

THE SUITCASE PROJECT: A JOURNEY IN MULTIMODAL READING OF GRAPHIC  
NOVELS WITH EMERGENT BILINGUAL FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS

By

Kayla Ashe, B.S.

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2019 Kayla Ashe

APPROVED:

Sabine Siekmann, Committee Chair  
Wendy Martelle, Committee Member  
Leslie Patterson, Committee Member  
Patrick Marlow, Program Chair  
*Linguistics Program*  
Todd Sherman, Dean  
*College of Liberal Arts*  
Michael Castellini,  
*Dean of the Graduate School*

## **Abstract**

This teacher action research focuses on how three fourth grade students interact and make meaning as they read the graphic novel, *Amulet*. While reading from the graphic novel, students engaged in the reading as design process to make meaning. These three students are Yup'ik students enrolled in a dual language school. Students interacted with peers and different modalities of meaning as they engaged in the meaning-making process. Data sources include a teacher research journal, audio recordings of readings and discussions, and students' reader response journals. Data analysis followed constructivist grounded theory. As there were various types of data collected and a multimodal text was used, multimodal data analysis was used to interpret the relationship across the various modes used in the study.

Three main findings emerged from the data: 1. Vocabulary can be learned through multiple modes. 2. Students used words to mediate meaning socially and in a private manner. 3. Combined visuals and text support meaning making. These findings led to the conclusion that meaning making and research are both multimodal. The findings also reveal how emergent bilingual students were active meaning-makers and could read and respond to a graphic novel successfully. At times, writing prompts were used. While students designed meaning with multimodal texts, the writing prompts constricted their responses to certain topics, such as setting and characters, and did not allow for students to continue designing meaning in their own ways. Students were able to continue designing their own meaning when responding to the text in a natural, multimodal way without prompts constricting thoughts relating to the text.



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## Chapter 1 Introduction: Building Curiosity for Reading

“What is in the suitcase?” This question circulated through my classroom on a daily basis from January until March last school year. I could see the sparkles of curiosity in the eyes of my students when we finally unzipped the old, brown suitcase that had mysteriously appeared in the classroom after Christmas break. Although it was not the intended name of the study, students grew keen on the name, “The Suitcase Project.” Every time I heard about their curiosities, I smiled. *This* was what I wanted. *This* was my *dream* classroom. Students were curious and excited about the upcoming project and they talked about it daily. This enthusiasm did not end when their eyes settled on the piles of series novels inside the open suitcase and it did not end weeks into the series reading project. Instead, students groaned and complained when I said, “Time is up, clean up!”

Throughout my time teaching in the remote village of Eek, Alaska, I have made several observations about the reading process. In the past, I had opportunities to observe students in grades K-12 read with one another during school-wide reading buddies that took place on Fridays twice a month. I had also observed my own students during small group reading and independent reading activities. In these observations, students were not equally excited and engaged. At the beginning of this study, as I reflected on how students approach texts and engage in the reading process and what I could do to promote reading, I had three assumptions. First, reading is difficult, but can be made easier with the explicit instruction of comprehension strategies. Second, students should be surrounded by engaging and authentic texts. Third, while reading these texts, students should act as participants by not only reading the words, but also by responding to what they are reading through oral conversations with peers and the teacher,

written responses in journals, and by reflecting on what they are reading. These realizations led to the Teacher Action Research (TAR) cycle that is described in Chapter 3.

### **The Teacher Researcher**

I moved thousands of miles away from my hometown near Chicago to the remote village of Eek on August 4th of 2013. Having spent most of the summer talking with others from Alaska, I felt that I knew what to expect. While having been a city person for most of my life, part of me was a bit nervous for a drastic change in lifestyle. Nevertheless, I hopped on a plane with the thought that *I could do anything for a year*. The day I arrived, I met one of my students. She chased me as my boss drove me to my new residence on a four-wheeler. My feet barely touched the ground before her arms were wrapped around me and she was asking who I was. I thought it was strange that she would hug a stranger, but I felt welcome all at once. I awkwardly stuttered, “Ms. Ashe” and my boss looked at me quizzically. I soon realized that in such a small community, everyone truly gets to know who you are. I then accepted that students would call me by my first name, which I came to prefer. I also realized that teaching in a setting in which you could truly get to know and understand each of the students was something that made this teaching experience not only unique, but something I wanted to continue experiencing. One year turned into six years and in that time, I have been able to build very strong relationships with my students. I see them in school, at feasts, and out in the community every single day. These strong relationships help me successfully reach students in the classroom and helps create a positive learning environment.

During the study, I was a dual language teacher responsible for teaching reading, writing, and mathematics in English for students in grades two through four at Eek School in Eek, Alaska. While reflecting on reading observations, I was drawn to the students in my third and

fourth grade blended classroom. Many of my second-grade students utilized beginning reader books, as they were still working on foundational skills of reading. In contrast, many students in the third and fourth grade room were ready to transition to chapter books, but seemed slightly intimidated by reading a chapter book or confused about how to engage with chapter books. There was also a lack of chapter books in the district-adopted reading curriculum. For these reasons, I decided to conduct research only in my third and fourth grade blended classroom.

### **Contextualizing My Question**

As a young child, I aspired to become a teacher. My younger sister struggled with school and I wanted to help her. In our free time, we turned the kitchen into a classroom. I got my black pens out to make copies of worksheets and I had my red pen prepared for grading. Sometimes, when I reminisce about my childhood teaching career, I think of the freedom I had in my kitchen schoolhouse. I created each lesson on blank sheets of paper without a lesson guide. I graded each paper without a key. I feel that freedom slip through my fingertips at times now that I have actually entered a career in the education field. I see the boxes of curricula sent out each year. I attend the hours of trainings for the *new* and *improved* programs that our district adopts. I read through the highly scripted curriculum and feel like an actress reciting lines instead of a teacher.

Although I did not realize it when planning this research, these frustrations and limitations with being restricted to only using the district-mandated reading curriculum led me to my initial research question. While following a skills-based model of reading provided in the reading curriculum, I felt I was not getting the results I wished for. I specifically wanted my third and fourth grade students to have exposure to authentic chapter books. For example, I wanted students to read a story and really connect to the characters. Instead, most students consistently described characters as “nice” or “good” and rarely described the characters in depth. Never did I

see students tracking change in a character. Only at times did I see students make connections to their own lives. In addition, the district-mandated reading curriculum does not often introduce authentic texts and/or chapter books to students. Most of the texts within the textbooks are short stories or plays.

### **Research Question**

It took me a long time to draft an idea of what would actually become my research. At first, writing was my primary focus, as our schedule did not allow for explicit writing instruction and I felt inspired to support my writers in fun and engaging ways. I wanted my students to see themselves as authors. In the midst of drafting a research question related to writing, I noticed some behaviors that were related more to reading. I observed students reading chapter books rapidly instead of effectively. Some students would pick up a chapter book, open it to see no pictures and “too many” words, and put it right back on the shelf. Other students would pick up a chapter book and “finish” reading it within fifteen minutes.

As I noticed the tension between students’ interest in chapter books and students’ access to reading strategies, I realized I was encountering something critical in my students’ reading journeys. In terms of pacing, some students would attempt to read chapter books, but often treated them as if they were picture books or beginning reader books and would rush through them. As a result, those readers would not retain much of the content within the text. Prior to starting the study, I believed that most students were ready to read chapter books, but needed to be taught how to utilize reading strategies that would support engagement with chapter books. In an attempt to discover some answers relating to my focus, I created a project in which students would work in groups to read from series novels and respond to chapters through writing in a reader response journal. Within the selection of books purchased for the project, several were

traditional chapter books, some had comic book elements, and one was a graphic novel. I formulated one main research question: *How do bilingual elementary students use the modalities present in graphic novels to interact and make meaning?*

### **Rationale**

As a child, I loved going to school. When thinking of my early childhood education, I remember the smells of the first day--new shoes, a clean classroom, and most important--books. I loved filling my brand new desk with my new textbooks. As I grew older and moved through the education system, I noticed my motivation change throughout each and every school year. The excitement of getting new books was replaced with *wanting* to enjoy the passages in the textbooks, but they just did not compare to the thrill of reading a novel. Those textbooks had a distinct smell, different from regular books, which I eventually associated with mundane work. The passages included in the text just did not interest me as much as I wished for them to. While I did not genuinely care for the reading textbooks, I was an avid reader. In second grade, I once had a friend set a timer so I could show her how quickly I could read a chapter of one of the books from *The Boxcar Children* series (Warner, 1924-1976). I took pride in reading chapter books and I was proud of my fluency. Many years have passed since I attended elementary school, but upon returning to the classroom, those smells of textbooks returned. The passages within those textbooks still include stories that will rarely be found on a library shelf. Even worse, as an educator myself, I discovered how hard it can be to stray from those textbooks.

Prior to entering my own classroom, my undergraduate work allowed me to participate in field experience in all elementary grades, including preschool and sixth grade. In addition, I traveled to Belize to work with teachers at an elementary school on the Guatemalan border. These teachers had an interesting challenge that they started to face: while Belize is a diverse

country, full of strong languages and dialects, the official language is English; the students attending the school after crossing the border from Guatemala were Spanish-speaking students. Suddenly the school felt as if it needed to make some shift to ensure that teachers could teach all students standard academic English (SAE) to the best of their abilities. Teachers were sent to a conference in the United States to practice working with reading assessments. Coming back, teachers were not all sure exactly how to use them. When we arrived to the classroom, the teachers asked for our help. We worked with students one on one to determine reading fluency and accuracy. When interacting with these students and reading the passages that were sent back with the teachers from the United States, I realized that students were struggling with the fact that the passages were not appropriate for the students at this school. Coming from the United States, these passages were filled with American English words. Even when using context clues, students could not read the passages accurately because of the dialectal differences. For example, in the American text, soccer balls were both present in the images and written in the passage. Most students referred to the word as football. While the word for soccer in Belize is actually football, this was not the word in the passage and was marked wrong. These differences are present in rural Alaska as well. For example, in the Lower 48, children might recognize a vehicle with tracks used for snow as a *snowmobile*, but in Alaska, those same vehicles can be referred to as a *snogo* or a *snow machine*. These differences should not be a determining factor for a student's ability to read accurately and make meaning.

At times, I struggle with understanding the purpose of most textbooks and some of the texts we use with diverse populations. My frustrations with requirements to use textbooks instead of culturally appropriate and authentic texts influenced my research. The frameworks and theories I used when participating in the study also address some of these issues and offer better

alternatives for teaching literacy in a diverse, ever-changing world. While there are several ways to promote literacy, I decided to implement a series reading project, in which students were given the opportunity to choose a series from a list of high-interest and engaging texts.

Stuffed inside the old, brown suitcase were several sets of book series. I purchased many different types of book series in order to give students plenty of options to choose from. I integrated book series into this research project because I believed that it would help my students with their language and literacy development in a fun and engaging manner. The project was designed to connect students to a specific book series that was self-selected and engaging. By reading from book series, students can potentially develop a deep connection to the characters as they follow them on their journey through the series.

While interacting with each series, students responded to the text through their personal reader response journals, participated in book talks with peers, and participated in conversations with the teacher. While all groups were reading different genres of series books, the group that I focused on for the duration of the study read from a graphic novel series that provided different ways for students to make meaning. Graphic novels allow students to interact with words, images, and the general layout presented on each page, unlike traditional chapter books. How these features enhanced the meaning making process will be described in future chapters.

While I had not taught above second grade until the 2017-18 school year (the year of this study), I observed most students in my third and fourth grade classroom continuing to read picture books and books at about the second-grade level instead of chapter books. As these same students had already been my students since they were in first grade, I found this to be problematic in their reading growth. This observation inspired me to think of exciting ways to engage students with chapter books. Most students have a hard time transitioning into chapter



books, even when they exhibit eagerness to read more age-appropriate materials. I believed that increasing student interaction with chapter books would contribute to reading growth and higher engagement during reading in the intermediate grades. By using book series, students are able to read, interact, and grow by learning how to engage in reading chapter books.

Another inspiration for my project comes from my desire to increase student confidence in reading as well as using different reading strategies. Series reading has the potential to increase students' reading perseverance. When engaging in the project, I challenged students to commit to a series. In doing so, they could demonstrate perseverance as they learned the structure of the series and as they reflected about what they read and understand from the text. Since books in a series typically follow the life of a certain group of characters, students can grow to know and follow the characters on their journey. With the length of the series, students can also grow to understand how that author writes. Series such as *Cam Jansen* (Adler, 1980-2014), *Judy Moody* (McDonald, 2000-2016), and *Ivy & Bean* (Barrows, 2006-2018) connect students to a group of characters and introduce a consistent theme, such as solving mysteries or maintaining friendships. As students develop a deep understanding of the series through the characters and style, I believe students can grow more comfortable and feel more confident about reading chapter books.

In addition to wanting students to grow more confident with reading chapter books, I also wanted students to read authentic (books not written solely for the classroom), self-selected, high-interest texts. To ensure that students were satisfied with the texts, they were given short blurbs about each series brought into the classroom for the project. They walked the "red carpet," met each character, and filled out a ballot to rate each series. At the end, students listed the top five series that seemed most interesting and also wrote about whether or not they preferred to

work independently or with a partner. In addition, students were reassured that they could change their series if they did not like the series they had initially selected, because reading is not a “one size fits all” activity. Not all books will interest all readers.

## **Summary**

Overall, I created the “The Suitcase Project” to encourage students to become active participants in the reading process. This research is important for both me as a teacher and the students I teach. I hope that it will also be useful for other teachers. For myself, the outcomes of the project will guide future plans as I continue to work with these students during our reading block. This research helped my students, because in the process, students explicitly learned how to approach chapter books and continued to grow as readers as they persevered through each chapter. Students also expressed growth as reflective readers and thinkers as they listened to recordings of their own readings, as they interacted with peers during book talks, and as they wrote in their reader response journals. There is one word that repeatedly comes to mind when I think about the purpose of any mindfully planned activity or project: growth. In this project, my hope was to see growth not only in reading and the use of reading strategies, but also seeing personal growth in the comfort of pursuing chapter books and confidence in reading those books. By engaging in the research process, I also experienced growth as a teacher.

To explain and support my journey through this teacher action research, the following chapters explain the frameworks and theories supporting my research (Chapter 2), the methods used throughout the research process, including the data collected and analyzed (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, I describe three different types of events that occurred during the project with varying examples from each type of event. In Chapter 5, I describe the implications and limitations of the study and how the findings influence my future as an educator.



## Chapter 2 Literature Review

In my decision to stray away from the district-mandated reading curriculum, I started to learn more about the frameworks related to my research. In this chapter, I will define key concepts related to my study through examples provided in scholarly work. While participating in teacher action research (TAR), I asked *how do bilingual elementary students use the modalities present in graphic novels to interact and make meaning?* This literature review focuses on meaning making through different mediational tools, the modes present in graphic novels, how those modes assist in the meaning making process, and how the reader acts as designer in the meaning making process.

Overall, my teaching and research are based on the premise that students make meaning as they actively participate and engage in reading and writing. In addition, meaning making is not strictly an interaction between a solitary reader and a written text. In fact, meaning making can be supported through teacher-student and student-student interaction and may involve multiple modalities, such as visual images. This complex and active meaning-making process is articulated in the multiliteracies framework. Multimodalities, multilingualism, graphic novels, and how the reader acts as a designer in the meaning making process will be described and related to the umbrella of my research, the multiliteracies framework.

### **Multiliteracies**

Multiliteracies is a pedagogical framework that values multiple languages and multiple language varieties equally. This framework also values cultural diversity, utilizes technology in different forms, and views learners as active meaning makers, or designers. As a result, this framework offers a different way to view students' learning and thereby encouraging different instructional decisions, as it values each learner as a unique individual with a unique background

and emphasizes learning in a variety of ways. The term multiliteracies emerged from the “growing significance of cultural and linguistic diversity” and “the influence of new communications technologies” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. 197). The framework acknowledges that people participate in literacy as unique individuals from different backgrounds who engage in the learning process in a variety of ways while speaking the languages and dialects of their choice. In this process, students engage in the design process, which Cope and Kalantzis (2009) use to describe the cycle in which students design, create, and use meaning. In an academic context, students are actively participating in literacy through the use of their cultural, linguistic, and personal resources.

The multiliteracies framework was developed by the New London Group (1996), a multi-disciplinary group that met to discuss old literacy, new literacy, and how the changes in society and technology necessitate a need to continuously reflect on what it means to be a literate person. The first meeting held in 1996 was in response to “a concern for language and education” and “the teaching of language and literacy in schools” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 1). About a decade later, Cope and Kalantzis (2009), who were part of the original authors of the New London Group (1996), wrote an article to reflect on the progress made since the first meeting. They suggest that the multiliteracies framework was designed to allow students to learn through different modes and languages that relate to them as they make meaning. For the purpose of this review, I will focus on how this framework supports and influences literacy instruction.

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) define literacy as “a set of supple, variable, communication strategies, ever-diverging according the cultures and social languages of technologies, functional groups, types of organization and niche clienteles” (p. 6). Similarly, Healy (2008) argues that

literacy is much more than reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Literacy is shaped by the changes and needs taking place within a society. The continuous evolution of classroom practices and worldwide communications influence literacy. Multiliteracies accept this evolution in literacy and argues that the criteria for being literate need to adapt and evolve with the new times. The multiliteracies framework provides a structure, called the design process, to understand literacy development and inform literacy instruction within these changing times through various languages, dialects, and/or modes that students can connect to and utilize in the meaning making process.

The multiliteracies framework views meaning making as a complex process whereby readers construct understandings of what is portrayed and create their own responses and interpretations of texts. To follow the multiliteracies pedagogy, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) argue that all forms of representation “should be regarded as dynamic processes of transformation rather than processes of reproduction” (p. 10). Similarly, assessments should capture this idea of transformation rather than reproduction. In an investigation about multimodal assessment, Lawrence and Mathis (2019) asked students to create responses to topics while also incorporating art. For example, after having been exposed to various texts, songs, and documentaries, students created collages and summaries to describe a particular unsung hero. Some of these collages made connections to current social issues that reminded students of issues from the past. This multimodal assessment gave students the opportunity to interact with learning points in a dynamic and creative manner rather than taking an end-of-unit multiple-choice test to reproduce the knowledge that was taught from the teacher.

In old literacy, “the process was learning by rote and knowing ‘correct answers’” which “produced compliant learners, people who would accept what was presented to them as correct” (reproduction) instead of attaining a greater depth of knowledge that prepares citizens for “a life of change and diversity” (transformation) (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. 199). Reproduction does not allow for students to think outside of the box, instead it asks that students reproduce what is taught from the teacher. Unlike reproductive learning, the transformative process allows for students to gain deeper knowledge through challenging tasks instead of rote and knowing activities. Transformation allows for students to actively engage in learning, problem solve, and develop skills that are necessary for critical thinking in the future. Kalantzis and Cope (2008) argue that transformed practice “inevitably involve students adding something of themselves to the meaning.” By engaging in the transformative process of literacy, students are prepared to succeed in the future, but also have the opportunity to include their knowledge while learning. While I provided reader response prompts for students to follow during certain parts of my study, students were allowed to also respond with written text and visuals. At other times, students were allowed to write freely in response to the passage they were reading. Part of my research involved seeing what kind of prompts resulted in more complex meaning making. Applying to terms used within the multiliteracies framework, the sentence stems and prompts are the types of responses characteristic of what Cope and Kalantzis (2009) call old literacy, because they asked for reproduction of what was learned from a passage. The open-ended and potentially multimodal response with written texts and visuals on the other hand are more in line with new literacy, because they gave students the opportunity to engage in transformation, as they could add their own creativity and personality into the meaning and in turn the written response.

My teaching practice is centered on the belief that the classroom is a place where each student brings something to the table. This means, that prior to any interaction with a text, students bring their knowledge and worldviews with them. This wealth of prior knowledge influences how students make meaning and allows students to act as designers as they read. Old literacy values being a rule-following listener who soaks up information from the teacher like a sponge and uses that information to succeed on tests. Rather than valuing students' knowledge or worldviews, old literacies ask that students accept the knowledge and worldviews of what is presented to them, ideally from a teacher. Old literacy does not connect to my students and to my teaching philosophy, because my students have knowledge that they bring into the classroom and because I do not view myself as the sole source of knowledge in my classroom. Healy (2008) states "in the same way that languages are strongly interconnected and inseparable from the knowledges they express, so too are knowledges or knowledge systems, strongly interconnected and inseparable from the realities and worldviews that give these knowledges structure and meaning" (p. 60). In my classroom, I refer to each of my students as a teacher and encourage collaboration amongst peers frequently. Because each individual comes with a different knowledge system, we each interact, interpret, and create meaning in our own unique manners. Weaver (2009) defines the reader as "the person seeking to make meaning by transacting with (actively reading) a text of whatever kind" (p. 23). This means that meaning does not stem only from the text itself, but it also comes from the reader who is seeking to make meaning. The multiliteracies framework views students as interacting with texts more actively than other views of literacy.



In addition to the linguistic and cultural considerations within education, social class issues also inspired ideas within the framework. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) argue that “education has become [a] more prominent topic in the public discourse of social promise” (p. 4). Equality and equity within education are deemed important and must remain sustainable in order to close the gap between the rich and the poor. The framework expresses the importance of preparing all citizens for a successful future, not just certain classes and cultures. Students of all backgrounds should have access to literacy in a way that closes the gap instead of widening it. Lawrence and Mathis (2019) designed multimodal assessments with the belief that providing students with alternate approaches to assessment could potentially “afford children from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to make meaning and communicate in forms outside of those deemed appropriate by the people in power” (p. 130). Lawrence and Mathis (2019) argue that the diverse students they worked with were misrepresented through standardized assessments. Instead of using multiple-choice assessments, they had students create collage summaries that demonstrated connections between past social issues and current social issues. Lawrence and Mathis (2019) concluded that educators “are responsible for setting conditions that both provide a range of opportunities to demonstrate learning and address local, state, and national standards” (p. 140). We should teach with culturally appropriate materials instead of expecting students across the country to become successful through scripted curricula. What works in one area is not necessarily appropriate for another.

When describing the cultural and linguistic differences within the multiliteracies framework, the term multilingual is used. Multilingualism stresses the importance of culture and worldviews within the meaning-making process. When discussing the representations of literacy

and the technologies used, the term multimodal is used. Both multilingual and multimodal will be discussed further in the following sections.

### **Multilingual meaning making.**

Multilingualism is one component of the multiliteracies framework. Multilingualism acknowledges that we live in a culturally and linguistically diverse world and considers how we can embrace the differences instead of focusing on assimilation. When referencing the ideas of both old literacies and new literacies, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) stress the importance of adapting instruction to meet the needs of each incoming generation of learners. For example, (English) monolingualism is one of the foundations of the boxed instruction of old literacy, which did not meet the needs of all learners. Old literacy finds the majority language most important, so when integrating old literacy practices, the focus is on the *power language*, English, instead of promoting the languages and dialects of the students within the classroom. In response to a noticeable language shift from Yugtun to English in Southwest Alaska, the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) adopted the dual language enrichment (DLE) program in an effort to maintain and revitalize the native language. Adopted in 2006, the mission statement for the district reads, “The mission of the Lower Kuskokwim School District is to ensure bilingual, culturally appropriate and effective education for all students, thereby providing them with the opportunity to be responsible, productive, citizens” (LKSD Website). Not only did the district adopt the dual language program to incorporate the native language into lessons, but the district also encourages teachers to teach culturally relevant lessons. Samson (2010) ties both the native language and other parts of the culture into her study by connecting Yup’ik dance to writing.

Samson (2010) learned that the multimodal nature of her classroom helps her young students write.

While English is considered a power language, not all dialects of English carry equal prestige. The dialect of English that maintains power can be referred to as standard academic English (SAE). This contributes to another disparity in literacy use without the use of multilingualism. Many students in Eek and in the greater Southwestern Alaska area tend to speak a dialect referred to as village English and are not deemed proficient in SAE or Yugtun upon entering kindergarten. In a sense, this separates students in this region from areas in which students enter speaking SAE fluently. Those who value a power language might argue that part of being an informed, literate citizen includes the use of SAE; however, in order to establish a society in which the multiliteracies framework work applies, all languages and dialects should carry equal prestige and should be used and welcomed.

Another way to embrace language and culture is through district-implemented programs. Since students in this study are enrolled in a DLE school, they are expected to graduate bilingual and biliterate in both English and in Yugtun. While the program is structured to use specific languages during certain content areas, students are typically partnered based on language strengths. Within pairs, one student is ideally stronger in English and the other student is ideally stronger in Yugtun. When working cooperatively, students are encouraged to support one another with the two languages. While students in the community generally speak a dialect of English for most of the class time, Yugtun was allowed and used sparingly, most often used during exclamatory responses during the series reading project. Students were allowed to use

language freely, because the process of meaning making should not be restricted to solely one language.

While classrooms become more and more diverse, lessons must be adapted to foster the languages spoken within classrooms or within the school community instead of expecting success by enforcing only the instruction of the majority language. Teachers do not necessarily need to be multilingual to use multilingualism in their classroom. One of the strategies to support multilingualism in the classroom is called translanguaging. When integrating translanguaging practices, it is okay that teachers do not understand all of the languages spoken by students. Garcia, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) describe a translanguaging classroom as “a space built collaboratively by the teacher and bilingual students as they use their different language practices to teach and learn in deeply creative and critical ways” (p. 2). Students can be given the opportunity to read or write in different languages and can receive additional resources in languages that are not just English, allowing them to participate in deep and creative thinking without being limited by the language. In the multilingual classroom, we must also be cognizant of the language that develops through the new times. For example, culture, generations, or new technology can influence language. This language should be valued and used in the classroom, too. For example, Moses (2010) participated in action research in response to children using certain Yugtun word endings incorrectly. In an attempt to support her language learners, Moses (2010) used grammar tasks to focus specifically on those word endings. Moses (2010) was responding to the language shift present in younger generations as well as some of the adults in the village and she was connecting to the importance of the post-bases in the Yugtun language, which is part of the culture in the context of her setting.

When integrating the translanguaging practice into activities, students are allowed to use different languages and/or dialects in the process of meaning making or in the process of communicating with peers and/or a teacher. Garcia, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) describe a translanguaging classroom as “any classroom in which students may deploy their full linguistic repertoires, and not just the particular language(s) that are officially used for instructional purposes in that space” (p. 1). This practice supports multilingualism by allowing students to use preferred languages and dialects to make meaning and communicate.

Integrating multilingualism in classrooms protects generations from being exclusively exposed to English. García-Mateus and Palmer (2017) argue that by incorporating translanguaging, the classroom becomes a “safe space wherein students could draw from their full linguistic repertoires to make sense of content” (p. 248). García-Mateus and Palmer (2017) collected data in a Spanish-English school in which students took on roles from a story told in Spanish. While engaging in the research, students were pulling from their linguistic repertoires to engage in conversation with bilingual peers, the teacher, and the researchers. In this view of language use, exclusive focus on the power language is not what is most important. Instead, “translanguaging strategies promote critical metalinguistic awareness in *all* students” (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017, p. 248). Multilingual classrooms have an additive view of students’ language as tools for meaning making. In other words, the use of the learners’ preferred language or dialect is valued, because using what is preferred is a more powerful tool in constructing meaning than forcing only the power language in hopes of creating English speaking students instead of creating meaning making students.

Monolingual ideologies limit students' learning potential by restricting learners to thinking and speaking in only one language, often being the power language. If students have wonderful ideas, but cannot verbalize or write them in one specific language, then they are unable to express what they know. Instead, one might assume that the student does not understand what is being taught. Multilingualism allows expression of knowledge in a more comfortable manner that does not limit the learners' knowledge.

**Multimodal meaning making.**

Another component of the multiliteracies framework is multimodalities, which Cope and Kalantzis (2009) describe as the various representations that can be used to assist in the process of meaning making. Multimodalities suggest that the learner is the active meaning maker who utilizes different representations while learning. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) list the following modes of representation for learners to access: written language, oral language, visual representation, audio representation, tactile representation, gestural representation, and spatial representation (pp. 12-13). As an educator, I always ponder *what* I want my students to learn, *how* I can make that learning fun and meaningful, and what *tools* could be used to enhance the learning process. To think of how to meet all learners, the modes of representation should be considered.

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) argue that teaching and/or making meaning through more than one mode allows students to not only gain a deeper understanding of the content, but also to see that content from different angles by using different lenses. An example of this is the famous comparison of a book to the movie representation. A book is never the same as a movie. A person can watch a movie and read a book and see the plot through two very different lenses.

The person might even analyze the characters in the story differently than they do in the movie. The movie can provide visual representations that the reader could have previously constructed in a different manner through the act of reading the written word and creating a visual within the mind. In the classroom, students might hear a story once and gain a deeper understanding by reading it again independently. The aural and visual representations provide the learner with different opportunities to learn. Learners might hear a teacher read the story and picture things differently once they read and see the pictures in the story for themselves. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) argue that “written language is not going away” but instead is “just becoming more closely intertwined with the other modes, and in some respects itself becoming more like them” (p. 15). Not only does utilizing different modes in instruction increase the chances to meet all students, but reinforcing the concepts allows students to use that information at a deeper level in more varied ways.

When engaging with different modes, students are accessing different semiotic resources. Jewitt (2009) argues that “multimodality can be used to build inventories of the semiotic resources (that is, the actions, materials, and artefacts people communicate with) that modes make available to people in particular places and times” (p. 5). Semiotic resources are the tools we choose to use to communicate and how we use them to communicate. Different semiotic resources offer different affordances, or meaning potential. Modal affordances suggest that students learn and express understanding through different modes in different ways and find some modes more useful than others. For example, students may excel in expressing understanding through speaking, but may struggle to write and express the same understandings. Samson (2010) engaged in research to determine how to connect various literacy genres to those

relevant to the Yup'ik culture by integrating *Yuraq*, the traditional native dance. Yup'ik culture has its own modes of storytelling, including *Yuraq*, which is a multimodal storytelling genre. Samson (2010) states, “*Yuraq* is telling a story, told by using multiple sign systems and a way of making meaning” and that the story “is told through music, singing, drama, and gestures” (p. 22). Samson (2010) connected gestural mode to the written mode by having students dance prior to engaging in writing. In my classroom, many students “struggle” to write; however, most students enjoy storytelling in another form, *Yuraq*, which tells a story through movement (dance). Students who prefer to share through oral stories or through dance express interest in multimodal story-telling rather than monolingual academic writing.

To guide teachers to prepare multimodal curriculum design, Albers (2006) asked both preservice teachers and inservice teachers to “generate content and engagements independent from and/or in conjunction with a teacher’s guide” with student’s interests and curiosities in mind (p. 81). Albers (2006) states that as educators, “we start with what we know is good teaching, and continually reshape our teaching based upon our new learning, and in this case, the role of multimodality” (p. 76). Prior to engaging in research, I designed my study around instructional practices emphasized by the district (such as sentence stems). While I had not necessary planned to focus on the graphic novel (a multimodal text), in the process of data analysis, I quickly became aware of the affordances this genre offered.

### ***Graphic novels.***

Graphic novels “offer value, variety, and a new medium for literacy that acknowledges the impact of visuals” (Schwartz, 2002, p. 262). Graphic novels “have engaging illustrations that help readers infer the emotions and motivations of characters as well as more fully understand



the twists and turns within the plot” (Richardson, 2017, p. 24). Graphic novels are multimodal texts that allow readers to question and consider “how color affects emotions, how pictures can stereotype people, how angles of viewing affect perception, and how realism or the lack of it plays into the message of a work” (Schwartz, 2002, p. 263). The modalities offered in a graphic novel include written language, visual representation, and spatial representation. Written language can be similar to text written in regular novels, but also includes written language in speech bubbles. At times, the written language can contain audio representations, because the text represents a sound instead of just a word. Graphic novels also contain several visual representations. The way the visual representations are arranged allows readers to access the spatial representations.

Today’s world provides readers with meaning presented in many forms. As graphic novels are multimodal texts, they incorporate different forms of meaning, including visual and written modes. Graphic novels can support learners who are “inundated with messages from various semiotic resources” in today’s world (Jennings, Rule, & Vander Zanden, 2014, p. 258). Jennings et al (2014) conducted research that included both graphic novels and traditional texts. Jennings et al (2014) found that the fifth graders interacting with graphic novels engaged in more discussions with peers and expressed greater comprehension of the text (p. 271). With this finding, it is evident that graphic novels encourage discussion and support comprehension at a deep level. Brenna (2013) conducted a case study to determine how graphic novels could potentially support comprehension strategy development in a fourth-grade classroom. Brenna (2013) noted, “many comprehension strategies appropriate for use with other textual forms were

modeled and utilised with respect to the students' current graphic novel reading" (p. 90). These studies support the idea that graphic novels support the meaning-making process.

Jennings et al (2014) describe interactions with texts as "multimodal and complex, integrating images with experience" (p. 258). Jacobs (2007) describes comics "as multimodal texts that involve multiple kinds of meaning making" used to strengthen literacy instruction "through the inclusion of visual and other literacies" (p. 21). In the case study done by Brenna (2012), students with different interests and abilities were separated into three groups, but all groups were exposed to graphic novels. Brenna (2012) found that "students had learned, and were excited about learning" when engaging with graphic novels. A group of students in my study read and responded to the graphic novel, *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009). This graphic novel contains images, speech bubbles, and sounds representing the actions taking place on the page. When reading the novel, students were able to interact with visual representations, spatial representations, and written language presented in different forms. While interacting with a graphic novel, students collaborated about the text and responded to the text with reader response journals. Within the journals, students responded by using circle maps, pen pal letters, and pictures. By offering a graphic novel as choice, I demonstrated to my students my belief that literacy exists in more than just the words on the page.

### **Role of Language in Meaning Making**

When interacting with multimodal texts, students can use both written language and oral language. Specific to graphic novels, written language is present in many forms. When using multimodal texts, students can also engage in interpretations and discussions revolving around texts or may even respond to texts using oral or written language.

### *Written language.*

While written language is one mode, it is complex and can be represented in different forms. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) describe written language as either “writing (representing meaning to another)” or “reading (representing meaning to oneself)” (p. 12). This modality includes “handwriting, the printed page, and the screen” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 12). When reading *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009), students interacted with written language in a variety of ways. Some pages of *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009) did not offer any written language, some pages contained several speech bubbles, some pages included written language in forms of sounds, and other pages offered a combination of these types of written language. Written language is a strong focus in traditional aspects of reading comprehension, but it still serves a purpose in graphic novels, especially in combination with the other modes present. Richardson (2017) conducted a comparative analysis to “investigate whether comprehension of text was stronger for readers of traditional text or those reading in graphic novel format” and found that fifth graders expressed “no difference in comprehension scores” whether they read traditional texts or graphic novels (p. 28). While the written word is stressed when learning how to read, meaning making takes place with more modes than just written language and can even take place without written language.

In my analysis, I focused on how students used the written language presented in multimodal texts and how they used the written language to respond. When interpreting the written word, I was curious as to how students were using written language to make meaning. In addition, I utilized reader response journals as a means to collect students’ written language in forms of a response to the text.

### *Oral language.*

Throughout the study, students were expected to engage in conversations relating to the text with their peers and teacher. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) define oral language as “live or recorded speech (representing meaning to another); listening (representing meaning to oneself)” (p. 12). I was interested in students’ use of oral language in the meaning making process. Research has found that language can be used in multiple ways in addition to social speech. While engaging in different types of oral language, students practice varying *types of speech*. The three types of speech that I will introduce are inner speech, private speech, and social speech.

Swain (2000) states that “semiotic tools mediate our interaction” and describes language as “a particularly powerful semiotic tool” (pp. 103-104). Students engaged in *social speech* while interacting with peers and the teacher. Wells (2007) says that when engaging in dialogue, “participants have to work at establishing and subsequently maintaining agreement about the topic and the purpose of their talk” (p. 253). Students would engage in conversations revolving around the text and how it could be used to respond to the text. Students often spoke to one another when helping a peer complete a written response to the text. Swain and Lapkin (1998) studied immersion students collaboratively working together on a task. In this, students had to communicate in a social manner. Swain and Lapkin (1998) state that the collected data from the study support the view of “dialogue as both a means of communication and a cognitive tool” (p. 333). Students use language to both communicate and think.

de Guerrero (2018) states that “acquiring a new language implies not only learning how to communicate in it with others, it also involves developing the capacity to use this language

covertly for private thinking and self-communicative purposes” (p. 1). Wells (2007) argues that “not all our thinking takes place in face-to-face action and interaction with others” (p. 249). Students engage in *private speech* when they still need to talk out what they are thinking and/or writing, but while doing this, their speech is not necessarily directed at anyone else. Private speech can be described as “audibly or subvocally articulated speech directed to oneself” (de Guerrero, 2018, p. 2). DiCamilla and Antón (2004) argue that while private speech “is often social or communicative in appearance, it is psychological in function” (p. 39). Entering this study, I was curious in students’ use of language. I hoped that conducting research through recording student interactions would allow me to capture the range of language used that I would not normally be able to observe.

Eventually, thinking can be used to think instead of using a collaborative interlocutor (Wells, 2007, p. 249). Using language to think thoughts without oral language is called ‘inner speech.’ Inner speech can be described as an “internal, self-directed inaudible speech involved in the thinking process” (de Guerrero, 2018, p. 2). As students develop their language, they enter phases of different types of speech, working toward using inner speech, or private thoughts that do not need to be spoken aloud. Written language and oral language can be applied to the design cycle as students engage with available designs and as they design meaning.

### **Available Designs, Designing, and The Redesigned**

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) describe the meaning-making process within the multiliteracies framework as consisting of the following: available designs, designing, and the redesign (p. 10). In the view, learners access available designs as they participate in the designing process, and then produce the redesigned, which becomes an available design for the

future. Learners are seen as the designers in the act of meaning making. They access semiotic resources through the available designs. The process or product constructed in the design process then becomes what is the redesigned. Rather than being a “correct answer,” the redesigned shows what meanings were formed through learning. This process is cyclical and continuously evolving.

### **Available designs.**

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) state that available designs are “the found or discernable patterns and conventions of representation” (p. 10). The modes of representation can act as available designs for meaning makers. Examples of available designs in modes include linguistic, visual, and spatial. Available designs are ways in which the semiotic resources are assembled to convey meaning. The genre of a story is also an available design. In this study, the graphic novel, *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009) is an available design itself. Within the graphic novel, there are more available designs for students to access than in a traditional text-only chapter book (linguistic, visual, and spatial).

Students access available designs and utilize them in their own unique manner as they make meaning. In the study, the use of graphic novels provided opportunities for students to utilize various modes of representation: visual, spatial, and written, with some of the written modes suggesting auditory sounds. Because they were working in groups, students also had the option to engage in oral conversations with peers and the teacher. Students also responded to sections of the text through the use of reader response journals. I was curious to gain insights into how my students would interact with the varied available designs provided from *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009); how they would enter the design process to make meaning as they

conversed and wrote about the text. When providing students with the multimodal text, I was hoping to gain insight about which available designs students would use and how they would use them.

### **Designing.**

Meaning is designed through the interaction of available designs. Kern (2000) suggests that design itself can refer “either to product or process,” meaning that a text can follow a structural design or readers can create a design from a text (p. 54). Within the designing stage, a student can reshape the available designs and make meaning from them. For example, students could access a visual representation (available design) of a character with red cheeks and assert that the character is feeling a certain emotion (shy, angry, embarrassed). Two different students interacting with this available design could decide on different meanings as they interpret the image or the same student might design meaning differently after interacting with the available design a second time. Accessing available designs to then begin designing recognizes that students have agency, and encourages them to more freely make meaning. Students can also recognize that the meaning they shape the first time could change when interacting with that same available design a second time.

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) describe designing as “the act of doing something with Available Designs of meaning” (p. 11). As students engage in the designing phase, they take on various roles as the reader (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Serafini, 2012). Serafini (2012) argues that “in order to create an informed, literate citizenry, readers must be able to navigate, interpret, design and interrogate the written, visual and design elements of multi-modal texts” (p. 152). In relation to reading visual and multimodal texts, Serafini (2012) expanded on the work of

Freebody and Luke (1990) to describe each role students partake in. The roles as named by Freebody and Luke (1990) are code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst. Serafini (2012) reshapes these roles to fit multimodal texts. Serafini (2012) uses the term reader as a navigator to describe one who attends “to the grammars of visual design, in addition to the grammar, structures, and typography associated with written language” (p. 155). He argues that readers of this day in age should be able to navigate multimodal texts, not just acquire the ability to decode traditional written text (p. 155). Jimenez and Meyer (2016) argue that readers as navigators “must recognize the importance of both traditional print and visual components of the text” (p. 434). In doing so, readers determine when and what they must attend to.

Serafini (2012) describes readers as interpreters as those who engage in interpretation by “constructing or generating viable meanings and responses to various texts and images” (p. 155). The role of interpreters is to construct meaning while interpreting a message that is implied from the available design. Serafini (2012) agrees that readers do bring prior knowledge and experiences into this interpretive role. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) argue that the act of representation “is an expression of an individual’s identity at the unique junction of intersecting lines of social and cultural experience” (p. 11). While interpreting an available design to designing meaning, students’ prior knowledge and experiences can influence the newly constructed meaning.

Serafini (2012) argues that “readers actually construct text to be read” when engaging in the role of reader as designer (p. 157). Students are responsible for creating what is happening in a given message and ultimately are the ones who decide on the redesign. Cope and Kalantzis



(2009) argue that “the moment of design is a moment of transformation” and agree that each time the designer makes meaning, the result can be new or different (p. 11).

To connect to cultural theories of meaning, Serafini (2012) describes the role of reader as interrogator. Serafini (2012) argues that cultural theories view text as having both personal and public meanings (p. 159). In this role, students understand that there is a consequence served to the reader through each interaction or frame.

The roles of the reader serve another way to consider the active roles learners play in the meaning making process. Going into the study, I was very interested about how students may engage in these roles as they interacted with graphic novels and made meaning. Prior to the study, I strongly considered teaching each role and seeing how students would engage in roles after being explicitly taught. Although my instructional design changed, I still remained curious about how my students could engage in these roles as they made meaning.

### **The redesigned.**

The redesigned is what emerges through the act of designing and in turn becomes an available design for others. Kern (2000) describes literacy-based teaching as “not linear, but overlapping” when discussing the relationship between reading, writing, and talking (p. 132). As students make meaning, they engage in different modes and each mode can influence and shape the meaning-making process. In addition, students might create the redesigned through the use of varying languages and dialects. The language in which they speak could influence the redesigned, or what was made during the designing phase. Like literacy teaching, the process of making meaning is not linear, but overlapping. The students in this study each created his or her own reader response journal. In this, students designed meaning after interacting with the

available designs from *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009). To reflect available designs being interpreted differently by each learner, the redesigned looks different in each reader response journal even though the group did collaborate frequently while writing responses.

### **Reader as Designer**

This study views the reader as a designer in the meaning-making process. I had been exposed to the design process before engaging in this research. While I had also explored other views of literacy and meaning making, I was curious about how students could create meaning while interacting with a text. This led me to questioning what might happen in my own classroom when incorporating ideas related to multiliteracies. This was a new stance that I was exploring in the process of conducting research and I wondered how it would change my view of literacy. When viewing readers as designers, the readers are actively engaged as they interact with available designs to design the redesigned. The multiliteracies pedagogy “requires that the enormous role of agency in the meaning making process be recognized” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 10). In this sense, students are actively engaged and take agency in the meaning-making process. The knowledge and views of each individual student can influence how that student designs by drawing on the available design. Instead of viewing literacy as skills-based, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) argue that the aim of literacy is “creating a kind of person, an active designer of meaning, with a sensibility open to differences, change and innovations” (p. 10). This view of literacy gives each meaning maker a voice. The meaning maker’s new design includes “an expression of their voice” that could be made available to future meaning makers.

Kalantzis and Cope (2008) argue that literacy “is not only about rules and their correct application” but is also “about being faced with an unfamiliar kind of text and being able to

search for clues about its meaning without immediately feeling alienated and excluded from it” (p. 203). Students should accept agency in learning and freely interact with available designs as they make meaning. Our goal as literacy teachers should be “to design learning experiences through which learners develop strategies for reading the new and unfamiliar in whatever form they may manifest themselves” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 11). I was curious about how my students would design meaning as they interacted with graphic novels.

### **Conclusion**

The multiliteracies framework shapes my beliefs as an educator in an evolving world and provides a lens through which I investigate how my students design meanings while reading the graphic novel *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009). I focused on how they students interacted with each other and with available modes presented in graphic novels. In the next chapter, I describe the research methodology I employed in order to answer my question: *How do bilingual elementary students use the modalities present in graphic novels to interact and make meaning?*

## Chapter 3 Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the design of my qualitative teacher action research study and the analytic framework used within the context of my setting. The participants of the study and my relationship with those participants will be described in detail. The research question, the overall goals for the research, and the activities that assisted in the data collection process will also be described and justified.

### Research Question

This teacher action research (TAR) focuses on how one group of three fourth-grade students interacts and makes meaning over a five-week period, while reading the graphic novel, *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009). It also focuses on how students interact with peers and the teacher before, during, and after reading the text. The guiding research question is: *How do bilingual elementary students use the modalities present in graphic novels to interact and make meaning?*

### Study Design and Analytic Framework

Two different theoretical frameworks guided my research design. Teacher action research (TAR) shaped the design of this inquiry. I used constructivist grounded theory (CGT) as my analytical framework. Both of these theoretical constructs will be described and related to my research process.

#### **Teacher action research.**

The research approach used in this study is teacher action research (TAR). Mills (2018) describes teacher action research as “any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn” (p. 8). This systematic inquiry helps those in the teaching profession

conduct studies that will help create a better understanding of what is going on in the classroom and how the students are responding. I am using TAR to answer my research question, because I realize I can do more to engage my students and motivate them as they read. My curiosity about engaging reading activities and my frustration with students *feeling* like they cannot read inspired me to make changes and document those changes in my classroom. Mills (2018, pp. 10-11) describes action research in four steps:

1. Identify an area of focus
2. Collect data
3. Analyze and interpret data
4. Develop an action plan

The process of teacher action research starts with an area of focus and specifically identifying that focus as it relates to the setting. This focus can be determined by anyone in the teaching profession, but I participated in this research as a teacher researcher. Once the focus has been identified, teachers may start collecting data to reflect that focus. The third step is to analyze and interpret the data. Lastly, an action plan is created after analyzing and interpreting the collected data. The process of teacher action research helps teachers determine how to improve instruction and learning within the classroom, but it does not necessarily follow discrete and linear steps. The four steps described by Mills (2018) work together in a cyclical manner before, during, and after research collection. Mills (2018) argues that the process of TAR is not stagnant, but forever evolving. TAR is a cyclical process of making changes in the classroom to see how learning is impacted.

My research mirrors this cyclical process in a couple ways. Initially, I identified an area of focus that I found important. I created a plan for the data collection process so that I could

analyze what happened in my classroom. By using the area of focus and following the research design, I could use the data to develop a plan for future instruction; however, within that plan, I had to make several adjustments based on the occurrences in the classroom that surprised me or needed changing. For example, at the beginning of the study, students wrote a retelling of the passage they had read. After the journal prompt had changed, some students seemed to continue retelling the story in their written responses. This compelled me to revisit my area of focus for students, so that I could collect the most insightful data. By the end of data analysis, I realized that as my focus had evolved, my question had also shifted. I did not know going into the study that I would only focus on the *Amulet* group. After creating a clearer, more narrow focus, I changed my research question to connect more to what emerged from the data. Table 3.1 below connects Mills (2018) components of TAR to my research plan.

Table 3.1: Components of TAR as related to my research plan

Mills Steps (2018, pp. 10-11).	My TAR Plan
Identify an area of focus.	Reading was my area of focus for this research. More specifically, I wanted to observe meaning making and interaction taking place during small group reading.
Collect data.	I used audio and video recorders during reading sessions and conversations, took observational notes, and collected student journals over the course of five weeks.
Analyze and interpret data.	To analyze and interpret data, the audio and video recordings were transcribed and coded. The journal entries were also read and coded. References to observational notes were made throughout the transcription and coding process to help make the most accurate decisions about what was actually happening with the participants.
Develop an action plan.	After looking over the data and learning about what happened throughout the study, I developed a clearer understanding of what works well in my classroom. More of this will be discussed in the Chapter 5.

In addition to following the process of action research, Mills (2018) argues that all research should be valid, reliable, and trustworthy. Mills (2018) describes validity as the ability of knowing “that the data we collect accurately gauge what we are trying to measure” (p. 52). In terms of this teacher action research, I am applying Mills’ (2018) definition of validity to the way I have structured my inquiry. To ensure validity, I had to make sure my research was dependable and confirmable. Mills (2018) describes dependability as “the stability of the data” (p. 155). Mills (2018) describes confirmability as “the neutrality or objectivity of the data” collected (p. 155). In efforts to keep data valid, I engaged with colleagues and professors before engaging in data collection, continued conferring with peers and professors during data analysis, and restructured my interpretation of the data after revisiting the data and continuing to meet with peers and professors about the findings. Mills (2018) defines reliability as “the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it measures” (p. 158). This research was designed to meet the needs of the research question and my students. If the data are both valid and reliable, then the research can be deemed trustworthy. In an attempt to establish trustworthiness, I carefully thought of data collection techniques and activities that would be advantageous for my students. I decided to implement a metacognitive activity prior to asking students to participate in reading surveys and questionnaires because I wanted my students to provide honest evidence about their reading strategies. I believed that by implementing metacognitive activities, I would collect more trustworthy evidence of students’ knowledge of reading strategies. The research activities in this study held my students and myself equally accountable.

In addition to gathering honest data, I used various methods of data collection to ensure that my research is credible. Mills (2018) defines credibility as the “researcher’s ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are

not easily explained” (p. 154). Mills (2018) describes qualitative data as descriptive in nature and in my research study, I collected descriptive data in a variety of ways. I kept a TAR journal with me while observing and working with students in groups. I reflected in my own research journal throughout the study as a means to create narrative samples to contribute to my analysis, but also reflected while listening to recorded data and while reading journal entries. Discussing and reflecting about my concerns, questions, and findings with colleagues also helped me as I gathered and summarized my data in a descriptive manner. To complement the observational notes, I also recorded students as they read and worked in groups. Lastly, I collected their journals to read and analyze their written responses.

As a result of collecting data, I developed a plan for analyzing it. This plan changed as I made discoveries and connections across data samples. For example, I started with transcribing conversations amongst students and myself. After reading my students’ journal entries, I noticed that writing was connected to those conversations and also to some of the written and visual modes from the graphic novel itself. After that discovery, I decided to represent data excerpts through multimodal ensembles, in order to present the connected information. After completing the data analysis, I also was able to consider how I could adapt this project for the future based on the findings presented in the data.

### **Constructivist grounded theory.**

To guide and drive my analysis and interpretation of the data, I used constructivist grounded theory (CGT) as my analytic framework. Similar to the methods of TAR, the CGT analytical framework is complementary to qualitative research and is described as “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data” that emphasizes the process of constructing “theories from the data themselves” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1). Instead of creating



categories and determining theories prior to interacting with data, CGT suggests that the data itself will present information that then can be coded, categorized, and related to theories.

Charmaz (2014) invites researchers to participate in CGT:

Grounded theory can guide you; it gives you focus and flexibility. This method offers the tools for conducting successful research. Grounded theory strategies will help you get started, stay involved, and finish your project. The research process will bring surprises, spark ideas, and hone your analytic skills. (p. 3)

Charmaz (2014) states that grounded theory “begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis” (p. 1). While engaging in CGT, the researcher must remain flexible and ready for adapting the research when needed. The researcher looks at what is happening throughout the study, interprets what is happening, and makes changes if and when necessary. There is a distinct, intricate, intertwined relationship between the data and the analysis process. My research question was created and changed, because I wanted to determine what was happening in my classroom by determining what patterns exist in my classroom during certain activities. In order to determine these patterns, I had to continuously interact with my data by listening to the recordings, coding the transcriptions, reading through journals, making connections between all of the data points, and going back to do it a second time to determine themes.

While engaging in research and analysis, I was able to integrate the theories of TAR (Mills, 2018) and CGT (Charmaz, 2014). Using TAR (Mills, 2018) helped me develop and execute my overall plan, while using CGT (Charmaz, 2014) helped with the analysis portion of my research, by giving me a flexible structure to analyze the data. Both TAR and CGT are

recursive processes, but CGT focuses primarily on the analysis process of the research and fits within the TAR framework.

Charmaz (2014, p. 15) provides nine strategies used within CGT. Table 3.2 lists the nine strategies and relates them to my TAR. These strategies are numbered, but do not necessarily take place in a linear fashion. These iterative steps of analysis provided by Charmaz (2014) are compared to what I did as a researcher in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: CGT strategies in relation to my TAR

Steps of CGT adapted from Charmaz (2014, p. 15).	How I used the steps in my TAR
1. Conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process	I recorded throughout the study and began transcribing while continuing the study.
2. Analyze actions and processes rather than themes and structures	I participated in initial coding as a first step to describing the actions taking place.
3. Use comparative methods	I interacted with data during the data collection process and continued to interact with it after the data collection ended. After coding, emerging categories were compared.
4. Draw on data	I used my TAR journal to record my observations and reflections. I also used notes to describe things I noticed throughout the transcription and coding process.
5. Develop inductive abstract analytic categories through systematic data analysis	I continuously returned to my codes and considered the accuracy of each code. I also reflected on if and how they relate to one another. The coding process continuously changed. What I thought the first time could have been seen with a new lens the second time.
6. Emphasize theory construction rather than description or application of current theories	In Chapter 5, I discuss how some of the data suggest that a practice used and praised in my district (sentence stems) <i>may</i> have hindered my students during their designing process and while constructing their redesigns.
7. Engage in theoretical sampling	Initially, my study consisted of several groups reading various genres of series books. My focus shifted as I narrowed in on the <i>Amulet</i> group. The data emerging from the group led me to multimodal analysis, which was not initially my focus.

8. Search for variation in the studied categories or process	After initial coding and creating categories, I looked for any variations in codes. I asked myself if they all belonged. I also questioned my process throughout the analysis. Just when I thought I had a grip on my process, I would change something in my organization.
9. Pursue developing a category rather than covering a specific empirical topic	My categories are organized based on events that I noticed during data analysis.

While completing my study, I spent hours transcribing, coding, and reflecting on what my data could potentially mean. Throughout the study, I had to adjust groups and prompts for various reasons. While the students did select their own texts, some were not as interested in their selections upon starting the project. For that reason, some students switched series. In addition, some students did not pair well, so some students selected different series to part from their group. Early on, I developed a focus on the *Amulet* group, because they were interacting frequently and seemed to thoroughly enjoy the graphic novel. I initially structured the study for a 4-week period, but I extended it one week because when students transitioned from retelling the passage read into writing about characters, many students still used a retell structure in their response. For this reason, I added an additional week to the study in which students focused on characters. Although the study was still going on, I started making a list of what I was noticing. I used initial coding to ensure that I was writing down exactly what was happening. I immediately noticed which texts were more engaging and which groups were working well together. I mulled over the various theories I had been exposed to while pursuing my applied linguistics degree. I came back to these theories when I continuously interacted with the data. The more I interacted with the data, the more shaped my research became. Within this phase of working with my data I was engaging in theoretical sampling.

When starting the analysis process, I first thought of a way to organize data in a table so that I could provide evidence of transcriptions and codes. I filled the middle column of my tables with transcriptions of interesting events that took place during conversations amongst group members each day. Following the coding process presented in Charmaz (2014), I began the initial coding with what was transcribed. To create clear and separate codes, I used green to represent codes relating to students and blue to represent codes relating to me as both a researcher and teacher in the classroom. At times, I wrote notes in the left column to help me remember various things as I continued coming back to the transcriptions. Below are figures that display excerpts of actual transcriptions. Below, Figure 3.1 shows an example of a transcription table with notes and codes to describe what happened.

	<p><b>11:50.5</b>            C: (whispers) did you put periods            D: (whispers) yeah</p>	<p>Asking grammar question.            Providing answer.</p>
	<p><b>13:00.0</b>            T: (talking to another group about characters)</p>	<p>Initiating discussion about characters with other group.</p>
<p>Cam picks up on my discussion with another group about characters and begins naming characters himself.</p>	<p><b>13:06.7</b>            C: there's sister</p> <p><b>13:16.3</b>            C: name <b>name</b>            C: Karen</p> <p><b>14:13.3</b>            D: oops</p>	<p>Naming character in <u>his own</u> story.</p> <p>Naming another character in <u>his own</u> story.</p>

Figure 3.1: Transcription with coding.

In addition to coding the oral conversations, I coded the students' journal responses for each chapter. In these tables, I provide pictures of student writing in the left column and code in the right column. Figure 3.2 shows Daisy's responses and my coding of her entry, as well as the prompt for that week.

**Reader's Response Journal Week 1 (March 26-March 30)  
Pen Pal Letters**

Read one chapter at a time. Stop after each chapter to write to your Wisconsin pen pal. Tell them what you are reading about. Please put the title and the date on the top of each entry. Please title the first entry as "Chapter 1 Pen Pal" and the second one as "Chapter 2 Pen Pal." If you read more, write the chapter first (1, 2, 3, etc.) and "Pen Pal" after. Put this in your Table of Contents too.

Response	Notes
<p><b>Daisy's Reader's Response Entry, Chapter 1 (3/26/18)</b></p>	<p>Naming partner. Naming title. Naming a genre.</p> <p>Describing crash.</p> <p>Naming characters.</p> <p>Naming emotion.</p>

Figure 3.2: Journal coding.

Charmaz (2014) describes coding as a link between data collection and emergent theories that researchers can rely on to explain the data (p. 113). Coding helped me as I reflected on what was happening in the data, what patterns were emerging, and helped me as I created categories with my data. Coding was another way for me to interact with the data I had collected.

**Multimodal analysis.**

As I interacted with data, I also engaged in multimodal analysis. Jewitt (2009) argues that the “relationships across and between modes in multimodal texts and interaction are a central area of multimodal research” (p. 17). While participating in initial coding, I noticed that students were using a variety of modes to interact and make meaning. This led me to looking into which modes students were using and when, how students chose semiotic resources, and how the modes were used. To observe this, I listened to the transcriptions, found the excerpts being discussed from the graphic novel, and read journal entries from students. I began documenting the relationships between the various data points, as they were very connected. In addition to

coding, looking at the relationship across modes helped me create the categories that led to my findings.

## **Setting**

The research took place in a third and fourth grade blended classroom in Eek School, which is located in the remote village of Eek, Alaska. In the sections below, the community itself will be described in detail. Then, the setting of the school in relation to the district and community will be explained.

### **The community.**

The small village of Eek, or *Ekvicuaq*, is located on the Eek River about forty miles south of Bethel and about twelve miles east of the mouth of the Kuskokwim River. The terrain in Eek is mostly flat with some hills surrounding the community. The village of Quinhagak is south of Eek and the village of Tuntutuliak is northwest of Eek. On a clear day, the Kilbuck Mountain range is visible in the east. The homes and businesses of Eek sit between two runways that are about two miles apart. There are three distinct sections of neighborhoods within the village. The first section stretches out beyond the new airport, the second section is located by the old airport, and the third section is situated in the central part of the village. The school, post-office, store, ball court, and video store are all located in the central part of town. We have one main gravel road that connects all sections of the village and one road that leads to the airport. All other parts of town are accessible by boardwalk.

Most people residing in Eek are Yup'ik. Within the village, you can hear both English and Yugtun (the local Alaska Native language) being spoken. That being said, the language being spoken is often connected to which generation a person belongs to. Typically, elders tend to speak Yugtun and younger children tend to speak a dialect of English. While students

typically enroll in school as “stronger in English,” many students still qualify as Limited English Proficient (LEP). In addition, many English speakers tend to speak a non-standard variety of English.

**The school.**

Several years ago, the Lower Kuskokwim School District, began to implement the dual language enrichment (DLE) program in an effort to promote bilingualism and biliteracy with our students. While most other schools in the district gradually transitioned into the program by transitioning one grade level per year into DLE, Eek School fully transitioned within one year. All grades kindergarten through sixth grade started to implement DLE in the 2010-11 school year.

In an effort to use the program correctly, the district created steps for each school to take when placing students into the program. When students enroll in school, they receive a language assessment to help guide the structure for the dual language program. In the past five years, nearly all of the incoming students ranked more proficient in English than in Yugtun, so our school uses an English-first model. Students are taught to read and write in English first, with some exposure to Yugtun in social studies and science. By second grade, students should receive English and Yugtun instruction for equal amounts of time.

During the school day, the subject being taught determines the language used by students. In grades K-6, social studies and science courses are taught in Yugtun and math is taught in English. Reading is taught in both languages from grades 2-6, but only English is used for the reading program in K-1. Once students move into the secondary grades, they receive only about one hour of Yugtun instruction in a cultural class.

The language of the day also helps determine what language is to be used in specific situations. For example, the language used during our morning meetings, in the bathrooms, and during gym time should reflect the language of the day. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, Yugtun is the language of the day. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, English is the language of the day. Students and staff members are supposed to follow the language of the day, but this practice is inconsistent. It is not rare to hear a student speaking English on a Yugtun day.

During the 2015-2016 school year, Eek School held monthly community meetings to re-evaluate our dual language program. From the discussions, the majority of the parents conveyed that children do not fully understand the Yugtun language, especially when attempting to complete homework assignments. Some parents expressed personal frustration when attempting to help children with homework assignments, because they do not recognize all of the words used in the social studies curriculum. Following the meeting, the Lower Kuskokwim School District believed it in the best interest to continue using the DLE program.

### **The classroom.**

For the duration of the study, the student desks remained arranged in the same positions, as my classroom is very small. While individual desks moved a couple times during the study, the set-up of the desks as a whole did not change. Throughout the study, there were three tables set up in quads and one table with six desks. Some students chose to work on the floor while others worked at quad tables. The *Amulet* group worked at two desks that were side-by-side with a third chair pulled up to the side of one desk. This group worked in the same spot in the same arrangement throughout the study.



## Participants

During the 2017-2018 school year, I taught grades two, three, and four. These grades are distributed across two different classrooms. One classroom consists of both third and fourth grade students and the other classroom is confined to second grade students. Within the blended classroom, there are seven girls and 11 boys; 18 students total. Of the total students, ten are in third grade and eight are in fourth grade. While I teach in the blended third and fourth grade room, my partner teacher (who teaches in Yugtun) teaches in the second grade. Then, we switch classrooms. Because of staffing changes, I feel fortunate to be able to teach the same groups of students that I previously taught. Prior to this 2017-2018 school year, I taught grades one and two. I have worked with students in these grades anywhere from two to four years, so I have developed strong relationships with these students and know them both on a personal and an academic level.

Each student voted on the books that interested them most and I sorted groups based on interest and ability to participate in the study. Although many of the 18 students participated, one group emerged as the focus of this study. All students in this group were in fourth grade at the time. The group reading *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009) consisted of two girls and one boy. While I started my study with many students in varying groups, I chose to work with this specific group because they read a graphic novel with many images and sounds included in the text, leading them to make meaning in varying ways. Also, this group interacted with one another frequently. Different discussions emerged in this group because of the different modes presented in the text. Table 3.3 briefly describes each individual student in the study. For the confidentiality purposes, pseudonyms are used.

Table 3.3: *Amulet* group student descriptions

Name	Description
Daisy	Daisy is a leader in her group. If no one starts reading first, she decides to take the lead. She offers support to her peers, but does not always feel confident in her answers.
Rosley	Rosley is a shy, but humorous student. She feels more comfortable working with peers than with her teachers. She takes her time reading, speaking, and writing, making her a very careful worker.
Cam	Cam loves sports. He is a rule follower and has a tendency to ask questions aloud. Cam is a caring, compassionate, and competitive student.

### Instructional Procedures

Prior to introducing book series, students were asked to record themselves reading a passage and to reflect on the reading skills that they used by filling out a comprehension questionnaire (Appendix B). In addition to reflecting about their own comprehension strategies, students also described their reading interests by completing a reading interest survey (Appendix C). To determine groups, I created several slides that introduced students to characters and summaries of various series (Appendix D). The series list in the slides included:

- *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* series (Cleary, 1965-1982)
- *Ramona Quimby* series (Clearly, 1955-1999)
- *Judy Moody* (McDonald, 2000-2016)
- *Junie B. Jones* (Park, 1992-2013)
- *Cam Jansen* (Adler, 1980-2014)
- *The Wayside School* series (Sachar, 1978-1995)
- *The Boxcar Children* (Warner, 1924-1976)
- *The Bad Guys* (Blabey, 2015-2019)

- *Flat Stanley* (Brown, 1964-2003)
- *Henry and Mudge* (Rylant, 1987-2007)
- *Ivy and Bean* (Barrows, 2006-2018)
- *The Magic Tree House* (Osborne, 1992-2019)
- *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney, 2004-2018)
- *Captain Underpants* (Pilkey, 1997-2015)
- *Goosebumps* (Stine, 1992-1997)
- *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2016)
- *Fudge* series (Blume, 1972-2002)

After hearing about different options, students completed a “ballot” and voted on which series sounded most appealing (Appendix E). I wanted to ensure that I provided high-interest texts for my students. These activities helped me create a new library of series chapter books.

Once series reading was introduced, students began reading the texts that interested them most. Throughout the study, students spent approximately fifteen to twenty minutes each day engaging in activities related to the study. Students were audio and/or video recorded during that block of time every day for five weeks. Monday through Thursday, students spent time reading the series they chose with their teacher-selected partners. The group that read *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009) chose to take turns reading passages. Students were responsible for completing journal responses after completing each chapter. On Fridays, students participated in “Café Talks” with various students. These groups varied from the ones that met Monday through Thursday. These conversations were also audio and/or video recorded. By the end of the study, I collected the reading questionnaires, surveys, and student journals.

## Research Procedures

While all students participated in the instructional activities explained above, only those who provided assent and parental consent were closely observed in the study. In an attempt to answer my research question, data were collected through video and audio recordings, written field notes, paper and pencil questionnaires, and student artifacts. The recordings include both teacher-student and student-student interactions. As the active researcher, I reflected in a journal on a daily basis. This journal assisted in data analysis and was a narrative for the research. To provide evidence of what students learned, reader response journals were collected and analyzed.

The collected recordings captured students interacting with peers, the teacher, and the text while reading *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009). The student artifacts consist of reader response journals, which students steadily used as they read each chapter. Table 3.4 displays the timeline of the activities that led up to video and audio recordings. These activities helped me group students by their interest and ability.

Table 3.4: Timeline of activities leading up to data collection

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Data</b>
Tuesday, February 27, 2018	Whole class reading interest survey	The students wrote responses to the survey and I collected them.
Wednesday, February 28, 2018	Whole class metacognitive activity followed by reading comprehension questionnaire	Student readings were audio recorded. Students then wrote responses to a written reading comprehension questionnaire and I collected them.

March 1, 2018	Whole group summaries of series and series selections- Students gave each book described an interest rating	Students gave a star rating (1-5) after reading/hearing the description of a series, and then listed their top five preferences. I collected the ballots to begin grouping students.
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After collecting information, exposing students to various series, and determining who would qualify for participating in the study (based on consent and assent), we finally started our project. As we delved into the project, two groups (*Amulet* and *Captain Underpants*) provided the most rich data. These two groups connected most to my interest in the study, as they read multi-modal texts. As I continued analyzing the data from both groups, I realized that the *Amulet* group provided so much information relating to multi-modal analysis that I chose to focus solely on that group. Table 3.5 represents the five-week study.

Table 3.5: Timeline of data collection

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Length of recording</b>
3-26-18 Day 1	<i>Week 1 Freewrite:</i> Students choose what to write as long as they stick to a pen pal letter format (Appendix F).	20:57 Audio
3-27-18 Day 2		20:36 Audio
3-28-18 Day 3		20:00 Audio
3-29-18 Day 4		22:27 Audio
4-2-18 Day 6		<i>Week 2 Character Writing:</i> Students continue to use pen pal letter format, but focus on character. Sentence stems provided (Appendix G).
4-3-18 Day 7	21:49 Audio	
4-4-18 Day 8	20:58 Audio	
4-5-18 Day 9	18:17 Audio	

4-9-18 Day 11	<i>Week 3 Circle Maps and Characters:</i> Students continue to use pen pal letter format, but focus on character. Sentence stems and structure for circle map provided (Appendix H).	24:39 Audio
4-10-18 Day 12		20:50 Audio
4-11-18 Day 13		24:38 Audio
4-12-18 Day 14		22:11 Audio
4-16-18 Day 16	<i>Week 4 Circle Maps and Setting:</i> Students continue to use pen pal letter format, but focus on setting. Sentence stems and structure for circle map provided (Appendix I).	14:47 Audio
4-17-18 Day 17		21:58 Audio
4-18-18 Day 18		20:13 Audio
4-19-18 Day 19		19:31 Audio
4-23-18 Day 20	<i>Week 5 No Prompt:</i> Students choose how to respond after reading each chapter. No prompt or sentence stems provided.	18:11 Audio
4-24-18 Day 21		21:50 Audio
4-25-18 Day 22		22:20 Audio
4-26-18 Day 23		22:40 Audio

Overall, I collected 23 days worth of audio recordings that included data from students in the *Amulet* group. Each day, there were about 20 minutes for students to work together, leaving me with about 422 minutes of recordings excluding the Café Talks. In all, students wrote 13 journal responses during the duration of the study.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter described the theoretical constructs shaping the research design, procedures, and analysis. The participants involved and the setting in which the study took place were also described. In the next chapter, I will describe in more detail the themes that emerged in the data throughout the analysis as well as my findings.



## Chapter 4 Data Analysis

This chapter focuses on three types of events that occurred in the study and connects them to my research question: *How do bilingual elementary students use the modalities present in graphic novels to interact and make meaning?* Below, I will explain how I prepared for data collection, the data collection process after the project started, the types of events that occurred within the study, and what emerged from the data itself. The data collected includes observations, transcriptions, journal entries, and *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009), the text series used for the duration of the project.

The data analysis led me to three main findings. First, I discovered that vocabulary conversations were not as important as I had originally thought prior to the start of the study. Second, while I had expected social interaction to support the meaning making process, I learned that private speech, or self-talk also supported the meaning making process. Third, I realized that the combination of modes provided in multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, contribute to a deeper understanding while engaging in the meaning making process. Overall, my analysis provides evidence that multimodal texts support readers in dynamic ways and that viewing learners as designers changes not only the students' role, but also the teacher's role.

### **Preparing for the Suitcase Project**

In early February, I gave students a reading interest survey (Appendix C) and a reading comprehension questionnaire (Appendix B) to gain insight into what genres interested my students, how they preferred to read, and which strategies they used while reading. I looked over the information presented in the survey to determine if I had enough books that would interest students. After reading through the surveys, I determined that I had enough books and then used the survey (Appendix C) and ballot (Appendix E) collectively when considering how to group



students. I had intended to use the reading comprehension questionnaire to create mini-lessons on reading strategies throughout the study, but that quickly changed as I saw the success of students working together.

While the reading interest survey asked students if they preferred to read alone or with a peer, I also wanted to use student interest in texts to create student groupings. Only a few students said they would prefer to read alone. Since a component of the project investigated interaction, I encouraged all students to work with partners during a “trial run” and then gave students the opportunity to read independently if they did not like the trial run. By the end of the trial run, only two students chose to read alone.

To introduce the project, I had students walk the “red carpet” into the classroom, pick up ballots, and walk to their seats. While students were at lunch, I stapled butcher paper to the carpet. Students came back to the classroom excited to walk the carpet and learn about the books inside of the suitcase. I wanted to present the series to students by introducing them to the characters from each series. Using Google Slides (Appendix D), I introduced characters from each series one at a time. There were many books (see Appendix D for full list of texts) presented on the slides. While progressing through slides, students would make comments about some of the books, especially those that had been made into movies. Students also commented that they had wanted to read some of the books presented, but had not yet had the chance. There were a handful of books that students had not heard of prior to seeing the summary on the slides. After students “met the character,” they used their ballots to give the series a star rating (on a scale of 1 to 5). After completing the ballot, students then wrote a list of their top 5 interests.

Out of the 18 students in my classroom, 16 agreed to participate in the study; however only 12 of those students could be recorded. After considering the reading interest survey, the

ballots and interests of students, and which students could be recorded, I grouped students. Two students read the *Flat Stanley* (Brown, 1964-2003) series, two students read the *Ramona* (Cleary, 1955-1982) series, three students read the *Captain Underpants* (Pilkey, 2005) series, two students read the *Mouse and the Motorcycle* (Cleary, 1965-1982) series, and three students read the *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009) series. I did not know how students would interact and make meaning with each of the texts, so I decided that I would record all of the students who had permission to participate.

### **Unzipping the Suitcase and Diving into the Books**

In late March, we were finally able to start the project and dig into the series novels. Each day, students would eagerly return from lunch so they could read as much as possible in our short twenty-minute time block set aside for “The Suitcase Project.” Usually, this was our designated writing block (only consisting of about twenty minutes). This was the best time of the day to engage in the project, as I had help from another teacher to work with a specific group. Two students would leave the room to read with that teacher while the rest of the students would settle in designated spots for their groups. Some groups chose to work at desks while others chose to read on the floor. These decisions were made the first day of the project and did not change. Every day was the same, aside from Fridays. Monday through Thursday, students would find their spots, start the recorders, and either finish a journal entry or start reading a new chapter. Some students were able to read one chapter and complete a response to that chapter within the twenty minutes. Other students had to read one day and respond to that chapter the following day, depending on the lengths of the chapters.

There were four different prompts used throughout the five-week study. Prompt 1 simply asked students to follow a pen pal letter format while retelling the chapter or passage read

(Appendix F). This prompt also served as a reminder for the formatting of each page. Students needed to write the date, create a heading, and put the entry in a table of contents. Prompt 2 asked students to write about the character and included several sentence frames for students to use (Appendix G). Prompt 3 revisited describing characters, but asked students to use a circle map to describe the character first (Appendix H). This decision stemmed from my observation that the previous week, some students had continued to use the retelling structure instead of following prompt 2. After completing the circle map, students were provided with the same sentence stems provided in Prompt 2. Prompt 4 asked students to complete a circle map about the setting (Appendix I). Students then used the circle map to write about the setting. Again, sentence stems were provided. No prompts were used on the fifth and final week of the study.

March 26th was the first day of the study in which audio and video recordings began being used to document readings and discussions related to the reading and writing component of the project. I immediately knew this project would teach me a lot about students and reading. That day, I observed the group reading *Captain Underpants* laugh so hard that “they literally had tears streaming down their cheeks” (TAR journal, 3/26/18). Immediately, I grew drawn to continue observing the *Captain Underpants* and *Amulet* groups. Both groups were very engaged, communicated with one another, used creativity when responding in journals (through the use of written text and visual representations), and read books that were multimodal. At this point, I was intrigued by how students responded to their selected texts and realized that there was something potentially special about these kinds of texts. By the end of the second day, I wrote in my journal about how well these groups were working together and that there seemed to be a clear leader in the *Amulet* group (TAR journal, 3/27/18). By April 18th, I started zooming in on observations and focused solely on the *Captain Underpants* and *Amulet* groups, because both

groups were so consistent with engagement, both groups liked responding to the text with written language and drawings, and both groups communicated orally with one another during the reading time. The students in the *Mouse and the Motorcycle* group and the *Ramona* group did not interact much. The students in the *Ramona* group had difficulty communicating with one another. As a teacher action researcher, I did not observe the *Flat Stanley* group frequently, because they read in a separate room with another teacher. The remaining groups could not be video or audio recorded, so I had to make the decision to not include them in my data analysis.

After the project ended, I continued transcribing the recordings from the *Captain Underpants* and *Amulet* groups. By July, I decided that while the responses from the *Captain Underpants* group excited me, their recordings were not always audible. On the other hand, the *Amulet* group had several clear audio recordings and I collected many points of data from this group.

### **The *Amulet* Group**

The *Amulet* group consisted of two girls and one boy. The three students in this group were all fourth grade students. I had taught these particular students anywhere from three to four years and had developed strong rapport with them. In previous years, I had taught this group during reading, writing, and math, but this school year, fourth grade students would leave the classroom to receive Read-180 instruction from another teacher; however, I still taught this group during our writing block and that time was utilized for this project.

#### **Daisy.**

Daisy has a shyness about her, but she is a very strong leader and an extremely engaged and active student. For many years in a row, she won a prize for perfect attendance. Not only does she take school seriously, but she also is very proud and vocal of her own culture. Daisy

participated in *Yuraq*, the Native dance, whenever she could. Her journal was decorated with statements like *love Yup'ik, love our culture because keep it alive*, and *love reading*. She often would delegate by reminding peers of how to take turns reading and by reminding peers of how to respond to the text. Daisy would often refer to the writing prompts when students needed a reminder of what to write. Daisy also supported her peers in many different ways. For example, if students struggled reading the images, she would jump in to add more detail. She also would immediately help her peers in completing their entries upon completing her own. Her voice is very active throughout the transcriptions. While she did not stop students from skipping over images at the very start of the study, Daisy “understood the importance of the images” in the graphic novel (TAR journal, 3/27/18).

**Cam.**

Cam is a highly engaged and active student. He particularly loves math, but he takes enjoyment in reading as well. When Cam is not at school, one can often find him outside playing football with friends. He likes to keep me updated on sports stats throughout each school year, mainly football and basketball. While Daisy often led the group, Cam also acted as a leader at times. He was particularly concerned with the placement of the audio recorder. If he thought someone was speaking too softly, he would encourage them to use a louder voice and he would move the audio recorder closer. Cam often verbalized his thoughts as he wrote in his journal and like Daisy, his voice is heard throughout the transcriptions. At times, he would be sidetracked with sports news and engaged in side conversations, but these distractions did not last long and he would even pick up the recorder to either tell me he would get back to work or to apologize for getting distracted. Early on in the study, Cam did not find reading the images from the graphic novel very important. After noticing students skip over images, I initiated a conversation

with the group. He responded by saying that the group should “skip over the images” (TAR journal, 3/27/18). After our conversation about the importance of the images, Cam became excited with reading the images. Cam also liked to use different voices when reading the speech bubbles.

### **Rosley.**

Rosley was the least present student in the transcriptions. While she was absent for a few days of the study, her lack of presence within the transcriptions was mostly because of her quiet nature. While she is a very shy and reserved student, she is an avid reader and participated throughout the study in a less vocal way. Rosley is a very kind, caring, and hardworking student. She often takes her time to complete her work, because she wants to ensure it is her best work. Prior to the study, I struggled with getting her to write. When initiating the study, I had students write about themselves as practice for an entry. In Rosley’s entry, she actually wrote about liking the writing process. Because of previous observations during writing, I had anticipated her entries would be short and she would have a hard time keeping up with the pace of her peers; however, Rosley did not struggle with the various components of the project. With some support from Daisy and Cam, Rosley finished her journal entries at comparable lengths to her peers and she did not take much longer than her peers to finish the entries.

### **Diving into *Amulet***

By the end of the study, the group had nearly completed the first two books in the *Amulet* series. In the first book of the series, readers are introduced to a family who moved to an old, family-inherited house two years after the father of the two children died. Readers follow the two children, Emily and Navin as they enter a new world belonging to their great-grandfather. Their mother, Karen was abducted by some sort of monster towards to the beginning of the story. The

majority of the first book focuses on the children's mission to save Karen as they learn about the new world they entered. By the end of the first book, they have saved their mother from the monster; however, she is poisoned and needs an antidote. The second book of the series focuses on the mission to find a cure. Along the way, the Emily and Navin learn about the enemies their great-grandfather faced. With the help of some friends, they search for an antidote while trying to stay safe from enemies.

While engaging in data analysis, I spent hours transcribing the *Amulet* group as they read from the text, discussed the text, and responded to the text in their journals. To make connections across different data points, I created tables to add pages from the book and excerpts from journal entries to connect to specific parts of transcriptions. While engaging in data analysis, I was looking for "learning moments" as my students made meaning with a multimodal text. In this, I was also looking for "learning moments" for myself as the teacher.

The first finding describes events in which I responded to increased intonation with vocabulary conversations. The second finding describes how students engaged in different types of speech as they worked to make meaning and write about the text. The third and final finding will describe events in which students either used visuals to support their understanding of written representations or used oral language to describe what the images were portraying. In each section, there are several excerpts from my data. Each excerpt includes transcriptions of what students said. When the text in the transcription is bolded, students are describing what they interpret from the visual mode. When the text is italicized, students are reading from the graphic novel, *Amulet*. When the text is normal font, there is a conversation happening amongst peers, students are engaging in self-talk, or students are engaging in a conversation with myself. Some

excerpts include excerpts from journal entries, which have been typed up. In addition, some excerpts also include pages from *Amulet*.

### **Finding 1: Vocabulary Can Be Learned Through Multiple Modes**

Early on, I noticed that several times I initiated vocabulary discussions as a response to hearing increased intonation from students. There were three instances in which I respond to rising intonation by engaging in vocabulary talk. In two of these cases, students then used the vocabulary word or concept in their journals after finishing the assigned reading for that given day. Below, I analyze the two instances in which the conversation and excerpts influenced the written response of students. I chose to discuss these two events because the oral conversation revolving around the vocabulary word seemed to influence the written responses made by students.

#### **“High beams”: Visual information supports comprehension.**

This event takes place on the first day of the project within the first book of the *Amulet* series. The *Amulet* group was composed of three students; however, the first day of the project, Rosley was absent and had to catch up the morning of the next day before the group delved into the next section of text. On day 1, students were directed to read the prologue (pages 2-12) and respond to it in their journals using prompt 1 (Appendix F). This prompt asked students to write about what they read in the structure of a pen pal letter. This particular vocabulary event begins while students are reading page 4 of *Amulet*. The images on the page (see the “text” column in the excerpt below) show a bright light entering the car, blinding the characters as they drive around the corner. The images then show the mother [Karen] and father [David] reacting to the light. By the bottom of the page, the car in which they are driving is seen going off the road. Speech bubbles include written text revolving around the fact that bright lights are blinding the



family, making it hard for David to safely drive the vehicle. Sounds of the car honking and hitting the fence in the accident are provided. Lastly, the individual frames show the images leading up to the event and the accident. Below, Excerpt 1.1: “High beams” shows the page from *Amulet* in which the high beams become problematic, the transcription of the conversation revolving around this event, and the journal entries in which students reference the accident. The first column shows the text in which students were looking at, reading from, and discussing. In the middle column, the transcript from this event is shown. This transcript starts at about one and a half minutes into the first day. The initials indicate who is speaking, with the T representing myself as the teacher and the other initials representing the three students in this group: Daisy, Cam, and Rosley. This conversation was captured on March 26<sup>th</sup>. Cam and Daisy wrote their journal entries that same day, but because of her absence, Rosley read and responded on the following day, March 27<sup>th</sup>. This first example taught me how multimodal texts can support language development and comprehension. I learned that vocabulary conversations were not as important as I had assumed going into the study.

Excerpt 1.1: “High beams”

Text	Transcript	Journal Entry
Book 1, page 4	<p>01:27.6</p> <p>1 D: <i>uhhh c I see it the guy's not</i></p> <p>2 <i>paying attention to his high</i></p> <p>3 <i>beams? I can't believe this honk</i></p> <p>4 <i>David lookout? hold on? crack.</i></p> <p>01:40.9</p> <p>5 T: What's what are the high</p> <p>6 beams do you know what high</p> <p>7 beams are look at the pictures</p> <p>8 D: ohhhh there?</p> <p>9 C: [shhhhh]</p> <p>10 D: [ohhhh?]</p> <p>11 T: what is it</p>	<p><b>Prompt 1</b></p> <p><b>Chapter 1(1)</b></p> <p><b>(3.26.18)</b></p> <p><b>Daisy</b>—“The family crashed because the head lights were to bright.”</p> <p><b>Cam</b>—“David was blinded from the bright light and he died.”</p> <p><b>Rosley (hers is</b></p>

	<p>12 C: (whispers) those things  13 D: these things?  14 T: what's coming out from the  15 car  16 D: ohhh flash  17 T: ... [well]  18 D: [light?]  19 T: what is it?  20 D: flashlight?  21 C: yeah?  22 T: um well we don't call those  23 flashlights they're called  24 headlights  25 D: oh yeah.  26 T: but they help the car do what  27 D: see?  28 T: yeah but you can't see if  29 they're too bright so what  30 happens to him  31 D: um he can't see,  32 T: it's too what  02:27.5  33 D: bright</p>	<p><b>dated 3.27.18, because of absence)</b>—"The mom had a bloody nose and Karen was crying because her dad fell someone high beam the tree broke and the dad fell and his legs were stuck."</p>
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With Rosley absent, Cam and Daisy start reading the prologue and decide to take turns reading each page. This was a collaborative decision that students in the group continued to use for the duration of the study. On page 4, Daisy is the reader. She reads from the speech bubbles and increases her intonation as she reads *high beams* in lines 2-3. She finishes reading the written text before I stop the group to respond to her increased intonation at the end of the word *beams*. In lines 5-7, I ask students if they know what high beams are and direct them to look at the pictures. Since students were directed to the text itself, they do not verbalize what high beams are. Instead, Daisy simply says "there" in line 8 and Cam says "those things" in line 12 without

providing a specific name or description of the object and making use of the available mode (visual representation) to make meaning.

In line 14, I direct their attention to the car and ask what comes out of the car. Using the visual mode and becoming more specific with what I am asking, students begin using the linguistic mode to give a name to what is coming out of the car. In line 16, Daisy begins suggesting that *flashlights* are coming out of the car. In lines 22-24, I tell Daisy and Cam that we do not refer to those lights as flashlights, but instead call them *headlights*. In line 26, I ask students what headlights help people do. In line 27, Daisy states that headlights help people see. In lines 28-30, I add that if they are too bright, people struggle to see and then ask what happens to the dad. In line 31, Daisy responds that the dad cannot see. In line 32, I say “it’s too what” and Daisy responds on line 32 with the word *bright*. The event ends after this moment, so Daisy and Cam finish the assigned reading for the day, ending on page 12.

Immediately after reading, students started writing a response following the format of prompt 1 (Appendix F), which requested that students write to their pen pals to inform them of what is taking place in the story. In her written response, Daisy concluded that the bright headlights were the cause of the crash. In Cam’s written response, he described that David was blinded by the bright light and ended up dying. Rosley read the prologue the following day and wrote her response immediately after reading the passage. Rosley worked on the reading and writing independently without support from her peers during our reading block earlier in the day so that she could interact with Daisy and Cam later in the day when they continued reading the story. While she missed the conversation about high beams, she still referred to them in her writing. She referenced different frames from the passage, mentioning physical appearances and emotions. She also wrote “someone high beam” and described how David was stuck. Although

she missed out on the vocabulary discussion with the group, she knew that the high beams played a significant role in the crash.

***Using modes to learn vocabulary.***

Students used combinations of visual representations, written language, and oral language to help them write responses to this event. The visual representations show that the bright lights from another vehicle were impacting the character's ability to see while driving. For example, an image shows Karen closing her eyes and trying to cover the bright light with her hands. The light shines on the faces of the characters in the car and then the accident happens. David complains about the high beams in the speech bubbles, allowing the written language to support the visuals. The sound effects also present readers with a written audio form of the crash. To respond to my curiosity of Daisy's rising intonation and assumption that she was confused about the word, we engaged in the oral language mode to discuss the meaning of the word high beams and how high beams were significant to the accident. While Rosley was absent for the conversation about *high beams* and did not know the exact meaning of the term, she recognized through visual representation and written text within the speech bubble that the term was important and contributed to the crash.

In this event, my response to increased intonation was appropriate, because Cam and Daisy did not initially understand what the term meant. Through conversation, we worked our way to describing that the lights were too bright. While interacting with students, I tend to use elicitation by probing and asking for students to provide words to finish my sentences or questions. For example, on line 26, I ask, "they [headlights] help the car do what?" Daisy is able to respond to that with only one word. Similarly, on line 32, I ask, "it's too what?" Again, Daisy responds with just one word. In this event, I am teaching a new word to students, so I tend to

provide most of the structure for the conversation to ensure that students understand the vocabulary word.

Interestingly, while my response to increased intonation seemed important and necessary at the time, Rosley proved that discussion of the term was not necessary for students to understand the importance of the word itself. While Rosley's writing does not fully suggest that she understood the meaning of the word (as she uses the word as a verb rather than a noun), it does demonstrate her ability to construct a response that included the high beam, showing her knowledge of the term's importance and its significance to the story without the teacher's help.

Going into the study, I thought that vocabulary conversations were necessary and important. I stepped in thinking I could support meaning making by providing definitions of difficult or unknown words. When seeing that Cam and Daisy used our conversation in their writing, I immediately felt reassured that my vocabulary conversation was in fact necessary and important; however, after looking over the transcription, I realize that I did not let students talk enough. Instead of letting students answer my questions, I would provide sentence starters and students would often answer with one word. I provided meaning instead of letting students make meaning. After seeing that Rosley wrote *high beams* in her journal without being present in the conversation, I realized that understanding the written and/or oral definition of each and every word in a text is not the most important piece of the meaning making process. While vocabulary conversations may have been more important for traditional texts, the visuals in graphic novels support the written text and allow for students to connect the visuals to what they are reading. The combinations of the visual and linguistic modes support vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

**“Financial strain”: Pronunciation is not the same as comprehension.**

This event takes place on the second day of the project. Students were asked to read pages 14-30. On page 14, students learned that two years have passed since the accident that caused the father [David] to pass away. On this page, the frames show the family driving a car with their belongings stacked on top, the car entering a new town, and the family pulling up to a home. There are several speech bubbles on this page. In the first frame, the mother is talking about her inability to afford the home they had previously been living in. She uses the words *financial strain* to add to her inability to afford the old house. She also tells the children that the house they are traveling to, belongs to the family. By the last frame, the view of that inherited family home is shown in the visual. Below, Excerpt 1.2: Financial Strain shows the conversation taking place within the text, the transcription that revolves around the words financial strain, and the journal entries in which students describe the cause for the move. This transcript starts at nearly three minutes into the second day. This conversation was captured on March 27<sup>th</sup>. All three students completed their written response on the same day, March 27<sup>th</sup>. The second example taught me how I responded to struggles with pronunciation with discussions on the vocabulary word. I also witnessed that again, I did not give students enough time to respond to my question and instead I ended up providing more support.

Excerpt 1.2: “Financial strain”

Text	Transcription	Journal Entry
Book 1, page 16	<p>02:40.5</p> <p>1 C: <i>unfortunately new things cost a lot</i></p> <p>2 <i>since your father passed away I haven't</i></p> <p>3 <i>been able to afford that house at least</i></p> <p>4 <i>out there out here we won't be under</i></p> <p>5 <i>quite as much fine-</i></p> <p>6 (pauses)(whispers)what's that word</p> <p>7 D: fin?-an-ickal?</p> <p>8 C: fin-an-ickal</p>	<p><b>Prompt 1</b></p> <p><b>Chapter 2(1)</b></p> <p><b>(3.27.18)</b></p> <p><b>Daisy</b>—“The family moved to a new house.” (didn't mention financial strain in her own writing).</p>



- 9 T: does that make sense  
 10 D: no  
 11 T: do you know that word Rosley? k  
 12 fin-ancial so uh sh they're having a  
 13 hard time with money right now so it  
 14 says read it again?  
 03:27.1  
 15 C: *at least out here we won't be under*  
 16 *quite as much*  
 17 T: financial  
 18 C: *financial (finachal) strain*  
 19 T: So that means they are moving  
 20 partially because they don't have a lot  
 21 of what?  
 22 D: Money!  
 23 T: Very good.  
 15:48.5  
 24 C: I forgot why did she want to move  
 25 to the new house  
 26 R: because  
 27 D: cause her her her husband died and  
 28 (pause) no she she couldn't afford that  
 29 house  
 30 T: do you think maybe it was both  
 31 D: yeah  
 32 T: maybe you could mention both  
 16:32.0  
 33 C: I forgot what you said the first one  
 34 D: they couldn't afford it and she felt  
 35 sad cause her husband (whispers) died

Cam—"Karen she wanted to move to a new house because she couldn't afford it."  
 Rosley—"They moved in to a new house because the husband died and she couldn't afford it."

On page 16, Cam comes across the word *financial*. In line 5 of the transcript, he begins reading the word but stops after reading the first syllable. In line 6, he asks Rosley and Daisy what the word is. In line 7, Daisy breaks apart the word and suggests that it is pronounced *finanikal*. Her intonation increases at both the first and last syllables. Cam immediately repeats Daisy's suggested pronunciation in line 8. I interrupt their construction of the word in line 9 and ask if what they are saying makes sense. In line 10, Daisy says no. Since Rosley did not attempt

reading the word, I ask her if she knows what the word is in line 11. She does not respond, so I begin describing the meaning of the word in lines 12-13.

In line 14, I ask Cam to reread the word. In lines 15-16, Cam rereads the speech bubble and pauses when he gets to *financial* for the second time. In line 17, I offer the word again. Cam repeats me with a slight error in line 18, saying *fnachal* instead of *financial* and continues reading until he finishes the word *strain*. In lines 19-21, I use scaffolded probing to ask what they [the family] do not have a lot of. Daisy offers the word *money* in line 22 and I praise the answer in line 23.

Starting at line 24 of the transcription, students are no longer reading from *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009), but instead are writing about what happened in the chapter using prompt 1. In lines 24-25, Cam inquired about the cause of the move. In line 26, Rosley attempted to make a suggestion, but Daisy took over in lines 27-28 to offer two different suggestions: the husband's death and the inability to afford the other house. In line 30, I interrupted her explanation to ask if both of her suggestions could have caused the move. In line 31, Daisy agrees that both of her suggestions are reasons for a move. In line 32, I encouraged students to write about both. In line 33, Cam states that he forgot the reasons. In lines 34-35, Daisy reminds Cam that they [the family] could not afford the old home and the death of the dad, adding that it made the mother feel sad.

While Daisy did participate in discussions and supported her peers by providing reasons for the move, she did not write about the reason in her journal. She simply wrote that the family moved. The fact that Daisy verbalized reasons for the move, but did not write about them could be seen as a choice in modal resources, because she answered the questions to her peers as they asked, but chose to simply write "the family moved" when it came to writing her own response.



In this, she verbalized what she knew and that did not occur repeatedly in a written mode, leading me to wonder what I would have interpreted without the recording of her conversation. Cam wrote that not being able to afford the old home caused the move. While Rosley remained mostly silent during the conversation, she did write down the two suggestions made by Daisy in the discussion of the cause of the move. She wrote that the move was caused by the husband's death *and* the fact that Karen [the mother] could not afford the old house. Rosley's silence during oral discussion did not prove that she did not understand the text, because she used other modes to make meaning. This suggests that Rosley makes specific choices about what information to include in each mode.

***Peers can co-construct meaning.***

In this event, students tried to co-construct the pronunciation of a word that was difficult. Cam felt comfortable asking peers for support. Daisy felt comfortable trying to sound out the word to provide the sought-after support. Daisy was active in supporting her peers and answering questions that were posed or prompted by me. Initially, Daisy seemed uncomfortable providing two different reasons for the move, as if there could only be one right answer. After interacting with me, she felt more comfortable providing Cam with two reasons for the move instead of just one. While Rosley was not active in contributing to the conversations, she was the only student to reference both reasons in her written response.

I interrupted their discussion of the word *financial* and provided the correct pronunciation and meaning of the term. I provided meaning and pronunciation simultaneously, because I made the assumption that their inability to pronounce the word meant that they did not understand the meaning of the word. Therefore, students were not given the chance to describe their understanding of the word. This assumption was made quickly, because at the beginning of

the study, I had a great concern for meaning making being hindered by not understanding the vocabulary within the texts. I rushed to provide both pronunciation and meaning without giving students the opportunity to describe the meaning of the word after hearing the correct pronunciation.

While this excerpt is similar to the first excerpt, the signal to my interruption was different. In this example, I assumed students did not understand what financial strain meant, because they expressed difficulty in pronouncing the word *financial*. Instead of asking if they know the meaning of financial, I gave Rosley an opportunity to pronounce the word and she did not, leading me to offer both the pronunciation and the meaning.

#### **Using Multiple Modes Instead of Explicit Instruction.**

The first finding demonstrates how I initially assumed that extra vocabulary support would be necessary in the meaning making process. There were two different signals I looked for from students to determine if they were struggling with reading words. First, I interpreted increased intonation as a sign that students did not understand a particular word read. Second, I interpreted the inability to pronounce words as a sign that students did not understand the meaning of the word. When responding, I decided that engaging in conversation about those particular vocabulary words was necessary so that I could help students make better meaning of what they read. I wanted to support them so that they could have a full understanding of the text they were reading. The two events in which I respond to these signals with vocabulary chats all occurred within the first week of the study. In example one, all three students used a piece of the discussion to write about in their response to the chapter. In example two, Cam and Rosley used a piece of the discussion to write about in their response to the chapter, while Daisy just writes about the move and not the cause of the move.

This pattern of responding to increased intonation dissipated as the project continued. Students grew more comfortable with the text and with working collaboratively. Instead of having the teacher step in from time to time, students grew to support one another with tricky words at times. If they heard a peer struggling with pronunciation, they would offer what they felt to be the correct pronunciation of the word. In addition, I grew more confident in their ability to utilize various modes to make meaning of the text and eventually stopped responding to the increased intonation and struggles with pronunciation. Instead, I met with the group to ask questions about story elements relating to the text and inquired about what students were gathering from each passage.

### **Finding 2: Students Used Words to Mediate Meaning Socially and Privately**

The use of bilingual pairs is crucial when following the dual language protocol. Students should speak with peers as they work through various tasks throughout the day. Since this is valued, I was curious about what I might capture in the audio recordings in terms of interaction. I wondered how pairs would communicate. When listening to the audio recordings, I heard Daisy, Cam, and Rosley speaking and interacting in many different ways. They read both written and visual texts, they discussed what was happening, they asked and answered questions, and they verbalized their own writing. While the audio recorder was running, this group spent most of the time talking.

Interestingly, students were not always talking to one another. Sometimes, they asked questions that did not spark a conversation or an answer. Instead, those questions were thought out and answered by the answer-seeking individual him or herself. At times, students were all speaking and bouncing their ideas off of one another. Other times, students were verbalizing their own ideas and influencing peers to think and speak about concepts related. Lastly, there

were times when students were verbalizing thoughts aloud, but privately, without influencing their peers. In reviewing my data, I became curious about when students responded to one another and when they chose not to respond to one another. In the first excerpt, I will describe an instance in which two students engage in self-talk while writing in their journals. One of the students utilizes his peer’s self-talk to make a change in his own journal. In the second excerpt, I will describe a situation in which social talk and self-talk is being used simultaneously.

**“What’s today?”: Using private speech to mediate writing.**

This event takes place on March 26<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the study. In this event, Daisy and Cam are both responding to prompt 1 (Appendix F) in their reader response journals at an independent level (Rosley was absent on this day). This is their first time responding to the text in this project, so Daisy and Cam spent a good amount of time making sure that they understood the format of the journals. In the background, several students in the classroom as a whole were asking about their pen pals. Prior to this event, Daisy and Cam did not engage in conversation about what they had read. Instead, Cam talks about needing a reminder of his pen pal’s name and asks about the date. Daisy whispers her heading to herself as she writes it down in her journal. The two students both communicate about erasers, but remain mostly quiet as they begin writing in their journals. Below, Excerpt 2.1 provides an example of the use of private speech. This excerpt taught me how private speech can be used to mediate language. Cam uses self-talk to verbalize what he will write in his journal. This transcription starts at about seven and a half minutes into the first day of the study.

Excerpt 2.1: “What’s today?”

Transcription	Codes	Journal Entry
<p>07:25.8  <b>1</b> C: what’s today [writing a</p>	<p>wondering out loud about the</p>	<p><b>Prompt 1</b>  <b>Chapter 1(1) (3.26.18)</b></p>

<p>date down in journal]  <b>07:32.2</b>  <b>2</b> D: (whispers) chapter 1  Dear Ciara  <b>3</b> three twenty-six eighteen  [writing heading for journal  entry]  <b>4</b> C: (whispers) hey that  eraser [using the eraser to  change the date]  <b>08:48.6</b>  <b>5</b> C: do we say ...  <b>6</b> C: (whispers) wait [pausing  from think aloud]  <b>09:13.4</b>  <b>7</b> C: How do we spell <i>Amulet</i>  [pondering the spelling of  <i>Amulet</i>]  <b>09:18.7</b>  <b>8</b> C: Am-u-let? [writing  syllabically to assist in  spelling]  <b>09:31.6</b>  <b>9</b> C: <i>Amulet</i> [reading his own  writing]  <b>09:39.9</b>  <b>10</b> C: I'm just gonna do <i>I am</i>  <i>reading Amulet</i> [stating  action and then reading his  own writing]</p>	<p>date</p> <p>verbalizing what she is  writing</p> <p>acknowledging the “3/26/18”  in Daisy’s private speech and</p> <p>thinking aloud</p> <p>sounding out word</p> <p>verbalizing what he is writing</p>	<p><b>Daisy</b>—“Chaper 1 Dear ciara  3-26-18”  <b>Cam</b>—“I am reading Amulet  with Daisy.”</p>
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In the transcriptions above, Cam is working in his reader response journal and is focused on the date and what he will write about. At the beginning of the excerpt, he asks about the date and then requires an eraser (in line 4). This led me to look in his journal to check if he changed the date or needed an eraser for something else. Figure 4.1 shows that Cam had erased what he had originally written as the date in his journal.

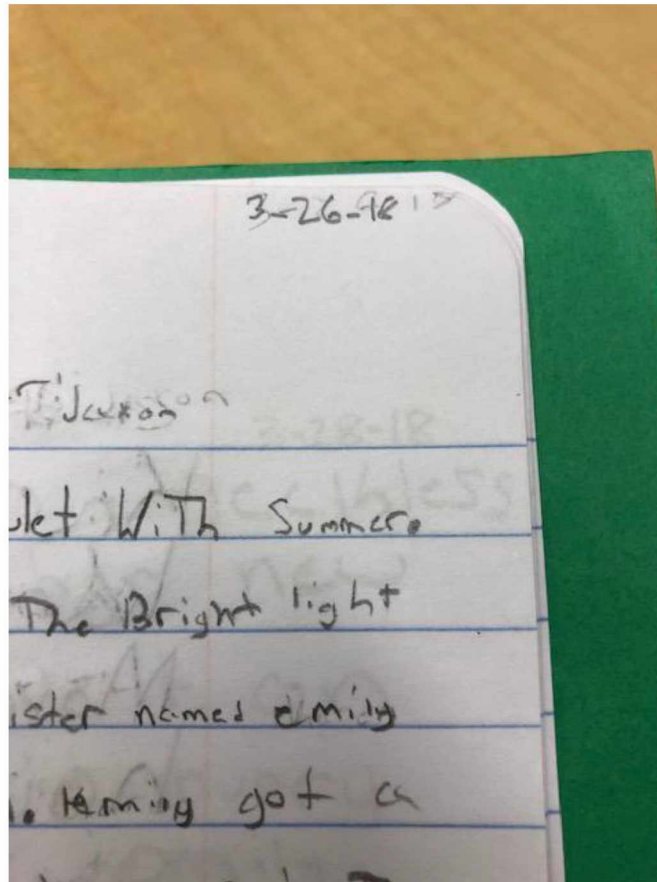


Figure 4.1: Cam's eraser marks.

In line 1 of the transcript, Cam asks about the date. Nearly seven seconds later in line 2, Daisy begins whispering what she is writing down in the heading of her own entry, which ends with the date. This whisper does not seem to be directed at Cam, but in line 4, Cam asks for an eraser as if to correct something he has written. Based on his inquiry about the date and the eraser marks found in his journal for this entry in Figure 4.1, I believe that he was aware of Daisy's private speech, or self-talk, and adjusted the date based on what he heard. In line 5 Cam begins asking a question, but then pauses. In line 7, he develops the question and asks how to spell *Amulet*, the title of the book. Cam does not receive an answer from anyone else. Instead, he sounds out the word and then reads what he wrote down in his journal. This event ends with Cam using the title *Amulet* in a sentence that he put in his journal.

*Using private speech to journal thoughts.*

Both Daisy and Cam participated in private speech while writing their first entry about *Amulet*. Daisy used private speech when creating her heading for the journal entry. She wrote down exactly what she whispered to herself in the journal entry. Cam used private speech when considering how to spell *Amulet* and he uses it again to when inserting *Amulet* into a sentence to inform his pen pal of what he is reading. This sentence is in his journal, but he added “with Daisy” in written form. Private speech was used for the duration of this transcript as students write responses in their journals, aside from when Cam asks for an eraser. Rosley was absent for this event and was not present in my classroom when catching up at a different time the next day, therefore her reading and writing time was not audio recorded.

This event shows both Daisy and Cam using private speech, showing that they are both using language to mediate meaning by speaking aloud to themselves. Daisy engages in private speech when speaking of her heading, which helps answer one of Cam’s questions and he seems to be aware of her self-talk. Immediately following Daisy’s private speech, Cam requests an eraser. In his journal, part of his title is erased and the date was erased. Both parts of his heading were written over eraser marks. This evidence leads to my belief that Cam overheard Daisy and used her private speech to answer a question he had already asked. Cam’s private speech seems to go unnoticed by Daisy and other peers sitting near the *Amulet* group. He asks for the date, asks how to spell *Amulet*, and states what he will write in his journal without any sort of response directed at him. Furthermore, he does not sound frustrated by the lack of response and does not repeat any of the questions he asks, supporting the idea that he is using private speech throughout this event. This is indicative of a larger pattern of private speech--no response is normal and non-triggering for the individual engaging in private speech. Students in this group were very

collaborative and comfortable with one another. They engaged in several conversations, leading me to believe that working in groups could potentially encourage students to engage in private speech. In addition, this example shows how private speech helped Cam as he completed his thoughts in writing. In the next excerpt, both social speech and private speech are used during journal writing.

**“This character has the amulet”: Co-constructing sentences.**

While the first example focuses on private speech, this excerpt includes both private speech and social speech. This event takes place across two days. On April second, students completed the reading passage and started to write a response, but ran out of time. On April third, the students started the recording session by talking about the written response and by completing their journal entries. The prompt for week two asked students to describe characters and provided several sentence stems for support (Appendix G). Conversations revolved around this prompt and students focused on discussing and writing about his or her respective character. Daisy finished writing first and spent her time responding to Cam and Rosley in different ways. Cam and Daisy engaged in conversations about which characters were and were not selected. Daisy also spent time providing Rosley with sentences that could be used in her journal. Rosley did not have much left to write when asking for Daisy’s support, leading me to believe she felt rushed to finish and needed extra help. Unlike Excerpt 2.1, Excerpt 2.2 shows both social speech and private speech. In this particular example, I learned how students can recognize when their peer’s are engaging in social speech or private speech and only respond when appropriate. The first column shows the transcription of the conversation starting at about nineteen minutes in on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.



Excerpt 2.2: “This character has the amulet”

Transcription	Codes	Journal Entry
<p>18:53.9  <b>1</b> C: you guys picked Emily and  <b>2</b> I picked Navin  <b>3</b> D: (whispers) yup (raises  <b>4</b> voice) nobody picked the  <b>5</b> mom? [it’s okay]  <b>6</b> R: [character] now this  <b>7</b> character  <b>8</b> C: you picked the mom  <b>9</b> D: no?  <b>10</b> C: see look the character  <b>11</b> named Navin has black hair  <b>12</b> and black eyes  <b>13</b> R: daisy help? me?  19:24.1  <b>14</b> D: k kid now this chapter  <b>15</b> now this chap-  <b>16</b> R: charac[ter? not] chapter?  <b>17</b> D: [now this] I meant  <b>18</b> (laughs) this character  <b>19</b> R: what were? you?  <b>20</b> think?[ing?]  <b>21</b> D: [has] a amuet amulet  <b>22</b> R: has  <b>23</b> D: has a amulet  <b>24</b> R: has the  <b>25</b> D: amulet so we can read</p>	<p>verbalizing selected characters amongst group</p> <p>writing in journal</p> <p>asking about character selection</p> <p>writing in journal</p> <p>requesting help from peer</p> <p>providing a sentence starter for peer</p> <p>questioning suggestion</p> <p>revising suggested sentence starter</p> <p>providing more for sentence repeats word while writing</p> <p>continues sentence</p> <p>repeats words while writing</p> <p>rushes writer to continue reading</p>	<p><b>Prompt 2</b>  <b>Chapter 5(1) (4.2.18)</b>  <b>Cam</b> “The charicter named  navin has black hair and black  eyes...”  <b>Rosley</b> “The character named  Emily has red hair, black eyes  and she likes to wear her  sweater. This chapter likes to tell  stories. In this chapter the  character wants to save her  mom. This chapter’s favorite  thing to do is wear her red  sweater. This character is good  at saving people. In the  beginning of the story, this  character was a normal kid. Now  this character has the amulet ya.”</p>

In lines 1-2, Cam is verbalizing which characters were selected by each student, stating that both Daisy and Rosley picked Emily and he picked Navin. In lines 3-5, Daisy responds to Cam and then acknowledges that no one picked the mom. She decides that it is okay that no one wrote about the mom. Rosley uses private speech in lines 6-7 as she is writing in her reader response journal. At this time, she is not engaging in conversation with Cam and Daisy, but she is verbalizing what she is writing. Although it was already determined that Daisy wrote about

Emily, Cam asks Daisy if she wrote about the mom in line 8. In line 9, Daisy responded that she did not write about the mother. In lines 10-12, Cam offers to share a piece of what he wrote about Navin. I believe he is sharing this through private speech, because he starts out by saying *see* as if he wants his peers to both look at it and listen to it. Rosley interrupts in line 13 requesting help from Daisy. In lines 14-15, Daisy tries to offer a sentence starter, but produces in error in her speech. Rosley immediately notices the error and points it out to Daisy in line 16 and replaces *chapter* with *character*. In lines 17-18, Daisy laughs at her own error and makes the correction to use the word *character* in the sentence rather than *chapter*. In lines 19-20 Rosley is still confused about why Daisy would say *chapter* and asks, “What were you thinking?” in a playful manner. In line 21, Daisy wants to help Rosley finish her sentence, so she suggests that the character has the amulet. In line 22, Rosley repeats the word *has* as she writes it in her journal. Daisy repeats more of the proposed sentence in line 23 as Rosley is writing. Rosley repeats *has the* in line 24 as she continues writing. In line 25, Daisy solely repeats the word *amulet* and then suggests that they can now read, signaling that Rosley is done with her journal entry.

During the written response, students focused on characters from the story. Daisy, Cam, and Rosley used the sentence frames provided in the writing prompt to assist in their descriptions of the characters. Cam chose to write about Navin, while both Daisy and Rosley chose to write about Emily. Daisy finished her writing early enough to engage in conversations with Cam about characters and to support Rosley in completing the end of her response. When looking at Rosley’s journal, I believe that Daisy was in the process of reading what Rosley had already written when making the error in her suggestion in the sentence starter. Earlier in Rosley’s entry, she had already made the error of writing “This chapter likes to tell stories,” using the word

*chapter* instead of *character*. Daisy offered help to Rosley, once Rosley asked for it. She only helped Rosley complete the last sentence of her journal. After that sentence, students were ready to continue reading.

***Social speech supports comprehension and writing.***

During this event students use a combination of private speech and social speech, but the social speech is more prevalent. Cam and Daisy engage in social speech when referring to the characters they chose. As Cam and Daisy use social speech to converse about selected characters, Rosley is engaging in private speech as she verbalizes what it is that she is writing in her journal. At one point, Cam even referred to his journal and wanted to share a clip of his entry with Daisy, but this conversation was interrupted by Rosley's request for Daisy's help. When Daisy is helping Rosley, they are both engaging in social speech. Aside from the small conversation that emerged from the error, Daisy is offering words for Rosley to write and Rosley follows what she is being told. While writing in her journal, Rosley is using private speech to verbalize what it is that she is writing. Although Rosley's verbalization of her writing was not directed at Daisy, Daisy could still hear Rosley's voice and look at Rosley's journal to determine when to offer more of the sentence to her peer.

This example shows how students understand when they should respond to a peer's voice; whether they are using private speech or social speech. While social speech is more prevalent in this specific example, Daisy seems to acknowledge Rosley's private speech when assisting her in her journal writing. Daisy could have used both Rosley's progress in writing and her verbalization of her writing to know when to continue helping sentence support. Students found it important to engage in social speech when discussing characters selected for the entry and character traits.

### **Using oral language to mediate meaning.**

Throughout the study, students relied heavily on private speech as they wrote in their reader response journal. Students verbalized what they were going to write as they wrote their entries and did not engage in conversation when doing this. Instead they used private speech, or self-talk to guide their writing entries. At other times, students engaged in social speech to discuss what was happening in the images, what was happening within the plot, or as a way to support peers during writing time. Students did not seem to ever mistake private speech for social speech or social speech for private speech. In addition, Excerpt 2.1 shows how Cam could access Daisy's private speech to benefit his question about the date. Cam did not engage in social speech with Daisy, but used her private speech to fix the date for his entry. Excerpt 2.2 shows how while peers were engaging in social speech and private speech simultaneously, they did not confuse one type of speech for the other and they were using both types of speech as a system of support. Daisy was able to engage in social speech with Cam and then switch to assisting Rosley in her writing. Then, Daisy could use Rosley's private speech and her written words to determine when to continue supporting Rosley as she wrote her journal entry. Overall, these types of speech helped me see how students interacted with the text, their peers, and their reader response journals. This category also gave me insight as to how students used self-talk to mediate meaning making while writing in journals.

### **Finding 3: Combined Visuals and Text Support Meaning Making**

In the last finding, I will discuss how students accessed multiple modes to support meaning making. This finding shows how students construct meaning through the available designs presented in graphic novels and makes explicit instruction from the teacher less needed. When interacting with graphic novels, students must understand the significance of the images

presented in the text. Graphic novels allow readers to make meaning through different modes, such as written language, visual representation, and spatial representation. Readers can interpret images and construct a story using both words and images. When this project first started, not all students knew how to engage in the act of interpreting the images. Early on, I notice that Cam was attempting to “skip” the pictures. We had a brief conversation about “reading the images” and from that point on, Cam, Daisy, and Rosley started describing most of the images that were presented without speech bubbles. Below is the transcript in which I tell students that the images should not be skipped.

Excerpt 3.1: “It has no words on this part... skip it”

#### Transcript

5:33.7

D: it has no words on this part

T: so what are you gonna do then

C: skip it

T: what?

D: what? ummm talk about it?

T: do you wanna talk about it? what are you seeing in those pictures

D: **she’s opening the door she’s gonna go and she found a room? button where somebody use to work it says Silas [Chairnon?]**

R: **[Charn?]**

T: now don’t just skip over the images Cam

D: **and she’s... she found a book and she’s gonna look at it (pause) and she’s...**

C: *Emily? Emily woch*

When transcribing the daily readings, I noticed how frequently students *read the images* and how after receiving some attention from me, it became a natural process for them. Students would read text from speech bubbles, swiftly move to reading an image, then would transition back to text in a fluid manner. In addition to this act becoming a part of their meaning making

process while interacting with the text itself, students referred to the images and text presented when writing in their individual journals.

**“They found amulet”: Visual mode supporting written mode.**

By the third day of the study, students had not yet seen the amulet in visual or written form aside what is displayed on the title page. Students read pages 30-60 from the first book. The discovery of the amulet is on page 31, which includes a few speech bubbles, sound effects, and many images. On this page, the characters Emily and Navin are talking to one another about this mysterious discovery of the amulet. At first, the speech bubbles discuss how Emily touched the hand. The visual mode in each frame on the page shows the process of the hand lighting up and turning to reveal the amulet, or necklace, on the other side. The written mode in the speech bubbles at the bottom of the page reveal that the kids think they would get in trouble for finding this necklace. The visual mode added to this written mode and shows their shocked faces after their discovery at the bottom of page 31. In Excerpt 3.2, I learned how the visual mode supports understanding at a deep level. Without having read the written form of the word, Daisy was able to name the visual mode as the amulet. This reading and written response took place on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

Excerpt 3.2: “They found amulet”

Text	Transcription	Journal Entry
Book 1, page 31	<p>00:01.9</p> <p><b>1</b> D: <i>see I told you</i></p> <p><b>2</b> <i>don't touch it don't</i></p> <p><b>3</b> <i>worry about it it's</i></p> <p><b>4</b> <i>just a tiny nick</i></p> <p><b>5</b> (sighs dramatically)</p> <p><b>6</b> <b>the hand is glowing</b></p> <p><b>7</b> <b>it somehow opened</b></p> <p><b>8</b> <b>the thing? now it's</b></p> <p><b>9</b> <b>turning around</b> <i>crk</i></p>	<p><b>Prompt 1</b></p> <p><b>Chapter 3(1) (3.28.18)</b></p> <p><b>Daisy</b>—“Emily found the amulet it was w[h]ere Emily put her(e) hand on it. Then she looked at it then she said don't tell mom.”</p> <p><b>Cam</b>—“Emily found a neckless on a neck at her new house she put it on and</p>

	<p> <b>10</b> they found amulet  <b>11</b> (giggles) let's go  <b>12</b> back outside before  <b>13</b> we get in trouble  <b>14</b> hold on? she's the  <b>15</b> girl Emily is  <b>16</b> gonna go to  <b>17</b> necklace she's  <b>18</b> took it now when  <b>19</b> she looked at it it  <b>20</b> got her eyes got  <b>21</b> red come on? we  <b>22</b> should leave it  <b>23</b> alone and tell mom  <b>24</b> about it shhhhhe'll  <b>25</b> just tell us to put it  <b>26</b> back? here help me  <b>27</b> put it on i'm not  <b>28</b> good at tying knots  <b>29</b> here it's easy just  <b>30</b> make two pretzels </p>	<p>Navin said hurry to emily and emily was just standing in one spot”</p> <p><b>Rosley</b>—“Emily found a book with a hand on it and she got a paper cut she put her hand in and then she got a paper cut. Emily found a necklace and she try put the necklace on. Emily had red eyes, when she had the necklace on.”</p>
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In lines 1-4, Daisy reads the speech bubbles from the top of page 31. In line 5 of the transcription, she transitions from reading the written text to gasping when she sees the image. She acts surprised when she sees the hand glowing. In lines 6-9, Daisy describes the glowing hand presented in the visual and how it [the glowing object on a table that has a handprint] turns around. In line 10, Daisy states the discovery of the amulet using the visual mode provided. In lines 11-14, Daisy returns to reading the written text, but at the end of line 14, she goes back to describing the visual mode. From the end of line 14 to the beginning of line 21, Daisy explains that Emily went up to the necklace, took the necklace, and then her eyes turned red. From the end of line 21 to the end of line 30, Daisy again returns to reading the written text.

When writing a response to the excerpt, Daisy used visual representation and written language to support her thoughts. She wrote about how Emily made the discovery after she put her hand on the table with the handprint using the visual representations. She used the written language in speech bubbles to discuss how the children thought the mom should not know about this discovery. When Cam wrote his response, he also used visual representation and written language to support his thoughts. He references the visual representations in a literal manner. He saw the image of the amulet on display and referred to the mannequin as a *neck*. When Rosley wrote her response, she included details from many different frames. She starts by reminding her reader that Emily got a paper cut from touching the handprint. She writes of the discovery of the necklace and also describes how Emily's eyes turn red when she puts the necklace on.

***Making connections.***

The images and text support the meaning making process and allow students to use words we had not yet discussed. The word *amulet* is not on the page, but Daisy immediately recognizes that the necklace is an amulet. Prior to this event, the word *amulet* and the visual representation of the necklace are only used on the front cover and title page of the graphic novel. Daisy read this image with fluency and instantly referred to the necklace as the amulet. Even after hearing Daisy refer to the necklace as an amulet, Cam and Rosley decide to call it a necklace in their written response.

On this page, students continued to read visual images and written text while engaging in the meaning making process. In this event, Daisy was responsible for reading page 31. Cam and Rosley took their turns reading after this event, but still refer to the page in their individual journals. This shows that they were listening to Daisy's interpretation of the visuals and reading of the written text, the written text, and the visual mode to make meaning. As a teacher, I did not



interrupt this event or engage in conversation with students about the discovery of the amulet on this page. The meaning that they made from this event was created without me.

In this event, Daisy reads through the written text and visual representations in a fluent manner. While she could have understood from the title that the amulet was the necklace, nothing leading up to this event states that the necklace is called an amulet. She could have used the written text in the title, the visuals, and the previous page to conclude that the necklace was in fact the amulet. While Daisy was responsible for reading from page 31, all students found this particular page important in their written response. Daisy, Cam, and Rosley understood the importance of the discovery of the necklace, or amulet.


**“He was in a different world”: Multimodal inferences.**

In this example, Daisy uses prior knowledge, visual information, and the written text of the amulet to make the inference that there are two different worlds, one of which her great-grandfather has been living in. This is significant because it shows how she is applying a reading strategy as she makes meaning of what she is reading in her journal. Again, this is accomplished without explicit instruction from the teacher.

The pages that Daisy refers to when completing her entry remind readers that Emily found an amulet, wears it around her neck, and listens to the necklace as it speaks to her. When the amulet speaks to her, it mentions the name of her great grandfather and a disappearance, but it does not mention where the grandfather might be. Page 26 shows the brief conversation between the mother and her two children about the disappearance of the great grandfather. The mother states that no one knew whatever happened to him. On page 62, the amulet starts talking to Emily. By this time, Emily’s mother needs to be saved. The amulet is guiding both Emily and Navin to their great grandfather’s house. There were no conversations revolving around *another*

world, so there is no transcription for this event. Instead, the first column shows the text from *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009). In the second column, Daisy’s written response about another world is shown, dated March 29<sup>th</sup>. In her response, she writes of how contrary to the belief of his remaining family, the great-grandfather never disappeared, but instead had been living in a different world. Excerpt 3.3: The other world shows how multimodal texts provide opportunities for students to make inferences.

Excerpt 3.3: “He was in a different world”

Text	Journal Entry
<p>Book 1, page 62 Book 1, page 26</p> 	<p><b>Journal Entry</b> <b>Prompt 1</b> <b>Chapter 4(1)</b> <b>(3.29.18)</b> <b>Daisy</b>—“Emily found a amulet. She was going to see her grandfather he didn’t disaper he was in a different world.”</p>

Daisy writes about the grandfather in this passage after reading pages 60-90. She remembered and used the text from page 26 to confirm that the grandfather did not disappear. Daisy considers the genre, the written language, the visual representations, and reflections of what has already happened in the story to make the inference that grandfather did not disappear,

but is in fact living in some other world. She writes of this inference in her reader response journal.

***Making inferences across multiple modes.***


This excerpt shows that not only is Daisy making meaning as she reads the written text and interprets the visual images, but she is also able to make inferences about the text. This example adds to my learning experience with vocabulary conversations. I did not have to teach making inferences for an inference to occur while Daisy made meaning. She used what she had already read through linguistic and visual modes to make the inference that Emily and Navin had discovered another world, one in which their great-grandfather had been living.

**“She is tearing”: Constructing emotions.**

The sequence of frames provided throughout this event can be found in the second novel of the *Amulet* series. On page 16, the frames provide visuals of the mother’s condition. By the bottom of page 16 and the top of page 17, the frames provide visuals of Emily’s emotional response. In this series of frames, there is only one written word, *sniff*, which acts as a sound for Emily’s emotional response to seeing her mother’s condition. Students sounded sad when seeing Emily upset about her mother’s condition. As students read from this page, they worked together to construct what Emily was doing in response to seeing her mother in this state. Below, the first column shows pages from the text showing Emily with her mother. The middle column shows the transcription from this event. Most of this transcription shows how students describe the visual mode. The third column includes the written response from students. Using prompt four (Appendix I), students were to describe the setting of the story. This excerpt’s transcription starts at about 13.5 minutes on April 17<sup>th</sup>. Excerpt 3.4: Constructing emotions taught me how the

prompt used for this specific week did not connect well to the content of the graphic novel, hindering the journal responses.

Excerpt 3.4: “She is tearing”

Text	Transcription	Journal Entry
<p>Book 2, pages 16-17</p> 	<p><b>13:38.5</b>  <b>1 R: she’s looking at her</b>  <b>2 mom</b>  <b>3 D: she’s bringing</b>  <b>4 mask thing?</b>  <b>5 C: cause it can’t hear</b>  <b>6 Rosley (moves recorder)</b>  <b>7 D: k talk</b>  <b>8 R: she’s her eyes are</b>  <b>9 trying to open [she’s</b>  <b>10 looking at]</b>  <b>11 C: [louder]</b>  <b>12 R: she’s looking at</b>  <b>13 her mom</b>  <b>14 D: then she’s gonna</b>  <b>15 cry? (pause) it’s my</b>  <b>16 turn her mom’s still</b>  <b>17 breathing in the mask</b>  <b>18 now she’s crying sniff</b>  <b>19 C: tearing she’s</b>  <b>20 tearing</b>  <b>21 D: I mean tearing</b></p>	<p><b>Prompt 4</b>  <b>Chapter 1(2) (4.17.18)</b>  <b>Daisy</b>—stuck to describing the setting. Did not mention the hospital or cure.  <b>Cam</b>—“But now there are traveling in a place called Kanalis.”  <b>Rosley</b>—“But now in a hospital. They try to help Emilys mom got po[i]s[o](i)ned”</p>

Rosley is responsible for reading the visual representations present on page 16. On lines 1-2, she starts describing the visual representation of Emily looking at her mother. On lines 3-4, Daisy interrupts Rosley’s reading and adds that she brought her mom some sort of mask. On lines 5-7, Cam interjects and moves the recorder, because he believes that it cannot pick up the sound of Rosley’s voice and then instructs Rosley to begin the process of reading the images

again. In lines 8-10, Rosley describes the visual mode of the mother trying to open her eyes to look at Emily. On line 11, Cam interrupts again to ask Rosley to speak louder. On lines 12-13, Rosley states that she [Emily] is looking at her mom. Rosley is interrupted yet again when Daisy adds that Emily will begin to cry. Daisy's interruption begins on line 14, but then she realizes the next page is for her to read, so she assumes her role and begins interpreting the visual mode immediately following her interruption. On lines 16-18, Daisy states that the mother is still breathing in the mask and that Emily is crying. On lines 19-20, Cam suggests that she is not full-on crying, but instead she is *tearing*. Daisy immediately accepts this suggestion and repeats tearing on line 21.

I did not notice a struggle in response to this particular reading during the actual study, but when completing data analysis, I realized that this event did not turn out the way I would have expected. The images reveal emotions in which students (particularly Daisy) seemed to respond emotionally. Students recognize that the problem within the plot developed within this passage and that the mother is in serious danger. The characters in the story express how important finding an antidote is. The children in the story (Emily and Navin) suddenly became responsible for saving their mother. Instead of focusing on the significance of these events, Daisy followed the writing prompt and focused on the setting of the story. Daisy wrote about where the characters were, what the land looked like, and where they came from. Cam named the setting and wrote about the characters' travel to Kanalis. Rosley focused on the setting presented on pages 16 and 17 and wrote of the hospital and that Karen is in the hospital because of poison.

***Tension between meaning making and writing prompt.***

This example is interesting because the event occurring within *Amulet* is important and leads up to the next events in the book. The prompt for this particular section of the book hinders

the students' abilities to fully describe the important reasons for the travel to Kanalis. Students worked together to describe how Emily is tearing up and students can see how the mother's poor health within the visual images. The fact that students had to write about the setting interfered with their ability to write about the significance of the events within these pages. Students worked together to describe the images, but did not use much of what happened in these two pages in written responses.

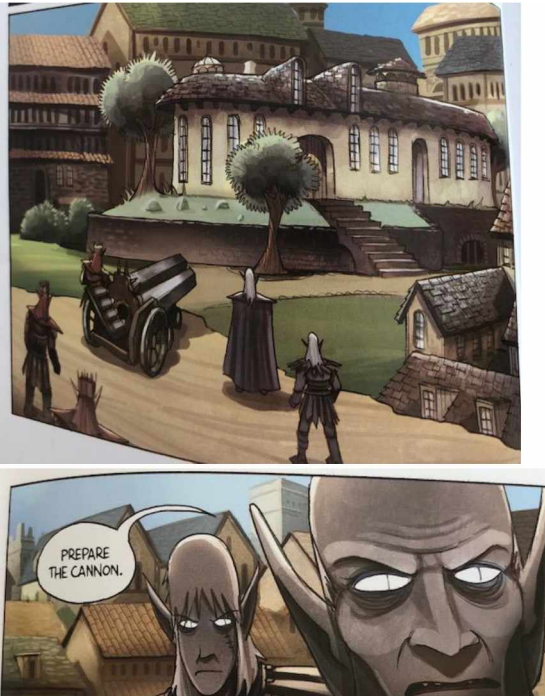
The emotions presented in the oral reading and the description of the visual representation on pages 16-17 does not match what was written in the journal entries. Prompt 4 (Appendix I) asked for students to focus on the setting. Daisy, Rosley, and Cam did just that. They stuck to writing about the setting and did not connect to the emotions within the story or their own emotional response to this horrific event within the text. In this event, the prompt limited the written responses.

**“Prepare the cannon”: Using written language to support visual mode.**

While reading the second book of the *Amulet* series, students continued to create stories with the images presented to them. On Day 19, students read pages 30-60 of the second book. This specific event took place on pages 46-47, which are facing pages. On page 46, which is heavily illustrated, students came across an image of elves standing outside a building with a weapon. The top of the page uses speech bubbles as a written mode, while the page as a whole also presents visual and spatial modes. Prior to this, I had not interacted with students about the word weapon. While the page did include speech bubbles at the top, it did not offer written text at the bottom of the page, so Daisy interpreted the 2-D image on lines 1 through 4 and Cam tried offering support when trying to name the visual of a weapon on line 5. Excerpt 3.5 provides

insight into how students can use different modes collectively to make meaning. This event started at about thirteen and a half minutes in on April 23.

Excerpt 3.5: “Prepare the cannon”

Text	Transcription	Journal Entry
<p>Book 2, pages 46-47</p> 	<p>13:35.5  <b>1</b> D: now there's  <b>2</b> (gasps) the elves  <b>3</b> are out there they  <b>4</b> have a gun  <b>5</b> C: not a blow up  <b>6</b> D: I meant a blow  <b>7</b> up thing  <b>8</b> C: <i>prepare to (??)</i>  <b>9</b> it's a cannon?  <b>10</b> D: oh  <b>11</b> C: look <i>prepare</i>  <b>12</b> <i>the cannon</i></p>	<p><b>No Prompt</b>  <b>Chapter 2(2) (4.23.18)</b>  <b>Daisy</b>—“A elf tried to kill Emily with a knife.”  <b>Cam</b>—“A elf tryied to kill Emily with canon and knife.”  <b>Rosley</b>—“A elf was trying to kill them with a knife and a cannon, at the hospital. They took the mom to the hospital.”</p>

Students first look at the image and briefly discuss what they see on the page. In line 4 of the transcription, Daisy suggests that the weapon is a gun, as she is the reader of the images and text on that page. Cam interrupts her on line 5 and says it is a *blow up*. Daisy corrects her initial statement and adds to Cam’s suggestion by calling it a *blow up thing*. Here, students express their Funds of Knowledge by describing what the weapon does, even if they cannot accurately name the image at the given time.

On line 11, Cam begins reading speech bubble that is presented on page following the image of the cannon. This page is also heavily illustrated, but starts with a speech bubble, which Cam starts reading immediately. Cam does not finish reading the text within the speech bubble

before acknowledging that the name of the weapon is provided in written linguistic text. He draws attention to this by calling to his peers and realizes that the weapon is called a cannon in line 9. He even directs attention to the text, sharing his discovery with peers in line 11 when he guides them to look at the speech bubble that says *prepare the cannon*. In this interaction with the multimodal ensemble, students understood the significance of the events. Through the process of making a connection between the image and the word provided in text, students expanded their understanding. This interaction provided language that they then used when discussing their understandings in written response form.

After completing the day's reading assignment, students started working on their unprompted written response. Although she referred to the weapon as a "blow up thing" in conversation and acknowledged Cam when he pointed out the word "cannon," Daisy did not mention this particular scene from pages 46-47 in her journal. When writing, she did mention a separate weapon, a knife, used by the elves in a later scene. Cam mentioned both events and summarized that the elves were trying to use cannons and a knife to kill Emily. While not verbally participating in the conversation surrounding the image, Rosley referred to the same weapons as Cam and went on to say that they took the mom to the hospital when creating her written response.

***Visual, written, and oral affordances working in concert.***

In this event, Daisy and Cam conversed about the visual without coming to the accurate term to describe the weapon on page 46. Using the text, Cam was able to determine the correct name of the weapon. Lastly, two of the three students used the word *cannon* in their reader response journal. This event tells me that Daisy and Cam tried constructing a word to describe the weapon using visual and linguistic semiotic resources. This event also tells me that Cam was



capable of using the linguistic mode to name the visual mode while engaging in the meaning making process.

In this particular event, Cam and Daisy both look at the visual representation of a cannon and try to determine the meaning without written text. They negotiate on what the name for the visual is and settle on *blow up thing*. When Cam sees the written text on the following page, he corrects the error and refers to the visual as a cannon. He takes a moment to point out the word and teach his peers the actual word for the image. This is an example of the way students started to make meaning without me stepping in to teach vocabulary words through discussion. Cam was able to use two different modes to determine the correct name for the cannon.

### **Using visuals and/or text to support meaning making.**

The examples included within the three findings all share how students accessed different modes as they made meaning. This finding captures how students make meaning while interacting with a multimodal text without much teacher interference. In these examples, students use visual and linguistic modes to make meaning. It did not take long for students to understand how to make meaning using both visual and linguistic modes. I only had to have one conversation with students about the importance of not skipping the images. Throughout the transcriptions, you can see many instances of bolded texts. This indicates that students were describing the visual modes presented on the page. When writing responses, students could use both linguistic and visual modes as they responded to the text.

### **Conclusion of Data Analysis**

While digging deep into the data, I learned even more about why my assumptions about providing so much structure and support were wrong. I came to view my students as designers who made meaning by interacting with multiple modes of representation. Students were fully

involved in the transformative process of learning instead of the reproductive process of learning that I had incorrectly assumed necessary in their understanding of the text. Not only did students engage with multiple modes to make meaning, but they also worked collaboratively and supportively as a team while reading the graphic novel, interpreting the meanings, and writing responses in their reader response journals. Within this, students did not need much support from me. I engaged in some conversations with the group, but most of their time was spent working together and interacting deeply with the text. The next chapter will discuss the overall conclusions and implications resulting in the completion of the data analysis.



## Chapter 5 Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter, I will discuss what emerged from my research, how it answered my research question, and what questions developed after completing the research and analysis. I prepared for the research with the initial question: *How do 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade dual language students construct meaning and interact with the text, the teacher(s), and each other during series reading?* I designed this question, as it allowed me to research both reading and writing while exposing students to authentic, self-selected texts. After discovering that so much data emerged from the *Amulet* observations, journal entries, and transcriptions, I revisited that question and revised it based on the patterns that came out of my research. While I was still interested in including an interaction piece to the question, I felt that the way students were constructing meaning, connected directly to the text being multimodal. The data analysis illuminated the multiliteracies framework as I recognized that students used multiple modes simultaneously to make meaning throughout the study. As my analysis drove me to look more into the multiliteracies framework, I adjusted my research question to ask: *How do bilingual elementary students use the modalities present in graphic novels to interact and make meaning?*

### Findings

After engaging in data analysis, three main findings emerged. While I did not discover these findings in any particular order, I feel as if they show the growth that occurred throughout the study, particularly for me as a teacher. Daisy, Cam, and Rosley not only taught me about how they interact and read, but they also taught me how valuable graphic novels can be in supporting meaning making processes in general. My data analysis resulted in three main findings, one of which focuses more on teacher-student interaction, and two of which focus more on multimodal

meaning making. Not only did these categories help answer my research question, but they left me with a few important learning points that can help future researchers, other teachers, and future experiences in my own classroom.

### **Multimodal texts support vocabulary development.**

When students read, they often used raised intonation when struggling to read a word. My initial response as a teacher was to provide vocabulary instruction through conversation. I learned fairly quickly that this was not as necessary as I thought it was prior to the study. Through our conversations, even I relied on referring to the visual and linguistic modes when asking students about the words and what they meant. Soon, I realized that they, too, used both the visual and linguistic modes to make meaning. By the middle of the first week of the study, I stopped responding to this increased intonation with a “mini-lesson” on a given vocabulary word. Instead of seeking the teacher’s help with challenging words, students were able to determine word meanings through peer support and/or different modes of representation.

These vocabulary conversations also taught me the importance of wait time. I am a quick speaker and often jumped to conclusions about students’ knowledge of word meanings instead of waiting or asking the right questions. For example, Cam struggled with pronouncing the word *financial*. I did not even give them an opportunity to offer a meaning after providing the correct pronunciation. Not only is wait time important when discussing challenging words, but it is also important to give students enough time to make meaning of what is happening within the text.

### **Self-talk mediates thoughts.**

When initially transcribing data from the *Amulet* group, I was shocked at how much students actually spoke. Unlike many other groups, Cam, Daisy, and Rosley spoke most of the time the recorder was on. Before analyzing the transcriptions, I thought students in this group

interacted almost the entire time. I wondered what made this group talk so much. After further analysis, I realized that a good portion of the time, students were actually using self-talk to regulate thoughts as they wrote in their journals. Students used self-talk daily to help them think out thoughts about the text, which characters they would write about, what they would write about, and how they would construct their sentences. The other portion of the time, students were talking collaboratively to make sense of what they were reading, in either visual or linguistic forms.

### **Multimodal texts support meaning.**

My data also demonstrated how students used multiple modes to make meaning from the text. Conducting the analysis taught me how the use of multimodal texts assists in the meaning making process. Albers (2006) states that “in any one text, multiple modes are involved in its making, and modes operate together to represent an overall message” (p. 77). In my study, I gained insights into how students learned to use the modes cohesively to develop a clearer understanding of the passages. Without both visuals and written texts provided, students would have struggled to develop a clear understanding of what was happening in the text. For example, in the remote area of Eek, students never heard of *high beams* to describe very bright lights coming out of a car. Had the visual not been provided, students might not have been able to develop an understanding of why the high beams were significant in the car accident.

### **You Are Not Alone**

To all of the teachers who feel exasperated and overwhelmed with ever changing curricula and the intangible value that is placed upon it, you are not alone. I felt more freedom going into this study than I did coming out of it. Even with that freedom, I felt that finding 20 minutes in my day to make room for the study felt nearly impossible. After completing the study,

I found myself questioning why those 20 minutes were so hard to find when they ended up being so important. These minutes were not only meaningful for students, but also gave me the opportunity to closely observe how they made meaning with authentic and engaging texts. Right after completing the study, I had many thoughts: *Wow ... these kids DO make meaning! I wonder how this would look as a genre study. That was fun.* Classroom behaviors were very manageable during that time. When students are excited, active, and engaged in the learning process, behavior issues do not tend to arise. As the project came to a close, I pictured myself modifying this project and completing it again in the future.

Then, the 2018-2019 school year started and I was introduced to yet another new curriculum for reading. With over 120 minutes of instruction for a typical day and only 90 minutes for actual reading time in my classroom schedule, I again felt overwhelmed. A few months into the school year, we were working on a math project. At the beginning of the math lesson, I said, "We will continue working on our project." A smile quickly spread across a student's face as he let out an excited "Yes!" This student had participated in the project the previous year in the *Captain Underpants* group. His smile quickly dissipated when he realized that it was actually a math project. After revealing he had been let down, he whispered, "I thought we were doing the Suitcase Project." In that moment, my heart sank just as much as his did. We are truly at a disservice to our students when we do not include authentic activities, tasks, and projects that help students grow, especially when those things make our students *happy and excited* for learning.

## **From Theory to Practice**

My research was centered on graphic novels, which are multimodal texts. Therefore, I relied heavily on the *multiliteracies* framework. Even prior to participating in teacher action research (TAR), I acknowledged the importance of allowing students to learn in different ways. In my undergraduate work, I interpreted that importance with the view that all students have different learning styles. This research changed my view, as I observed and learned how different modes can actually work together to create meaning, not to help one learner (and his or her learning style) over another, but to strengthen the meaning-making process as a whole for all students involved. Within my study, students worked with a few modes that were presented in the graphic novel, *Amulet*: written language, visual representations, and spatial representation. Students also used oral language and written language when reading aloud, listening to peers, and writing in the reader response journals.

The fact that graphic novels were not explicitly taught to students did not limit or alienate them. Prior to the interaction, students understood the process of reading and had experience interpreting images from picture books. In addition, students used what they knew about reading and about action stories, communicated with one another, and searched for clues when they struggled. Often times, students would turn to other available modes to help determine understanding. Albers (2006) suggests that “when constructing multimodal texts, meaning makers intentionally choose media with which they are familiar, and/or the media that will enable them to say what they want to say” (p. 78). As Cam, Daisy, and Rosley progressed through the project, they grew to learn how visual representations and written language work together to support one another in graphic novels. For example, when looking at the cannon,



students chose words they were familiar with to name the image, such as “gun” and “blow up,” but were able to correctly rename the image once seeing the written language presented in a speech bubble on the next page.

While some might argue that graphic novels and comics do not provide enough written text for students to engage in “reading,” the variety of modes offered allows for students to develop stronger meaning-making abilities. Jacobs (2007) argues that comics can be used to teach multiple literacies and argues that teaching with comics does “not give up the benefits of word-based literacy instruction” but instead can “strengthen it through the inclusion of visual and other literacies” (p. 21). In my research, I found that when working with the multimodal text, students did not rely solely on one mode to make meaning. Students often interpreted what the images portrayed and referred back to both the images and words when writing responses. The data show the significance of using more than one mode to make meaning. The transcriptions used in analysis are prime examples of students using both images and words to understand what they read. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) describe how different modes of representation can create different understandings. When reflecting on certain events within the data, I started to wonder about what would have happened if I had only collected one modal output. If I had not collected audio recordings to listen to what students were describing and discussing, I would not have gained insight to the deep meaning making they were experiencing. The journal entries alone would not have given me a full understanding of students’ thoughts. In addition, without the use of audio recorders, I would not have discovered the role of private speech as a mediator for language.

Students used social speech to discuss the content within the graphic novel, but also used it to work collaboratively and supportively. For example, while students would often use private speech to assist in their own writing, they would use social speech to help a peer write. Even when private speech was not directed at others, it was made available to others. When Cam and Daisy were using private speech for their own writing, Cam utilized Daisy's private speech to change the date in his journal.

Within my own research, I wanted to make sure that the objectives of the activities (conversations and written responses) allowed for students to engage with the text in a transformative way rather than a reproductive way. After analyzing the data, I realized that the prompts with sentence stems asked students to participate in a reproductive way of writing. However, students did engage in a transformative process when participating in nonrestrictive writing and when engaging in meaning making and conversation with peers. The images presented in *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009) often made students think of places in Alaska. Students discussed how the topography of a city within the story reminded them of a remote village north of their own. In this, students freely connected a piece of their own lives to the visuals in the story they were reading. Conversations about connections took place frequently throughout the study. The means in which students connected to the story were not constricted.

In my study, students interacted with a text in different ways as they made meaning, mostly without the help of a teacher. Students read images and written text, discussed events with peers, engaged in intermittent conversations with the teacher, and responded in varying ways using a reader response journal. In this, students were able to think outside of the box of traditional reading as they explored a variety of additional ways to make meaning. Students did not have any pressure to know all the "right answers," but were instead encouraged to express

what they were learning in different ways. In addition, the images in a graphic novel can potentially supplement the knowledge of new words, allowing modes to work together to support the meaning making process.

### **Implications**

Before engaging in TAR, I put tremendous effort into making reading *exciting*. My range in teaching experience from grades one to four gave me the opportunity to learn about how reading excites learners at different levels. In my time teaching these varying grades, I have observed how students engage in reading and what their preferences are during independent and/or group reading. I also was able to witness students who loved reading and grew from it and students who were once reluctant to read and grew to love reading.

To ensure that students would enjoy participating in the project, they were given the opportunity to vote on books they found most interesting. When introducing the books through the “Series Reading” Google Slides (Appendix D), I purposely put *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009) towards the end out of my own naivety at the time. I am embarrassed to admit that I did not fully understand how graphic novels allow for authentic and extensive meaning making prior to the study. Since I was not passionate about graphic novels at the time, I did not place any particular importance on *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008-2009). Because students self-selected texts, there was a chance that I would not have learned so much through the use of graphic novels. Had Daisy, Cam, and Rosley selected another book, my data analysis and findings would look a lot different. TAR opened my eyes to the realm of learning that exists with the use of graphic novels. While some might argue that struggling readers should solely practice reading written texts, I will argue that successful meaning making does not come from one mode alone. Graphic novels provide

multiple modes for students to engage with and allows for students to gain more insight as to what they are reading.

In my experience, the students struggling most are often provided with intervention activities that actually inhibit readers from accessing authentic texts to engage in complex and engaging meaning making. These interventions focus primarily on phonemic awareness and phonics with the goal of teaching readers to become decoders. The “books” provided with the interventions are black and white paper copies of texts that attempt to get students to master the high-frequency words with a given week. With no focus on meaning making whatsoever, how are we trying to actually teach our students to *understand what they read*? It frustrates me that the varying leveled readers provided with the curriculum offer real books to all types of readers per grade level except for the students struggling the most. During small group reading, the students I should *excite* and *encourage* the most, look at me with droopy eyes and express unwillingness to participate. They verbalize their irritation with lack of real books, as they have a right to. Learning to read becomes more of a behavior problem during this time instead of a great success. Instead of using redundant rote lessons with our struggling readers, we should provide them with exciting and engaging multimodal texts to support their meaning making.

This study consisted of three students who enjoyed participating in the meaning making process. All three have enjoyed reading since entering my classroom as first graders. While these students successfully made meaning, interactions about the available designs presented in the text presented a problem with the traditional form of comprehension assessments in which students must select “one” right answer. In Excerpt 1.2: Financial Strain, Daisy was unsure of providing just one answer, but did not feel comfortable providing more than one answer. This

example prompted me to reflect on the multiple-choice comprehension assessments provided weekly in the reading program, online, and on many standardized tests, in which there is only one correct answer. So consistently, students are meant to think of only one right answer. These assessments do not mirror the design process, where meaning making is full of different possibilities and outcomes. To ensure that students feel confident in answering questions about text, instead of worriedly thinking only one response could be accurate, students should be exposed to authentic interactions with texts more often.

Prior to observations during research and completing data analysis, I had many assumptions based on the observations I made, specifically with how my students approached chapter books. I assumed that I would have to work with each group as much as possible to provide enough scaffolding. Several thoughts raced through my head as I considered how I would go about being a teacher researcher in the most supportive way for my students' learning: *How can I teach comprehension strategies during this twenty-minute time frame? What if I do not support each group enough? How will I teach students in each group the vocabulary words that might be more difficult? How will I teach the genres?* By the end of the first week of the study, these worries diminished as I realized that the structure of the project seemed to be working for my students. Instead of focusing on what I thought my students might not know or understand, I started interacting in conversations with them about the stories and how they were responding to what they read. I now deem those conversations more important than the scaffolded probing I provided at the very beginning of the study.

As a researcher hoping for intriguing findings, I felt like I over-prepared for this study. Prior to the study, I saw relevance in the survey and questionnaire, but they did not prove

important throughout the remainder of the study. I thought these would help me prepare for mini-lessons over genre and reading strategies, but students were actively engaged in the meaning making process and I did not end up providing mini-lessons at all. In the end, I acted mostly as an observer. At times, I engaged in conversations with students about the texts, but I did not have to teach strategies.

I also had a fear that students would not write enough in response to each chapter or section of text. To prevent my fear from coming true, I provided prompts with sentence frames to assure that students would have the support necessary for completing each written response. I had already designed prompts for each week before even starting the project. Upon completion of each chapter, students were expected to respond to the chapter in reader response journals. Based on previous challenges and experiences with getting students to engage in writing in my classroom, I made the assumption that students would need support and structure for these responses. When looking at some of the journal entries, I realized that sentence stems actually inhibited some of the entries. Instead of proving helpful, these prompts hindered students' meaning making process, as they restricted what they *could* say in response to what they read. Students often followed the prompts, but what they wrote about did not always mirror the deep discussions they engaged in about the text. Not only did the sentence stems restrict students from writing about more preferable topics, but it also restricted their word choice. Often, students wrote the sentence stems word for word. Some responses ended up reading more like fill-in-the-blank sentences than authentic responses. In weeks where prompts were not as restrictive or were not provided, students responded more freely and meaningfully.

For example, Daisy followed the prompt requiring students to write about the setting of the story after a critical and emotional moment in the text. Students had read that the mother absolutely needed an antidote and that Emily and Navin would have to travel to get the antidote to cure their mother. Students were emotional as they read this event, as they looked at images of the mother with a breathing mask in a hospital bed, and as they talked about how Emily felt seeing her mother in such a state. These events and emotions were not present in Daisy's response for that day, however, because she did as she was told and wrote about the setting using the sentence starters provided in the prompt. If I were to conduct in this project again, I would not require students to respond to such restrictive prompts. I also would not provide any sentence stems at all.

When beginning data analysis, I thought of doing a comparative analysis between the *Captain Underpants* and *Amulet* groups. Based on observations in the classroom, some transcriptions, and journal entries from both groups, I thought I would learn a lot from engaging in comparative analysis. Students in both groups were engaged and interacted frequently when I observed them. I was unable to capture this dialogue with other groups, as most read text-heavy novels and/or remained nonverbal while writing responses. After further investigation, I realized that what I had observed with the *Captain Underpants* group was not as prevalent in audio recordings. While I did gain insight from the *Amulet* group alone, a comparative analysis could have been completed if I had realized that the audio recorder could not pick up what the *Captain Underpants* group was doing. I could have used a video recorder with that group instead, had I realized that what was seen in person was not captured in the audio recordings.

## **The Suitcase Project Today**

After hearing a student sound so disappointment when thinking we were starting “The Suitcase Project” again, I decided I needed to find time to implement the project for the 2018-2019 school year. Every time the project was mentioned, the new third grade students were curious as to why the fourth grade students were so eager to start the “The Suitcase Project.” Once again, I saw an excitement for reading. After considering my findings from the research, I decided to allow students to create responses freely. Other than that, the project remained closely the same. Students chose the books they wanted, chose whether they would read with peers or independently, and respond to passages using a reader response journal. Again, the students who chose *Amulet* are considered some of the highest readers in the classroom. When students started writing responses in their journals, I noticed that the *Amulet* group tended to use written language for about a half of a page and then chose to use visual representations on the bottom half.

One afternoon, I pulled the second book from the *Amulet* series off of the shelf as a parent walked into my classroom. She smiled as I handed the book to a student and told me how the *Amulet* series was the first graphic novel series her middle child had been exposed to and how ever since reading *Amulet*, her daughter had become an avid artist, typically drawing anime characters.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from my data analysis have inspired me to add more multimodal texts to my classroom library. Multimodal texts provide different opportunities for students to make meaning. If I were to engage in a project like this again in the future, I would make it less structured and give students the opportunity to fully express how they make meaning through all modes available. Currently, I am teaching some of the same students in the blended third and



fourth grade classroom. The students who participated in this study inspired us to tackle this project again, without prompts. When I heard such eagerness from a student when he thought we were starting “The Suitcase Project” again, I had to provide students with the opportunity to engage with these texts again.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



(907) 474-7800  
(907) 474-5444 fax  
uaf-irb@alaska.edu  
www.uaf.edu/irb

### Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

November 13, 2017

To: Sabine Siekmann  
Principal Investigator

From: University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB

Re: [1148745-1] Constructing Meaning and Interacting With Text During Series Reading

Thank you for submitting the New Project referenced below. The submission was handled by Expedited Review under the requirements of 45 CFR 46.110, which identifies the categories of research eligible for expedited review.

Title:	Constructing Meaning and Interacting With Text During Series Reading
Received:	November 5, 2017
Expedited Category:	6 and 7
Action:	APPROVED
Effective Date:	November 13, 2017
Expiration Date:	November 13, 2018

This action is included on the April 4, 2018 IRB Agenda.

*No changes may be made to this project without the prior review and approval of the IRB. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in research scope, research tools, consent documents, personnel, or record storage location.*

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[www.alaska.edu/titleXcompliance/nondiscrimination](http://www.alaska.edu/titleXcompliance/nondiscrimination).

Appendix B: Reading Comprehension Questionnaire

**Reading Comprehension Questionnaire**

Students will listen to a short clip of them reading a story. As they listen to the recording, students will read along to the passage that was read. After reflecting on the reading strategies they used, students will read this questionnaire and complete it to the best of their ability. Most students will read this independently, but I will take a small group and read the questions to them if they need help. I created this written questionnaire to get students thinking about reading strategies.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. When I read a story or a paragraph of information, I understand what it is telling me.

always

sometimes

never

2. I use illustrations or photographs to help me figure out what a story is about.

always

sometimes

never

3. I reread a sentence when it doesn't make sense the first time.

always

sometimes

never

4. When you read, do you see pictures in your head?

always

sometimes

never

5. When you read, do you make predictions about what might happen?

always

sometimes

never



Appendix B: Reading Comprehension Questionnaire cont.

6. When you read, do you connect to the characters in the story?

always

sometimes

never

7. When you don't understand what you are reading, what strategies do you use to make sense of the story?

---

---

## Appendix C: Reading Interest Survey

Students will take this Reading Interest Survey prior to participating in the Series Reading project. I adapted this survey from an image retrieved from Pinterest.com. The survey was adapted specifically from the image retrieved from <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/2b/78/aa/2b78aa154635591113b46dae1bd8f00b.png>.

# Reading Interest Survey

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you like reading?                      yes              no              sort of

3. Do you like to read with a partner?              yes              no              sort of

4. Do you like to read by yourself?              yes              no              sort of

5. Do you like to read with a teacher?              yes              no              sort of

6. Do you like to read at home?              yes              no              sort of

7. Do you like to read aloud or silently?              aloud              silently              both

8. Color the boxes below of the types of books that interest you most:

Comic Books	Series Books	Historic Books	Fiction	Poetry
Nonfiction	Scary Stories	Funny Stories	Animal Stories	Books About Sports
Folktales	Mysteries	Picture Books	Novels	Adventure

## Appendix D: Series Reading Slides

### Series Reading

This mousy tale follows another character created by Beverly Cleary. Ralph and his family live in an old hotel. They hide from humans until Ralph befriends a boy with toy motorcycle. Ralph is adventurous and wants to ride the motorcycle as fast as it could go. Can this mouse maintain a friendship with humans!? Follow Ralph through this series of three books to find out!



Meet Ralph S. Mouse

Appendix D: Series Reading Slides cont.



Written by Beverly Cleary, this series introduces you to the Quimby family. The first book focuses on Beezus, who is Ramona's brother. Beezus and his friends find Ramona annoying and refer to her as a pest. In the remaining books in the series, the story is told from Ramona's point of view. If you like to laugh and would like to see Ramona's transformation from kindergarten to fourth grade, then this is the series for you!



This is Judy who might just be moody. She is in third grade and has a mood for any type of event. If you like laughter, learning, and oddball adventures, follow Judy as she progresses through third grade!

Appendix D: Series Reading Slides cont.

Barbara Parks introduces Junie B. Jones at the young age of 5 as she starts kindergarten. She is friendly, but still has rivals when she goes to school. Junie has a baby brother and a dog. She is afraid of roosters and ponies. Are you interested in learning just why she is afraid of these animals? Follow her and her adventures and she progresses through school!



Meet Junie B. Jones

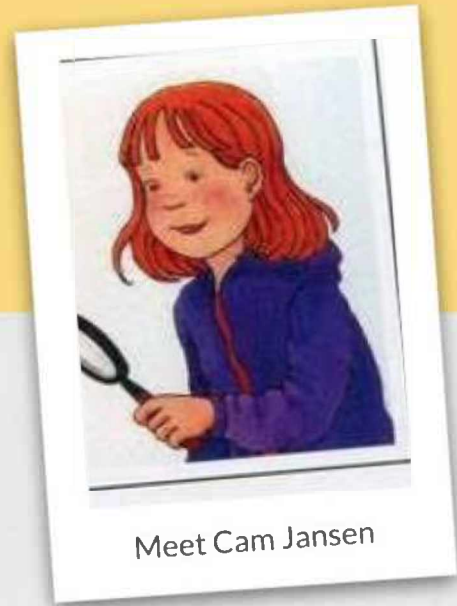


Meet the Boxcar Children

Gertrude Warner writes of four siblings who are orphans at the beginning of the series. They wander around and stumble upon a boxcar that they want to use as a home. Eventually, they live with their grandfather and act as sleuths to solve mystery after mystery. Travel along with these four siblings as they search for clues.

Appendix D: Series Reading Slides cont.

David Alder writes of a young and excited fifth grade sleuth named Cam. Follow Cam as she solves mysteries with her best friend, Eric!



Aaron Blabey just put a twist on what it means to be a superhero by writing of former bad boys dreaming of becoming heroes. Meet these bad boy villains who are tired of being bad. Can these villains prove to be heroes instead?



Appendix D: Series Reading Slides cont.



Meet Flat Stanley

Jeff Brown writes of a young boy named Stanley. Poor Stanley was flattened in his sleep. Now, he isn't just your normal boy. He quickly adjusts to being flat when he realized he can get anywhere without having to squeeze through. Follow Stanley as he slides under locked doors and travels the world.

Cynthia Rylant writes about a boy and his (BIG) dog. Follow Henry and his dog Mudge as they both learn lessons and grow up together. What kind of trouble will this 182 pound dog get into!?



Meet Henry and Mudge

Appendix D: Series Reading Slides cont.

Meet Ivy. Ivy is a shy, quiet, and smart young girl training to be a witch. Meet Bean. She is loud and rebellious. Ivy and Bean are so different that it seems unlikely that they would be friends. Follow these two girls as they form a friendship that can last a lifetime!



Meet Ivy and Bean

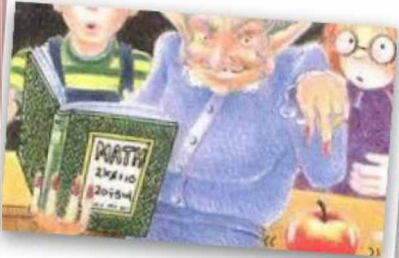
Jack and Annie are two youngsters who have a magical tree house and like to go on different adventures. Follow Jack and Annie as they go on different adventures and meet a variety of animals.



Meet Jack and Annie



Appendix D: Series Reading Slides cont.



Meet Wayside School

This trilogy (three books) tells the wacky story of a wacky school. The school has one classroom on each of the 30 floors, but the 19th floor is somehow missing. Each chapter focuses on a different character in the first book. Would you like to follow the silly stories that take place on the 30th floor of Wayside School?

Meet Greg. Greg just started middle school and he struggles to fit in. Will Greg find his right group of friends? Will he even be able to keep his best friend? Meet this wimpy kid and follow him through his hardships in middle school.



Meet Greg

Appendix D: Series Reading Slides cont.

George and Harold are two fourth graders going to school in Ohio. One of the boys creates a comic that includes a character named Captain Underpants. Somehow, this character becomes real. Would you like to see how these two pranksters deal with a mean principal and this comic book character?



Meet Captain Underpants

Do you like to read scary stories? This series might be for you! Each story focuses on different children or groups of children. These characters face monsters and other scary things.



Goosebumps

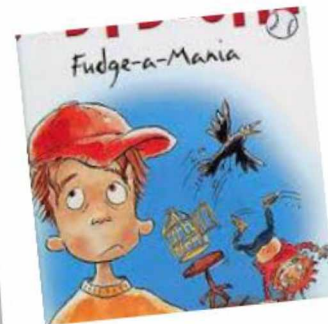
Appendix D: Series Reading Slides cont.



Meet Emily in Amulet

This graphic novel starts about two years after two children lose their father in a car accident. The family had to move away, because they could not afford to stay where they had been living before the accident. Emily discovers a strange amulet while cleaning the new, mysterious house. Strange things start to happen and they find themselves in a new world... will you join them?

Meet Pete and Fudge. Fudge is a younger brother who is always getting in Pete's way. Pete is sweet, but loses patience easily. Fudge is wild. What trouble will these two boys get into?



Meet Fudge

Appendix E: Series Reading Ballot

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Series Reading Ballot  
Cast Your Votes!

Mouse and the  
Motorcycle 

Ramona 

Judy Moody 


Junie B. Jones 

Boxcar Children 


Cam Jansen 

The Bad Guys 

Flat Stanley 

Henry and Mudge 

Ivy and Bean 

Magic Tree House 

Wayside School 

Diary of a  
Wimpy Kid 

Captain  
Underpants 

Goosebumps 

Amulet 

Fudge 

Appendix F: Prompt 1

**Reader Response Journal Week 1 (March 26-March 30)**  
**Pen Pal Letters**

Read one chapter at a time. Stop after each chapter to write to your Wisconsin pen pal. Tell them what you are reading about. Please put the title and the date on the top of each entry. Please title the first entry as “Chapter 1 Pen Pal” and the second one as “Chapter 2 Pen Pal.” If you read more, write the chapter first (1, 2, 3, etc.) and “Pen Pal” after. Put this in your Table of Contents too.

Appendix G: Prompt 2

**Reader Response Journal Week 2 (April 2-6)**  
**Pen Pal Letters About Characters**

Read one chapter at a time. Stop after each chapter to write to your Wisconsin pen pal. Tell them what you are reading about, but this week focus on describing the character and what they character is doing. Please put the title and the date on the top of each entry. Please title the first entry as “Chapter 1 Pen Pal” and the second one as “Chapter 2 Pen Pal.” If you read more, write the chapter first (1, 2, 3, etc.) and “Pen Pal” after. Put this in your Table of Contents too. You might use some of the following sentence starters/frames to describe your character:

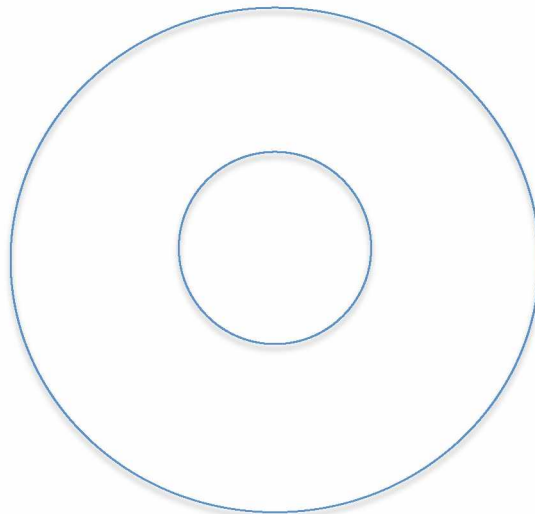
- The character named \_\_\_\_\_ has \_\_\_\_\_ hair, \_\_\_\_\_ eyes, and likes to wear \_\_\_\_\_.
- This character likes to \_\_\_\_\_.
- In this chapter, the character \_\_\_\_\_.
- This character’s favorite thing to do is \_\_\_\_\_.
- This character is good at \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the beginning of the story, this character \_\_\_\_\_. Now this character \_\_\_\_\_.

**Reader Response Journal Week 3 (April 9-13)  
Pen Pal Letters About Characters**

Read one chapter at a time. Stop after each chapter to write to your Wisconsin pen pal. Tell them what you are reading about, but this week focus on describing the character and what they character is doing. Please put the title and the date on the top of each entry. Please title the first entry as “Chapter 1 Pen Pal” and the second one as “Chapter 2 Pen Pal.” If you read more, write the chapter first (1, 2, 3, etc.) and “Pen Pal” after. Put this in your Table of Contents too. If you need to make a Circle Map to help you, please make one and focus on ONE character. You might use some of the following sentence starters/frames to describe your character:

- The character named \_\_\_\_\_ has \_\_\_\_\_ hair, \_\_\_\_\_ eyes, and likes to wear \_\_\_\_\_.
- This character likes to \_\_\_\_\_.
- In this chapter, the character \_\_\_\_\_.
- This character’s favorite thing to do is \_\_\_\_\_.
- This character is good at \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the beginning of the story, this character \_\_\_\_\_. Now this character \_\_\_\_\_.

Circle Map:



## Reader Response Journal Week 4 (April 16-20) Pen Pal Letters About Setting

Read one chapter at a time. Stop after each chapter to write to your Wisconsin pen pal. Tell them what you are reading about, but this week focus on describing the setting and maybe even how the setting has changed. Please put the title and the date on the top of each entry. Please title the first entry as “Chapter 1 Pen Pal” and the second one as “Chapter 2 Pen Pal.” If you read more, write the chapter first (1, 2, 3, etc.) and “Pen Pal” after. Put this in your Table of Contents too. If you need to make a Circle Map to help you, please make one and focus on the setting. You might use some of the following sentence starters/frames to describe your setting:

- The setting is at \_\_\_\_\_.
- It looks \_\_\_\_\_.
- At first, the story took place \_\_\_\_\_, but now \_\_\_\_\_.

Circle Map:

