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The University of San Francisco

THE IMPACT OF TRANSACTIONAL STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION ON THE
READING COMPREHENSION OF A DIVERSE GROUP OF SECOND GRADERS

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International & Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Sunjoo Shawn Kim
San Francisco
December 2013

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

The Impact of Transactional Strategies Instruction on the Reading Comprehension of a Diverse Group of Second Graders

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of TSI in teaching reading comprehension to a diverse group of second graders. The diversity included various levels of readiness in reading, language status such as English learners and native speakers of English, and various levels of participation by children in a whole-class setting. Part One of this study used teacher action research as its methodology to address reading comprehension and student autonomy. Part Two of this study used participatory action research, involving children as co-researchers, to investigate how second graders perceived Literature Circles as their reading comprehension instruction and to suggest ways to improve Literature Circles. The significance of the study was based on the need to find an effective methodology for teaching reading comprehension to both native speakers of English and English learners in the same classroom.

The findings suggest that TSI was effective with students in the primary grades, such as second grade, in teaching reading comprehension and in increasing autonomy in children as learners and as members of Literature Circles. In addition, there were unexpected findings of increased motivation and enjoyment in children, increased teacher-like facilitating and helping behaviors, and evidence of children informing instruction for the teacher. Participatory action research by children suggested that second graders enjoyed learning through Literature Circles as well as ways to improve Literature Circles.

The study concluded with the suggestion that there was interaction among various factors found as the result of Literature Circles such as reading comprehension, autonomy, motivation and enjoyment, children helping each other, children informing instruction for the teacher, and the suggestion that alternative paradigms in teaching and research such as Literature Circles and PAR are in need in the primary grades.

The dissertation written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Sunjoo Shawn Kim

December 14, 2013

Candidate

Dissertation Committee

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October 7, 2013

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October 7, 2013

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Table of Contents

I. RESEARCH PROBLEM	1
Background and Need.....	3
Theoretical Framework.....	4
Model for Balanced Comprehension Instruction.....	5
Principles for Success in Teaching ELs.....	5
Limitations of the Study.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	8
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	9
Introduction.....	9
History of Reading Instruction in Classrooms.....	9
Recent Studies on TSI.....	16
TSI and English Learners.....	24
Theoretical Framework.....	32
Balanced Comprehension Instruction Model.....	32
Principles for Success in Teaching ELs.....	36
Summary.....	41
III. METHODOLOGY	43
Research Design.....	43
Role of Researcher.....	45
Background of Researcher.....	45
Setting and Participants.....	46
Selection of Participants	47
Protection of Human Subjects	51
Description of Intervention: TSI.....	52
Validity	54
Data Collection	55
Data Analysis.....	57
IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	59
Reading Comprehension.....	59
Autonomy	95
Children Helping Each Other.....	108
Motivation and Enjoyment	114
Children Driving Instruction.....	118
PAR.....	120
V. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	133
Reading Comprehension.....	134

Autonomy	139
Children Helping Each Other.....	141
Motivation and Enjoyment	142
Children Driving Instruction.....	143
Participatory Action Research by Children	143
Reading Comprehension, Autonomy and Other Findings.....	145
Recommendations for Further Research.....	148
REFERENCES	150
Appendix A: Internal Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects Approval	158

TABLE OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: Eleana’s responses in Cycle One.....	60
Figure 2: Eleana’s responses in Cycle Two.....	62
Figure 3: Eleana’s responses in Cycle Three.....	63
Figure 4: Nathan’s responses in Cycle One.....	67
Figure 5: Nathan’s responses in Cycle Two.....	68
Figure 6: Nathan’s responses in Cycle Three.....	69
Figure 7: Sheila’s responses in Cycle One.....	72
Figure 8: Sheila’s responses in Cycle Two.....	73
Figure 9: Fia’s responses in Cycle One.....	77
Figure 10: Fia’s responses in Cycle Two.....	78
Figure 11: Fia’s responses in Cycle Three.....	79
Figure 12: Jin’s responses in Cycle One.....	83
Figure 13: Jin’s responses in Cycle Two.....	84
Figure 14: Von’s responses in Cycle One.....	88
Figure 15: Von’s responses in Cycle Two.....	90
Figure 16: Von’s responses in Cycle Three.....	91
Figure 17: Smartboard file showing data processing for Question 1.....	123
Figure 18: Smartboard file showing data processing for Question 2.....	124
Figure 19: The interaction among RC, AUT, motivation, and enjoyment.....	147
Table 1: Summary of Students.....	47
Table 2: Forms of Data.....	56

CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the United States, students classified as English learners have performed poorly as demonstrated by their scores on standardized tests. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2009), only 3 percent of ELs scored ‘proficient’ both in 4th and 8th grades. English learners’ poor performance on tests may be because of poor comprehension skills making traditional classroom practices in teaching reading comprehension one factor in the gap between the needs of English learners and the curriculum (Carrasquillo, A. & Rodriguez, V., 2002; Cummins, 2003). Consequently, it has become increasingly important for educators to look for instructional methodologies that are effective in providing instruction in reading comprehension both for native speakers of English (NS) and English learners (EL). Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI), one form of comprehension instruction, has shown hope in the field of teaching reading comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Meta-cognitive reading strategies, such as questioning, inferring, summarizing, and predicting, have been recognized as effective in teaching reading comprehension. The National Reading Panel (2000) recommends multiple-strategy instruction where children learn to use multiple meta-cognitive reading strategies in a coordinated way. TSI is one of these multiple-strategy instruction models. The panel examined 33 studies dedicated to multiple-strategy instruction with findings that suggested its effectiveness.

TSI helps students make use of multiple meta-cognitive reading strategies simultaneously in a coordinated and systematic way (Pressley, 1994). According to Pressley (1994), the key components of this instructional strategy are: direct explanation

that involves explicit teaching of reading strategies by the teacher (Duffy, Roeler, Meloth, Polin, Rackliffe & Tracy, 1987); scaffolding of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) in small groups or pairs; and transactional learning where learning is experiential and interactional (Rosenblatt, 1978).

However, Reutzel, Smith and Fawson (2005) define TSI more broadly as “a ‘family’ or ‘set’ of comprehension strategies embedded in a collaborative, interactive and engaging routine”. Under this definition, models such as Reciprocal Teaching and Literature Circles would be classified as TSI. Reciprocal Teaching uses a collaborative routine with a pair or a small group of students involved in transactional learning, and Literature Circles use another kind of collaborative routine with a small group format for a student-led literature discussion. Reciprocal Teaching, included under the broad umbrella of TSI (Reutzel, Smith & Fawson, 2005), was effective in teaching reading comprehension to students in general education and to children with learning disabilities (Lederer, 2000; Takala, 2006).

In order to explore the potential value of TSI in teaching reading comprehension to children including ELs, studies followed to examine its effectiveness. Some of these studies suggested TSI’s positive impact in increasing reading comprehension for English learners in upper grades such as grade three through seven (Ambrister, 2012; McElvain, 2010). Few studies have focused on implementation of TSI with ELs in the lower grades, such as grades K through Two. One pilot study examined the efficacy of a modified TSI format in the primary grades and results showed success (Pilonieta & Medina, 2009). In research that looked at teaching science content to second graders, Reutzel and his colleagues (2005) found that TSI was more effective than Single Strategy Instruction

(SSI) where comprehension strategies are taught in isolation from one another. Reading comprehension must be taught in the lower grades along with decoding and fluency (Applegate, Applegate & Modla, 2009), but more studies are needed to test the effectiveness of TSI in teaching reading comprehension to both native speakers and ELs in the lower grades. Studies that focus on effective instruction for English learners have focused on methodologies that coincide with many aspects of TSI (Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, Collins & Scarcella, 2007).

Background and Need

Schools in the United States face the challenge of educating students in kindergarten through grade 12 including native speakers of English (NS) along with those that are English learners (EL) in the same classroom. Between school years 1997-1998 and 2008-2009, the population of English learners in the United States has grown by 51 percent, from 3.5 million to 5.3 million (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2010). In case of California, English learners make up more than 25 percent of the student population in the public schools. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requires the same standards for English learners as those that are native speakers of English. The Act also mandates that every student, including English learners, be instructed in a mainstream classroom or a free standing English Language Development (ELD) classroom by a fully credentialed teacher who holds at least a Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development credential (CLAD). For example, the most common practice in school districts in California is to place English learners in the mainstream classrooms (Jepsen & de Alth, 2005). Therefore, teachers need a

methodology that is effective in teaching reading comprehension to both native speakers of English and English learners in the same classroom.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of TSI in a second grade classroom consisting of native speakers and English learners who spoke a variety of home languages such as Spanish, Arabic, Tongan, Korean, Cantonese, and Tagalog. Using the Teacher Action Research method (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1990, 1992), the research questions addressed were:

1. How does Transactional Strategies Instruction affect second grade students' reading comprehension?
2. How does TSI affect the students' ability to function autonomously as readers and as members of Literature Circles?

Using Participatory Action Research method, the research question addressed was:

3. Based on the students' perceptions, how can the implementation of TSI in the second grade classroom be improved?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study comes from two sources: The model for Balanced Reading Comprehension Instruction based on research in reading, as developed by Duke and Pearson (2002); and the Principles for Success in Teaching ELs by Freeman and Freeman (1998). The two sources of the framework were used to construct a set of good teaching practices as suggested by research in teaching literacy to native speakers and research on literacy instruction for English learners.

Model for Balanced Comprehension Instruction

Duke and Pearson's model for Balanced Reading Comprehension Instruction (2002) established guidelines for building quality instruction for reading comprehension. The five steps of comprehension instruction are: teacher presentation, teacher modeling, collaborative practice, guided practice, and finally independent practice. These steps represent a gradual release of responsibility in teaching by the teacher. These five steps also become the set of procedures for teaching metacognitive reading strategies such as prediction, story structure, structures for informational text, visualizing, summarizing and questioning. Duke and Pearson's model also includes additional factors for a supportive classroom, such as authentic activities and lessons in literacy and environmental factors that support comprehension in the classroom.

Principles for Success in Teaching ELs

The second part of the theoretical framework regarding teaching literacy to ELs comes from Freeman and Freeman (1998) who proposed seven principles for teaching ELs successfully. First, they assert that learning proceeds from whole to part. English learners need to see the bigger picture to know where they are going as they go through lessons and activities. Thus, organizing curriculum around themes is very important. Second, lessons should be learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. Teachers need to provide contexts in which students can construct knowledge instead of being fed information. Third, the meaning and the purpose for learning have to be readily apparent for students at the time of instruction. ELs perform better if their lesson seems to be for immediate and present use. Providing authentic experiences in literacy can engage students in learning with a sense of meaning and purpose. Fourth, lessons should

encourage social interaction among students. Cognition, academic skills and language proficiency develop faster in ELs when the classroom environment is geared toward collaborative learning. Fifth, Freeman and Freeman suggest that lessons need to engage students in both oral and written language from the start. Simultaneous development of oral and written proficiency benefits students' academic progress. Sixth, helping students understand concepts in their own languages and cultures supports their literacy in English. Under the current policy of English-only in most of the schools in the United States, this sixth principle may not seem possible, but this principle is tied to addressing the issue of students' self esteem. Last, teachers need to show faith in the students and their potential. Lessons need to be built on students' interests, backgrounds, and needs. Interest-based lessons typically promote social interaction among students, involve use of both oral and written language, and support students' languages and cultures. These principles from Freeman and Freeman were used both to provide criteria for evaluating TSI. Throughout the study, these elements were identified in the TSI model to explain its effectiveness in teaching English learners.

Limitations of the Study

The study focused on my learning and teaching experiences as the classroom teacher of 29 children over the course of five months of exploring TSI as the method of instruction in reading comprehension. The implementation of TSI and the collection of data began in September, 2012 and ended in early March of 2013. Therefore, the results of the study represented a moment in time over the span of the children's education in primary grades, kindergarten through two. Furthermore, the study focused on one school located in a middle-class neighborhood including families who speak diverse languages

and represent a range of socio-economic levels. As a result, our experiences, those of the students and the teacher in this study, do not necessarily represent those in other school settings. The Teacher Action Research and Participatory Action Research were chosen not to be able to generalize the results, but to gain a deeper understanding of how TSI impacted second graders, their teacher, and our interaction over the course of seven months in our particular setting.

I, as the teacher researcher, also contributed to the limitations of the study. The beginning of this study marked my fifth year implementing TSI as my reading instruction and sixteenth year of teaching primary grades. Therefore, I have my own biases and expectations, which have accumulated over the last four years. In addition, my background as an immigrant and an English learner, and of having been brought up in a middle-class family, may have introduced even more factors limiting the study.

Significance of the Study

It is important for teachers to know the extent to which TSI is effective in teaching reading comprehension to native speakers and English learners in the lower grades, and how TSI may impact students' perceptions of themselves as readers. As previously stated, there is currently limited research on TSI for this age group. It is also important for teachers to know how children perceive TSI, and from their point of view, how the program and its implementation can be improved. The understanding gained from this study was designed to help teachers in lower grades meet the instructional needs of their native speakers and English learners in reading comprehension within the same classroom. Furthermore, teacher educators and administrators in charge of staff

development can use this knowledge to improve their programs for teachers in training as well as for teachers in classrooms.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms will clarify understanding.

Reading Comprehension Strategies: These are metacognitive strategies good readers use to comprehend text (Harvey & Goodvis, 2007). They include comprehension monitoring, activating and connecting to background knowledge, questioning, visualizing and inferring, determining importance in the text, and summarizing and synthesizing information.

Instructional Methodologies: These refer to the teaching strategies used in order to teach their students how to utilize *reading comprehension strategies*.

English Learners (ELs): English learners are students who are learning English as a second language regardless of where they were born. Their first language is a language other than English.

Primary and Upper Grade: Primary grades in this study refer to grades kindergarten through two. Upper grades represent grades three through five.

Middle School: Middle school represents grades six through eight in this paper.

High School: High school represents grades nine through 12 for the purpose of this paper.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The history of reading research for mainstream education, or education for native speakers of English, has shown that students have not always received quality instruction of reading comprehension due to the gap between research and classroom practices. English learners have not done well on standardized tests, despite the fact that there has been an abundance of research that suggests effective methodologies for teaching reading to ELs, pointing to a similar gap in research and classroom practices. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the teaching of reading comprehension as a possible solution to address some of the problems in both mainstream and EL education in teaching reading.

The first section of the literature review examines the history of teaching reading comprehension, the development of reading comprehension research in the United States, and the gap between research and practice. The second section of the literature review discusses recent studies in TSI. The third section examines studies of TSI concentrating on ELs. The fourth section explores studies in teaching literacy to English learners and will attempt to establish commonalities between TSI and instructional methodologies suggested by research in the area of educating ELs. The last section of this literature review discusses the framework for this study more in depth.

History of Reading Instruction in Classrooms

The quality of reading comprehension instruction in classrooms in general has been low (Durkin, 1978-1979; Pressley et al., 1998), and therefore, the poor performance

of ELs on standardized tests is not surprising. Traditional practices of teaching reading in mainstream classrooms did not include much instruction in reading comprehension. A well-known observation study by Durkin (1978-1979) examined the comprehension instruction in reading and social studies in grades 3 through 6 and found that almost no comprehension instruction was provided. Less than 1% of the reading instruction time in the classrooms observed was devoted to teaching reading comprehension. That 1% consisted of assessing the students' comprehension by asking comprehension questions without having taught any strategies for comprehension. Compared with the paucity of comprehension instruction, a relatively sizeable amount of time was invested in administering and checking assignments. A study by Pressley and colleagues (1998) revealed that not much progress was made in teaching of reading comprehension in classrooms in the next twenty years. The researchers observed nine classrooms of grades 4 and 5, and found that the teachers did not teach any comprehension strategies.

While the instructional practices in teaching comprehension in classrooms did not see much progress from the 1970s to the 1990s, teacher researchers and researchers in academia were actively producing literature concerning effective methodologies for comprehension (Pearson, 2001-2008). Reading was no longer a skill, but a cognitive process and cultural practice. Some teacher researchers in the classrooms as well as researchers in academia were producing literature on good methodologies for teaching comprehension. However, the lingering schism between the majority of the classroom practices and the abundance of research was caused, to a degree, by the teachers' and administrators' shyness toward teaching comprehension as a set of skills and strategies in the face of the whole language movement or the phonics movement. The whole language

movement assumed comprehension would happen with the use of good texts and quality assignment. Teaching of skills and strategies in comprehension instruction had a place neither in the whole language movement nor in the phonics movement. The phonics movement had a simplified view of reading comprehension as listening comprehension times decoding. With the realization that neither movement was doing the job of teaching comprehension, came the resolution to teach comprehension strategies directly. This renaissance movement to teach reading comprehension, as propelled by cognitive science and psycholinguistics, viewed reading as complex transactions among reader, text and context. Reading was no longer a skill, but a cognitive process and cultural practice.

On top of extensive research on methodologies for teaching reading comprehension, attempts to engage multiple comprehension strategies simultaneously in an established routine became active (Pearson, 2001-2008). Four methodologies were developed in the style of Transactional Strategies Instruction (although the name TSI did not exist from the beginning). These methodologies included: Reciprocal Teaching; Students Achieving Independent Learning (SAIL); Literature Circles; and Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS). TSI helps students make use of multiple meta-cognitive reading strategies simultaneously in a coordinated and systematic way (The National Reading Panel, 2000). According to Pressley (1994), the key components of this instructional strategy are: direct explanation that involves explicit teaching of reading strategies by the teacher (Duffy, Roeler, Meloth, Polin, Rackliffe & Tracy, 1987); scaffolding of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) in small groups or pairs; and transactional learning where learning is experiential and interactional (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Reciprocal Teaching

In reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984), the teacher and student take turns leading a dialogue regarding a portion of a text. Initially the teacher models summarizing, questioning, clarifying and predicting. Initially, the teacher models the steps of summarizing, questioning, clarifying and predicting, and the students gradually take on more and more responsibilities toward independence, with feedback and guidance from the teacher. Reciprocal teaching can occur between the teacher and a student, among the teacher and students, or among students.

Palincsar and Brown (1984) conducted three studies testing a method for reciprocal teaching, which they developed. Reciprocal teaching may be one of the earliest instructional methodologies in the TSI style of teaching. In the first study by Palincsar and Brown, the intervention using reciprocal teaching resulted in a significant improvement of comprehension level of struggling readers in seventh grade. The researchers selected the four activities because the activities combined dual functions of fostering and monitoring comprehension. The student participated whenever she or he could. The teacher then provided guidance and feedback. The students took on more active role as the dialogue leaders as the training progressed.

In the second study by Palincsar and Brown (1984), volunteer teachers were used to facilitate the intervention of reciprocal teaching in a natural school setting with 21 white 7th graders who struggled with reading. The study found that students improved in reading comprehension according to the planned criteria by the authors. In this second study, the small-group format was used instead of the two-student format used in the first study. After 13 days of intervention, a qualitative and quantitative improvement was

observed in the reading comprehension skills of the students. The dialogues were analyzed by qualitative measures and the comprehension was assessed by quantitative measures. The effect of the intervention lasted up to eight weeks and was generalizable to the classroom setting. The strategies learned were applicable to new tasks. In addition, all of the teachers that were doubtful about the effect of reciprocal teaching in the beginning of the study were uniformly enthusiastic about it in the end and said they would incorporate it to their classroom teaching.

Students Achieving Independent Learning (SAIL)

Another successful TSI-type methodology that incorporated a simultaneous use of multiple comprehension strategies is SAIL. SAIL begins with a strategy lesson covering one or more of the following metacognitive strategies: prediction, evaluation of prediction, generating of questions in response to text, interpretation, summarization, visualization, and clarification (Pressley et al., 1992). The strategy lesson is delivered in the form of direct explanation, which begins with mental modeling by the teacher and proceeds to guided practice, eventually leading to independent practice (Duffy, Roeler, Meloth, Polin, Rackliffe & Tracy, 1987). The next ingredient to be added in making meaning is transactional learning, which has three categories of transaction (Pressley, 1994): between the text and the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978); between the child and adult (Bell, 1968); and among students in the group (Hutchins, 1991). Finally, Pressley emphasized the role of the teacher as an “intelligent assistant” that can assist children perform complicated tasks (Boy, 1991). The teacher should be able to break down and explain all the strategies that he uses simultaneously for comprehension while reading, and model each step for students with the long-term goal of automaticity. The teacher as

an intelligent assistant should be able to diagnose the difficulties the students are experiencing (Pressley et al., 1992).

Researchers found that SAIL was effective in increasing reading comprehension of second graders in public schools in Montgomery County, Maryland (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter & Schuder, 1996). This quasi-experimental study involved an intervention with 12 struggling readers in second grade. Students who participated in the SAIL intervention were then compared with peers in a comparison group. At the end of the year of intervention, SAIL students showed greater awareness of comprehension than the comparison group on interviews and think-aloud tests. On the story recall test, the SAIL students performed better on recalling factual information of the text than the comparison students. On the comprehension and word tests of Stanford Achievement Test, the SAIL group showed greater improvement than the comparison group. They received significantly higher scores than the comparison group. The study concluded that SAIL was effective in teaching reading comprehension to second graders who struggled with reading.

Literature Circles

Daniels' Literature Circles (1994) are based on a student-led discussion format in small-group settings. Student roles within the groups include the: Questioner, Connector, Word Wizard, Literary Luminary, Summarizer and Illustrator. Questioner leads the discussion and asks questions; Connector makes text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-another text connections; Word Wizard chooses vocabulary words that are worthy of learning; and Literary Luminary chooses passages worth noting for a variety of reasons;

Summarizer shares a summary of the text; and Illustrator draws the result of his/her visualization of the text.

The methodology belongs to the family of TSI. It is in use widely in schools of the United States, Australia, countries in Asia and Europe (Daniels, 2002). According to Daniels (2006), as early as the early 1980s, a few teacher writers such as Searle and Smith simultaneously began to set up small reading groups in which students took turns leading discussions instead of the teacher. These teachers modeled their literature discussion groups after adult book clubs. Such teacher research drew attention from teacher authors such as Daniels, Short, Haste and others who began writing books and talking about Literature Circles as a way to teach reading comprehension (Daniels, 2006).

Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)

Fuchs and Fuchs (1998) developed Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS), a commercial program designed for teaching students in kindergarten through high school students, including learners with special needs. The program includes an important component of teacher training.

A typical PALS lesson for students in grades 2 through 6 engages students in peer-tutoring routines through a series of structured interactions using books provided by the PALS program. For grades 7 through 12, teachers provide and select reading materials. The lessons last 30 to 35 minutes. The first half of the lesson focuses on phonics and fluency and the second half focuses on reading comprehension (Vanderbilt University School of Education, 2009-2010).

Fuchs, Fuchs, Kazdan and Allen (1999) conducted a quasi-experimental study of the effectiveness of PALS for teaching reading comprehension to elementary school

students. The study took place in 15 general education classrooms in grades two through five and the participants included 31% female students. Thirty-eight percent of the participants were African-American while the rest were white, and 24% received free or reduced-priced meals. Two groups received intervention in PALS and a control group received traditional reading instruction using the same text, but without PALS collaborative learning. Sixty-three sessions of intervention took place, three times a week for 35 minutes a day during the students' regular language arts period. For measurement, the study used the comprehension subtest of Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. The gain in reading comprehension level was significantly higher in the intervention groups than the comparison group.

Recent Studies on TSI

TSI with Struggling Readers

TSI has been proven effective in various settings, across a range of subjects, and with different populations of students. In one study of TSI, Lederer (2000) found that Reciprocal Teaching was an effective intervention for teaching reading comprehension in social studies to fourth, fifth and sixth graders who had learning disabilities. The study took place in a rural public elementary school in New Mexico. Lederer's study looked at 128 students divided into experimental and control groups, with six teachers in the experimental group and six teachers in the control group. The intervention occurred in 17 sessions. Comprehension questions designed by the researcher were used to measure the effectiveness of the intervention.

Lederer's (2000) study is noteworthy in that he explored the content area reading such as social studies, rather than simply language arts, for which Reciprocal Teaching

was originally intended. The success of this study also suggests the possibility of using Reciprocal Teaching with the whole class and small groups. One interesting outcome of the study was that when it came to the long-term effect of the intervention, the strength of the positive impact from TSI possibly depended on the instructional style of the teacher in the students' regular classroom. For example, students were less likely to exercise what they had learned in intervention when their regular teacher was a more traditional teacher who practiced teacher-directed style of teaching.

Johnson-Glenberg (2000) also found improvement in comprehension with struggling readers who were taught using Reciprocal Teaching. This experimental study found that using reciprocal teaching as an intervention resulted in a significant gain in comprehension for students in grades 3 through 5. The participating students came from 95% white middle class neighborhood. Twenty-two students participated in Reciprocal Teaching Group, 23 in a group focused on Visualizing and Verbalizing (V/V), and 14 in a control group. The intervention occurred in small groups at the frequency of four sessions a week with a total of 28 sessions that lasted 30 minutes each. The interventions resulted in significant gains for the students in the Reciprocal Teaching and V/V groups on 11 measures of reading comprehension such as Wechsler, WRAT, and the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test. This experimental study showed that reciprocal teaching was effective in improving students' reading comprehension, and as effective as a high cost intervention called Visualizing and Verbalizing (V/V) used by Lindamood Bell in school settings. While the purpose of the study was to compare the two methodologies, this study is also important to our discussion of TSI.

TSI in an Urban Setting

TSI has also been shown to be effective in an urban setting. In an observational study, Long and Gove (2003) examined the impact of Literature Circles when combined with “engagement strategies” in an inner city school. The engagement strategies were, by nature, the same as metacognitive strategy training in questioning and inference. The study took place in an urban area with predominantly African-American residents of low socio-economic status. All of the 16 participants were African-American fourth graders. The intervention consisted of four three-hour sessions of literature circles, followed by one of the engagement strategies. The intervention included the use of children’s literature about the South and racism. The study found that the interventions resulted in increased critical thinking by the participating students as demonstrated by their responses. Furthermore, the students reported enthusiasm about the experience and feeling that they “learned a lot in those three hours”. The researchers attributed the increase in comprehension and engagement to the use of literature that mattered to the students’ lives as well as to the instructional methodology used in intervention.

TSI with Students with Language Impairment

In addition to being effective in teaching reading comprehension to struggling readers, readers with learning disabilities and students in urban schools, TSI’s success with children with language impairment has expanded the arena for its use. In a study by Takala (2006), the participants came from a middle-class neighborhood. An experimental group received 10 to 15 sessions of intervention for five weeks during the two regular semesters in the classroom setting. Both whole class and small group formats were incorporated. The researcher found that Reciprocal Teaching was effective

in increasing comprehension in both mainstream and speech and language impaired students. The children of both experimental groups, and the teachers who participated, expressed positive feelings about the interventions. Students stated that they had learned new techniques for improving reading comprehension and teachers had positive responses about new strategies for teaching reading comprehension.

TSI in Content Areas

Studies that looked at using TSI as an intervention were followed by studies that tested TSI in content area reading, and found that TSI was effective in teaching comprehension in content areas in upper grades. An action research study by Wilfong (2009) incorporated a variation of literature circles for teaching comprehension of science textbooks in a middle school mainstream classroom setting. Wilfong used the term “Textmasters” to signify that students could be masters of textbooks by developing competence. In addition to the roles of Discussion Director, Summarizer and Vocabulary Enricher, they added “Webmaster” who was to turn the group’s understanding of the text into a graphic organizer of any form. The study participants included 73 middle school science students in Ohio. The intervention that lasted for one month began with a training session on the roles and behavioral objectives in the literature circles. Next, students observed the first group of four go through the Textmasters’ meeting in a fishbowl session. Each intervention consisted of 20 minutes of silent reading of the text and preparing for the roles for the Textmasters’ meeting. After the meeting, the culminating activity followed. The activity took the form of *Jeopardy* or *Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader?* types of games the students made up using the information they learned. The final 10 minutes of each session were for self-reflection during which

the students rated their own performance on the scale of “very good,” “satisfactory” and “needs improvement.”

Wilfong (2009) found that after one month of intervention, the study resulted in positive gains in the students’ scores on the chapter tests of the science textbooks being used for Textmasters. The increase in scores, from an average of 86% to 89%, was small, but statistically significant. Out of the 73 students, 14 students’ scores went down, 10 students’ scores remained the same, and 49 students’ scores increased. Both students and teacher reported satisfaction with the methodology.

TSI in the Lower Grades

Although most studies on TSI’s effectiveness have focused on students in grades 4 and higher, a few researchers have examined the effectiveness of TSI in teaching comprehension to lower grades. Reutzel and his colleagues (2005) compared the effectiveness of Single Strategy Instruction (SSI) and Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI) in teaching reading comprehension to second graders. The study took place in four classrooms in a school with 35% diversity, high poverty and low academic performance. Eighty second graders were randomly assigned into two groups, SSI and TSI, within each performance categories: high, medium and low. The four participating teachers received extensive training in teaching comprehension strategies. This study used a mixed-method design employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods: normative comprehension tests, criterion referenced comprehension tests, informal assessment based on oral retelling, student motivation assessment, strategy use survey, content knowledge acquisition test, classroom observation of teachers and students, and teacher response journals. The SSI group received training in using each isolated metacognitive

strategy. The TSI group received training in using the same strategies as the SSI group, but in addition, learned to use multiple strategies in an established routine of interaction and collaboration among students. The interventions occurred for 35-40 minutes a day, three days per week. The intervention lasted for 16 weeks, or half of the school year.

Reutzel and his colleagues (2005) found that the two strategies, SSI and TSI, were both effective in teaching comprehension, increasing student motivation for reading, and promoting student perception of self-efficacy in using reading comprehension strategies. However, TSI was more effective in helping students learn and retain content knowledge of informational science texts. In addition, the authors found that both teachers and students extended their teaching and learning beyond the lessons. The strength of this study comes from the triangulation of data from a number of various sources of data. The authors acknowledge that the sample size was modest at 80 students, but the careful and detailed design and implementation of the intervention and data collection contributed to the strength of the study. The authors were also very explicit about the practical significance of the results through the effect sizes. This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding teaching reading comprehension to the earliest grade levels and the use of informational texts such as science books.

Pilonieta and Medina (2009) conducted a pilot study examining the implementation of Reciprocal Teaching in the lower grades. Pilonieta and Medina modified the format of Reciprocal Teaching to accommodate the needs of first-grade students while keeping the three major principles of Reciprocal Teaching: zone of proximal development; proleptic teaching where the teacher gradually releases responsibilities to students; and expert scaffolding (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). In this

modified format, students were taught basic strategies of clarifying, summarizing, and questioning. In addition, pre-reading strategies were added on in the beginning and an extra strategy of visualizing was added on to the post-reading. The dialogue leaders use “leader cue cards” to know how to proceed. The cue cards gave prompts such as: “Tell the group to do a picture walk” or “Tell the predictor to make a prediction” (Pilonieta & Medina, 2009). Five to six weeks of training took place before the amount of teacher support decreased and more independent group work took place in the seventh and eighth weeks.

According to Pilonieta and Medina (2009), the study was successful in supporting first graders’ reading comprehension, but the authors did not provide specific results in the paper. According to the authors, the researchers and teachers observed that children actively participated in higher order thinking and functioned independently during Reciprocal Teaching sessions. The study also showed that the students retained their strategy awareness and procedural knowledge even after six months when they had been promoting to second grade. As in the previous studies on Reciprocal Teaching, students and teachers were happy with the methodology and looked forward to the next session. Although this article is helpful for designing Reciprocal Teaching in the lowest grades such as in first grade, it does not provide enough details and results of the study. More research on Reciprocal Teaching, and its role in TSI, is needed in Kindergarten through second grade.

Unsuccessful Case of TSI

While TSI has been shown to result in gains in student comprehension, not every study proved the success of TSI in teaching reading comprehension. One study on the

use of PALS to teach reading comprehension did not paint a positive picture for the methodology (Mathes, Torgeson, Clancy-Menchetti, Santi, Nicholas, Robinson & Grek, 2003). The quasi-experimental study included 89 low-achieving first graders from a medium-sized school district in the Southeast United States. The PALS group showed more increase in the comprehension level than the control group, but the gain was not statistically significant.

Potential Drawbacks of TSI

Duke, Pearson, Strachan and Billman (2011) supported the use of TSI, but caution against using TSI routines in a rigid manner. They explained that poorly executed rigid routines take away the essential strengths of strategy instruction, including the responsive and adaptive nature of TSI lessons to fit the context and text. They warned against a worst scenario of TSI strategies becoming the object of assessment. When assessment becomes a main focus, the authors believed that educators can lose the sight of why they teach strategies in the first place. Duke, Pearson, Strachan and Billman saw TSI as a means to an end, not the end in itself. The researchers viewed TSI as the vehicle by which readers are taught to comprehend text and acquire comprehension. This argument goes hand in hand with Daniel's (2006) concern over teachers using the "role sheets" for Literature Circles too extensively and rigidly, without allowing students to develop ways to discuss books with room for their own flow of thoughts.

A similar concern about strategy instructions being the goal rather than the means, was raised by Palincsar and Schutz (2011). The authors presented discourse going back to the theoretical roots of strategy instruction, and offered safeguards to keep in mind in order to keep comprehension strategies as useful tools for comprehending and acquiring

knowledge. Palincsar and Schutz proposed that the texts used in TSI be related to one another to deepen students' understanding of a subject; that the strategies be developed as tools to respond to the text and the reader; and the eventual goal of strategy instruction be knowledge building.

TSI and English Learners

TSI's success in teaching mainstream students and students with disabilities, has led researchers to study its effectiveness in teaching reading comprehension to English Learners. Fung, Wilkinson and Moore (2003) examined the effectiveness of reciprocal teaching in increasing reading comprehension of expository texts in Taiwanese ELs in grades 6 and 7. An, intervention in the form of reciprocal teaching, lasted 15-20 days and alternated between the use of Mandarin and English texts. The students were trained to use strategies of summarizing, questioning, predicting and clarifying. Based on quantitative measures including a researcher-developed comprehension tests and standardized comprehension tests, students showed improvement in comprehension of both Taiwanese and English texts. The researchers also found the qualitative changes in the students' comprehension. Although this study occurred within the bilingual education context of teaching literacy, the study is noteworthy as one of the initial efforts in testing the effectiveness TSI on ELs.

Interest in studying the effects of TSI on English learners was extended by Saenz, Fuchs, and Fuchs (2005) to include English learners with learning disabilities. The researchers examined the effects of PALS on Spanish-speaking English learners with learning disabilities, and their classroom peers. One hundred thirty-two students in grades 3 through 6 participated in the study, along with 12 reading teachers. The

assignment of teachers was random and sessions took place three times a week for 15 weeks. PALS intervention in this study consisted of three main activities: partner reading with retelling, paragraph shrinking, and prediction relay. The strategies included in these activities were: cumulatively reviewing information read, sequencing information, summarizing paragraphs and pages, stating main ideas in as few words as possible, and predicting and checking outcomes. The control groups received traditional reading instruction. Saenz, Fuchs, and Fuchs concluded that PALS was effective in teaching reading comprehension to ELs as well as to mainstream students.

Barrera, Liu, Thurlow and Chamberlain (2006) focused on TSI and reading comprehension of ELs, and also found the method successful. For ELs with learning disabilities, the challenge to be at grade level standards is more than twice as difficult as ELs without such disabilities. Although the impact of learning disabilities on language development is not well understood, it is clearly known that one marker of difficulty in achieving academic success is the difficulty with reading. This single case study research aimed at testing the effectiveness of combining Chunking and Questioning Aloud (CQA), and small-group student-led literature discussions, and visualization of a story on the reading comprehension of six middle school ELs with learning disabilities. The intervention lasted for 36 school days. The methods of data collection included pre and post comprehension tests and observation. The intervention had a positive impact on the students' reading comprehension.

The study by Barrera, Liu, Thurlow and Chamberlain (2006) is relevant to examination of the effectiveness of TSI because CQA mini-lessons are similar to methods for teaching the questioning strategy of TSI. In CQA, the teacher reads a story

aloud and stops after a segment to ask comprehension questions. CQA and visualization are also identical to the metacognitive comprehension strategies used in mini-lessons for literature circles. The student-led small group discussions can be interpreted to be similar to Literature Circles.

McElvain (2010) examined the effectiveness of Transactional Literature Circles on the reading comprehension and on psychosocial aspect of 75 at-risk English learners. This was a mixed-method study consisting of mostly quantitative methodology with a qualitative portion. The intervention took place in the form of a method McElvain called Transactional Literature Circles (TLC). Data included students' scores on California's standardized tests, as well as on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). The seven-month intervention resulted in greater gains by the intervention group than the control group. The intervention group went up by one grade level in reading. Student surveys and interviews with teachers revealed that TLC was helpful in promoting self-efficacy and confidence in reading and participating.

Effective Practices in Teaching ELs that Coincide with TSI

Researchers have found that, regardless of whether they are in a bilingual or English-only program, quality of instruction is what matters most in educating ELs (Calderon, Slavin & Sanchez, 2011). The focus of this literature review is not the debate of choosing between bilingual education and English-only instruction for English learners in schools. Collier and Thomas (1996) established that it is more effective to educate ELs in their own primary languages during the earliest grades to build literacy and academic skills, which eventually are transferrable to English in later grades. Cummins (1996) and Krashen (1996) also strongly support bilingual education. Whether in

bilingual education or English-only setting, teachers need to look for the common threads in effective, research-based programs for teaching ELs.

Before delving into the effectiveness of TSI strategies for ELs, it is also essential to look beyond academic achievement when considering instruction for ELs. EL students are likely to experience more anxiety related to language learning in a mainstream classroom due to various factors including the fear of failure, worries about communication, and test anxiety (Pappamihiel, 2002; Yoon, 2004). All of these factors can undermine ELs' sense of self-efficacy and sense of self. As a coping strategy, ELs are likely to resort to avoidance, wanting to be left alone. Other learners simply ignore the class or the teacher (Pappamihiel, 2002). Either way, the result is a lack of participation or engagement by ELs.

A study by Pappamihiel (2002) took place in a Texas school district, in a neighborhood with a low socio-economic level and with a high EL population. The participants included 178 ELs of Mexican heritage who spoke Spanish as their native language. The methodology of the study was mostly quantitative, based on the English Language Anxiety Scale, but also incorporated interviews with focus group in order to give voice to the quantitative data. The results showed that ELs in English as a Second Language (ESL) class experienced anxiety related to having to achieve in English, while ELs in mainstream classrooms experienced anxiety arising from social situations involving non-EL students. Focus group discussions revealed an additional finding that Mexican-born ELs experienced stress in interacting with Chicano students who looked down upon and teased them. The ELs in this study were dealing with anxiety coming

from several directions. When examining the specific instructional practices for ELs, it is important to keep in mind the potential impact of this anxiety.

Research studies in the field of teaching ELs have suggested instructional strategies that are effective in teaching reading comprehension, and many of these strategies coincide with various aspects of TSI. One such strategy is small group instruction for scaffolding. For example, a study by Kamps, Abbott, Greenwood, Arreaga-Mayer, Willis, Longstaff, Culpepper and Walton (2007) focused on the reading comprehension of 170 first and second grade EL students and 148 English-only students. The intervention consisted of direct instruction designed to teach strategies in a small-group format consisting of three to six students. The control group was placed in larger groups of six to 15 students, and did not receive direct instruction in using strategies. Both groups received instruction in balanced literacy. The researchers found that giving direct instruction of strategies in a small-group format was more effective in teaching reading than simply teaching balanced literacy in a larger group format.

Echevarria, Vogt and Short (2008) explained why the small group format is beneficial. A small-group setting helps ELs to reduce anxiety and allows them to participate more than in a whole-class setting. Through increased participation, students have more opportunities to practice using the tools of TSI.

Establishing interactive and experiential components in reading is another methodology suggested by research in teaching literacy to English learners (Carrasquillo et al., 2004; Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Cummins, 2003). Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (2002) suggested the use of literature groups in which the teacher briefly introduces the books and offers choices. The students, in groups of five or six, read the

book individually or in the group, and then discuss and carry out activities related to the reading. The authors also suggest collaborative groups in which students look at literature for a purpose, either for recreation, or for gaining knowledge about a certain topic. This collaborative feature of literature groups is also a good opportunity to have students collect and share materials from their cultures, which can build connections and understanding among ELs and English speakers.

Calderon, Slavin and Sanchez (2011) also place emphasis on cooperative learning as one of the several elements laid out for effective practice for English learners. When cooperative activities occur in content area learning, higher order thinking, such as using inference, application and evaluation, can develop, as is the goal of TSI.

Researchers have also found that the teaching of metacognitive strategies may increase participation by ELs. Cho, Xu and Thodes (2010) examined ELs' motivation to read, and their engagement in reading, through an intervention, which consisted of teaching the prediction strategy (one of the seven or eight metacognitive strategies) in a small-group setting. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the impact of small-group work, in an interactive and collaborative format, on student motivation and participation for reading and learning. The study was conducted in a school located in a neighborhood with low socio-economic status and a high immigrant population. The participants consisted of 26 struggling readers, 11 of whom were ELs whose native language was Spanish. The reading intervention consisted of Direct Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) in which students pause at predetermined stops to make a prediction about what will happen next. Students continue reading until their predictions are found to be true or false, or need modification due to more information. Students work in a

small-group format designed for interaction and collaboration in which students do most of the discussion about the literature. The intervention lasted for two months and was administered for 30 minutes per day for three times per week. The researchers found that interaction and collaboration among students helped English learners to help each other comprehend the text and increased student motivation and participation. Although DR-TA covers only one metacognitive strategy, this study suggested it is an effective instructional methodology for ELs. The DR-TA strategy coincides with one of the features of Transactional Strategies Instruction, interaction and collaboration in a small group format.

Using content areas to teach reading, and reading comprehension, is increasingly gaining popularity among researchers. The use of content area reading is important for many reasons. Often, students struggle because the external and internal structure of informational text is not taught explicitly. Furthermore, ELs learn conversational English in two to three years, but take much longer to learn academic language (Cummins, 1986). Since informational text primarily uses more academic language than fiction does, it follows that teaching reading should integrate content areas.

Ogle and Correa-Kovtun (2010) introduced an instructional routine for ELs and struggling readers using informational text from content areas in a partner-reading format. This routine, termed Partner Reading and Content, Too (PRC2) incorporates teacher modeling of reading strategies through mini-lessons, along with a routine for two students to move through the text in a 20-30 minute segment. During their first encounter with a book, partners walk through the whole book as a preview. Next, both partners silently read a two-page segment of the book. Following the silent reading, each partner

rereads one page in order to generate questions about the text to ask each other. Each partner reads aloud a page and asks a question of the other, and both partners talk about the passage. The partners take turns as reader and listener. Finally, each student adds academic vocabulary present in the text to his or her vocabulary notebook. The readers found that PRC2 using informational text was effective in helping struggling ELs increase comprehension and learn content knowledge.

Taboda and Rutherford (2011) undertook to study the impact of academic vocabulary on reading comprehension of English learners. In this mixed-methods study, two types of vocabulary instruction were tested for their effects on reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and perceptions of autonomy and reading engagement in fourth-grade ELs. The contextualized vocabulary instruction (CVI) used in the study combined a strategy instruction of four metacognitive comprehension strategies with motivation practices, along with implicit instruction of academic science vocabulary. The motivational practices were in the form of the teachers' giving support for choice and relevance in the literature read by students to increase their perceived autonomy. On the other hand, the intensified vocabulary instruction (IVI) made use of explicit instruction of academic vocabulary without the reading strategy instruction or the motivation practices. The participants were twenty ELs, who were mostly Hispanic. The intervention lasted for eight weeks for 35 minutes every day during the first period. The results of the study suggested that CVI supported reading comprehension and the perception of autonomous learning in students and IVI increased academic vocabulary skills. The findings are helpful in understanding reading instruction for ELs. When the instruction in academic vocabulary is delivered as part of metacognitive instruction along

with choice and relevance in the literature, ELs' reading comprehension and the sense of autonomy increases.

Another study by Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, Collins, and Scarcella (2007) suggested guidelines for effective instruction for ELs in elementary schools, which coincide with the effective methodologies for teaching reading to ELs. This study as commissioned by U.S. Department of Education compiled a secondary analysis of studies addressing literacy instruction for second language learners at the elementary school level. As a result, the researchers made five recommendations for literacy instruction. The first recommendation stated that assessments and screening of English learners for reading problems should use the same procedure as assessment used for native speakers. The second recommendation was to provide ELs with intensive reading intervention in small groups of three to six students. The third recommendation was to provide extensive vocabulary instruction, including textbook vocabulary from content areas such as science and social studies. A fourth related recommendation was to provide instruction for academic English starting in the earliest grades. Finally, the fifth recommendation was to provide regular opportunities for peer-assisted learning. These recommendations are very closely related to the methodologies generated or recommended by the research in teaching reading comprehension to ELs and the collaborative components of Literature Circles.

Theoretical Framework

Balanced Comprehension Instruction Model

The theoretical framework of this study comes from Duke and Pearson's model of balanced comprehension instruction (2002). Their model of balanced comprehension

instruction has five steps for teaching reading comprehension strategies. The first step is an explicit presentation by the teacher of the definition of a reading strategy along with when and how it is used. The second step is a teacher modeling of the strategy in the form of a think aloud. The third step is the opportunity for students to engage in collaborative use of the strategy. The fourth step is a guided practice leading to independent practice, the fifth and last step in a strategy lesson. The five-step sequence represents *gradual release of responsibility*, in which the students take on more and more responsibility in teaching themselves as time goes by, while the teacher releases more and more responsibility until the students have reached independence in using a strategy (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

In addressing specific reading strategies to teach, Duke and Pearson (2002) recommended seven strategies: prediction, think aloud, story structure and informational text structure, visual representation of the text such as a semantic or a concept map, summarizing techniques, and questioning. In prediction, students use their existing knowledge along with what they have read so far to predict what will happen next. Prediction activities engage children by helping them check their understanding of what will happen with what actually happens in a story. This process of prediction promotes comprehension. Student think-aloud is an effective practice because it helps learners continuously summarize as they are reading, and leads to more strategic reading rather than “impulsive” jumping to conclusions. Training students in using the text structures for both fiction and informational text is important because following the structure helps them recall information more effectively. Graphic representation of information is useful because it allows readers to present information again in different formats, therefore,

letting the transformative process enhance the relationship of knowledge, memory and comprehension. Giving students the reasons for using these visual displays is also important in developing student understanding. Duke and Pearson state that summarizing as a comprehension strategy is supported by research that it not only enhances summarizing skills, but also increases comprehension. Finally, Duke and Pearson recommend asking questions about the text as well as questioning beyond the text are important strategies to teach readers has received much support from research as effective reading strategies.

In Duke and Pearson's (2002) model of balanced comprehension instruction, the training from the strategy lessons is utilized by students in an "integrated set of practices" that can be applied to any text. This integrated set of practices would be an established routine that usually takes place in the form of cooperative-learning groups, in which students take turn leading the discussion and teaching one another. An example of one of those integrated sets of practices is reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). In reciprocal teaching, the teacher begins with extensive modeling and direct teaching of how to use reading strategies. Students gradually take on more responsibilities and teach each other by asking questions, summarizing the paragraph, asking for clarifications when needed, and making predictions. Reciprocal teaching is meant to last 30 minutes and uses one-to-one and small group formats. The 'teacher' role can be shared by more than one student. Reciprocal teaching has worked well with struggling readers as well as good readers (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

In addition to strategy lessons, the sequence for carrying out each strategy lesson, and student-led discussion groups, Duke and Pearson (2002) recommended other factors

that support reading comprehension instruction in the classroom. These factors include choosing well-suited texts, paying attention to student motivation, and a system for an ongoing assessment. First, it is important for students to use texts that are appropriate in terms of reading level, so that students are not dedicating too much effort on decoding words when trying to learn a reading comprehension strategy. Next, providing engaging and motivating work for the independent practice portion of comprehension instruction increases the chance of success in students' learning. Finally, the teacher needs to continuously monitor the use of different strategies by students in the classroom, in order to inform his or her comprehension instruction based on the needs of the students.

Duke and Pearson (2002) also suggested cultivating a supportive classroom context. Students need to spend a great deal of time actually reading in order for them to practice their strategies. There should be authentic reasons to read a variety of texts to give students genuine purpose in reading, rather than just for reading instruction. The classroom has to be an environment rich in vocabulary and concepts from discussions that take place, in addition to experiences provided for building background knowledge. Some phonics instruction has to take place along with comprehension instruction in order for students to successfully develop decoding skills. Alongside the reading development, writing instruction in which students write in order for others to understand is necessary. Finally, Duke and Pearson recommended frequent and in-depth discussions of text.

Duke and Pearson (2002) also described the reading behaviors of good readers and encouraged teachers to share these practices with their students. Good readers are active readers. They initiate reading and are motivated to read. Good readers establish a goal at the onset of reading, and check their reading against the goal throughout the

reading process. Good readers typically preview their text before reading, noting such things as the text structure and segments of the text that might be relevant to their goal. Good readers frequently make predictions while reading about what is to happen next; they know what parts of the text are more important than others. Good readers construct meaning, revise it, and ask questions about it while reading. They negotiate meaning with their prior knowledge. The list of actions by good readers goes on to include such reading behaviors as determining the meaning of words and concepts using the text, thinking about the author and his or her style and beliefs, and monitoring their own understanding. By sharing these qualities with students, teachers shed light on the many steps required to be a good reader.

Principles for Success in Teaching ELs

Freeman and Freeman (1998) suggested seven principles for teaching ELs successfully. First, they proposed that language learning moves from the concept of whole to part, relying on Vygotsky's (1962) belief that word meanings develop from whole to part. Vygotsky (1962) relied on the fact that, although children's first utterances are single words, these words represent a whole idea. Freeman and Freeman (1998) also relied on Goodman (1967) who explained that the natural pattern in which both speech and writing develop is from whole to part. Freeman and Freeman (1998) disagreed with the approach to teaching reading from smaller parts and proceeding to the whole because students can quickly lose interest when they do not see the end results of their drills and exercises. Therefore, the role of the teacher in this whole-to-part approach is to provide lessons and activities in a functional social context or academic context. This way, teachers keep their students cognitively engaged by keeping the language and learning

meaningful. Teachers observe and document students' growth and provide instruction in Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, the area between what a student can learn alone and what a student can learn by an adult's scaffolding. Freeman and Freeman (1998) also believed that ELs learn best when learning English occurs within the context of content-area learning.

The idea of context-embedded lessons, supported by Freeman and Freeman (1998), is based on Cummins' (1981; 1996) research on the process of language acquisition. Cummins found that English learners learned conversational English within two years, but achieving proficiency in academic language took much longer: four to nine years. Proficiency in academic language depends heavily on the context provided for the content being taught. Therefore, Freeman and Freeman (1998) relied on Cummins' (1981; 1996) study when they call for lessons that are: built on students' background knowledge; organized around themes; organized to promote student interaction; and structured to increase active use of language by students.

The second principle Freeman and Freeman (1998) endorsed asks teachers to center their curriculum in the students' cultures, experiences and background knowledge. The purpose is not only to maximize student background knowledge as schema for learning, but also to make sure the children develop a strong sense of self and feel appreciated as a valuable member of the learning community. Students feel more connected to academic content when they see connections to their own lives.

Freeman and Freeman's (1998) third principle suggests that teachers design lessons and activities that show meaning and present purpose in the present and in the immediate future. The authors discussed the lack of purpose and meaning in drills and

exercises in phonics and grammar that are disconnected from the bigger meaning and purpose for the children. Teachers need to provide opportunities for ELs to use and enjoy language in an authentic way to function, interact, solve problems and to learn more language. ELs need to read real books, do hands-on activities using language, go on field trips and work together to investigate a common topic of interest, and play games and sing songs. The use and importance of what they are learning has to be apparent to the children. For example, Freeman and Freeman (1998) encouraged writing letters for a real audience. They believed that students' vocabulary expands when there is an immediate function and an immediate purpose for writing. The authors suggested using content areas to teach academic English by providing a rich context in which language learning as well as acquisition of content knowledge occurs.

Freeman and Freeman (1998) argued for social interaction as their fourth principle of success in teaching ELs. They relied on Krashen's (1982) model to explain that ELs need 'comprehensible input' in order to progress in language acquisition. Comprehensible input refers to the language presented to the EL that is slightly more advanced than the ELs' current level. ELs need this comprehensible input in order to learn the language. The language of the teacher, an interesting book, and or the social interaction with other students provide such comprehensible input for ELs' to improve in language learning. Freeman and Freeman (1998) suggested activities such as collaborative learning projects, book exchanges, cross-age tutoring and pen pal letters to build students comprehensible input. The authors (1998) acknowledged that training students for collaboration is involved and time-consuming, but the gain in their autonomy in learning as a result is valuable and worth the effort.

The fifth principle of success in teaching literacy to ELs supported by Freeman and Freeman (1998) is to make sure that a lesson or an activity involves all four modes of communication: speaking, listening, reading and writing. In explaining this principle, Freeman and Freeman examined research studies by Elley and Mangubhai (1983), Hudelson (1984, 1989), and Edelsky (1986) and concluded that all four modes of communication should be integral parts of lessons and activities because these processes interact and help each other progress. Therefore, Freeman and Freeman (1998) suggest that each process not be taught in isolation for too long as is done in many language classrooms.

Freeman and Freeman's (1998) sixth principle for success addressed supporting students' first languages and cultures. Although bilingual education is beyond the scope of this literature review, this principle is worth noting for its impact on students' identity and confidence on top of their academic development. From the work of Krashen (1996), Freeman and Freeman (1998) compiled six reasons for bilingual education. First, while students are progressing in English, they learn the content knowledge, higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills in their first language. Waiting until their English proficiency is in place to develop such knowledge and skills would delay their academic success. Second, the concepts and skills they learn in their first language are transferrable to learning in English because of a common academic proficiency in both languages. Third, in bilingual education, there is a closer home/school relationship, and parents can help with homework and be able to communicate with teachers and administrators. Fourth, the long-term gain includes more job opportunities requiring bilingual skills. Fifth, research suggests that bilinguals show more flexibility in

cognition. Finally, students who are proficient in both languages have a positive identity and have pride in their cultures. Although bilingual education is not a reality in many schools across America, any teacher can strive for acceptance of and appreciation for each child's language and culture.

The seventh, and last, principle for success in teaching English learners suggested by Freeman and Freeman (1998) emphasized having faith in the students and their potential. They compiled case studies of experiences of teachers with EL and bilingual students, and developed the idea that the general attitude toward culturally diverse people can negatively affect instruction. The authors also expressed concerns for how assessments and evaluations of ELs may have been biased. They emphasized that ELs, as well as all students, learn language through content and that content should be solid and academic. Students perceive the high expectations of the teacher by the meaningfulness of the work they are asked to do. The key features of such classrooms included a general attitude of the teacher and schools that welcomed and valued diversity. If children are judged only by their English proficiency, their experiences and background knowledge in their first language and culture go unnoticed. Students are sensitive to the general attitude in the school toward ELs and struggle with self-confidence and self-esteem. Therefore, the authors suggested each EL student be assessed through a comprehensive portfolio rather than limiting assessments to standardized scores. Applying all of Freeman and Freeman's seven principles not only contributes to the academic success of EL students, but shows students they are valued and that the teacher and school has faith in them.

Summary

The present goal in most of the public schools in the United States is to educate both English learners and the native speakers of English in the same mainstream classroom. The most efficient solution to achieve this challenging task in teaching reading is to look for an instructional methodology that works for a diverse student population including native speakers and English learners of different cultural backgrounds. An instructional methodology that results in academic success and builds appreciation of the linguistic status and cultural backgrounds of each student would be beneficial to everyone in the classroom. TSI has shown effectiveness with native speakers of English, struggling readers, students with known learning disabilities and English learners. Furthermore, the individual strategies coming from research on teaching literacy to English learners coincide with various aspects of TSI. These strategies include: teaching of metacognitive reading strategies, small group scaffolding, interaction-and experience-based collaborative groups, and rich interpretive discussions. The research on TSI also seems to have opened doors to using the methodology to teach both reading using the content areas and teaching content areas using reading. However, the bulk of the research has involved children in third grade and above, and very little research exists in Kindergarten through second grade. This study involving the use Literature Circles, one example of TSI, with a diverse group of second graders attempted to fill a gap in research in the primary grades. Teacher Action Research was the vehicle for examining the process of change in second grade readers, and Participatory Action Research (PAR) engaged children as researchers to investigate their own perceptions and emotions

regarding the effectiveness of Literature Circles. In addition, through PAR, the children looked for ways to improve the program for the future second graders.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This was a combined-methods study, consisting of both Teacher Action Research (TAR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR). Part One of this study was Teacher Action Research through which I conducted inquiry about TSI as a methodology for teaching reading comprehension. Over the course of five months, from September 2012 to March 2013, I reflected on my teaching behavior, my students' learning behavior and our interaction throughout our TSI reading block.

One of the theoretical frameworks for the methodology for this study, Teacher Action Research, comes from Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992). Lytle and Cochran-Smith used the term "teacher research" and proposed that the source of knowledge about teaching practices has to come from teachers in their interactions with students. They challenged the traditional view that knowledge for educational practices has to come from outside researchers, such as academicians. Instead, they argue, that the teachers' emic processes, i.e. the internal and reflective processes such as questioning and reflecting on their interactions with students, generate meaningful knowledge about teaching and learning. Lytle and Cochran-Smith viewed teachers and students as co-constructors of knowledge and proposed that teachers co-construct knowledge with their teaching colleagues. Teacher research is defined as "systematic, self-critical inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1990). The inquiry-based research process involves a system and order in designing the research, collecting data and analyzing data. In this Teacher Action Research study, the

immediate “action” component was the improvement in my teaching practices and my classroom in the implementation of TSI. A future “action” component will involve adding to the collective endeavors of my immediate colleagues at work, teachers in general, teacher educators, and university researchers to improve of literacy education.

Teacher Action Research as a methodology goes hand in hand with the views of Williams and Brydon-Miller (2004) who question the traditional methodologies for studies concerning literacy teaching. They view the very interaction between the teacher and students to be of central importance in teaching practices in classrooms, and therefore propose that educational research in teaching literacy has to come from teachers. Williams and Brydon-Miller believe that imposing positivism and “scientific” methods used by outside researchers as the source of knowledge would be inappropriate.

Part Two of this study incorporated a modified version of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in which my students as co-researchers explored ways to improve our Literature Circles program, which incorporates TSI. Teachers rarely ask young students in primary grades if a particular method of reading instruction is working for them. As a teacher with sixteen years experience in the primary grades, I wanted my students to participate in a research study as co-researchers and to have the opportunity to voice their opinions about the reading instruction they receive every day. Additionally, I hoped that the students would be able to look for ways to improve our Literature Circles program. The students and I generated questions for interviews, and took turns being interviewers, interviewees and videographers. We saw that the “action” part of the research can take place throughout the academic year by making changes to the implementation of our TSI program.

Participatory Research is defined as a “self-conscious way of empowering people to take effective action toward improving conditions in their lives” (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall & Jackson, 1993). The reason it labeled research, according to Park, is because training the powerless to possess the research skills is to help them “transform their lives for themselves”. It was my view that children in the context of education did not have a voice in determining what works for them in terms of instructional methodologies. I wanted them to be empowered in the process of finding out if their reading program was working for them, and how to improve the program that affected them every day in the classroom.

Role of Researcher

As the researcher and the classroom teacher in this study, I assumed two separate, but overlapping roles. Over the course of the research, I reflected on my interaction with the students, as well as my teaching practices. Maintaining complete objectivity as the researcher was not my goal. In studies regarding teaching literacy, as is the case in this study, the quality of interaction between the teacher and the students is what matters, and therefore, the effort to maintain objectivity by the researcher symbolizes a disconnect with the reality of classrooms (Williams & Brydon-Miller, 2004).

Background of Researcher

At the time of this study, in the 2012-2013 academic year, I had been a classroom teacher of both native speakers of English and English learners in the primary grades for sixteen years. My educational philosophy, in teaching reading as well as other subjects, is to help students learn and practice strategies so that they can be autonomous and self-extending learners. Because I had used TSI as my reading instruction for the last four

years, I had a set of expectations and biases that may have been different from a teacher who was trying the methodology for the first time. I was familiar with the process of transformation second graders went through by participating in Literature Circles and had experienced the outcomes of the process.

I am also an immigrant to the United States, who has had some of the same challenges of learning English and learning the culture as those of my students. I have a personal opinion as to what type of instruction might have been more helpful to me as an EL.

Setting and Participants

The setting of the study was my second-grade classroom in a suburban elementary school in California. The school has a diverse student population of which, 33 percent are English learners, and 22 percent receive free or reduced meals. In 2009, there were 30 different first languages spoken by the student population in our school. The most common languages were Cantonese at 17 percent, Spanish at 12 percent, Mandarin at 4 percent, Arabic at 3 percent, Korean at percent, Filipino at 3 percent, Japanese at 1 percent, and Hindi at 1 percent. The percentage of English learners in my class in 2012-2013 was 31 percent, and the classroom population consisted of nine different ethnic groups. The general socioeconomic level of the community is middle class and the school emphasizes achievement on standardized tests. The school's API score, an indicator of student academic performance and improvement on the California Star Test, is in the upper 800s. An API score in this range is considered an exceptional score.

Selection of Participants

The participants in this study were the second graders in my class during the school year 2012-2013. At the school where I teach, classes are formed based on the established practice of teachers and the principal coming together to balance each class in terms of the reading levels, number of English learners, and the number of children receiving special education or special services such as speech and language. My class during the time of the study had 29 children who were seven or eight years old. Out of the 29, four students were pulled out by the reading specialist during our Literature Circle time and were not able to participate in the study. Table 1 details the students' names (pseudonyms used), their reading level, language status, and level of participation in whole class activities.

Table 1
Summary of Students

Lit. Circle Group	Name	Reading Level August 2012	Language Status EL/Native Speaker	Participation in Whole-Class Setting
A	Ron	At	NS	Low
A	Rea	Above	EL	Middle
A	Jin	Above	EL	High
A	Fia	At	EL	Middle
A	Zolo	Below	EL	Low
B	Rick	Above	NS	High
B	Don	At	EL	Low
B	Christopher	Below	NS	Low
B	Abbie	At	NS	Low
B	Adeline	At	NS	Low
C	Von	Above	EL	High
C	Noa	Above	NS	Low
C	Lyn	Above	EL	Low
C	Ren	Above	EL	Low
C	Eleana	Below	NS	Low
D	Gianni	At	NS	High
D	Dree	Above	NS	Middle
D	Anna	At	NS	Low
D	Sheila	At	NS	Low

D	Hon	Above	EL	Low
E	Elle	At	EL	High
E	Dan	At	NS	Low
E	Nathan	Below	NS	Low
E	Noam	Below	NS	Low
E	Triton	At	NS	Low

At=At Grade Level Below=Below Grade Level Above=Above Grade Level

The five Literature Circles were formed with an effort to balance each group based on the students' English learning status, reading level, level of participation in whole-class discussions, and behavior. The following descriptions of the students were included to give a snapshot of the learners in the class and in each Literature Circle group. Group A's membership consisted of Ron, Rea, Jin, Fia and Zolo. Ron is an Asian American boy with a gentle smile. He was at grade level in reading in the beginning of second grade and was high-functioning in general in terms of processing and following directions with good behavior. He enjoyed organizing and preparing materials for me and other students, and always did his work, but was shy and not likely to participate in a whole-class discussion. Rea is a good-natured Latin American English learner who was an above-average reader in the beginning of second grade. She was very chatty, but was a conscientious worker and enjoyed helping other children. Fia is an Asian American English learner who was very chatty and giggly. She enjoyed interacting with other children, and was at grade level in reading in the beginning of second grade. Jin is a recent immigrant of three years from Asia and an English learner, but has learned English at an accelerated rate and began second grade reading above grade level. She was motivated and did high quality work. Zolo is a Latin American English learner who struggled to begin work, stay on task, and finish work. He was full of character and very

capable, but was not motivated to do school work. He began second grade reading at below grade level.

Group B consisted of Rick, Don, Christopher, Abbie and Adeline. Rick is a highly intelligent and articulate white American who is a native speaker of English. He began second grade as a high reader, but struggled with organizing himself for work and staying on task. He had a tendency to roam around the room and visit other students in the classroom. Don is a Latin American English learner who began second grade as a struggling reader. He was shy, calm and was a conscientious worker. Christopher is Latino and a native speaker of English. Christopher began second grade reading below grade level and received speech and language instruction to overcome challenges in communicating in social interactions. He did not have issues in articulation, but in reading social cues in communication and responding appropriately. He is capable, but was likely to “check out” during whole-class discussions. Abbie is of Asian and Caucasian heritages, and is a native speaker of English. Abbie began second grade as a grade-level reader, and was not likely to participate in whole-class discussions. Madeline is a white Caucasian native speaker of English, and began second grade reading at grade level. She is intelligent and capable, but was shy and not likely to participate in whole-class discussions.

Group C’s membership consisted of Von, Noa, Lyn, Ren and Eleana. Von is Asian and a native speaker of English. He was an advanced reader and an advanced learner in general, and was deeply interested in science. Noa is Asian and a native speaker of English, and was slightly above grade level in reading. He was extremely shy and hardly participated in whole-class discussions. Lyn is Asian and an English

learner. She was an advanced reader, and was a high-functioning student. She was social, but not likely to participate in whole-class discussions. Ren is also Asian and an English learner. She began second grade reading above grade level, and also was high-functioning. She was extremely quiet and not likely to talk even at recess, let alone in whole-class discussions. Eleana is a native speaker of English with Chinese and Polynesian heritages, and began second grade reading at below grade level. She was always quiet and was not likely to participate in whole-class discussions.

Group D's membership consisted of Gianni, Dree, Anna, Sheila and Hon. Sheila is biracial with Latin and Caucasian heritages, and is a native speaker. She began second grade reading at grade level. She was shy and never spoke in a whole-class discussion unless called on. Dree is African American and a native speaker of English. She began second grade reading at above grade level and was very capable and high-functioning. She was so serious about high achievement that she forgot to enjoy learning. Sheila is biracial with Latino and Caucasian heritage, and is a native speaker of English. She began second grade as an above-grade level reader and was extremely shy. She was not likely to speak in whole-class discussions. Anna is Asian and a native speaker; she began second grade reading at grade level. She was likely to drift away during whole-class lessons. Hon is Asian and an EL. He began second grade reading above grade level, but was not likely to be engaged during whole-class lessons.

Group E's membership consisted of Elle, Dan, Nathan, Noam and Triton. Elle is Middle Eastern and an English learner. She began second grade reading at below grade level, and was very distracted while being quiet. She daydreamed and was not likely to participate in whole-class discussions. Dan is Asian and an English learner. He began

second grade reading below grade level. Although very capable, he had difficulty motivating himself to focus or organizing himself to work. He talked continuously and was easily distracted and likely to distract others. Nathan is Asian and an English learner. He began second grade reading below grade level, and often struggled with comprehension. He was likely to drift away during lessons and whole-class discussions and was too shy to participate during whole-class discussions. Noam is white Caucasian and a native speaker of English. He began second grade reading below grade level, and was likely to drift away during lessons and not participate during whole-class discussions. He was very capable, but did not usually show it in his work. Triton is Asian and an English learner. He began second grade reading at grade level, and quietly distracted himself and others. He was shy and not likely to pay attention during lessons or participate during whole-class discussions.

Protection of Human Subjects

As the researcher in this study, I followed the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects at University of San Francisco in order to protect the participants and a full disclosure was made to the school district regarding the purpose, participants, intervention, and data collection procedures of the study. I received approval from the school district. Parents of the student participants filled out consent forms after being informed of the purpose of the study. Every possible measure to protect the identities of the district, school, teachers and students was taken. Pseudonyms of the district, school and students were used for reporting and analyzing data.

Description of Intervention: TSI

As described in the Literature Review, numerous studies have found Transactional Strategy Instruction to be one of the most effective instructional methodologies for teaching reading comprehension to children. TSI helps students make use of multiple meta-cognitive reading strategies simultaneously in a coordinated and systematic way (The National Reading Panel, 2000). The key components of this instructional strategy are: direct explanation that involves explicit teaching of reading strategies by the teacher (Duffy et al., 1987); scaffolding of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) in small groups or pairs; and transactional learning where learning is experiential and interactional (Rosenblatt, 1978).

I designed the reading curriculum based on the key components of TSI described above. I chose this methodology as the focal point for this study, not only because studies had found it to be effective in teaching reading comprehension to children, but also because it incorporated all of the effective teaching practices recommended by research for teaching English learners. These practices include: explicit instruction of reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction strategies (Avalos, Plasencia, Chavez & Rascon, 2008); rich interpretive discussion of text (Beck & McKeown, 2006; Kong & Fitch, 2002; Kong & Pearson, 2003); scaffolding in small groups (Avalos et al., 2004; Valencia & Buly, 2004); and interactive and experiential format (Carrasquillo et al., 2004; Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Cummins, 2002).

TSI took the place of traditional reading comprehension instruction, which used the district's official language arts program, for one to one hour and thirty minutes per day for seven months. Every TSI reading block began with a meta-cognitive strategy

lesson and/or a procedure lesson. Following the strategy lesson and the procedural lesson, students were either meeting in a student-led literature discussion circle or working independently in preparation for the circle meeting. While the class was working independently in preparation for the circle meeting, I provided scaffolding lessons for small groups of students with various needs, such as the English learners or students struggling with reading. In the Literature Circle model, the teacher gradually releases responsibility from the discussion circle and eventually takes the role of a guest, simply visiting circles without being involved in the discussions. Students begin to meet on their own as they gain more and more autonomy and independence.

Of the seven metacognitive strategies for comprehension the students were taught, the strategies they had to demonstrate in writing in Literature Circles were summarizing, questioning, having an inner conversation with the text and making connections. The students recorded evidence of the use of these three strategies in their Literature Circle Logs. In addition, the second graders were trained to choose a certain passage that they wished to share with their Literature Circle, and to state the reason for choosing the passage. They also had a chance to share any inner conversation they had with the text in the “Free Discussion” section of the Literature Circle log.

Summarizing fiction can take the form of restating what happens in the beginning, middle and end of the story, or a problem/solution approach; both formats were taught in mini-lessons delivered to the whole class. When summarizing non-fiction, students were taught to choose a main idea from a paragraph or a section, and use the collection of those main ideas to form the summary. For generating questions, the children were trained to generate questions that were related to important facts in the text as well as

questions that required them to infer based on what was said in the text. In the case of fiction, children inferred based on what the characters said and did, and based on the illustrations. In case of non-fiction, the students inferred based on the facts stated in the text as well as the photos and illustrations. Their summaries, discussion questions, drawings, and items in Free Discussion section were used to assess their reading comprehension. It is true that summarizing and generating questions are means to an end, the processes to lead them to comprehension, but it is also true that after repeated training, their summaries and discussion questions did show the breadth and the depth of their understanding of the text.

The texts used in Literature Circles were children's literature from the student anthologies from the district's adopted curriculum, Houghton Mifflin California. Because the school district had just adopted an English Language Development program that was aligned with the student anthologies, we were required to stay with Houghton Mifflin student anthologies and were not allowed to include other texts, unlike in the previous years. Each circle was heterogeneous in terms of reading levels as well as the number of English learners.

Validity

Traditional researchers measure validity by the extent to which 'experts' define a research study as valid in design and construct. However, Participatory Action Research develops the notion of expertise one step further to include the wealth of knowledge of those participating in the research as co-researchers (Fine, 2008). In PAR, multiple forms of expertise are brought to the same table to be developed and honored in the production of knowledge. In addition, the validity of a research construct must be rebuilt from the

experiences in PAR. Teacher Action Research also challenges the traditional notion of knowledge and expertise as coming from the outside experts (Lytle & Cochran, 1992). The teachers' own words and analysis are valid as knowledge. The daily experiences of the teacher and the quality of interaction between the teacher and the students form the core of expertise and construct validity. Therefore, my daily experience in the classroom, my interactions with my students, and my students' daily experience along with my reflections and analyses, all contributed to our collective expertise as well as construct validity.

Following Wolcott's strategies for ensuring the validity of Teacher Action Research (Wolcott, 1994), I paid close attention to the following areas: listening more than talking; recording observations soon after a teaching episode; making time to write down my reflections as early as possible; producing more data than overanalyzing; reporting fully; being candid about my work; and seeking feedback on my field notes from my committee whenever possible.

The triangulation of data sources also contributed to the validity of the study. Within Part One, my field notes were compared with the recordings of Literature Circle Meetings. The findings from Part One of the study, Teacher Action Research, were compared with the voices of the children from Part Two of the study, Participatory Action Research.

Data Collection

The following forms of data were collected:

1. Field notes
2. Video recordings

3. Children's written work

I took field notes throughout the reading block regarding all aspects of TSI each day. Field notes included the strategy lesson, small group lessons and or literature circle meetings. In addition, the field notes contained observation of my interactions with the students, student behavior, and what occurred within TSI instruction and Literature Circles.

Table 2

Forms of Data

Phase	Month/Year	Forms of Data Collected
Part One:	9/12-2/13	Field Notes of Teaching Episodes and Literature Circle Meetings
TAR	9/12, 11/12, 2/13 9/12-2/13	Video Recordings of Literature Circle Meetings Students' Written Work
Part Two:	3/13	List of Questions Generated by Students and Teacher
PAR	3/13 3/13	Video Recordings of Interviews File of Smartboard used to Summarize findings from Interviews
	3/13	Field Notes by Teacher

Note. TAR refers to Teacher Action Research. PAR refers to Participatory Action Research

Table 2 provides information about the phases of data collection throughout the study. There were three sessions of video recording of Literature Circle meetings per group, one in late September or early October, one in December and one in February. The first one was a fishbowl coaching and demonstration of the first few stages of Literature Circles. The second recording was of their initial attempts at meeting in a circle on their own. Finally, the last recording in February was of their meeting after a few practices of meeting independently.

The children produced a large quantity of writing in response to literature including the Literature Circle Log. A completed Literature Circle Log contained their written preparation of five meetings and their five different roles. Their written work was collected and saved for analysis.

In order to identify ways to improve the implementation of TSI through children's perception, Participatory Action Research (PAR) was modified for second grade. At the end of the six-month training in TSI, the children and I together generated interview questions for conducting interviews of one another. They took turns interviewing each other and shared the job of videotaping the interviews. In a whole-group discussion forum, the children and I coded for themes together and arrived at common suggestions to improve their reading program, TSI.

Data Analysis

For Part I of the study, which was Teacher Action Research, field notes and video recordings of literature circle meetings were analyzed for generative themes. The themes were then categorized, ranked and synthesized. The children's written work was analyzed for depth of reading comprehension. Writing samples from two students reading at below grade level, two students reading at grade level, and yet another two students reading above grade level were examined to assess reading comprehension. The writing samples came from the four sections of Literature Circle Log: Summary, Discussion Director, Artful Artist, and the Free Discussion sections.

The objectives covered in mini-lessons were used to analyze students' Literature Circle Logs in their various roles. For example, students were trained to write a summary that restated the beginning, middle and end of a story, and a summary that stated the

problem and solution of the story for fiction. For non-fiction, students were taught to find a main idea for each section, and use the collection of those main ideas to form the summary. For generating questions, students were trained to generate questions that were related to important facts in the text as well as questions that required them to infer based on what was said in the text. In the case of fiction, children inferred based on what the characters said and did, and based on the illustrations. Therefore, these objectives were used to analyze their writing. I also contrasted the quality of their responses between the roles they played in Literature Circles. I defined the levels of quality by looking for a balance of factual and inferential questions, citing of evidence from the text, completeness of the summary, and recognition of themes. For examining students' autonomy, the video recordings and the field notes were analyzed. The same data were analyzed for new themes to arise.

In Part II of the study, the phase that used PAR as its methodology, the children participated as co-researchers. In this phase, each child, as an interviewer, reported the data he or she gathered to the whole class, and I immediately entered the data on Smartboard in children's view. A few interviews were processed per day as time allowed. When every member of the class was finished reporting his or her data, the data was analyzed together as a whole class on Smartboard. The children were trained to look for the mode in the data, and to look for a general pattern. Taken all together, the various forms of data painted a picture of TSI's use and effectiveness in a second grade classroom, and shed light on the second grade researchers' impressions of their reading comprehension instruction.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of Transactional Strategies Instruction on the reading comprehension of second graders including native speakers of English and English learners in the same classroom. The research questions were:

1. How does Transactional Strategy Instruction affect second grade students' reading comprehension?
2. How does TSI affect the students' ability to function autonomously as readers and as members of Literature Circles?
3. Based on the students' perception, how can the implementation of TSI in the second grade classroom be improved?

Reading Comprehension

In order to understand how Literature Circles affects young children's reading comprehension, the second graders participated in Literature Circles from September of 2012 to March of 2013. The first research question asked: "How does Transactional Strategies Instruction affect second grade students' reading comprehension?"

Written responses, in the form of the Literature Circle Logs, were collected from the whole class. The samples from six children consisting of struggling, at-grade-level, and high readers are shown here for discussion.

Eleana

Eleana who is a native speaker of English was reading at grade level in terms of decoding when she began second grade, but her comprehension was low. This was a concern for her first grade teacher and a cause of concern for me as her second grade

teacher in the beginning of the year. In Cycle One of the research in early October, she misunderstood *summary* as a *connection* and wrote:

This story reminds me of when I was finding a butterfly in my backyard it was fantastic looking for it and it was so fun.

Eleana's work in the Artful Artist and Free Discussion showed a similar connection (Figure 1). Eleana wrote, "this story reminds me of when I was exploring my backyard to look for butterflies."

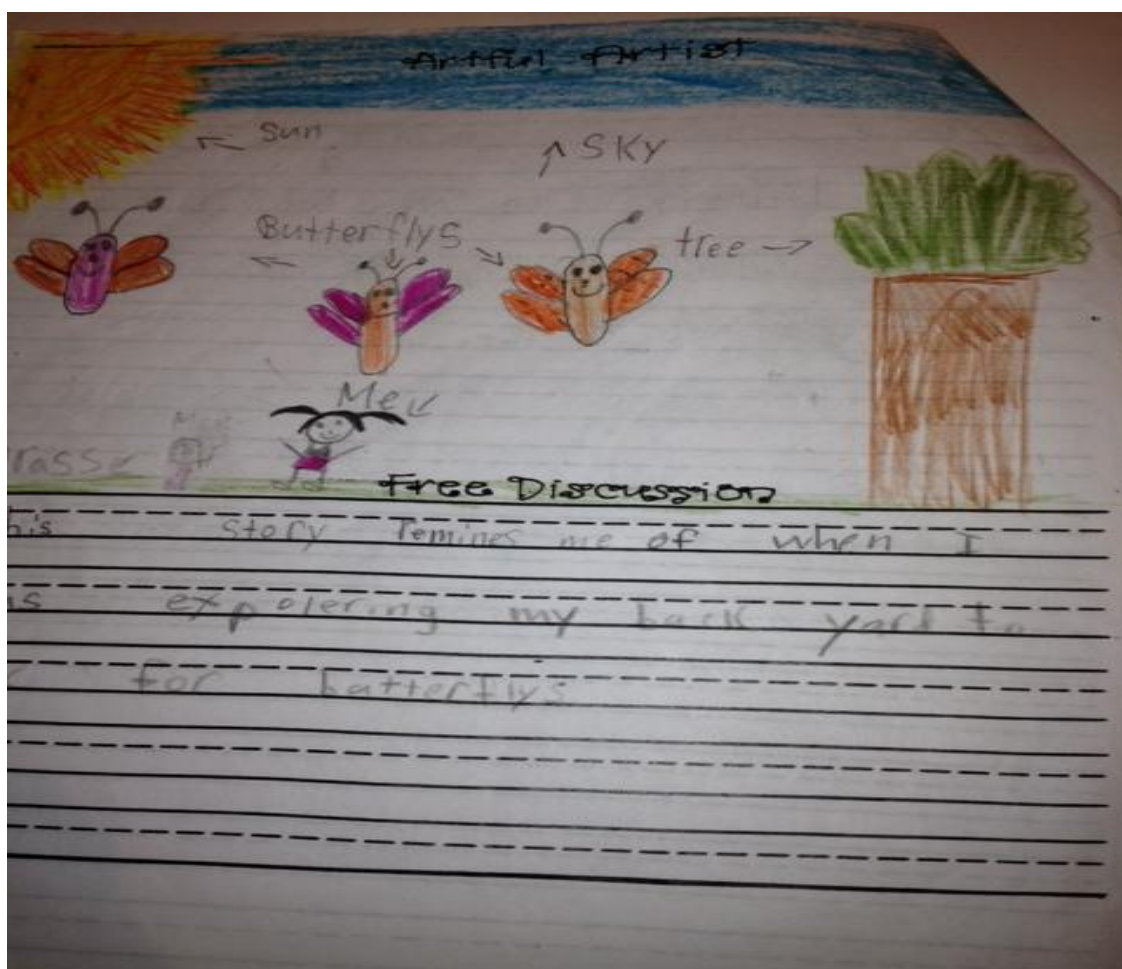


Figure 1. Eleana's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle One

In Cycle Two, Eleana summarized the story of a dog named Gloria who steals the safety show from the main character, Officer Buckle, by imitating him without his

knowing (Rathman, 2003). Gloria becomes popular and the officer withdraws from the show. Gloria is not able to put on a good show by herself. From then on, bad accidents happen all over the school. It takes Gloria and Officer Buckle together as a team again to have successful safety shows in schools. Eleana wrote:

The main ideas were when Officer Buckle said the safety tips and when Gloria did tricks when Officer Buckle was not looking and when the little girl wrote a note about Officer Buckle and about Gloria.

She vaguely understood what was going on in the story, and struggled to articulate her thoughts. Her summary was incomplete, but she seemed to better understand what it meant to summarize by Cycle Two. Eleana had some understanding of the role the dog was playing next to the officer. In her Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections, she drew herself making a speech in front of her large family including uncles and aunts, and wrote, "This story reminds me of when I did a speech in front of my Tongoin family and their dog was Right by me and the dog bit me on the finger nail and the speech was outside."

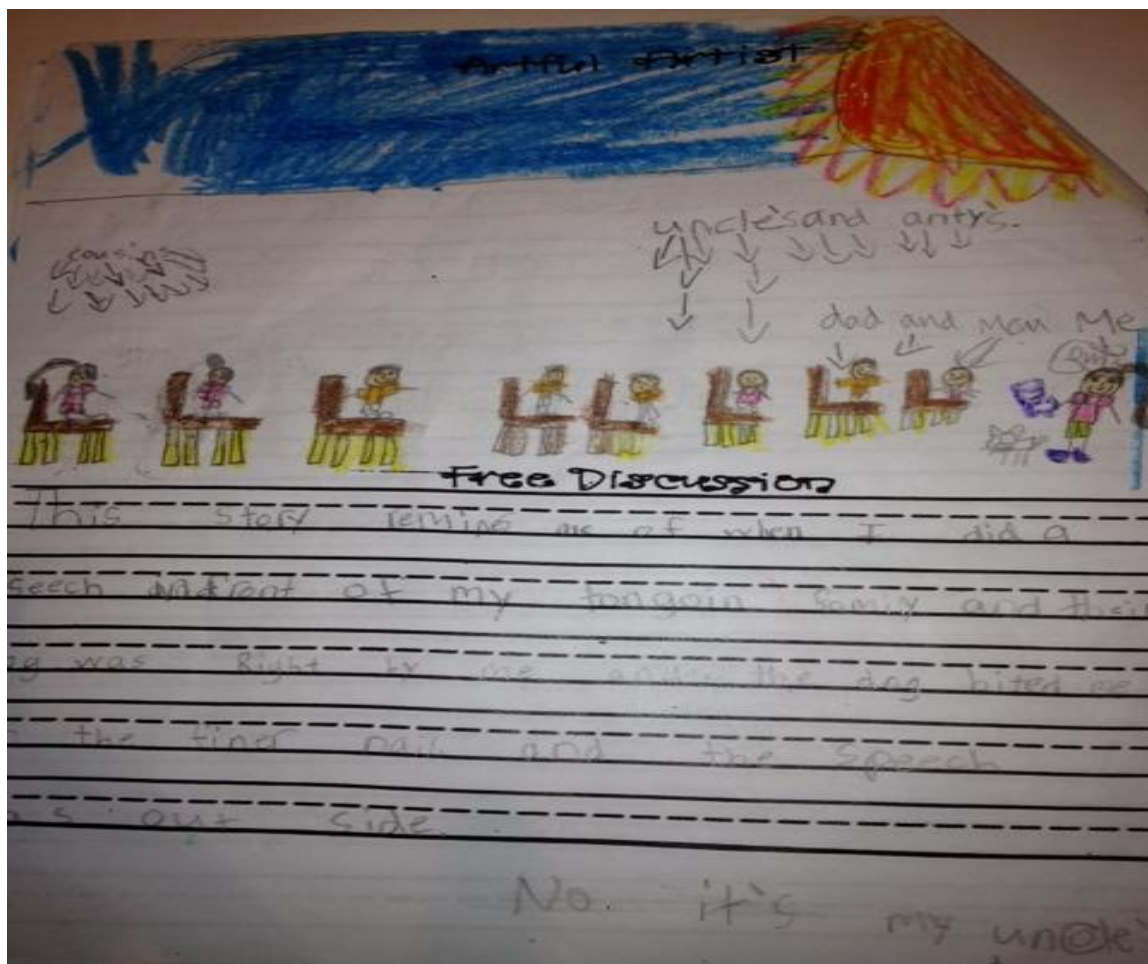


Figure 2. Eleana's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle Two

By Cycle Three, Eleana's summarizing was becoming more proficient and complete. She summarized a story about a girl named Alex who is angry because her father did not make it to her birthday (Cummings, 2003). Alex is rude to her mother and aunts, and handles the carousel, a gift from her father, roughly. One pole of the carousel is broken off, by her uncaring and rough handling. That night the character has a dream that the animals on the carousel come to life and she enjoys an adventure with them. In the morning, her father is back and wants to fix the carousel for her. Eleana wrote:

The main idea's is when she got the carousel, She took it to her room and broke the animal off the carousel. When she was about to go to bed the animals jumped

out the window. She got on the zebra and flew. Alex was sleeping, her dad came home, and he said do you want to fix this.

She confused the pole of the carousel with an animal on the carousel. However, despite the grammatical errors and the skimpy beginning, Eleana's summary included the most important events and the ending of the story. Eleana's work in the Artful Artist section and Free Discussion showed that she understood the inappropriate behavior the main character in the story displayed when her aunties have come to celebrate her birthday (Figure 3). Eleana wrote, "This story reminds me of when I was did not want to eat cake but my mom said it was part of the rule's so I did."

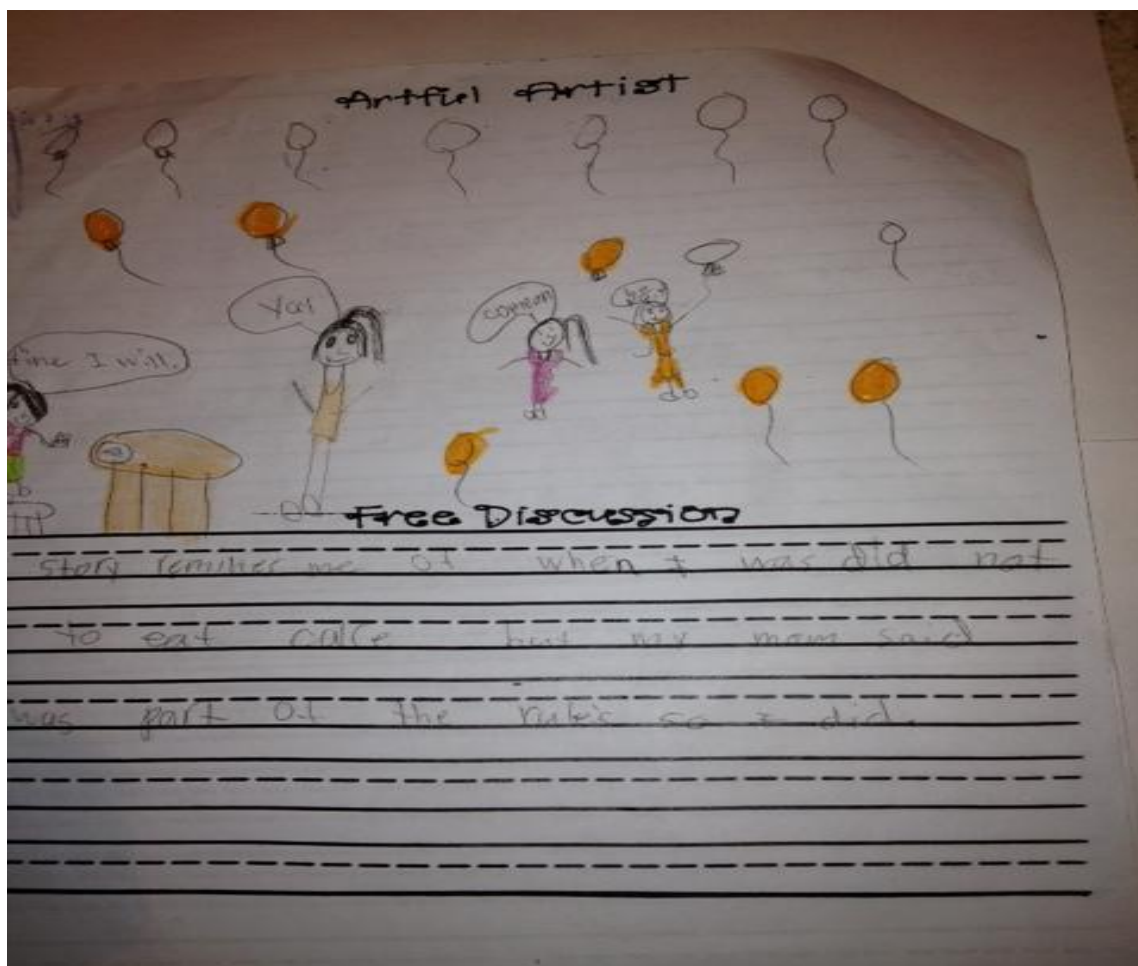


Figure 3. Eleana's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle

Three

In the role of Discussion Director, Eleana generated questions that were tangential to the story in Cycle One. The text was realistic fiction that had to do with the animals in the forest leaving their traces behind, and the children infer what has been there (George, 2003). The questions Eleana generated were:

Why did they want to make a blueberry pie.
 Why did they wear bathing suits.
 were did they find the Baby wood ducks?
 were are they?
 why was cammy wereing Sun block?
 why were they folowing the trees.
 where were the parents?
 why were they at the woods?

Eleana was beginning to ask some inferential questions as well as questions based on the facts in the story. One of the questions, “Where were the parents?” is of interest because this question is a sign that Eleana was using her background knowledge to make connections. Eleana noticed that parents, who are so essential in children’s lives, are missing in the story. This question might be more likely to be asked by a child than a grown-up.

In Cycle Two, Eleana began with a question that hit on one of the central ideas in the story about a girl named Jamaica who decides to hang her art on the stark and blank walls in the subway station (Hest, 2003). She does this for her grandmother who leaves for work very early in the morning and for the passengers at the station who she thought looked too serious. Eleana’s questions as Discussion Director were:

What was jAmaica’s idea...
 why does jamaica’s story’s go on...and on...
 why does jamaica like to draw So much.
 why did jamaica wear the hat every day.

These questions were of better quality than those of the previous cycle, and addressed the central idea and Jamaica’s passion as an artist.

In Cycle Three, Eleana's questions went a step further, and asked the children in her Literature Circle to infer even further:

Why are jalapeno bagels a good choice of food for pablo?
Witch kind of food did you like why?
Did you like the story why
Why did the boy pick jalapeno bagels?

The first question came from the anthology itself, included at my suggestion when Eleana initially got stuck generating questions. However, Eleana generated the second and third questions on her own. These questions asked her classmates to make connections, while the fourth question addressed the main idea of the story *Jalapeno Bagels* (Wing, 2003), the experiences of bicultural families. The evolution of her questions from Cycle One to Cycle Three showed that Eleana seemed to have progressed in her comprehension.

Eleana, who began second grade struggling with reading comprehension, took a bit longer than others to learn to summarize during Cycle One. However she was beginning to ask the right kinds of questions as a Discussion Director during the same cycle, showing a glimmer of comprehension. By Cycle Two, she had a grasp of what it was like to summarize, and was already asking questions that were hitting on the important ideas of the story, as well as addressing character analysis. By Cycle Three, her summarizing missed a chunk of the beginning of the story, but managed to include important events and the ending. Her questions were proving to be deeper and inferential and considered the not so simple topic of a biracial and bicultural heritage. By March 2013, Eleana was beginning to achieve passing scores on the reading comprehension tests provided by the language arts package adopted by the school district.

Nathan

Nathan was another student whose reading comprehension was targeted for improvement in the first two trimesters of second grade (Late August through early March). Even in Cycle One, his performance in his Literature Circle was in contrast to his performance on district-adopted Houghton Mifflin test of comprehension, which use multiple choice questions. Although the format of Nathan's summary looked more like a list than a summary, the content of the story, *A Trip to the Firehouse* (Lewison, 2003) was present and very clear:

1. The firefighters tell them that Spot has not eaten his breakfast yet would they like to come inside and feed him yes they would.
2. Three firefighters show how long it takes for them to put it all on less than thirty seconds
3. The pole is an important part of the firehouse he explains it helps the firefighters move fast when the alarm rings

Nathan demonstrated his understanding even further as an Artful Artist and in his Free Discussion section (Figure 4) where he wrote the following questions:

1. Why is the fire stason so importint?
2. Why is the firefithter help so much?
3. Why is the fire stason so nice?

These questions asked the children in his Literature Circle to infer, and address the important ideas in the text. The first question deals with the state of readiness for fighting fires. The second question addresses firefighting as a helping profession, and the third question deals with the technological aspects of the firehouse.

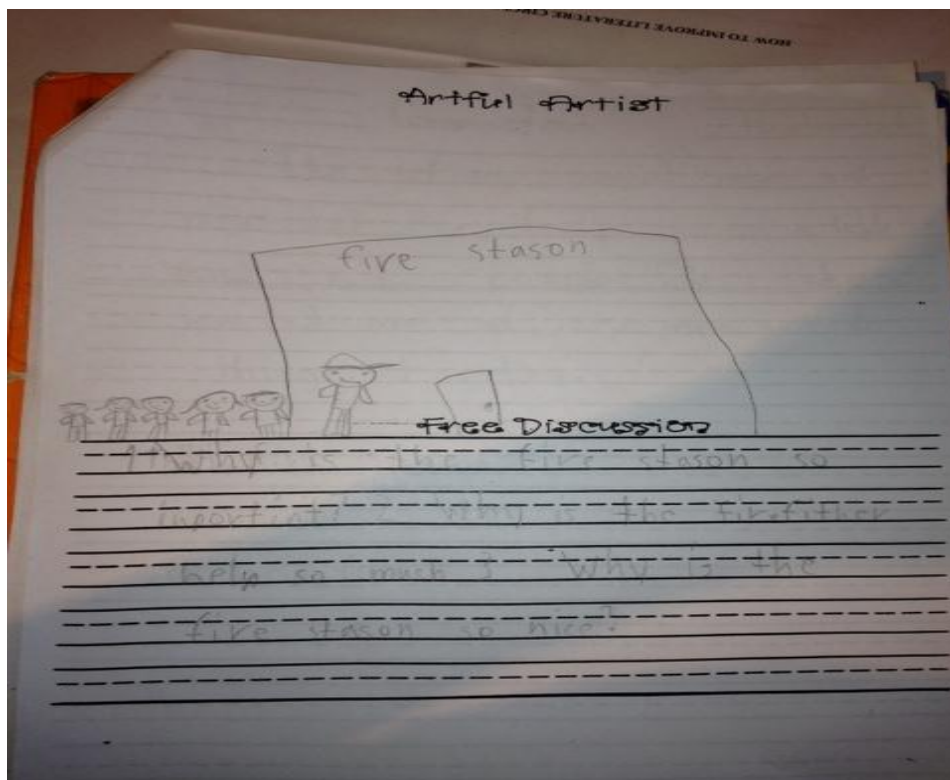


Figure 4. Nathan's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle One

In Cycle Two, Nathaniel's summary improved and looked more like a summary, except for places where he uses speech without quotation, making the flow of his summary awkward:

Long ago the Birds and Animals had a great argument we who have wings are better than you said the Birds But when the teams were fromed one creature was left out Bat he had wings and teeth He flew back and forth between the two sides So it is that the Birds fly south each winter And every day at ducks Bat still romes flying to see if the Animals need him to play ball

The depth of his reading comprehension, demonstrated in the summary, was further corroborated by his drawing in Artful Artist section and extra questions he generated in the Free Discussion section (Figure 5). All three of his questions were essential in understanding of the story:

1. What are they playing for?
2. Why dose the bat want to play?

3. how dose the bat score a point?

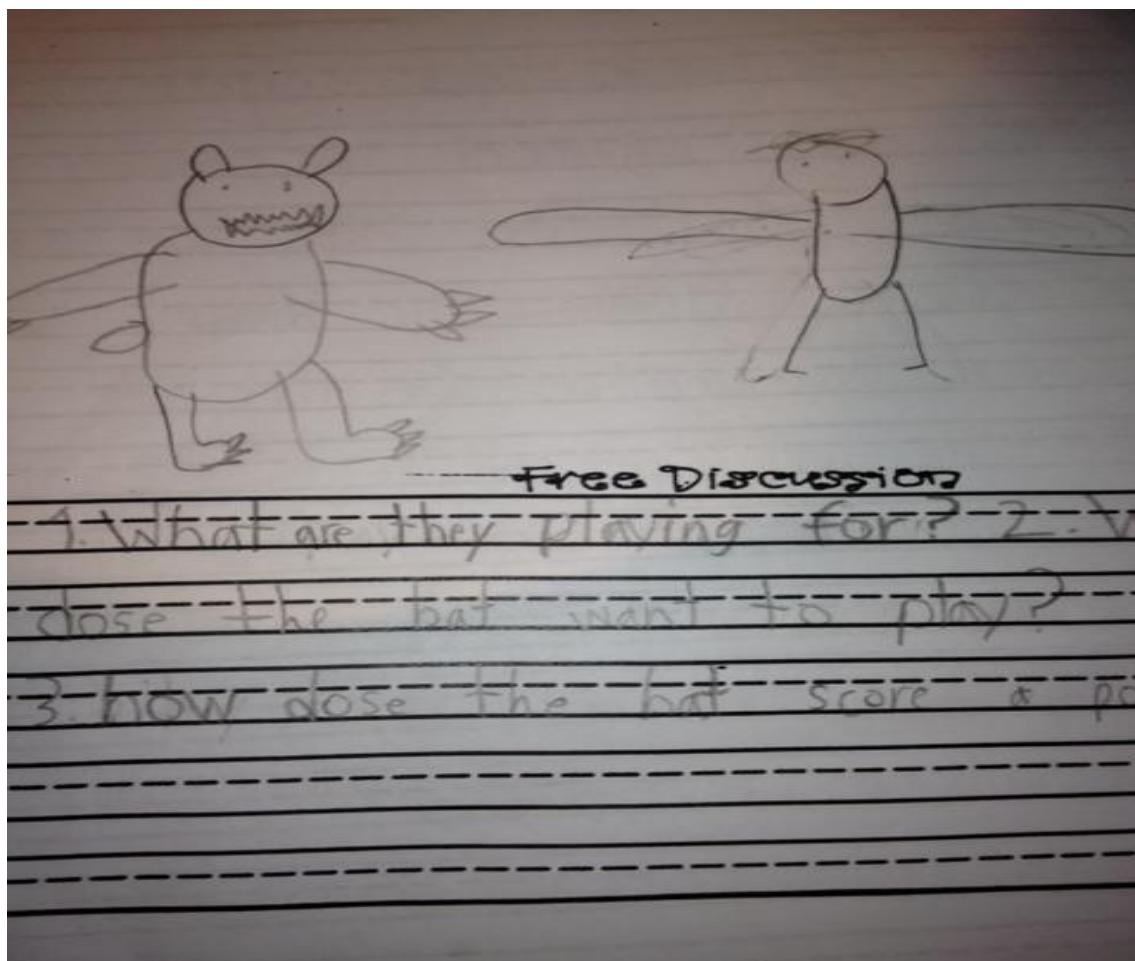


Figure 5. Nathan's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle Two

Nathan's demonstration of comprehension in Cycle Three was equally solid. His summary of the story written by Tomie de Paola (2003), an author and illustrator of children's books, about his childhood as a young artist, was strong:

Tommy wanted to be an artist when he grew up. Hiss friend had favorite things to do, too Jack collected all kinds of trutes. herbie made huge cities in his sandbox. His twin cousins, who were already grown up, were in art school training to be real artist. Tommy put his pictures up on the walls of his half of the house His dad took them to the barbershop where he worked.

Although he was missing the account of an important event about Tomie's efforts to secure more than one piece of paper for art, and the use of his own box of crayons from

home with multiple colors in his classroom, Nathan's understanding of the rest of the story was there. His work as an Artful Artist and in his Free Discussion showed further evidence of his understanding of the text (Figure 6):

1. Why dose he want to be a artist?
2. Why dose he put his painting on the wall?

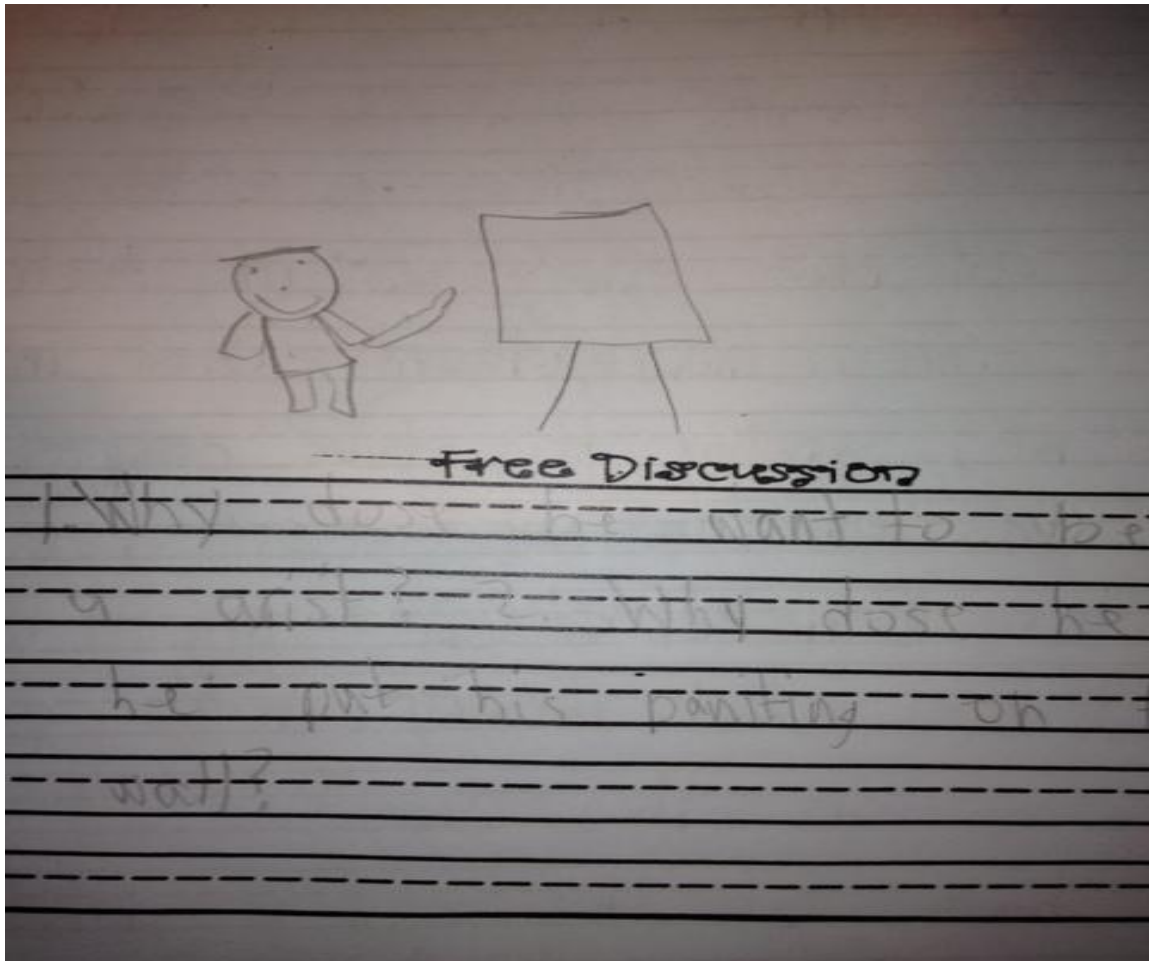


Figure 6. Nathan's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle Three

Nathan's comprehension continued to be solid in his work as a Discussion Director. The questions he generated as a Discussion Director in Cycle One, from a nonfiction story called *Chinatown* (Low, 2003), read:

1. Why dose Grandma go for a walk every morning?
2. Why dose the boy tell Grandma to watch out for cars?
3. Why dose master Leung tech a new move every week?
4. Why is the kitchen (of the restaurant) noisey?
5. Why is his faviroe holiday chinese newyear?

The purpose of the story was to introduce Chinatown as a type of neighborhood and examine different aspects life in Chinatown. Therefore, the questions Nathan generated were appropriate.

In Cycle Two, the questions he generated as a Discussion Director, for a non-fiction piece about ants (Steffoff, 2003), continued to be strong and covered the important ideas in the story:

1. Why dose Ants live and work together?
2. Why anthills are huge and filled with tunnels?
3. Why every ant has two long waving stalks on its head
4. Why little ant takes care of the queen's eggs?

The first and last questions have to do with the idea of teamwork in this non-fiction about ants, and the second and third questions address important facts in the text.

In Cycle Three, the quality of the questions Nathan asked was equally high. He generated questions from a piece of fiction about how a little girl living on a farm with her grandmother overcomes her fear of thunder and lightning:

1. What is thunder cake baking weather?
2. Why is the child hiding in the bed?
3. Why dose the child have to count when she hears lightning and stop when she hears thunder?
4. Where did the grandma find the milk?
5. Where did they find the eggs?

Nathan's first question asked about the setting and an important fact of the story. The second question asked for an inference about a scene when the little girl hides in her bed. The third question addressed the exact mechanics of how to predict when the thunder strikes. The fourth and fifth question addressed important facts in the story regarding different places on the farm, outside of the comforts of the house, where the character had to go to gather the ingredients for baking a thunder cake.

Based on the multiple-choice unit tests belonging to the district's language arts curriculum, Nathan was another student for whom reading comprehension was an area targeted for improvement in the beginning of second grade. Interestingly, his comprehension, as evidenced by his summaries and discussion questions in his Literature Circle, was solid even in Cycle One and throughout Cycles Two and Three. The schism between his performance on traditional tests and his performance in Literature Circles continued to exist until March 2013, when I helped him understand the connections between the metacognitive strategies he had been trained in and the type of questions asked on the multiple-choice tests. Nathan's case alludes to the possibility that some children really cannot show what they comprehend on traditional multiple-choice tests, and that they need more training making connections between the two avenues of showing comprehension. Nathan's was a student who needed an arena such as Literature Circles to show what he really knew. Contrary to his test scores, Nathan turned out to be very skilled in reading comprehension.

Sheila

Sheila, a native speaker of English, is biracial as a Caucasian American and Latin American. She began second grade right at grade level in comprehension. She is quiet

but responsible. In her summary in Cycle One, she demonstrated that she learned to collect the main idea from each paragraph from a non-fiction text about how to be a wildlife spy:

Allways let an adult know where your going and when you'll be back. don't chase animals or try to make fly or run away. Sometimes you can figure out where an animal has been. don't scare the animals bye getting to close. leave your pets and radio at home.

She further corroborated her understanding of the text by drawing beaver and deer tracks, and stating that her favorite part in the text was when the children found a deer track and beaver track (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Sheila's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle One

However, in Cycle Two when Sheila was summarizing a piece of fiction, her summary was very incomplete; most of the important events in the story were missing:

When officer buckle had a new Safety tip he would write it on his bulletin board.
 Officer buckle told it to students in napville Sometimes, they would snore.
 Officer buckle Said, safety tip number one: keep your shoe laces tied.

Despite this incomplete summary, her work in the Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections (Figure 8) indicated that she understood one event in the story in which the officer's dog, Gloria, steals his show by acting out the officer's speech without his knowing (Rathman, 2003). She stated that her favorite part of the story was when Officer Buckle's dog was pretending to have been shot by the electrical storm. Although Sheila was not able to articulate the significance of this part of the story in her summary, the event left an impression on her.

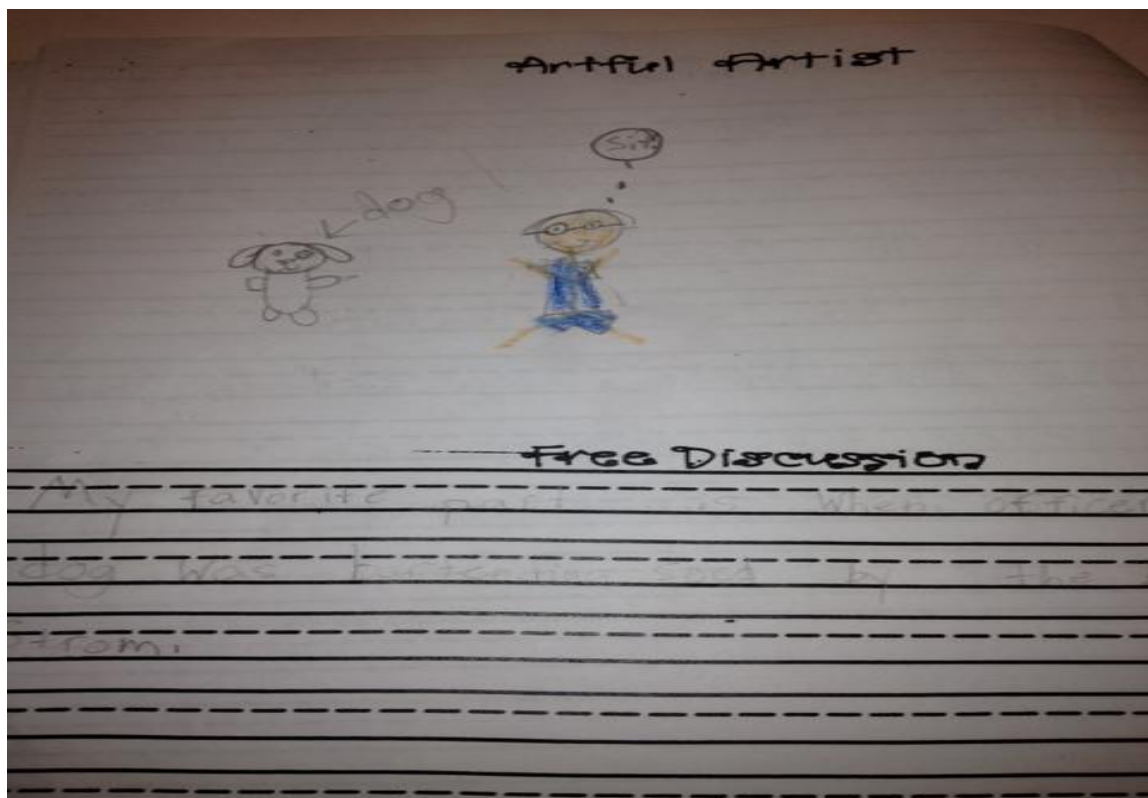


Figure 8. Sheila's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle Two

In Cycle Three, Sheila still did not show much improvement in summarizing fiction. She shared a few events from the beginning of the story, but never really developed the summary to cover the entire story:

Off went the sneakers. On went the bows Of went the jeans, On came the frills. every single little pearly button buttoned on her dress. She definitely didn't want her her hair braided or Shiny.

The children had been taught to summarize fiction texts by using the beginning-middle-end approach, or by problem-solution approach, but Sheila did not use either. Compared with her solid understanding of how to summarize a non-fiction, her summarizing skills in fiction seemed to be lagging.

On the other hand, the questions Sheila generated as a Discussion Director demonstrated slightly more comprehension than her summaries. Based on a realistic fiction story, in which children find traces of forest animals around the pond and guess what animals have been there (George, 2003), Sheila asked:

1. Why do they need bluebearies?
2. What kind of Animals did they see?
3. Why do they call the path the deer path?
4. Why did they bring there dog sam?

These questions do require some inference and some understanding of important facts in the story. Adeline and Sheila generated these questions together since they happened to have the same roles for this particular text, although they were in two separate groups.

In Cycle Two, the questions Sheila generated based on a piece of fiction showed some improvement. In this particular story, *Jamaica Louise James* (Hest, 2003), the title character, paints pictures for a subway station where her grandmother takes the early morning train for work and a lot of passengers look down because of the blank drab walls. Sheila asked:

1. Why did they need to wear snow boots?
2. Why did they hang pictures on the wall in the subway?
3. Why was Jamaica scared?
4. What was the big idea?
5. Why did Jamaica get a paint set?
6. Why does Jamaica like to paint?
7. Why does Jamaica cuddle up with her mom and Grandma?
8. How many cats does Jamaica have?
9. How come the city is quiet at night?
10. Why does the man in the picture that Jamaica drew have triangle pockets?

The first and third questions ask about the setting of the story. The second and fourth questions address an important idea in the story. The rest of the questions address some facts in the story that children should understand. Therefore, the questions Sheila generated in Cycle Two do show improved comprehension.

In Cycle Three, Sheila continued to generate quality questions. She was a Discussion Director for the story *Jalapeno Bagels* (Wing, 2003) about a boy who comes from a bicultural family of Jewish American and Mexican American heritage. The boy decides to bake jalapeno bagels, a food that integrates both of his cultures, for an international festival at school. Sheila's first question asked her classmates to consider that precise reason for baking jalapeno bagels:

1. Why did Pablo pick the jalapeno bagels?
2. Why do his parents like to bake?
3. Does Pablo like to help his parents bake?
4. What kind of food does Pablo like?
5. Why does Pablo like to bake?

The second, third and fifth questions addressed Pablo's relationship with the family business of the bakery, and the fourth question asked about Pablo's bicultural heritage. Although Sheila struggled with summarizing fiction texts, she demonstrated good comprehension as demonstrated by the questions she asked as the Discussion Director.

Sheila began second grade right at grade level in reading. She was one of the students that never spoke during whole group discussions in class. Her performance in summarizing the text varied depending on the type of text. She definitely had an easier time summarizing non-fiction than fiction. In Sheila's fiction summaries, most of the important events in the story were missing. However, she showed evidence of her comprehension of the important events in her Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections. Sheila demonstrated even more comprehension through the discussion questions she generated from Cycle One and forward. Her questions showed more progress as time went on, regardless of the genre of the text. She showed growth in comprehension despite the fluctuations in her performance.

Fia

Fia is an Asian American EL, and began second grade at grade level in reading comprehension. The story she summarized in Cycle One was realistic fiction about Chinatown as a neighborhood (Low, 2003). She managed to collect and put together the main ideas and formed a summary as she was trained to do:

The boy lives with his mother father and grandma. Every morning the boy goes a walk with grandma around china town. Most of the days when we are in the park there was a class there. They are old people young people are exercising there in the park. When the boy and his grandma stop they at the cobbler. So many times, we Pick our old shoes and bring it to the cobbler and the cobbler can fix the old shoes to new shoes.

Her comprehension of the story is there, although the point of view in terms of who is telling the summary kept switching. The finale of the story is the Lunar New Year celebrations, which is missing in Fia's summary, but it appears in her Artful Artist and the Free Discussion sections as is shown in Figure 8. She liked the part when the boy and his grandma celebrate New Year's Day.



Figure 9. Fia’s responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle One

However, when dealing with a non-fiction about ants in Cycle Two, Fia’s summary is not as thorough as her summary of a fiction: “You can see most ants almost any part of the world. The ants carry dirt out of the tunnels to make a pile. Some anthills are huge and filled with tunnels.” She had a great start, but was not able to carry her summary into the middle and end of the selection. Her work in Artful Artist section did not do much to complement the important parts of the story that were missing in her summary. She wrote, “I like this story because I like ants” (Figure 10).

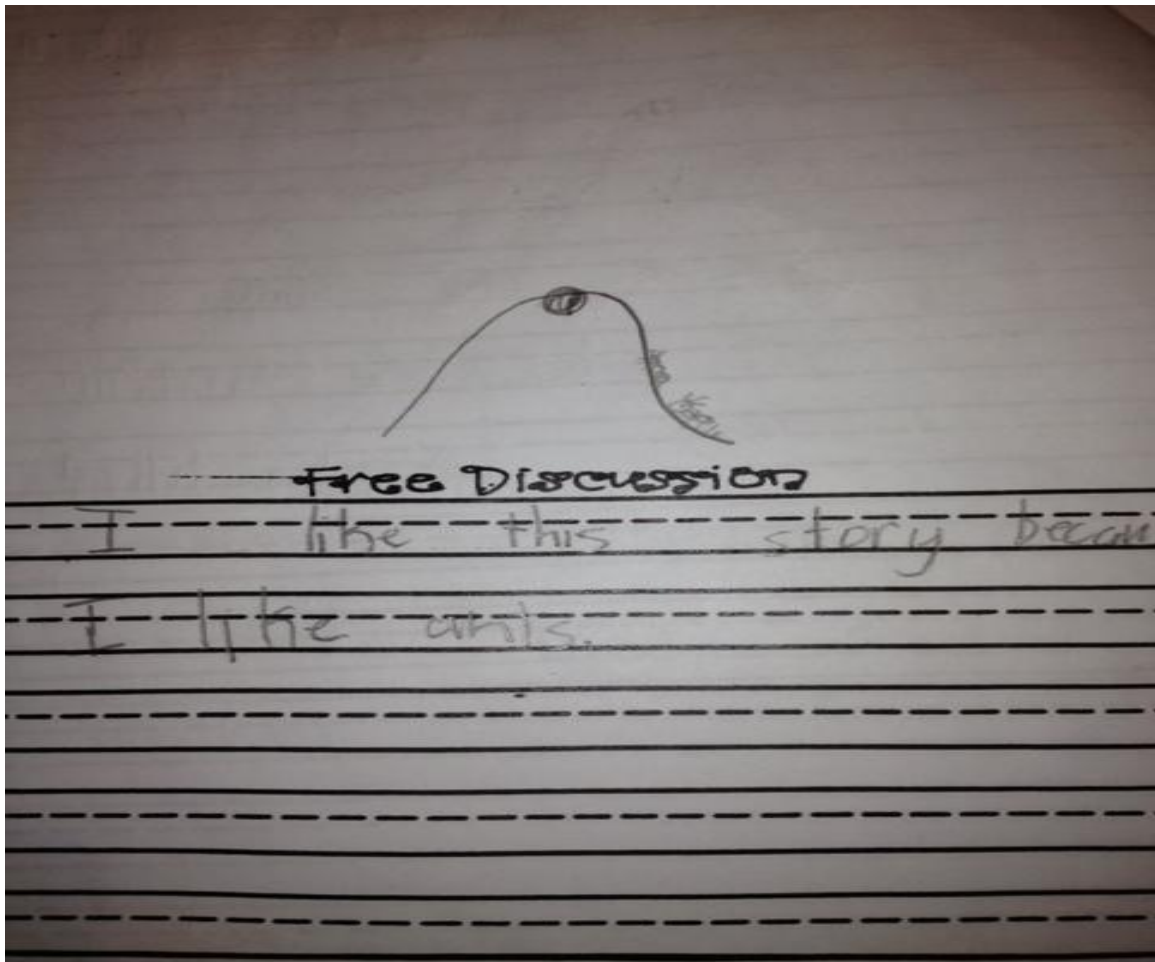


Figure 10. Fia’s responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle Two

In Cycle Three, Fia’s summary of a fictional story turned out to be more complete than her summary of non-fiction. Except for not mentioning the setting, she made good use of the problem/solution approach she was trained to use:

Grandma and the girl wanted to make a thunder cake, but the girl was to scared to go outside, so her grandma and the girl baked the cake together and the girl was not scared of thunder any more.

She could certainly have included more important facts from the story, but her understanding of the story using the problem/solution approach was present. Fia corroborated her summary with her Artful Artist and the Free Discussion sections as shown in Figure 10. She wrote, “I like this story because the girl was not scared of

thunder and when the girl and the grandma baked the cake together.” Fia fully recognized the problem in the story and how the grandmother helped the girl overcome her fear by baking a thunder cake together (Polacco, 2003).

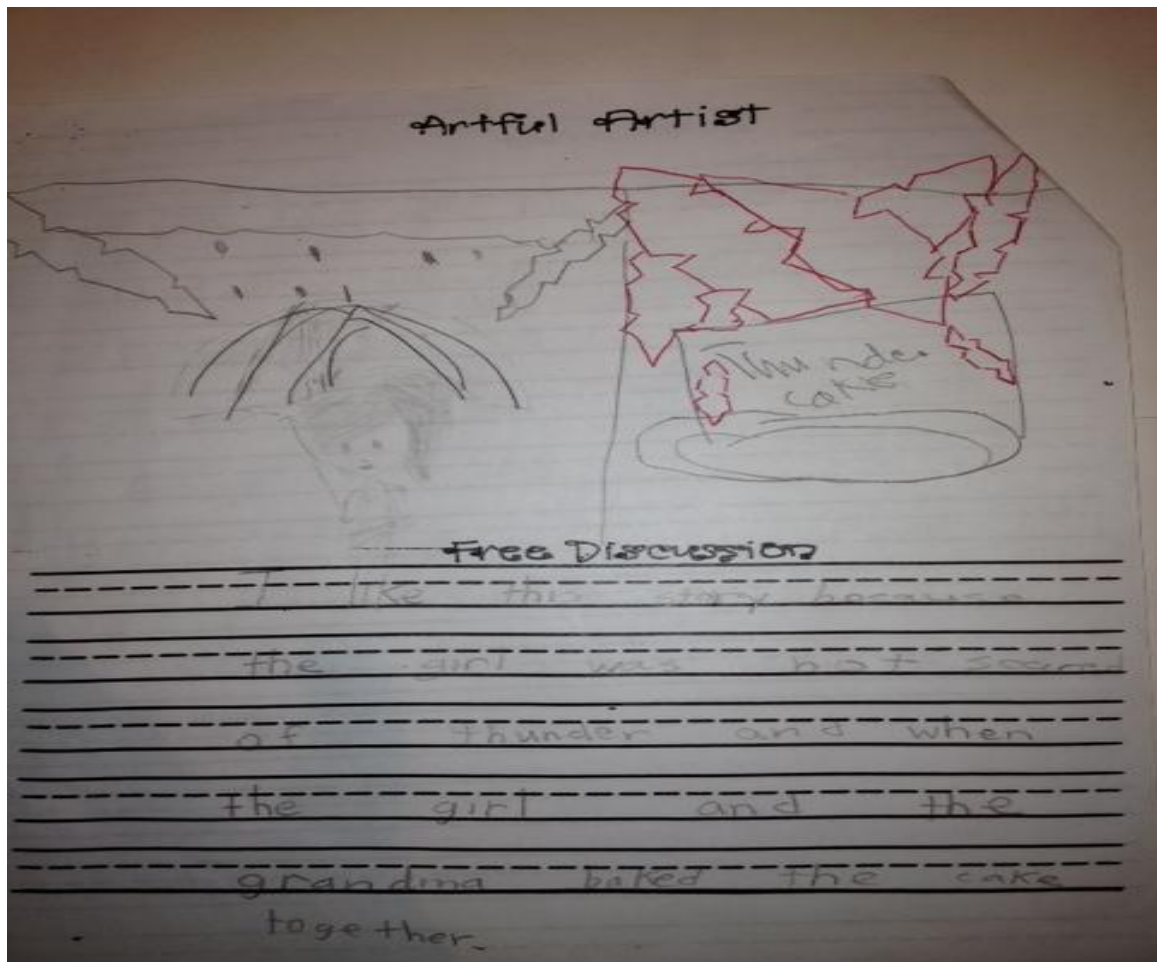


Figure 11. Fia’s responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle Three

The questions Fia generated as a Discussion Director fluctuated in quality, similar to her performance in summarizing. In Cycle One dealing with a non-fiction text about how to be a wildlife spy (Duckworth, 2003), her questions addressed important facts, as well as inferences the author had intended for the children to make:

1. Why do you have to sniff or listen?

2. Why do you have to look for signs for animals?
3. What does active?
4. Where do you look for insects?
5. What time should you go and find insects?
6. Why should you tell someone where you going?

In Cycle Two, Fia's questions addressed tangential facts rather than important facts or the problems and solution in the story about Officer Buckle and Gloria, his dog, who together learn that it takes teamwork to do a good show about safety (Rathman, 2003):

1. Was officer Buckle a girl or a boy?
2. Is Gloria a girl or a boy?
3. What was the dog's name?
4. How many schools did officer buckle share his Tips?

Fia's questions missed all of the important events in the story, including when Gloria got everyone's attention by acting out Officer Buckle's speech without him knowing.

However, she drew and wrote about that particular event in her Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections. She drew a picture of Gloria and the officer, and wrote, "I loved the part when Gloria copied Officer Buclel."

Her questions in Cycle Three demonstrated some understanding of another fiction text. In this story, described in the previous section about Eleana, the main character, Alex gets upset on her birthday (Cummings, 2003). As the Discussion Director, Fia borrowed two questions from the anthology, but generated some of her own questions:

3. Was Alex happy when her dad came home?
4. Was Alex happy when she opened her dad's present?
5. Did Alex like her mom braiding her hair?
6. When Alex opened one present from Aunt Ruby what was it?
7. Did Alex like Aunt Ruby's present?
8. If you had a present and you broke it, how would you feel?

Her third question addressed the resolution in the story. The rest of her questions dealt with Alex's feeling upset when her father was not able to make it to her birthday. Fia could have made her list of questions more thorough by including Alex's dream.

Fia is an English learner and began second grade right at grade level in reading. She operated in a similar way as Sheila, in that summarizing realistic fiction came easier than summarizing other types of fiction. Even as early as Cycle One, her comprehension was evident. Although she missed the ending in her summary, she focused on that event in her Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections. As for generating discussion questions as a Discussion Director, she started out strong in Cycle One with non-fiction, but struggled with fiction in Cycle Two. However by Cycle Three, Fia managed to improve the quality of the questions. Both Sheila and Fia, who were considered right at grade level, demonstrated minor fluctuations in their comprehension, but also showed signs of strong comprehension skills.

Jin

Jin is an EL who had been in the United States for three years with no prior training in English. She began second grade as an above average reader with above average comprehension. In Cycle One, Jin adopted the main idea approach where the children were trained to extract main ideas from different sections of a non-fiction text and compile them as a summary. Her summary of the non-fiction text about the firehouse (Lewison, 2003) reads:

David and his class are visiting their neighborhood firehouse today. The fire chief lets everyone try on a real fire helmet. Next, they meet the firehouse dog. David see's the firefighters gear on the wall. Katelyn see's the firefighter at the top. The pole helps the firefighters move fast when the alarm rings. They see where the firefighters sleep. Things are never slow in the dispatch room. An operator shows the children how the alarm system works. Operators look up on this big

blackboard to find out where the alarm is coming from. The children go downstairs now to get a good look at a fire truck that is kept at this firehouse. they examine the bell that clangs. the siren that screams, the hoses that woosh, the valves that click. Since it's such a nice day today, the children can help clean the fire truck. When the children are done with the washing, they help a firefighter roll up a long flat fire hose. The firefighters tell the children they've done a great job.

Despite the missing capital letters and one misspelled word, her work was very thorough for a second grader. She began with describing the setting along with the characters, and moved through the text by extracting the main idea from each paragraph or section; she also remembered to include the ending.

In Cycle Two, Jin's summary of a fiction story was as thorough, except for the turning point and the ending. It seems that because the beginning of her summary was a bit more detailed than it needed to be, she stopped writing when she reached the end of her summary page:

Long ago there was a fight with the birds and the animals about who was best. They went on and on, until they would go to war because of it. Then Crane and Bear decided to have a ball game. So they walked and flew to a field. But when the teams were formed, bat was left out. First he went to the Animals. Then he went to the birds. Then he went back to the animals. The game began.

However, Jin introduced the turning point in her Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections:

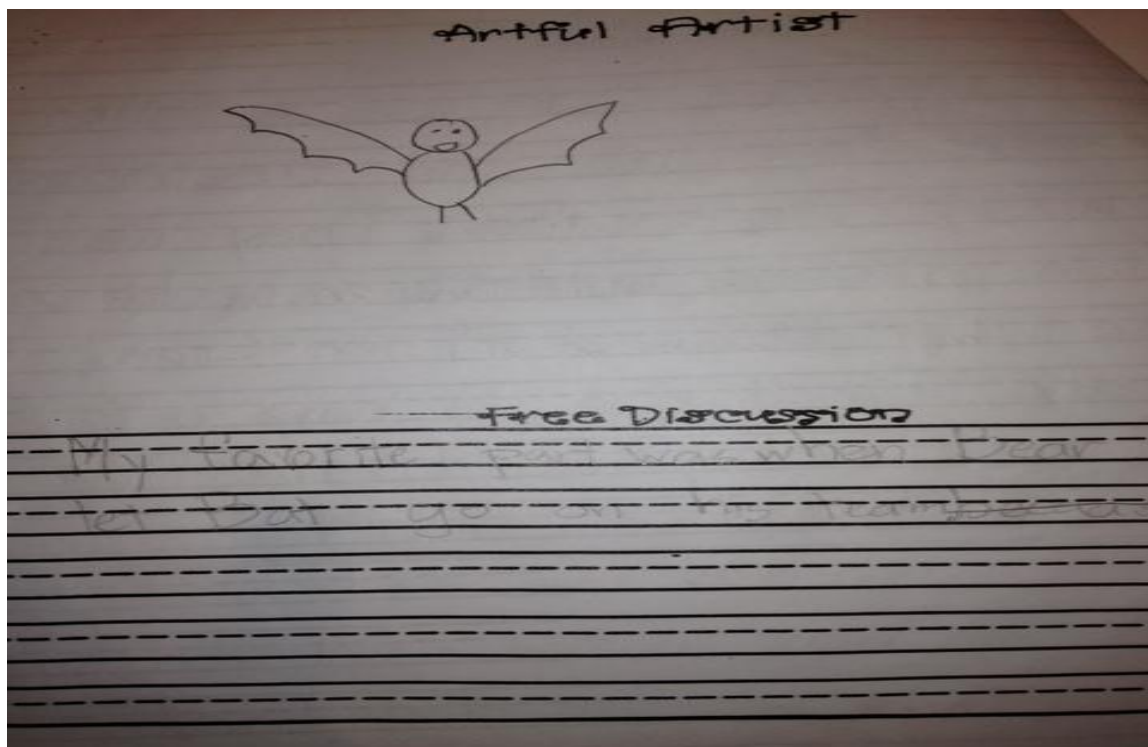


Figure 12. Jin's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion in Cycle Two

She wrote, "My favorite part was when Bear let Bat go on his team." This is when things turned around for Bat, who had both wings and teeth, by being accepted to a team and later getting a chance to use his wings and night vision to the Animal team's advantage (Bruchac, 2003).

In Cycle Three, Jin wrote a summary for another piece of fiction. In contrast to Cycle Two where she wrote more details than needed in the beginning of the summary and ended up shortening the middle and the end, Jin learned to skip the less important facts in the beginning of the story and arrive at the more central events in the story:

Tommy wanted to be an artist when he grew up but Miss Landers didn't let him use his 64 crayons. So the next day, he hid the 64 crayons under his shirt and the art teacher came. But his art teacher, Miss Bowers, said to copy but Tommy said artists don't copy. So Miss Bowers said after he draw hers, he can draw his own. So he did.

In the beginning of the story, there is a long narration of how Tommy draws everywhere in the house and how his family hangs his pictures at work and at home (DePaola, 2003). She made this part short by saying, “Tommy wanted to be an artist when he grew up...” in order to arrive at the critical event she described. That event was a cornerstone for Tommy to declare his identity at school as an artist. Jin certainly fine tuned her craft of summarizing and demonstrated more comprehension than she had Cycle Two. In the Free Discussion section, as shown in Figure 13, she wrote, “My favorite page is when Tommy drew pictures because I love drawing.”

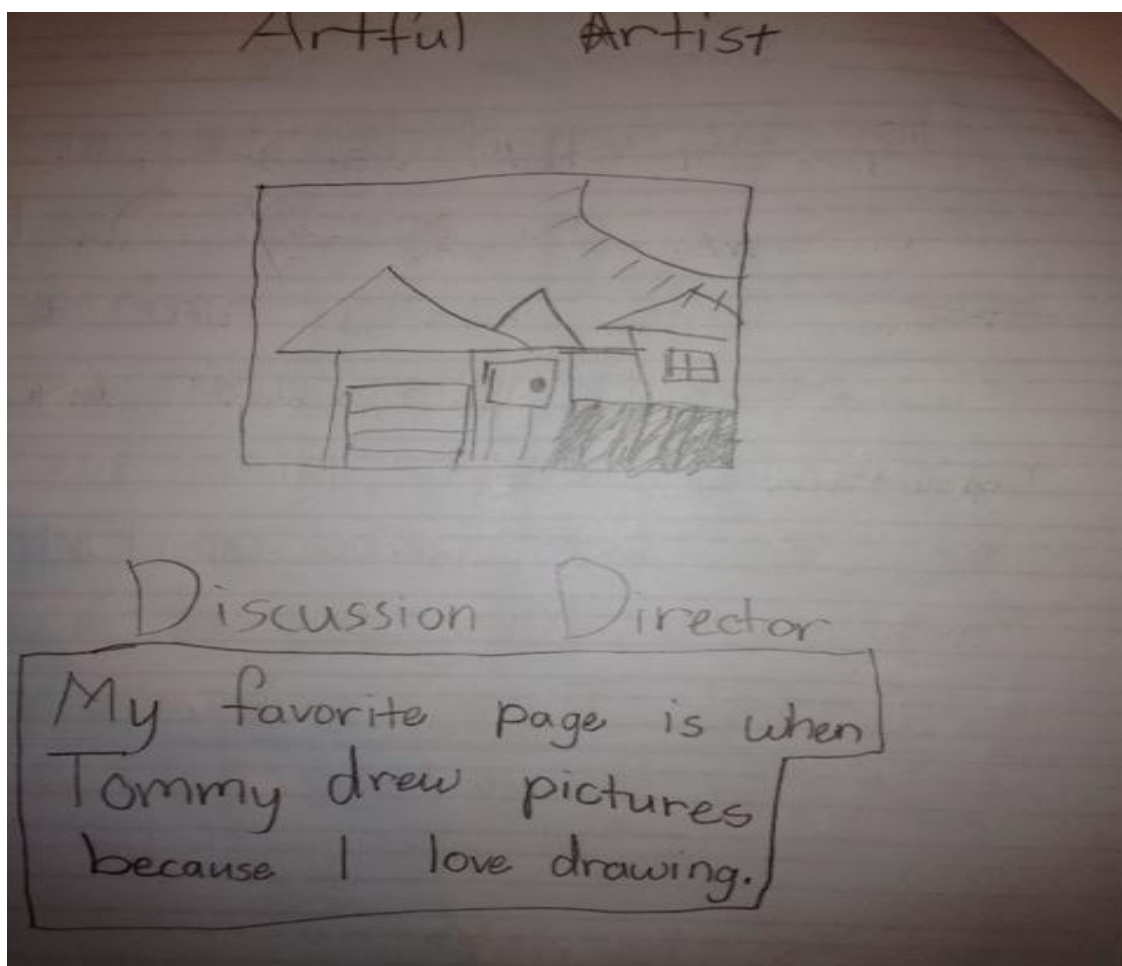


Figure 13. Jin’s responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle Three

The questions Jin generated as a Discussion Director were of quality throughout the three cycles of Literature Circles. In Cycle One, Jin asked about the story about Chinatown as a neighborhood (Low, 2003):

1. Why isn't the boy's grandfather in they're house?
2. Why does grandma and the boy go for a walk through Chinatown?
3. Why do the boy go to the park?
4. Why does the boy and the grandma say "hi" to Mr. Wong?
5. Why does Chinatown really wakes up when the delievery trucks arrive?
6. What does it mean to get our strength up?
7. Why is the kitchen in the restaurant noisy?
8. Why does the boy's grandma is pleased when the crab is furious?
9. Why did the boy's grandma say "be sure to stay close by.
10. When do the older kids from kung fu march to the beat of thumping drums?
11. What does "Gung hay fat choy" means?

Jin addressed some facts in the story that were helpful to understanding as in second, third, fourth, tenth and eleventh questions. Jin's fifth, sixth and eighth questions are unique in the sense that Jin was paying attention to the author's use of certain expressions such as when a town "wakes up" and "get our strength up." In her eighth question, Jin was enjoying the expression of when the crab is "furious." Her first question asked the children in her Literature Circle to infer about the family members that were not mentioned in the setting of the story in the beginning. Her eleventh question addressed the meaning of the Chinese words the author wanted the readers to know. Therefore, the questions Jin generated in Cycle One were very thorough in that she included questions that addressed important facts, questions that required inference, and questions that addressed some literary expressions.

In Cycle Two, Jin generated discussion questions for a non-fiction text about ants:

1. Why does ants have antennae?
2. How does ants talk?
3. Who is the queen?
4. How does ants carry other ants?
5. What are larvae?

6. Why do some people call leafcutter ants parasol ants?
7. How does Weaver ants make nests?

Although she did not ask any direct question related to the theme of teamwork, except for the fourth question that indirectly addressed the concept, the questions Jin generated were extensive in terms of addressing important facts in the story.

In Cycle Three, Jin continued to generate quality questions as a Discussion director:

1. Why did the girl hide under the bed?
2. Why do you think the little girl is afraid of thunder?
3. Why do you think grandma asked for her grandchild to count?
4. Why is she scared when she get's the egg and the milk?
5. Why is the child scared when she gets the tomatoes and strawberries?
6. How do you think the child is brave?
7. How do you think the child thinks she's not brave?

Jin combined questions to address important facts in the story as well as encouraging other children infer based on the characters' actions and speech. Her sixth and seventh questions are of particular interest because they asked for evidence for thinking the child is brave, and the evidence for the child's thinking that she's not brave. Jin's third question was also of interest because it addressed the exact mechanics of the grandmother's plan to help the girl overcome her fear of thunder.

For students like Jin, who began second graders as advanced readers, Literature Circles seem to have provided the training and the arena for them to learn, apply, and push themselves to excel in reading, without the limits of the traditional approach to using the district mandated language arts text. In Cycle One, Jin, an English learner, wrote summaries of non-fiction were high in quality and very thorough. She demonstrated that she had a good understanding of the training provided in mini-lessons. Her attempt to summarize fiction floundered slightly by missing the turning point and the

ending, but her summary was still of quality. It also seemed that she stopped writing when she reached the end of the physical space of the summary section in her Literature Circle Log. She made up for the missing events by discussing them in the Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections. By Cycle Three, Jin became extremely proficient at managing the level of the details in her summary so that she could manage her physical space in the Literature Circle Log and squeeze in all of the important events of fiction. The quality of her work in Cycle Three showed even greater improvement. Jin's work in generating discussion questions showed quality in all three Cycles, and she always had a balanced combination of factual and inferential questions, and topped them with questions regarding literary expressions which children in second grade do not usually attempt to do.

Von

Von, a native speaker of English, is an Asian American student who began second grade as a high reader. He displayed a high level of reading comprehension throughout the three cycles of Literature Circles. In Cycle One, Von summarized a realistic fiction story about the traces and clues the forest animals leave behind:

It is a warm, muggy afternoon and Cammy with his brother, William are picking blueberries. they grab their containers and walked to a maple tree that is lonely. They find a footprint of a raccoon. They go to the pond and find a crater and a tree fallen. They find a big pile of sticks. They find soft shells. A old skin was hanging on a near tree. The pond they looked at a feather. Mussel shells lay near. "the lake!" Cammy said.

Von's summary was noteworthy in that he was very aware that, as far as the text was concerned, the characters never really saw the animals, and that all that they saw were the clues. Unlike other children who frequently say in their summary of this particular text, "They saw the raccoon," Von talked about the traces the animals leave. His work in the

Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections further demonstrated that he went even one step further and understood the mini-lesson about realistic fiction and what makes this text fall under the genre of realistic fiction. He wrote, “I like the story because it is cool and it is realistic fiction” (Figure 14)

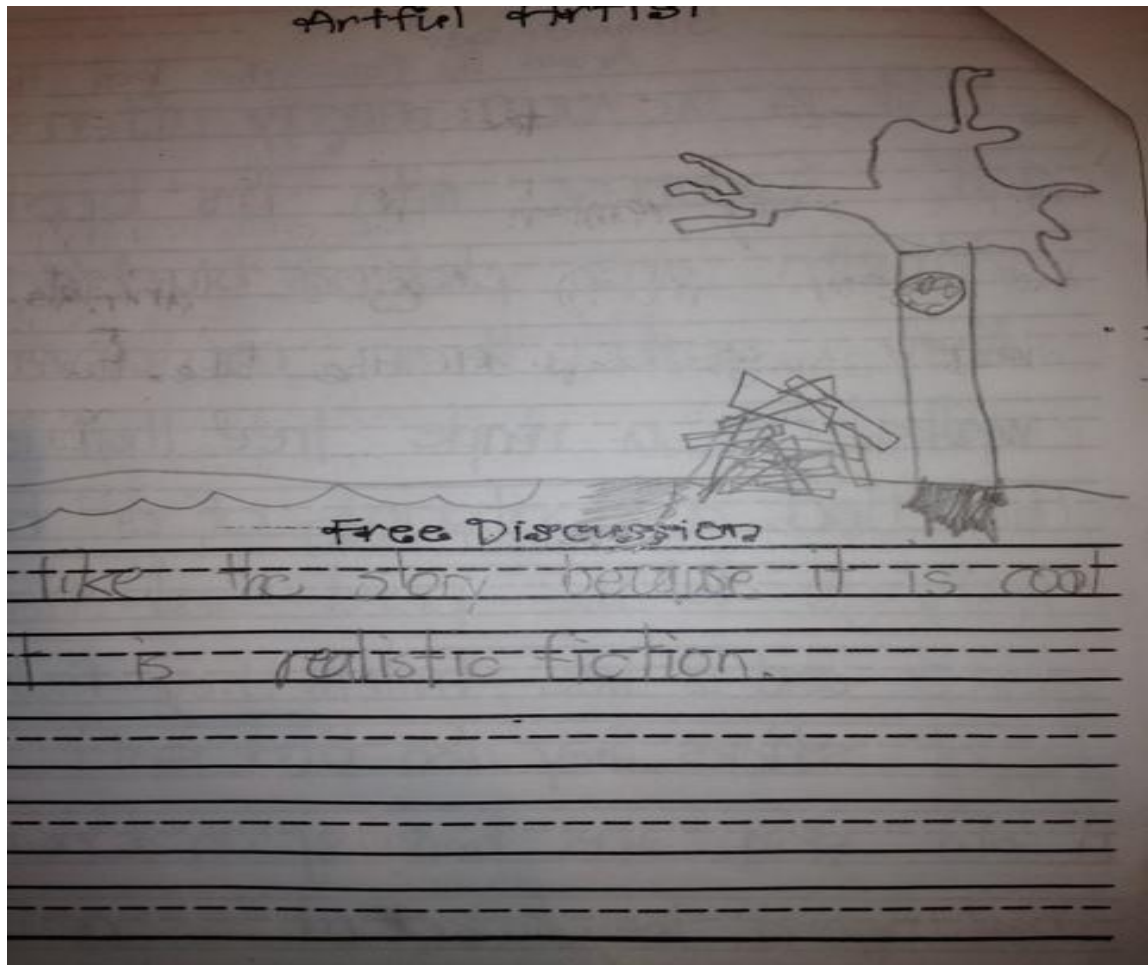


Figure 14. Von’s responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle One

In Cycle Two, Von summarized a story about a girl named Jamaica Louise who has a big idea to hang her pictures on the walkways of the subway station for her grandmother and the passengers (Hest, 2003):

Jamaica Louise James has a cool idea. Last winter the mayor put her name and age on a golden plaque (not the one on the teeth in the subway station on Eighty-sixth and Main. Her mom says her stories last forever. She has a big artist ad

with five colored pencils. She gets ideas for drawing by looking. When the city quiets down they meet together. Jamaica shows her pictures. All day long, Grammy sel tokens in the station. Jamaica likes subways but not stations. She blends color until they are right. She goes in the subway, hangs pictures, and shouts, "Surprise!" to Grammy. Now the walls are filled with color.

This summary was very complete from the beginning of the story to the end, and showed a high level of sophistication, not only in demonstrating his understanding of the story, but also in putting the summary together as a craft. As shown in Figure 14, Von drew a very detailed subway station, similar to BART, a subway he knows, and wrote, "I like this story because she focuses on small nature, compassion, curiosity, and caring for others." This statement showed Von was going one step above the important facts in the story and the basic inferences a young reader might make. He made an attempt to arrive at the themes the author might have tried to convey. The story indeed focuses on small nature, such as the places where Jamaica gets her ideas as an artist. Jamaica also demonstrates curiosity as an artist and compassion and caring for her grandmother and other people that use the subway.

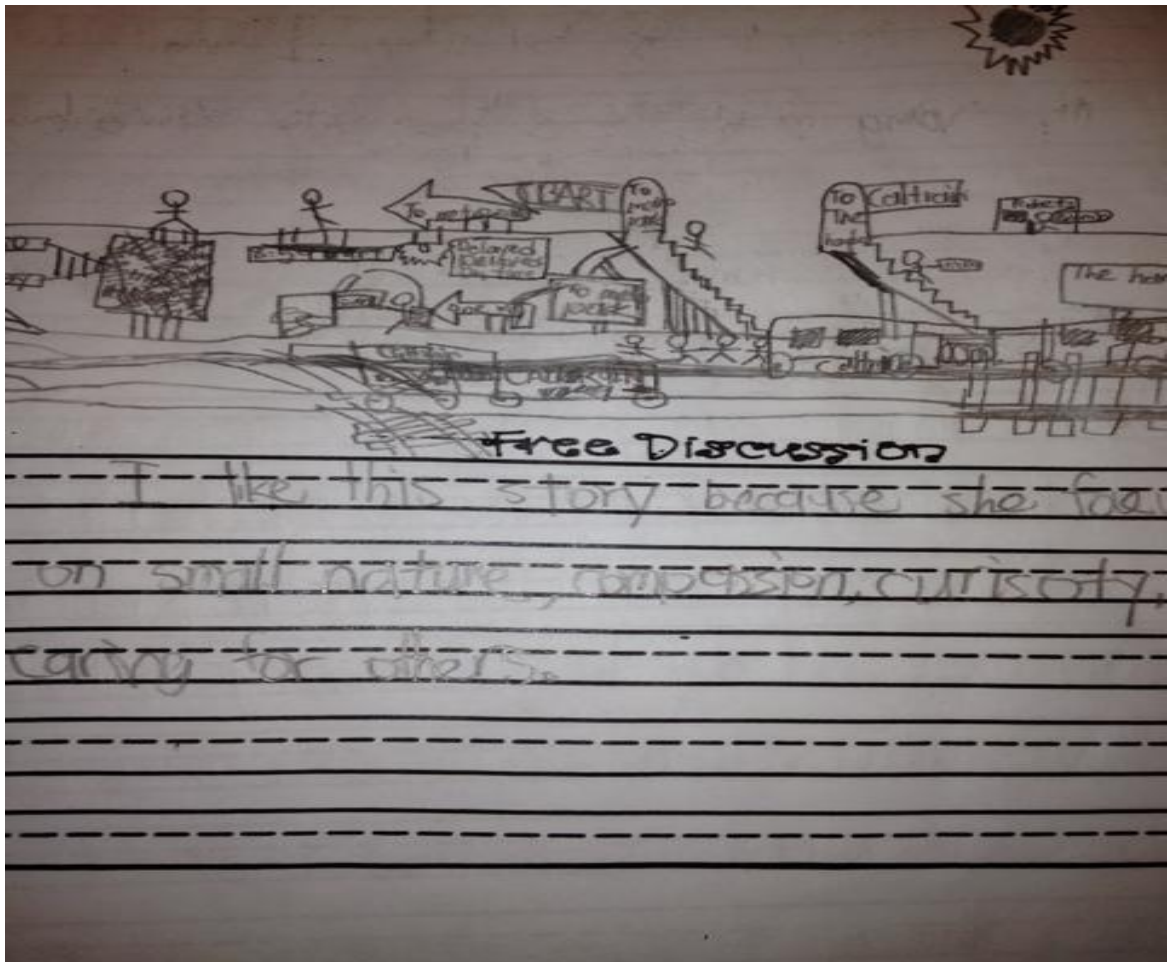


Figure 15. Von's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle Two

In Cycle Three, Von summarized the fiction story about Pablo who decides to bring two things that represent his Jewish and Mexican heritages (Wing, 2003). Von seemed to have put more details than he needed, but his summary still had a flow with all of the important events in place:

The boy's teacher told them to bring a culture from home. The boy will bring something from the bakery. Mama wakes up Pablo, or the boy, early morning. They go to the bakery to make pan dulce (pan dulce is Mexican sweet bread). They knead dough. Next, they make empanadas de calabaza-pumpkin turnovers. The boy spoons the pumpkin filling. The look flaky and brown. The boy now make chango bars. Mama isn't looking, so the boy adds more chocolate chips. Pablo helps his dad make bagels. "We make challah also," says the boy. Challah is Jewish braided bread. Then they make lox. The boy doesn't like lox. Then they make another batch of bagels called Jalapeno bagels. Mama slices the

Jalapeno chiles. Dad knead the dough. Then the boy tries to choose one out of many delicious bakery treats. Then he chooses Jalapeno bagels.

He ended up filling the summary page before he was able to state the ending where Pablo chooses Jalapeno bagels because it was a mix of two cultures, his father's and mother's.

In his Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections (Figure 16), Von drew a very detailed picture of a bakery, and wrote, "I think this is the best story because I want to try making chango bars."



Figure 16. Von's responses in Artful Artist and Free Discussion sections in Cycle Three

The questions Von generated as Discussion Director showed improvement as he moved through the three Cycles. In Cycle One, Von did not generate questions from the

correct text, and even when he used the correct story, the questions he generated addressed facts that were not crucial for comprehension of the realistic fiction:

1. Why did Cammy and William eat all the blueberries?
2. What did they pick while walking?
3. How did they find the lake?
4. How did they find the path?

Because the author's purpose for writing this realistic fiction was to encourage children to infer based on the evidence the animals leave behind (George, 2003), Von could have included more inferential questions than the ones he generated. However in Cycle Two, Von seemed to have understood how to generate good questions to promote comprehension in his group. He generated a very thorough set of questions from a fiction story called *Big Bushy Moustache* about a boy that loses a fake mustache that he was supposed to wear for a school play (Soto, 2003):

1. Why didn't Ricky follow the teacher's orders?
2. Where did this story take place?
3. How did Ricky lose his mustache?
4. Where did Ricky lose his mustache?
5. Why can't mustaches be green or blue?
6. Mustaches can be thin or thick. True or false?
7. Ricky is a boy or a girl?
8. How did Papi take his mustache off?
9. Can Ricky be as same as Papi?
10. Why did the crossing guard say Ricky looks like her Mami?
11. How many people live with Ricky?
12. Compare Ricky with the boy in Chinatown.

In addition to questions that addressed the important facts and events in the story, Von added questions such as the fifth, sixth and seventh that would entertain and amuse other children. His eighth question dealt with the father's state of mind for giving up his mustache for his son, as well as the mechanics of how the father cut the mustache off his face. His tenth question was dealing with Ricky's desire to look like his dad, but the annoyance the crossing guard brings on by saying that he looked like his mom. The last

question is of particular interest in that he is asking the children in his group to make a text-to-text connection by comparing Ricky in this story with the boy in the story about Chinatown. What characterizes Von's work in general is his effort to always take his comprehension, and that of his Literature Circle mates, one step higher.

As Discussion Director in Cycle Three, Von wrote questions that dealt with all areas of non-fiction regarding brothers and sisters (Senisi, 2003), and wrote notes of possible answers so that he could remember when he asks his group:

1. Is Tori going to have a baby boy or girl?
It depends on their genes and genetics.
2. Why does Ben have a newborn brother?
No actual answer.
3. Why is the baby is soft?
Because the hair is on its skin.
4. Why does a baby need attention?
Because its young age needs it.
5. How are brothers and sisters like friends?
Because they play a lot with us.
6. What have you learned about families in this selection?
No actual answer.
7. Why do younger brothers know less than elderly?
Because they know less.
8. Why was Sujathi adopted?
It depends on their friendship.
9. Why does Will's father and uncle got into fights when they were young?
Because when you get older, you change forever.
10. What is a great-aunt?
A aunt that is over 80 years old.
11. Why does Katerine's relatives have been friends for 70 years.
Because of their strong friendship.

Upon reading his first question and his own answer, one might forget that Von is a second grader. It is not too common to come across children who would discuss genes and genetics, although Von's answer is not entirely correct. However, the questions and answers such as the eighth, tenth and eleventh questions and the answers, might bring a laugh and the realization that Von is indeed a second grader. His definition of a great-

aunt as an aunt that is over eighty years old is quite entertaining and endearing. Von did not quite understand how Katherine's grandmother and the sister, the great aunt would have been best friends for seventy years. He wrote, "because of their strong friendship," missing the idea that sisters can be best friends. In spite of the entertaining answers Von wrote to his questions, the quality of his questions was still very high. Again, his sixth question went a step higher, and asked other children to take a step back, and try to extract important ideas from the text, "What have you have learned about families in this selection?"

Von, a native speaker of English, is another student who began second grade as a high reader. His work throughout the three cycles of Literature Circles can be characterized by always pushing himself to go one step above what is expected of him. For example, after having written a very well crafted summary, he added that he liked the story because it was cool and because it was "realistic fiction," bringing in his understanding of the genre. In addition, he drew the most technical and detailed picture in the Artful Artist section of the Literature Circle Log, with a high level of sophistication. Von's work as a Discussion Director also showed growth. Compared to the questions he generated for Cycle One, where he did not seem to have a clear idea of what kinds of questions promote comprehension in his group, the quality of the questions he generated in Cycle Two was much higher. He not only remembered to include questions of fact and inference, but also added questions to amuse and entertain other children. He also made sure he rose one step higher and asked other children to compare the character from another text with the one in the current text. In spite of his amazing work, there were moments in his work when he let us know he was only seven years old

and that there were things in the world he does not yet understand. These aspects of Von's work made me smile.

Even children such as Jin and Von, who began second grade as high readers showed growth in reading comprehension throughout the three cycles of Literature Circles. Their summaries became longer and more sophisticated; they drew detailed illustrations that demonstrated understanding of text and connections to their own lives; and both Jin and Von generated higher quality questions in their role as Discussion Director as the cycles of Literature Circles progressed.

Autonomy

One of the goals of this study was to better understand how Literature Circles impact second graders in terms of their autonomy as readers and learners. This class of second graders participated in Literature Circles for seven months, from September of 2012 to March of 2013. To address this issue of autonomy, the second research question asks: How does Transactional Strategies Instruction affect second grade students' ability to function autonomously as readers and as members of Literature Circles? Through past experience, I have found that Literature Circles, as a form of reading instruction, helped second graders reach a significant degree of autonomy as readers and as members of their Literature Circles. However, this study allowed me to look into the role of Literature Circles in a more systematic way.

As a result of the study, three sets of behaviors representative of the students' autonomy emerged. First, the children read the text, prepared for their roles, and shared their work with other children during the Literature Circle meetings. Next, students not only had the knowledge of the procedure for conducting their meetings, but also applied

that knowledge to conduct their meetings smoothly on their own. Last, the children reflected on their own behaviors as learners and members of Literature Circles, and were able to articulate regarding the same from a metacognitive stance.

Initial Training through Mini-Lessons

The notes from the initial mini-lessons for training of the roles demonstrate a number of behavior problems and describe a lack of student autonomy during lessons. My notes from September 27, 2012 after the first mini-lesson on the role of Vocabulary Enricher read:

Their behavior was awful. I repeated the directions so many times and there were so many interruptions. Some kids grabbed more dictionaries, unaware that they each had one in their work buckets although they had been told. So much confusion followed.

The children were being trained to locate three words that were good for understanding the text, or good for second graders to learn. At the same time, they were being trained to pull their resources and supplies together. I told the students repeatedly to go to the page with the guideword, “vaccine” showing the dictionary page on the Smartboard using the document camera. Without bothering to look at the Smartboard, or trying to locate the page, Carlton repeated, “Where is it?” three times. I had to give him the page number.

However, toward the end of the lesson, there were signs that the children were understanding and following the directions. For example, Noam who normally drifts away during lessons, remembered how many vocabulary words he was supposed to find and what to do after finding and writing the definitions. He was also very clear that he was supposed to use those words in sentences. The end of my notes for the day indicated the feelings of stress and worries: “I am stressed out about the behavior issues of some children that set off other children, too.” The anxiety and the worries I experienced came

from the fact that the children's behavior during the initial training period were so significantly different from the behavior of students in previous years.

Cycle One

After at least one mini-lesson to train the students for each role, Cycle One of the Literature Circles began. Student behavior issues seemed to lessen by the time the children moved on to their first cycle of meetings, where they actually played the roles they had been trained for. These meetings in October were the children's first few attempts at preparing for and actually meeting on their own. I intervened briefly as needed in each group. The children were still slowly acquiring the routines of the procedures and doing their jobs.

My teacher notes from Group A's meeting on October 4 indicated there were instances when the children were not sure how to conduct the meeting, but there were no indications of severe behavior issues. I wrote: "There was a bit of confusion as to how the meeting should flow." The behavior problem that did occur was loud talking among the students working on their own at their desks while I was meeting with Group A, and the members of Group A talking as they lost focus toward the end of their meeting. During the meeting with Group A, Zolo, the Discussion Director, was able to get the meeting started with a minimum prompt from me. However, at several points he got lost as to what should happen next and needed me to intervene and help him out. I gave him a chance to practice what he needed to say a few times to get the meeting to flow:

Zolo: Passage Picker!

Teacher: Would you like to share your passage?

Zolo: Would you like to share your passage?

Fia: Ya um...(softly mumbling) I want to read pages 184-190 because it is interesting.

Teacher: Speak more loudly please.

Fia: I want to read pages 184 because it is interesting. I will read the page. I tried it before.

Zolo: One Eighty-four!

Zolo gained control as a Discussion Director and announced the page number to help the group find the page. Another point of confusion that occurred during the meeting was when Rea realized she had not prepared the Artful Artist drawing.

While Group A was struggling with basic procedural matters, Group B seemed a bit more advanced in how the children functioned during the first cycle of their meetings. The challenge that its members were facing seemed different. Group B managed to go through the meeting with the correct procedure, but encouraging some of their members to participate and respond to each other was a struggle. From the beginning, I had to prompt the scattered group to sit more closely to each other so that they can hear each other and be heard. Don and Abbie had to be prompted again and again to move closer to the rest of the group. There was even a moment when Rick had to remind Abbie to “pay attention.” However when it was time to share the preparation they had done as Connector and Passage Picker, Don and Abbie managed to do their parts and contribute. Christopher who struggled with communication in social interactions was dealing with the challenge during the meeting also. He was talking loudly on his own when Rick was responding to a question Adeline had asked. However, despite his initial difficulty the fact that he did another job when he had been assigned to Vocabulary Enricher, Christopher managed to participate by answering questions asked by Adeline, the Discussion Director.

One of the surprising outcomes of this meeting was Adeline’s awareness and proficiency as a Discussion Director. For someone who hardly says anything in class, and someone who always looks almost frightened, Adeline’s performance and the

amount of autonomy she displayed was quite a shock to me. The other surprise came from Rick, for he seemed to have an internal sense of what was going on, and was able to articulate it to the group and at times, and remind other children for a better flowing discussion. He would take a metacognitive stance about who was participating, and declare: “Christopher and I are the only ones listening,” to prompt other children to listen to each other more seriously, or “I couldn’t hear him” when someone was talking inaudibly. He would also spontaneously say things to quickly bring the meeting on the right track: “I am the Summarizer” or “Who goes next?” The behavior Rick showed during the Literature Circle meetings was in contrast to his usual tendency to roam around the room and stay off task.

Group C was also dealing with issues of knowing the procedure and learning how to function in a small-group setting during the first cycle of meetings in early October. Most of my interventions were designed to help them move the meeting along by reinforcing the procedure and teaching them to respond:

Teacher: Please call on different jobs. Call on people with different jobs. Go ahead.

Ren: (softly) Passage Picker, may you share your passage.

Teacher: (modeling for children) Would you like to share your passage?

Lyn: I have chosen pages 208 and 209 because it teaches about a lot of things.

Teacher: Oh you’ve chosen that passage because it teaches you about a lot of things. That sounds good. Now you would open to the page, and you (to Lyn) need to give them the page numbers again because you spoke very softly.

Lyn: 208 and 209!

Noa: (stares into space)

Teacher: Noa, open to the page.

Group: (opens to the page, and waits for Noa to open to the page)

Teacher: So you (to Lyn) would start reading and they (the group members) will pace their reading according to your pace.

Group: (reads aloud together)

The procedure for how to communicate in a small-group situation had to be taught to Group C. Even something as simple as, “Would you like to share your passage?” that

adults might take for granted had to be explicitly taught, and repeatedly rehearsed, by the children. Speaking in an audible volume was another challenge in the case of Ren who was so extremely shy that she would not make a peep in a whole-class setting. Actually listening to each other and listening for what to do next was challenging for Noa who frequently drifted away. His preparation for his job as a Vocabulary Enricher was also incomplete and he ended up mumbling when sharing his work. He had chosen three words, *insects*, *snake* and *around*, but had not checked the definitions or written sentences using the vocabulary words. I gave him a reminder about what we would expect from him as a Vocabulary Enricher again. In spite of the mishap, he managed to participate in and contribute to the Free Discussion portion of the meeting. Eleana had done the wrong job, but managed to participate in the discussion toward the end.

As happened with Groups A and B, a member in Group C began to show signs of taking a metacognitive stance toward what was going on in their learning and meeting. Von stated after the meeting, “What went well is that everybody did their jobs and what needs to improve is that they should speak louder. Everyone should also remember to do their Artful Artist’s job.” For the most part, his assessments of what went well and what should happen were accurate. Interestingly, a very similar attempt at taking a metacognitive stance like Von’s was displayed by Euijin in Group A and Rick in Group B.

During the same first cycle of the meetings, Group D showed that they were also dealing with the challenges related to the procedures, preparing themselves for the meeting, and how to communicate with each other in a small-group situation. Anna had prepared for the wrong roles, but she communicated her mistake to the group at the

beginning of the meeting before anyone pointed it out. Gianni realized during the meeting that his summary was not complete. He said, “Um... I didn’t do it right,” but it turned out that he had a solid summary for the first half of the story. The students in Group D also had to be taught how to respond to each other:

Dree: would you like to share your vocabulary?

Hon: Graceful, ease of movement or bearing. He dances very graceful. Cobbler, a shoemaker. The cobbler make very little money. Musty, stale. Inside a shop it is very musty.

Group: (silence)

Teacher: When somebody is done sharing, one of you should comment on what you thought of it.

Gianni: It was very good vocabulary.

Teacher: OK it was a good set of vocabulary words that second graders should learn. I agree.

Overall, Group D did not have behavior problems and moved along during their meeting in spite of minor problems, demonstrating the beginning of autonomy in their functioning in a small group. Dree was very effective as the Discussion Director in moving the meeting along. Hon had done his job as Vocabulary Enricher correctly and shared his work effectively during the meeting. He also responded to a lot of questions raised by the Discussion Director. Sheila, who was quiet for about two-thirds of the meeting, clarified for the whole group the fact that the martial arts discussed in the story was kung fu rather than tai chi or tae kwon do.

Even Group E, who seemed to struggle the most with the issues of procedure and preparing for their jobs correctly for their meeting, was not entirely without the signs of autonomy. Dan usually struggled with staying focused during a lesson, and the Literature Circle meeting was no exception. As a Discussion Director, Dan got lost frequently and had to often be reminded of what was expected of him. However, with my prompting, he managed to fulfill his role. Triton had not prepared his vocabulary work properly and

brought definitions he had made up. Noam who usually drifts away during lessons and whole-class discussions did a good job as a Connector and responded to questions, contributing meaningfully to the discussion during the Literature Circle meeting. The surprise the meeting held for me was from Nathan, who also drifts away during lessons. He had done his job as a Summarizer almost correctly, and shared with enthusiasm. Elle, who usually played silently during lessons and whole-class discussions, rose to the occasion and performed beautifully as a Passage Picker. She stated clearly that the reason she chose a particular passage was because “The firefighters tell the kids that they can wear their clothing in 30 seconds.” To this comment, Dan declared, “She did an excellent job!”

Cycle Two

By mid-November, when the children began Cycle Two of Literature Circle meetings, they showed higher proficiency in the meeting procedures and showed a decreased need for teacher intervention. The behavior problems visibly lessened and students’ autonomy increased.

In Group C, Ren, who was previously confused as a Discussion Director and sometimes fell into silence, proceeded to call on the Summarizer without hesitation. Eleana who had done the wrong job during the first cycle, had done her job correctly and confidently. The meeting flowed well until I made a mistake of changing the order of the discussion, in spite of having told the whole class that the Director can use his or her discretion to go from Summarizer to the other jobs and to asking questions, or from the Summarizer to questions and to other jobs. Ren took the latter approach and I confused her by steering her toward the first. At the time, Group C students were not yet quite sure

how to monitor themselves in terms of how well the meeting went or what needed to improve, and I intervened to help them with this process.

Group D's first meeting in Cycle Two of Literature Circles occurred after the Christmas break, and the children had to be briefly refreshed on the beginning procedures of the meeting. After some initial hesitation, the meeting flowed very well. Dree was a very effective Discussion Director, was good about keeping the meeting flowing, and even gave feedback to other children when they shared. Hon was on top of his preparation and sharing as in Cycle One, and Anna had done her job correctly and contributed to the discussion. Sheila who barely spoke during the first cycle shared her work as a Connector. She even contributed by answering questions posed by the Discussion Director. Gianni's summary, which was incomplete during Cycle One, was complete and he contributed during the discussion. What stood out about this meeting were strong signs that the group was beginning to take a metacognitive stance in monitoring their own behavior and work:

Dree: OK. We're done.

Teacher: Now you know what to do next, right? What do you do next?

Dree: How did the meeting go? Sheila!

Sheila: Good because everybody did their jobs.

Dree: Hon, how did the meeting go?

Hon: Well because everybody did the talking and the meeting went smoothly.

Dree: Gianni.

Gianni: Good because we got to share our pictures.

Dree: Good job. (watching Anna's hand go up) And Anna!

Anna: I liked the meeting because nobody was goofing around and we shared our Free Discussion.

Dree: I like...the meeting went well because everyone got to share their Free Discussion and nobody was interrupting when other people had a chance (to talk).

This conversation demonstrated the children's understanding and self-awareness of what behaviors were conducive to a good discussion on literature. They considered it important that every member do his or her reading and the preparation related to the job.

It was also considered essential that every member tried his or her best to take turns talking without being interrupted, and that the group members responded to each other. They were also aware that “goofing around” had no place in a literature discussion. Continuous training through mini-lessons regarding the topic of how to have a successful meeting, and the opportunities for practicing what they had learned were already bearing fruit by Cycle Two of meetings for Group D.

What characterized Group E’s Literature Circle meeting in Cycle Two in terms of the change in their autonomy, was a slight increase in proficiency in the procedure and a noticeable increase in participation by its members. In Cycle One, Dan struggled with the procedure and had trouble focusing. In Cycle Two, he briefly got lost and was almost on the verge of losing his job of Discussion Director to Nathan who was equally lost and started asking a series of comprehension questions a Discussion Director would ask. However, Dan regained control and successfully resumed his position as a Discussion Director:

Dan: I wanna ask questions now. (resuming his role as Discussion Director)
 Teacher: Have other people shared their jobs?
 Dan: No...(searches through his Literature Circle Log to see which job has not been addressed) Noam, would you like to /share your sentences with the group?
 Noam:/Y...a
 Teacher: Would you like to share your connections? (modeling for Dan)
 Dan: Would you like to share your connections with the group?
 Noam: This reminds me of Bree and Aper (his pets) fighting over a piece of bread.
 This reminds me of when I talk to a rabbit.
 Dan: (searches though his Log to see which job should be called next)
 Vocabulary
 Enricher, /Would you like to share your vocabulary?
 Noam: /I have a picture
 Triton and Nathan: /Picture.
 Noam: (shares his Artful Artist drawing)

With help from his Literature Circle Log, Dan did his best to regain control of the meeting and resume his job as Discussion Director. Considering how difficult it was for him to organize himself to perform a task, this effort on his part was commendable. I expressed a feeling of relief from my worries about Dan in my journal:

Dan seemed lost and confused, but when he was responding to Nathaniel's questions, his responses were very profound and interpretive. (In the story) The animals and birds were arguing over who was superior. He went a step further and added that they chose to play a ball game over violence. He gained more and more control as the meeting went on and did a beautiful job. When it looked confusing because Nathan the Summarizer happened to bring questions for his free discussion and he was beginning to look like the Director, Dan resumed his role as soon as Nathan was done by saying, "I wanna ask questions now." My worries about Dan began to disappear. Compared with his performance during the first cycle of the meetings, he has grown significantly in terms of functioning and comprehension of the text.

Triton's preparation for his job as Vocabulary Enricher also showed that he now understood how to do his job correctly without my intervention. He actually went to the dictionary and found the definitions, whereas in Cycle One, he took a shortcut and wrote skimpy definitions from his background knowledge.

Group E's work in the second cycle of the Literature Circles also showed the beginning signs of children taking a metacognitive stance regarding their work. When Dan asked the group how they thought the meeting went, Nathan thought they did "good" because "Everyone did their job." Triton felt that "The meeting would be better if Noam wrote more." He was referring to the Free Discussion section.

Cycle Three

By the time Cycle Three of Literature Circle meetings rolled around in February of 2013, the signs of autonomy were even more evident. The children seemed to be comfortable with how to prepare for the meetings, what the procedures were for the meetings, and how they were supposed to respond to each other. In case of Group A, I

never had to intervene a single time during the third cycle, even when there was a crisis during the meeting. Zolo had not prepared for the meeting fully and tried to make up things to say on the spot. When other children complained that he had not brought his writing, he responded, “Let me just do what I made up. My favorite part is when Ben loves his brother. I didn’t even draw the picture.” The children obliged and the meeting moved on. Zolo even managed to remark on another child’s picture, “I like your picture because it’s very cute.” Although he had not followed the directions exactly, he was still able to participate in the literature discussion, and the group had the ability to move through the crisis.

Group B also showed a lot of growth in terms of autonomy by Cycle Three of Literature Circle meetings. Adeline, who usually looked frightened to speak, was a very effective Discussion Director. She had internalized the procedure and leaned over this way and that way to help other children read a difficult word as needed:

Adeline: Summarizer, would you like to share your summary?

Rick: Pablo has to take something to the international food festival. He decides to bring Jalapeno bagels and Chango bars, but he brings jalapenos to his class. That’s it.

Christopher: Mine is not that complete.

Adeline: It’s OK.

Christopher: Culture, um...

Adeline: (leans over to help)

Christopher: Dough, stuff made of flour.

Adeline: (leans over to help him pronounce “ingredient”) Ingredient.

Christopher: Ingredient, one of the things that make up a mixture.

Adeline: Connector, please share your connections

Everyone in Group B had done his or her job correctly and contributed to the discussion.

Again, I did not have to intervene a single time.

Group C also showed growth in autonomy. My notes after observing their meeting read:

There was more spontaneity in their conversation. Eleana made spontaneous efforts to elicit responses from the group. The group had muscle knowledge of the procedure for conducting the Literature Circle meetings and helped each other with what to do. The Free Discussion portion at the end seemed more comfortable, natural and enjoyable.

Eleana, who used to struggle with preparing for her job as Discussion Director, had high-quality questions ready for the meeting. She also was more successful as a Discussion Director and made spontaneous efforts to elicit responses from the group. Group C, as a whole, also experienced growth.

During Cycle Three of Literature Circles, Groups C, D, and E each incorporated an additional student who had previously been pulled out for reading at Literature Circle time. By Cycle Three, the three groups were very autonomous in how they ran their meetings, and training and incorporating these three new members of the groups seemed to be very natural and smooth. Group C also showed a lot of flexibility in that if anyone was absent, anybody in the group filled in for that person without involving me, and the meeting moved right along.

Summary

The second research question asked how TSI affects the students' ability to function autonomously as readers and as members of Literature Circles. One of the behaviors that demonstrated autonomy was preparing themselves for the meeting by organizing themselves, pulling their supplies and resources together to read, looking up the job schedule and job description, and filling in the Literature Circle Log. For the most part, the children were able to prepare for the meetings on their own by Cycle Two in late November. By Cycle Three, it is safe to say the students were very proficient at preparing themselves for each meeting. Another behavior that represented autonomy was having the muscle knowledge, or internalized memory, of the procedure of how the

meeting was supposed to proceed. The students knew how to function as a group that came together to discuss literature. Being able to function as a group included being able to sit together, listening to each other, and responding to each other using proper language for discussion. The children showed continuous progress in their functioning throughout the first and second cycles of Literature Circles, and were comfortably settled by Cycle Three. The third behavior that represented autonomy was their being able to reflect on their work from a metacognitive stance and articulate their thoughts about how the group meetings went. There were beginning signs of this behavior during Cycle One of Literature Circles by a few children such as Jin and Von, and the signs of the behavior continued to grow in Cycle Two. By Cycle Three, most children seemed to be aware of their own group's behavior, and were able to assess their behavior and performance accurately.

Children Helping Each Other

Closely related to children achieving autonomy as learners, and members of Literature Circles, was the evidence of children's teacher-like helping and facilitating behavior. This phenomenon represented an unexpended finding of the study. Although the format and the procedure of the Literature Circle meetings assume and require a contribution from every member, there were sign of children going beyond what they were are asked to do in terms of fulfilling their roles and responding to each other. The children's work throughout Literature Circles revealed teacher-like facilitating and helping behavior in terms of giving actual help with a certain task, clarifying for other children and giving feedback.

Initial Training through Mini-Lessons

During the Initial Training stage for Literature Circle implementation, the students showed minimal signs of helping each other. Helping occurred at my request as in a pair-share, or as in case of Carlton, when a child's natural personality was to give help and roam around the room as soon as he or she is finished with the task at hand. My notes from a mini-lesson during the initial training for Vocabulary Enricher indicated that after quite a struggle, Carlton learned to locate words in the dictionary and as soon as he thought he knew what to do, his usual pattern of helping and roaming around surfaced. No other children demonstrated helping behaviors during the training phase.

Cycle One

During a meeting in Cycle One, Rea and Ron who were in Group A, helped out Zolo the Discussion Director when he experienced a moment of confusion:

Zolo: What made the hole in the sandy water? (pause) Ron!

Ron: That's sunfish.

Zolo: Why would those feathers stuck to the tree? (pause) Rea.

Rea: Because when they flap their wings, the fur comes off and it stays, it gets stuck on the tree.

Zolo: (got lost and confusion followed)

Zolo: Why were the white stuff stuck to the tree?

Rea: I said that already. When they flap their wings, it gets stuck on the tree. Now you're done.

Zolo: I wrieded two of them?

Group: (giggle)

Ron: Now you call on the Connector.

What Rea did for Zolo was to clarify what just happened so that he could move on to the next step. As a result, Zolo realized he had written the same question twice. The kids giggled following Zolo's remark, "I wrieded two of them?" finding the situation entertaining. In response to the giggling, Ron steered the children right back to the meeting by letting Zolo know he was to call on the Connector next. All of this happened

even before I tried to intervene. In my experience, a situation like this would hardly occur in a whole-class setting. Shouting these remarks across the room would hardly be appropriate even in the children's sense of good manners.

This helping behavior among children happened again in the form of giving feedback during the same meeting when Zolo yelled out a page number, "Page One Eighty Four!" Ron responded in his usual calm and gentle voice, "You don't have to yell it out." A few minutes later, the children were reading a passage chosen by the Passage Picker together:

Group: (stops at "spagnum moss") What is that word? Spg moss?

Zolo: It's a great word for Vocabulary Enricher?

Teacher: Spagnum moss?

Group: (continues reading from the word "spagnum moss")

Jin: Do you know why I can't get it? (referring to not having included the word on her vocabulary list) Because I can't find it (referring to the dictionary)

Fia: O you were looking at the dictionary.

Jin: Ya. I looked there, but there wasn't...

Teacher: Well, it's a special kind of moss. That's why you didn't see it in your dictionary. Thank you for checking though. Nice try.

First, Zolo gave Jin and the group the feedback that the word "spagnum moss" would make a good word for the job of Vocabulary Enricher. Next, Fia's comment, "O you were looking at the dictionary" was an attempt to reinforce and clarify Jin's going to the dictionary. Interestingly, these two comments operating as feedback allowed Jin to have a chance to articulate her decision-making from a metacognitive stance.

In Group C's meeting in Cycle One, Von made attempts to steer the discussion in the right direction twice when Ren, the Discussion Director, asked three questions that went off track from the main idea of the text about how to be an observer of wildlife:

Ren: How many butterflies did they see?

Von: Sixty or seventy because there were a lot of butterflies. Monarch butterflies migrate.

(a few minutes later)

Ren: What did they smell?

Von: This story, it tells you how to be one (meaning wildlife detective). It teaches you how to use the smell to guess what has been there.

(a few minutes later)

Ren: How many insects did they see?

Von: (smiling) This is like the third time. A lot because many insects live in the forest.

The three questions that Ren asked as a Discussion Director were factual questions that missed the author's deeper purpose for writing this passage. These were factual questions that did not help the readers in their comprehension of the story. The number of insects or butterflies there were in the illustrations was irrelevant to the main ideas of the story. However, how to use one's sense of smell was one of the key points in how to be a wildlife detective. It was obvious that Von was aware of these differences in generating questions, but without being offensive or rude, he made three attempts to steer the discussion to the right direction, all three times in good humor.

Group D also showed evidence of children helping each other when Anna forgot what job she had prepared for the meeting and confusion ensued. Dree, as the Discussion Director, looked at her schedule of jobs quickly and clarified the situation so that the meeting could start. Group E also displayed efforts by children to help each other out by clarifying for each other and keeping track of the procedure. When Elle used the wrong personal pronoun and there was a risk of misunderstanding the story, Triton knew what she meant but asked a clarifying question on behalf of the group:

Dan: Why did the kids feed Spot? Why did the children eat cream cheese and bagels?

Elle: Because they were hungry?

Triton: Spot or the children?

In this story, the firehouse chief let the visiting children feed Spot because he had not eaten breakfast yet. So what Elle should have said was, "Because it (or he) was hungry?"

Being aware of what was going on, Triton asked the clarifying question. A few minutes later in another part of the discussion, Triton made another attempt to move the meeting forward in a similar moment of confusion when time was being wasted again. Knowing that the Connector should share so that they could resolve any confusion, he asked, “Who’s the Connector?” As a result, Noam raised his hand and shared, “That’s me. I have made a text-to-text.” So the discussion moved on. Triton’s attempts here were in contrast to his usual tendency to play silently during whole-class lessons. The Literature Circles offered Triton the opportunity to be a helper to other students.

Cycle Two

Teacher-like facilitating behaviors by children during the Literature Circle time surfaced more frequently in Cycle Two:

Zolo: I have chosen page Three Hundred Four because it was interesting.

Jin: (clarifies) Three Hundred Four?

Group: (looks at Zolo to start reading and reads together)

T: Did you go over why it was interesting?

Zolo: (silence)

Jin: (instead of Zolo) Because it was interesting.

Teacher: O Zolo said that? Because it was interesting. Why was it interesting, Zolo?

Zolo: Because it has lots of good parts. Because I saw people learning their lines and one of them was doing the lines they were supposed to.

Jin somehow took it upon herself to assist Zolo, perhaps because she was already aware that his reaction time was longer than other children’s and he got easily lost. Jin’s intervention and assistance earned some time for Zolo to gather his thoughts and explain to the group why he found the passage interesting. At the same time, the group was tuning into each other more, and it came naturally for them to wait for Zolo to begin reading in order for them to pace their reading aloud with his speed.

Von, in Group C, was also demonstrating the teacher-like facilitation in order to make the meeting go more smoothly:

Ren: Eleana, would you like to share your Free Discussion and Artful Artist?

Eleana: Yess! (pause) This story reminds me of when I did a speech in front of my family and relatives, and their dog was right by me. And the dog bit me on the fingernail, and the speech was outside.

Von: Where is the picture?

Eleana: (shows her drawing)

Von: (shows his drawing) This story is supercalifragialisticexpiallidocious because it is exciting. (explains about the drawing of a police station from 1936 and a lot of intricate drawings of complex activities)

Von was asking about the picture and his comments were similar to those I might make, as the teacher, to make sure Eleana did not forget to share her Artful Artist drawing. In another part of the discussion, Von was clarifying for the group when Noa's sharing as a Vocabulary Enricher became a bit diffused and difficult to discern:

Noa: Officer Buckle shared his safety tips with the students at Napville School. Nobody ever listened. Sometimes there was snoring. (no indication of which words were the vocabulary words)

Von: What are the words?

Noa: (confused and no response)

Von who suffered from his difficulty with social interactions despite his high intelligence displayed prudence not to be direct as to say what the person did wrong, but used words that would correct the situation indirectly. His interventions were not critical, but accommodating and helpful.

Cycle Three

In Cycle Three, the children showed signs of monitoring on behalf of each other for self-correction. When Patrick, in Group B, realized that Abbie the Passage Picker skipped the read-aloud portion of the meeting, he corrected the situation by saying, "We didn't go into this thing," referring to the read-aloud. On the other hand, Christopher's

valid attempt to correct a job that had not been properly done went beyond the other children's level of functioning and ended up looking almost unintentionally rude:

Adeline: Do they make bagels and donuts?

Rick: They probably make donuts, too, because my mom tells me that sometimes you use the same dough.

Christopher: (as if talking to himself) That's a yes/no question. You are not supposed to do yes/no question. (referring to what I had said when I gave them lessons on how to generate questions)

Adeline: Is it just their store?

Rick: Yes.

Unfortunately, Christopher's correct understanding of how to generate questions to promote comprehension among his group, and his efforts to be helpful, were not registered by his group because he did not have the tools of pragmatics, such as the opening and closing of channels (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000) due to his challenges in social interactions as discussed in the Participant section. He could have raised his hand or addressed the Discussion Director directly, but instead, he was mumbling and sounded as if he was complaining to himself.

The helping behavior that occurred in the three cycles of Literature Circles consisted of children giving help with reading difficult words, clarifying what was going on in the meeting, and giving each other feedback. These teacher-like facilitating behaviors occurred spontaneously among the students, without my request or prompting. These behaviors for the most part contributed to a more smooth discussion and a meeting.

Motivation and Enjoyment

Another unexpected finding of this study was that children seemed more and more motivated to learn through Literature Circles over time, and seemed to enjoy the company of their classmates in the learning process. In Cycle One, Zolo, a member of Group A, showed a part of him that was different from his usual pattern, struggling to begin the task, stay on task, or complete the task. My notes from his group's meeting read:

Considering this was his first time as Discussion Director, he (Zolo) was motivated and spoke loudly enough to be heard. His response when he randomly called on Fia was very funny. What a character!

His personality was shining through during the meeting, and he kept making me and other children laugh. In one instance, he stated the same question twice, and when someone helped him clarify that he had written the same question twice, he gave his typical confused look and said, “I wrieded two of them?” Instead of getting upset at him or looking down on him, the children broke up in endearing giggles.

Dree was a very serious child and she rarely smiled. However, during Literature Circle meetings, she smiled showing her beautiful teeth quite often. She began smiling during her group meetings as early as Cycle One:

Dree: Questions. (smiling) What does the boy take every Saturday?

Group: (Sheila’s and Gianni’s hands go up)

Dree: Sheila.

Sheila: Kung fu.

Teacher: Good question. It’s a good factual question.

Dree: (smiling) What do they celebrate every year?

Group: (everybody’s hands go up)

Dree: (smiling) Gianni.

Teacher: That’s another good factual question.

Gianni: Chinese New Year.

Dree: (smiling)

In Cycle Two, Zolo again showed excitement responding to a question asked by Ron, the Discussion Director. When Ron asked where the boy in the story went after dinner, Zolo was excited to offer his answer and shouted, “His room.” Showing excitement about lessons was not usually in his repertoire of behaviors. It would be an overstatement to say that Zolo was always excited during meetings, but it is true that he showed more excitement and engagement during Literature Circle meetings than in whole-class lessons.

Both Ren and Eleana in Group C were extremely quiet in general and hardly ever expressed any of their ideas during whole-class lessons. They went through Cycle One of their Literature Circles completing their roles and whatever was required at minimum.

However, starting in Cycle Two, they seemed more motivated and animated in their conversations. At the beginning of their meeting in Cycle Two, Ren and Eleana also showed more confidence and enjoyment:

Ren: (smiling) Summarizer, would you like to share your summary?
 Eleana: Yes. The main ideas were when Officer Buckle said the safety tips, Gloria did tricks when Officer Buckle was not looking. And when the little girl wrote a note about Officer Buckle and Gloria.
 Teacher: Pause. Um...can you speak louder? OK. Thank you.
 Eleana: (repeats confidently while smiling)

Gianni, in Group D, was genuinely interested and motivated to listen to other people's work and to see their drawings:

Gianni: Ants can eat caterpillars. (showing his drawing)
 Dree: Good job. Um...Passage Picker, you could share your Artful Artist and Free Discussion.
 Anna: (showing her drawing) I like this book.
 Dree: (smiling) This is a picture of my ant.
 Gianni: I didn't get to see Dree's picture.

This part of their conversation is an example of the students having a good time sharing their thoughts and drawings. Gianni, who did not get to see Dree's drawing, was sincerely interested in her work and showed genuine curiosity. He basically asked the group to slow down so that he could look at Dree's drawing more carefully. If the children were just going through the motions, Gianni would not have bothered to back track so that he could see Dree's picture.

During Cycle Two, Dan, in Group E, showed excitement over his role as Discussion Director. His voice and smiles were leading me to believe he was really getting into his role when he was asking questions:

Dan: Why do birds and animals have an argument? (pause) Nathan.
 Nathan: To see who's like the best?
 Dan: Correct. Why did Bear say that Bat could not be in the team? (pause) Elle.
 Elle: Because he had wings...he had wings.

Dan: Correct. Why did they even have a ball game? (pause) Nathan.

Nathan: To see who would win the argument?

Dan: (smiling) Wrong. (pause) Elle.

Elle: To end the argument.

Dan: Yes.

Triton: That was what I was going to say.

Dan was enjoying the play on words tremendously. Most children would have been accepting of “ending the argument” or “winning the argument” as a correct answer.

Dan chose to be very precise, and honed in on “settling the argument” as the correct answer.

In Cycle Three, Group A had quite an animated meeting. My notes after that meeting read:

The depth of their responses was remarkable. They also monitored each other in a positive way. I also realized they had a lot of fun doing this. A lot of them smile as they talk and the children giggle at funny comments or situations. Zolo who has such difficulty beginning and finishing work managed to get something done, throw humor into situations and enjoy the meeting. I was very proud of them.

In this example, the text they were reading discussed what it is like to have brothers and sisters. They were having such a good time discussing a good name for a baby sister or brother, and were giggling away when Fia (referring to babies) asked, “Why don’t they have hair?” Later in the same meeting, when there was no response after Jin talked about her favorite part of the story, Jin decided to be funny and pretended to be bossy by telling the group to “Respond, respond, respond!” The children broke off again in giggles.

During Cycle Three, Group B also had quite an engaging meeting. The text dealt with the topic of bicultural heritage. This topic motivated Don and brought him out of silence. He later used the topic for writing during writer’s workshop time, and wrote a lengthy piece about what it was like to have a heritage from two different Latin American countries. This Literature Circle meeting was particularly motivating to him. Later at the

end of the same meeting, Rick realized something that was surprising to him. He said to Adeline in a fascinated voice, “You lost a tooth.” Then the children engaged in a lively conversation about the teeth they had lost. Previously, it was not Rick’s pattern of behavior to notice these things about other people. However it seemed he was paying attention to Adeline while she was leading the discussion as a Discussion Director. It was obvious to me that the children were enjoying each other’s company and building deeper relationships with one another through their Literature Circles.

Children Driving Instruction

Prior to this study, I had not noticed that the children had issues with oral English during lessons in whole-class setting. I had thought even my English learners were expressing themselves adequately. However, observing the children’s discussion in their Literature Circle Meetings revealed that both native speakers and English learners needed coaching in spoken English for academic purposes. Mostly, the students’ needs centered on grammar and vocabulary for expressing their ideas, and not on pronunciation.

Beginning in Cycle One, this issue with academic oral English surfaced right away. What follows are examples, in italics, of the students mistakes in using academic English. Zolo who is an EL asked, “What’s were the cracks?” He also asked, “I *writed* two of them?” Jin who is also an EL said, “Muggy means hot and *human*. The *road is muggy*.” Fia, an EL, stated the reason for picking a certain passage: “I want to read pages 184 through pages 190 because *it is* interesting.” Christopher who is a native speaker discussed part of the text that he liked, “Cammy and her brother went to the blueberry bush and they saw a flimsy shape of snake skin, and they stopped at the blueberry bush and they *eat* them.” The Discussion Director in one group asked, “Why

do they want to eat the pie?” Abbie, who is a native speaker responded, “Because it is delicious and it has blueberries in it, and I love’em, too.” Hon, who is a high-functioning EL, said as a Vocabulary Enricher, “Graceful, ease of movement or bearing. He dances very *graceful*. Cobbler, shoemaker. The cobbler *make* very little money. Musty, stale. Inside a shop, it is very musty.” Dree, who is a native speaker of English, began her meeting with, “Summarizer, *may you* share your summary.” I followed up and suggested, “Would you like to share your summary?”

The examples go on to demonstrate that children did need explicit coaching in academic oral English. Eleana who is a native speaker recalled an event, “And the dog *bited* me and the speech was outside. Anna, who is also a native speaker, gave a reason why she had chosen a certain passage: “I like pages six and seven because *it has a ant queen* in the picture.”

Participating in a small-group discussion about children’s literature was a venue in which the children’s need for explicit coaching in academic oral English became obvious to me as their teacher. By listening to their conversations, and the mistakes they made, I was able to target my instruction towards the specific language and speaking needs of my students. The Literature Circles also provided an important venue in which the children had an opportunity to practice spoken English for authentic academic purposes.

In addition, I received first-hand information about what metacognitive comprehension strategies they needed help with, as a result of listening to their discussion during Literature Circle meetings.

PAR

The purpose of the Participatory Action Research portion of this study was to engage second graders as co-researchers to examine how they felt about Literature Circles, and to look for suggestions for improving Literature Circles. In previous research focusing on Literature Circles, and students in grades kindergarten through 12, I did not find any study incorporating children as co-researchers in a PAR approach. My third research question was: Based on the students' perception, how can the implementation of Literature Circles in the second grade be improved?

Generating Interview Questions

I initiated Part Two, the PAR component of the study in late March 2013 when the Literature Circle meetings for Cycle Three were wrapping up. I began this part of the study by reminding my students about how well they routinely evaluated their own Literature Circle meetings. I complimented them on what a great job they had done accurately evaluating their own work and behavior. When they acknowledged that they were comfortable with evaluating their own meetings, I asked them if they would like to take their routine evaluations a step further by conducting a study, as university professors do, to look for ways to improve their own Literature Circle experience. Their response was positive and the level of excitement rose when they learned that they could take turns being videographers, interviewers and interviewees similar to “grown-up” researchers.

The next step of our PAR process was to generate interview questions as a whole class. I asked them what different areas of Literature Circles they would need to think about and gave them two examples, the Literature Circle Logs that they wrote in in

preparation for the meetings, and the different roles they performed for and during the meetings. I invited them to create more categories for generating questions. They raised their hands and added additional categories including: coaching sessions with me, the meetings, reading and writing proficiency, the stories they had read for meetings, their feelings about literature circles, and their work behavior. I suggested one last category about children learning from each other.

Generating the actual interview questions took two one-hour sessions on two consecutive days. After giving the students a few minute to think about what questions would be good to ask one another under each of the categories they generated, I sat in front of the computer connected to the Smart Board so that I could type in the questions in full view of the students as we were generating questions.

On the following school day, the children began conducting the interviews. In order to reduce the noise level of the classroom, only two or three interviews were held per day while the rest of the class was engaged in independent work such as getting ready for their next Literature Circle meetings. The interviews were scheduled as long as there was no interruption by school-wide activities such as assemblies. I did modeling of how to interview so that the children knew how to conduct interviews. For the job of a videographer, I expedited the process of training with the iPhone by giving it to Rick who was already familiar with how to make a video. Rick became my helper and trained other children to video-record. Many children had experience with smart phones and the process of children teaching each other to record videos was smooth. The first six interviews were conducted this way, recorded while the rest of the class was preparing quietly for the next Literature Circle meetings. Following the first six interviews, the rest

of the class were paired up randomly to interview each other, without being recorded, all at the same time in the classroom in different corners and at desks.

Generating Themes

When all of the interviews were completed, each interviewer presented his or her interview (Figure 17) results to the class while I recorded the results on the Smartboard for the whole class to see. I continued to record results every day until all of the interviewers presented their data. This process took eight school days.

Questions 1 and 2 addressed the Literature Circle Log students filled out to organize and prepare themselves for the Literature Circle meetings. Question 1 asked, “What do you like about our Literature Circle Log and why?” The completed Smartboard with the students’ responses are shown in Figures 17 and 18. The children gave different responses such as:

(It) keeps me organized.
You get to work right away
It’s fun because you get to read and write.
We switch jobs.
It’s fun to fill it out
It’s easy to do your job.

Some children also commented on their favorite sections in the log such as the Summarizer page or the Artful Artist section. Instead of introducing any particular method of processing data, we simply read the different responses together.

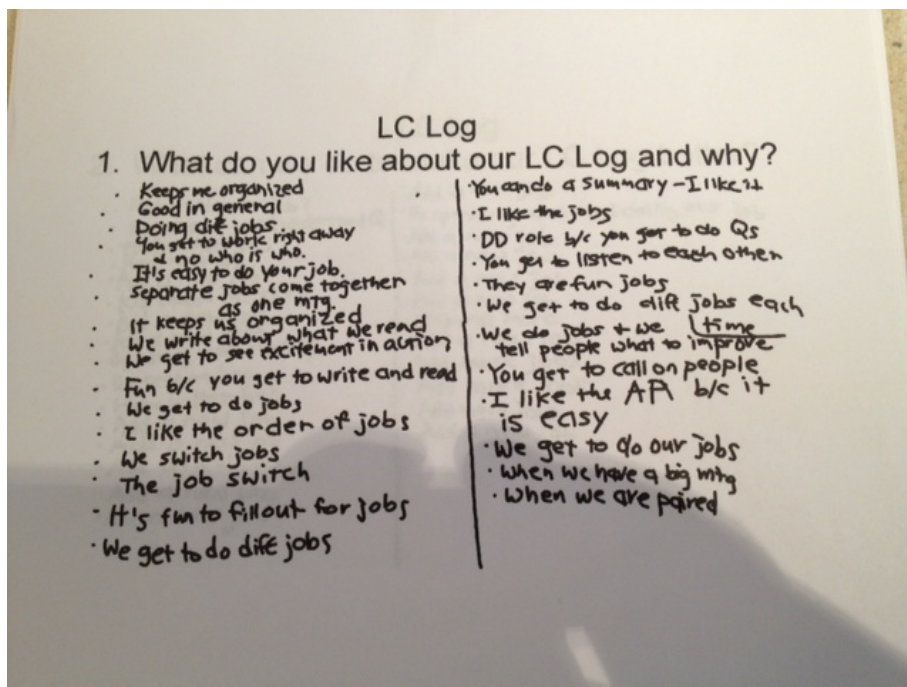


Figure 17. Smartboard file showing data processing for Question 1.

Question 2 asked, “What can we do to make our Literature Circle Log better?” At this point, glancing at the data on Figure 18, I asked them how we should proceed. Many of the students noticed a response that was frequently occurring. I helped them refresh their math concept of the *mode* as the most frequently occurring data. They all agreed that “adding a new job” to the Literature Circle Log was the mode, and would be the way to improve our Literature Circle Log. The few other suggestions that had been made by children were: “Have kids choose the story,” and “Having more stories.” These two ideas are also quite valuable and echo Daniels (2002) who writes that having a choice of stories is an integral part of using Literature Circles in the classroom.

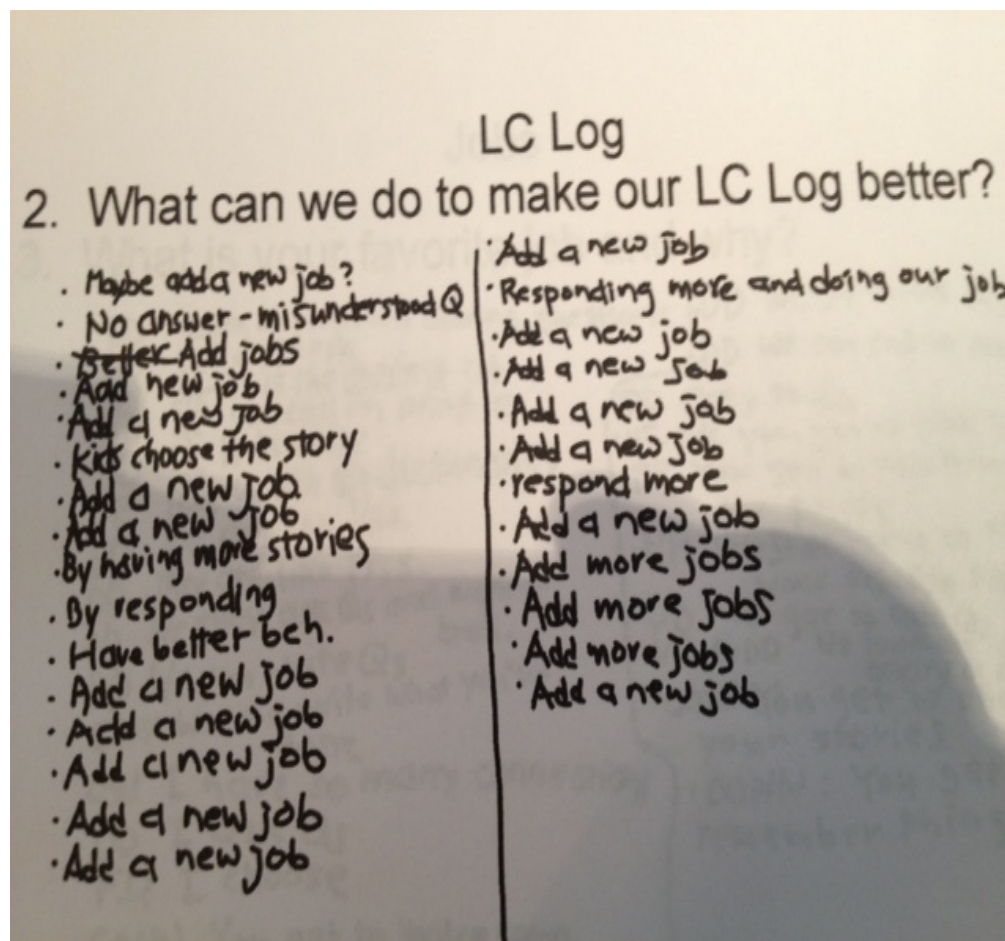


Figure 18. Smartboard file showing data processing for Question 2.

Questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 had to do with the various jobs or the roles within the Literature Circles. Question 3 asked, “What is your favorite job and why?” Again, the children agreed that using the most frequently occurring data, the mode, would be the way to handle the data for this question. The children saw that six children out of 28 voted for Discussion Director as their favorite job. By this time, Eleana had moved out of the district and the total number of children in the class was twenty-eight. The reasons given for choosing the Discussion Director as their favorite job varied. Some said calling on people and sharing questions was fun. Some said the Discussion Directors had an authority like a teaching assistant in terms of monitoring behavior.

The next highest vote for a favorite role was for the job of Connector. Six students responded that being a Connector was their favorite job. The reasons varied, but they all had to do with being able to use their own experiences. One child liked the job because he or she had so many connections to make. Another child liked the job because “you get to share stories.” Yet another child said, “You get to remember things.” One child even specifically responded that as a Connector, “I get to share my experience.” One student favored Free Discussion as a favorite job because he or she had a lot of choices as to what to present.

Question 4 asked, “What is your least favorite job and why?” Eleven out of twenty-eight children responded that their least favorite job was Vocabulary Enricher for two different reasons. One was that they did not like having to choose words out of the story, and the other was that it was difficult to look up the dictionary for the definitions. The second least favorite job that eight children reported was Summarizer because looking for main ideas and putting them together in a summary was difficult, especially in the case of non-fiction. The third least favorite job that seven children reported was Passage Picker for different reasons. One student did not like having to look through the story again to decide. Another child thought the job was too simple. Others had difficulty deciding on the passage.

Question 5 asked, “What is your most difficult job and why?” Although this question sounds almost like Question 4 that asked about their least favorite job, the essence of the question was different because theoretically, the most difficult job does not have to be the least favorite job. However, the result for Question 5 turned out to be similar to Question 4. Ten out of 28 children responded that Vocabulary Enricher was

their most difficult job for the same reasons as in Question 4: It was difficult for them to choose three words out of the text and to locate them in the dictionary. Summarizer was reported as the most difficult job by seven children, the second highest number, and for similar reason as in Question 4: difficulty finding the main ideas. Passage Picker was reported as the most difficult job by five children, the third highest number, for the same reasons as in Question 4, the difficulty with having to choose.

Question 6 asked, “What is your easiest job and why?” The job of Passage Picker received the highest number of responses, with seven students citing it as the easiest job, followed by Connector and Discussion Director, which received six responses each. The reason Passage Picker was the easiest job was that they “just needed to pick the page” they liked. The reason why the job of Connector was considered easy was reported to be that it had to do with talking about their own experiences. The reasons the job of Discussion Director was considered easy was that they “just needed to ask questions.”

Question 7 asked, “How do you feel about Ms. Kim’s coaching sessions with you?” Coaching of the students in the Literature Circles took place in two formats, but this question referred to situations when each Literature Circle group was coached by me, without the audience of the whole class. Twenty-five out of twenty eight children responded that they felt good about it or liked it. Some reasons for feeling good about the coaching sessions were that they “learned more” through coaching or “got trained more.” Two children reported that they were happy to have an audience. Three children were reported to have said they felt nervous or embarrassed to be coached, and the reason given by one was that there were other children watching him or her.

Question 8 asked, “How do you feel about being coached in front of the class?”

This question referred to the fishbowl coaching of a Literature Circle group in front of the whole class. Half of the class, fourteen children, reported they felt happy and good about being coached in front of the class, and the other half reported that they were feeling nervous, embarrassed, or shy about being in front of the class. Half of the class enjoyed having an audience, and the other half was feeling nervous, embarrassed, or shy because of having an audience.

Questions 9 and 10 dealt with the meeting procedure for Literature Circles.

Question 9 asked, “Are you happy with the way your Literature Circle meetings are conducted?” All of the twenty-eight children were reported to have said they were happy with the procedure, and the reasons why they liked the meeting format varied. The answers included:

We get to go in certain order.
 You can use the Literature Circle Log for help.
 You get better at it.
 I like the order of it (the meeting).
 I like getting called on to share.
 Meetings go smoothly.
 I just do.

Question 10 asked, “What can we do differently to improve our Literature Circle meetings? Eleven children suggested responding to each other more. Other suggestions included improved training of procedures, generating better questions, adding a new job, improving one’s behavior, and change of groups.

Questions 11 and 12 addressed the perception of being better readers and writers.

Question 11 asked, “Do you feel that Literature Circles have helped you become better readers? Why or why not?” All but one of the children were reported to have responded yes to the question about perceiving themselves as better readers after participating in

reading instruction through Literature Circles. The reasons varied. One common answer the students gave for becoming better readers was that they read a lot of stories, and they got to practice over and over again. One child commented, “I’ve learned that it is easy to find main ideas.” Another commented that he became a better reader because Literature Circles “helps you with words that you do not know.” Yet another child put it simply, “because you read.” The only child that answered no to the question said, “because I tried reading better and I can’t do it.”

Question 12 asked, “Do you feel that Literature Circles have helped you become better writers? Why or why not? All of the children were reported as having said yes to the question. Again, their reasons varied:

Writing in the (Literature Circle) Log
 Because you read
 Because you get the details from the story
 Because we write a lot
 We write on our own.
 When you write more, you get better
 Because I wrote and got better at it
 I get to make decisions about what to write
 We’ve been doing this (writing) for a long time.
 We know how to spell new words.
 We write for every job.
 Writing is fun.

Questions 13 and 14 dealt with the stories they used in Literature Circles. As I mentioned before, the stories came from the Houghton Mifflin readers for second grade as mandated by the school district. Question 13 asked, “Do you like the stories we have been reading in Literature Circles in general? Why or why not?” Twenty-six out of twenty-eight children liked them. The reasons varied:

They have a problem and solution.
 They are interesting.
 Because the stories have action and humor
 Because it (stories) has holidays and stuff

Because they are fun to read.
 We read a variety.
 Some are non-fiction
 Because some are short and some are long.

The two children that were reported as having said no to Question 13 gave no reason for their response. Question 14 asked, “What kind of stories do you wish you could read for Literature Circles?” The children’s responses included fiction, non-fiction, chapter books and their own books from home.

Question 15 asked, “Do you like doing Literature Circles in general? Why or why not?” Twenty-six children out of twenty-eight responded yes for a variety of reasons:

I liked reading and remembering and sharing.
 We get to read and write a lot.
 We know how to look in the dictionary and connect with our past.
 You get to read fiction and non-fiction.
 Because it helps you with language
 We become better writers.
 It helps us be smarter.
 You get to draw pictures.
 It will help us when we grow up.
 You can do jobs.
 I like to learn more.
 I feel happy.
 The class gets to see you do it.
 Because we get to share jobs.

The two children that responded they did not like Literature Circles in general said it was boring and that there was too much reading.

Questions 16 and 17 addressed children’s behavior during Literature Circles. Question 16 asked, “How does your behavior affect your group’s work in Literature Circles?” This question was asking for children’s understanding of the relationship between their behavior and the success of Literature Circles. The children’s responses

varied, but most of them were clear on how poor behavior and good behavior affected their meetings:

(Poor behavior) distracts kids.
 Poor behavior leads to inattention.
 Bad behavior leads to bad meetings and good behavior leads to good meetings.
 Poor behavior slows down the group.
 Talking leads to poor meetings.
 It affects your group if you are a baddie.
 We could work on our own behavior.
 Good behavior leads to better meetings.
 Sometimes, interruptions make you start (sharing your job) all over again.

When asked, in Question 17, if they felt that their circle mates behaved in Literature Circles in general, twenty-five children answered yes, and two children answered no. One child answered “sometimes yes,” and “sometimes no.” One was reported as having answered no because “some kids fooled around.” The other one that was reported as having said no complained that one of his or her circle mates “drew too much during the meeting.” The reasons given for feeling their group behaved in general varied:

They listened to each other.
 I do think they work on their behavior.
 They mostly respond.
 Smooth meetings
 They pay attention.
 Everyone listened and no one talks. (while someone is sharing)
 We don't talk most of the time.
 They don't talk all that much.
 They all did their jobs.
 We have good behavior.
 They do more responding.
 It helps having partners. (referring to when the children who used to be pulled out for reading joined the Literature Circle groups)

Question 18 asked, “Can children learn from each other?” Twenty-one children responded yes, and one child responded no because some children were “talking too much.” One said yes and no because “some are smarter and some are not.” The reasons for believing that children can learn from each other included:

Some are smarter.
Because you can ask each other questions
Because children can teach other children
Because they ask each other
Because they are smart
If we're good, we learn from each other.
Because we listen to each other
Children usually know how to do stuff.

Summary of Findings

The findings showed that Literature Circles, as a TSI, was effective in increasing reading comprehension in second graders of all levels of readiness. However, the improvement was not necessarily in a linear fashion, but fluctuated depending on the genre and task at hand. In one case, a student was able to show more comprehension through his performance in Literature Circles than on multiple-choice tests. TSI was also found to be effective in increasing autonomy in children. In addition, there were unexpected findings that were not addressed by the research questions. Children displayed helping behavior that were teacher-like and in facilitating manner and seemed to enjoy and be motivated by each other's company. The opportunities for close observations provided by Literature Circles resulted in the children informing instruction for me by revealing what specific reading strategies they needed more training on and that the class as a whole needed more instruction on the use of academic language. Part II of this study in the form of Participatory Action Research showed that children as young as second graders can be trained to be co-researchers in a study. The children generated helpful information about Literature Circles and how to improve the methodology as a comprehension instruction. They found that they enjoyed learning through Literature Circles in general and believed that children can learn from each other. However, they felt that having a different job and a variety of genre and types of books

added to Literature Circles would help improve the program. They also recommended that they needed to respond to each other more during Literature Circle Meetings.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Similar to many other public school classrooms in California, my second grade classroom during the 2012-2013 school year was made up of a diverse group of children. There were native speakers and English learners. My students came from seven different ethnicities and families of whom represented different socioeconomic statuses. The students' personalities and learning styles were not homogenous either. A few students were very well spoken and articulate, and some never spoke a word in class. Then there were those that drifted away into their own worlds in the middle of a lesson. As nature dictates, my second graders began the academic year at different levels of proficiency in reading. Some began the year as struggling readers, some right at grade level, and some as high readers. The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of Transactional Strategies Instruction, using Literature Circles as the mode of delivery, in a diverse second grade classroom consisting of native English speakers and English learners in the same classroom. The research questions were:

1. How does Transactional Strategies Instruction affect second grade students' reading comprehension?
2. How does TSI affect the students' ability to function autonomously as readers and as members of Literature Circles?
3. Based on the students' perception, how can the implementation of TSI in the second grade classroom be improved?

Reading Comprehension

The findings from this study showed that Literature Circles increased reading comprehension in children as young as second graders. This finding was not a surprise and was expected based on the previous studies of TSI on mainstream students at various levels of proficiency in reading (Reutzel et al., 2005) and English learners (McElvain, 2010). However, the results from this study suggest that the progress in children's reading comprehension was not linear over time, but fluctuated depending on the genre of the literature and the type of task used to demonstrate comprehension, eventually resulting in an overall improvement over the course of six to seven months. The children's summaries and the lists of questions from their Literature Circle Logs revealed that for some children, summarizing nonfiction was less challenging than summarizing fiction, and vice versa. In addition, some children were able to show more comprehension through the questions that they generated than through the summary, and vice versa. Sheila and Fia were typical examples of this phenomenon, in that they both summarized nonfiction with ease, and yet struggled to summarize fiction. However, when the children's summaries suffered, the questions they generated for their group discussion acted as an alternate venue through which they were able to demonstrate more comprehension. By Cycle Three of the Literature Circles in March 2013, both Sheila and Fia made an improvement in comprehension as shown in their summaries and the questions they generated to guide group discussion.

Although research has shown that TSI has a positive impact on children's reading comprehension, studies that have supported its success have not been too explicit on the reasons for its success. Explicit coaching of several metacognitive comprehension

strategies seems to be one of the leading factors related to the success of a TSI format (Fung, Wilkinson & Moore, 2003; Long & Gove, 2003; Reutzel et al., 2005; Cho, Xu & Thodes, 2010). Reutzel et al. (2005) isolated the benefit of delivering multiple metacognitive strategies over delivering one single vocabulary strategy. Furthermore, Taboda and Rutherford (2011) tested the impact on students' comprehension when metacognitive strategies were explicitly taught and when they were not, showing the metacognitive strategies to be more successful. A few studies even tried to isolate the group size for its benefit and found that small-group instruction was more effective than the whole-class setting when delivering the strategy instruction (Kamps et al., 2007; Cho, Xu, & Thodes, 2010).

Similar to previous research, the extensive metacognitive strategy instruction and the small-group setting in this study can be said to have played a role in the improvement of children's comprehension. Although an isolated example, Nathan's case should be noted in that he was not able to demonstrate reading comprehension through traditional multiple-choice testing. His written work throughout the three cycles of Literature Circles demonstrated that he was comprehending what he was reading rather well, but he did not quite make the connections between the metacognitive comprehension strategies he was using in his Literature Circle work and the questions on multiple choice tests. In March 2013, immediately after I intervened and helped Nathan make an explicit connection in applying metacognitive strategies to the multiple choice test, he earned a passing score for the first time. Although Nathan's experience was unique, I cannot help but think of many children who just do not show comprehension on multiple-choice tests and are then considered as having a low level of reading comprehension.

TSI, as an intervention and a methodology, passes the test of quality instruction set forth by Balanced Comprehension Instruction (Duke & Pearson, 2012), a framework for this study. The mini-lessons on reading comprehension strategies in this study followed the five-step format recommended by the *gradual release of responsibility* model designed by Pearson and Gallagher (1983). These steps included an explicit presentation by the teacher of the strategy the students were about to study, modeling by the teacher, collaborative guided practice among students where they had a chance to practice the strategy with other students, guided practice as an interaction among the teacher and students, and independent practice as the final step. Additionally, the strategies that the children were trained on in this study covered more than the strategies suggested by Duke and Pearson (2012) which include: prediction, think aloud, story structure and informational text structure, concept map, summarizing and questioning. The intervention for this study added mini-lessons and training on inference and making connections.

Furthermore, Duke and Pearson (2012) recommended an “integrated set of practices” which established in the form of cooperative learning groups in which children take turns leading the discussion and teaching one another. The Literature Circles in this study had such a routine built in as a central feature. As for the “well-suited texts” that Duke and Pearson recommended, I was not able to make independent decision on what the students read in their Literature Circles. Due to a policy change in my school district, as discussed in the Methodology chapter, the only literature that was allowed in the academic year 2012-13 were the stories in the second grade anthology published by

Houghton Mifflin. The anthology contained a combination of fiction and non-fiction, with some stories that reflected diversity of cultures in children's lives.

The guidelines for environmental factors for the classrooms by Duke and Pearson (2002) were met since my classroom library contained leveled literature as well as literature based on interests. Phonics instruction definitely took place alongside Literature Circles in order for decoding "not to be an issue," as suggested by Duke and Pearson. Duke and Pearson also recommended that teachers observe children's use of the comprehension strategies and use this information to drive instruction. That is exactly what ended up happening in this study and is discussed in a later section titled "Children Driving Instruction." For the most part, implementation of TSI in this study, using a combination of methods including Literature Circles, seems to have met the guidelines for Balanced Comprehension Instruction set forth in the framework provided by Duke and Pearson.

The framework from Freeman and Freeman (1998), also part of the theoretical framework of this study, set forth principles for quality instruction for ELs in literacy. The first principle from Freeman and Freeman states that lessons and activities occur in a functional social or academic context in order for children to be cognitively engaged in their learning. Literature Circles certainly has provided the social and the academic context where EL students and native English speakers developed as learners. The second principle emphasizes putting children as the center in designing the curriculum to build on their background knowledge. In the Literature Circles used in this study, children's background knowledge was incorporated, not only in the comprehension strategy of making connections, but also in how students were taught to infer, generate

questions, summarize, and strategically approach informational text. Freeman and Freeman's second principle also relates to creating a classroom where students can build their sense of self and experience the feeling of being appreciated as a valuable member of a learning community. Although I was not able to add more literature from different cultures due to the mandate that I stay with the official adopted curriculum, the job of building the self and the feeling of being appreciated as a member was done to a degree by giving all students opportunities for leadership and responsibilities in the Literature Circle groups. Literature Circles serve a purpose of equalizing the field because all students experience every role.

The Literature Circle meetings also satisfied Freeman and Freeman's (1998) third principle of having a present and immediate purpose for learning. The immediate purpose for the children's learning the strategies and reading in this study was the Literature Circle meeting and discussion, which they looked forward to. The fourth principle of using social interaction for success in teaching ELs was also satisfied by the rich interaction among children in Literature Circles. The fifth principle that argues for involving all four modes of communication, including speaking, listening, reading and writing, was also very well met by Literature Circles in that students, read, write and interact through speaking and listening every day. The sixth principle of supporting students' first and second languages and cultures were not extensively covered by the intervention in this study because the school is an English-only setting and the literature I provided from diverse cultures was presented outside the Literature Circles. Our class birthday celebrations incorporated birthday songs from the children's first languages, although this was certainly presented not as part of Literature Circles.

The last principle for success in teaching ELs by Freeman and Freeman (1998) emphasizes having faith in the students and their potential. The basic tenet of TSI is the belief that students will eventually reach autonomy and independence as readers and as members of their collaborative discussion groups. Every year in the past five years and in academic year of 2012-2013, the year of this study, the children involved in the Literature Circles in my second grade class struck me as ‘little intellectuals.’ Even when I doubted their ability to grasp concepts, or master a reading comprehension strategy, the children constantly amazed me with their potential, and promise, as learners. On the whole, the use of TSI using Literature Circles as a form of intervention in this study seems also to be aligned with the principles from the framework set forth by Freeman and Freeman.

Autonomy

The second research question asked how TSI impacted children’s ability to function autonomously as readers and as members of Literature Circles. A few studies in the field of TSI dealt with children’s *perception of autonomy* (Taboda & Rutherford, 2011) and *self-efficacy* (McElvain, 2010), but the concept of autonomy I arrived at, as the result of the study, is slightly different. Autonomy in the context of this study has more to do with actual demonstration of students’ demonstration of strategies outside of and during their Literature Circle meetings, as well as their ability to take a metacognitive stance. Field notes and video recordings from the study helped me operationalize the concept of autonomy as it relates to second graders. The children demonstrated autonomy by getting themselves prepared and organized prior to their Literature Circle meetings, by being proficient in conducting the meetings by themselves, by having the

muscle knowledge or internalization of the procedures, and finally, by articulating that they were operating and reflecting from a metacognitive stance in terms of how they behaved, worked and learned.

The students showed more and more autonomy as they moved through the three cycles of Literature Circles. The students' challenges in Cycle One had to do with organizing themselves to prepare for the meeting, and actually conducting the meeting themselves following the procedures, and actively listening and responding to each other. The students showed more autonomy in Cycle Two, and by Cycle Three, they hardly needed my intervention for anything. Even when a child was absent, the rest of the group would not make a big deal or panic, but would have someone fill in for the absent child without asking me to intervene. The ultimate demonstration of autonomy came when four students, who had previously been pulled out by the reading specialist during the language arts block, finished the program and came to join Literature Circles. Four of the Literature Circle groups took one new student each and took care of training them, integrating them into the circle and helping him or her blend right in. What would have taken me weeks to accomplish by myself, the children handled in just a few days.

The importance of autonomy as a goal in reading instruction is evident in the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983). In this model, students take on more and more responsibility in teaching themselves over time, while the teacher releases more and more responsibility until the students have become independent in using their comprehension strategies. The independence and the autonomy the second graders were able to achieve seem to have been more than just being able to independently comprehend the texts they read. Their functioning as

learners, and as members of Literature Circles, became more and more autonomous as they moved through the three cycles of Literature Circles.

Children Helping Each Other

Although this concept was not originally part of the research questions, the findings of this study suggest that Literature Circles promote helping behavior among children. Some children, like Carlton, do have a natural aptitude and tendency to help each other, and all children can be trained to help each other in a teacher-like facilitator's manner. When Zolo got lost and was not able to move on, Rea stepped in and clarified what he had just done so that he could move on. In another moment when Zolo's funny comment threw the children into the giggly mode, Ron steered them right back to the discussion. Von frequently made attempts to steer the discussion to the right direction when the children seemed to get sidetracked. When Jin took the correct step of going to the dictionary to do her job as a Vocabulary Enricher, Fia reinforced the behavior by stating, "Oh, you went to the dictionary," in a teacher voice. It was fascinating to me that these behaviors included giving actual help with a certain task, explaining how to do something, clarifying for each other, and giving feedback. How the children went about displaying these behaviors was not in any way prideful or offensive, but genuinely well intended and well taken. These behaviors were almost absent during the initial training stages during mini-lessons, but occurred more frequently in the three cycles of Literature Circles. All of these helping behaviors served to propel the meeting forward, benefiting everyone in the group.

Motivation and Enjoyment

The children, in general, seemed motivated to learn through Literature Circles, and seemed to enjoy each other's company during their group meetings. Even children such as Zolo, who were likely to drift away into their own worlds and were not likely to be engaged in a whole-class lesson, showed enthusiasm during the meetings. Zolo even managed to entertain the group and me, making us laugh. Dree, who usually was so intensely preoccupied with doing well in school that she forgot to smile, showed her beautiful smile frequently during Literature Circle Meetings, enjoying her job as a Discussion Director tremendously. Dan also showed a lot of motivation and engagement during the meetings, more than he ever showed during whole-class lessons. Rick's fascinating discovery that Adeline had lost a tooth while she talked as a Discussion Director brought another smile to my day. In general, the second graders showed a lot of enthusiasm, smiles and laughter during Literature Circle meetings. This finding is not surprising since student satisfaction regarding TSI instruction has been well documented beginning with the initial studies of Reciprocal Teaching (Long & Gove, 2003; McElvain, 2010; Palincsar & Brown, 1985; Pilonieta & Medina, 2009). The children were not the only ones who enjoyed themselves during Literature Circles. I enjoyed their company and ended up laughing and smiling a countless number of times. At the same time, children that usually tended not to participate due to shyness or drift away during whole-class lessons were definitely more engaged and participated a lot more during Literature Circle meetings.

Children Driving Instruction

As a teacher, interacting with and observing children during Literature Circle meetings was a very tangible way to learn what students needed to learn and, therefore, what I needed to teach. The sequence of instruction, in terms of mini-lessons, was determined by students by showing me what they understood well, and what they needed to focus on more. In addition, as a result of the study, I found that both groups of students, English learners and native speakers, needed more explicit instruction in academic oral English. The needs were not so much in pronunciation, but in using certain customary expressions, in sentence structure, and use of academic vocabulary. Prior to listening to them in their small Literature Circle groups, I did not realize there was so much need for explicit teaching in this area. I thought they all sounded all right. More mini-lessons needed to be dedicated to teaching academic language.

Participatory Action Research by Children

In this study, children as young as second graders were able to carry out a research study to find out how their fellow classmates viewed Literature Circles, and to find out ways to improve the program. They were able to generate categories for different aspects of the Literature Circles, such as the stories and Literature Circle Logs, and generate questions based on the categories. Students took turns being interviewers and interviewees, and some of them carried out video recording of the interviews. The first videographer trained the next student, and so forth. The whole class gathered valuable data and each child reported his or her findings to the class. We processed the data together as a whole class. Participatory Action Research has been done by mostly

on high school students or older groups (Rubin & Makeba-Jones, 2004), and PAR involving children as young as second graders seems to be rare.

According to the findings of the PAR segment of the study, the majority of the second graders liked doing Literature Circles. The motivation and enjoyment that was found in their interactions in Literature Circle meetings in Part I of the study supported their finding that they enjoyed learning through Literature Circles and vice versa. The students also believed that Literature Circles helped them become better readers and writers. This finding partly corroborates the increase in reading comprehension that was found in earlier part of the study. Although exploring their writing progress was not part of the study in Part One, the fact that students enjoyed the Literature Circles and thought and it helped their reading and writing can only be helpful in their learning.

The increase in children's ability to reflect on and articulate ideas about their own work and behavior from the first part of the study became further corroborated by the children's own findings in Part Two of the study. The children were also keenly aware of the relationship between their behavior and the success of their group in Literature Circles. In addition, the children were able to articulate what their favorite and least favorite jobs were, and what the most difficult and the easiest jobs were. These findings further informed instruction for me as the teacher in thinking about which roles to use in future Literature Circles. The children were also very clear on how to improve the meeting procedure for Literature Circles, and their suggestions included responding more to each other during the meetings, adding a new job to the Literature Circle Log, and expanding the variety in the literature covered to include more fiction, non-fiction, books based on interests and chapter books. Finally, children believed they could learn from

one another, a tenet that is the heart and soul of Transactional Strategies Instruction such as Literature Circles.

Training students to be co-researchers in a study, and supporting them to change the status quo in issues that concern them, is empowering (Fine, 2008). It was empowering for my second graders to be able to take many tiny steps as co-researchers to gather such valuable information that would bring about change to benefit themselves and a countless number of second graders to come. They demonstrated excitement and satisfaction in conducting research. They clearly felt the sense of accomplishment.

As a result of our PAR, the suggestions the second graders made during the research year are reflected in the implementation of Literature Circles in the current year. As the restriction on what literature to use became more relaxed by the district this year, I am integrating a variety of genres and literature based on interests. I am also focusing on the craft of how to respond to each other during literature discussions to follow the second graders' suggestion that children need to respond more to each other during the Literature Circle Meetings.

Reading Comprehension, Autonomy and Other Findings

The findings of this study suggest that Literature Circles resulted in improved reading comprehension in second graders, as well as a positive impact on several other areas such as autonomy, children helping each other, enjoyment and motivation, and children informing instruction. Studies in the field of TSI have typically reported additional benefits of TSI in addition to improved reading comprehension. As early as in 1985, Palincsar and Brown reported teacher and student satisfaction about Reciprocal Teaching in addition to improved reading comprehension. Long and Gove (2003)

reported enthusiasm by students in addition to success in increasing reading comprehension in children. Pilonieta and Medina (2009) found that the level of teacher support decreased over time and the level of independence by children increased gradually. Cho, Xu and Thodes (2010) found increased student motivation and participation in addition to improved reading comprehension. In the same year, McElvain (2010) found improved self-efficacy and confidence in reading and participation in children.

Considering these findings in the field of TSI, and the findings from this study, I suggest that there is an interaction among reading comprehension and these other factors. As the diagram below in Figure 19 illustrates, each factor involved in TSI interacts with all of the other factors positively, resulting in improved reading comprehension, autonomy, helping behavior, enjoyment and motivation, and information to guide instruction for the teacher. For example, it is not surprising that children would build autonomy in what they enjoy doing, and both the autonomy and enjoyment would have a positive impact on their reading comprehension. Such interactions may explain the success behind Transactional Strategies Instruction, which is built on the formula of Direct Explanation (Duffy et al., 1987) of metacognitive strategies plus transactional learning (Rosenblatt, 1978).

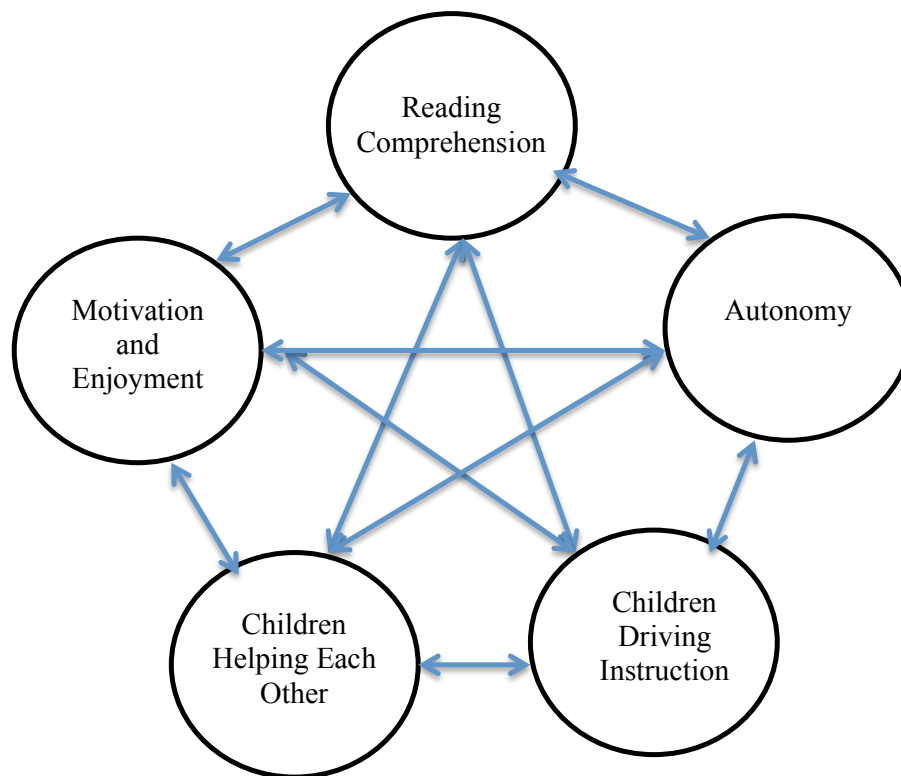


Figure 19. The Interaction among Reading Comprehension, Autonomy, Motivation and Enjoyment, Children Helping Each Other, and Children Driving Instruction

The TSI-Literature Circle intervention and PAR represent alternate paradigms for pedagogy and research that are very much needed in our classrooms. Children that are trained in, and trusted with, independence tend to value that trust in both paradigms, and thrive as learners. The second graders not only achieved success in TSI in terms of reading comprehension, autonomy, positive interactions such as in helping each other and enjoying each other's company, but also took on the role of researchers. They found valuable information that not only triangulated the findings of Part I of this study, but also generated new knowledge about how to improve Literature Circles for themselves and for the new second graders that would come up the ranks. The findings from Part One and Part Two of this study are phenomena that usually do not surface in the

traditional forms of instruction. In this study Transactional Strategies Instruction created room for students to grow intellectually and affectively, and Participatory Action Research provided young children with an alternate forum to be empowered through receiving training, learning to function, and succeeding as researchers.

Recommendations for Further Research

Observation of the student Literature Circles in this study made evident an urgent need for explicit coaching of academic language in second graders that are English learners and native speakers. A study that would explore the development of academic oral language in children through Literature Circles would be a beneficial tool for better understanding Literature Circles as a comprehensive instructional tool.

This study touched upon a possibility that students that do not perform well on multiple-choice tests of comprehension might be able to demonstrate their comprehension through written and oral responses in Literature Circles. Literature Circle Logs may have the possibility of being used for assessment, as in the portfolio suggestion made by Freeman and Freeman (1998). Further research in this area could shed light on the strengths of using Literature Circle Logs as an alternative form of assessment of reading comprehension.

Last, there is potential for expansion of Youth Participatory Action Research to lower grades, even as young as second grade. Student inquiry could look into a curriculum issue, character education, citizenship and environmental concerns, or other topics that are easy to comprehend for young children. In addition, if there is a group in the student population that could use some help in getting their experiences recognized as legitimate, such as in the study of transnational Latina youth (Sanchez, 2006), even

children as young as seven or eight can participate as co-researchers in naming their experiences.

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APPENDIX A

USF IRBPHS

To Meskoirala@usfca.edu

May 2, 2012

May 2, 2012

Dear Ms. Kim

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #12-052). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must

be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP

Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

IRBPHS – University of San Francisco

Counseling Psychology Department

Education Building – Room 017

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