measure student achievement.
The researchers chose to focus on 41 teachers from two states: Florida and Colorado. These teachers taught upper-elementary students (grades 3 through 5) through at least 90 minutes of instruction each week. All teachers were certified in special education and volunteered for this study. Three of these teachers were male, and the majority of the teachers were Caucasian. Thirty-two of these teachers held master’s degrees and they had a range of 1 to 32 years of experience (mean 15). Over fifty-percent of the teachers taught in schools with a free or reduced-priced lunch count over 50%. There were thirteen teachers who taught in schools where 80% of the students participated in the free or reduced-price lunch program. In this study, an average of 72% of the students received a free or reduced-price lunch. The teachers instructed groups that ranged from 2 to 17 students for 150 to 500 minutes a week. Some of these students also received instruction in a general education classroom.

The 244 students in this study were all proficient in English and had ethnicities of Caucasian (43%), African American (27%), and other (7%). Fifty-nine percent of the students were boys and all students were school-identified as having learning disabilities (LD) and all had difficulties reading. Their oral reading fluency (ORF) scores varied between the groups of students, but it should be noted that overall the scores from Florida students were greater than their counterparts from Colorado. These pretest scores were not compared with the teacher assessment instrument; therefore no posttest scores were noted in the article.

The researchers gathered their information by observing 40 teachers three times a week and one teacher four times a week. The total observations of all 41 teachers equaled 124. All teachers knew the goal of these observations was to better understand how reading is typically taught by special educators. The observers took notes on practices and behaviors as well as used an instrument to assess reading instruction, Reading Instruction in Special Education.
Observation Instrument (RISE) that they adapted from The English-Language Learner Classroom Observation Instrument (Haager, Gersten, Baker, & Graves, 2003). This assessment encompassed 22 items: instructional practices, general instruction environment, phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, reading comprehension, classroom management, and overall classroom practice. This assessment scores teachers on a scale from 1 (low) to 4 (high) on the observation of these skills. RISE was developed by the researchers from a variety of other observation instruments and refined based on the results of a pilot. The frequency of the observations was spread throughout the year including late fall, winter, and spring.

After all the observations were complete, the results revealed that the mean rating for all teachers in the area of reading comprehension was 2.5- halfway between the lowest score (1) and the highest score (4). Seven teachers scored a 3.5 or 4. One teacher had a score of 4. Five teachers scored 1.5 and thirteen teachers scored 2- this indicated that their promotion of reading comprehension was low. Ten teachers scored a 2.5 or 3. Three teachers never taught reading comprehension during the observations; they received no score.

In addition to RISE scores, the researchers noted their observations of types of activities and questioning. In most of the lessons, the teachers asked at least one comprehension question. These questions consisted of mostly factual questions to assess the students understanding or ability to recall information. Questions of a higher-level were only observed 16 times. Many times teachers asked vocabulary-related questions. When looking at the activities observed, most consisted of predicting (30 times), reminders to think before/during/after reading (15 times), making connections (13 times), and rereading (12 times). All other activities were observed less than 7 times.
The researchers note that out of the 124 lessons observed, only 66% address comprehension. This leads the researchers to wonder if teachers prioritized word study and vocabulary instruction. It was not recorded if the students were getting comprehension instruction in the regular education classroom or if this instruction was present on a “non-observation” day. The researchers found that follow-up on predictions, finding the main idea, summarization, text structure, and metacognition instruction were largely missing from observed lessons. The researchers also note:

It is not clear whether the special education teachers in our study (a) did not understand what explicit comprehension instruction should look like; (b) did not consider comprehension instruction important (e.g., perhaps thought that phonics instruction should take precedence over comprehension); (c) were constrained by curricular considerations that interfered with comprehension instruction; or (d) simply were unsure of what is involved in reading comprehension. Future research should include interviews that explore teachers’ beliefs, concerns, or decisions regarding comprehension instruction to shed light on why teachers are doing little to promote comprehension. (Klinger, et al., 2010, p. 72)

The implications of this study show that there is a gap between effective comprehension research and practice. Klinger et al. (2010) noted the numerous studies that show positive effects of explicit reading comprehension instruction for all students. The researchers found that despite the overwhelming research, instruction is still lacking in special education classrooms. While this study doesn’t address student group dialogue and journaling directly, this study is important because reinforces the importance of having comprehension activities in every lesson. My case study includes activities that are not only teacher-led, but also student-led (group and independent). Students gain skills by helping each other. However, it is also important for them to process what they read independently, as they will not always be able to have a friend or teacher to help them. In my case study, I gathered evidence of this independent thought process by collecting students’ journals.

Improving Reading Comprehension with Computer-assisted Strategic Reading
Klinger et al. (2010) noted the evidence of the positive effects of explicit reading comprehension instruction. However these researchers found that these proven methods are not being used as much as one would think with such overwhelming evidence. Another study, by Kim, Vaughn, Klingner, Woodruff, Klein Reutebuch, & Kouzakani (2006), examines the effects of reading comprehension through computer-assisted collaborative strategic reading on middle school students diagnosed with a learning disability.

This study essentially combined Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) and Computer-assisted instruction (CAI). These two methods are outlined to provide readers the background knowledge for understanding the method the Kim et al. created. CSR is a method of teaching that includes clearly specified procedures to help students learn strategies to implement before reading, during-reading, and post-reading. In this method, teachers model and use think-alouds to introduce the strategies used in expository readings. As the students gain proficiency, the responsibility is transferred to the learner by giving each student a role in a collaborative group. The strategies learned by students include: brainstorming background knowledge, predicting, monitoring comprehension, applying fix-up strategies, identifying main ideas, generating questions, and reviewing concepts learned.

The second method, CAI, provides students and teachers with a computer program for self-paced, individualized instruction. CAI includes immediate feedback and opportunities for practice. The researchers note that there have been two types of studies that use CAI in different ways. After reading both types of studies, Kim et al. concluded that the teachers that used CAI as a tool in the classroom did not yield as significant results as the teachers that used CAI to complement their existing reading comprehension instruction. In response to this data, the
researchers created Computer-Assisted Collaborative Strategic Reading (CACSR), the combination of CSR and CIA.

CACSR provides students and teachers with interactive comprehension strategy instruction that is intended to maintain student-interest. This method provides learning that is individualized in text level, pace, learning path, and types of expository readings. Since this method uses a computer, student progress is automatically recorded so that students and teachers can receive immediate and corrective feedback.

Kim et al. (2006) observed the administration of CACSR (intervention group) and reading resource instruction (comparison group) in two classrooms. The two volunteer language arts/reading resource teachers taught classrooms with a total of 34 students with disabilities (combination of students from grades 6-8). These classrooms had more than 16 (intervention group) and 18 (comparison group) students, but the researchers only included data from students legally identified as having a disability that could decode words at 2.5 grade level or above, and were at least 1 year below grade level in reading comprehension. The instrument to determine decoding and comprehension levels was the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised (WRMT-R) Word Identification (WI), Word Attack (WA), and Passage Comprehension (PC). All students in the study attended a class for students with reading difficulties. The eligible students from each classroom were divided in half. The first half received the normal instruction, and the second received the intervention instruction.

The procedure for both groups included pretesting, pairing of students based on reading ability, teacher training on CACSR, CACSR implementation by trained teachers and research assistant, posttesting, and post-interviewing of teachers and students. The intervention instruction was given fifty minutes, twice a week for 10-12 weeks. These intervention sessions consisted of
students working in pairs on the CACSR program to read, discuss, and answer passage questions. Students alternated taking the lead at reading and controlling the computer. During the remaining 3 days of the week, the CACSR students received the same instruction as the comparison group. The intervention group focused on first learning the computer program and secondly using the computer program to learn. Strategies on which the program focuses were previewing, clicking and chunking, getting the gist, and wrapping-up.

The comparison groups participated in a reading resource class or a language arts class. These classes taught fluency and vocabulary. One teacher also taught comprehension strategies. These teachers worked closely together to teach the same core program. The research assistants in both classroom observed that the two teachers provided very similar instruction and would thus be comparable. These teachers did not provide any CSR strategies in the comparison class.

At the end of the study, the WRMT-R Passage Comprehension scores showed that the intervention group outperformed the comparison group on the adjusted posttest scores. These results support what many have believed to be true about good reading comprehension; it must consist of modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. Another positive thing from the teachers worth mentioning is related to the class size. The CACSR seems to reduce the teachers’ instructional demands related to class size. It must be noted that CACSR is not meant to resolve challenges related to reading comprehension nor is it meant to replace good instruction. CACSR is meant to complement already good instruction.

While I do not have the advantage of CAI in my classroom, I do like to think that my students are supported from that which the researchers found important: the presence of explicit instruction, modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. During the implementation of my case study, I did not merely tell the students to read the passage, discuss, and reflect on
paper. All of these components were modeled and guided for students before I asked them to work in groups/independently.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, successful literacy skills are crucial for students to effectively navigate today’s world. Since no two of our students are the same, we should never treat reading instruction as a one-size-fits-all approach. Effective literacy includes explicit and systematic instruction that involves reading and reflection on the reading through discussion and/writing. These things were kept in mind when creating an intervention for my student. In chapter three the student’s intervention plan will be discussed and described in great detail.
Chapter 3: Case Study Procedures

This chapter will describe the student used in the case study, the intervention steps, and the process used to collect data for this case study. First I provide a thorough description of my research participant, Lilly, including her academic background. I will also provide an overview of the pool of participants, Lilly’s classmates. Finally, the intervention steps used in this case study will be described, along with how the data was collected.

Description of the Participant

At the time of this study, Fall 2010, Lilly was ten years and four months old. She was commencing her fifth grade year at a private independent college preparatory day school. The student population at our school is 70% Caucasian, the other 30% of the population consists of Middle Eastern, International, Hispanic, Asian, Native American and African-American students. Some students are English Language Learners.

Lilly came to us at the start of her third grade year in fall of 2008. She previously attended a public school where she received outside academic support. During her first year with us, Lilly’s teacher and Learning Specialist observed that she frequently needed directions restated. Additionally they felt her focus and work depended on her confidence, which was closely related to her emotional state. At that time, questions arose regarding whether her challenges had to do with processing or with her emotional state.

After helping Lilly adjust to her new environment and close observation by her teacher, learning specialist, and mother, the school psychologist evaluated her at the end of her third grade year. This evaluation included the usage of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fourth Edition (WISC-IV; Wechsler, 2004), the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement
(Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001), and the Qualitative Reading Inventory-Fourth Edition (QRI-4; Leslie & Caldwell, 2006).

The results of the learning/processing abilities portion of the psychoeducational evaluation concluded that she has superior visual processing/reasoning abilities. Her verbal/language abilities and visual processing rate were in the average range. Her working memory is also very strong. Her weak performance on a measure of listening comprehension indicates the importance of monitoring this skill and possibility of further assessing her receptive language skills.

In the reading portion of her psychoeducational evaluation, Lilly performed in the average range in measures of word recognition, reading fluency, passage comprehension, and decoding. Despite some awkward phrasing and word recognition challenges, Lilly was able to read the third grade passage and correctly respond to 5 of the 8 comprehension questions. The Writing portion revealed that she had average spelling skills and strong sentence writing skills. Math was shown to be one of her strengths. She performed in the high average range of basic computation skills, and above average on applied problems. She seemed to enjoy the challenge of multi-step word problems.

Since Lilly’s psychoeducational evaluation at the end of her third grade year recommended that her receptive language skills be evaluated, Lilly had a Speech and Language Evaluation at the end of the first trimester of her fourth grade year. Lilly was given the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-4 (CELF-4; Semel & Wiig, 2003). This test examines both receptive and expressive language skills. Lilly received average scores in almost every portion of the CELF-4. She received an above average score on the Working Memory subtest. The only score that displayed an area of weakness was the Language Content subtest.
Understanding Spoken Paragraphs. Three paragraphs were read. She scored 4/5 questions from the first paragraph, 2/5 from the second paragraph, and 0/5 from the final paragraph. After being asked questions regarding the final paragraph’s contents, she stated that she was paying attention, but she couldn’t remember anything. The Speech and Language Pathologist concluded that despite her high score on Working Memory, the demand of retaining the information and applying it to meaningful questions made the task more difficult for her.

At the end of her fourth grade year, the Learning Specialist used the QRI-4 to assess her progress in reading comprehension. She was able to answer 3/8 questions about the fourth grade passage without support. All other questions needed direct instruction, conversation, and assurance to get Lilly to produce an answer. Similarly, in to the years prior to this assessment, the Learning Specialist noted that her confidence impacted what she could synthesize and restate without support. In chapter four, I will give my own assessment findings as well as my observations of her during assessment and classroom procedures.

At the beginning of her fifth grade year, Lilly’s IEP goals included her self-advocacy for her needs, the improvement of her receptive vocabulary in the classroom, and her continued development of her outstanding visual processing skills. Lilly, her mother, and teachers are in charge of helping her self-monitor comprehension at home and in the classroom. This includes asking clarifying questions and using active listening skills. Lilly is expected, with assistance, to restate oral and written directions and take risks in predicting answers to questions.

On the first day of Reading class, I asked the children to provide me with some ways to help them learn. I had them fill out a questionnaire in which they describe their earliest reading memory, most exciting thing they have read, some ways they like to learn, some ways for me to help them make Reading easier, and activities they would like to do in class. This is how I have
the whole class self-advocate for their needs at the beginning of school, since most students are new to me. Lilly remembers reading in the dining room when she was six. She stated that she learns best when someone tells her information, and that reading out loud helps make reading easier for her. She requested that I seat her in front of the classroom and that she wanted to dress like characters from a book as a project.

**Description of Procedures and Data Collection**

Since Lilly’s arrival at our school, she has been recognized as having challenges with reading. However, if she has a positive attitude, it is reflected in classroom work. The following sections of this chapter focus on the invention steps used in my case study and the collection of data.

After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of my case study, I pursued the approval from the parents of the children I taught. Thirty-seven of the forty-four parents returned the informed consent form; all of these parents gave permission. Since I believe that what I am doing in the case study are good practices for all students, all of my students received the intervention. The data displayed in this case study is only of the students that returned the consent form that gave permission for me use their data.

**Pre-assessments**

The case study commenced with pre-testing my research participant (research sample) with the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised (WRMT-R; Woodcock, 1998) and the Qualitative Reading Inventory-Fifth Edition (QRI-5; Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). I chose these two assessments because they measured comprehension and I was familiar with them from my practicum. This was done one-on-one after school. With the pool of participants, I administered a modified version of the QRI-5 in a group format. The pool of participants individually
received a passage taken from the QRI-5. On one side of the paper was the passage, and the reverse side had the comprehension questions. The students read the passage, turned to the questions and completed the answers with a pencil as best they could. Then the students took a different color of pencil or pen, looked back at the passage, and elaborated their answers, or completed the questions they missed. This was administered to the pool of participants at the beginning and end of the study. For all students, including my research participant, I chose the passage, “Farming on the great plains” as the pretest (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). Please see attached the following sample. The pretest and posttest (shown) were in the same format.
The Intervention, Modeling, and Data Collection

Since I felt that the entire class, including Lilly, would benefit from more reflective reading, I delivered the intervention to all students. There are many factors that influence reading comprehension. These include explicitly taught skills and comprehension development (Werderich, 2002), and the dedication of time for students to co-construct meaning with their peers and their teacher (Tolentino, 2007; Ruddell & Unrau, 1995; Everson, 1991). The structure of my study enveloped both of those things. I set up my classroom similar to Raphael, Pardo and Highfield’s (2002) Book Club. I chose one test for the entire class to read based on our school’s curriculum needs regarding culture and geography. During some class periods, there was an opening community share with a mini-lesson where the whole group focused on a reading or writing strategy. Since the chosen text, *Three cups of tea: The young readers edition* (Mortenson, 2009), takes place in a different country, this was a time for me to teach background and cultural knowledge pertinent to the day’s reading.

Helping students examine the process of how good readers think and helping foster the development of their metacongnition are my top priorities. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) stress that students need interaction with the text in addition to a literal understanding. To prepare my students to reflectively respond to the readings, I modeled for a period of two weeks how to read together, and discuss in a group. We did this as a whole group. At the beginning, I did much of the talking providing examples of the types of statements students should contribute. Over time, students contributed more and more. I gradually released more and more responsibility until I felt the students were ready to work with me as an observer. After that, students read the assigned reading with their group. My classes had each have five groups with four to five students. They all met simultaneously and were grouped heterogeneously according to reading
level, willingness to discuss, etc. With their peers, students were encouraged to stop during and after the reading to discuss what they read. Discussions included information from the text and/or their own reactions or connections. For journaling, I provided a list of general questions to help students with writer’s block. Some of these inquiries dealt with setting, predictions, opinions, student understanding, student reaction, prior knowledge, and character motivation. This list of questions was also helpful during discussions. I stressed that each individual has a different meaning derived from the text—and that was ok. Many individuals’ interpretations of text intersect in group discussions and we form our understanding with our peers (Ruddell & Unrau, 1995). Different opinions were always encouraged so that meaning can be negotiated.

Throughout the study, I evaluated the students’ group participation by participant observation. Please see the participant observation form. The students’ participation was recorded and given a numerical score based on their willingness to share and discuss, preparation, and use of listening skills. At the end of the study, these scores were averaged into one score for data comparison. Since I am investigating the link of dialogue and reading comprehension, this data was helpful information when comparing pre and posttest scores.

*Student Observation Form*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Discussion Date</th>
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<th>Discussion Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student C</td>
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Even though small group and whole group discussions focus students on comprehension, negotiation of meaning does not have to solely happen through verbal discussions. During this study, students kept reading journals. After their reading and group discussions, these journals were a place for students to write important information from the text as well as their reflections and connections. Please see the sample. This journal also served as an outlet for students’ thoughts and allowed a place for synthesis and reflection about what they read and discussed. I feel that journaling is a more private way to record thoughts and questions. As a result, my students, who can sometimes be self-conscious, had a safe place to express their thoughts and articulate their reading preferences. To prepare students for journaling, I modeled the use of the reading journal, along with discussion, during the first two weeks of modeled/guided whole group instruction. Like the whole group discussions, I supplied my own journal responses. The responses were recorded in my “journal” (the board) for the students to see. Gradually, students volunteered their own responses. Towards the end of the two-week introduction, students supplied most of the responses as I recorded on the board.

Sample Journal Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the Story: Facts, Events, Vocabulary</th>
<th>From My Head: Reactions and Connections</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
For my study, I coded these journals for comprehension, content and levels of critical reflection using categories that were generated and customized for students’ responses. Students did not complete these journals for a grade. The grade they received in my classroom was merely for participation. When reading the journals I noticed that each of their statements fit into categories. I used the think-aloud statement categories from Caldwell & Leslie (2004) and Bintz & Shelton (2004) as a starting point to help me categorize. I then added categories as needed. To help the reader better understand the types of student statements, I have included a table with the category titles, descriptions of categories and/or statements of students in chapter four. Each of the students’ statements counted as one. It was possible to have multiple statements in multiple categories for a single journal entry. To choose which journals to analyze, I organized my students by posttest QRI-5 score. Then I chose four students from the low, middle, and high groups. I also included the scores of my research participant to compare her with the low, middle, and high groups.

Post Assessment

At the very end of the study, posttests were administered to the research sample and the pool of participants in the same procedure as I did with the pre-testing. The only difference was the group’s reading selection, “How does your body take in oxygen?” Since I am teaching students to slow down and reflect about the text as they read, my hope was that this skill transfers from the readings done in class to the assessment readings. In chapter four, I will compare the progress of my research sample to my pool of participants.

Modeling

The fifth grade students have me every day for Reading class. However every sixth day of class was a study hall, as our school operates on a six-day rotation. My classes were 45
minutes long throughout the six-week study. During weeks one and two, I modeled discussion and journaling in a whole group format. I read aloud the chapters as the students starred the important events. From there, as a group, we decided which vocabulary and/or events from the story were the most important to record in our journal. My “journal” was on the whiteboard and the students copied into their journals on the left hand page. On the right hand side, we recorded our thoughts, opinions, connections, etc. I stressed that my journal page might look different from theirs, because we have different thoughts, opinions and connections. Students were invited to record their own thoughts and share if they desired.

I gradually released responsibility to the students by making most of thing things in my “journal” their contributions. By the time the two weeks of modeling were over, we had discussed how to converse as a group, how to stay on task, how to get back on topic after getting distracted, etc. This whole group conversation continued through mini-lessons even after the students started reading in groups.

**Working in Groups**

Over the next four weeks, the students worked in groups of four or five. I sought out the help of the primary school and middle school learning specialists for help assembling my student groups based on gender, personality and comprehension level. It was important for me for each group to have a variety of personalities and comprehension levels.

Just as we discussed the story as we read in the whole group, the students discussed as they read in their small groups. They starred the margins of their books to help them remember important events, vocabulary, etc. After the conclusion of their assigned passage, they then worked together to negotiate which three or four starred items will appear in their journals. After
these things were recorded, the students went back to their seats to complete the independent part of their journal (connections, thoughts, opinions, etc.).

In summary, the procedures for this case study were the pre-assessments of Lilly and her classmates, an intervention plan that was created based her pre-assessments, IEP, and her classmates’ needs. Lessons were planned and carried out with everyone’s needs in mind, and the post-assessments were given. Data was collected through the six weeks of instruction given to Lilly and her classmates.

**Conclusion**

This chapter described the methods used to collect data for this case study. First, there was a detailed description of Lilly, including her academic background. Then the procedures used in this case study were discussed as well as a description of how the data was collected. In chapter four an explanation and analysis of results will be discussed.
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will describe the data gathered to measure my students’ progress. I will describe my student and her classmates throughout the course of the assessments. In addition I will include the data I collected to measure the effectiveness of my intervention. After I present the data, I will summarize my findings.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

As described in chapter three, I collected a variety of data from my research participant and her classmates. All students did a version of the QRI-5, completed reading journals to record their thoughts, and received a final grade for all their discussions. The WRMT-R and the QRI-5 were administered to my research participant separately from her classmates after school. The results of both these assessments are described below. I will first describe the pre and posttest results of my research participant and then the results of her classmates.

Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) results of the research participant.

The pre and posttest of the QRI-5 were completed in one session after school at the beginning and end of the study. Since the WRMT-R tested on word identification I decided not to retest Lilly in that area of the QRI-5. In both the pre and posttest, Lilly was at ease and relaxed; we know each other well. During the QRI-5 pretest, Lilly took a quite a while reading. After getting lost a few times in the reading, I gave her a piece of paper to help her read line by line. Since she scored a frustration level without look backs, and had troubles getting through the reading, I decided not to go forth with a more difficult reading. I will explain the different QRI-5 comprehension levels in the section of this chapter that describes the comprehension portion of the assessment. During the posttest, Lilly did much better with the reading and the questions, therefore I moved on to a sixth grade reading. I have summarized the results and
provided tables of each aspect of the QRI-5.

The first aspect of the assessment, Word Identification, is measured in two ways in the QRI-5: 1) lists of high frequency words by grade level that the student reads aloud while timed for 1 second recognition, and 2) the percent of oral reading errors in the grade level passages. The following chart demonstrates the results of the Word Identification assessment. According to her IEP, Lilly had some difficulty decoding writing words, especially vowel diagraphs. These identified challenges occasionally surfaced in my testing with the QRI-5, but were not a consistent problem. When Lilly took her time to look at the whole word, she didn’t have too many problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QRI-5 Word Identification Assessments and Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QRI-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy on Word Lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QRI-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage Rdg. Accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5 Expository</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6 Expository</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To observe Lilly’s fluency, I timed Lilly’s reading to calculate her Words Per Minute...
(WPM) while observing her reading characteristics in the fifth and sixth grade passages described in the above table. The results are can be found in the fluency chart below. On the pretest, Lilly’s fluency was in the low third/fourth grade range. Lilly improved her fluency on the posttest. In both pre and posttests, Lilly reread portions and used self-talk. In the posttest she stopped more to process what she read and looked at the diagram. In addition, she took more time processing her thoughts than sounding our words in the posttest, yet she improved her overall WPM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QRI-5 Fluency Assessment and Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QRI-5 Oral Reading rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5 Expository</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6 Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6 Narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To assess Lilly’s comprehension, I used the same passages that were described in the fluency and word identification tables. The results of the comprehension portion of the QRI-5 are demonstrated in the follow table. Before reading each passage, prior knowledge was measured through questions about concepts important to the passage. A score of 55% or more indicates the student is “Familiar,” with the topic and concepts in the passage. Lilly was unfamiliar with the concepts and topics in both fifth grade passages, and she was familiar with the sixth grade passage’s topics and concepts. Following the passages, I asked Lilly to retell the story/article and answer eight questions, equally divided between implicit and explicit inquiries. An Independent score is determined by answering all eight questions correctly. An Instructional score is when a student answers six or seven questions correctly. A score of zero to five correct answers indicates a Frustration score. Lilly’s results are featured in the table below.

A number of factors influenced my decision to proceed to a sixth grade passage with Lilly. Lilly’s word identification and fluency improved quite a bit during the posttest. In
addition, I saw that her comprehension improved from Frustration to Instructional without lookbacks in the posttest. When presented with the sixth grade passage, she did a good job reading, but she still scored at the frustration level with lookbacks in the comprehension section. As a result, Lilly tested instructional at Level Five her current grade level placement. Since the QRI-5 resembles the classroom experience, I would gauge her comprehension level at the Grade Five of the QRI-5 at the end of the study. I will give my interpretation of these results in chapter 5. I will now move on to Lilly’s results of the WRMT-R.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QRI-5 Comprehension Assessment Results and Analysis</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QRI-5 Retellings and Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 5 Expository</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Farming the Great Plains-Unfamiliar Retelling</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions: 21%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>W/Lookbacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Does Your Body Take in Oxygen-Unfamiliar Retelling: 24% Questions: 75% W/Lookbacks 86% Instructional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pele- Familiar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retelling: 56%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions: 50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W/Lookbacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilly has made significant gains. Level 5 went from Frustrational to Instructional without lookbacks. She tested instructional overall in the Level 5 level.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When looking back, Lilly increased her ability to answer implicit questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In all readings, Lilly was able to increase her scores by looking back at the reading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total QRI Passage level-Fifth Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised (WRMT-R) results.

The WRMT-R pre and posttests were administered over multiple days because of the availability of the student and the length of the test. The pretest was done over two days and the posttest was done over three days. Since Lilly and I have a good relationship, she was relaxed
during the testing and tried her best in all areas. I have provided a table of the results of the pre and posttest.

Lilly’s results of the WRMT-R were calculated using the grade equivalency tables in the test administrator’s handbook. It should be noted that Lilly took the pre and posttest when she was at the grade equivalent of 5.0 and 5.2 respectively. Overall she made improvements in all areas. Some of her posttest scores were significantly higher than her current grade level. Please see her results illustrated in the table below.

To help the reader better understand the different subtests, I will define them in the order in which they are given in the assessment. Word Identification, like the word lists in the QRI-5, measures the student’s ability to read words that they may or may not be familiar. Word Attack uses nonsense words to anticipate how the student will approach the reading of new words. This looks at the student’s ability to read the new words and the student’s usage of the rules regarding sound and letter(s) relationships. Word Comprehension measures how students understand words. This subtest is divided into antonyms, synonyms, and analogies. Passage Comprehension measures the student’s ability to read and understand a short passage. The passage has one word missing. The student is required to fill in the blank with the word that best fits the passage. I will offer my interpretations in chapter five.
Group administration of the QRI-5

As described in the previous chapter, I administered the QRI-5 to the entire class in a group format. The students were given one class period (45 minutes) to complete the reading and the questions. Students identified their “without lookback” and “with lookback” responses with different colored pencils or pens. The readings were different in the pre and posttest. I will reflect on the use of the different readings in chapter 5.

The results of Lilly’s 37 classmates were a negative change between pre and posttest. While Lilly’s score stayed the same (with lookbacks) the average change of student scores was -.29. Since this is unexpected, I also compared the students’ comprehension progress without lookbacks. The difference between the pre and posttest “without lookbacks” total is an improvement of .21. This is also consistent with Lilly’s without lookbacks. It appears that while the students did not improve their total score, they were able to improve their score the first time around with the comprehension questions. This is illustrated in the chart below.
Explanation of classroom interaction and results of student journaling.

During my intervention, students read in small groups (4-5 students). They were required to periodically stop and discuss what they have read. I did not see any relationship between the students’ final discussion grade and their QRI-5 score. Most students enjoyed being encouraged to talk about the book in their groups. Not all students, enjoyed journaling. Lilly was one of the handful of students who did not particularly like to journal. Sometimes students claimed to not have anything to say. I had a list of general questions to help the students with writer’s block. Some of the inquires dealt with setting, predictions, opinions, student understanding, student reaction, prior knowledge, and character motivation.

In addition to looking at pre and posttest scores of the QRI-5, I thought it would be useful to compare the journals and the QRI-5 posttest scores. I wanted to know if the high-scoring students had certain writing characteristics that could be predictors of reading comprehension success. My pool of participants was rather large, so I decided to divide them into groups of low,
middle, and high based on the QRI-5 scores. I then chose four journals from each level to analyze.

Since examining journaling is qualitative, I decided to code my students’ journals. Each of their statements fit into categories. I used the think-aloud statement categories (Caldwell & Leslie, 2004) as a starting point to help me categorize. I then added categories as needed. To help the reader better understand the types of student statements, I have included a table with the category titles, descriptions of categories and/or statements of students. Each of the students’ statements counted as one. It was possible to have multiple statements in multiple categories for a single journal entry. The average numbers of statements per group (low, middle, and high) are displayed in the next table. I also included the scores of my research participant to compare her with the low, middle, and high groups.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Student Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stating a match with prior knowledge/other readings</td>
<td>“I am reading a book called <em>Parvana’s journey</em> the stories are about a girl called Parvana and the war with the Taliban and when I read chapter 20 it really made me thing of the life of Parvana…” The student goes on to explain the similarities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating an understanding or cause/effect</td>
<td>“I was worried for Greg when they were stuck in a gangster territory because he could have died because they were fighting over drugs and the land.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making new meaning (inferences/conclusions)</td>
<td>“I think the children got it about (understood and donated money to) the children because the were taught in a school, so they understood how much poverty those people were in.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing/summarizing</td>
<td>“…the children have to sit in a plain area writing in dirt to practice their times tables. They can’t afford paying for the teacher.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal connections</td>
<td>“This reminds me of the time my dad, my brother, and I got lost in the woods, but we didn’t need to sleep there.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a judgment or statement on feelings</td>
<td>“I think it was mean of Greg to go to Khane and say I’m not building you a school and then leave.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicting</td>
<td>“Since I read the name of the next chapter, I think they are going finish the school and open it…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking questions that indicate understanding or I wonder statements</td>
<td>Student’s questions show synthesis of the reading. “I wonder if the children wanted Greg to stay with them, or if they were just curious about him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating a lack of understanding</td>
<td>“I didn’t understand how Haji Ali let other people eat the villages 12 prized rams.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions/statements that indicate a lack of understanding</td>
<td>“I wonder why Greg’s girlfriend dumped him and he got fired from his job.” This is explained in the chapter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical analysis of motivation behind behavior</td>
<td>“It would be hard to give up 12 rams. Giving up 12 rams they said is like giving up 12 babies…Haji Ali and Greg must really want Korphe to have education, they are going through thick and thin.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character analysis</td>
<td>This category includes cultural observations as well as comparing/contrasting Pakistan and the US. “In the United States, we have a lot of things but in the town of Korphe they don’t. The children (in the US) are supervised most of the time at school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>This category includes how students would feel in the character’s shoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I were…I would…</td>
<td>Students are thinking in the character’s shoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examining conditions</td>
<td>Students wonder what they would do in the character’s place. This category also includes students pondering how the character might act if the situation changed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off topic statements</td>
<td>Students statements do not relate to the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to action</td>
<td>Students suggesting what they can do to help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing Journal Statements and QRI-5 Scores

- Stating a match with prior knowledge/other readings
- Stating an understanding cause/effect
- Making new meaning (inferences/conclusions)
- Paraphrasing/Summarizing/Retelling
- Identifying Personally Personal connections
- Making a judgment or statement on feelings (opinions, I feel..., I think...)
- Predicting
- Asking questions that indicate understanding, I wonder if...
- Stating a lack of understanding
- Questions/statement indicating a lack of understanding
- Critical analysis, motivation behind behavior
- Character analysis/cultural observations, compare/contrast US
- Empathy, how students would feel in characters' shoes
- If I were...I would...
- Student wondering what they would do in character's situation or if the character's situation changed
- Off topic statements
- Call to action

Average Number of Statements per Journal

- Participant
- High
- Middle
- Low
When looking at the average number of statements made by my research participant and her 3 groups of classmates, there are few areas where there are significant differences. The high performing group had the more statements in the making new meaning, paraphrasing, critical analysis of motivation behind behavior, if I were…I would..., and empathy categories. The lower performing readers more frequently made judgments.

When I looked at these scores, I decided to refer to a statistics teacher at my school for help. He explained to me that while the bar graph can illustrate average number of statements in comparison to my research participant, I could also use my total data from my three groups (high, middle, low) to mathematically determine if there is a relationship between the QRI-5 scores and statement categories. To do this, we used a chi-squared test. Using the number of observed statements in my categories for each journaling group, the chi-squared test calculated an “expected” number. This expected number is the number of statements my group would make if there was no relationship between the statement category and QRI-5 scores. If the group did not have the expected number of statements, there was indeed a relationship. My colleague and I were only able to test the categories with the largest numbers. Below is a table that illustrates that categories we tested, and whether or not the test determined a relationship existed. The probability that what we saw with my data would happen by chance is $p=0.000000003$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of statements in chi-squared test</th>
<th>Relationship between Category and QRI-5 score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment/Statement on feelings</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing/Summarizing/Retelling</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Analysis/Motivation behind behavior</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I were…I would…</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Analysis</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As displayed in the table above, I found that there were three categories where a relationship surely existed. Those categories were empathy, judgment/statement on feelings, and identifying personally/personal connections. When there was a difference, but not large, I indicated a rating of slight on the table. If there wasn’t much of a difference I indicated none. My interpretations of these results will be described in the next chapter.

To summarize chapter four, I provided the reader the data I collected in my case study to give an understanding of my conclusions in the next chapter. First, I described my research participant and her pre and posttest results. Then, I described the results of her classmates and compared them to my research participant in the areas of the QRI-5 and journal content. Finally, I described a test to indicate relationship between the QRI-5 scores and journal statements. My interpretations and conclusions can be found in chapter five.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

This final chapter will, in three sections, conclude the case study. The first section will connect back to the problem, existing research, and how the results are connected. The second section will offer an explanation of the results and the strengths and limitations of the study. Finally, the last section will provide recommendations for the student for school and home.

Research Questions, Results, and Connection to Existing Research

At the start of this case study, I wanted to better understand the connections that dialogue and journaling have with reading comprehension. This better understanding would make me a better Reading teacher as well as directly benefit my research participant. The questions driving my intervention were: How does dialogue impact comprehension? Can journaling be a form of “inner dialogue” used to help facilitate comprehension? What is the relationship between certain types of journal statements and comprehension scores?

When creating my intervention, I looked for research that included mixed methods. This complemented my philosophy that learning is a multi-faceted process that requires a variety of different methods. Bintz & Shelton’s (2004) study incorporated written conversation as a method to support reading comprehension. My study had verbal dialogue as well as a written independent dialogue. Guthrie et al. (2009) compared traditional instruction with multi-faceted instruction that incorporated reading aloud, paired reading, fluency and word recognition practice, and explicit instruction on inferencing. This mixed-method approach was found to be beneficial to their students.

The methods in these studies were modeled, a practice that I believe should be in all classrooms. I felt that in order for my students to respond to the readings reflectively, in discussions or in journals, I needed to model first. This was done explicitly at the beginning of
the six-week study. Over a period of two weeks, I modeled how to read together and discuss in a group. As a whole group, we discussed as we read together. At the beginning, I did much of the talking providing examples of the types of statements students should contribute. Over time, students contributed more and more. I gradually released responsibility to my students when I felt they were ready. I was surprised that Klinger et al.’s (2010) found there was a gap between comprehension research and practice in the classroom. Many of the teachers in the study did not provide explicit comprehension instruction. Klinger et al. (2010) believes that it is important to have explicit comprehension instruction in the classroom. Researchers like Berne & Clark (2008) and Caldwell & Leslie (2003) incorporated instruction to guide students in how to respond in discussions and think-alouds. Guthrie et al. (2009) guided students to help monitor their comprehension. Guthrie et al. (2009) and Barden (2009) modeled fluency for their research participants. Even when the student assistance was in the form of a computer, it was modeled (Kim et al., 2006). These researchers believed in explicit modeling of comprehension, and they built it into the main questions and interventions of their studies.

When looking at a multi-faceted approach, I also found case studies had similar components to my dialogue and journaling. Berne & Clark (2008) studied peer-led discussions of text. They coded their dialogue transcripts similar to the way I coded my journals, and found that most of the dialogue in their classrooms was comprehension-related talk. If I were to do research dialogue again, I would definitely consider coding students’ verbal statements and comparing them to comprehension scores. This would potentially give me more information than the single grade for discussion in my study. Caldwell & Leslie (2003) also considered the influences of think-alouds to assist with reading comprehension. In my students’ discussions, I noticed that there were many students thinking aloud. However, like the researchers, I found that
my total dialogue score did not necessarily have relationship with comprehension scores. Caldwell & Leslie (2003) concluded that text familiarity was a great contributor to a reader’s success. I would agree, since not all my readers were comfortable with the informational text I used in the posttest.

Keeping in mind of the conclusions of previous research, my research participant responded in a positive way to my intervention in all areas of the WRMT-R. When analyzing the scores for the QRI-5, it is evident that my research participant’s total score stayed the same. My pool of participants’ total score on the QRI-5 had a negative change of -.29. However, they increased their “without lookbacks” score by .21. Lilly’s “without lookbacks” score also improved. She saw a large increase of two full points. I did not see a relationship between a student’s discussion score and their comprehension score. This score difference suggest a possible link similar to the conclusions of Caldwell & Leslie (2003) indicating that text familiarity might possibly impact comprehension just as much as thinking aloud. In addition, when administering the whole group QRI-5, I think I would do it differently in further research. I will offer my possible reasons for the scores in the strengths and limitations section of this chapter.

To further understand my students’ comprehension process, I coded my journals similar to Bintz & Shelton’s (2004) written conversation, Caldwell & Leslie’s (2003) categories of think alouds, and Berne & Clark’s (2008) student discussions focusing on comprehension strategies. Our studies were looking for dialogue that influences comprehension. My study in particular looked at inner dialogue that facilitates comprehension. The data revealed that students who scored high on the QRI-5 had more paraphrasing/summarizing, empathy, character analysis and critical analysis statements in their journals. By using the chi-squared test, I found that personal
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identification, judgment, and empathy statements had an actual mathematical relationship with a higher QRI-5 score. These results are not unlike the Craig & Nation (2006) study that found that students in the higher comprehension groups had certain characteristics in their written narratives. Caldwell & Leslie (2003) also found that those students with higher scores also use more think-alouds.

**Explanation of Study’s Results, Strengths and Limitations.**

In this next section I will offer explanations of the results as well as the strengths and limitations to my study. I believe that one of the great strengths of this study is my mixed-methods approach. While the QRI-5 and the WRMT-R provided useful numerical results that could be easily compared from pre to posttest, I feel like I have a better picture of my students by also looking at their discussion scores and journal statements. I will discuss each assessment individually to help the reader understand its results, strengths, and limitations.

The WRMT-R provided a nice overall picture of my research participant. Lilly saw improvements in all areas of the assessment. The two areas where she saw the most improvement were passage comprehension and word attack. The intention of this study was to improve her reading comprehension, but Lilly and I did not specifically work on her word attack skills. We only talked about decoding when there was a word in context that she was finding difficult. This assessment was administered in September. My only explanation for such a large increase is that she might have be a little “rusty” after a summer off, and in November found the task easier because she had been in school.

I administered the QRI-5 to my research participant and her classmates. Lilly’s total comprehension score stayed the same, while her classmates’ scores saw a decline -.29. When looking at their scores without lookbacks, Lilly increased her score by 2 points and her
classmates increased their scores by .21. It appears that even though the total scores did not improve, they improved during the first attempt at the comprehension questions. I felt that it was an overall strength to use the QRI-5 with all students. I liked the way I administered the assessment to large groups. The students had no difficulty understanding the process. However, I feel that one of the limitations of administering a QRI-5 is the inability to have a posttest identical in level of difficulty to the pretest. The QRI-5 is intended to get a general view of a student’s reading level. The leveled passages for fifth grade vary in difficulty and text formats. For example, I chose an expository passage for my pretest that had more of a layout of a narrative. For the posttest, I chose an expository passage that was potentially more difficult because it was heavy on vocabulary and had a layout similar to a science textbook. Perhaps the text familiarity to which Caldwell & Leslie (2003) referred, was a contributing factor.

To potentially get around this problem, I could give half the students the first reading and half the second during the pretest. During the posttest, I could switch readings, eliminating the problem of difficulty. I would be interested to see how that would impact results.

Another strength I found in my study was the use of discussion in groups. I felt that the students really benefited from having a conversation before they went to independent journaling. One thing I would change is instead of giving students and overall discussion grade, I would like to code their discussion statements to see if that would yield any useful information on their thought processes. The single discussion grade for each student did not reveal any relationship with his or her QRI-5 score.

I believe that coding students’ dialogue, similar to the Berne & Clark (2008) study, would be beneficial because I found that coding my journals proved helpful in analyzing patterns of statement categories used by students of certain comprehension levels. This is one area of my
study that I would not change. I feel that by comparing my low, middle, and high scoring students on the QRI-5, I was able to determine a relationship between certain statement categories and comprehension score. For example there was a strong relationship between high comprehension scores and the categories of empathy, judgment, and personal connections. Since these are certain characteristics of high scoring students, I will also emphasize making these connections in class. In addition, I will choose texts that students will find engaging. By looking at coding the dialogue, I can see that the students who were engaged with the text were the ones that scored the highest. It is empowering to take qualitative data and turn it into quantitative data.

Recommendations for School

Lilly’s IEP states that because she has troubles with reading and occasional processing of auditory information, she needs support in addition to her regular classroom instruction. The following recommendations should be utilized during both individualized and classroom instruction. The interventions in this study seemed to benefit Lilly’s overall literacy skills. The skills that were emphasized in this intervention were primarily focused on reading comprehension. Therefore my recommendations for Lilly will focus on reading comprehension strategies. Lilly should be encouraged to self-monitor her comprehension during large and small group work and direct instruction. She should be reminded to ask questions to clarify her understanding with classroom directions (verbal and written) and the text she is reading. Lilly seemed to benefit from discussions of the text in small groups, large groups, and direct instruction. Therefore I also recommend that Lilly verbally discuss what she has read with her group, partner, teacher, or parent. Discussions should happen when Lilly finishes portions of a longer text. She may retell what she has read or think about connections she has with the text.
Journaling was also a useful tool for Lilly to use when she was working independently. Lilly should also be encouraged to write about what she reads, since it seems to help her process the information in the text. These recommendations connect to Common Core State Standards for English, Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010, p.12-24) in areas two, three, and six of Reading Standards for Informational Texts as well as Speaking and Listening Standards one and two as described in chapter one. Even though word analysis was not a focus of the study’s intervention, Lilly should also be guided in syllabication patterns, roots, and affixes to help her increase her decoding and word knowledge to aid her comprehension. She should be encouraged to reread passages as necessary to be certain she understands the text. This is emphasized in Reading Standards: Foundational Skills area three (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010).

**Recommendations for Home**

At home, Lilly should be encouraged to use what she knows about words to decode unfamiliar words instead of having adults read the word for her as emphasized in Reading Standards: Foundational Skills area three. Lilly should select books at school with the help of a teacher and read those books for pleasure for at least 30 minutes each night. With her mother, she should retell the important events and big ideas of the text. To help her retell, she should write down characters’ names and important events as she reads. This is connected to Reading Standards for Informational Text items two, three, five, and six (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010). These notes can be used to generate more writing when she needs to report on her book at school.
Conclusion

This final chapter concluded the case study. The first section provided a connection between the problem, existing research, and the results of this study. These results were further explained in the second section in relationship to the study’s strengths and limitations. In the final section, recommendations for home and school were provided to address Lilly’s needs.
References


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