READING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF A DIALOGIC

APPROACH TO TEACHING IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

by

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DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The University of Houston-Clear Lake

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Educational Leadership

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE

DECEMBER, 2021

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my late maternal grandmother, Katie Lee Henson, one of my first-ever teachers in life. One of the greatest lessons that she taught me was living is a learning experience. 1929-2021

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I give all glory and honor to God. His strength was made perfect in my weakness along this journey. To Albert and Patricia Blake, my remarkable parents, I cannot thank the both of you enough for your steadfast encouragement, support, and prayers throughout this entire process. To my little big brother, Albert Blake III, thank you for always being in my corner. I am honored to be your big sister. I pause to honor and recognize my paternal and maternal grandparents, great-grandparents, and my ancestral and spiritual host of souls who have all been a part of the great cloud of witnesses that have cheered me on from the inception of this journey until the end. To Dr. Roberta D. Raymond, my dissertation chair, thank you for your patience, selflessness, and firm belief in me during times when it was challenging for me to see the light at the end of the tunnel. To Dr. Amy Orange, my methodologist, you have truly made this dissertation process a rewarding experience. I fell in love with qualitative research because of you. Dr. Christian Stevenson-Winn, thank you for serving on my dissertation committee. Your words of encouragement and text messages were always timely and helped me finish this race with fervor. Dr. Lillian McEnery, I want to thank you for making my dissertation dream team complete. I appreciate your tremendous kindness and support. Thank you for always "loving on my dissertation" with a warm smile. To the administrators, faculty, staff, and students at GVE . . . thank you for your support and words of encouragement throughout my journey. May you forever SOAR.

ABSTRACT

READING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF A DIALOGIC

APPROACH TO TEACHING IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

Amisha L. Blake
University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2021

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A limited body of research exists that considers reading teachers' perceptions and

attitudes about a dialogic approach to teaching (Dunn, 2018). The purpose of this

qualitative research study was to investigate elementary reading teachers' perceptions and

attitudes about a dialogic approach to teaching. Sociocultural Theory was the framework

that grounded this research study. The researcher used a purposeful sample of four

elementary reading teachers. Each participant was interviewed, and two classroom

observations were conducted. A constant comparative method was used to analyze the

data. The five themes that emerged were not all classroom discussions are equal, student

barriers to rich classroom discussions, the positive impact of assertive influences on

student learning, barriers that hinder teachers' abilities to extend discussions, and

teachers' limited knowledge of dialogic teaching. The results revealed consistencies

among participants related to their perceptions and abilities to extend discussions and

teachers' limited knowledge about a dialogic approach to teaching. Each participant felt comfortable teaching both fiction and informational texts in their classrooms. Results determined that affirming students' responses and providing positive feedback were the most common forms of dialogic tools used in elementary classrooms. Teachers had no prior knowledge of dialogic teaching. However, teacher participants expressed an interest to know more about dialogic teaching; more specifically, how to apply the five elements in their daily instructional practices. Results suggested elementary reading teachers need professional development training to inform their instructional practices to develop a dialogic approach to teaching.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

One of the leading responsibilities elementary reading teachers have is to ensure that students are equipped with literacy skills needed to demonstrate the capacity to be proficient life-long readers. Classroom teachers are provided with a standard curriculum that outlines specific objectives and skills students are expected to learn. Although curriculum documents include state and federal criteria particular to what students in each grade level should be taught, these predefined standards do not entail specific methods relative to how a teacher is supposed to employ these standards in the delivery of their lessons (Shanahan, 2014). Furthermore, in some areas, instructional practies are even scripted as if to serve as a one size fits all approach to teaching (Kelly, 2018). Students are expected to learn grade level standards proficiently before entering the next grade level. Therefore, if students are required to meet certain prerequisites, it is vital that reading teachers provide consistent and quality reading instruction that is centered around the student as an active participant throughout the learning process (Boyd & Markarian, 2011).

Dialogic teaching is a reciprocal practice that encourages teachers and students to evenly share in the progression of learning through classroom discussion (Alexander, 2018). More specifically, dialogic teaching in the classroom setting promotes teachers acknowledging their students as collaborators during conversations that transpire during the learning process. A dialogic approach to teaching and learning welcomes equity of voice within the classroom setting (Boyd & Markarian, 2011). Teachers that embrace a dialogic approach endorse students communicating their thoughts in a coherent way that confirms their knowledge and understanding of content material (Boyd & Markarian, 2011). These aspects of teaching reading were the focus of this qualitative research study.

As an introduction to this research study, this chapter includes the research problem, significance of the study, the purpose of the study, research questions, and definitions of key terms.

Research Problem

Reading teachers' instructional approach is often monologic in nature with the teacher serving as the keeper of all knowledge (Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013). The teacher often dominates classroom conversation while students wait to be addressed and called on for a response. Student communication during classroom instruction is routinely curtailed by the redundancy of recitative speech, especially in the area of reading. Noticeably absent is the frequency of authentic dialogue between teacher and students while reading instruction is delivered (Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013). In order for students to be skillful enough to compete in a global society it is imperative that reading instruction moves from foundational skills and practices towards more meaningful and expressive conversations (Peterson, 2019).

Monologic teaching is a repeated problem of practice in the classroom learning environment. This highly structured formulaic process inhibits students' potential to grow and develop as competent readers (Reznitska & Gregory, 2013). Monologic teaching is an overly mechanical instructional technique that impedes students' ability to engage in authentic conversations around texts with their teacher and peers in a collective manner. As a result of this style of teaching, students in the elementary classrom are hindered from being able to completely understand and embrace written text because the collaboration of different voices in the classroom settting is the basis of comprehension. A limited degree of research exists that provides evidence about elementary teachers' thoughts and beliefs about dialogic teaching. To close the gap in the present body of research, this qualitative study sought to explore the perceptions and attitudes of

elementary reading teachers regarding a dialogic approach to teaching. Moreover, this research centered on what elementary reading teachers perceived dialogic teaching to be and also captured their attitude toward the implementation of this approach to teaching during daily reading instructional practices.

Significance of the Study

A lack of research exists regarding teachers' perceptions and attitudes about dialogic teaching as an instructional approach to teaching in the elementary classroom setting. This qualitative study is important because it adds to the narrow body of research that exists about elementary reading teachers' perceptions about and attitudes toward a dialogic approach to teaching. This research study provides insight based on research conducted in one elementary school into how teachers' attitudes and perceptions transpose into their delivery of reading instruction. The findings of this research will prove valuable because they provides an account of elementary reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes about dialogic teaching. District leaders, campus leaders, teachers, and other persons in the field of education that have the responsibility of coaching campus leaders and teachers, planning and delivering meaningful and engaging instruction to students, will find this research beneficial to their overall growth and development as educators. This study explored the capacity to which a dialogic approach to teaching fosters regular interaction and teacher and peer engagement in the classroom setting. This research study will prove to be valuable through the ability to transform the everyday practices for all elementary teachers, irrespective of the content area taught.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate elementary reading teachers' perceptions about and attitudes toward a dialogic approach to teaching reading in the elementary clasroom setting. Additionally, this study emphasized reading teachers'

perceptions of applying dialogic teaching practices using narrative texts versus informational texts and the dialolgic tools that contribute to how teachers approach dialogic teaching. Reninger and Rehark (2009) defined discussions about text as conversations during which participants ask and answer questions of each other and the text in order to construct meaning. They further suggested a significant feature of discussions in classroom contexts is the distinct pattern of exchanges between students and the classroom teacher (Reninger & Rehark, 2009).

Throughout the study, the researcher determined if elements of a dialogic approach to teaching emerged during the reading instructional block in kindergarten through fifth grade classroom elementary classroom learning environments. By examining reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes about a dialogic approach to teaching, other educators and school administrators will gain insight on how they can better engage students in meaningful classroom dialogue. The researcher elected to conduct this type of research in order to add to the limited amount of research surrounding teachers' perceptions and attitudes of dialogic teaching in the elementary classroom setting. There is a need for more research surrounding this particular area of study so that educators have a heightened awareness of dialogic teaching in order to apply this style of teaching as an instructional practice in elementary classrooms.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the perceptions of reading teachers regarding the influence of dialogic teaching on student comprehension?

RQ2: What are reading teachers' attitudes about dialogic teaching?

RQ3: What are reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes of dialogic teaching using narrative and informational texts during reading instruction?

RQ4: What dialogic tools contribute to how reading teachers approach dialogic teaching?

Definition of Terms

Authentic questions: Open-ended questions without prescripted responses (Cook et al., 2018).

Dialogic teaching: A style of teaching characterized by teacher and students working together to build on their own and each other's knowledge and ideas to develop logical thinking using authentic questions (Alexander, 2001; Nystrand,1999).

Dialogic talk: Communication that is collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful (Alexander, 2008).

Dialogic tools: Practical tools mobilized in teacher planning and practice with potential to mediate dialogically organized instruction in a given classroom situation (Caughlin et al., 2013).

Informational texts: Literature that conveys information or ideas. Informational texts include a variety of different genres, such as procedural texts, bibliographies, and informational/explanatory texts (Wantanabe Kganetso, 2017).

Instructional strategies: Learning techniques teachers use such as paraphrasing, generating main ideas, or sumarizing; asking and answering student-generated questions; visualizing; using the text to predict or make inferences; making connections within the text and beyond; and using graphic organizers (Boardman et al., 2017).

Narrative texts: Literature that involves temporally or conceptually connected events, such as stories about daily activities, relationships, cultural traditions, humor, and folk tales; and emphasize social and emotional knowledge, the construction of meaning, and narrative and inferential skills (Luo et al., 2020).

Open-ended questions: Questions that cannot be adequately answered with a yes or no response or a single-word response (Zucker et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Limited research studies exist that examine teachers' perceptions and attitudes about a dialogic approach to teaching (Dunn, 2018). Teachers, campus administrators, and other educational leaders should give thought to this matter and consider the direct impact on teaching and learning. This chapter provided an overview of the research problem, the significance of the study, and purpose for this qualitative research study. Additionally, research questions and key terms pertaining to this qualitative study were addressed. This research study confidently contributes to the growing body of research in the field of education and serves as a support for district and campus leaders alike to determine the influence that dialogic teaching has on teachers and the impact on student success. Chapter II provides a literature review on the major topics that support this study.

CHAPTER II:

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes about dialogic teaching in the elementary classroom setting. Dialogic teaching is a concept that merits further attention as it relates to reading instruction (Barak & Lefstein, 2021). Multiple definitions and theories have been developed regarding dialogic teaching (Sedova et al., 2014). However, a limited body of research exists that considers teachers' perceptions about and attitudes toward a dialogic approach to teaching (Dunn, 2018). Chapter II further explores topics around dialogic teaching as an instructional practice. Also included in this chapter are topics regarding classroom discourse, questioning, student generated questions and explanations, and teachers' perceptions about their delivery of reading instruction. The literature review provides an account of elements aligned to dialogic teaching.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the perceptions of reading teachers regarding the influence of dialogic teaching on student comprehension?

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RQ3: What are reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes of dialogic teaching using narrative and informational texts during reading instruction?

RQ4: What dialogic tools contribute to how reading teachers approach dialogic teaching?

Dialogic Teaching

Dialogic teaching is commonly defined as an instructional approach that includes students in the collaborative construction of meaning and is characterized by mutual control over key elements of classroom conversation (Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013).

Dialogic teaching supports teacher and students leading the course of conversation and promotes communication through authentic exchanges (Lyle, 2008). Teachers who acknowledge a dialogic approach to teaching understand that students are not meant to be passive participants but to engage in meaningful conversations by assuming the responsibility of serving as co-constructors of their individual learning (Davies et al., 2017). Alexander (2008, p. 104) identified five principles of dialogic teaching:

- Collective: Teachers and students addressing learning tasks together, whether as a small group or as the whole classroom rather than in isolation,

- Reciprocal: Teachers and students listen to each other, share ideas, and consider alternative viewpoints,

- Supportive: Children articulate their ideas freely without fear of embarrassment and they help each other reach shared understanding,

- Cumulative: Teachers and students build on their own and each other's ideas and link them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry, [and]

- Purposeful: Teachers plan and steer classroom talk with specific educational goals in mind.

The first three elements refer to the collaborative culture and discourse whereas the last two elements describe the content of dialogic teaching.

Sedlacek and Sedova (2017) conducted a study to determine if change of classroom discourse would influence the quantity of students who actively engaged in communication. The researchers designed a teacher development program that equipped eight lower secondary teachers with specific principles of dialogic teaching in their classroom over a 2-year period. Teachers were trained to transform their practice while the process was observed by the researchers over a 2-year period. Forty-five minute

lessons were recorded before and after the workshops to determine if teachers had correctly included elements of dialogic teaching into their instruction. The focus of the teacher development program involved the concept of collectivity. More specifically, the primary objective was to determine whether the transformation of whole group discourse in the classroom setting involved a change in the number of students who participated in classroom discourse. The results of this study suggested the higher the level of student participation, the greater the extent of an open discussion persisting. Furthermore, this study implied there was a correlation between the length of open discussions in the classroom and the nature of student discourse remaining strong. The more open discussion is incorporated in the classroom, the number and quality of student responses increase.

A similar study was conducted by Reznitskaya et al. (2012). In this quasi-experimental study, the researchers intended to determine whether participation in dialogic discussions led to improvement in individual argumentation. Twelve fifth-grade classrooms from two area public schools were selected to participate. Two classes from each school were assigned to a treatment environment at random. The researchers defined one group as an experimental condition and the other group served as the comparison condition using conventional materials and methods. The study was conducted in three distinct phases. The first phase consisted of a reading comprehension pretest assigned to all students. During the second phase, teachers and students in the experimental condition group met once a week for 12 weeks to engage in literature discussions of assigned readings. The literature discussions were video recorded for 40 minutes. The last phase required all students to complete two writing tasks. Additionally, several students from each classroom were randomly selected for interviews. The data analysis of both pre- and posttests were conducted by raters unacquainted with the treatment conditions. Group

discussions were transcribed and coded. The findings of this research suggested that there was no significant difference between the experimental condition group and the comparison group for all three phases measuring student performance. However, students in the experimental condition demonstrated accountability regarding the practical aspects of classroom dialogue. Students in this group opted to engage with issues germane to their lives while the comparison group maintained a more monologic style of classroom dialogue throughout the process. In summary, the findings of this research study suggested there was no significant difference between the experimental and comparison group. However, students in the experimental group were recognized to have taken more control and ownership over the practical aspects of classroom discussions, which is an attribute of dialogic teaching.

To encourage students' ability to take ownership of their learning, teachers often use scaffolding, a form of instructional support. In a study conducted by Muhonen et al. (2016), the researchers examined types of observable dialogic teaching patterns in early childhood classrooms where teachers implemented scaffolding. The researchers used a sample of eight preschool classrooms and five primary classrooms. The final selection was made based on the teachers' ability to engage their students in moderate to high levels of quality instruction that would potentially yield repeated exchanges between the teacher and students. The data analysis consisted of the researchers noting dialogic teaching episodes, with an emphasis on classroom talk to identify scaffolding strategies. The findings of this research determined that when the teacher initiated dialogue, teacher's scaffolding was more determined on the student's participation and the response given, whereas when the child initiated dialogue, there was a shift in which the teacher served in the role of an active listener of student learning. The implications of this research suggested that students take a more active role in their learning when the teacher

provided the type of scaffolding that is collective, reciprocal, and supportive, which are key elements of dialogic teaching.

Classroom Discussions

Classrooms are the main location where dialogue between teachers and students and among students has a strong impact, not only on what children learn but how they acquire and extract new learning (Khong et al., 2019). Classroom discussions are a significant instructional approach for teachers across grade levels, age groups, and content areas (Backer, 2018). Having the aptitude to facilitate classroom discussions is a necessary skill that teachers need to determine students' literacy skills and current content knowledge (Alston et al., 2018). A teacher's ability to motivate and engage students in meaningful classroom instruction is extremely important in fostering greater student achievement and improving educational results (Stone et al., 2019). The amount of student engagement is influenced by the approach by which a teacher interacts with students. The structure of classroom discourse, involving teacher and students immersed in conversation, brings awareness into a teacher's capacity to engage students in the classroom setting (Stone et al., 2019).

Classroom discussions are often a balancing act between teachers and students. Alibali et al. (2019) conducted a research study that stressed the importance of teachers possessing skills that convey both practical and complex concepts in a way that students can readily comprehend while keeping classroom discussions meaningful. This research study conveyed how teachers' gestures can influence the course of classroom discourse. This study denoted the two main ways in which teachers maintain shared understanding in the classroom was through gestures and revoicing or reaffirming students' speech. The two practices were determined to support student and teacher interactions in the classroom.

The study by Murphy et al. (2018) wanted to find out the effect of quality talk on student comprehension. The sample for this study included 35 fourth-grade students from two elementary classes. Two fourth-grade teachers applied quality talk, a small-group discussion method used to increase students' understanding by fostering students to think, talk, and engage with text. The year-long intervention concentrated on students being able to craft their own questions, respond to authentic questions coherently, and use literacy journals to chronicle pre- and postdiscussion activities. Moreover, teachers attended a series of workshops to aid in their delivery of quality talk. Various elements of video recordings were reviewed, analyzed, and coded for each teacher. Coders observed and listened to videos to pinpoint teacher-initiated discourse elements to detect the type of questions teachers asked to perceive teachers' release of control over time. Conversely, coders were attentive to student-discourse elements to identify transformations in students' critical thinking over time. The findings of this research demonstrated a significant increase in authentic student questioning and a decrease in the frequency of teacher questioning by the end of the intervention. Moreover, as teachers began to yield to allow more student authentic questions, students gained control of classroom dialogue. In summary, the findings of this study were that, over time, the number of teacher questions declined, and authentic questions increased. The implications of this research study suggested, through teacher modeling, students gained control of classroom discourse and the occurrences of student elaboration and comprehension increased. There was also evidence that classroom discussions can lead to student achievement.

Klara at el. (2019) conducted a research study that aimed to determine the influence that dialogue has on student achievement. This study included a sample of 32 classes with a total of 639 students. The research method was two-fold, including both observational and standardized literacy test data. Two lessons were observed in each

classroom. Researchers measured the level of student participation in classroom talk and student achievement. Student participation was operationalized based on the amount of student participation during a lesson. Only words or expressions that were a part of whole-group interactions were included. Students were given a literacy assessment that included 16 tasks. The tasks encompassed all areas of reading literacy in alignment with grade-level curriculum standards. The findings of this research study indicated a link between a given student's talk time and the number of expressions featuring reasoning and a student's achievement. However, it is important to note that the findings of this research denoted there was no significant link between student utterances and expressions regarding better results at the classroom level.

The classroom setting is a forum for teachers and students to engage in dialogic discussions. However, a large part of what makes classroom discussions strong are the questions that surface. Aflalo (2021) reported that questions are the basis for student learning. Moreover, it is the kind of questions that students present that contribute to significant learning experiences.

Questioning

Authentic questioning is the cornerstone in a dialogically controlled classroom (Kelly et al., 2018). Questions are the conduit that drives instruction and discourse. Biggers (2018) stated questioning is a central practice in elementary classrooms. Questioning supports teachers' ability to facilitate the delivery of instruction and support student learning. When students are asked questions, their cognitive skills are activated and attuned to the instruction provided by the teacher. In a conventional classroom environment, teachers often ask a variety of questions during instructional time. Teachers ask questions for a multitude of reasons. A study by Döş et al. (2016) explored classroom teachers' strategies for asking questions in the classroom. More specifically, the aim of

the study was to investigate the quantity of the questioning strategies in addition to the intention for using specific questioning strategies. This mixed-method study included 170 primary school teachers in the District of Şahinbey, Gaziantep. Teachers completed a 10-question semistructured questionnaire that included both open- and closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was used to determine the reason why teachers used questions and their use of convergent-divergent and probing questions. The findings of this mixed-method research study determined several reasons why teachers ask questions. Twenty-six percent of teachers generally asked questions to attract students' attention and appeal to their interest. Approximately 14% of teachers indicated they asked questions to foster higher-level thinking while another 14% of teachers affirmed they asked questions to give students the opportunity to convey their feelings. This study found that teachers asked divergent questions more frequently than convergent questions. The results of this study also revealed two issues with teachers' motives for using convergent versus divergent questions. One concern is that teachers often misidentify convergent and divergent questions. Divergent questions were asked 67% of the time and convergent questions were asked 33% of the time. The other issue is though divergent questions were asked more frequently, teachers held the belief that their students' levels were so low they did not have the aptitude to answer them. The findings of this study suggested teachers are misguided in what type of questions they are using for different purposes. Thus, teachers need instructional guidance about the approach to asking quality questions.

Though questions are a necessary element of reading instruction, not all questions tend to be purposeful. Asking questions is much more about the quality of student responses contributed than the number of questions posed. Deshmukh et al. (2019) conducted a descriptive analysis of teachers' question types based on questioning. The

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study also sought to explore students' responses. This study took place over the period of 2 academic school years. In the study, 82 prekindergarten and 14 kindergarten teachers from South Central and Midwest United States participated. On average, most classrooms consisted of 17 students. A subgroup ranging between two to four students was chosen to participate in a more detailed data collection at random. Participation in the study entailed a questionnaire, reading a research-based text, and an exit interview postshared book reading. In the final analysis of the study, results revealed 5,207 teacher questions and 3,469 student responses. Half of the questions asked by teachers solicited *yes* or *no* responses and the remaining of questions were *why*-type questions. Sixty-three percent of student responses consisted of a single word response while 36% of student responses consisted of multiword responses. The majority of *yes* or *no* responses were reported to be accurate and most *how*-type question responses were inaccurate. Although *how*-type question responses were more likely to be inaccurate, it is important to mention that inaccurate responses were welcomed. The impact signifies an opportunity for students to learn and teachers to support students further in increasing their understanding of various skills and concepts. The implications of this research study suggest the classroom should be a learning environment where students are given opportunities where they are challenged to respond to more rigorous levels of questions versus lower-level questions.

Lee and Kinzie (2012) conducted a qualitative research study that aimed to describe discussion patterns of prekindergarten teachers and students with a primary focus on teachers' use of open-ended and closed-ended questions and student responses to the two different types of questions during science activities. The study included three prekindergarten teachers at different schools. Each teacher was observed in the classroom setting and participated in a 1 hour-long interview about their perceptions of instructional strategies surrounding open-ended and closed-ended questions. The researchers used

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inductive analysis to determine any connections or relationships in student responses. The results of this qualitative research study indicated that teachers used mostly closed-ended questions rather than open-ended questions. Findings also revealed that on the rare occasions when open-ended questions were asked and students showed signs of struggle, teachers diverted back to a closed-ended question. Closed-ended questions constrain students' responses to questions. Responses are usually limited to one-word responses. In contrast, open-ended questions give students the opportunity to articulate their thought process and expand their responses using more complex words, sentences, and phrases.

Questions are a fundamental component of dialogic teaching. However, most questions that are asked during discussions are prompted by teachers. Ness (2016) reported that students are naturally inquisitive and consistently ask questions to the adults in their lives. Yet, questions that students might want to share are not raised as frequently as teachers' questions. Dialogic teaching supports students having the autonomy to generate questions.

Student-Generated Questions and Explanations

The acceptance of student-generated questions and explanations is another key element of dialogic teaching. Student-generated questions are necessary in the learning environment. Aflalo (2018) conducted a comparative pre/posttest intervention that sought to discover the effect of student-generated questions after students had achieved a certain level of familiarity and competence with content matter. This research study was conducted in six biology classes in two different colleges in south Israel. A total of 133 students participated in the study. The study was carried out over a period of 4 years. Students were taught a total of 14 lessons followed by an examination at the conclusion of the first semester. Students prepared for the exam by asking questions related to the topics studied and given models of assessment questions. During the second semester,

students were able to create their own questions based on certain guidelines. Student-generated questions were evaluated for effectiveness based on examination results and a questionnaire. A content analysis was conducted, and responses were categorized into six clusters according to student responses on the questionnaire. The findings of this research indicated there was no significant difference in students' assessment scores after engaging in question generation. However, research findings denoted an increase in three out of six classes in the higher order thinking question grades after students constructed questions of their own. The study emphasized that students felt more prepared to encounter questions that involved a greater level of reasoning ability.

Explanations are another aspect of classroom interaction. Ingram et al. (2019) conducted a study that used a Conversation Analytic (CA) Approach. A CA Approach is an inductive and empirical approach that focuses on classroom interaction. This method investigates what is significant to the participants and captures interactions that occur spontaneously in situational settings. Seventeen teachers from eight schools volunteered to video record between one to six math lessons each. Each teacher's years of experience ranged from 3 to 30 years. Video recordings captured daily practices and communication exchanges were transcribed. Two interactional situations perceived by students to be explanations were examined further. One explanation involved a student providing a reply to a question that had been previously answered and the subsequent explanation was about a student speaking out of turn. The results of this research provided several implications for teachers. When spontaneous conversations occur, some teachers might feel uncomfortable. The ability to have complete control of classroom intricacies is obsolete. For this type of learning to occur more often, teachers must be knowledgeable about content material. More specifically, teachers should be cognizant of the types of questions that yield to interaction situations that warrant students explaining their thought

processes in depth. The research also suggests that teachers demonstrate challenges with accepting and responding to student explanations that diverge from the responses they anticipate. Typically, teachers focus on making sure that students' responses are in alignment with math content and that an inadequate amount of regard is given to students' actions in the moment. Teachers must have the capacity to effectively address both the content material and what students communicate that had not been expected.

Evans and Dawson (2017) conducted a study that was part of a larger research project that focused on the development of processing unstructured problems in mathematics. The researchers used an instructional tool known as worked-out examples (or designed student responses) that are used to support teaching and learning. The purpose of this instructional technique encourages mathematical ideas to emerge while also addressing student misconceptions. The study involved an intervention where one teacher provided instruction to a single heterogenous group of 13-14-year-old students in a secondary school in the United Kingdom. The teacher in the study had 3 years of teaching experience and no prior awareness of teaching with designed student responses. Teacher guides served as the sole source of support used in the implementation of the intervention lessons. The intervention was conducted in three parts. The first part consisted of students addressing the mathematical problem independently followed by feedback in the form of written questions from the teacher. The second component of the intervention involved students working in pairs to share their original ideas and construct a collaborative response followed by whole group discussion. The final stage involved students discussing designated responses to the same problem attempted in part one followed by another whole group discussion. The researchers video recorded the lessons and scenes from the fourth, fifth, and sixth pairs were viewed and transcribed for further analysis to allow the teacher and students time to become acclimated with the process. A

postinterview was conducted at the conclusion of the intervention. The findings of study revealed that students typically explained and justified their responses more when the focus was on the use of designated student responses questions than their own responses. Moreover, students were encouraged by the teacher to be more analytical of designated student responses. The results of this study underlined the fact that students found explaining their own work to be challenging but made greater endeavors to discuss designed student responses. Possibly, it was the opportunity for students to work collaborative with their peers that made the practice a constructive learning experience.

Teachers' Perceptions of Reading

Teachers have a great responsibility for providing instruction to their students. According to Hall (2005), teachers bring with them into the classroom a myriad of their perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about teaching. These perceptions and attitudes often determine what and how teachers transmit information to students that can influence students' perceptions and thoughts. Moreover, teachers demonstrate their beliefs and attitudes about reading through their behaviors. A teacher's personal reading behaviors can impact their instructional practices and style of facilitating instruction to their students. These beliefs and attitudes influence how students feel about reading because teachers and students spend a percentage of the instructional day reading texts together. With most of their time spent at school during the weekday, children witness the reading patterns and habits of their teacher. Teachers demonstrate their beliefs and attitudes about reading through their behaviors. McKool and Gespass (2009) conducted a study that investigated the relationship between teacher's personal reading habits and their instructional practices. The researchers reported that teachers valued themselves as readers. However, only a little more than half of teachers read longer than 10 minutes per day. The researchers reported that teachers spent most of their personal time preparing

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lessons and grading assignments. However, teachers who read for leisure for 45 minutes or more were more likely to engage their students in instructional practices such as literature circles and comprehension discussions. The implications of McKool and Gespass' study suggest when teachers demonstrate an active effort in reading, their own behaviors infiltrate into the learning environment and shape the delivery of their instruction.

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes about reading have much to do with their understanding of reading as a pleasant experience. According to Merga and Ledger (2019), a teacher's ability to engage in reading as a shared activity often has to do with their awareness that reading is more than tasks related to curriculum demands such as decoding or comprehension. Reading is also meant to be enjoyed. Merga and Ledger conducted a qualitative study that focused on the attitudes of teachers who conducted read-alouds for their students in the primary classroom. The researchers reported that teachers who enjoyed engaging their students in regular read-alouds expressed that their students' enjoyment was reciprocated. Additionally, some teachers stated that reading aloud to their students fostered a genuine connection for reading and even supported their student's literacy development skills such as extending their vocabulary and the development of oral language. The implication of this research study supports that teachers' level of reading engagement and their use of best practice strategies such as read-alouds reveals that reading is more than a task-oriented practice that can impact students.

Nathanson et al. (2008) used a survey questionnaire to determine if preservice and in-service teachers at the graduate level were enthusiastic readers and if their instructional practices influenced reading enthusiasm. The researchers reported evidence that enthusiasm was missing. More specifically, 17% of preservice and in-service teachers

found minimal to no pleasure in reading. Another 47% of respondents expressed they enjoyed reading but further analysis suggested that these individuals did not have solid reading habits. The findings of this research study suggest that a decline in reading interest could be attributed to a lack of enthusiasm for reading in those who teach reading. Teachers who teach reading can have a tremendous impact on how their student's express enthusiasm for reading or not. Participants who identified as enthusiastic readers attributed a former teachers' enthusiasm for reading. The implications of this questionnaire survey suggest that if teachers regard reading as an enjoyable practice, students will perceive reading in the same manner. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes about reading can shape students' minds and opinions about reading more than a standardized and predetermined curriculum.

Theoretical Framework

Since this study focused on reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding a dialogic approach to teaching, the researcher based the theoretical framework on sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) theorized the concept of sociocultural theory as learning that takes place during social exchanges between individuals. According to Vygotsky, it is through social interactions that new learning ensues. Mahn (1999) reported the staple of Vygotsky's theory assessed human beings as meaning makers. In addition, Mahn asserted that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory placed emphasis on social interactions as a way for children to be able to codevelop meaning together. According to Pellegrino (2020), all learning is essentially social, involving the individual's use of shared language, tools, norms, and practices in collaboration with the setting in which social interactions take place. Through social interactions, learners can acquire knowledge from their teacher and peers.

Sociocultural theory identifies that knowledge is a construction between individuals or between members of a group of people (Wang et al., 2011). Sociocultural theory allows individuals to posit the relationships between individual creative contributions on the one hand, and collective group processes on the other. Kahn (2012) reported that as children relate and react to others, they develop the capacity to communicate using language and higher mental processes, such as attention, memory, and concept formation. Vygotsky (1978) stated that "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 57). Therefore, it is necessary for learners to be given chances to dialogically exchange their understandings of tasks collaboratively (Kahn, 2012).

Conclusion

The literature review has provided a framework for the ideas involved in this study regarding reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes of dialogic teaching in elementary classrooms. The following chapter describes the methodology used by the researcher for the purpose of this qualitative research study. This chapter includes an overview of the research problem, research purpose and questions, research design, collection procedures, data analysis, privacy considerations, and limitations of this study.

CHAPTER III:

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methods used for this case study. This is a qualitative case study of one elementary school from an urban school district in southwest Texas. The purpose of this single case study was to investigate elementary teachers' perceptions and attitudes concerning a dialogic approach to teaching in four elementary reading classrooms.

Instructional Setting and Context

The school district used for this research study was an urban school district located in Texas. Most campuses in the district had at least one teacher specialist. The main role of a teacher specialist was to provide classroom teachers with instructional support to enhance the effectiveness of teaching practices and learning outcomes for students. Teacher specialists were supervised by their campus principals. The participating school in this study enrolled a large population of Hispanic students. Clover Elementary School (a pseudonym) serves nearly 600 students from a variety of backgrounds, with 77% of the student population being Hispanic, 21% African-American, 1% White, 1% mixed-race, and 91% economically disadvantaged. As reported by the Texas Education Agency school report card (Texas Education Agency, 2019), Clover Elementary received a "met standard" rating with distinctions in two areas. Texas Education Agency (2019) stated,

> Campuses that receive accountability ratings of A, B, C, or D are eligible to earn distinction designations. Distinction designations are awarded based on performance relative to groups of campuses of similar type, size, grade span, and student demographics. Districts are eligible for a distinction designation in postsecondary readiness.

Clover Elementary received distinctions in science and comparative academic growth. According to the Texas Education Agency (2019), a campus earns an academic achievement distinction in science based on attendance rate and performance (Masters Grade Level). Students who perform at the Masters Level are ready for the next grade level and require minimal or no intervention in the subject area assessed. A campus earns a comparative academic growth distinction if the campus can show differences among racial/ethnic groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and other factors within its comparison groups.

Campus Level

At the campus level, four classroom teachers who taught reading were included in this study. Teacher participants were selected based on their assigned role and their direct involvement with providing reading instruction to students in the elementary classroom learning environment. Campus instructional leaders served as the liaison between the school district and teachers regarding expectations involving the planning and execution of reading instruction. Campus instructional leaders played a fundamental role in organizing and facilitating weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in addition to professional development learning opportunities to ensure overall effectiveness in lesson planning and lesson delivery of reading instructional practices.

Classroom Reading Teachers

The reading teachers for this study were selected because of their direct involvement with providing reading instruction to students in the elementary classroom setting. All teacher participants were responsible for creating weekly lesson plans, selecting instructional resources, and preparing for the delivery of reading lessons. Reading participants' teaching experience ranged from 2 to 12 years.

Researcher's Role

The researcher who conducted this study was an elementary school magnet coordinator in a Texas school district with 14 years of elementary school experience. During her 14 years of experience, the researcher was a former classroom teacher and teacher/instructional specialist. The researcher taught 1 year of third grade and 8 years of fourth grade. Her entire career was in Robust Independent School District, including her administrative experience. As a former classroom teacher, the researcher understood the value of meaningful classroom discussions during reading instruction. The researcher conducted her research study at Clover Elementary because the campus has a distinct vision that all students can read on grade level by second grade. As a campus leader who provided instructional coaching to classroom teachers, the researcher intended to explore teacher perceptions and attitudes about dialogic teaching, in addition to observe if specific dialogic teaching practices were being implemented by reading teachers at Clover Elementary. The researcher recognized the need to take an in-depth look into the daily practices of Clover Elementary's reading instruction practices.

Research Design

The researcher employed a qualitative research case study approach to allow for a more comprehensive vantage point of reading teachers' perspectives and attitudes about dialogic teaching in elementary classroom settings. According to Saldaña and Omasta (2017), a case study focuses on a single unit—one person, one group, one organization, or event. The researcher triangulated various sources of data including observations and interviews to certify that the results yielded from the qualitative research study were credible. Using the case study approach, the researcher sought to have the following questions answered:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of reading teachers regarding the influence of dialogic teaching on student comprehension?

RQ2: What are reading teachers' attitudes about dialogic teaching?

RQ3: What are reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes of dialogic teaching using narrative and informational texts during reading instruction?

RQ4: What dialogic tools contribute to how reading teachers approach dialogic teaching?

Participant Selection

Once district approval was granted, research participants were identified, and provided an overview of the study (Appendix A). The researcher employed purposive sampling. When purposive sampling is used, "participants are deliberately selected because they are most likely to provide insight into the phenomenon being investigated due to their position, experience, and/or identity markers" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017, p. 96). The participants for this study were selected because the campus administrative team recommended them. Campus leaders shared that participants had an awareness of an effective, organized, and student-driven lesson cycle that included dialogue between teacher and students. The participants were also selected for this study because of their employment in the school district as well as their daily interaction with students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The participants in this research study involved four elementary reading teachers. The four teachers in this study included one kindergarten teacher, one second grade teacher, one fourth grade ESL teacher, and one fifth-grade teacher. The researcher chose to include teachers with various credentials to offer a more broad and diverse perspective about different aspects of reading instructional practices for different grade levels at the elementary level. Teacher participants were informed that

their participation was voluntary. Since this research study involved children under the age of 18, the research had to acquire assent from each student (Appendix B).

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to data collection, the researcher gained approval from the University of Houston-Clear Lake's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) as well as the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once approvals were granted, initial contact with the school district commenced, with the intent to explain the purpose of the study, the potential benefits, the design, as well as the intention to maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the campus, teachers, and students involved in the study. Before each participant was interviewed, a protocol of questions was piloted with a panel of experts to improve accuracy, credibility, and validity of the study. The committee of experts included university professors, school principals, and other campus-based instructional leaders from neighboring schools in Robust Independent School District. The protocol was developed specifically for elementary reading teachers. The piloted interview protocol was reviewed and modified to ensure that the questions were aligned to the research problem. After the interview questions were edited, the researcher used them for the study (Appendix C).

Interviews

With permission from the campus principal of Clover Elementary, the researcher contacted each reading teacher individually. Upon contact, the researcher obtained permission from each reading teacher to participate in the study. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant that ranged between 30 and 45 minutes. Per CPHS recommendation, interviews were conducted remotely due to Coronavirus-19. Two research participants did approve to conduct interviews in their classroom while maintaining social distance. The researcher conducted interviews with

participants at a time that was convenient for the participant. Pseudonyms were used to protect the individuals involved in the study. After each interview, recordings were uploaded to the researcher's personal computer and stored on the hard drive for safe keeping. To protect the identity of the participants in the study, the researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym. The four teacher participants in this study were Suzanne Rae, Marilyn, Jennifer, and Maxine.

Observations

The researcher was given permission to conduct face-to-face observations, maintaining social distance throughout the entire observation period. Two 30-minute in-person observations took place in each participant's classroom to allow for teacher and student interaction to transpire in a comfortable and familiar environment. At the same time, the classroom setting permitted the researcher to observe teacher and student communication emerge organically. To gain more insight into each teacher's ability to integrate dialogic teaching into their daily instruction practices, the researcher observed the whole group instruction portion of the reading instructional block. During this portion of the instructional block, the researcher focused on the types of dialogue that transpired between teachers and students, in addition to the variety of questions presented during the reading block. The researcher purposefully noted questions that were initiated by students compared to those that were initiated by the reading teacher.

Field Notes

The researcher maintained a collection of field notes from all classroom observations conducted and kept a record of copious notes after each interview. The researcher was careful to denote both verbal and nonverbal gestures during the interview process. Field notes included the physical and social classroom environment in relation to how reading teachers might have included dialogic teaching practices in the classroom.

Data Analysis

According to Nassaji (2015), qualitative research analysis includes an inductive exploration of data that reveals recurring themes, patterns, or concepts. Since this research study was inductive in nature, the researcher analyzed various components of each teacher's reading block to observe elements of dialogic teaching. Prior to coding the data, the researcher reviewed transcripts of audio recordings to ensure that all pertinent information was captured during each interview process. Interview data from the interview protocol was recorded with permission, transcribed by the researcher, color coded, and analyzed to determine emergent themes within participant responses. The researcher read through notes from interviews, classroom observations, and field notes to determine any patterns. Patterns identified during this process were defined and categorized. The researcher was intentional about denoting specific themes that manifested over time. As themes emerged, they were organized into categories by major and subthemes for consideration. The researcher was able to determine the various ways in which dialogic teaching was demonstrated in the elementary reading classroom learning environment.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to collecting data, permission was obtained from the University of Houston Clear Lake, the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, and the Institutional Review Board. After permission was given, teachers were provided an informed consent form stating the purpose of the study, in which participation was completely voluntary, and that identities would remain confidential (Appendix A). Confidentiality of data was maintained using pseudonyms for interview participants and the research site with the reporting of findings. All hard copies of personally identifiable information were stored in a locked file, and all electronic copies were stored on the researcher's hard drive and

password protections were put in place. Hard copies and electronic copies will be destroyed after 5 years.

Transferability

        This qualitative case study was conducted at a single elementary site. Therefore, the results should not be generalized to all elementary reading teachers and students in kindergarten through fifth grade in RISD. However, the findings will prove valuable to teachers and campus leaders by providing information on dialogic teaching practices in elementary classrooms.

Limitations

        As a result of this study being qualitative in nature, the researcher was completely reliant upon the participants' honesty of their responses during the interview process. Additionally, while the teachers included in this study participated voluntarily, the sample size for this study was not comprised of a substantial number of teachers based upon the entire demographic area targeted. Third, given that all the respondents were female teachers, the data do not yield themselves to male counterparts or other ethnicities for consideration.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

</div>

        The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine reading teachers' perceptions about and attitudes toward dialogic teaching in the elementary classroom setting. A case study approach was employed to explore teacher and student interactions and specific dialogic tools in relation to dialogic teaching. This chapter provided an overview of the research problem, the significance of the study, research questions, and definition of key terms. The next chapter will provide the results of the study including participant demographics, findings related to each research question, and a summary of findings.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate elementary reading teachers'
perceptions about and attitudes toward a dialogic approach to teaching reading in the
elementary classroom setting. This study was important because it examined the various
perspectives that reading teachers have regarding the discussions that transpire during the
reading instructional block with their students. This chapter summarizes the results
determined from careful analysis of the qualitative data. Along with interviewing the
teachers, the researcher conducted 30-minute classroom observations of each teacher's
reading block on two separate occasions. This portion of the research study occurred over
a 6-week period. Interviews were conducted using structured questions for each teacher
participant. The researcher examined the participants' experiences as told from their
perspectives.

The interviews explored the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of reading teachers regarding the influence of
dialogic teaching on student comprehension?

RQ2: What are reading teachers' attitudes about dialogic teaching?

RQ3: What are reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes of dialogic teaching
using narrative and informational texts during reading instruction?

RQ4: What dialogic tools contribute to how reading teachers approach dialogic
teaching?

This chapter presents the thematic results of data analysis for this study, as well as
participant profiles outlining their personal experiences as elementary reading teachers. A
few of the reading teachers in this study encompassed a wide range of professional
experience in the field of education. Three of the four teachers in this study had

previously taught other grade levels, subject areas, and/or worked in other districts or sectors, which showed their diverse teaching experiences. The researcher identified five major themes that emerged through qualitative coding and analysis. The next two sections provide background information and teacher profiles for each participant.

Background Information on the Participants

Each research participant volunteered to take part in the qualitative research study. Research participants were elementary school teachers in a large urban school district in Texas assigned at the same site. Participants were four female reading classroom teachers with a broad range of experience in education spanning between 2 and 12 years. Each participant held a standard teaching certificate in one of the following domains: Generalist EC-4, EC-6, English as a Second Language (ESL) generalist, and English Language Arts and Reading (4-8). The participant's teaching assignments were kindergarten, second grade, fourth grade ESL, and fifth grade. Each teacher participant's assignment focused on the delivery of reading and language arts instruction within a 90-minute time frame. The campus research site was departmentalized, signifying that each research participant had a partner teacher who provided instruction in one of the other core subject areas such as mathematics, science, and/or social studies. Due to Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19), research participants taught concurrently, providing instruction to students in the classroom setting in addition to students that received instruction in a remote learning environment outside of the classroom learning environment. The interviews included stories and recollections relating to each teacher participant's experiences as a reading teacher, which were examined to determine their practices involving classroom discussions and conversations that emerge during the reading instructional block. Throughout the course of the research study, the participants

provided a glimpse of their daily experiences and interactions with their students in the elementary classroom setting.

Participant Profile #1

"Marilyn"

Marilyn is a reading teacher who has been teaching for 5 years. This is her first year in Robust Independent School District. She is a spry teacher with plenty of dynamism. Marilyn's journey and experiences with children began long before her role as an elementary teacher. She has always had a passion for children and knew she wanted to work with them in some capacity. Much of her youth was spent babysitting and being an active participant of her church. Initially, when she enrolled in a 4-year university, her major was undeclared. The researcher asked Marilyn what major she ultimately selected. Marilyn shared that after careful consideration and self-reflection, she decided to become a teacher and make an impact on children like her childhood teachers had done for her. She obtained her degree in Youth and Community Studies which is under the College of Applied Learning and Development. After graduating she enrolled in an Alternative Certification Program (ACP) resulting in her getting her standard teaching certification in the state of Texas. This was Marilyn's first year at Clover Elementary and first year teaching second grade. Prior to teaching at Clover Elementary, Marilyn previously taught 1 year of preschool in the private sector. She also taught 1 year of fourth grade and 2 years of kindergarten at other public schools in the state of Texas.

Participant Profile #2

"Jennifer"

Jennifer is a reading teacher who has been teaching for 6 years in Robust Independent School District. All 6 of those years of teaching experience have been at Clover Elementary School. Jennifer's story that led to her experience as a classroom

teacher is special. Her journey commenced on the other side of the pond. In 2003, she left her hometown of South Africa to work in London, England at a school for children with autism and Asperger's syndrome. At the time, she was a people's support worker because she had not completed her undergraduate degree. Eventually, she traveled back home and completed her undergraduate degree studies at a private college with a degree in Elementary Education. A few years later, she was presented with the opportunity to complete graduate studies in the United States. She went on to earn her master's degree in Special Education. Eventually, she secured a teaching position as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher at Clover Elementary School. Jennifer is a teacher with a benevolent heart for children. She understands that students come with a diversity of educational needs that must be addressed. Jennifer considers it a privilege to be able to impart knowledge into her students every day.

Participant Profile #3

"Maxine"

Maxine is a reading teacher in Robust Independent School District. This is her 2nd year teaching at Clover Elementary School. Although Maxine comes from a lineage of educators, she did not set her sights on becoming one herself. Her educational journey took a slightly different path than what she originally planned. She earned her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and went on to complete a graduate study program where she obtained her master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Maxine's passion for helping others led to social work for a while. She was involved in providing support to survivors of Hurricane Harvey. Some time passed by when she reached an epiphany and decided that she wanted to follow in her family's footsteps and become a schoolteacher. Maxine's personal educational background and journey has a tremendous impact on how she interacts with her students. She delights in speaking about her fifth- grade students

and the uniqueness in personality that each of them brings to the classroom. Maxine is an encouraging teacher and constantly motivates her students to think deeply. From listening to Maxine share her experiences, it is obvious that being a teacher is not only in her DNA but something that was always meant to be.

<p style="text-align:center">Participant Profile #4</p>

<p style="text-align:center">"Suzanne Rae"</p>

Suzanne Rae is a kindergarten teacher in Robust Independent School District. She has a total of 12 years of experience in the field of education and 8 of those years have been as a classroom teacher. For the past 3 years, Suzanne Rae has been a teacher at Clover Elementary School. For Suzanne Rae, teaching had always been a lifelong dream and something she always wanted to do. There was no doubt in her mind that she would go off to college and earn a degree in education. Four years later, she earned her undergraduate degree in Elementary Education. After college, she did not go straight into teaching in the school system. Instead, she opted to teach prekindergarten in a childcare setting. Her interests changed and she sought to explore the other side of education and wanted to know more about running a childcare center and went into management. After spending some time in a managerial role, she realized that her passion has always been in the classroom. She listened to her heart and decided to officially be a classroom teacher once again. As Suzanne Rae shared her story, it became quite clear that her heart had always been with teaching primary students.

<p style="text-align:center">Introduction to Themes</p>

The four participants in this research study were elementary teachers with a passion for teaching and a heart for students. All participants taught at the same elementary campus and provided reading instruction to their students daily. Each teacher provided reading instruction to more than one cluster of students. A standard day of

teaching consisted of providing reading instruction to two rotations of students for primary teachers and three rotations of reading instruction for upper elementary teachers. The reading instructional block consisted of a warm-up activity related to a particular reading skill, a read-aloud, direct instruction (or "mini- lesson), independent practice, and some form of an extension activity known as an "exit ticket" before students transitioned to various centers and workstations. Due to the global pandemic known as COVID-19, teachers had the responsibility of teaching some of their students in a remote or virtual learning environment outside the scope of the traditional classroom setting. Themes began to emerge as the researcher conducted interviews with each participant. The five primary themes were not all classroom discussions are equal, student barriers to rich classroom discussions, the positive impact of assertive influences on student learning, barriers that hinder teachers' abilities to extend discussions, and teachers' limited knowledge of dialogic teaching.

Presentation of Themes

Not all Classroom Discussions Are Equal

One theme that emerged was that not all classroom discussions are the same. From this theme two subthemes emerged: classroom discussions and how teachers plan their reading instruction using questions. For the purpose of this research, classroom discussions are common practices that involve the shared exchange of information between teacher and students during the dispensation of knowledge whether familiar or unknown to all persons involved. Classroom discussions allow individuals the platform to express their thoughts and opinions on a given topic in the classroom setting during the learning process. Research participants voiced their beliefs on how they perceived classroom conversation to develop during the reading instructional block in their respective classrooms. Marilyn stated,

I would say . . . they're pretty good. The only thing is, it's the same kids that

usually contribute. But I've noticed that over time, the other kids who are real

quiet do start contributing and having conversations. I like seeing the kids make

connections and take ownership of what they're reading and relate it to their own

life. And they do well with that.

Marilyn's comments illustrate her skillfulness with being able to detect that the

discussions in her classroom are not often a shared experience by all her students. She

observed that some students tend to not speak up as much as their peers. Her response

indicated there was a moderate shift that her other students began to speak up as time

passed. Ideally, she would like for there to be more of a balance with regard to the

amount of participation in classroom discussions. Marilyn explained her thoughts about

why students who are typically quiet during classroom discussions increased their

participation. Marilyn elaborated on this point stating,

Well . . . I don't want to toot my own horn. But . . . from what I've seen . . . I'll

. . . even if the answer is not exactly what I'm looking for I'll say, well thank you

for contributing. I'm so glad you spoke up, thank you. I'll make them feel

comfortable, which I really try to do. 'Cause I would want that if I were a child.

It'll just seem that whatever they say they're not going to get in trouble. I

encourage it. I say, okay, well, maybe you're not right on it. But let's keep talking

and discussing. But yeah . . . they start opening up . . ..

As revealed through Marilyn's words above, she understands the impact that

affirming the responses her students share can result in them feeling comfortable enough

to engage in classroom discussions more often. Observations of Marilyn's classroom

supports that she embraced her students' responses during the reading instructional block.

Her second-grade students made connections to texts read aloud in class and often wanted to share their own personal stories connected to the text.

Teachers' reactions to students' responses can influence the way students view learning. According to Tan et al. (2019), feedback that is limited or unclear can decrease the rate of student learning. However, positive teacher feedback that is nonjudgmental influences students' learning experiences in a constructive way. It is apparent that Marilyn established a respectable connection with her students, making them comfortable and welcomed to share without fear of judgment. During an observation of Marilyn's reading block, the researcher observed how her students were eager to gather around her. Her students were excited to share their wonderings and notices as she projected an image of an animal they discussed together. Like Marilyn, Suzanne Rae could attest to the prospect of having her kindergarten students share more during classroom discussions as well. When the researcher asked Suzanne Rae how she would describe the discussions that occured between her and her students during the reading instructional block she stated,

> Sometimes I have to kind of . . . 'cause it's kindergarten . . . I kind of have to pull things out of them a little bit. But I try to get them to answer questions as we go along. They're constantly sharing. So, for example, if I'm reading, they can share you know what they think is going to happen next. I try to get them to share what they think, what's their favorite part of the story.

At this point during the interview, Suzanne Rae paused and asked the researcher to repeat the question again to confirm she understood correctly. Suzanne Rae expounded on her initial point, saying,

> Yeah, a lot of it is just answering my questions. So, I do sometimes have to kind of . . . tell me more, tell me—and sometimes, they'll kind of get on a tangent a

little bit and tell me what they think. But it's mainly me asking constant questions

about the story and having them answer, share what they think about the story.

Suzanne Rae's response bears a formidable resemblance to Marilyn's experience in that

the ability to engage students in classroom discussions does not always transpire without

effort. As a kindergarten teacher who has taught reading for the past 3 consecutive years

at Blue Bell Elementary, Suzanne Rae expressed the level of endeavor it takes to engage

her kindergarten students in classroom discussions. Suzanne Rae's responses indicated

that she frequently involves her students in classroom discussions using probing

questions. Probing questions are a common strategy teachers use to encourage students to

develop a statement or respond further (Benedict-Chambers & Fortner, 2019). Suzanne

Rae remarked that she attempts to engage her students by asking them to share their

thinking during reading discussions.

Jennifer, the fourth-grade teacher revealed her thoughts and shared the approach

she used to engage her students in classroom discussions, explaining,

I think I make sure to ask questions that will engage them [students] in the

reading process, the learning process. So, I think conversation is really trying to

first of all engage them, secondly, trigger prior knowledge to what they already

know and getting them to activate that and apply it to what they're reading,

getting them to help others in the environment.

The substance of Jennifer's response demonstrated the effort and intentionality

that goes into engaging students in meaningful classroom discussions. More than asking

questions, classroom discussions are foremost about being skillful in creating a solid

framework that affects the course for which classroom discussions materialize. The

nature of classroom discussions thrives when teachers cultivate a learning atmosphere

that recognizes the knowledge and information students already come equipped to share

(Kovalainen & Kumpulainen, 2007). This key point was noticed during an observation in Jennifer's classroom. She and her students were reading an informational text about squirrels and their affinity for snakeskin. The passage made note to mention what scientists thought about squirrels and their unique behaviors. During the discussion a male student stated, "Scientists don't know everything." Instead of ignoring her student's response Jennifer replied, "That's right. They're still learning." The exchange between Jennifer and her student demonstrated how in that moment she acknowledged his perception on the topic. This illustration during her reading block was an example of a reciprocal interchange between a teacher and her student. Jennifer also cited a specific activity she did with her students toward the end of the second semester of the school year to enhance classroom discussions with regarding to questions. She explained,

> When it gets to the questioning part, I think that's a really good part because
> we're doing a lot of things now where it's like I need you to justify whether this
> answer is right or wrong. I need you to stand up and tell me. I tried one of those
> lead4ward games this week. I think it's called Justify Your Answer, but I changed
> it to Jennifer Right, Jennifer Wrong. And I said, okay, I chose C. Now you need
> to tell me why Ms. Jennifer, you're wrong. I put that stem [sentence stem] on the
> board like, Hastie you're wrong because . . . or Hastie you're right because . . .
> and going back and proving. A lot of them were afraid because of respect. Like, I
> don't want to tell you you're wrong. But I'm like, I'm giving you permission in
> this space to tell me I'm wrong right now.

Jennifer's comments suggest the idea that classroom discussions should center around students steering the course of discussions as much as the teacher. Thus, as indicated by her statement, students oftentimes express reluctance in telling the teacher he or she is wrong. It is apparent that most students are accustomed to the teacher being

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the main expert in the classroom. Students have adapted to waiting to be called on by the teacher to share their thoughts during classroom discussions. Jennifer understands the importance of their being equity of voice in the classroom:

> I think, one thing I've learned in teaching is you don't always want to hear your own voice as much. You want to hear them [students] participating and them speaking about and talking about their strategies and what they know about what they're reading about.

> Jennifer had an awareness that classroom discussions are the key chance to explore precisely what and how much information students have acquired throughout the learning process. Although the students were apprehensive to take part in the activity, she found their reaction rather amusing. She knew the game of Jennifer Right; Jennifer Wrong was an enjoyable and educational way of involving her fourth-grade students in meaningful classroom discussion concerning texts. During an observation of Jennifer's fourth-grade class, students were observed in multiple small groups reviewing answers from an assessment. While students were working in small groups, Jennifer walked around to each group listening in on each group's conversations.

> Maxine's fifth-grade classroom discussions were reminiscent of the reaction that Jennifer felt when she introduced the learning activity to her students. When asked by the researcher to describe the classroom discussions that occur in her classroom, Maxine chuckled,

> Some of them are really funny. Some of them are eye opening. Like, for example, we were reading about --- and because March is like Women's History month, right. I didn't mention that to them. I just had us reading a lot of articles about women. And then, here go one of my male students. He was like, "Ms. Maxine, when can we start reading about barrier-breaking men?" Barrier-breaking men!

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The fact that he put that phrase, like I just loved it. Even though these women are

barrier breakers, I love it. I loved that he was like, "Can we start talking about

barrier-breaking men?" I was like, "Sure, I'm going to find some articles on

barrier-breaking men. We're going to read about that."

Maxine's account describing the kind of classroom discussions in her fifth-grade

classroom illustrated that students' responses are occasionally spontaneous with an

element of humor. Maxine's lighthearted reaction to her student's request to learn more

about barrier-breaking men speaks to her responsiveness with regard to acknowledging

what her students have to contribute and showing consideration for her students' requests

to explore their individual topics of interests.

During interviews, participants were asked about their current instructional

practices, how they plan reading lessons, and if there was a difference in how they plan

for teaching using narrative texts versus informational texts. Marilyn expressed the

following about how she prepares to teach reading:

So I use the curriculum guide on the district website as kind of a guide. Some of

the questions I change. Some of them—they have questions embedded in the

curriculum guide and I will use a lot of those questions. Especially being new to

second grade. I'm still learning. And then, if a conversation comes up during the

lesson, I'll think of a new question to ask. But a lot of questions I'll come up with

beforehand, and I'll embed them in my presentations, so I don't forget to ask

them. And yes, I use the curriculum guides and then my own knowledge.

Jennifer also shared how she prepares to teach reading in her fourth-grade

classroom. She expressed her planning protocol, stating,

So, with Robust ISD, we have a scope and sequence that's put out for the year.

And of course, we have the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that

we use to guide us on what our students should know by the end of the year. So, this is kind of like our map for as we're coming in. We use both things together.

Maxine, the fifth-grade teacher, explained how her planning process involves making sure her lessons are real-world and applicable. She stated the following regarding her planning process:

For me, planning usually involves like, something that is real-world and applicable, even if it is fiction. I still look for realistic fiction, where like it's relatable to where students can draw on background knowledge and apply it to their daily lives. I really strive to give them [students] like real-world applicable lessons. So planning usually looks like me finding fiction and I will make sure it has---. I have a lot of Hispanic students in my classroom. I also have a lot of Black students in my classroom. So I always try to get something related to that as well, to their culture. That also helps with the classroom discussion as well. Having people who look like them. So planning is usually real-world applicable material. I really just try to make it real world. And then from there, you know, I always implement an I Do, We Do, and a You Do; my reading strategies as well as I'm gonna be going over what I expect students to do.

Maxine also shared how she does not typically plan discussion questions in advance. However, she might have one or two questions preplanned. She usually builds off the responses her students give in class. During the interview, Maxine shared with the researcher that the questions she plans are known as pillar questions. Maxine elaborated on what pillar questions are, explaining,

Well pillar questions are the questions I know I'm gonna ask. So like, in my read-alouds, like there are some questions, I'll know [in advance]. Like, I'll have some things I know I'm gonna say. Like in my teacher model/t-chart. I'll have one or

two questions that I know for sure I'm gonna ask to start off a discussion, and

then I'll have at least two questions that I know for sure that's gonna start off that

conversation.

Suzanne Rae also shared her planning process when getting ready to teach reading

for her kindergarten students. She detailed the following:

Well first of all, I mean I have to think about where the students are and what

they're gonna understand and how I can deliver it in a way they're gonna

understand. And the way that's gonna keep them interested. So, I just think of like

you know, what's gonna keep the kids engaged and focused. And just kind of do

as many---. When I plan, I try to think of as many hands-on [activities] and try to

be creative as I can. Because with kindergarteners, they need to stay engaged and

focused. So when I'm planning that's really a lot of what I think about. Just, how

can I bring this down to their level and deliver it in a way that they're—first of all

are they gonna be able to understand, and second of all is it going to excite them.

You know, 'cause not every reading skill is going to excite kindergarteners. So

you have to have a way. You have to be creative with any grade, but especially

kindergarten.

In addition to revealing their planning process, each participant expressed their

thoughts and opinions about planning reading lessons using narrative texts versus

informational texts during the reading block. Marilyn shared the following response:

It's . . . pretty much the same way. I guess I feel like . . . maybe . . . I guess the

planning would be similar. I mean, I introduce it. We'll read a story and go over

the different elements of the genres. But I think maybe the informational texts—I

found maybe more, shorter passages or those that we're able to read.

When asked if there is a genre that she gravitates to more than another, she shared her personal preference saying,

I think traditional tales. We just talked about contemporary tales a couple of weeks ago. And I think that's just more fun because the stories are fiction and it's maybe more entertaining for the readers. But I enjoy informational too because I'm learning a lot with the students which makes it fun too.

The researcher's observation in Marilyn's classroom supports that the teacher enjoys

Marilyn also shared her thoughts and opinions about using both narrative and informational texts in her second-grade classroom. She disclosed,

I do feel comfortable. But now that I'm thinking about it more, informational, I guess I like because it's black and white. Narrative, we're saying, "Well, what do you think the theme of this is?" And the theme that I was thinking of the kids came up with something else. I was like, "You know what, you're right." It's more subjective. Yeah, so I mean I feel like I'm comfortable teaching both. I think narrative is more fun. But maybe informational is a little easier because it's more direct. Narrative, you can kind of come up with—everyone has their different opinions about that.

Jennifer communicated her perspective on teaching using narrative versus informational texts. She gave insight to how she communicates fiction and nonfiction to her students. She voiced,

Fiction is what we do first in the beginning of the year. It's something we start with at the beginning of the year. Students are very aware of stories. They're aware of fiction. And so when planning for fiction it is really making sure that they know that this is fake, right. This is not a real story. This is—yes, it could be realistic fiction where this really could happen . . .. Whereas nonfiction is what I

love to read. To me it's so wonderful because there's so many facts and so many resources that you can put around nonfiction.

For clarification, the researcher asked Jennifer to explain if she would say she preferred teaching one genre versus the other. She expounded,

Oh . . . that's a hard question. Umm, no, I wouldn't say I have a preference. I do think personally, I love nonfiction, but there's something about fantasy, right. And I think that's so important for children's imaginations. For them to read the words that become alive to them. So I think personally, yes. I love nonfiction. But teaching, I think the genres are exactly the same. I think that each have their own benefits in teaching them. But I don't think I have a preference.

Maxine, unlike Jennifer, was set on her genre of preference. During the initial interview, she said:

I definitely prefer teaching nonfiction over fiction. Nonfiction is real life and it's applicable. It's like, I feel like students . . . one, I teach fifth grade. So I basically group them as middle schoolers, even though they're not. I just feel like kids, they need to know what's going on in the world today. And in my nonfiction texts I'm able to grab news articles. I'm actually able to grab stuff that is happening right now. I get real life articles.

Maxine went on to share with the researcher her challenges with finding fictional texts that she can apply to real-world scenarios. However, she expressed that there is an abundance of access to nonfiction material, even on the World-Wide Web. Although it was evident that Maxine's personal preference was nonfiction texts, she did state that she was equally comfortable teaching both genres. She felt like the discussions were different when using nonfiction texts versus fiction texts. Like Maxine, Suzanne Rae, the kindergarten teacher preferred informational texts versus narrative texts. She said,

Of course, I have my favorites more than others. I would say I really like the informational texts unit, I think you can do a lot with informational texts. And I really think we did a lot. And I think you can be really creative with that. And they [students] learned a lot from it. Every text we read they learned, and they still tell me something they still remember. So, I will say the informational is always a little more exciting for me.

Although Suzanne Rae's personal preference is reading nonfiction texts, planning to teach nonfiction was not without its challenges at first. During the interview Suzanne Rae said,

So for informational texts, it was a challenging unit because they [students] weren't as excited about that one. But when they started to see . . . I had to take the topics down to their level so they were learning about things that they would be interested in. And so I just got them excited. I really had to think about the age and what are—they're not gonna want to learn about. I can't think of an example, but you know I try to pick the text that they would want to learn about. You know I try to pick texts that they would want to learn about. You know, different animals and things. Narrative isn't as challenging because they seem to like a lot of the stories that we read.

When describing her level of comfortability teaching narrative and informational texts she shared,

So it's changed a little bit. In the beginning it was narrative just because I've already read, you know, narratives. I was comfortable with that. But as we did our informational unit, I became even more comfortable with that. I just think it was exciting. The students really enjoyed it, and I think that got me even more into it

to be honest. I mean I really enjoy both, but I will say that that has changed a little

bit. I really like informational texts.

In summary, teacher participants discussed how all classroom discussions are not

the same during reading instruction. It was noted that the discussions in each teacher

participants' classroom possessed unique qualities distinctive of their personal

experiences as a reading teacher. Still, the researcher was able to find certain similarities

that mirrored other teacher participants' classroom discussions. It was found that an equal

exchange of knowledge between teacher and students, propelling students to take risks in

questioning teachers about reading texts, and teachers appreciating students' responses

and requests can all add value to classroom discussions.

Student Barriers to Rich Classroom Discussions

Another theme that emerged from this study was student barriers. For the purpose

of this research study, student barriers were issues that impeded students' ability to fully

engage in classroom discussions. In this section, the teacher participants shared accounts

of certain aspects that deterred their students from engaging in classroom discussions

related to academic, psychological, and social factors.

The experience of having a teacher read a story aloud is often the most favored

part of the instructional day for students. Young children, particularly in the primary

grade levels, exhibit high levels of satisfaction with this facet of learning in the reading

classroom. However, for some students there is a transition in how they experience

reading when faced with the undertaking of learning to read for the first time. Suzanne

Rae shared a portrayal of what this experience was like for some of the emergent readers

in her kindergarten class. She stated,

I think I can tell when they're not satisfied if it's a little bit above their level and

they're frustrated. Obviously, they're not going to be as satisfied. Or, if they have

other areas that they're struggling with and they're not quite ready to start reading

and they're showing that frustration.

When the researcher asked Suzanne Rae to clarify what specific areas caused her

kindergarten students frustration, she voiced,

Like as far as, if they're still struggling with putting a CVC word together, their

sounds, and then they can't put the—they can't sound out that word to put it in a

sentence to read the page. I mean that will obviously show some frustration. I

think, I mean this is where I notice the most frustration because this is new to

them. This is the foundation for their reading. So that is where I see the most

dissatisfaction is if they are not ready.

As indicated in her quote above, Suzanne Rae clearly expressed how her

kindergarten students felt. She provided insight to the fact that learning to read is not

always an exciting experience for emergent readers. Learning foundational skills such as

CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words, is a necessary component of being a fluent

reader; requiring students to blend individual letter sounds together to produce words.

Contrary to what many believe, this is often a complex task for readers (Constantino-

Lane, 2019). Suzanne Rae further detailed that some of her students show frustration with

reading when they notice their peers can do something they cannot. The researcher

observed how Suzanne Rae sought to combat these issues in her classroom. When

conducting observations in Suzanne Rae's class, the researcher noted how her

instructional routine always started with a focus on phonics. During one observation in

particular, the researcher noticed how Suzanne Rae helped support her students'

understanding of long vowel sounds by matching a picture to the vowel sound they heard.

She was also intentional about asking certain questions during the phonics portion of the

lesson such as, *What do you notice about the red word? What do we notice about the purple word? And what vowel do you hear?*

Marilyn shared her views related to challenges second-grade students faced with reading in her classroom. She talked about her students' feelings of being overcome with reading texts in addition to external influences. She stated,

> I think the kids who get overwhelmed by just looking at what I'm reading—
> maybe who have struggled with reading. I think maybe that can make it [reading]
> not as interesting for them. And just . . . and home . . . home factors. Maybe they
> didn't get enough sleep that night and they're tired and uninterested. I guess it just
> depends.

Marilyn's viewpoint highlighted two distinct factors that posed as challenges for elementary students. When students merely gaze at texts without developing a connection to it, this can impair their ability to extract meaning and ultimately block their capacity to comprehend written texts. Similarly, an insufficient amount of rest can disrupt children's ability to maintain focus during the instructional day. Jennifer, the fourth-grade transitional language teacher, gave an account of student challenges that bore resemblance to Marilyn's experience. She described how her fourth-grade students were sometimes confused and withdrawn when reading. Her students were oftentimes lost in decoding the words of the text especially when reading alone. During the interview, Jennifer provided an analogy of having to read a doctoral paper and not being able to comprehend the meaning. She said,

> I think for me I see that when they're lost in the passages. If they're having to do
> independent work . . . as I said, most of my students, at least seventy-five percent
> of my students are below grade level reading. And so, I can't imagine getting a
> doctoral paper in medicine and trying to read it and understand it and not. And

then be able to be successful at questions in it, right. So, I do see frustration there. I see—I see students perhaps giving up. I see students just answering anything. I see students not doing strategies, what I've taught them.

Jennifer's portrayal emphasized there were moments during the reading instructional block when student frustration was heightened, primarily when reading alone. As described, student discontentment with reading can often be demonstrated through their actions. In Jennifer's illustration, her students idly selected responses to reading questions. She also mentioned that more than half of her students read at a grade level below fourth grade. This detail can attribute to the point that students can feel a sense of defeat when asked to read and interpret texts they do not easily comprehend.

Maxine, the fifth-grade reading teacher participant, encountered a similar situation involving her students' challenges with reading alone. In the following quote, Maxine shared how she had to urge her students to read more because her students demonstrated a lack of interest in reading independently. She expressed,

I totally do not think they like to read on their own the way I would like them to read on their own. I make them read on their own because I kind of noticed that that was kind of lacking in them . . .. I think on their own there's a very low satisfaction.

When the researcher asked Maxine what she thought attributed to her students' low level of satisfaction, she gave additional information related to her students who were in a remote learning environment. She expounded,

But I also think that like they're at home. They're not paying attention. There's other stuff they want to do. And so they're just not as engaged . . . And then in my third class where most of the students are in person, I got like four or five that's

virtual. They—sometimes they show. They show . . . they don't stay, or they do

stay sometimes. This is even after parent phone calls.

Maxine's account of her classroom experiences further emphasized the challenges

that students encounter. The virtual classroom setting may not be the ideal space to learn

for some students. As detailed in the quote above, students who prefer this type of

learning situation are often faced with numerous external factors that distract them from

staying focused and engaged throughout the instructional day. Furthermore, other issues

such as inconsistently logging in for reading instruction can present challenges for

students. When students are routinely late logging in for lessons, exiting class ahead of

schedule, or not showing up at all, these behaviors can affect their ability to be well-

versed in the learning of new material with their teacher and peers. The researcher was

able to witness some of these challenges Maxine encountered with her virtual students

during an observation. The students in the classroom were prepared and ready to learn,

but Maxine was still having to reach out to students online and ask them to join the link

to the learning assignment for the day.

In summary, teacher participants gave their respective accounts of barriers

students were confronted with in the classroom setting during the reading instructional

block. As noted, there are various challenges that can impact students' ability to fully

engage in the learning environment. It was found that students often deal with feelings of

frustration and anxiousness when it comes to reading in the elementary classroom setting.

Moreover, those emotions were often exhibited when students felt overwhelmed and lost

within the words and pages of written texts they did not find easily comprehensible.

Other deterrents such as not being able to perform at the same level as their peers, the

struggle to read and comprehend written texts independently, in addition to maintaining

focus in the remote virtual learning environment, were other barriers that students faced

in the classroom setting. Student barriers can have a direct impact on how students engage in reading experiences in a classroom learning environment that adopts a dialogic approach to teaching reading. When students demonstrate a lack of confidence and low levels of satisfaction when reading, these feelings can result in an unwillingness or reluctancy to participate in dialogic discussions. Therefore, teachers must be mindful of detecting moments of frustration from students and be able to counter those occurrences in a positive and reassuring way.

The Positive Impact of Assertive Influences on Student Learning

A third theme that emerged from this study was assertive influences. For the purpose of this research study, assertive influences were the people in the classroom setting who had a more pronounced and expressive presence throughout the reading instructional block. In this section, teacher participants' beliefs and attitudes are shared as told from their perspective.

In a classroom learning environment that supports a dialogic approach to teaching, teacher's and students' comments are voiced in a reciprocal manner. In the typical classroom setting, it is common to witness the same students asking or responding to questions. Students of this nature are not intimidated and therefore open to sharing their knowledge. During the interview, the researcher asked Marilyn what she thought attributed to the same students who continually respond. She stated,

> I hate saying this but confidence. They know they're intelligent. And some of the kids who don't, say, "I don't want to seem dumb." Because I used to feel—I used to be that way. I was never . . . I knew it [the answer], but I didn't like attention. I don't want eyes on me. So maybe other kids are like that. And their confidence level is low because maybe they're not . . . they're a little lower level than other kids who are sharing.

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Her telling statement depicts a situation that is often observed in the traditional classroom setting. As she expressed, some students will speak freely and share their thoughts and opinions because of their natural ability to perform in the classroom. On the other hand, there are students in the classroom who perhaps do understand but perceive their peers to be more knowledgeable and decide not to respond. Marilyn also went in depth regarding what she does to engage her students who are quieter. She elaborated further, stating,

> Well, I'll do cold calling with popsicles. And just students who talk a lot I'll let them have a chance to talk. But then I'll also call on someone else and say, "Well, what about you? You're quiet. Are you thinking over there? What do you have to say or contribute?" Yeah . . . I try and just go around the room and keep the kids talking.

The practice of cold calling, an instructional technique teachers use to engage learners in classroom discussions, confirms that she showed an effort to involve all her students in the learning process. Marilyn used popsicle sticks to cold call her students during her reading instructional block. She wrote each of her students' names on a popsicle stick. During reading instruction, Marilyn would randomly choose a popsicle stick. The name of the student on the popsicle stick would be selected to share a response or comment during the lesson. Marilyn sought to ensure that her students' presence in the classroom did not go unnoticed and what they had to share was valued. Jennifer, the fourth-grade reading teacher participant, shared her perspective of the more dominant student voices in her classroom. When asked by the researcher if there were ever any points during a reading lesson when she felt like some students responded more than others she explained,

> Yes, absolutely. I think—that's such a great question because this week I had that thought about that. So yes, there are definitely the leaders in the classroom, right.

And they want to talk, and they want to lead, and they want to move the class

forward. So, I think what attributes to them being leaders is those students have a

full understanding of what they're reading. They have the background knowledge.

They're able to talk about the text. They feel confident and so therefore they're

taking that confidence and running with it.

Jennifer's description of the more assertive student voices in her classroom

supports Marilyn's assertion. In her depiction, she emphasized certain students' innate

ability to take command of classroom discussions. Jennifer's experience with witnessing

these types of moments in the classroom furthers the claim that there are students in the

classroom setting with high levels of self- assurance in their ability to make connections

with written text and engage in classroom discussions with their teacher and peers.

Jennifer also talked about the students in her classroom who had to exert more effort

during the reading instructional block. However, with support from her and their peers,

an increase in their confidence level was noted. Below is an account of this type of

occurrence in her classroom. She expressed,

But then I have like what I would say the in between students who really battle

with reading; but if we're reading it out loud with each other and they're

hearing—then I see their little confidence levels with the questioning start. I had a

student this week who on every single test, the student has not passed a test, but

we did a text together. He was listening the whole time I was reading. We were all

reading the questions out loud together and working as a group and he was getting

every question right. And I was just like, "Yes!" Because all it took was just him

listening to what was being read and he understands it.

Jennifer's statement is an example of how students' understanding of written text

and level of enthusiasm are enhanced when given the opportunity to engage in

collaborative discussion with their teacher and peers. Jennifer detailed some students who demonstrated challenges with reading had a better sense of assurance and belief in their ability to embrace and understand written text when carried out in a shared experience between their teacher and peers. She also mentioned that her third group of students had an even lower degree of self-assurance when it came to reading and comprehending written text. On occasion, this group of students would utter random responses without considering what they said. In those instances, Jennifer provided more direct guidance. She sometimes had the confident students step in and help their peers talk through their thinking collaboratively.

As told from Marilyn and Jennifer's perceptions, some students' voices were more prominent than other students. In many cases, reading teacher participants credited students who regularly spoke out as being confident. Students who showed an ability to share their thoughts freely were aware of their intelligence, possessed a certain level of background knowledge, and demonstrated leadership traits.

Students were not the only assertive influences heard during the reading instructional block. Participants candidly mentioned that teachers' voices often dominated classroom discussions. Teacher participants provided accounts of experiences in their classroom when at times their voices were more dominant during the reading instructional block. Marilyn offered a unique insight on her belief explaining why her voice was more dominant:

> Well, I think mine was more dominant in the classroom this year which I tried— well, I guess it depends on what we're talking about. If kids are kind of confused and it's over—a little over their head, I think I'm more dominant. I try to let the kids share as much as I can, but a lot of these stories are too . . . that I was reading are kind of lengthy this year and I felt like I was dominant in reading them. And I

tried to initiate conversation and have the kids—and kind of make their voice more dominant, but I feel like overall this year I felt like mine was. And I don't really know exactly why, but . . . I will need to work on that.

Marilyn's narrative explaining why her voice was more dominant is very telling. From her perspective, she felt that her voice had to be more prominent when she detected that more complex texts posed as a challenge for her students. Furthermore, it appeared that Marilyn struggled with allowing her students command of discussions in these moments. Marilyn's awareness but uncertainty with determining why her voice was more dominant was also very significant. The researcher asked Marilyn to further explain what she meant when she said those dominant moments depended on what they were talking about. She explained,

I think some—and these kids are still young. But some of these concepts are kind of—there's some big concepts. I mean, I taught a lot of them. My fourth graders struggled with them. And I was teaching inferencing. Fact and opinion are hard for these kids. So I feel like, when I see that they are confused, I feel like I keep talking and keep teaching. So that makes my voice more dominant. I have to review things and reteach.

Marilyn shared that she should be more intentional about creating opportunities in the classroom when students who have a better understanding of certain concepts and skills could help their peers. She also stated that sometimes a student might be able to explain something in a better way to their peers than she could. Marilyn's experiences plainly revealed the amount of influence that her voice had during classroom discussions without realizing the limits put on her students to be more vocal during the instructional block. Similarly, Jennifer shared her awareness of moments when her voice was more

dominant. When the researcher asked Jennifer whose voice would she say is more

dominant in the classroom, she replied,

> That's a good question. It should be the kids, right? It should be the students'
>
> voices. I feel like I . . . I do have more of a dominance of voice in the classroom. I
>
> need to let that go a little bit I think and let the students talk amongst themselves
>
> to get through. I think it depends on what part of the semester we're in as well.
>
> Like when we're doing—when we're building up for the STAAR test there were
>
> lots of children voices more and me guiding and facilitating it. But prior to that,
>
> when you're in the direct teaching it is more my voice that's coming through. It
>
> also depends on the class. Mr. Loyd's homeroom that I teach, the boys in there are
>
> more like stronger than characters I guess than the girls. And so, they have lots to
>
> say all the time. So it's kind of just revamping them to a place where they're on
>
> task, they focus, and they're—they've got a lot of stories to talk about. Yes . . . I
>
> guess it just depends on the time of the year. But I do feel like I am a little bit
>
> more dominant that I should be.

Jennifer's commentary reveals much about her perspective regarding moments in

the classroom when her voice is more dominant than her students. Although she

expressed that her students' voices should be more pronounced during classroom

discussions her voice was more distinct most of the time. Jennifer acknowledged that she

should release control more often during classroom discussions and allow her students

more opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations surrounding written texts. She

also shared that she often observed how the male voices were more dominant than female

voices in her partner teacher's homeroom class. With this group of students, male

students did not refrain from sharing their thoughts and opinions during classroom

discussions in comparison to their female classmates. Suzanne Rae's perspective on the

most dominant voices in her kindergarten classroom was also informative. When asked whose voice would she say was more dominant in her classroom she said,

Umm . . . I would say there's a good balance. I really would. I would say, I mean—obviously I, you know guide them, but they do have a lot of chances to interact, to ask questions, to answer—maybe not with each other, but like with the lesson; what we're doing—with me. So I would say a good balance. I wouldn't say I dominate, or they dominate.

The researcher sought to clarify Suzanne Rae's response and asked if her classroom discussions were more of her students being able to respond to her questions that she asked but not directly to their classmates. She replied,

Exactly. Yeah, I would say that's something we could do more of. You know, they don't interact with each other a lot. But yes, they are very—they interact a lot with my lessons. I make sure that the lessons do have time for that. It's just not me up there talking. It's they—I, I talk for a little bit but then we do something where they interact with the skill that we're doing or something like that.

Suzanne Rae's account of the more dominant voice in her classroom was revealing. Though she perceived an equitable amount of control between her and her student's voices, there appears to be some hesitancy. Furthermore, she communicated that there is often more of an involvement that her students have with her as she delivers her lessons and emphasizes certain reading skills versus there being more time for peer exchanges during reading lessons. The impression given was that there appears to be a direct focus on Suzanne Rae and the lesson she is teaching. Even so, Suzanne Rae acknowledged that allowing more frequent and consistent peer interaction is something that she should do more in her kindergarten classroom.

In distinct contrast to Suzanne Rae's experience, Maxine shared a different perspective of the more dominant voices in her fifth-grade reading classroom. Maxine's portrayal described a learning environment in which she served in the role of a facilitator during classroom discussions. She expressed her classroom discussion encounters, saying,

> Well, I would like to say that students' voices are more dominant. 'Cause I like to facilitate the conversations so I would do add-ins. I might pose a question for them to critically think about. But I would say collectively, in all my classes, I really wouldn't say it's boys versus girls 'cause they all equally contribute and really have open ended discussions; whatever the topic at hand. They're actually very open in discussing. So I would say the students definitely overpower my voice. 'Cause I do feel like more as a facilitator. I try not to lecture. I try to let the students have the floor. 'Cause I feel like them speaking and drawing their own conclusion, you know, that's what's going to help them grow as learners and also in reading as well; and in critical thinking because that's my ultimate goal is for them to become critical thinkers. But I would say the students definitely overpower my voice. And I'm glad that they do. I definitely let them have that range. And I think it's equal among the boys and the girls in the way that they speak.

Maxine's depiction of the discussions in her reading classroom stressed the idea that she views her students' voices to be the more leading influences in the classroom rather than her own. From her perspective, student voices are heard and valued. Maxine perceived her role in the classroom as the catalysts by which classroom discussions unfolded. Instead of lecturing, Maxine guided her classroom discussions by posing questions that promoted her students to critically think. Thus, her students engaged in

meaningful discussions with her and their peers. During another interview, the researcher asked Maxine what made her feel so comfortable with relinquishing control during classroom discussions. To this question, Maxine expressed,

> Well, I think that could be the counselor in me. Yeah, before I was a teacher I was a counselor. So, I am a counselor. I still counsel. But I . . . I just think that students—like they learn best taking ownership. Like, if I was in their shoes, at ten years old and eleven years old, I don't think I could just sit for an hour and a half listening to somebody talk. I mean, I just don't think I could do it. And I don't think that they want to. So, like, first of all, they love to talk anyway. So why not get them to talk about things that are needed, that are necessary? Like, especially about this world. 'Cause I think that like, I don't think kids know how powerful they really are yet. That they're already so powerful. And like, we're so—I just want them to know that they can use their voice.

As stated in the quote above, it is evident that Maxine recognized the importance of students having the self-sufficiency to take ownership of their learning. She identified her students possess a natural inclination to talk, and therefore, should be engrossed in meaningful discussions with their teacher and peers during the reading instructional block. Moreover, she understood that classroom discussions should transcend beyond written texts and the classroom environment. Authentic learning experiences should connect to relevant and real-world issues.

In summary, teacher participants gave individual details of their experiences of the more dominant voices heard during classroom discussions in their reading classrooms. It was noted that several teacher participants were forthright about instances in their classroom when their voice would minimize the voices of their students. It was found that teacher participant voices were most often dominant when teachers provided

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direct instruction of a particular reading skill or introduced a new concept to their students. The researcher also found out during interviews that several teacher participants were aware that their voices were often more dominant and that there was a need for them to give more control and authority to their students during classroom discussions. In addition, there were occasions when student voices were more dominant in the classroom. Those students were usually more expressive, offered elaborate responses, and were perceived as exhibiting higher levels of confidence.

Classroom teachers and advanced students were the more communicative voices in the classroom. Their level of engagement kept classroom discourse constant. More specifically, their questions and responses exchanged during discussions had a positive impact during reading instruction. However, it is important to note that the more quiet and reserved students are not to be deemed passive participants. Although they may appear to be unresponsive and disengaged in classroom discussions, they are still participants in the learning of new information. According to O'Connor et al. (2017) students who are quieter and more reserved may still be learning and achieving at the same level as their peers. Perhaps the quieter voices do not speak because they do not want to. Or maybe they process at a slower rate than others. It could also be that the less vocal students are the better listeners in the classroom, which does support the idea of dialogic teaching principles.

Barriers That Hinder Teachers' Abilities to Extend Discussions

Another theme that emerged throughout the data analysis were barriers that hinder teachers' abilities to extend discussions.

For the purpose of this research study, time factors are any components of the instructional day or reading block that limit teachers' and students' ability to engage in prolonged classroom discussions without interruption. In this section, the teacher

participants shared personal accounts of different time factors they found hindered their ability to extend classroom discussions.

There are moments during the reading instructional block when a discussion during the reading lesson might yield to another topic. During an interview with Jennifer, the researcher asked her to talk about any instances when classroom discussions with her students were underway and a particular topic commenced that she did not anticipate happening. She expressed those unexpected discussions did occur in her reading class. From Jennifer's perspective, she described the nature of these kinds of discussions as off topic, but still an important chance for students to learn. When asked how those impromptu discussions made her feel, she shared,

> That's a great question. I feel like I love going off topic a little bit because I think that's a real good place of learning 'cause they're so invested and they wanna ask questions and they want to know more. So, I do love it. I do realize that students can take you way off topic as well. So, I've had to learn as a teacher—as a beginning teacher a couple of years ago, that I had to reel it back in very quickly. But I think from a perspective of my time during the day—I'm teaching. You know there's definitely that pressure of you need to get A, B, C, D done during the day. And so, it's a good thing to have that pressure on me because as I said, I had to reel those conversations back in. Like, really get to the main points. If you want to know more about it, we can talk about it at recess or we can read some books about it or you know, let me know and I can assign you those books. But I do feel like a lot of learning takes place in the off topic. But, having the pressure of, you need to have A, B, C, D done during the lesson, that's where I—I'm constantly thinking of that before I kind of reel it back in. So, I might cut it short.

I'm like, "Oh, this is good. We could keep going with this." But I do realize that there's TEKS to be taught. So we need to get back on track, you know.

Jennifer's detailed statement about the unplanned discussions that occur in her classroom illustrated that she is receptive to these types of learning experiences for her students and considers these moments prime opportunities for new learning to develop. However, she did feel a need to curtail classroom discussions to get her students focused on the reading lesson due to the demands of sticking to the instructional block schedule. When asked her perspective about there not being enough time for students to ask more questions during the reading block, she replied,

So much I could say there. I think—you know, I've worked in districts where you have—your time is not monitored, perhaps is the right way to say that . . . strictly . . . I guess. You have—you have free range of your two and a half hours of how you—as long as you're doing it all. But it's very much, if you want to spend these two hours today and just thirty minutes on reading—it was in your hands kind of thing to do that. And in that, I think natural learning kind of takes place. Even though I agree that schedules are important and schedules . . .. I think we're just trying to stick to such a strict timetable. Right now that it's try and fit everything in. And I think it's too much sometimes. When you're on something, I think the focus can stay on it because learning is taking place in there. But I think in the back of our heads it's like, you are monitored for your time, I guess. And you are appraised for your time. And so, it's kind of—you want to stick to how it works because that's part of the job. But I have worked in different districts where it is more free and open and that does allow for those times to you know, get children to be talking and—instead of being, oh my gosh, we should've been on writing ten minutes ago and we're still having this conversation. So I think that's part of

it. But schedules are good. It does keep you accountable. It does give you—I just wish there was a little more leeway or room in it.

Jennifer's experience demonstrated the openness so many of the participants cited about the desire to allocate more time for students to pose questions during the reading instructional block. However, the expressed concerns of sticking to the daily schedule were continually at the forefront of their minds.

Marilyn had similar experiences with time factors in her classroom. She was open in sharing her familiarity with dealing with limited periods of time to engage in prolonged discussions with her second- grade students. She expressed that on the occasions when classroom discussions happen to naturally progress, she tries not to cut them off unless she and her students are under a time limit to move on, such as having to transition to another part of the instructional day. She tries to let her students share as much as they can, if time permits.

She shared an account with a time factor issue she encountered during her first reading instructional block of the day. Marilyn voiced,

I feel like it has been hard. Especially in the morning with my morning class. 'Cause I do my reading block lesson at around 7:40. And then we go to P.E. at 8:30. And then after P.E. that's when I do my writing lesson. So that—I kind of feel pressed for time. and I don't maybe allow as much conversation as I would like. But my afternoon class, I feel like maybe we engage more because we have a longer period of time to do that. We don't have to go to P.E. We don't have a deadline. And sometimes I'll say, "You know what, whatever." And we'll go back to it after P.E. I'll say we were having such a good conversation. I'll minimize the time 'cause we've got to do the writing lesson, but I will go back to it and talk about it more.

Marilyn was direct about sharing her perspective about the lack of time students have to ask questions in the elementary classroom setting. She explained,

> Well . . . you know . . . I think there's just so little time in the day with everything going on and then you've got to account for discipline problems that come up or kids talking and—I want to blame it on the time but you know . . . sometimes we just—teachers get overwhelmed and want to move on to the next thing. But overall, I think we're pretty good at leaving time for questions, but I wish we had a lot more time for questions. Just not enough hours in the day. I just feel like there's just so many—I got to get those grades in for the week. And I mean, that's part of it but . . . if it was more relaxed and . . . which some days—and every day is different too. Some days, we do have more time for questions. But . . . time.

In addition to her perspective on why she felt there is not enough time for students to ask questions during the reading instructional block as articulated above, she went on to explain what she thought the benefits of having students ask more of their own questions during the instructional block could be. She explained that giving students the time to ask more questions would force them to use higher order thinking skills and come up with their own questions and use vocabulary they would not normally use. Another benefit that she mentioned was allowing students to generate their own questions puts them in the role of the teacher and increase their confidence in the process.

Like Marilyn, Suzanne Rae shared a similar perspective why students have an insignificant amount of time students to ask questions during their instructional block. Suzanne Rae stated,

> I would—I would just say time. I would say that teachers kind of get—just worried about running out of time; and they just want to get through and talk and explain what they're supposed to do and teach and—because if you aren't—

because as much as I do stuff and let them ask questions, if you stopped—I mean you wouldn't get through anything. I mean that's just the reality of it. So it is definitely time, you know. So I would say that.

Based on Suzanne Rae's comments, it is evident that she has concerns about time factors that supersede her ability to engage in extended classroom discussions with her students. From her perspective, she is anxious of exhausting time without being able to get through her entire reading lesson. She did state that if time was not an issue and students could ask more questions, this would allow them to see each other's ideas in different ways. She articulated how students think and learn differently. The ability for students to generate their own questions would open their eyes to see their peer's point of view in a way that they might not have thought of before. Maxine offered her perspective on the insufficient amount of time for students to ask questions in the classroom setting. She expressed,

> I really do feel like a component of all of those conversations is for the students to ask why. 'Cause they really did ask a lot of why questions and a lot of how questions. I don't know why it's not a lot of encouraged questioning for students in the elementary classroom because honestly, I really do think that's a very big marker in their success. It's definitely needed to ask those questions. I really do feel like my kids really grew this year by being able to talk. And they love to talk.

The response given by Maxine reflected the desire she has for students to ask questions during classroom discussions. She understands that students frequently ask *how* and *why* questions, and these are the types of questions that should be fostered from students. From her perspective, these are the types of questions that contribute to student growth in reading. Maxine also shared her insight on what she believes the benefits of students generating their own questions could be. She said,

When students generate their own questions, they put themselves in the teacher's spot. And I think there's a lot of studies that show that people perform better when they watch—people perform better when they know they're being observed. They're going to perform differently, you know. And they're gonna try to show off in a way. And so kids, when they're put in that seat to take ownership of their lesson where they're like almost the teacher in a sense, they don't want to mess up 'cause they view the teacher as an expert. So they want to be experts themselves. They want to be experts in their thinking. They want to be experts in their writing. They want to be experts in their reading. And they want to be experts in their questioning. And so when you put them in the seat of an expert they're going to perform like an expert. And so like that is the best benefit of it all. They get that ownership. They get to be the expert.

As evinced through Maxine's words above, she supports students taking ownership of their learning in the reading classroom. She understands that students are fully invested when held accountable for their learning. From her perspective, when students are given control of their own learning, they perceive themselves to be experts alongside the teacher.

In addition to time being a reoccurring theme, participants expressed their own barriers. Marilyn shared what she felt her greatest challenge teaching reading was. During an interview with the researcher, she said,

What's hard for me—especially this year is all the kids are on different levels. We have some really high readers who are on fifth grade level and then we have pre-k level. So that's really been a challenge, kind of meeting them in the middle. And especially this year with the pandemic going on. Finding the time to care for these kids who are really struggling. Because I'm expected to teach problem and solution, and retelling, and figurative language. And that's been a challenge for

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me when a lot of these kids can't even read. So, I'm trying to give those higher

kids what they need but then kind of trying to lower it and cater to the kids who

struggle.

As stated in Marilyn's quote above, it is evident that she has an important

responsibility to ensure that she supports the needs of her students in a way that addresses

and fosters their diverse learning needs. Like Marilyn, Jennifer also shared instructional

barriers that she encountered in her fourth-grade classroom. During an interview she

expressed her instructional barriers, stating,

Because I currently work with transitional language students, my biggest

challenge is honestly the state testing at the end of the year. That state testing is

done on a level that is high—higher than what grade level fourth grade is, usually.

It's a little challenging. Most of my students most years come in under reading

level in English. So, it's getting the students to transition into a new language as

well as getting them to understand the language, getting them that comprehension

of what they're reading. Background knowledge of course is a huge part of that

too. They have very limited experiences . . . some of my students . . . most of my

students. And so, sometimes, when you're reading about certain things it's not—

the connection is not always being made because it's completely foreign to them.

The connection in their brains is not being made to what they are actually reading

about. So, I would say, the English—the transition from Spanish to English for

me is one of the biggest—the biggest challenge; and a lot of students under grade

level when they come into fourth grade.

Jennifer provided a telling depiction of the challenges she faced as a fourth-grade

teacher. Her genuineness with communicating her biggest challenge to teaching her

students who transitioned from learning to read and comprehend in Spanish to English,

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gives a clear indication that these types of barriers can be challenging for both teacher and students. Jennifer's ability to provide instruction that fully immerses her students in learning to read and comprehend after years of learning in their native language coupled with taking the state assessment at the end of the year were two of her greatest challenges as a teacher. Suzanne Rae, the kindergarten teacher participant, mentioned her challenges with being a reading teacher. She described her challenges as occurring primarily at the beginning of the year. Suzanne Rae revealed,

> I think getting the—it's challenging in the beginning of the year getting the kids excited to read because they don't—because they can't read yet, most of them on their own. So, getting them excited in the beginning is very challenging in kindergarten. But once they started to learn more words and be able to read more words, that's kind of when the excitement starts; and they start putting those words together to make a sentence. Then the excitement starts. But in the beginning, it really is a challenge getting the kids to want to read.

Based on Suzanne Rae's experiences with her challenges as a reading teacher, she maintains a positive attitude about getting her students to overcome their own hurdle of learning how to read. Although her students were not enthusiastic about learning to read initially, Suzanne Rae resolved to develop them into emergent readers. Maxine, the fifth-grade reading teacher, explained her greatest challenge was getting her students to be critical thinkers. During an interview she stated,

> Oh . . . I think—that's a really good question. I feel like my greatest challenge is getting my students to critically think outside of the text, which is why I have so much dialogue in my classrooms, or in my classes that I teach. Because my goal is to—as an educator, is to get students to critically think, to really think about what is not being said, what could be added to this text. Why is this thing or

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this—what is missing? Like, that ability to critically think is what I believe is really gonna help them be prepared for the real world. And so, my greatest challenge is getting them to critically think on their own.

Maxine's comments suggested that her main challenge involves urging students to question what they read and determine why particular texts are written the way they are. Based on Maxine's experience, she aims to get her students to read with more depth and complexity. Moreover, this form of teacher and student engagement is what dialogic teaching is grounded in.

In summary, reading teacher participants shared individual accounts of different factors that limited their ability to engage students in prolonged classroom discussions without interruption in the elementary reading classroom setting. It was found that teachers often restricted classroom discussions because of their responsibility to provide reading instruction based on standards and skills that their students needed to acquire by the end of the school year. Moreover, teachers were held accountable to follow their reading block schedule with fidelity. It was also determined that classroom discussions were limited at times when teachers expressed concern of exhausting instructional time if discussions were prolonged beyond the reading instructional block. Teacher participants were also direct in sharing their personal experiences about barriers that deterred their instructional practices in the classroom.

Teachers' Limited Knowledge of Dialogic Teaching

Participants' limited knowledge about dialogic teaching was another theme that emerged through the data analysis of reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes about a dialogic approach to teaching. In this section, teacher participants gave insight on what they considered dialogic teaching to be. Additionally, participants shared if they perceived themselves to be a dialogic teacher, the type of professional development that

would support them in being dialogic teachers, and how being more knowledgeable could influence their instructional practices and influence classroom discussions during reading.

Marilyn shared her thoughts on what she considered dialogic teaching to be. She affirmed that she was unfamiliar with the term dialogic teaching. However, when she thought about the concept of dialogic teaching, the word dialogue came to mind. During an interview, Marilyn voiced her belief as to when she felt the appropriate time to engage students in dialogic discussions was. She shared,

> Especially after maybe a read aloud or mini lesson—having that dialogue. 'Cause I want kids to take ownership of their own learning and share. And I don't want to be the only one doing all the talking, which a lot of the times I feel like I am. I enjoy when kids share, even if it's not really what I am looking for. I think it's important because it gets them confident and know that they have voice and what they say matters.

In Marilyn's statement above, she made it clear that she wants to give her students voice and agency of their learning. She acknowledged she feels she does most of the talking during the reading instructional block. In contrast, her comment also suggested, engaging students in dialogic conversations would only take place following a read-aloud or the delivery of direct instruction. This would imply that students would defer participating in dialogic conversations until after the central part of the lesson concluded.

> When asked if she considered herself to be a dialogic teacher, she asserted,
>
> Yes, I think so. 'Cause I'll say, "Well look, this is my opinion, but what do you think about this?" Or "How can you relate this to your life?" "Have you experienced how that character is feeling?" So yeah, it helps me to kind of get to know the students. And learn different things about them and build more of a rapport.

Marilyn feels she is a dialogic reading teacher. She believes that asking her second-grade students the types of questions as those mentioned above makes her a dialogic teacher. She expressed that she has never received any form of professional development training about dialogic teaching from either her undergraduate program, campus, or on her own. However, she was open in sharing that she would be interested in knowing more about dialogic teaching as an instructional approach to teaching reading. Marilyn shared that she would want to know how to appropriately embed dialogic teaching in her daily practices. If given professional development training from her campus instructional leaders, she would want the training to emphasize what dialogic teaching is and what it consists of. Marilyn also wanted to know how to incorporate it in her reading classroom purposefully. When the researcher asked Marilyn how she thought knowing more about dialogic teaching could impact her ability to be an effective reading teacher, she stated,

> I think I would know how to be more aware when I'm teaching and how to incorporate it in the teaching and how to do it really well. Like, not just—just becoming more knowledgeable and seeing—see someone like a video of a teacher doing it and how the kids respond. And I'm a very visual learner so it would help for me to see someone, an example classroom and someone using dialogic teaching in their classroom.

Marilyn expressively detailed that being well-educated about dialogic teaching could guide her instructional practices. She explained the type of professional development training on dialogic teaching that she would most benefit from is having the opportunity to observe a dialogic teacher in the classroom setting. She believes that watching a dialogic teacher in the classroom setting would serve as an exemplar for her to model her instruction after.

Jennifer was also forthright in sharing her thoughts about dialogic teaching. When the researcher asked Jennifer during the initial interview if she was familiar with the concept of dialogic teaching, she communicated,

> I am not. I actually looked up the word dialogic earlier 'cause I was like, let me— let me see exactly what that is. But I guess it's conversations around texts. That's what I'm understanding of what I just read. So . . . I would say that this happens. I might not call it dialogic teaching but maybe it is—I would hope what was—what would be happening in my classroom . . . naturally, you know.

Her statement suggested, though she is unfamiliar with dialogic teaching, she has an interest to know more about what it is as an instructional practice of teaching and learning. Although she did not associate the interactions that transpire in her classroom as dialogic teaching practices, she believed that dialogic experiences innately occur in her reading class. Despite not having an actual understanding of what dialogic teaching is, Jennifer considered herself to be a dialogic teacher. When asked if she considered herself to be a dialogic teacher, she expressed,

> Absolutely, yes. I don't just come in and read and then we move on to questions. I want to make sure there—there is conversation about the text. Maybe even to a fault perhaps 'cause maybe we go a little too much around in circles in conversations but . . . uh, yes. But I do think also with my ESL students that it is important so there are some connections that are being made through conversation, through pictures, through different things that they could connect to what they're about to read.

Jennifer believed that what makes her a dialogic teacher is that her instructional block involves more than her reading written text followed by her students responding to a series of questions. Additionally, she felt that she may spend too much time engaged in

classroom conversations due to the support her ESL students need with making

connections to text through not only conversation but also visual representations and

other instructional supports. When asked if she had ever received formal professional

development training about dialogic teaching from her undergraduate program, school

district or on her own she initially stated that she had not. However, Jennifer wanted the

researcher to understand that her current school district does provide professional

development opportunities that emphasize when questions are asked during the reading

instructional block. She clarified what she meant by saying,

> Perhaps with my school district there . . . you know—you do your reading block.
> When you do go to professional development, they do go through the prereading
> questions, during reading questions, postreading questions. So yes, from that point
> of view . . . yes. But yes, I'm always willing to learn more. I think it would be
> good a good—a good thing to know more about.

Although Jennifer's school district has provided professional development in

terms of the questions that would be asked of students before, during, and after reading,

no specialized training had been offered specifically about dialogic teaching as an

instructional strategy. She also shared with the researcher that dialogic teaching is a new

concept and the very first time she has ever heard this term used. When asked what she

would want professional development training opportunities to stress about dialogic

teaching from her campus instructional leaders, she said,

> I think that talking—allowing time for the talking time. You know, allowing,
> giving the—giving that time for the students and teaches to interact; either with
> themselves or with the teacher and going through that with—creating that time
> perhaps where it is allowed to do it without being so stringent on what's next and
> what's coming next. Like, also just the types of questions that would be asked

within the read aloud. The focus or what the purpose in those questions and how getting them to think, you know. Like opening their brains to what those questions should look like or how they can think about them.

Jennifer expressed that her goal as a reading teacher is to have her students love and enjoy reading and not to look at reading as a task. She understood there are skills and standards her students should be proficient in by the end of the school year. However, she wanted her students to be excited about reading.

Moreover, she expressed that reading is not about tests, but it is about the love of literature and the love of books. When the researcher asked Jennifer how she felt knowing more about dialogic could impact her ability to be an effective teacher, she stated it could allow her to get students to love reading and have good quality discussions. Like Marilyn and Jennifer, Maxine was not aware of dialogic teaching as an instructional strategy and was unsure if she would consider herself to be a dialogic teacher. When questioned if she had any prior knowledge about dialogic teaching she explained,

Not at all. I know it has to do with dialogue because of the word dialogic in there. I figured it's something conversation based. But that's about the extent of what I can infer. I think I'd need to know a little bit more about it.

Based on Maxine's statement, it is evident that she had no prior understanding of dialogic teaching. She was direct in sharing that she needed to know more about dialogic teaching before she could identify herself as a dialogic teacher. She also informed the researcher that she had never received any type of professional development training from her undergraduate program, alternative certification program, or district and campus leaders about dialogic teaching as an instructional strategy. However, she was vocal in communicating that if given the opportunity to receive professional development from

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campus instructional leaders about dialogic teaching what she would want the training to focus on. She articulated,

> I guess I'd want them to emphasize what an effective dialogic teacher would look like in a classroom. And I think because we're at an elementary school I think I would like to see it effective across grade levels. What a dialogic teacher looks like in third versus fifth versus fourth. Especially in those grade levels where like they're going to take STAAR for the first time. I really do feel like our students did well on STAAR this year' cause they've had a lot of discussions. And even honestly before STAAR they just like to talk. But just what it would look like effectively across different grade levels.

Maxine articulated the exact type of professional development that she felt would best support her responsibility as a reading teacher. She also expressed that she believed knowing more about dialogic teaching could impact her effectiveness as a reading teacher. Having more of an awareness about dialogic teaching would prompt her to do further research on this method of teaching on her own. She further explained that she wants to be able to determine how she could apply dialogic teaching in her daily teaching practices in the elementary classroom setting.

Like the other three teacher participants, Suzanne Rae had not received any professional development training or courses from her undergraduate program, school district, campus instructional leaders, or on her own about dialogic teaching. Although Suzanne Rae had not received or attended any type of professional development learning opportunities, she was interested to know more about dialogic teaching as an instructional approach to teaching reading. When asked what she would want her campus instructional leaders to focus on if given professional development training on dialogic teaching, she said,

I would say maybe how to utilize them interacting with each other in kindergarten. Like, how I can promote that and use that in a lesson. 'Cause I don't really know—I don't know. I've never done that. So giving them a chance to back and forth; and how you would put that into a lesson. That would be interesting.

There is a sense of uncertainty in what Suzanne Rae thinks would be the type of professional development best suitable for her role as a kindergarten teacher. As a primary grade-level teacher, she feels her students necessitate more hands-on support from the teacher. As mentioned, she expressed an interest in knowing how dialogic teaching practices would appear in a kindergarten classroom.

Despite Suzanne Rae not knowing much about dialogic teaching, if offered the chance to attend formal professional development trainings, she believed that knowing more about dialogic teaching could impact her ability to be an even more effective teacher. Suzanne Rae said that she is always open to a different way to teach and different ways to set up her lessons. Knowing more about dialogic teaching could impact the way she would introduce a new skill or concept to her students.

In addition to expressing how dialogic teaching could influence their instructional practices, participants voiced what their perceptions of the influence of dialogic teaching on student comprehension. Marilyn shared the following,

I think it would force them [students] to use those higher order thinking skills and come up with their own questions and use the vocabulary maybe that they wouldn't normally use . . . So vocabulary is a benefit, those higher order thinking [skills] is a benefit, having—kind of putting them in the teacher role . . . giving them that confidence, maybe.

As mentioned above, Marilyn's believed that dialogic teaching practices would challenge her students to take ownership and academic risks in the classroom. Similarly,

Jennifer stated her position about the influence that dialogic teaching could have on student comprehension. She stated,

I think it goes with—you know, it's all the different senses of what you're doing, what you're hearing, what you're seeing; being able to talk things through. Being able to show what they [students] understand. You know, making connections in their brain and everywhere. Like, whether they're listening to the teacher or whether they are speaking out. So I think it's a very positive thing if it's going to build—if it's going to build on top of the foundation, so they really have a fuller understanding of what they're reading about or what they're learning about.

Jennifer's view speaks to how dialogic teaching gives students autonomy to make connections with written texts. Although she did not have any prior knowledge about dialogic teaching, she realized that it supports students building on knowledge they already have, which is aligned to teaching and learning being cumulative, an element of dialogic teaching. Maxine, the fifth-grade teacher gave her thoughts on how she felt dialogic teaching had the ability to influence student comprehension. She responded,

I think dialogic teaching impacts students' comprehension in a very unique way. 'Cause they are able to really talk about the issues or the prompt or the passage or the article or whatever—they are really able to think out loud. And so being them being able to talk it out, they get to hear the ideas of their peers who are the same age as them and they get to critically think outside the box. They get to the second highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy, which is to justify or stand on their decisions. And that's the best place that they honestly need to be. They should be inferring and making critical thoughts and decisions every day; and honestly, in every single class period. And so, them [students] being able to have that dialogic component, I feel that's very helpful for them.

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Suzanne Rae shared how she thought dialogic teaching could influence student comprehension. She expressed the following,

I think it definitely would help. I mean, it would open them [students] up to different ways of you know, talking about what the subject they're learning about. Just different ways to interact, different ways to learn that skill, I guess. Since I don't really know a lot about it yet, but I definitely think that it would help. I mean, it definitely wouldn't hurt. I mean I think it can open their eyes to, you know, a different . . ..

There was some indecisiveness in Suzanne Rae's response. The researcher could also sense some nervousness in her speech. Perhaps, the apprehension detected in her tone was in not knowing enough about dialogic teaching to give an informed response. However, she was able to relay her belief that dialogic teaching would allow her kindergarten students the chance to learn in different ways and see things from a different perspective, which is aligned to teaching and learning being reciprocal, another element of dialogic teaching.

In summary, reading teacher participants shared their perceptions about and attitudes toward their request to know about dialogic teaching. It was found that research participants had no prior knowledge about dialogic teaching before participating in this research study. Furthermore, research participants had not received any formal professional development training from their undergraduate program, alternative certification program, school district, campus, nor on their own. However, all four participants expressed a willingness to know more about dialogic teaching and how they could apply dialogic instructional practices in their classroom.

Chapter Four described the findings of this case study. This study explored the perceptions of reading teachers about a dialogic approach to teaching reading in the

elementary classroom setting. In addition to a brief introduction to each participant in the study, this chapter included data gathered from the responses of each reading teacher participant. A range of sources from the field were considered in this study including classroom observations, interviews, and field notes. From these different sources, five themes emerged: the nature of classroom discussions, student barriers, assertive influences, time factors, and limited knowledge of dialogic teaching.

CHAPTER V:

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of elementary teachers about a dialogic approach to teaching reading in the elementary classroom setting. This study was important because it examined the various perceptions and experiences of elementary reading teachers and how they perceive dialogic teaching to be as an instructional strategy. This chapter summarizes the results determined from careful analysis of this qualitative study. Therefore, the findings identified in this study present implications regarding dialogic teaching as an instructional approach to teaching reading in the elementary classroom setting.

The following research questions were answered in this research study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of reading teachers regarding the influence of dialogic teaching on student comprehension?

RQ2: What are reading teachers' attitudes about dialogic teaching?

RQ3: What are reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes of dialogic teaching using narrative and informational texts during reading instruction?

RQ4: What dialogic tools contribute to how reading teachers approach dialogic teaching?

A qualitative case study approach was selected because it allowed the researcher to attain a deeper awareness of the perceptions of elementary reading teachers about dialogic teaching as an instructional strategy. According to Hatch (2002), qualitative research allows the researcher to explore the experiences and circumstances conveyed through the lives of the persons involved in their natural environment. This study consisted of structured interviews with four elementary reading teachers. In addition to

interviews, the researcher conducted classroom observations to understand and involve herself in the natural setting.

The data for this study were comprised of the four participants in this study. In addition, the data collected for this research study consisted of the perceptions of the four teacher participants collected through interviews and field notes of the observations of the teachers' classrooms. The researcher identified five major themes that emerged from the data. In the following section, each of the five themes will be discussed.

Summary of Findings

The summary of the findings from this study addressed the five major themes that emerged from the data analysis: not all classroom discussions are equal, student barriers to rich classroom discussions, the positive impact of assertive influences on student learning, barriers that hinder teachers' abilities to extend discussions, and teachers' limited knowledge of dialogic teaching. The themes were both distinct and interconnected because they each supported the perceptions of reading teachers regarding fundamental components that impact the interactions that occur between teachers and students during the reading instructional block in the elementary classroom setting.

Social Factors That Influence Classroom Discussions

As a former elementary teacher who was responsible for teaching reading, the researcher understood the need for meaningful discussions to transpire consistently, particularly during the reading instructional block. For elementary students to participate in authentic social interactions, the classroom setting necessitates a learning environment that fosters teachers and students engaged in discussions that promote a mutual exchange of information. The teachers in this study discussed various social factors that influenced discussions in the reading classroom. It is important to note the social factors that

influenced classroom discussions also included challenges that affected the quality of classroom discussions.

Not all Classroom Discussions Are Equal

Sociocultural theory was used as a framework to examine the quality of classroom discussions between teachers and students in the elementary classroom setting. According to Panhwar et al. (2016), sociocultural theory is the idea that student and teacher exchanges that evolve during the learning process shape how individuals formulate information. The social exchanges provide a support for new learning to be acquired. The teachers in this study discussed social factors that influenced the nature of classroom discussions during the reading instructional block. During the interviews, the participants in this study provided specific examples of what classroom discussions looked like during the reading instructional block. From the interviews, the researcher discovered that some reading teacher participants demonstrated more responsibility in facilitating the course of classroom discussions than their students. Suzanne Rae, a kindergarten teacher, and Marilyn, a second- grade teacher, shared there were times during the reading instructional block when a more concerted effort was given on their part to engage students in classroom discussions. To counter this matter, both primary grade level teachers believed that asking their students questions attributed to an increase in student participation. Asking questions is a key component and common practice that teachers apply throughout the instructional block. According to Eshach et al. (2014), questions are an integral part of the growth and development of the human experience. Questions serve as an educational tool that can enhance the productivity of classroom discussions in the learning environment. As Shanmugavelu et al. (2020) detailed, questions are instructional tools that help students attain academic success. Therefore, it is important that teachers have an intended purpose for how they will question during

classroom discussions. This is consistent with Döş et al. (2016) who reported that one important element of question asking is intentionality. It is imperative for reading teachers to determine the objective and the anticipated outcomes when asking questions in the classroom learning environment. When there is an exact goal for questions that teachers ask during the instructional block, any potential disruption to the learning environment can be avoided. Although questions are a necessary component of classroom discussions, the researcher determined that elementary reading teachers asked most questions during the reading instructional block, thus restricting the opportunity for students to ask questions. It appeared that teachers who limit students' questions do so without understanding the impact this has on students' ability to engage in dialogic discussions with their teacher and peers. Aflalo (2021) reported several reasons why teachers curtail students' questions in the classroom learning environment. Teachers restrict students' questions because of low self-confidence in their ability to teach their assigned content. Conversely, teachers who demonstrate confidence in their discipline have a propensity to teach in lecture format. To ensure that classroom discussions are dialogic in nature, it is important that students' questions are fostered in the classroom setting.

Another vital component of questioning in the classroom is to provide adequate wait-time for students to respond during the instructional block. Wait-time refers to the quiet period between a teacher's question and a student's response or the period between a student's response and the teacher's next statement. Wait-time is often minimized throughout average classroom discussions. However, it is essential for elementary teachers to extend wait-time during the reading instructional block.

According to Wasik and Hindman (2018), providing sufficient wait-time can impact the trajectory of classroom discussions. Wait-time allows students time to process

their thoughts before responding. The impact of allowing wait-time produces more accurate and comprehensive responses from students. According to Ingram and Elliot (2016), extending wait-time can result in changes in how students and teachers use their turn to speak during classroom discussions; more specifically, not only in terms of the structure of the interaction but also regarding what they do in their turns.

Student Barriers to Rich Classroom Discussions

From the interviews, it was clear to the researcher that student barriers were another social factor that influenced discussions in the classroom setting. When participants were asked about challenges their students encountered during the instructional block, some of them cited high levels of frustration with reading. Students were often frustrated in situations when tasked with having to learn new skills or concepts or having to read texts above their current level of comprehension. Suzanne Rae, the kindergarten teacher explained that her students were discouraged when faced with having to learn new reading skills. According to Kirby et al. (2011), students with limited reading proficiency may find reading unfulfilling, and a result lose interest. Likewise, Jennifer, the fourth-grade reading teacher expressed that her students often felt lost in the pages of texts when having to read independently. A lack of a desire to read was found to be another factor that inhibited students from engaging in class discussions. Students experienced low levels of satisfaction with reading when having to read alone versus collaboratively. Research participants reported that students appreciated reading more when able to do so with their teacher and peers. This aligns with Brokamp et al. (2019) who suggested that teachers encourage students' motivation to read, expressed through talking to them about books and their personal interests.

The Positive Impact of Assertive Influences on Student Learning

The work of Reznitskaya and Gregory (2013) supported that it is the knowledge and proficiency of classroom teachers and the more advanced students that transmit information among the other students in the classroom. These individuals are often the more assertive voices in the classroom. Assertive influences were another social factor that affected the dynamics of class discussions in the elementary classroom setting. Assertive influences are those voices heard during the instructional block that overshadow the voices of other participants in the classroom setting. Based on the results of this study, the researcher determined that confident students and reading teachers' inability to share control of classroom discussions were the two leading factors of assertive influences. Reading teachers expressed students who were confident in their ability to comprehend written texts, and share their opinions and responses to questions asked during the reading instructional block were often the most outspoken voices in the classrooms. These confident voices were seen as the student leaders in the classroom. Although reading teachers expressed the need for students' voices to be heard in the classroom, the researcher determined that reading teachers were another assertive influence in the classroom. Reading teachers contended with sharing control of classroom discussions with their students. From the interviews, the researcher discovered that some teachers acknowledged the need for students' voices to be heard, but still felt obligated to control classroom discussions. Some participants attributed this issue with specific skills, concepts, or texts being overly rigorous for their students.

In summary, the researcher was able to conclude that there were various social factors that influenced classroom discussions in the elementary reading classroom setting. Teachers must be aware to watch for these factors and be able to manage them accordingly during the reading instructional block.

Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs

Barriers That Hinder Teachers' Abilities to Extend Discussions

Many types of barriers hinder teachers' abilities to extend discussions. As mentioned by Khong et al. (2019), these barriers can influence the trajectory of the dialogic communication between teacher and students in the classroom. Moreover, they further detail how the absence of providing teachers the time to reflect on their instructional practices gives even less time for them to evaluate the effectiveness of how they engage with students (Khong et al., 2019). The work of Edwards (2015) further detailed challenges that teachers face in the middle grades. One of the more common challenges mentioned related to educational systems. More specifically, teachers reported not having enough instructional time. Research participants were direct when sharing their attitudes and beliefs about time factors that inhibited more in-depth and prolonged classroom discussions during the instructional block. The researcher determined that reading teachers demonstrated significant concern with having to balance the demands of delivering solid reading instruction coupled with a fixed daily schedule that was expected to be followed with fidelity. It could be that reading teachers neglect a more dialogic approach to teaching reading due to the demands of a daily schedule that outlines each component of the instructional day. Moreover, most teacher participants credited instructional transitions, classroom disruptions, and managing other administrative tasks as additional time factors that impeded more comprehensive classroom discussions from taking place during the reading instructional block. Although elementary reading teachers expressed a desire for deeper classroom discussions to ensue, participants shared concern that if more time is yielded during the reading instructional block, enough time would not be devoted to other content areas. Another time factor that reading teachers shared their attitudes and beliefs about were discussions that were thought to be off topic. These off-

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topic discussions were subjects that students initiated during the reading instructional block but not necessarily aligned with reading teachers' instructional plans during the lesson. Even though those unexpected moments surfaced during the reading instructional block, elementary reading teachers believed that those discussions were important and added value to the overall learning experiences in the classroom. These results suggest that extemporaneous classroom discussions and questions are just as important as those that are planned.

Teachers' Limited Knowledge of Dialogic Teaching

The purpose of dialogic teaching is intended to engage students in deep and meaningful discussions. Specifically, dialogic teaching is meant to enhance students' ability to think, question, and honor the thoughts of others during conversations. These types of discussions require a balance between teacher and student discourse. For this reason, the work of Sedova et al. (2016) affirmed that teachers need opportunities to further their understanding of dialogic teaching to enhance their instructional capacity. When the researcher asked teacher participants to share their attitudes and beliefs about dialogic teaching as an instructional approach, all four participants stated they had no prior knowledge of dialogic teaching. Reading teachers inferred that dialogic teaching had something to do with talking and/or a form of communication by fragmenting the word dialogic. When the researcher asked teacher participants if they considered themselves to be a dialogic teacher, half of the participants felt they were, and the other half were undecided. The teachers who said they were uncertain felt they needed to know more about dialogic teaching to decide. Additionally, all four teacher participants expressed they had never received any form of professional development about dialogic teaching through their undergraduate or alternative certification program, school district, campus, or on their own. However, all reading teacher participants affirmed they were

interested in attending professional development training on dialogic teaching. More specifically, teacher participants expressed the need to know how to implement dialogic teaching practices in their classroom during the reading instructional block.

Based on these findings, the results suggest that elementary reading teachers should be provided with professional development training that denotes what dialogic teaching is as an instructional approach to teaching and learning. Furthermore, elementary reading teachers need professional development training that will support reading teachers in how to purposefully plan for and apply dialogic teaching practices in the elementary classroom setting. Wilkinson et al. (2017) conducted a research and professional development program that supports the need for dialogic professional development training for teachers. The study was designed to enhance teachers' discourse methods with a focus on shifting from teacher-led practices to more dialogic pedagogical practices. The findings indicated that teachers were able to initiate discussions, ask extensive questions, and facilitate inquiry dialogue with the support from the researchers.

Implications

The findings in this qualitative research study will add to the body of research about dialogic teaching as an instructional approach to teaching in the elementary classroom setting. Included in this study are elementary reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes about various social factors that influence current classroom discussions. According to the findings of this research, for elementary teachers to employ a more dialogic approach to teaching in nature, there is a need for teachers to be mindful of giving agency to all student voices in the classroom learning environment during the reading instructional block. Students who were more vocal were perceived as the confident learners in the classroom. The idea that students who consistently speak are perceived as confident is subjective. Though some students engage in discussions more

than their peers, it cannot be assumed that students who are less vocal do not have anything to contribute to class discussions. Every student has the aptitude to impact the course of classroom discussions. All students do not process at the same rate as their peers. It could be that students who are not as quick to speak simply need more time to gather their thoughts before offering a response. Therefore, it is necessary that elementary reading teachers are inclined to listen not just for the purpose of providing a response but more specifically what to listen for and how to reply accordingly. Another implication based on the findings in this research study is the need for elementary reading teachers to create a classroom atmosphere where reading is accepted as an experience that is not only to be enjoyed alone but also in a social and collaborative manner. The classroom environment should be a place where students embrace written text through collective experiences with their teacher and peers. According to Pierce and Gilles (2021), students ponder written texts intently when given opportunities for discovery with their peers. This is in alignment with dialogic teaching an instructional tool to teaching. Reznitskaya et al. (2012) supported that dialogic teaching is distinguished as mutual accountability between teacher and students over dialogue, centered on learning through a range of questioning with attention drawn to reasoning on a deeper level.

Additionally, elementary reading teachers shared their attitudes and beliefs about time factors and the type of professional development training they felt would enhance their capacity to be dialogic teachers. Reading is an important component of the instructional day. Solid reading instruction contributes to students' comprehension of written texts. The basis of comprehension is students spending adequate time reading and discussing authentic texts. Students cannot understand what they do not talk about. Based on the findings of this research study, teachers and students should have adequate time to engage in classroom discussions primarily because they do not follow a predictable and

linear path. Shi and Tan (2020) supported classroom discussions involve time for students to comprehend and reflect what they read. The intent of classroom discussions allows for questions to be asked and time for the respondent to both process and share their thoughts.

However, it is important to stress that if school districts and campuses provide teachers with more instructional time, teachers must be cautious to use this additional time efficiently. Andersen et al. (2016) asserted the effectiveness of additional instructional time depends largely on the teacher. If given additional instructional time, it is imperative that teachers know how to use this time in a way that impacts student success; if not, teachers must be shown how to make use of this added time. Based on the findings from this research study, teachers need professional development training on dialogic teaching and how it can improve their instructional practices in the classroom learning environment.

Professional development is the most ideal and effective way for teachers to adopt a dialogic approach to teaching in the classroom learning environment. All four reading teacher participants unanimously expressed an interest to know more about dialogic teaching as an instructional approach during the reading instructional block. Each teacher participant stated they had no prior knowledge or training from any educational institution about dialogic teaching. These findings greatly suggest that undergraduate colleges and universities, school districts, and individual campuses provide teachers with training and development to enhance their awareness of dialogic teaching. More specifically, elementary reading teachers need support on what dialogic classrooms should look like and how to apply dialogic teaching practices regularly during classroom discussions.

It is noteworthy to mention that integrating a dialogic approach to teaching in the elementary classroom setting does not come without risks. Aukerman et al. (2008) reported that the instructional threats of teaching in a dialogical manner involves teachers surrendering majority control of discussions in the classroom. In a learning environment stimulated by dialogic instructional practices, teachers are incapable of anticipating the course of classroom discussions in advance. Embracing a dialogic approach to teaching has the potential to be complex, especially for novice teachers in the field of education (Caughlan et al., 2013). Although there is an awareness that dialogic teaching has its challenges, professional development is the ideal means for elementary reading teachers to better understand and apply dialogic teaching practices. Yenen and Yöntem (2020) supported that professional development training is necessary for teachers to show continued growth and development. More specifically, teachers should encounter instructional coaching and development that is comparable in nature to the type of dialogic involvement that students should experience in the classroom setting. According to research, teachers receive professional development training that is primarily didactic in style. From these lecture-based trainings, teachers are expected to be proficient enough to apply the information they received in their classrooms. However, what is needed are open forum concepts where teachers can voice their opinions and share ideas in a safe and collaborative space (Wells & Mitchell, 2016).

Limitations

There were several limitations of this research. The sample size for this study was not comprised of a substantial number of teachers based on the entire demographical area targeted. Only four elementary reading teachers in a single, public elementary school were involved. Enlisting only four teacher participants provided a narrow view of what elementary teachers perceived dialogic teaching to be as an instructional approach to

teaching reading. Another limitation of this qualitative research study was the omission of teachers who taught other content areas such as math, science, and social studies. An additional limitation was Coronavirus-19. Due to the global pandemic, teachers provided instruction concurrently. More specifically, teachers balanced teaching students who attended school face-to-face in the classroom setting in addition to students who attended class through an online communication platform.

Recommendations for Future Research

As a former elementary reading teacher and current campus administrator who provides instructional coaching and development to classroom teachers, there is a need for further research about dialogic teaching as an instructional approach. A recommendation for future research could be to explore the perceptions and attitudes of bilingual reading teachers and teachers who teach other content areas such as math, science, and social studies. Including elementary teachers that taught other content areas could have provided additional data that might have impacted the overall findings of this study. Another recommendation for future research could be to explore this research study in a new location such as middle and high schools. Dialogic exchanges from the perceptions of middle and high school teachers could have added alternative perspectives of dialogic teaching. A final recommendation for future research could be to explore students' perceptions and attitudes about a dialogic approach to learning at all three levels: elementary, middle, and high school. As students advance in school, they are faced with having to read and comprehend text with even more depth and complexity.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate elementary reading teachers' perceptions about and attitudes toward a dialogic approach to teaching reading in the elementary classroom setting. This qualitative study used a case study approach to

examine these perceptions and attitudes. This study incorporated two face-to-face interviews with elementary reading teachers. In addition to the interviews, classroom observations were conducted before and after each interview. The participants in this qualitative research study provided a diversity of perspectives concerning reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes about a dialogic approach to teaching reading in the elementary classroom setting. In conclusion, the findings in this study can influence how school districts and campus instructional leaders can plan professional development for their reading teachers regarding dialogic teaching practices. This study can support efforts to improve the nature of classroom discussions that transpire between teachers and students in the elementary classroom learning environment.

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University
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Informed Consent: Adult Research Participant

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your

participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you

may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the

study, or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your

decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be

entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully and ask questions

about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

Title: Reading Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes of a Dialogic Approach to Teaching

in Elementary Classrooms

Principal Investigator(s): Amisha Blake

Student Investigator(s): Amisha Blake

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Roberta Raymond

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the research study is to investigate elementary

reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes about dialogic teaching.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this research study, you will be asked by the

researcher to observe a component of your literacy block (i.e., read- aloud, mini- lesson,

small group instruction, etc.) on two separate occasions. You will next be asked to participate in an individual interview with the researcher; this interview will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The initial interview will be prior to the initial classroom observation and the other interview will be post the second classroom observation.

Expected Duration: The duration of this study will be conducted over the course of a 4-week period.

Risks of Participation: There is minimal risk in participating in this research. You will be assigned a random identification number if you participate in this study, and after your interview is transcribed only this identifier (not your name) will be associated with your responses. Your name and individual responses will never be shared with anyone outside the researcher.

Benefits to the Subject

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) to better understand reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes about dialogic teaching.

Confidentiality of Records

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, you will not be identified by name. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the Principal Investigator or Faculty Sponsor for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

Compensation

There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study.

Investigator's Right to Withdraw Participant

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

Contact Information for Questions or Problems

The investigator has offered to answer all of your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Amisha Blake by telephone at (832) 421-2840 or by email at BlakeA7633@UHCL.edu.

If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Roberta Raymond by telephone at (281) 283-3593 or email at Raymond@UHCL.edu

Identifiable Private Information *(if applicable)*

Identifiers might be removed from identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens and that, after such removal, the information or biospecimens could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from the subject or the legally authorized representative, if this might be a possibility

OR

Information or biospecimens collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used, or distributed for future research studies.

Signatures

Your signature below acknowledges your voluntary participation in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator(s), institution(s), sponsor(s) or granting agency(ies) from their professional and ethical responsibility to you. By signing the form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, and explanation of risks or benefits have been explained to you. You have been allowed to ask questions and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You have been told who to contact if you have additional questions. You have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate as a subject in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the Principle Investigator or Student Researcher/Faculty Sponsor. You will be given a copy of the consent form you have signed.

Subject's printed name: _____

Signature of Subject: _____

Date: _____

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items listed above with the subject.

Printed name and title:

_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:

_____

Date:

_____

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281.283.3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE

GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT.

(FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE #FWA00004068

University
of Houston
Clear Lake

Assent Form: Child Education Research Participant (Ages 7 Through 12)

You are being asked to help in a research project called Reading Teachers' Perceptions of Dialogic Teaching in Elementary Classrooms and the project is part of my dissertation research study at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. The purpose of this study is to find out what your teacher thinks about a certain type of teaching skill. You will be asked to participate in your reading class with your teacher and classmates. Your help will be needed for finding out the types of conversations that you and your teachers have about the stories that are read during class time.

You do not have to help if you do not want, and you may stop at any time even after you have started, and it will be okay. You can just let the researcher know if you want to stop or if you have questions. If you do want to do the project, it will help us a lot.

Please keep the upper part of this page for your information. Thank you for your assistance.

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Title of Study: Reading Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes of a Dialogic

Approach to Teaching in Elementary Classrooms

Student Researcher: Amisha Blake

Faculty Sponsor: Roberta D. Raymond, Ed.D.

☐ Yes, I agree to (allow my child to) participate in the study on (title) Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ No, I do not wish to (allow my child to) participate in the study on (title) Click or tap here to enter text.

Printed Name of Assenting Child: _____

Signature of Assenting Child: _____

Date:

_____

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name of Witness to Child's Assent: _____

Signature of Witness to Child's Assent: _____

Date: _____

The University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) Committee for Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed and approved this project. Any questions regarding your rights as a research subject may be addressed to the UHCL Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (281-283-3015). All research projects that are carried out by investigators at UHCL are governed by requirements of the university and the federal government.

(federal wide assurance # fwa00004068)

APPENDIX C:

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The purpose of this research study is to investigate elementary reading teachers' perceptions and attitudes about dialogic teaching. Each participant is asked to participate in two -30-minute (pre and post observation) interview sessions. The researcher will adhere to the interview protocol below.

Introduction and Overview: Thank the interviewee for participating in this research study. Read the purpose of the study and other relevant information as stated in the paragraph provided above. The researcher will confirm the interviewee's questions and or concerns, if any, have been addressed prior to the beginning of the interview process. Additionally, a completed and signed consent form for each participant will be required prior to proceeding to the next steps.

Please provide the following demographic information that best describes you:

Years of teaching experience_____ Years at current school site_____

Current teaching assignment/grade_____ Content area_____

Gender_____ Age_____

Highest Level of Education Earned _____

The interview questions are as follows:
1. Would you mind telling me about your educational background? What experiences led you to the role of an elementary teacher?
2. How long have you taught reading?
3. What do you find to be your greatest challenge teaching reading?
4. How do you plan for the delivery of your reading instruction? What does planning usually involve?
5. Describe any differences from your perspective in how you plan for teaching with narrative texts versus informational texts?

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6. Would you say that you prefer teaching one genre more than another?

7. Do you feel more comfortable teaching with narrative texts or informational texts during a read aloud, guided reading or small group instruction? Or, are you equally comfortable using either genre for instructional purposes?

8. Are you able to determine if and when your students enjoy listening and reading? If so, how?

9. What do you think attributes to your students' level of satisfaction or dissociation with reading?

10. What specific processes do you implement to engage and involve your students to participate during the reading instructional block?

11. During your reading instructional block, how would you describe the discussions that occur between you and your students?

12. During your reading lessons, are there opportunities for your students to ask you questions about what is being read?

13. During your reading lessons, are there opportunities for your students to ask their peers about what is being read?

14. During your reading lesson, are there every any instances when conversations occur between you and your students that you did not anticipate happening? If so, can you share.

15. How familiar are you with the concept of dialogic teaching, and would you say that you are a dialogic teacher?

16. When your students are talking during the lesson what do you listen for? Do you listen for any specific type of responses?

17. Are there any instances during the reading instructional block when you notice your students have taken control of the conversation or classroom discussion? If so, when does this usually occur? And what is your response?

18. Do students have the authority to facilitate conversations and discussions (i.e., students share responsibility for discussions, govern turns, ask questions) during the lesson? If so, how often would you say that occurs?

19. Are you comfortable with relinquishing control to your students during classroom conversations and discussions during the instructional block?
20. Have you ever received any form of professional development training about dialogic teaching either from your teacher preparation program, school district, or on your own?
21. Would you be interested in knowing more about dialogic teaching as an instructional strategy?
22. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a reading teacher?
23. Is there anything that you did not mention that you would like to add before we end this interview?