

A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF STRUGGLING READERS IN SECONDARY
LITERACY TEACHERS: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

SooJin Lee: A Social Construction of Struggling Readers in Secondary Literacy Teachers: A
Collective Case Study

(Under the direction of George Noblit)

The Social Constructionism and New Literacies Studies supported the idea that the concept of (struggling) reader is not a given but is constructed in social interactions. With the literature review, I found that the frequently used term, *struggling reader*, was ill-defined and felt the need to see how the concept is used in reading classrooms. In this dissertation study using collective case study method, I explored how secondary teachers working with a group of students considered as struggling in reading construct the concept of struggling readers in their discourses and practices with the two guiding questions: (1) How do teachers identify and define the struggling reader in classrooms? and (2) How does this perception assist and inhibit teacher practices? With the analysis, three constructs and four contexts in the social construction of struggling readers in teachers were revealed. The three constructs include (a) reading assessments, (b) students' schooling level, and (c) the diverse cultures of students are brought to the classroom were implicated in how teachers thought of struggling readers. Four contexts that affected the social construction of struggling readers in these teachers were (a) a deficit view of student culture, (b) high-stakes standardized testing, (c) everyday communications in school, and (d) absence of teacher education. Inequity from the larger context impacted on the construction of struggling readers in teachers deeply and viciously, by distorting the students' care as patronizing and institutionalizing.

To all readers who have been identified as struggling (including myself).
It does not have to be “your” struggle.

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격려해주셔서 감사합니다. 유학을 결심한 순간부터 여정을 마치는 지금까지, 고비마다
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EC	exceptional children
ESL	English as a second language
NLS	new literacy studies
ZPD	zone of proximal development

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims to explore how secondary teachers working with so-called struggling readers construct their perception of the group of students in their teaching practices with a method of collective case study. I begin this introduction with a study background and a significance of the study. Then I justify my use of the term, and describe researcher positionality as well as a theoretical framework that informed my study. Finally, I outline the organization of the whole dissertation.

Background

Teaching students how to read has been one of the most important goals of public education over history. Indeed, the popular adage for what needs taught has been ‘reading, writing and arithmetic’, constituting the 3Rs. However, teaching reading has not proven to be as straightforward as many wish it would be. Indeed, reading researchers, have been struggling to find an agreement as to what *reading* is. The meaning of what reading is, and who readers, are varies based on who defines it (Alvermann, 2006), which is a concrete demonstration that the concept of reading is socially constructed. Without a agreed upon definition, the meaning of *reader* may well be different for different people, which make educators who have to teach reading puzzled, confused, and frustrated (Williams, 2004). Concomitantly, there is little agreement on how to conceive of those who struggle to read. Even though many researchers have used the term *struggling reader* frequently, only a limited number of studies have attempted to examine what the *struggling reader* means in reading education (e.g. Alvarez, Armstrong,

Elish-Piper, Matthews, & Risko, 2009; Alvermann, 2006) and even fewer have addressed how it is constructed (e.g. Hall, 2007; Hikida, 2015; Learned, 2014; Triplett, 2007).

Without conceptual agreement amongst experts, this study sought to better understand the idea of struggling reader by looking at the phenomenon in English classrooms in a public high school. The following research questions guided this study: (1) How do teachers identify and define the *struggling reader* in classrooms? and (2) How does this perception assist and inhibit teacher practices?

To answer the questions above, this study implemented a collective case study, recruiting seven reading practitioners from four English classes of a public high school from a suburban Southeastern state. The reading practitioners included four classroom teachers, an Exceptional Children teacher, and two English as Second Language teachers from one high school. All the teachers were white females who have been working with *struggling readers*. I draw on four sources of data for this dissertation including classroom observations, interviews of teachers and students, a teacher focus-group interview, and artifacts from the teacher-driven classes from 6 months of classrooms visits.

Each teacher became a single case as well as a part of a collection, being compared to find similarities and differences among cases (Goddard, 2010; Yin, 2010). The analysis was conducted to understand how each teacher constructed their definition of the *struggling reader*, and how the perception impacted teaching practices. Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) was applied in data analysis to better capture the authentic context of the social construction.

Significance of the Study

Researchers have noted that the fundamental concept in reading research is problematic. These researchers note that the concept of *struggling reader* is mired in a deficit view of student ability and focuses research on a negative state (Alvermann, 2006; Triplett, 2007). Researchers have also never articulated an agreed upon definitions of *struggling reader* (Alvermann, 2006). Decades of research and millions of dollars in funded research have been devoted to undefined concept in the name of promoting students' reading competence. Without some level of agreement, even on alternative definitions, research in reading can be argued to be simply mindless. Reading researchers do not know what it is that they have been studying.

Such a fundamental problem will not be easily remedied. An entirely new approach is needed. Recent studies attempted to know more about who *struggling readers* are by exploring the social construction of the concept on the student side (e.g. Hikida, 2015; Learned, 2014). My study initiates a new line of research that seeks to understand and define the concept as enacted in classrooms. My approach is to acknowledge the concept of *struggling reader* is socially constructed in specific contexts which include deficit perspectives on race, class, and gender. This then means one place to start is examining the concept in practices in schools and classrooms where the meaning of the concept is contested and negotiated. My study will unpack the concept 'in situ' to identify the dimensions and structure of *struggling reader* as a social practice. Other studies will, of course, be needed – but hopefully my study will set the stage for a highly significant program of research.

Justification of Using the term: *Struggling Reader*

Understanding that the use of the term 'struggling reader' is problematic, I tried to find an alternative term to describe the group of readers without a deficit perspective. I was worried about my use of this term throughout this study may reinforce the deficit notion in this label.

During my project, I found multiple terms teachers used to refer their students perceived as readers with struggles, but the terms were not successful to describe students in the classroom I observed. I decided to use *struggling reader* in this dissertation, only because it is common formulation but tried to remain skeptical of it while seeking a better understand the social construction of the phenomenon. The final chapter will revisit the term and explore what might be done to move beyond it and other parallel conceptions.

Researcher Positionality

A researcher is the most important tool in qualitative research (Patton, 2015), and a researcher is constructed by her own sociocultural experiences (Charmaz, 2014). For the reasons, I will address how and why I am interested in this project to reveal both my strengths and potential biases. I am a female Asian reading researcher, who believes in the sociocultural theory that an individual is influenced by a culture around the person as well as influences to the culture in turn. Also, I agree with Lisa Delpit's *intentional teaching* (Delpit, 2006) which suggests education should unpack and teach the institutionalized literacy to students as well as addressing the value of diverse cultures and literacies of theirs. I am very passionate about the population who are identified as *struggling reader*, and this is because of my experience as a secondary reading teacher back in Korea working with low-achieving readers and as a marginalized international doctoral student who has been and perceived as a struggling reader in the United States.

Coming from a well-educated, middle-class family in South Korea, I have always been a high-achieving student, which mattered most there. Without an active reflection of how much privilege I had, I became a teacher who wanted to save those “poor” kids showing low-achievement in school-wide and national-mandated tests by teaching literacy and reading. To build a rapport with my students, I studied their interests and background knowledge focusing on

pop culture. It worked and my students got their highest scores in the school exams. Looking back, I was a good teacher, my intention was good, and my heart for the students was genuine. However, what I believed in was the idea of “teacher savior,” and I didn’t even think that could be condescending until I came to the States.

In America, all my identifiers – my gender, ethnicity, and language – marginalize me here and made me a slow reader and speaker. As an international doctoral student in the United States, I repeatedly got the message from one faculty member that I was not good enough as a doctoral student even though I was engaged in reading research required by the doctoral program, my performance has been good, and I had no diagnosable symptoms related reading. After doubting my ability as a student and blaming myself, I one day received a message listing why I was not a good enough student for her. The list she gave me made me realized that I have been perceived as a *struggling reader* (and writer) by her due to the cultural differences I brought to the program. The way she perceived me had an effect on my identity as a reader, and my performance was negatively impacted.

It was a moment of great epiphany. This experience entirely changed me as an educational researcher. I realized that I have never felt *struggling readers* was a social construction even after reading and agreeing with the literacy research addressing the issues. What I thought was more of how to “help” and “fix” their “problems” which were identified through my own lens as a teacher, without a recognition that my perception could have impacts both on my own practices and on the students’ identities as a reader.

As a result, I am moving from being a teacher savior to someone with a more complex and nuanced understanding of how a teacher is caught up in contributing to, and even creating, the very problems she wishes to correct. In some sense, this research project is a personal quest

to understand myself as well as having implications for teachers and reading researchers in general. I am well aware of that my passion from personal experience could be the biggest bias, potentially overdetermining what I will see in the research site and how to interpret data. To minimize my potential overdetermination, I will come back to my data and analysis in every step, arguing against my beliefs and try to see if different interpretations or explanations are also possible. It is interpretations of the people being studied, not a researcher's, which are pivotal interpretations to be pursued in qualitative research (Erickson, 1986).

Theoretical Framework

Social Constructionism

This study is following *social constructionism* as a theoretical framework (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Even though both social constructionism and social constructivism believe that knowledge is socially constructed, constructionism focus on social context of knowledge construction while constructivist focus on individual cognition (Hruby, 2001). Social constructionists believe that learning of social knowledge is done throughout one's life naturally and (too) effectively, preventing learners from recognizing, and thus being able act back upon, what they have learned through their lived experience (Bowers, 1984). Bowers (1984) in his book, *The Promise of Theory*, suggested five propositions on how students are learning social knowledge through communication in their lived experience. These included:

1. Social reality is shared, sustained and continuously negotiated through communication (p.35).
2. Through socialization the individual's intersubjective self is built up in a biographically unique way, and it serves as the set of interpretational rules for making sense of everyday life (p.36).
3. Much of the social world of everyday life is learned and experienced by the individual as the natural, even inevitable order of reality. This natural attitude toward the everyday world is experienced as taken for granted (p.39).
4. The individual's self-concept is constituted through interaction with significant others: the individual not only acquires the socially shared knowledge but also an understanding of who she/he is in relation to it (p.40).
5. Human consciousness is characterized by intentionality; it is the intentionality of consciousness that insures that socialization is not deterministic (p.42).

I would explain how these propositions parallel with my research on social construction of *struggling reader* among teachers (and students) within classroom context.

His first proposition was that “social reality is shared, sustained and continuously negotiated through communication” (Bowers, 1984, p.35). Teachers share their idea of struggling reader with colleagues and students within school contexts. They share their ideas with colleagues in professional learning community (PLC) meetings, at the teachers’ lounge, or in hallways. They also share their ideas in classrooms with their students. In classes, teachers give specific instructions about which activities to make a better reader. For the purpose, teachers either allow or ignore students’ behaviors and train them to follow a certain concept of good reader in themselves. Through their teaching, teachers interact with colleagues and students, sustaining their idea of *good reader* and *struggling reader*. Of course, the social knowledge constructed in lived experience is not only sustained through interaction, but also revised (Bowers, 1984). When teachers get new knowledge about readers in communication with either teachers or students, the definition of *struggling reader* is revised itself.

Bower’s second proposition was that “through socialization the individual’s intersubjective self is built up in a biographically unique way, and it serves as the set of interpretational rules for making sense of everyday life” (Bowers, 1984, p.36). With their own experience of *struggling reader*, what teachers see or hear from others in their lived experience also becomes part of the teachers’ social knowledge. Language and socio-cultural context around teachers hugely impact on the knowledge. For example, using “struggling” for students, not teachers or curriculum, contains the social assumption that students have problems, not teachers nor schools. These types of social assumptions are subtle, so teachers are unaware if they even exist. Communication plays a role as media between participants as well as reinforce the

knowledge in the teachers. Once teachers' knowledge about struggling reader constructed from interactions with colleagues and students, the knowledge becomes part of the teachers' toolbox to understand and identify students struggling or not.

His third proposition said that "much of the social world of everyday life is learned and experienced by the individual as the natural, even inevitable order of reality. This natural attitude toward the everyday world is experienced as taken for granted" (Bowers, 1984, p.39). With the knowledge, teachers use communication to signal to students what struggling reader does, and what good readers should do in classroom. The teachers take their social knowledge of struggling reader for granted. Colleagues and students also share these social assumptions via communication, internalize it, and then the social knowledge constructed among them becomes natural and difficult to be noticed. To realize the social knowledge of *struggling reader* was constructed, teachers and students need to be intentionally reflective. This explains why people use the concept, struggling reader, without definition. People, even scientific researchers, do that because the knowledge is taken-it-for-granted.

His fourth proposition claimed that "the individual's self-concept is constituted through interaction with significant others: the individual not only acquires the socially shared knowledge but also an understanding of who she/he is in relation to it" (Bowers, 1984, p.40). With interactions between teachers and students, teachers learn from students and share their knowledge about struggling reader. Students also acquires the idea of struggling readers in communication with their significant others in classroom, the teachers with their verbal cues and attitude towards the concept. They develop their self-concept as either good reader or struggling reader through teachers' approval, disapproval, or ignorance. Self-conceptualization is influenced by social interactions, including significant other's responses (Bowers, 1984). Given the

importance of teachers influence on students' learning in school, the power of teacher perception on students' self-conceptualization is huge.

Bower's fifth position is that "human consciousness is characterized by intentionality; it is the intentionality of consciousness that insures that socialization is not deterministic" (Bowers, 1984, p.42). A teacher's curriculum and instruction for struggling reader and non-struggling reader would be very different, because teachers' constructed social knowledge of *struggling* and *good reader* influences on what they are being conscious of in their classrooms. This consciousness influences on teachers' attitudes and practices in classroom, which construct students' social knowledge of readers, sustaining dominant socio-cultural idea in it.

With Bower's notion on social knowledge, the use of struggling reader without distinction can be interpreted like this. People (including researcher) might use the term, *struggling reader*, without definition on the assumption that we all are sharing same social knowledge of what *literacy*, *reading*, and *reader* is, implying it is an objective and natural concept for everyone. This perspective, however, ignores the nature of literacy as a social knowledge. Literacy researchers (e.g., Cook-Gumperz, 2006; de Castell & Luke, 1983; Gee, 2004, 2015) have suggested that reading is not a mere combination of universal skills, but "a social practice, comprised of interpretive rules and events constructed and learned in institutions" (Luke, 1995, p. 97), and "a historically based ideology and a collection of context-bound communicative practices" (Cook-Gumperz, 2006, p.1).

New Literacy Studies (NLS)

Within social constructionism, I draw on the framework provided by New Literacies Studies (NLS) in conceptualizing this study. Opposed to the traditional psychological approach to literacy in the 1980s which viewed reading or writing as a mental process happening in

individual human brains, NLS researchers argued that literacy is not a mere acquisition of language-related skills, but a social practice (Street, 2003). Gee (2015) stated:

The NLS argued that literacy was something people did in the world and in society, not just inside their heads, and should be studied as such. It saw literacy as primarily a sociocultural phenomenon, rather than a mental phenomenon. Literacy was a social and cultural achievement centered in social and cultural practices. It was about distinctive ways of participating in social and cultural groups. Thus, it was argued, literacy should be studied in an integrated way in its full range of contexts and practices, not just cognitive, but social, cultural, historical, and institutional, as well. (Gee, 2015, para. 4)

Literacy researchers (e.g., Cook-Gumperz, 2006; de Castell & Luke, 1983; Gee, 2015) who agreed with the sociocultural perspective, along with NLS, have suggested that reading is “a social practice, comprised of interpretive rules and events constructed and learned in institutions” (Luke, 1995, p.97), and “a historically based ideology and a collection of context-bound communicative practices” (Cook-Gumperz, 2006, p.1).

Street (1985) named the traditional view of literacy, which suggested literacy as neutral and universal, “autonomous.” He argued that the autonomous model “disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin (p.77)” literacy (Street, 2003). As an alternative, he offered an “ideological model of literacy”, suggesting “literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill; that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (Street, 2003, p.77). Because literacy is constructed heavily depending on the contexts, NLS understands literacies as plural (Gee, 2015; Street, 2003).

Because literacy practices are always embedded in the context, what determines one’s literacy practice as good or bad is not “in one’s head, but, rather, the conventions, norms, values, and practices of different social and cultural groups” (Gee, 2015, para. 8). When applied to reading, what makes a reader good or bad depends on the social, historical, and cultural context in which the reading performance is happening. That is, a good reader in one context can be considered as struggling in the other context depending on what valued and counted as reading in

certain contexts. The struggles of a reader do not necessarily come from one's own practices and capabilities but are heavily contextual including perceptions of people who have the power to decide one's reading performance good or struggling.

Dissertation Organization

After this introduction, chapter 2 details the literature and research that informed my work, and chapter 3 provides the methodology for this collective case study. Findings from individual cases are provided in chapter 4 and findings from a cross-case analysis and discussions are detailed in chapter 5. Finally, concluding thoughts are shared in chapter 6.

Chapter Summary

Teaching reading has been one of the most important goals in schools. Many literacy researches have studied about how to make struggling readers to successful ones, while they have not yet agreed on who struggling readers were. Also, only limited studies looked at how struggling readers were made to be perceived that way. With my positionality as a former teacher and a formally perceived struggling reader, I designed this collective case study to see how reading teachers construct their perception of struggling reader and how the perception affects their teaching practices.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I review the literature to see how the definition of reader has been changed historically in the United States context to support that the concept of struggling reader has been always socially constructed. Then, a systematic review of studies on struggling reader from five representative literacy research journals to explore how struggling reader is constructed – meaning how the concept has been defined and used in current literacy studies.

Trajectory of a Definition of Struggling Reader in the United States

In the first half of this section, I review the historical trajectory of the concept of “struggling reader” in impactful theoretical perspectives in the field of U.S. reading research. The perspectives include the medical model of reading, behaviorism, psycholinguistics, cognitivism, constructivism, and sociocultural theory.

Books (e.g., Tracey & Morrow, 2006) and book chapters (e.g., Alexander & Fox, 2013; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2009; Klenk & Kibby, 2000; Kucan & Palincsar, 2010; Wixon & Lipson, 1991) on the history of reading research follow the trajectory of theories. In addition to reviewing the history of what is a “reader”, studying “what was regarded as problematic reading/reader” would provide inklings for what aspects of reading/reader reading research have emphasized. Chapters from handbooks of reading research reviewing research on reading difficulties and disabilities (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2009; Klenk & Kibby, 2000; Kucan & Palincsar, 2010; Wixon & Lipson, 1991) would allow me to grasp what “being a reader” has been meant in the U.S., in a historical sense.

Those previous studies about struggling reader, reading difficulties/disabilities could be grouped into two large categories based on what they attributed the struggles to. First group attributed difficulties/struggles of reading to the readers, while the other group of studies attributed them to the context around the readers (See figure 1). The first group of studies about struggling readers have longer history – coming from the medical model of reading to the very recent engagement model. They have tried to find what struggling readers lack or do wrong in their reading and fix the readers to be better. What in the reader should be fixed has been changed following their theoretical model—from readers’ eyes to their motivation in reading. The latter group of studies of struggling readers tried to reveal what made certain group of readers to be considered as struggling readers, if any. I offer detailed explanation about how each group of studies has defined struggling readers below.

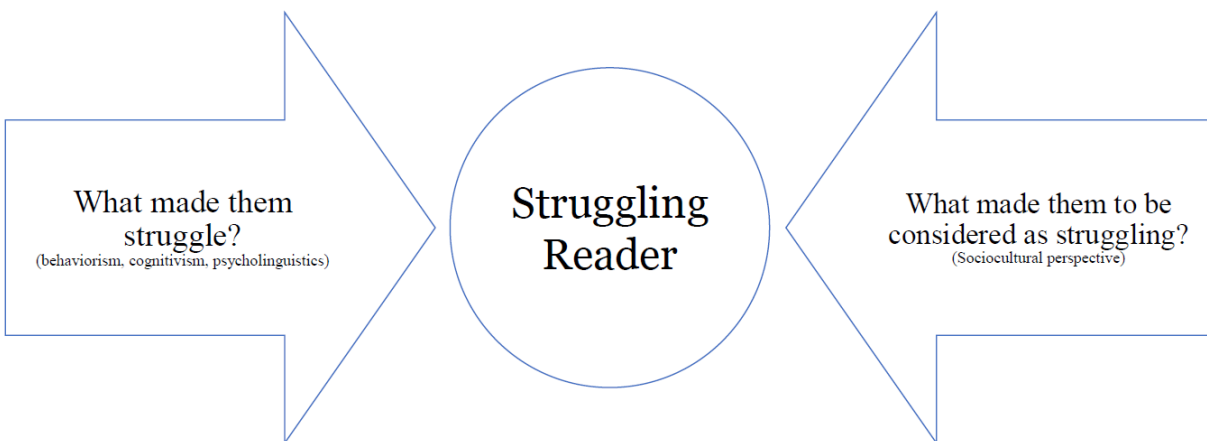


Figure 1. Literature of struggling reader

Reading Research Attributing Reading Struggles to Readers

Studies of struggling readers in this section have followed different theories of reading from medical model to engagement theory. Even though they followed different theories, they had one thing in common: these studies have believed struggling readers have difficulties in

reading and tried to cure them by appropriate interventions. This idea of fixing or curing struggling readers started early in the 1900s, and are still dominant in reading education research.

Medical model: something's wrong with you if you cannot read.

To early researchers before 1900, being a reader was a given. If you learn the language, you will be able to read. Because researchers at that time believed reading to be such a natural process, they thought there was something wrong with children who were not able to read. These researchers did not think the reason was coming from the activity of reading itself, so it is not surprising that the first approach to problematic reading was encapsulated by the medical model. The assumption under this model could be described as: if you can see, hear, and think, then you are a reader. Researcher from the medical model tried to find something wrong inside the reader and fix it. This is known as the medical model of reading diagnosis. Among the major variables studied were visual acuity, auditory acuity, general physical status, neurological factors, emotional/psychiatric factors, and intelligence (Klenk & Kibby, 2000; Wixson & Lipson, 1991).

Behaviorism: readers acquire skills of reading through conditioned learning.

Alexander and Fox (2013) described 1950-1965 as the era of conditioned learning. At that time, behaviorism was the most dominant theory in reading research as well as other education research fields. Reading during this period was conceptualized as conditioned behavior, a process susceptible to programming. Learning was seen to be the acquisition of behaviors as a result of certain environmental contingencies, rather than development or growth.

Reading was perceived as a perceptual activity, including the identification of visual signals, the translation of these signals into sounds, and assembly of these sounds into words, phrases, and sentences (Alexander & Fox, 2013; Pearson & Stephens, 1994). Phonics instruction became one of the logical methods of instruction for beginning readers (Chall, 1995).

Readers in this phase were expected to acquire skillsets for reading. They could get those skills for reading through conditioned instruction, often linked to reward and punishment. After repeated practice, a child was expected to read without cognitive effort. If readers showed problems in reading skill acquisition, the solution was likely to be an individualized training program, focusing on skill-and-drill (Glaser, 1978).

Linguistics & psycholinguistics: readers have language acquisition.

Psycholinguistics shared the assumption that language develops naturally for humans, which separates them from other animals. Psycholinguists thought that that language was prerequisite in human brain, so reading was something that everyone should be able to do. In other words, learning was conceptualized as a natural process, in the psycholinguists' view (Alexander & Fox, 2013). It was assumed that, under certain favorable conditions, human beings were biologically programmed to acquire language. This programming involved the existence of mental structures – Language Acquisition Device – designed to perform the complex task of assimilating and integrating the particular linguistic cues provided by a given language community (Chomsky, 1975).

For psycholinguists, language was to be developed through meaningful use, not practiced until it became automatic and engrained in the mind, as behaviorists had proposed.

Psycholinguists also argued that the capacity for language must be innate because all human languages follow similar production rules. This assumption applied to the reading processes as well (Alexander & Fox, 2013). As a consequence, learning to read was viewed as an inherent ability rather than a reflective act that involved the acquisition of a set of basic skills with repetitive practice like behaviorists thought (Harste, Burke, & Woodward, 1984). Like a child comes to understand the spoken language of his surrounding community (Halliday, 1969), readers come to understand their written language, given enough exposure in meaningful

situations (Goodman & Goodman, 1979). Learning to read was “arriving at facility as a result of a predisposition to seek understanding,” (Alexander & Fox, 2013, p.10) rather than being taught. Readers, in the view of psycholinguists, were those who had the ability to read within themselves, and the ability would eventually flourish, with meaningful language experiences.

Cognitivism: readers proceed a reading process in human mind.

Cognitive theory has played an important role in reading research. For psycholinguists, it still has a strong influence on reading research (Perry, 2012). Cognitive theory, more specifically, information-processing theory, dominated reading from 1976 to 1985 (R. C. Anderson, 1977). Research driven by an information processing model of reading attempts to describe both how information is processed and what mental representations are formed (Just & Carpenter, 1987). This has involved efforts to identify the skills, abilities, and knowledge structures that are critical for performing complex cognitive tasks to build a model of cognition (Wixson & Lipson, 1991). This focus on a search for underlying processes has profoundly influenced the construct of reading disability. “Information-processing perspectives on reading are often so intertwined with perspectives on reading disability that the two are difficult to separate” (Wixson & Lipson, 1991, p.547, emphasis in original text).

Working from this perspective, researchers typically compared the skills or products of expert readers with those of novice readers, methods known as good-poor reader research (Wixson & Lipson, 1991). When differences in some component were observed, that component was presumed to represent a key processing element. This research paradigm has been used to demonstrate differences between good and poor readers and is clearly based on the assumption that the factors that differentiate these two groups of readers are the causes of “problematic” readers’ reading difficulties. When a person is diagnosed as a problematic reader, the cause of her inability to read could be different from that of other problematic readers.

In sum, according to the cognitive theory perspective, readers were people who could process the information from the text in their brain. Using their prior knowledge and skills, they make meaning out of the text. Most cognitive researchers tried to find how reading was processed in human mind. Many research found out constructs of the reading process by comparing “good” and “poor” readers. A “problematic” reader was supposed to experience difficulties in any of those constructs, so the instruction for “problematic” readers based on cognitivist’s view focused on each isolated step of the reading process. Thus, if a student was not excelling in phonemic awareness, an instructor would pull out the student from the class and then train them with phonemic awareness-related activities. Research driven by cognitive theory tried to understand reading as a developmental process, so like other remedies, researchers focused more on emergent readers than older readers. So one legitimate critique for the cognitive reading researchers is that they focus too much on lower-level skills such as decoding and fluency rather than comprehension (Perry, 2012), even though they focused on comprehension more than previous perspectives had.

Cognitive constructivism: readers make meaning of the texts using prior knowledge.

Different from social cognitivists, cognitive constructivists regard the individual as the primary agent for construction of knowledge. As the constructive agent, a reader is expected to bring his or her own background knowledge, and experience to the act of reading and draws on them in organizing, selecting, and connecting mental material cued by the text (Davis, 2002).

Cognitive constructivists considered readers’ prior knowledge and analyzed the kinds of selections and additions readers made when integrating their understanding from the text with their own knowledge. From the late 1970s into the 1990s, numerous constructivist studies focused on the following topics: knowledge frameworks (e.g., schema, scripts); text organization, particularly stories but also expository patterns; and the types of inferences, or

additions, that people make when they read (Davis, 2002). Literacy educators took these new understandings about reading and developed strategies for enhancing and monitoring comprehension through active reading processes that stimulated students' prior knowledge. Schema theory (R. C. Anderson, 1977) and transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 1994) incorporated this perspective.

Social learning theory: all readings are structured by social context.

Readers in social constructivists' view, sociocognitivists' view and sociocultural theorists' view are different from all of the previous theories. Reading is not an individual task, seeking one ultimate meaning any more. Reading, in previous theories, was regarded as a totally neutral and individual practice. Researchers tried to find the causes of "problem" in reading from the reader, physically (medical model) or psychologically (psycholinguistic and cognitive model). As the concept of literacy has been changed from neutral to socially-constructed, the meaning of being a reader has been changed as well.

Social constructivism: readers develop their own reading through social interaction.

Social constructivism has been widely embraced in reading education since the last quarter of the twentieth century. This perspective regards learning as social and constructed. Social constructivism in literacy education spans a broad landscape featuring theories that emphasize the psychosocial processes of the individual and theories that emphasize the importance of social relations and institutions (Hruby, 2002). Most social constructivists in literacy acknowledge and incorporate the importance of both the individual and the social aspects of knowledge foundation. All social constructivists in literacy agree upon the central importance of language in understanding (Phillips, 2000). Vygotsky (1978) and his idea of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) emphasized the role of teachers and scaffolding in reading education. Constructivists expected readers to construct meaning from the text in accordance

with what the learner already knows. At the same time, society or culture surrounding the reader facilitates this process and provides necessary guidance as to how the reader should construct the meaning so that can be coherent with other readers' in the society. Such work recommended socially oriented learning practices such as group work and peer-led instruction (Hruby, 2002).

Engagement theory: readers are engaged, active knowledge seeker.

Under the umbrella of sociocognitive theory, the rich and impressive body of literature on motivation had formed over the past several decades found its way into the reading community (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). One of the characteristics of this motivational research was its social cognitive perspective on student learning (Pintrich & Schunk, 2001). In other words, these motivational factors were not considered in isolation but were studied in relation to other factors such as students' knowledge, strategic abilities, and sociocultural background and features of the learning context. The result of this infusion of motivation theory and research into the reading literature was a reconceptualization of the student as an engaged or motivated reader (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

The learner was conceptualized as a motivated knowledge seeker (Alexander, 1997), more than passive receptacles of information (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). They are active and willful participants in the construction of knowledge (Alexander, 1997). In contrast to the habituated skills of earlier eras, the effective use of strategies was understood to require reflection, choice, and deliberate execution on the part of the learner (Alexander & Judy, 1988). Such a perception differed from that of information-processing theory and the efferent/aesthetic distinction underlying the psycholinguistic perspective of reading (Goodman & Goodman, 1979). Specifically, it was assumed that a search for understanding or the act of learning via text involved the integration of cognitive and motivational forces (Alexander & Fox, 2013).

The portrait of engaged reader framed by the research had both individualistic and collective dimensions, a reconciliation of information-processing and socio-cultural perspectives of past decades (Guthrie, Van Meter, et al., 1996). Engaged reader are willing to put forth effort and can knowledgeably respond to the demands of a particular situation by using appropriate reading strategies (Alexander & Fox, 2013).

Reading Research Understanding Reading Difficulties as a Social Construction

Traditional theories of literacy, which studies in the previous section followed, assumed that there is one desirable way of reading that can be used as criteria to evaluate a reader to be good or not. With these perspectives, research has been perceiving those readers who were not fitting in the criteria inevitably deficient. Even with the social constructivism, understanding reading as a socially constructed activity, readers were expected to be a better performer in a certain reading performance desired in the dominant ideology through social interaction and engagement.

Different from those perspectives which attributed reading difficulties to so-called struggling readers, studies in this section focused on the context around the readers. Adopting sociocultural theories, those studies pointed out that the concept of reading itself was not an absolute truth, but a socially constructed concept following the society's dominant ideology. The researchers also pointed out how the idea of "good reading" often marginalized groups of students who have been underserved, socioculturally and historically rather than addressing and/or solving difficulties of reading.

Sociocultural theory: readers' difficulties are sociocultural constructs.

Sociocultural perspectives on literacy argue language and culture is inseparable and deeply related (Perry, 2012). With the acknowledging of the multiplicity of literacy, the sociocultural perspective of reading offered a different approach to understanding reading and

readers from those of the traditional theories of literacy. Sociocultural perspectives of literacy do not set a static form of reading or readers. Rather than suggesting forms of good readers, the reading research following sociocultural perspectives of literacies have offered various forms of reading practices of readers in different real-life contexts with different modes of representations of reading. Also, a group of researchers coming from critical literacy has questioned power dynamics in contexts including teachers and peers in classrooms that made a certain group of readers' identities as struggling readers.

Reviewing strands of sociocultural perspectives in literacy research, Perry (2012) picked literacy as social practice, multiliteracies, and critical literacy as three major sociocultural perspectives of literacy. All three have expanded the border of literacy: literacy as social practices suggested a multiplicity of literacy, multiliteracies expanded the modes of literacies, and critical literacy brought the issue of power, ideology, and agency into literacy research (Perry, 2012).

New Literacies Studies (NLS).

Perry (2012) used the term literacies as social practices, as an equivalent term of New Literacies Studies (NLS). Researchers from NLS understand language as “always comes fully attached to 'other stuff': to social relations, cultural models, power and politics, perspectives on experiences, values and attitudes, as well as things and places in the world” (Gee, 1996, p.vii). Different from the traditional model of reading which consider reading as neutral and decontextualized skills, researchers from NLS take the sociocultural contexts into account to understand readers' literacy practices.

As a very early researcher of NLS, Street (1984) named the traditional concept of literacy, viewing literacy as neutral and decontextualized skills as an autonomous model of literacy. He then suggested the ideological model of literacy, saying that literacy practices are

contextual, and have many different forms in different cultures (Street, 1984). This acknowledgment of multiplicity of literacy has enabled reading researchers to investigate and understand how readers reading performances (and struggles) can be context-specific, meaning readers struggling in one context could show proficiency in the other context including different learning environment (e.g., McDermott, 1993, Triplett, 2007) including different relationships between teachers and peers (e.g., Dudley-Marling, 2004; Triplett, 2007; Wortham, 2004) and out-of-school contexts (e.g., Black, 2006; Heath, 1983; Moje et al., 2000). These studies questioned the traditional concept of the good-bad reader dichotomy attributing reading difficulties to readers' accounts.

Multiliteracies.

In the traditional perspectives of literacy, reading and writing were associated only with print-based performances. Even NLS researchers with sociocultural perspectives have studied primarily on print-based literacy performances (Perry, 2012). A group of researchers, called New London Group, developed the theory of multiliteracies and expanded the border of literacy from print to multimedia including diverse forms of representations including audio, visual, and online (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Similar to the NLS, multiliteracies emphasized the real-world contexts of literacy practices.

Cope and Kalantzis (2000) suggested two arguments of multiliteracies: "The first argument engages with the multiplicity of communications of channels and media; the second with the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity" (p.5). While the increased emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity is aligning with NLS, the emphasis on the multimodality of literacy is different (Perry, 2012).

This is multi-modal literacies or a multiliteracies view of reading. People who "read and write" with diverse platforms including online, and other than print-based platforms, who have

not been regarded as readers in the previous print-based reading model, are now included in the group of readers with this view. Multiliteracies has expanded the border of literacies with expanding the representations of literacy as well as the concept of readers. With NLS and multiliteracies, recent research has studied readers literacy performances in online environment (e.g., Coiro & Dobler, 2007; Roswell & Burke, 2009).

Critical literacy.

While both NLS and multiliteracies include power relationships from their orientation questioning the criteria of the traditional model of reading, critical literacy theory especially heavily emphasizes both power and empowerment, and recently have expanded to include issues of agency and identity into the field of literacy research (Perry, 2012). As a critical literacy researcher, Freire (2001) defined literacy as reading both “the word and the world,” suggesting that the literacy embedded power relationship in itself, more than a simple cognitive skill as traditional theories said. Freire argued that it is important “to understand literacy as the relationship of learners to the world” (p.173).

Researchers from critical literacy perspectives have raised questions to the previous concept of reading: Who has the power to decide the criteria of good/bad reading? How the criteria were formed? Sociocultural reading researchers from critical literacy suggested that perceived good readers so far were people whose reading were valued by society. Even though readers perform particular forms of “reading”, if that is not a valued form of reading in society, the readers are regarded as “problematic” or “struggling.” Sociocultural views, with other critical theories, raise a question that all social practices, including literacy, are involved with the power structure.

Summary

The concept of “reader” has changed over history based on the theoretical orientation the concept resided in. Historically, many studies have considered reading as a default status, attributing reading difficulties to struggling reader themselves. In the view of medical model, reading was physiological act. If a child could not read, then researcher tried to find physiological cause such as visual/auditory deficits. With Behaviorism, readers can read with repeated practice of skills with conditioned instruction. Linguists and Psycholinguists focused on the language acquisition device innate human brain, and readers were expected to be able to read eventually with meaningful language-rich experiences. Cognitivists’ thought reading was a process happening in human brain, and readers were expected to be able to read when they follow the processes of reading. Theories influenced by Social Learning Theory regarded reading as a socially constructed activity. Social Constructivists focused more on the meaning making of reading, and readers were expected to play a role in the reading as an interactional or a transactional act. Engagement theorists focused on emotional aspect of reading, and expected readers to be engaged and motivated in reading.

Other groups of reading researchers have argued that the context around reading activity marginalized a certain group of readers, identifying them as struggling. Sociocultural theorists, see reading as a power-related concept, and opposed the view of functional literacy, which often undermined and devalued readers’ agency and identity. The changes in the concept of “reader”, overall, rather integrated and inclusive rather than exclusive change. Each succeeding generation of researchers has investigated a wider range of phenomena, and often at a greater level of complexity.

Definitions of “Struggling Reader” in Current Literacy Research

This study then is about how struggling reader is socially constructed. Clearly, the concept will be constructed differently in different contexts. The purpose of this study is to analyze the social construction process in one specific context.

Before move into the research questions, I first tried to examine what the knowledge about the term has been constructed and used in current reading research since my project can be built upon the idea that academia is still unable to grasp who *struggling reader* is. A systematic literature review method (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016) was employed to review the studies in the field of reading research. I believe that the systematic literature review method is appropriate for this study because the study can be built upon the analysis of how researchers have framed and investigated a problem or topic, which includes *struggling reader*. I reviewed not only *struggling reader* but other terms referring learners with reading difficulties that has been interchangeably used with struggling readers as well to understand how the concept is used in literacy research.

Terms for learners with reading difficulties for analysis was generated based on both reading-related sources (e.g., *Handbook of Reading Research*) and those from a broader literature of special education (e.g., *Handbook of Reading Disability Research*), and it ended up an initial list of 20 terms referring those readers (table 1). I selected five representative peer-reviewed literacy research journal; *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, and *the Reading Teacher*. After initial searching with 20 terms, I ended up with a final list of five terms most frequently used in literacy research: *struggling reader*, *reluctant reader*, *striving reader*, *non-reader* and *at-risk reader*.

Table 1. Terms referring struggling readers in current reading research

Terms	Number of sources
struggling reader	373
reluctant reader	109
nonreader	43
striving readers	29
at risk reader	24
student with reading disabilities	20
less-skilled reader	17
student with reading difficulties	13
remedial reader	13
emerging reader	10
slow reader	10
resistant reader	9
disengaged reader	7
challenged reader	5
delayed reader	5
disabled reader	3
unmotivated reader	3
inefficient reader	1
retarded reader	1
behind reader	0
underachieving reader	0
low-level reader	0

Journal articles which (a) used those five terms in their titles, key terms, or abstracts, and (b) published within 10 years (2007-2016) were initially searched in Eric and EBSCO. Titles and abstracts were first used to determine if a study is about students with reading difficulties. In

total, 48 articles were searched and chosen from the ERIC and EBSCO databases for the analysis.

An analysis table for each term was generated, including information that helped me figure out how a study framed the terms related to *struggling readers*. The information included is: (1) full citation, (2) definition of the term, (3) descriptions of the term, (4) descriptions of study participants, (5) terms used as synonyms, and (6) terms used as antonyms.

Analysis for the terms referring learners with reading difficulties showed that those terms were (a) frequently used without explicit definition, and (b) used interchangeably without explanation (See Table 2 for detailed information). In most cases, (c) *struggling reader* was used as a universal term for diverse learners with reading difficulties, and (d) it was questionable what the learners were really *struggling* with.

Table 2. Use of terms referring learners with reading difficulties in literacy research

Terms	Pattern of Use	Synonyms	Antonyms
Struggling reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only limited number of studies provided explicit definition of the term • Students who lack basic reading skills and/or vocabulary • Students who choose not to read • Students with learning disabilities • Low-achieving students in (standardized) test(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with reading disabilities • Students with reading difficulties • At-risk reader • At-risk students • Unmotivated students • Strugglers • Struggling comprehender • Struggling decoder • Students with learning disabilities • Low-achieving reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced reader • Proficient reader • Good reader • Engaged reader • Motivated reader • Typical reader • Non-struggling reader • Experienced reader
Reluctant reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly used for students who do not like/enjoy reading (e.g., Shaw, 2013) • More than half of studies described their “reluctant readers” as low-achieving students while others did not give achievement status of students (e.g., Benning, 2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling reader • Students with reading difficulties • Alliterate student • Remedial reader • Disengaged reader • Nonreader • Unmotivated reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged reader • Motivated reader
Striving reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No explicit definition for striving reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling reader • Marginalized reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proficient reader • Good reader • Committed reader

Terms	Pattern of Use	Synonyms	Antonyms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes lower-scored students (e.g., Dennis, 2009) • Sometimes students lack reading skills or vocabulary (e.g., Green, 2015) • Students with disabilities (Smetana, Odelson, Burns, & Grisham, 2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonreader • Students with academic difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident reader • Strong reader
Nonreader (Non-reader)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No explicit definition of nonreader • Mostly students who are able to but choose not to read (e.g., Korman, 2013) • Sometimes students who cannot read due to lack of vocabulary and/or basic reading skills (e.g., Amendum, Amendum, & Almond, 2013) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling reader • Reluctant reader • Weaker reader • Alliterate adolescent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better reader • Proficient reader • Motivated reader
At-risk reader (Readers at-risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No explicit definition for at-risk reader, but all participants identified as at-risk readers in the studies were screened by scores of test(s) • Sometimes used with more details • (e.g., Readers at-risk for reading (comprehension) difficulties) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling reader • Student with reading difficulties • Student with reading disabilities • Poor reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good reader

Terms	Pattern of Use	Synonyms	Antonyms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-achievement from standardized test(s) (e.g., Valencia, Smith, Reece, Li, Wixson, & Newman, 2010) • Some were diagnosed/documentated with learning disabilities (e.g., Nguyen, Leytham, Shaefer, & Gelfer, 2015) 		

Missing Explicit Definition of the Terms

Most studies did not provide definitions for the terms related to learners with reading difficulties. Not only lacking explicit definitions of the terms, some studies did not even describe why the participants were categorized as learners with reading difficulties before proceeding with their research. If a research piece does not provide a clear definition of terms used, readers cannot have a clear idea on the research context. It is understandable when the term itself conveys meaning such as *reluctant reader*, it implies the reader does not like reading. If the term was already defined in academia, such as *alliterate* (or *alliteracy*), the absence of explicit definition could be justified. Studies that used terms with rather vague adjectives, however, such as *struggling reader*, *striving reader*, or *challenged reader* made it hard to get a clear idea of the population to which the term referred. The descriptions for those populations with reading difficulties in the studies were not specific enough to know much about the participant' perceived reading difficulties.

Given that most of the research on *struggling reader* were about instruction that might be effective for certain populations, unclear understandings of the term *struggling reader* itself

becomes more problematic. Studies with effective instructional strategies are supposed to be replicable, so that as many students who experience the same problems can get help. However, no explicit definition or detailed description makes it difficult to know what the research is actually saying. If you are a teacher who needs an effective instructional strategy for students with certain difficulties in reading you could study the research, but you would not be sure if the instructional strategy in that research would work for your students because there is no detailed description or definition of the students. You cannot be sure if the students' reading difficulties in the research are the same or similar to what your students are experiencing.

The descriptions of *struggling reader* in the studies were unspecific, making it difficult to know the students' perceived problem(s). Researchers usually shared the concern that the causes of *struggling* can be varied for each reader. That is, appropriate support for each difficulty is different for different students. However, the descriptions or definitions of *struggling reader* in the research reviewed were not specific aside from students who have difficulties in comprehension – students can struggle because of their basic skills, strategies, language, emotional causes, cultural differences, or etc. Further, at times only the observers identify them as *struggling* while students themselves do not. Most research reviewed here grouped these students with comprehension difficulties based on a certain type of test and were given the same “treatment.” I am not saying the instruction was not effective. The results showed that the participants' reading ability was improved. However, still, I cannot ignore the idea that they could become better readers if they received more individualized support based on their own cause of difficulties.

Readers can be confused if the concept of certain terms in one study is the same as that of other studies, especially if there is no universally agreed definition for the term. It happened to

me during literature analysis for this study. There seemed to be no agreement on *struggling readers* or *reluctant readers* or other terms amongst studies reviewed. Some used two different terms interchangeably while others made distinction between the two, which will be addressed in the next section.

Use of Different Terms Interchangeably

There was no definitional distinction amongst different terms referring *struggling readers*. Not only were those terms indistinguishable, but they were also used interchangeably without understandable rules or patterns. *Struggling reader* was used as a substitute for all types of student with diverse reading difficulties. *Student with reading difficulties* was used interchangeably with *students with reading disabilities* and *struggling reader*, while *student with reading disabilities* was often used for counterpart groups of *struggling readers* because they are population in need of special education, not general education. This made me confused. What is the relationship between *student with reading difficulties* and *students with reading disabilities*?

There was no clear definitional distinction amongst different terms referring students with reading difficulties. Not only were those terms indistinguishable, but they were also used interchangeably without any understandable rule or pattern. Using different terms without clear distinction raises same problematic consequences as does using terms without clear definition. It confuses readers, and possibly undermines the validity of the whole research. If there is difference amongst the terms, then the research should define the terms. If they came from different theoretical framework, then research should provide such information for readers.

Use of Struggling Reader as a Universal Term

As much using different terms interchangeably without distinction is problematic, using one word as a universal term seems also problematic. *Struggling reader* was used most widely in

reading research from within the last ten years. Since reading research did not distinguish reading disabilities from reading difficulties, *struggling* includes these two sections from its origin—both special education and general education. It gives the term *struggling reader* many layers, from diagnostic learning disabilities to disengagement from reading. Because *struggling reader* refers to readers with *any* difficulty in reading (Alvermann, 2001), naming someone a *struggling reader* can be misleading. When one is perceived as a *struggling reader* without further description, the spectrum of its interpretation is wide: the person can have severe learning disabilities that hinder him/her from reading or the person can comprehend very well but choose not to read. Perry (2012), defining “critical literacy,” claimed that if a term is defined too broadly, it does not mean anything. The argument can be applied to *struggling reader* in exactly the same way. Is it even academically meaningful?

Is it right that we group diverse, heterogeneous readers who (are perceived to) experience difficulties in reading under one word: *struggling reader*? It is perhaps not better to use the same labels for an apple and a pear. Using *struggling reader* for every reader with different challenges simplifies each difficulty, blurs what the actual difficulty is, and makes it difficult to find an appropriate solution or support.

Reading educators and researchers has been concerned that current perspective of *struggling readers* may oversimplify the nature of reading, suggesting good readers can have reading difficulties under certain situations with certain texts just as *struggling reader* can (e.g., Alvermann, 2001, 2006; Luke, 1995; Riddle Buly & Valencia, 2002).

Validity of Framing Student Participants as Struggling in Reading

During analysis, except for *reluctant reader*, one overarching commonality amongst the terms referring to *struggling reader* was found. Descriptions, at least the ones provided by

researchers, of *struggling readers* suggested that *struggling readers* are low-achieving students. Most population in the research were screened mostly based on standardized tests.

It aligns with Alvermann (2001)'s definition of *struggling reader*, students who fall below "average" on some measure of reading competence. More specifically, those *struggling readers* are those who scored below an expected mark on a specific standardized test (or tests) following a local or a state requirement. Even if they scored lower than expected on the test(s), it is not necessarily reflective of problems in their reading. If their score was the problem, then why do we use *struggling reader*, not *struggling test-taker*? There is always a chance that students are having difficulties and struggles with a test because of test anxiety, or because of their unfamiliarity with certain format of test, or any other reason particular to the test itself that hinders those readers from showing their full competence in school reading, especially for tests.

The idea that most *struggling reader* in reviewed articles are described as low-achieving students seems to show that reading educators are held accountable by standardized tests. Because students' scoring higher than average is a requirement for reading educators, including researchers and practitioners, the concept of "low-achieving" becomes problematic for reading educators.

All the terms referring to *struggling reader* have deficit perspectives of readers in them. It is the readers who have problems in reading. Alvarez et al. (2009) found that those terms often blamed the victims, that is, *struggling readers* are the ones who carry the blame of their reading difficulties and "bear the consequences of ineffective, deleterious, and detrimental actions performed by others" (p.16). If it is not reading that they have problems or difficulties in, then it is not fair to use those terms implying that students do not have competence in reading. Researchers concerned that reading problems are not due to students' inability but, rather, are

reflective of school administration, school curricula, and instruction that fail to access students' knowledges and strengths (Alvarez et al., 2009; Dennison, 1969). As Alvermann (2001) argued, anyone can struggle at any point with certain texts in different contexts.

It would be nice if one who has challenges with reading can get appropriate support. I believe that the idea of “struggling” reading diagnosis started with good intention as the concept of the “reader” developed. Reading teachers and researchers want every student to be a “good” reader so that they can find any difficulties students may meet during reading activities and help to overcome them. With the accurate naming of the issue to be addressed, without blaming innocent children with false problems, the difficulties associated with problematic reading will be more likely addressed.

Findings from this literature review revealed that the deficit approach to students with reading difficulties are still prevalent in defining and identifying them in literacy research. The notion of reading disability has contributed to identifying individual students' needs in improving their reading ability and preventing their reading difficulties. However, the notion of reading disability may reproduce the predominant discourse of deficiencies in literacy and mislead our understanding of how we can support the literacy practice of those population in more positive and constructive ways (Dudley-Marling, 2004, 2007; Gee, 2004). I would like to reemphasize Mcdermott & Varenne's (1995) caution, “everyone in any culture is subject to being labeled and disabled” (p.1) if the population is ill-defined and multiple sociocultural factors are ignored in supporting them.

Summary

In this section, a systematic review was implemented to explore the use of struggling reader in current literacy research. Total of 48 studies from 10 years of publications from the five

representative literacy research journals were reviewed. Analysis for the terms referring learners with reading difficulties showed that those terms were frequently used without explicit definition in the studies, and the terms were used interchangeably without explanation. There was no clear definitional distinction amongst different terms referring students with reading difficulties. More than two thirds of studies used struggling reader as a universal term for learners with reading difficulties. It was also questionable what the learners were really struggling with reading since most studies show their participants were falling below average on some measure of reading competence (Alvermann,2001). There is always a chance that students are having difficulties and struggles with a test (e.g., test anxiety, unfamiliar questionnaire types, etc.) than reading practice per se. Findings from this review revealed that the deficit approach to students with reading difficulties were still prevalent in defining and identifying them in literacy research. The notion of reading disability has contributed to identifying individual students' needs in improving their reading ability and preventing their reading difficulties. However, at the same time it requires us to reframe the deficit view of readers with reading difficulties.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the trajectory of the definition of (struggling) reader in the U.S. history, grouping them into two groups following where they attribute reading difficulties to – either struggling readers or contexts. The definition of reader and reading has constantly changed following the change of dominant theory in the literacy research field. The changes in the definition of reader reflected in the sociocultural perspective of literacy argues that reading and reader are socially constructed concepts, not givens. Then I offered my systematic review of the current use of the concept of the struggling reader. The findings suggested that current literacy studies have studied a concept that was not clearly defined. Struggling reader has been used as an umbrella term for different types of learners with reading differences, reinforcing the

deficit view of the readers grouped as struggling. Through this literature review, the need for studying the use of struggling reader as a concept and how it is constructed in classroom context became clear to me. As such, I designed a qualitative research to address the gap in the research, following the research methodology shared in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This study explores how teachers' perceptions of *struggling readers* might influence and/or constrain teaching practice. Guiding questions are: (a) how was the concept of struggling reader socially constructed in high school classrooms? and (b) How does the concept affect/inhibit teaching practice?

To get answers for these questions, I relied on qualitative research, specifically a collective case study. Data gathered by direct observation, interview, and a focus group lead me to deeper understanding. Research design and data collection strategies are explained in detail in the sections below.

Research Design

This study used collective case study design, and the data gathered with qualitative research methods. I wanted to explore how this social knowledge of *struggling readers* is constructed from the teachers' perspectives with the classroom situated in current socio-cultural-political milieu. Hopefully this study also contributed to literacy classrooms which serve students and teachers better by understanding how teachers construct their perceptions of a group of students labeled as struggling in reading and how the constructed perception helps and/or inhibits the teachers' teaching practices for the students. I chose qualitative research methods for my study, because qualitative researchers seek "understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions" (Glesne, 2015, p.4). Each teacher who decided to participate in this study became one of my cases. A case is "an integrated

system” (Stake, 1995, p.2) which includes a person or an event in a study. A case study design allows a researcher to incorporate various types of data including both quantitative and qualitative as long as it helps to better understand the case(s). Because I worked with more than one teacher, the research design for this study is appropriately called a collective case study, meaning more than one case is involved in the research (Goddard, 2010; Yin, 2010) which are then brought together in the final analysis.

In collective case study, cases are selected because they share some similar characteristics that bound themselves (Goddard, 2010). In this research, teachers were selected because all of them were working with the student population identified as *struggling readers* in their classroom regardless of their teaching subject or their roles in classroom, and the focal students were selected because they were in these teachers’ classes. Each teacher was studied as a separate case as well as a part of a set, being compared to find similarities and differences among them (Goddard, 2010). All teachers were in-depth analyzed separately as an independent single case to understand how each teacher constructed their definition of *struggling readers*, and at the same time I wanted to see if there is any commonalities or differences among the cases and the reasoning behind such. Students in this study were not analyzed as main sources, but their reactions to teacher instructions in classrooms that I observed and the interviews with focal students helped me to understand the relationship they had with the teachers and how the teachers’ conception of struggling reader has affected to students in their classrooms.

Sampling

I adopted a part-convenience sampling process as well as critical cases sampling for this study. Convenience sampling was only partially used to get access to the school. My advisor connected me to personnel from a county school system in a Southern state, explaining the

purpose of this project. The Associate Superintendent let me present my research proposal in detail to her and an ESL specialist working with ESL teachers in the district, and they suggested me to a school fitting my research questions.

From there critical cases sampling was used. Critical cases sampling is a type of purposeful sampling, incorporating cases “that permit logical generalization and maximum application to other cases” (Marshall & Ross, 2010, p.115). After the meeting with the director from the county schools and the ESL specialist, I learned about teachers from a high school, who had been working in year-long English classes designed for the students identified as *struggling readers*. Four classroom teachers, two ESL teachers, and one EC teacher were involved in those classes. I decided the teachers would be my cases because they had been working with *struggling readers*. I especially liked that they were willing to support this population with help from the county schools, even though they were not required to do so, and in spite of this decision requiring the teachers to do additional work. I wanted to learn from them and their classes how the concept, *struggling readers* was constructed in their classrooms, in their lived experiences. I contacted the school with the help with the county schools’ personnel, and the principal and the teachers agreed to participate in the project.

Participants

Seven high school teachers from C High, one ESL specialist from the school district and 13 students from their classes participated in this study. Seven teachers included four classroom teachers, an Exceptional Children (EC) teacher, two English as Second Language (ESL) teachers. There were two English I teachers (Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow), one English II teacher (Ms. Green), one American History I teacher (Ms. Blue), two ESL teachers (Ms. Red and Ms. Navy) and one EC teacher (Ms. Purple). All the teachers were middle-class white females. Ms.

Orange, Ms. Yellow, Ms. Navy and Ms. Purple had worked with year-long English I program for three years, while that was a first year working with year-long English classes for Ms. Green, Ms. Blue and Ms. Red.

Along with the teachers from the high school, one ESL specialist (Ms. Sky) from the county schools was also interviewed during the data collection. She helped me from the very beginning stage of this study. She had been in the original meetings with the school district, listening to my research proposal. Ms. Sky helped me to contact and recruit teachers. She knew all the teachers, because she had been working with the high school teachers for three years with this year-long English class. As an ESL specialist of the county schools, she had been working with ESL teachers across the district and running a monthly ESL PLC meeting for elementary and secondary schools in the county and had invited me to one of the meetings. I did not use her as a separate case for my study, but the information she gave was included in my analysis to understand what happened in the year-long English classes.

Because I observed the classrooms, students in the classes participated in the study to the extent that they granted consent to be in the study. These students were in those classes either identified as *struggling readers* or students with behavior issues. Those who identified as *struggling readers* were in this course because their teachers in previous year identified them as struggling readers with formal and informal reading evaluations, classroom performance, and/or their low Lexile levels. That is, for the ninth graders, the decision was made before they entered high school by their middle school English teachers. The ninth-grade teachers made the decisions about the tenth-grade students. Even though all students participated in this study by being observed, I wanted hear stories from students' end, responding teachers' instructional decisions for them because they were part of the teachers' lived experience. In my first observation, I

explained my research to the students and encouraged them to participate as focal students handing assent forms and parental consent forms. Only two students returned the forms in the first month. When students became familiar with my existence in the classrooms, I talked to individual students about doing one-on-one interviews with me. Teachers also encouraged students and parents to participate in the study. As a result, fifteen students and their parents agreed to in-depth interviews about their responses to the teachers' instructional decisions.

Research Site

At first glance, Canterbury High School (pseudonym, hereafter "C High") was in the middle of nowhere. Except for an elementary school across the street, I thought there were nothing but tall trees and grass around the school in my first visit. With more visits, I found a highway behind the school building, and gas stations, scattered houses, and even an apartment complex in nearby blocks. About 15 minutes' driving would take you to the nearest downtown from the school. Nonetheless, the school was located in a quiet and peaceful suburban area. The parking lots surrounding the school building were spacious. I parked my car in the parking lot for visitors and teachers, located in front of the school building. There were pamphlets about a safe driving workshop, school schedule, and other workshop opportunities on front glass doors. A school office was on the left, where all all visitors were supposed to sign in and out. This required scanning government identification materials and having pictures taken with a machine. When the machine did not perform appropriately, a staff member in a reception booth and myself enjoyed making fun of the Twenty First Century's technology. When I signed in and went into hallways, I felt I was the only Asian in the building. The feeling had a reason. C High's demography of students was 64% Caucasian, 12% African-American, 17% Hispanic, 4% multi-

racial, and 1% Asian. During my observations, there was one male Burmese student in the four classrooms I observed, and that was all.

There were two year-long English I classes for ninth graders, one Year-long English II class for tenth graders, and one American History I class paired up with the Year-long English II. All were observed throughout a semester. All three English classrooms were on the second floor, and they were very close to each other, while the American History I classroom was on the first floor. The American History classroom was close to ESL teachers' office. Two groups of 10th graders are taking English II and American History I classes, and those two groups were switching classes each day. That is A group took English II on Monday while B group took American History I. On Tuesday, B group took English II and A group is in American History I class. (See figure 2.)

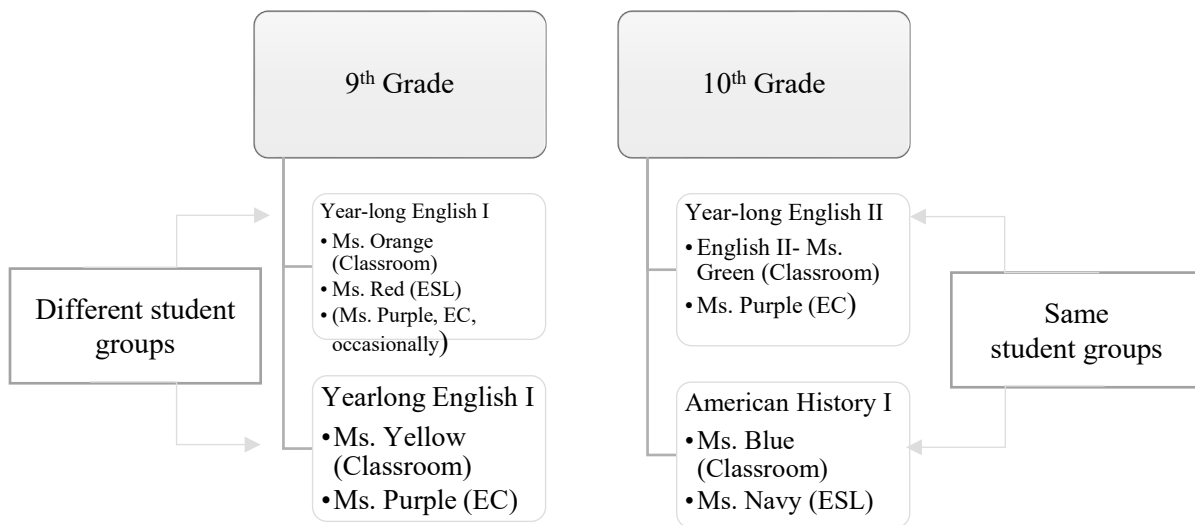


Figure 2. The organization of year-long English classes in the C high

All classrooms had rules (e.g., “No late submissions”, “No water or food in classroom”, “3b4Me (ask three classroom friends before you ask questions to teacher)”, class-related informative posters (e.g., Handwritten posters explaining punctuation, map of America), other

information (e.g., school vision, floor plan, and fire exit), pictures, paintings, and inspiring quotes were on the walls.

Data Gathering

To answer the research questions, I gathered data from interviews, a focus group, and direct classroom observations. Data was gathered primarily in the context of the Year-long English I, II and American History I classrooms of C High where interactions between the teachers and the students (and possibly with other stakeholders such as colleagues, parents, and administrators) happened every day. Data was also collected in other spaces around the school where the teachers share their ideas about students, including the hallways, the teachers' lounge and school library where students shared their thoughts with me.

I visited C High 1-3 days per week from mid-January to early-June. In my typical observation day, I observed in 2 of the 4 classroom teachers' classrooms from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. with an hour of lunch at the teacher's lounge. In the morning, I drove to the school around 10:20. After signing in with my driver's license and having a picture taken of myself with the reception machine, I walked up the stairs to the second floor. I was in either Ms. Yellow's or Ms. Orange's Year-long English I class during the second block period, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. I waited outside of the classroom until the first block end bell rang. Once most students from the first block came out from the classroom, I went into the room, said hello to either Ms. Orange or Ms. Yellow, asked if there was announcement or news related to the day's instruction, and took a seat. I moved where I sat in the classrooms to see students from different angles, but all of them were close to the classroom corners so I could see the whole classroom at one glance. The desks in the classrooms were all grouped, and most students had their preferred seats in classrooms. In my first visit I asked teachers if they had a specific seat that they wanted me to sit.

Ms. Yellow suggested a section next to the teacher station, and other teachers told me to sit anywhere I wanted to.

When the bell rang at 12:00 p.m., some of Year-long English I students left the room while others stayed for a lunch tutoring. I talked to the classroom teacher and/or the ESL/EC teacher about the day's class and then typically went to the teacher's lounge for lunch. The lounge was on the same floor with the English classrooms, just around the corner. The one-hour lunch period was divided into two sections, A lunch and B lunch. When the teachers had lunch tutoring, I ate my lunch by myself, but mostly it was with one of the English teachers and/or Ms. Purple, the EC teacher. There were other English teachers or basketball coaches as well. The year-long English teachers introduced me to other teachers as a researcher from UNC-CH. I did not talk much during lunch, but listened to what was said when teachers talked to each other. Once I finished eating, I added more memos in the running notes, or checked schedule for the rest of the day. At 12:50 p.m., I grabbed my bag and moved to either the Year-long English II class (Ms. Green's) or American History I class on the first floor. Similar to what I did during the second block, I sat the corner of the classroom, observed the classroom, wrote running notes, and talked to the teachers before or after each class.

I visited two classes per day mostly, and sometimes only one class depending on the school schedule as well as mine. I tried to balance the total number of observations for each class. All collected data has been recorded in a data accounting log for tracking the data collection process, following Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, (2014).

Individual Interviews

First and foremost, I wanted to hear from teachers how they define and identify *struggling readers* in their classroom. Interviews helped me to understand the context with an insider's view on the topic in their own voice (Stake, 1995). That allowed me to understand how teachers construct the meaning of *struggling readers* in their lived experiences. All eight adult participants (seven teachers and one ESL specialist from the district) and 11 focal students were interviewed. All participants had at least one formal semi-structured interview and a follow-up interview was done when needed, so I conducted total of 21 formal interviews. Because I asked questions before and after the Year-long English classes and during lunch to understand what has happened in the classrooms, the number of informal interviews I had with the teachers are more than 80.

I supplemented informal conversational interviews with standard open-ended interviews. With the standard open-ended interviews, all participants are given the same questions at the beginning, and then the interviewer the freedom to choose the topics and questions in the later part (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995). All teacher participants and focal students were given same questions at first (see appendix A and B, respectively). These set of questions allowed me to compare and contrast each participant's answers to see if there were any patterns among the groups. Then, my follow up questions were differentiated based on the answers from each participant. These standard open-ended interviews were recorded with their consent, and then transcribed to be analyzed. All voice recordings and transcripts were saved in my recording device, laptop, and clouds for safe backup purposes, and all of them are encrypted and located in personal space for security.

As well as the formal open-ended interview, I conducted informal conversational interviews as well. As the name suggests, this type of interview uses questions coming from the immediate context and natural setting (Patton, 2015). My conversation with teachers and students before, during, and/or after each classroom observation is also considered as informal conversational interviews. I talked to the teachers, asking about students' behavior, or distinctive different instructional decisions, or any confusing responses for clarification. Because I was introduced to the teachers as a researcher working with the school district, the teachers expected to be questioned, and sometimes they even encouraged me to ask more questions. These conversational interviews were less systematic and difficult to compare the answers among different participants, but helped me to understand the very context that the participant and I was in (Patton, 2015). Also, the teachers seemed to feel less pressure when this conversational interview happened, especially as they got familiar with my stay in their classrooms, because the format was informal. These interviews were recorded in field notes manually, along with classroom observation notes. Not like the formal interviews, informal interviews were not recorded and transcribed word by word, but I tried to capture the important message and wordings to me from the conversations as much as possible.

All student interviews were done in the school library and hallways between classes without the teachers around, because I wanted the students to feel comfortable when they talked about the Year-long classes and the teachers. One exception was an interview with an autistic student (Lia). I interviewed her in a teacher's office with the EC teacher (Ms. Purple). It was second month of classroom observation, and Lia seemed more comfortable with her teacher, Ms. Purple, who had worked with her for two years. During the interview, Ms. Purple even helped me to paraphrase or modify questions for Lia when she said she did not understand the question I

asked. Interviews with students were around 10 minutes, which was much shorter than the interviews with teachers (usually around one and a half hour long). It was because (a) students were not my main research population and interview with them worked as additional data to understand teachers' words and deeds, (b) I was only able to talk to students during the breaks and lunch, and (c) I had only limited number of dates to interview eleven students. It took longer than I expected to get most of the students' assent and parent permission forms back during my stay at the C High, so by the time all forms were returned, I only had two days to interview seven students from Ms. Orange's and Ms. Yellow's classes. The teachers allowed me to interview them during the second block (usual class time) on the week right before summer break. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with adolescent assent and parental consent.

Focus Group Interview

Along with direct observations and interviews, I conducted a focus-group interview with teacher participants at the end of the data gathering stage. A focus group interview involves a group of 4-7 people who share similar characteristics which make them homogeneous (Patton, 2015). Those teachers I observed shared same background, working with *struggling readers*, and share their opinions in PLC regularly. I hoped this focus group interview would entail less pressure on participants and more relaxed atmosphere than the one-to-one interview (Marshall & Ross, 2010). I also wanted the communication among participants to stimulate each other's participation in the interview. This, in turn, allowed me richer data which I would not be able to get from one-to-one interview (Marshall & Ross, 2010; Patton, 2015).

The fact that the teacher participants were already familiar with each other was also challenging because focus groups tends to group unfamiliar people with similar characteristics typically (Patton, 2015). Power dynamics between teachers could limit the conversation and

make analysis complex. I was aware of this potential weakness, and tried my best to insure the focus group interview was not dominated by specific persons. I asked the teachers to take turns when they answered, and once everyone had chances to talk, I opened the conversation to anyone.

The focus group interview was voice-recorded with the participants' consent and fully transcribed. Right after the focus group, I wrote down a set of memos including my observations and interpretations from the focus group interview. All data were saved on the recording device, my laptop, and personal cloud as encrypted files.

Classroom Observation

To triangulate the teachers' interviews and to see what was done in classrooms, I conducted direct classroom observations. Direct observation is frequently used in case study research because a researcher can better understand the case by experiencing when and where the case takes place by physically being there and interacting with people who live in the context (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2010). It also helped me, with my perspective as an outsider, to discover things often ignored or taken-it-for-granted by people living in the context (Patton, 2015). By "outsider," I identified myself as not only an outsider of the classrooms or the school, but also an outsider from a different cultural background and ethnicity. Direct observation can be done in the field with other forms of data gathering such as interviewing and/or collecting documents (Yin, 2010). By being in the place during direct observation, I was able to get more information by building a deeper rapport with study participants, which enabled me to develop feelings about, and impressions of, them, which helped me in analyzing the data (Patton, 2015). Observational data is useful because the data itself provides information about the case, and it

can also triangulate the participants' self-reported data from interviews (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2010).

For this study, four classrooms were observed twice a week from January to June 2017. I observed the classrooms 1-3 times per week, sitting in the classrooms where the teachers give instructions to their students. During the observations, I recorded my field notes as a form of running notes to capture as much information as I could, and then added my reflective memos after the observations were done and throughout the analysis process. Since one of the purposes of observational data was to allow readers to feel the sense of "being there" within the context of a case (Patton, 2015), I tried to notice and depict full detailed descriptions of activities happening in the classrooms (Goodall Jr., 2000), following the observation guide (see appendix D). The forms of recording included voice recording, hand-written running notes, doodles and drawings. All field notes were recorded in both Korean, my first language, and English, my second language. The hand-written running memos included my initial inquiries or interpretations beyond the factual happenings, which were marked separately in the field notes. Each observation was recorded in the data accounting log to help me balance the number of observations among four classes and seven teachers. All field notes were saved in the encrypted personal clouds as either scanned picture (.jpeg format) or documents (.pdf format) after each observation to save the field notes securely.

Artifacts

With field notes and transcripts from observations, interviews, and the focus group, I gathered other artifacts including "varied forms of written texts and recorded visual image" (Charmaz, 2014, p.45). Those artifacts included students' reading assessment results, school calendar, classroom activity handouts, pictures of classrooms, and any kind of documents that

helped me to better understand the case was gathered, for example, a survey done by the school district of the students. The artifacts allowed me to get literal information written in documents. I was also interested in participants' logic and social, cultural, and political background behind the documents as well. All artifacts collected were photographed or recorded upon consent. The content and my impressions about the document were written as part of the field notes. All artifacts were saved on my laptop and personal cloud, as encrypted files to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study followed a constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory is an inductive and systematic methodology in conducting qualitative research, providing explicit and sequential guidelines for a researcher throughout the analysis of gathered data (Charmaz, 2014). Rather than starting with structured hypothesis, a grounded theory researcher starts from gathered data, and tries to make meaning out of it through analysis. With the goal of understanding how teachers constructed the concept of *struggling readers* in their lived experience in school, grounded theory allowed me to see, hear, and understand the case in the participants' voices and experiences.

Different from traditional grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which implied a researcher as an objective observer, Charmaz (2014) suggested constructivist theory, which acknowledge "researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data" (p.13). She made it clear that this constructivist grounded theory is a form of social constructionism, focusing on social influences and processes in knowledge construction (Charmaz, 2014). This, of course, is consistent with my theoretical framework for this study. As a researcher, I acknowledge that my experiences and identities, working as a reading teacher with *struggling readers*, and being a *struggling reader* impact my analysis and interpretation of data.

Data analysis based on constructivist grounded theory started with the data collection, and the interview questions or observation guide were modified based on the conceptions emerging in the initial data analysis. Rather than using a codebook generated from literature, participants' interviews were coded line by line at the initial coding stage to construct codes. For coding and analysis, a qualitative data analysis computer program, MaxQDA 12, was used.

From the early stages of data analysis, I wrote analytic memos to record my ideas, feelings, or questions that arose during analysis. Memo-writing is regarded as pivotal in

grounded theory since it guides a researcher to generate codes or categories for analysis from an early phase of research as well as helps the analysis be clearer, deeper, and theoretically stronger (Charmaz, 2014). Analysis strategies for each data are detailed below.

Individual and Focus Group Interview

All formal interviews and focus group interviews were transcribed in full before analyzed. The formal interviews I had included seven interviews with the teachers, one interview with an ESL specialist from the district, and eleven student interviews. The interview data were analyzed line by line, and a qualitative data analysis program (MaxQDA 12) was used. Adapting grounded theory, I used open coding to see which theme were emerging from the data (Charmaz, 2014). I also used deductive coding to particularly find what the interviewees talked about their idea of good/struggling readers and instructional practices for *struggling readers*. Codes for deductive coding directly came from the research questions.

Field Notes

My field notes consist of running notes written during, between, and after the direct observations and informal conversational interviews I had with teachers as well as a reflective memo added afterwards. Running notes include what I observed and exact wordings from the teachers and the students in the situation, and my reflective memos include the impressions, feelings, questions, and other thoughts came up in my mind at the observational visits and the analysis. The reflective memo did not always correspond to the observed data (Cruz, 2008; Gorman-Murray, Johnston & Waitt, 2010; Talburt, 1999). All field notes were scanned and analyzed with the MaxQDA. I highlighted in the scanned document when I found the meaningful segments. I should note that even though I followed in-vivo and deductive coding like I did in the interview transcript analysis, I did not code every part of field notes line by line like I did

with the interview transcripts. In vivo coding here with the field notes gave me to figure out what was happening in the whole classroom amongst the classroom teacher, the EC or ESL teacher, and the students. I also particularly focused on teaching practices, teacher words showing their perception on struggling readers, and student response to the teaching practices. These field notes informed me about teaching practices of the teachers and students' responses toward certain instructional decisions made by the teachers. The captured teaching practices in the field notes aligned or differed from what the teachers said they did in the interview, so in a sense, the field notes also triangulated my data. I revisited the field notes regularly throughout the analysis and added more reflective and thematic memo as needed.

Artifacts

Artifacts other than interview transcripts and field notes, including students' reading assessment results, school calendar, classroom activity handouts, pictures of classrooms, and a mini-survey done by the school district were analyzed. These artifacts were not treated as a main data sources for this study, but they allowed me another perspective on the main sources of data (interviews and field notes). For example, classroom activity handouts gave me the idea of what instructional strategies or topics the teachers had focused on, and the pictures of classroom with the wall posters captured the quotes or instructional ideas teachers tried to emphasize, and the mini-survey showed students' responses about the year-long classes. All artifacts were analyzed with a help from Max QDA. I opened all documents in the qualitative analysis program and highlighted when meaningful information supported or rejected my analyses instead of coding them line by line.

Triangulation of Data

Using individual teacher interviews, a focus group interview, student interviews, field notes, and other artifacts allowed me to triangulate my data. In my efforts at “triangulation”, I do not attempt to validate my data as one factual ‘truth’, but try to demonstrate that I had sufficient data to understand what was happening in the classrooms from multiple points.

Reporting

To report what I found and learned after analyzing the data, I first developed a narrative for each classroom with one classroom teacher and one teacher either EC or ESL. I first reconstructed the classroom context by writing a paragraph or two to give readers the idea of where the case was situated physically. Then I provided individual teacher cases in each classroom with the emerging theme from the data with my interpretation. After I built individual cases, then I offered my cross-case analysis with the constructs and the contexts that constructed struggling reader in the teachers. Individual cases are detailed in chapter 4 and the cross-case analysis in chapter 5. Not all of my data will be shown in those chapters (e.g., classroom photos were omitted to avoid potential participant identification) but they were used in the interpretation of cases.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the rationale for the qualitative collective case study I designed to understand high school teachers' perception of struggling readers and their teaching practices in classes designed for students who were considered as struggling readers. I addressed the participant recruiting process of a school, teachers, and students and explained how I selected my seven teachers as individual cases. Then, I shared how multiple data, including interviews,

observations, focus group, and other artifacts, were gathered and then coded in-vivo and deductively based on my research questions. Lastly, I addressed how the multiple data were analyzed and reported to answer my research questions.

CHAPTER 4. FOUR CLASSROOMS, SEVEN TEACHERS

In this chapter, I share narratives of individual teachers and class. In each narrative, I provide a brief introduction of classroom layout, class routine, and teachers in each class.

Offering each individual teacher's cases, I listed themes emerged from the data.

I should note that the presented cases here in this chapter cannot tell the participants' whole stories. Though I made difficult decisions to describe each class as close to what they said and what I saw as possible, I acknowledge that all final decision made by me to depict which aspect of the participants' stories to be told are subjective (Stake, 1995). That said, I have tried to make consistent decisions across the cases about what data to include, and exclude. Also given my effort to include all data relevant to the research questions, these cases are rather long. My decisions were subjective but also rather inclusive.

9th Grade Year-long English I with Ms. Orange and Ms. Red

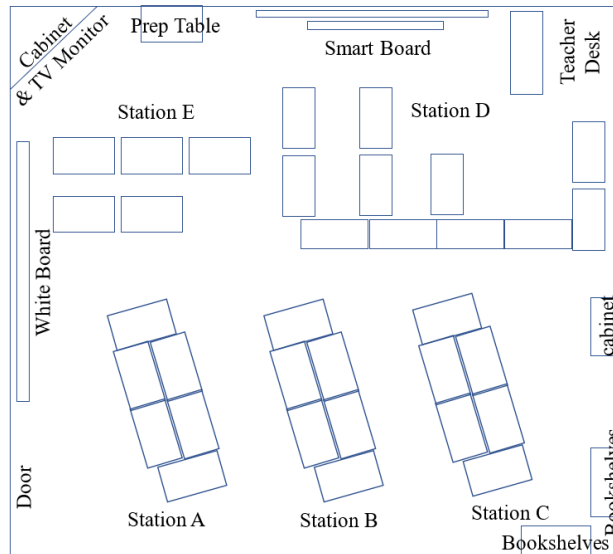


Figure 3. Classroom organization of Ms. Orange's

A Day in Class

Year-long English I is 90 minutes' class on the second block of school class between 10:30 am to noon. There are usually around 16 students in the classroom with two teachers, Ms. Orange and Ms. Red. Ms. Orange is the classroom teacher and Ms. Red is the ESL teacher of the year-long English I Class. When either Ms. Orange or Ms. Red is not able to be in class, Ms. Purple or other substitute teacher steps in, so the class always has two teachers in the room. Except one Caucasian boy, all students are students of color, either Latin@ or African American.

Before the class bell rings, when students are coming into the classroom, Ms. Orange greets the students with smile in front of the classroom, asking how they are doing. Students typically answer back with smiles. Ms. Red brings her trolley with her laptop and handouts for students, also greeting students from the outside of classroom. Except one or two occasions, student sit where they are assigned to sit. Ms. Red sits in her station (usually station A close to the classroom door) once she is in the classroom. This class has sub-blocks including whole-classroom lecture and station-rotating. In whole-class lecture, Ms. Orange teaches grammar on

one day, Ms. Red teaches vocabulary on the other day, and they read books together as a whole class. The books they read during my observations were classics such as *Odyssey*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Of Mice and Men*.

Students come into the classroom before second block bell rings. Ms. Orange and Ms. Red greet students, Ms. Orange sitting in teacher's corner, and Ms. Red standing near classroom door. Two teachers talk each other about the day's classroom activities before classroom starts. The goal of the class and activity is on the smart board screen by the class starts. Some students come and get their class folders from the stationary desk. Some put their bag under their desk and talk to each other. Some sit down and play with their laptops. Most students sit in the front two stations but one African American boy and one Latino boy sit by themselves alone in other stations. When bell rings and class starts, Ms. Orange makes sure that every student sits in their desk. When students are not in their seats and louder than she could accept, Ms. Orange stops the students and makes everyone get in their places. She explains the goal of the class; what activities students are expected to do until when. Ms. Red sometimes shares the activity explanation. Classroom starts with whole-class activity.

Bell rings, and Ms. Orange gives announcement, checking the previous day's assignment, the classroom rules, and class schedule. When students do not respond to what she says, she intimidates students, saying "Okay, nobody came to the tutoring yesterday even though I emphasized that for three times. I will expect that you finished all the work by yourself." Then she introduces what they would do in class that day. Year-long English I class has its routine, and usually it starts with whole-class instruction of grammar or vocabulary. Ms. Orange leads grammar instruction and Ms. Red leads vocabulary activities. During the whole-group instruction, most students are doing their tasks, but they sometimes make noise talking to their

friends, playing with spinners, or ask to get water or go to the bathroom. If the behaviors are not distracting other students, Ms. Orange just gives a look indicating that she knows what the students are doing. If these behaviors distract other students or gets loud, Ms. Orange stops her lesson and scolds them or threatens them with short sentences with strict and firm voice, such as “stop that,” “That’s not what I asked you to do,” “do you want me to make a phone call (to a basketball coach or an administrator)?”

The whole-class instruction usually takes 25-30 minutes. Then Ms. Orange shifts the class into the station-rotating instruction. Stations include one-on-one or small group instructions with Ms. Orange and Ms. Red, and other students who are not in the small group instructions work by themselves. After 15 minutes’ station work, students rotate their seats, so students who worked with one teacher either move to the next station with another teacher or work on the task by themselves. The work-alone students solve questions from handout papers (or working on electronic documents uploaded in Google Classroom), solve reading questions on an educational website called *Achieve 3000*, or read books by themselves depending on what Ms. Orange tells them to. The class read one book together over a month, and when the class finishes the book, they watch movies based on the book together. On those movie days, they skip station-rotating lessons. When it gets close to noon, students begin to pack their bags and get distracted from the task. Ms. Orange usually stops them, make sure the students turn in the classroom worksheets, and reminds students of lunch tutoring. The bell rings, students leave the classroom like a tide.

Ms. Orange

Ms. Red is a Caucasian woman in her early 50s with 16 years of teaching experiences. With a medium-length almost grey-silver hair, her voice was very strong and strict as she gave her simple, short, and strict commands in her classroom. After 10 years of teaching, she took 14

years off to raise her kids. When her daughters became high schoolers, she came back to teach high school. She came back to the C High, where her daughter studied. She was raised in upstate New York and got her teaching license and master's degree in English there. She went to school in Buffalo and then got her masters in English. She has worked with ninth graders because she preferred younger students. She has taught English I or “the very opposite” Critical Reading and Composing for advanced ninth graders.

A good reader is a comprehender (and knows how to do school).

Ms. Orange defined a good reader as a reader who could comprehend the text by understanding the author’s purpose and writing techniques:

someone who's able to understand that an author has an intention and a structure on purpose. Once you understand that and you learn the structure and the purpose then you become a good reader. They are able to know nuances in the language, in the diction, in the rhetorical strategy, all of those things. Yes, and how the author uses the language to reach that goal. [SJ: So, have the ability to analyze that, not just understand.] Yes.

She identified a good reader in different ways including class discussions, or seeing if readers could answer the question analyzing author’s purpose or sentiment of texts. Finding textual evidence from each text is important part of the writing, so she uses that strategies in the year-long English I as well. What students are doing with the website *Achieve 3000* is basically finding topic sentences and supporting ideas, and repeat that drill to demonstrate that students have the ability to comprehend texts with various comprehension skills. It was interesting to note that, for the students in higher-track English, she mentioned their analysis of satire and humor with theories as part of her definition of ‘good readers’ while she mentioned finding topic sentences and supporting ideas from short articles for readers in year-long English I. Even though she said she used the same strategies for both classes, she differentiated them based on her expectations for each group of students.

[I identify good readers with] A number of different ways. Through class discussion is one way. Discussion among peers. Their writing, I ask them to write about it. So, what I generally do with my-- not as much with this class but with my other classes, we'll do something-- right now I am teaching a unit on satire for my other classes, humor and satire. So, what we do is we learn a basic vocabulary for that unit, then we look at pieces that qualify as humor or satire--Then we analyze them in terms of the vocabulary, right? Like the different humor and satire theories. And then, at the end of the unit, they pick one to write about, talk about, what was the author's intention and how did the author get us there using the satirical techniques or using-- In the first unit that we did, it was all about-- I was teaching them how to annotate and again, this idea that every an author does is on purpose so what do we look for when we annotate. We did several pieces together and then they wrote about that and pulled textual evidence. So, with these students we kind of repeat this idea through *Achieve 3000* by constantly-- What is the main idea, what are the supporting detail? Every paragraph is the same, every paragraph has a main idea and then supporting details and that. What's the overall topic? Just that repetition.

For identifying 'struggling readers', she would use the similar strategies, listening to the peer discussion after reading text to see if students understood the text, see if they could figure out the authors' idea and techniques used to convey the message. However, Ms. Orange said, she did not need to use the strategies to identify good or bad readers for year-long English I students because "this class, it's already figured out for us." These ninth graders were screened to be the year-long English I classes because of their Lexile level or EOG (End of Grade) exam results from eighth grade. The middle school English teachers had decided which English class the students should go into based on the reading assessments results.

Because inclusion classes in North Carolina could not have more than 50% of EC (Exceptional Children), readers with learning disabilities, readers with low-scores without learning disabilities, and even readers with grade-level reading capability with behavior problems were placed in in year-long English I class. Ms. Orange knew that the ESL specialist from the district and middle school teachers has put students into year-long English I with behavioral issues or issues other than reading scores. She accepted the decision, but did not like it. Then she used her strategies to identify students' reading difficulties to determine the students' abilities as readers – retesting, working in groups, using *Achieve 3000*. Even after the stratification of students as readers was done, Ms. Orange kept assessing students' reading

abilities with informal assessments. She said that the judgement of students as readers shifts, which showed that students' status as reader was not static.

From the middle school. And sometimes, they would be put in this class just because their behavior problem or they have an absentee problem and didn't do well in the middle school so they figure, "Oh, we will just put them in this class." When we sense that, we usually retest them and check the reading scores. We also use *Achieve 3000*. And then, working in groups with them, we can also tell. We break down the groups and we see if they are really at that reading level that they are slated to be at or if there is something else going on. So, that's how we tend to judge it, we do a lot of shifting.

Readers in year-long English I.

Honestly, you can see the ethnicity make up in here. I have just one white child. [Others are usually Latino] and Black. I think it's more girls Caucasian [in higher track English courses]. I'm starting to see more African-American students and Hispanic students in that class than I have in the past but usually girls.

Because the year-long English classes were designed for struggling readers, my questions asking about the differences between struggling readers and good readers were translated to be about the differences between students in the year-long English class and those in higher-track courses. Ms. Orange picked up the ethnic differences first, and then the gender differences between the two tracks. Even though she what she first said was about students' race and ethnicity, she seemed to focus more on the gender differences.

She went back to the students' ethnicity after she talked about her experiences with Asian students after I shared my educational background during the interview. She complimented how Asian students' English grew quickly and their academic achievement was great because their parents cared about them. She continued that she did not see the care from Latin@ family, and she thought it was because the Latin@ students' parents were not educated and struggling in life so they could not monitor their students.

When I taught in Chapel Hill, I had either Korean or Vietnamese students that were coming in, the same thing. They would start out barely speaking any English, by the end of the year, they would be better than your standard white English kids because they cared. Now, I don't see that as much with the Hispanic groups because I think the parents again are not educated, are working, and are struggling so there's nobody monitoring them.

The other difference Ms. Orange picked up between the students considered as good readers and struggling readers was their socio-economic status. It was interesting that how she understood the students' socio-economic status to the parents' education level and the parental involvement and then connected this to students' level (academic track) of schooling. For her, higher socio-economic status meant higher education of parents, and the level of education was directly connected to of the students' capability with schooling (the institutional processes and logics of school). She said that the students in "upper-level" could be assessed as good readers because of they knew "how to do school" which they learned from their educated family. She suggested that the reading assessments (either formal or informal) teachers used to place students were assessing not only their reading competencies but also their schooling which in turn was deeply connected to the culture the students have grown up in.

Well, some of it is socio-economic. Most of the students in this class are from a lower socio-economic group, so parents are not educated and are not as involved as in their education. In the upper group, I have just the opposite thing going on. So, for example, next week is an open house. Conferencing, parents come in, so we sit down in the cafeteria at a table with our nameplate and if you're a parent, you pick up the report card and you come and you talk to the teacher if you want to. Some parents I need to see are not the ones that are there. The ones who come will be all the parents from those upper-level classes so that's a big difference. Parental involvement because that's where it all starts, right? From a young age, kids are in pre-school, parents are reading to them, they understand the importance of education. That's a major difference, I think. Because they have those advantages, they get how to do school better. In the upper level, right. They know how to do school. They know how to take notes, they know how to annotate, they know how to respond, they write better.

Ms. Orange believed that students need someone to take care of them, especially having 'eyes on them' and control them. With the parental involvement she mentioned above, Ms. Orange continued to say that the students need "the eyes" to look if they were doing school work. Even though a student had a rough life, Ms. Orange understood that as no parental support, more specifically no parental control over the student's work, and that made the student a struggling reader.

That's right and some of them-- I mean, what they're dealing with at home is-- I wouldn't do my homework either. When I'm worried about-- I have Frank (pseudonym), both of his parents died in a car accident two years ago. I just found this out. He's living with his sister. There's no support there really. I mean, she came to his IEP meeting, but there nobody-- I mean, she's barely your age so how is she providing for him? What kind of support does he get? There's no one on them making sure that all this is happening. [students need] The eyes. Now, when you meet with the parents, right, they're very supportive. I have hardly ever called the parent and not had support on the other end, but again, calling a parent of an ELL student, I've got to get a translator. It's like a whole process. Again, the parental involvement.

Ms. Orange's emphasis on parental involvement for student's achievement aligned with her parenting style as well. It was not just she tried to control the students in her classroom, but that was the way she believed how children should be treated to be successful in school. She said that she came back as a high school English teacher after a long break from teaching because her oldest daughter became a high school student. She even taught her daughter in her English class. Ms. Orange took care of her daughters by being deeply involved in their education. I even met her daughter coming to Ms. Orange's classroom and getting snacks – this style of parenting was what she thought as parental involvement that enhanced a child's education.

I'll be honest with you one of the reasons I came back to teaching was because my oldest was in high school. [...] I know who their friends are. If they're not doing well I get a knock on my door. Right? [laughs] I don't even have to check the report cards. [...] I think honestly my girls would tell you even without me in the room that they liked having me here because it worked for them too when it worked for them. If they needed something, they needed me take care of something I'm right here.

Ms. Orange believed that the care from parents was with controlling and it connected to her classroom management strategies in the next section.

Teaching practice of Ms. Orange.

Ms. Orange's instructional goal for the year-long English students were the improvement of their Lexile level, which was not necessarily supporting them as better readers. Then she complained about how the EOG test was not designed to assess the year-long English students' reading because texts in the test were disconnected to the students' interests. Then she added her

main goal for the class would be developing their reading stamina so the students would not give up when facing the difficult readings:

To see their Lexile level improve. I mean, the test for this course is ridiculous. It's completely unrealistic. It's basically a reading test. They get a long article, a few poems, and generally like a short story, but they're not interesting at all. They're terrible. They're very archaic. Boring and long. My goal for them is for them to look at that and not give up, but to have developed strategies for being able to attack a difficult piece of reading [in the state-mandated reading test]. That's my main goal.

Then Ms. Orange added how she designed the course to develop the reading stamina for students. She wanted the year-long English students to be able to tackle difficult literature and not to give up – which she expected the students would do in their EOG test when they found the long and boring passages. For them to be able to do that, she designed the course with literature reading and repeating the reading strategies – finding main idea and supporting details. Again, the strategies to tackle with difficult reading was aligning with how she described the state-mandated reading test.

We're trying to develop their stamina and to teach them what do I do when I-- what are my strategies for encountering difficult literature. What we do at the end of the year, probably only the last two weeks of school, is read *Romeo and Juliet* and we'll teach them *Of Mice and Men* and then we have about two weeks before the test. During those two weeks, we'll say, "Okay, all year, here's what we've been doing. Now, you come to this test, what do you do? What are your strategies?" Well, first I'm going to find the main idea, then I'm going to find the supporting details as I'm reading, right? Then, I'm going to go to the questions and I'm going to go back to the text. I'm going to look up any difficult vocabulary, right? Using vocabulary in context. We don't do any test prep during the year. We're just hoping that it all works.

Then, she said that the instruction of strategies were not for the preparing the test, which was clearly contradictory to what she had just said and what I had observed. I saw the students learning grammar, reading in their individual work time and as a whole-class, and I saw them working on the activity handouts with color pencils. Ms. Red let them use color pencils to color-code main idea and supporting details. The drill style instruction was repeated throughout the semester. Because Ms. Orange thought that the year-long English I students did not have reading stamina, she wanted them to have the skill of finding main idea and supporting details so the

students would not give up their EOG tests. Even though she reported her class did not do the test-prep until two weeks before the exam, what I observed was a whole semester of preparing students to take the reading test.

I am not suggesting that the class was only for test-prep and not developing students' reading. Learning how to find main idea and supporting details is also part of reading, and Ms. Orange taught the year-long English I students how to do it by repeating the drill. However, while the year-long English I students color-coded the main idea and supporting details, readers in higher-track English analyzed literature using theories about satire and humor. In the individual work time, the year-long English I students read their assigned book, they were on task, and they even seemed to enjoy reading the literature. Ms. Orange needed to stop their reading to move on to the handout, asking students to color-code main idea and supporting details. In the class designed to support struggling readers, a teacher stopped students' reading so the students could work on strategies that would be useful in standardized testing. Her perception of struggling reader, including failure in standardized testing, lack of reading stamina and reading competence affected this instructional decision.

Other than color-coding the main idea and supporting details, Ms. Orange thought providing background knowledge that engaged students was very important to meet her instructional goals. She recognized that the whole-group instruction was not working for the class and she needed to incorporate the background knowledge students bringing to engage them in reading. Ms. Orange used multimedia such as a movie based on the literature and diverse themes to grab students' interest.

One of the themes she shared was using gang to help the year-long English I students to understand the tension between Montagues and Capulets in *Romeo and Juliet*, because “they

understand gangs and that's really what the Capulets and Montagues act like in town." I could not find a clue in my data if she made this decision to use gangs to help students interpret *Romeo and Juliet* consciously give the number of students of color, especially the ratio of Latin@ and Black male students. However, she said it was the year-long English I students who need to start from what "they already know", revealing her assumption that the students (of color) would be familiar with fight between gangs and the discourses around it. For Ms. Orange, students of color in the year-long English classroom would "understand" the gang fight better than the tension between the two families in Italy.

I think the thing that I had to realize as a teacher even more so is that I feel like I'm pretty good at this anyway but even more so with these kids is providing them with background knowledge, like accessing what they know. Every unit that we designed for this class starts with, "Okay what do they need to know in order to be able to access this material first? What would they already know?" [...] For example, with *Romeo and Juliet*, we start with gangs. Because they understand gangs and that's really what the Capulets and Montagues act like in this town. They cause civil unrest. People are afraid. They both want power. It's like giving them something that they can understand so they can get what's going on and what we're trying to teach them.

In her teaching, what she thought she needed to do but was hard for her was release of responsibilities. With the suggestion from the ESL specialist from school district, Ms. Orange and other teachers knew that they need to let students have more autonomy in their learning, to read well. However, Ms. Orange did not see or did not believe her students in the year-long English I had the ability to use such responsibilities well because the students did not listen to the questions she repeated "three times." I noted that it was only few students who kept asking Ms. Orange to repeat the questions, and, in general, the students in classroom, once understood what they needed to do, were on task and completed their work.

I think that what's hard to do but what we have to do especially by this time of the year is release that responsibility. Ms. Sky calls it a gradual release of responsibility. "I'm not responsible, you're responsible." Like today you must have heard me say three times, "I'm not repeating them. You need to be responsible for learning this and listening."

It was Ms. Orange herself who could not give allow the shift responsibilities towards autonomy in student learning, because she did not trust students' abilities to understand the literature or even the scenes from the movie. She had her own way to understand the literature using the scene, and wanted her students to interpret the movie clips in the way she planned. She stopped the movie during watching and made her students to focus on particular part of the screen or particular actor/actress. For her, readers in the year-long English were always in need of her constant guidance to comprehend texts, which seemed the opposite of gradual release of responsibilities in student learning.

I like to tease them by trying to tell them the story and then-- that's little thing, little play that we have but, again I need them to understand what's going on before they watched it on the screen— because they don't always pick everything up and tomorrow, we're going to focus on the scene between Romeo and Friar Laurence to tie in the concept of a character foil and bring that all together.

That aligns with her strong beliefs in classroom management. She knew that some of the year-long English I students were placed in the classroom with behavioral issues, and she believed disciplining them was a way of schooling them. In class lessons, when Ms. Orange felt a student disrupted her class verbally or with action, she scolded them with a straight and direct message such as “take your hood off,” “stop it right away,” or “do as you are told.” She was not yelling, and maintained calm when she gave the directions. She knew that she controlled the classroom and also knew the students would not hold grudge because they have been built a year-long rapport.

Sometimes they act out when I am here. It just depends on the day. The first or second time you were here, they were terrible. They were just terrible. My style of teaching with them is I'm very blunt and very honest with them and the next day I read them the riot act and I said, "I was extremely embarrassed by your behavior yesterday. Here is what I saw, here's what I don't want to see again". Right, and they respond to that. One of the reasons why I like teaching this level is that you can be very honest with them and they don't really hold it against you, where the older kids would be like, "Oh she doesn't like me," or blah blah blah. No, it's not about you. It's about your behavior.

It is interesting to note that the students in her class also appreciated her classroom management skill. One white male student praised her classroom management saying,

One of the things I've seen is, since I would classify her class as having a lot of troublemakers in it, being able to easily diffuse a situation and not really getting angry fast -- having a slow fuse almost.

For Ms. Orange, ESL students' and EC students' needs in learning reading are not that different – it should start from learning the structure of language. While explaining this, she expressed a deep frustration about how current standards or school practices do not value grammar. She did not believe readers could learn language without understanding its structure.

I think they're (ESL students and EC students) the same, really. They are the same, yet different. Both involve an unfamiliarity with how language really works, a certain understanding of how language works. I think it takes so long for people to realize, "Oh, that's intentional, that structure is intentional." They just have no concept of the structure of the language which is why I think grammar is important. A lot of English teachers don't teach grammar. And that just blows my mind and it's very frustrating. Even these upper-level kids that I have, they come to me having very little grammar. Very little. How can you teach language without teaching structure of the language? The academic language.

With her grammar, she had the idea of standard English. In several occasions in her classes, I observed she has fixed the African American male students' double negative and Latina student's pronunciations.

Ms. Orange knew the importance of building trust with students was important in teaching them. She knew that she needed to develop a rapport with a student to win their trust and convince them to listen to her. She thought having this year-long English class was helpful for building the effective student-teacher relationship, saying “having them for the whole year is important.”

Chris for example, the behaviors that you see in him are a result of his becoming frustrated. He has no working memory. So, he knows it in the moment and then he doesn't know it. Which we see in his vocabulary quizzes all the time. So, imagine trying to learn a strategy. I feel like he's getting better but he immediately has this block where he's like I'm going to be frustrated by this so I'm just not going to do it. Right? Or this is only going to make me frustrated. But with him, it involves building his trust in you too. So, that's the benefit of this year long. I have that whole

year to develop a rapport with him. This is just you being stubborn so just listen to me, trust me, and you'll get through it. He's super stubborn. So, that's his issue.

She had ideas of effective teaching practices and tried to step up in her teaching. She participated in several professional development activities during my stay (even though she did not think they were helpful), and tried to find better instructional strategies for students. Ms. Orange figured that having routines and structure would be helpful for the students.

what's struggling readers need, I think they need routines. They don't do well with unpredictability. This Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol [SIOP] is a theory, the reason that I thought about it is that this is a theory about it. It really talks about providing background knowledge, because when I first started teaching here. I had no idea how to approach the ELLs. It was like, I get a kid plopped in my class, who spoke no English. How am I going to teach him the short story? You know what I mean, which that was the last thing they needed to be learning, right? I took this course [about SIOP] because I just felt I have no knowledge of how to access learning for these kids. The sheltered means that you keep them together like this.

To the routines she developed with other teachers for this year-long English I, students reacted in different ways. Some enjoyed to have fixed routine because they could be “mind prepping”, and the others said that as “boring.”

Most students in the year-long English I class said that they think Ms. Orange was helping them to be better readers. The interviewed students said that Ms. Orange was a great reader because she read the books out loud with emotion, which entertained them and helped them to focus on the text. In classes, even when she used straightforward and direct words to scold students, they did not seem to mind it. I could see Ms. Orange's words were well-taken by the students. The students quickly asked questions with smiles to her and followed her directions. Jerry was an African American male student placed in the class because of his behavior issues, not because of the reading ability. He was one of the most “problematic” students to Ms. Orange and got scolded every day. He said that Ms. Orange loved him, saying “she's just like my mom,” implying her scolding was for his own good. A Latino student, Franky, said he liked how Ms. Orange always gave detailed directions and checked in with him until he completed the work.

During the interview, I noticed that even they did not describe themselves as good readers, and the reasons they gave were similar to how Ms. Orange or other teachers described them or the language they used in classes. During lunch, the teachers who knew Jerry shared that he was totally capable and was not supposed to be in the year-long class. They said he just liked to play around. In the interview, Jerry said,

[as a reader, I am] Okay, I'm not perfect. I'm okay. I'm not perfect. Because I mess up sometimes, most of the times. Sometimes, I say a word wrong, or I just to have this a long pause because I lost where I was. [...] Basically, I'm not even supposed to be in this class. I just didn't do anything last year because I don't actually know why I didn't do anything. I did work, but I just didn't do much of it, so I got put in these low classes. [...] I'm pretty sure I'm not going to be in a year-long English class next year. They [the teachers] noticed that I'm really actually smart, but I didn't act like it.

We should all be reading teachers and teacher prep has failed to do that.

Ms. Orange concerned (almost frustrated) about high school teachers focused on content at the expense of teaching strategies, especially not being able to teach content-specific reading and writing.

A lot of the elementary school teachers, they know so much more about education strategies than, I think, high school teachers do. High school teachers are just, "Oh, it's just my content, I'm teaching my content." There's no reflection going on about strategy or how to employ that. In elementary, you can't do that. There are actually strategies that-- I feel like elementary teachers are much more conversant with talking about strategies. I mean, we should all be reading teachers. no skill development. I mean, I've had AP Social Studies' teachers come to me frustrated because the kids didn't know how to write an essay. They were like, "They should know how to write, they're in AP." I said, "But they've never experienced this type of essay. This is new to them, you have to model it for them. You have to show them how to write this type of essay." It's different, they just don't know how to do that. [...] they don't see themselves as reading and writing teachers. [...] You know where that's coming from right? They don't know how to do it themselves so they don't feel confidence in teaching it.

She then strongly argued that the teacher prep failed to prepare teachers to be good reading teachers. Ms. Orange said that she did not get the idea of what readers are and what she should do as a reading teacher at all from the teacher prep courses.

You know how many courses I had to take in reading? One. I took one class, as an undergraduate. I had to teach reading and it wasn't very good. One class. [...] I'm an English teacher but I'm not a reading teacher. That's a separate degree. [...] I've become a better reading teacher in the past six years with students. It just wasn't there. I just didn't even think about it in that way. [where

did you get the concept of reader or how to teach them?] Definitely, it wasn't teacher prep courses. I would say it's mainly been the past six years.

Ms. Red

Ms. Red is the ESL co-teacher in the year-long English I class with Ms. Orange. In her late 40s or early 50s, she wore comfy black pants or long black maxi skirts with cardigans. She wore glasses and had shoulder-length chestnut brown hair. Often, she seemed overwhelmed and tired. She always brought a black cart, with her laptop and piles of paper and folders.

She was one of the three ESL teachers (one of the two full time ESL teachers) at the C High. She taught Kindergarten and Pre-K for three years, and then 20 years of 4th grade. Then she got her ESL teaching certificate and started working at the C high. It was her second full year at the C high and third semester in the year-long English I class when I conducted my observation. She was there for the second semester the year before, and all year that year. C high was her first school to teach ESL. In her first semester working as an ESL teacher, she worked half day at an elementary school, and half day at the C high. That's why she was not in the year-long English I class until the second semester (Spring 2016). She was teaching and little seminar with the newcomers. The classes included American History II, Year-long English I and English IV.

In the year-long English class, she led vocabulary learning section, made PowerPoint slides and handouts, and did one-on-one mini-lessons with ESL students when they did worked in stations in classes. In the classroom, she did not speak up very much and usually looked at Ms. Orange as if she checked on what Ms. Orange thought even when Ms. Red had the whole-class teaching (vocabulary learning activities). In the mini-lesson, Ms. Red called each student to her station and did one-on-one instruction. She read-aloud the books with the students and asked

questions. As an ESL teacher, Ms. Red said she speaks Spanish, but I have not witnessed her using Spanish in the year-long English I class with the Latinx students.

During the class, in the reading time or when the students worked on the handouts, she walked around the classroom and talked to the students to help them. She talked to the same group of students throughout my observations, and the students were the best behaved in the class, not the troubling ones. Students in Ms. Orange's year-long English I classes did not pay as much attention to Ms. Red as they did to Ms. Orange. One African American boy particularly expressed his negative emotion in several occasions – he did not listen to Ms. Red, did not answer her question, talked back to her and acted out until Ms. Orange asked him to stop.

She shared a small office/classroom with two other ESL teachers. In that classroom, she had a lunch conference with ESL students who need additional support. On her desk, and other desks in her office, there were piles of papers and manila folders, unorganized. During the interview, it took some time for her to answer my questions. I felt the need to assure her the fact that all this interview was confidential and only for me. She said, however, given the small number of the participants, she said that people will know who said what, and jokingly told me not to write down some of her answers. She seemed that she did not want to say anything unpleasant about her colleagues, and she did not want others to listen to our conversation. During the first interview, she closed and locked the office door, and in the second interview, her voice and tone of speaking changed when others were around us. She was very conscious about what she was saying when answered my questions. She also seemed extremely defensive or extra concerned that this type of interview could affect or impact on her work or her relationship with district very much. I also became defensive and careful about my wording. She took lots of time to answer with many paused moments between her sentences.

A good reader needs good decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.

For Ms. Red defined a good reader “the first thing you have to have is a good decoding skills and side words because that’s what gives you access to the text.” Also, she said a good reader is “able to process what you’re reading, so that you can distinguish what’s essential from what’s non-essential and how the ideas relate to each other.” In the interview, she repeatedly said that “you cannot comprehend anything unless you can decode, you know enough side words, being able to understand the relationships among ideas, and being able to filter out what’s not essential and focus on what is essential.” The reader she described aligned with the five pillars of literacy the National Reading Panel (NRP) suggested in its 2000 report – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel (NRP), 2000).

She identified a reader with challenges with formal and informal assessments. Some formal assessments that they have are the *Achieve 3000* and the EOG scores in reading. Informal assessments were “just class discussions and individual conferences with children.” She also said that sometimes by coming to a child and ask him about what he’s reading and “you can tell how much he’s getting out of it and how much he’s comprehending just from an informal conversation with the child.”

She also identified good readers by their understanding of the text. If readers understood the text and answered the comprehension question right, then she would tell the readers do not have difficulties. She mentioned the newcomers’ reading challenges with the example of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon, and described students’ challenges; it was the British idioms in the book, so the newcomer students were challenged not only with the new language (English) but also with the British idioms. It was interesting that she used a contemporary British fiction written by a White man to do the lunch seminar with mostly Latin@ students. She read me some part of the passage, and then told me that if the ESL students

that she had the conferences with did not able to follow the storyline, then she would be very concerned, meaning she would identify them as struggling readers, saying:

If there's something that at this point in their education, depending on who they are, how long they've been here, and what they've been exposed to, if there's something that they can't tell me then, I become concerned.

She then added that "it is not just their language, their lack of vocabulary" and told me how the students did not understand the word "murder," so she needed to use "kill" to help them to understand. For her, students' knowledge of vocabulary and idiom was an identifier of good or struggling reader.

Year-long English I student: they are rude. that's enough.

Of the nine ESL students she had been working with in the year-long English I classes, she only has one newcomer. The newcomer student has been in the US around three years, and the other ESL students were identified as LAP (Language Acquisition Plan) student when they were in elementary school, and Ms. Red said now "all of them sound like native speakers if you talk to them." When I asked why those ESL students who spoke like native speakers were in the year-long English class. She saw the reason the non-newcomer ESL students stayed in the lower-track English mainly because of their learning disabilities based on the records (seven out of nine ESL students were recorded with specific learning disabilities). Ms. Red described them;

They've been in US schools all this time and they've not been able to exit the (LAP) program with their access scores. They're not able to get a high enough score to be exited. The question arises in my mind like, "Well, what's going on?" Because how many of those have IEPs, too. [...] Seven of those nine have been identified with specific learning disabilities. Seven out of nine. To me, that's the reason they're not able to pass that access test. It's not because of their language issues. It's because they have a learning disability, that's why they can't pass the test. There's much more going on than being in LAP with seven out of nine of them.

To clarify, I asked her again if she thought the reading needs of the ESL students in the year-long English classes were not just language. She laughed and said "no, it's not," and that year, "it's their behavior."

Their behavior is, really interferes with what we try to get done in there. It's not their language issues and it's not their learning disabilities, it's their behavior. [...] A lot of them are just not focused, they can't focus, they can't pay attention, they distract other people, constantly talking. Some of them are disrespectful, some of them are not motivated.

At first, Ms. Red suggested that the ESL students considered to be struggling readers were challenged with the learning disabilities, but soon she pointed out their behavior. For her, the ESL students' challenge did not come from language or learning disabilities. Their behaviors were the real problem to her. She focused more on their behavioral issues than learning disabilities. She continued to talk about the behavioral problems she witnessed in the year-long English I classes:

(ESL students with IEPs have) Lots of behavior problems. [...] talking to their neighbors when they're not supposed to be talking, off-task, fooling around with stuff. We had several kids who are just always messing with stuff. Always fooling around with pencils or those stupid spinners or whatever and rude. Some of them are just rude. I would say the rudest ones all have IEPs.

In her mind, the ESL students with behavioral issues with talking and unengaged were rude, and I could see that, at one point, their behavioral issues, especially being rude was connected to their learning disabilities in her.

When I asked her what differences she had noticed from ESL students in higher-track English course and students in the year-long English I, the first thing she pointed out was the level of confidence. She said she saw the readers in English IV have more confidence in their learning and in general;

In their reading and just in general. Just perceiving themselves as a learner, being able to succeed in school what they could process. It's interesting because it's really apples and oranges because the majority of the kids that I have and the other two classes are newcomers. What's interfering for them (students in English IV) is a lack of vocabulary and background knowledge. Not a specific learning disability so it's really different. The ones that have been here longer and have some vocabulary, that don't have IEPs, that can concentrate the longer. [...] they (newcomers in English IV) have more ability to attend. [The students in higher-track courses show] So much more independence. [...] Let's say the ones that have been here four years, five years. So much more independent than the ones with IEPs.

Ms. Red thought that the newcomer ESL students in the higher-track course experienced challenges because of vocabulary or background knowledge, not learning disabilities like students in year-long English class. Once they got the language, they would not experience difficulties. Interestingly, what Ms. Red argued next was about discipline. She said, readers in the higher-track English courses concentrated longer and attended class regularly without any attendance issues. Even though she did not mention that when I asked about the identification of good/struggling reader, she pointed out disciplined attitude, that is accepting the norms of schooling, as one of the differences between readers in lower and higher-track English classes.

Then Ms. Red tried to explain the disengagement of the students in the lower-track course as a defense mechanism after the history of failing.

Could be a defense against, 'I don't want to try something that I know I'm going to fail at because I've been failing at this since I was a little kid.'

However, her attempt did not go further after that sentence and she did not return to this reason.

Instead, she pointed out how the students were disrespectful to teachers.

That's enough. The disrespect, the off-task behaviors and the fooling around, it's enough. That's about it, but it's a lot to deal with.

She pointed out the cultural difference as the reason of the Latino students' disrespectfulness to women teachers. "this Latino machismo. They don't want to be told what to do by a woman."

The words she used to describe the students were "rudeness", "defiance", and "disrespect."

Teaching practice for year-long English class.

When I asked her instructional goals for the year-long English I students, she detailed her goal with the grammar, (especially) vocabulary, reading, and writing. She said;

I want them to grow and I want to expand their vocabularies, I want to improve their reading comprehension, I want to improve their writing, and just their language skills like proper grammar and understanding what an English sentence is and what it's not, and being able to write in complete sentences. I guess, for writing, ideally, I'd like them to be able to write a three paragraph—I know I'm dreaming, but a three-paragraph essay with some support because we do

a lot of mirror writing where there'll be an example, it'll be online in two boxes, and one they'll be an example, and then over here is where they write.

Listing all her instructional goals, then she added that would be a dream for the students, because “even with that support, it’s really hard for them to write” probably “because of their learning disabilities.” Then she wanted the students to read more and to be exposed more to vocabulary. Then she continued to talk about the grammar goal. Even though some of the students “aren’t there, even now.”

Yes, but sometimes, a lot of them—I think it's because of their learning disabilities, they just can't, even with that support, it's really hard for them to write. For reading, I just want to see at least a year's growth. Really with what we're doing in there, I'd like to see more than a year's growth. With their vocabulary, I don't know how to quantify it but I would like them to be doing our vocabulary lessons and learning those words, but I would also like them to be doing so much reading. So much reading that their vocabulary is expanding just by being exposed to words over and over and over because I think, I don't know what it takes 10 times to expose to a word before you-- Vocabulary, reading, writing and then, I guess my grammar goals would be for them to know all the parts of speech, and be able to explain to me why this word in a sentence is functioning as a noun, why it's functioning as an adjective. Then, the parts of a sentence, complete subject, simple subject, complete predicate, simple predicate, and then, proper punctuation. That's really it for the grammar goals. Still, some of them aren't there, even now.

The instructional goals Ms. Red listed seemed generally applicable to any other English course in any school – a year’s growth in reading, lists of grammar units, and writing a complete essay. Also, these were different from the instructional goals I heard from Ms. Orange or Ms. Yellow, I became curious about how she ended up with those instructional goals for the year-long English I. When I asked if she had set the goals with other teachers working for year-long English class, she seemed panic as if she got an unexpected question. Then she added,

That’s funny, that’s a good question because I guess we have to go by the common core standards and those are phrased in a particular way. There’s the read for information goals. Do you know the common core goals? [...] If I were boiling everything down, what I want is just that. That’s interesting because I was not on the team when they put together the curriculum. No, I don’t know how they [other co-teachers] picked the activities that they did in relationship to what’s on the 9th grade common core list.

Then we moved on to the instructional strategies. Ms. Red’s instructional strategies for ESL students were mainly similar regardless of their classes: “breaking things down into chunks,

vocabulary support but maybe in year-long English I, managing the behaviors.” She was in charge of vocabulary lessons for the whole-class for the Ms. Orange’s class. She said she simplifies the texts for students, provided translated text, and teach vocabulary with visuals for the ESL students in the year-long English I and ESL students in the other courses. She described her role as an ESL teacher to “simplify” the regular texts for the students who were struggling in reading, while she said that the students needed to be exposed to more reading and more vocabulary at the same time.

In that class, I just did a variety of things. I would made Quizlets for everyone, for the whole class. I made quizzes for everyone, for the vocabulary. Then I would choose a different simplified version of the text of whatever we were doing. [...] We would still have them read the regular text but then they would have on hand a summary or something visual. Then sometimes, one of the things that they had, was an independent reading novel that they were really supposed to be reading at home. [...] That one I just printed out the Spanish one. Where is that? It was called the *Curious Incident of the Dog at Midnight*. That one I just talked to the other teacher. We're just [letting students to read] the Spanish. She was perfectly happy with that because studies show that the more you improve your reading in your first language, the more you improve your reading in the second also. Then I would do the achieve lessons. I could say I would do the same thing in history,

When she mentioned the simplification of texts for the struggling readers, it reminded me of what Allington (2005) said about the pull-out class for struggling readers. He argued that the special pull-out courses designed only for struggling readers could not decrease the gap between the struggling readers and their peers in the regular English class, because readers in the pull-out class usually work on drills while their peers read more texts and become better readers (Allington, 2005).

It was not surprising that she intentionally pointed out the behavior management at the end of her sentence given her perception of students in the year-long English students was “rude”. For her, the most important and urgent instruction for the readers in the year-long English I class was behavior management – that is, teaching them how to school. However, in classroom,

she did not actively manage students' behaviors. During my observation, it was mainly Ms. Orange who talked to students to direct students' behaviors or attitudes.

One day, Ms. Orange was out and Ms. Red was in charge of the whole class for half an hour. Students were louder than usual, ate snacks, talked to each other, and played with their laptop or cellphones. For ten minutes or so, Ms. Red continued her vocabulary lesson without asking students to stop making noise. When she explained the meaning of "Betroth," Latino students asked her if she was married. Ms. Red told them she did not have chance, and then the boys laughed at her. She seemed uncomfortable but did not stop them. Once she finished her explanation, Ms. Red moved to the teacher's desk and asked the students to fill in the blanks from the individual vocabulary activity handout. She read the directing prompt written on the handout and students did not focus. "Guys, guys!" Ms. Red tried to make the students listen to her but it did not work. One student asked her if he could listen to music, and she said no. It took longer than usual class with Ms. Orange for the students to get started working on their handouts. The two African American male students were still talking to each other. Especially Chante, who played at the school basketball team, made loud noise repeatedly. Ms. Red told him, "Chante, that is not very helpful," then he replied that the other student started making noise. She did not respond him, and talked to other Latino student if he wanted a candy. Then she talked to the Caucasian male student, who was not acting out, about the news article he was reading online. After some chuckle, Ms. Red lightly patted the student on his shoulder. Chante took Ms. Red's picture with his cellphone. When Ms. Red said for them to work on the worksheet after she found out that some male students has not started working on the handout, one student talked back, "I ain't do grammar." After some minutes, Chante woke up and told Ms. Red that his laptop was not working so he needed to go to the media center. After he left the classroom, Ms.

Red mainly approached and talked to one of the Caucasian male or female students who were not acting out until Ms. Orange came back to the classroom. It was clear that she tried not to deal with, and largely, avoided students' behavioral issues.

Learned teaching by “boots on the ground.”

Ms. Red said she did not have many experiences with LAPs or IEPs (Individual Educational Plans) before the C high, so she got helps from Ms. Purple, the EC teacher at the C high and has worked with the year-long English classes from the beginning. When I asked if the ESL students with learning disabilities would get more help from EC teachers, she said the strategies for ESL and EC students are very similar, and she worked together with Ms. Purple, getting advice. Also, the lessons for the students were already “mapped out with a team of people including the EC teacher” so she thought it was working. She said, she learned the strategies from other teachers and their experiences. Sometimes books are helpful, but mostly a lot was learned from other teachers and her own “boots on the ground.”

9th Grade Year-long English I with Ms. Yellow and Ms. Purple

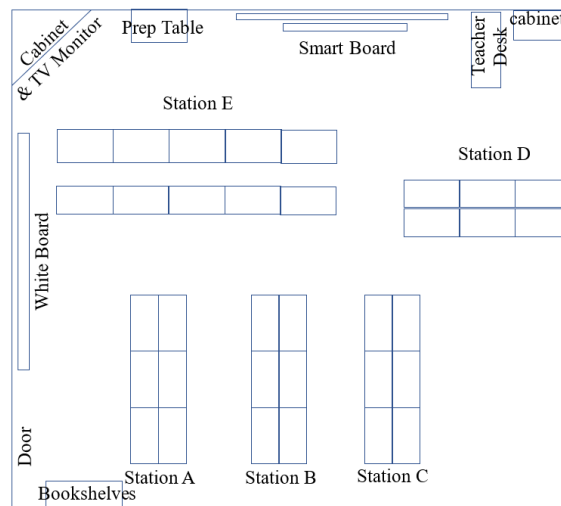


Figure 4. Classroom organization of Ms. Yellow’s

A Typical Day

Different from other classroom teachers, Ms. Yellow did not hang many posters on the wall except the front wall. On the other three walls, there were only the station signs. On the front wall around the smart board and the white board, she put lunch tutoring schedules of herself and Ms. Purple, helpful reminders explaining classroom rules about tardiness, bringing water and laptop, rules about how students may ask a question, and what should do when students were absent from a class. Most rules in the posters used acronyms such as “3b4me (ask questions to three friends before teacher),” “Absent? Three Gs ([check] Google classroom, get a friend, and [check] green crate [which was in front of the classroom].” Ms. Yellow put C High’s faculty & staff pictures on a cabinet under a TV monitor. On the cabinet in the teacher station behind her chair, she put several pictures taken with other English teachers, those of her family, and multiple drawings by her daughters.

Year-long English I with Ms. Yellow and Ms. Purple is relatively similar to that of Ms. Orange and Ms. Red. It is a 90 minutes’ class on the second block of school schedule, between 10:30 am to noon. There are usually had around 16 students in the classroom with two teachers, Ms. Yellow as a classroom teacher and Ms. Purple as an EC teacher. In this class, no student is considered as ESL. There were more Caucasian boys and a girl. Other than these three, other students are students of color. They did the whole-class instruction and small-group station-rotating as well. The books they read, the activities, and the handouts are the same as those of Ms. Orange and Ms. Red. Ms. Yellow lead the whole-class instruction while Ms. Purple lead the vocabulary instruction. While Ms. Red used PowerPoint document explaining vocabulary and printed handouts, Ms. Purple additionally used a web-based quiz game *Kahoot!* for the vocabulary test on the last day of the week.

Ms. Yellow

Ms. Yellow is a Caucasian woman with a pale skin with pale blond hair. Tall and very slim figure, with a small voice and a very thick southern accent, she had to almost yell to reach out to the students. She used her family picture (with two lovely girls and her husband) as a screen saver. She was mid-30s' with 13 years of teaching experience at the C High. She has been teaching predominantly 9th grade English. She had taught English I honors and Standard English I as well as the year-long English I.

A good reader is a good comprehender.

Ms. Yellow said she did not have difficulties in defining a good reader. She emphasized the ability to comprehend the content with basic reading skills and vocabulary, saying:

A good reader is a reader who can comprehend but also make inferences and analyze, when he or she reads. To start with, a good reader would be able to sound out and decode unfamiliar words using context clues and phonetics. A good reader would be able to comprehend things in various ways— chronological order, cause and effect, etc., but also a good reader is going to be able to make inferences and get to an understanding of author's purpose.

The description is similar to Ms. Red's definition of good reader, aligning with what NRP (2000)'s five pillars of literacy.

Her expectations for a good reader differed by the level of courses the readers were in. The identifiers of a good reader from year-long English I and that from standard or higher track course would be different for Ms. Yellow. She expected an ability to understand the literature and make connections to real-world application for students from higher-track courses, but she did not expect that from students in year-long English I. That is, she would expect to build ability to comprehend for higher-track readers, but would expect to build more basic skills for lower-track readers:

Identifying a good reader is going to differ based on the kind of class that you teach. For English 1 Honors, you would look for a different thing than you would look for from an inclusion student and from year-long student. I would start with just looking at basic Lexile levels to see what

grade level they're reading at, and you can do that using programs like *Achieve 3000* that we have, and using multiple choice assessment and doing *CORE* (Consortium on Reading Excellence) Assessments. After that point, you would look at short answer type responses, constructed responses where they have to put their understandings in their own words. For English literature studies, when it comes to understanding actual works of literature, then the student would have to be able to make some kind of real-world application thematically.

Since the expectation for the good reader is different depending on the courses they are in, Ms. Yellow said that she uses different strategies to identify a good reader in year-long English and other courses.

To identify readers' difficulties, Ms. Yellow would listen to them read to check if they have problems in fluency, then she would continue to talk to them to figure out other possible difficulties:

[for identifying difficulties] so you start by just listening to them read out loud. That's going to tell you if they're having a problem with fluency. If it's not a problem with fluency, then you're going to start to have those questions and answer verbal conversations. You don't want to do it in writing, because sometimes there can be a problem with transferring information from the brain to the paper. In the end, at that point, you would-- maybe you can [...] test their word ID, and their silent reading and their listening comprehension.

Year-long English I students are.

Ms. Yellow said the readers in year-long English I were placed in the class based on their Lexile level and their performance on the reading EOG the previous year. However, even with the English teachers' and the district people's effort not to have readers with higher Lexile level in the classroom, they still had one student with a higher Lexile level and problematic behaviors. Ms. Yellow assumed that it was hoped that "the slower pace curriculum and the added co-teacher would help hold him a little more accountable," but nothing had "seemed to work."

Next, Ms. Yellow argued that the students in the year-long English I exhibited different attitudes as readers in classes comparing students in higher-track English course. Then she listed the problematic behaviors of the year-long English I students. According to her description, those readers in year-long English I showed lack of engagement with the class work, they pretended to

work then tried to ask questions, they got easily distracted by each other, they did not get their assignments done, and they did not come to the lunch tutoring. All in all, the attitudes of year-long English students have failed to show Ms. Yellow any “evidence of engagement or concern.” Students in the Honor’s class, in comparison, were willing to ask questions with more “desire to understand it [text] a little better” even with a low Lexile level. Ms. Yellow saw the behaviors of distractions in the Honor’s class as well, but it was more understandable because the class got bigger and the distractions seemed to be connected to the class size.

The differences [between Honor’s students and year-long students] would be, of course, in their ability level, but more importantly their level of engagement, it’s usually more difficult to get a year-long class engaged, and the reason for that is because they’re used to struggling and they’re used to things being difficult, and so they’re used to having this survival skill of just not even trying because they think if they try it’s going to be wrong, so engagement is a huge difference. [...] With year-long, there’s more distracting behavior, and some of that is because of attention spans, so more tapping pencils, throwing pencils, visits to the trashcan, etc. More being distracted by phones and ear buds. More distractions from each other. Which is interesting because the year long classes tend to be much smaller so you would think that you would have fewer of those distractions. Behaviors like that, the distracting behaviors those are actually on the rise in Honors classes as well of late. But those classes have gotten really big. Mine last semester were 36 students in each section. Sometimes those distractions just come per the size of class. Other behaviors from year-long students, not as many of them are attending lunch tutorials on their own. Not as many of them are asking questions in the class when they are struggling with an assignment. It seems like they're complacent with almost getting an assignment done, or getting an assignment done but not doing it very well. You just don't see behaviors that are evident of engagement or concern. Even if they don't understand what a question's asking. Instead of asking for clarification they'll just write something down. [SJ: as they understood?] Or not. [laughter]

Ms. Yellow also shared her experience with “affluent white kids.” Their disengaged attitude was another struggle that prevented them to be better readers, she analyzed:

Honestly, what I've seen the last couple of years is that some students who end up in this class, in the last few years it's been more affluent white kids have really been battling a feeling that they're too good or too smart to be in class. Sometimes I've seen that they've put up their own walls where they refuse to be engaged because they're too smart for this. I actually had one kid say that to me before, last year, who's now in English 2 year long. Struggles would be those reading abilities. It would be their own attitude about being in a year-long class.

Third, she pointed out the readers in the year-long English I lack parental involvement.

She said she did not hear from the parents of the year-long English I students and did not get

responses from them. She connected parental involvement with student accountability, because she thought that parents were the ones holding students accountable for the classwork. She saw much more parental involvement in Honor's class and much less in the year-long English I class.

Another difference is going to be parent involvement, and even parent awareness of what's happening in the classroom, and of course, behavior for the students. [...] This is my third year teaching a year-long course, so six semesters of it, and during that whole time, I think, I've heard from two parents regarding grades in the class or even behaviors. Of course, I've reached out to more parents than that but usually don't get a response e-mail or response phone call. Honors on the other hands, they tend to be the parents that have the Great Book app on their phone and they get notifications of their grades, and they really become more "Helicopter parents." Not all of them, but some of them. It's almost like the parents of the Honor student hold their students accountable for the work that's going on in the classroom, and I don't really see as much of that from the year-long parents.

I pushed her on if there were any sociocultural differences between higher-track English and lower-track English courses, and then she pointed out the gender and ethnicity differences. She saw more Caucasian female in Honor's English and more male of color, "overwhelmingly the majority" in the year-long English courses.

Well, it's pretty stereotypical that more Honor students in English are female, and that usually is a very true from what I experience. Usually the year-long class has a greater number of males in it. As far as ethnicity and race is concerned, year-long has varied from year to year, but overwhelmingly the majority of the students are Hispanic African-American. The Honors, they're definitely more Caucasians, specifically female Caucasians.

She added later, those readers in different courses shared a commonality of concerning about their reputations from the friends' group. She explained the concern about their reputation encouraged students in Honor's class to perform better, while the same concern made the readers of the year-long English I class disengage in the class work including reading.

There are some things that are same about those two groups. They're concerned about their reputation in the class. In honors, if they're in a class full of honor students, they want to live up to that expectation. As a student, they perform a little bit better. Same thing in a year-long class, they're concerned about friends and what their friends think of them. If their friends are goofing off, then they're going to try to fit in with that.

During my observation, however, except the one Caucasian male student with the grade-level Lexile level, who was placed because of his behavior, other students in the classroom were

on-task, did not act out, and got most of their work done with the support of the teachers. They read books in class, wrote down what Ms. Yellow wrote on the board, and followed the direction of hers. During the lessons, Ms. Yellow and Ms. Purple reminded the students what they should do several times repeatedly, but in the end, I saw students read the texts they were given, and followed the teachers' directions.

Teaching strategies for year-long students.

To meet the needs of the readers in her year-long English I class, Ms. Yellow started with a reading assessment to figure out the students' struggles:

We start with a Whole-To-Part assessment. There are those three areas of reading, the word ID, the silent reading comprehension, the listening comprehension. We know which students struggle more with which area. That's the reason why we structure vocabulary like we do. We're trying to hit all three of those things.

Then, even though "it's unbelievable to say," Ms. Yellow taught the students the basic reading strategies such as "making predictions, visualization while reading, looking at pictures for clues" because the students did not have those as "habits" as other readers.

Another thing would be, it's unbelievable to say it, but reading strategies that we all use all the time like making predictions, visualization while you're reading, looking at pictures for clues. These things are not habits for these students. You have to ask them to intentionally do it. It may or may not become habit for them. Those are just ways of interacting with the text, they don't do it naturally, which impedes their comprehension.

The year-long English I classes assigned a large portion of time preparing students to read "pieces of literature" and to achieve that goal, the teachers (Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow) with Ms. Sky planned building background knowledge, vocabulary, poems, real-life articles of their Lexile level connected to the theme of the literature. Ms. Yellow said they did two weeks' preparation work before reading the literature, providing them "a lens through which they can look at this piece of literature," and they "had to put a lot of work into building these units."

With the year-long we spend a big portion of time preparing students to read pieces of literature. [...] When we do *Romeo and Juliet* Honors level students automatically understand there's a fight between the families. But with year-long we have to give them a more real-world application of

that. We use the strategy of talking as the family as gangs. We do two weeks of prep work about gangs and how these families are like gangs. To summarize those ideas mostly with year long before reading a piece of literature we have to give them an approach, or a lens through which they can look at this piece of literature. [...] So we had to put a lot of work into building these units. When you do it that way the students feel more success because it's just transferring the knowledge from this children's poem to a more difficult 9th grade piece of literature. [SJ: You found that it's more beneficial for them to understand the real text they are working on? MO: Yes, yes.]

Even though building background knowledge was effective for readers both Honor's and year-long English I classes, Ms. Yellow thought students in year-long English I needed much more "purposeful" instruction providing background from the English course since they did not bring much from other subject knowledge as Honor's students did.

When it comes to literature they both need understanding of other things outside of the text like historical background of the author, cultural ideas of the time period, things like that. But with the year-long students, it doesn't seem that they've held on to as much that they've learned in history class. We have to be more purposeful about that background. But we do still have to provide it of course to the English I honors student.

With the texts to build background knowledge, Ms. Yellow provided BDA (Before reading-During reading-After reading) tasks to support the year-long English I students' comprehension. It was mainly for the lower-track readers, and when those tasks were used in the Honor's class, the tasks were more rigorous involving writing assignments, while year-long English I students would fill in the blanks:

We try as much as possible to follow the BDA format for scaffolding assignments. Before reading task to anchor, during reading task to interact with the text and then the after reading which is when they try to apply it to some idea. Primarily for year long. Now we do it honors, of course, their BDA would look much different. So their [Honor's course students] after reading would be constructing a thesis statement or something like that in prep for writing assignment. [...] If they [year-long English students] are working on a thesis statement we might have constructed the statement for them and they fill in blanks with it. Blanks would be chosen very purposely to make sure they understand the big idea.

Throughout my observations, I witnessed teacher perception about year-long English I students needed to work on simpler and easier work. In multiple occasions, teachers repeatedly

emphasized that the activities were “easy,” “simple,” and not “brain stuff” to the students in class every time they introduced activities or offered handouts to year-long English I classes.

Ms. Yellow emphasized all the activities were designed to lead the students to a “deeper level of understanding” with scaffolding. To her, the year-long English I students needed these activities to comprehend the literature, while Honor’s students would comprehend the literature by themselves and did not need these scaffolds to help them. One of the activities to help year-long English I students to comprehend was color-coding with pencils. If the Honor’s students applied these color-coding, that would be for a higher-level activity, not finding topic sentence and supporting details as year-long English I students did.

I would say that for year-long the design of the lesson is more gauged towards comprehension for a big part of the lesson. Whereas with honors you can mostly assume that they comprehend it. So you probably noticed that when they do text assignments in year-long a lot of what they do is with color pencil highlighting the text. That's to make sure that they understand it and can find the textual evidence for it. That stuff, you don't have to do as much with the Honors classes. For them they have to see the text and know what the text means before they can be successful on all the other portions. Again, you don't see that with honors. So when Honor’s [students] are highlighting text, you might go and ask them to identify things that are true about the character and to go ahead and make those inferences.

After explaining the reading strategies the teachers taught, Ms. Yellow brought up the reading stamina. She was happy to tell me that the students who had gotten easily distracted during their tasks became students who could work on task “for 45 minutes straight.” Staying in their place and focusing on their work sounded disciplined to me, and Ms. Yellow thought that as one of the successes the class had achieved.

One thing that we have done really well is to build that stamina. The students who come in here, not being able to read one sentence without getting distracted, are now able to work for 45 minutes straight. They might not get all the answers right, but they're at least able to try for that amount of time.

Then she added, the year-long English class would be beneficial for students who could not work independently, with short “attention span,” meaning reading stamina. I understood that as,

through the year-long English I, students would build their reading stamina and be able to work on tasks longer.

The student that I think does not benefit as much is the students that's already capable of working independently. For example, Jamie or Haley, they can work independently, they can focus on an assignment. The student that I think benefits the most is that student who comes in on August and they can't read a piece of paper for five minutes and answer one question before they're losing attention span.

Before I finished my observation, she shared the emerging idea on how to improve the Year-long English I classes coming year. It was about having the class in a bigger room with four teachers (Ms. Orange, Ms. Yellow, Ms. Red, and Ms. Purple). Ms. Sky provided and supported this idea. The teachers thought, by changing the environment, students in the year-long English I could get refreshed and newly engaged in English class with different—positive—mindset.

I think it's just going to alleviate the stigma that these students have on a classroom. They're used to walking into a classroom, and struggling, and not being successful. If we can take them into a new environment that's taught differently, hopefully, they won't bring in those attitudes.

Ms. Yellow seemed to be excited to be with Ms. Orange, another English teacher. Also, it was interesting how she thought having four teachers in one room would make students more accountable on their work. It reminded me of what Ms. Orange talked about -- having more “eyes” on students to discipline them.

I'm excited to be in a room with Ms. Orange, as in their content specialist. I think that would strengthen our station teaching, just having more teachers to accomplish task. Also, with classroom management, even though there were being more students, you'd have more eyes on the student, more people holding them accountable.

The blueprint Ms. Yellow shared with me sounded nice, but given the demographics of the class – many students of color – I could not think of the upcoming year-long English I classroom as the place would embrace the students’ cultures. With a tea kettle and a reading nook, it sounded too white.

Yes. Ms. Sky has talked about doing like little reading nook with different kinds of seating, we talked about possibly having a little tea kettle in the kitchen. Treating it more of like a learning lab than a classroom where you have to walk in and be quiet and do your work. Each area of the

room would have a different purpose. You would have a reason to be there, and you would have a time to be there. Some reading work, some writing work. You could do it by literary content, some with thematic station, a characterization station.

In addition to the teaching strategies, Ms. Yellow suggested that what the year-long English I students needed was a teacher with “expectations for them but also has a level of understanding of their struggles but also is going to hold them accountable for what they do.” She thought the teacher-student relationship as an important part of the instruction, and one of teacher’s roles to her was “holding them accountable” because “some of them were just used to slip in through the cracks of not being noticed.” To Ms. Yellow, the whole-year setting of the year-long English I course was helpful to know more about the students and their struggles.

In addition to what we've already talked about, I think they have a real special need. They need a teacher that has expectations for them but also has a level of understanding of their struggles, but also is going to hold them accountable for what they do. Some of them were just used to slip in through the cracks of not being noticed. I think it's important that we continue this whole year-long thing.

The teachers of year-long English I, in order to prevent the students from “falling through cracks”, wanted to make the class likable. Ms. Yellow understood that the students in the year-long English I needed “a place where they can experience success as a student.” She believed the teachers “made that possible for them” by “chang(ing) the way” they taught. Ms. Yellow wanted the readers not to feel like “different” or “not smart enough” in her course.

We treat it [year-long English I] differently than another English One class to prevent them from falling through cracks and prevent them from disliking school so much. They need a place where they can experience success as a student. Above all else, what we've done is we've made that possible for them. [...] I really feel like the best thing that we've done is change the way that we teach. Anchoring them in the background knowledge, or using a mix of visual and text. Using the station teaching, doing vocabulary differently, not expecting them just to memorize things. Some of that is true in all classes but being a year-long class, we have the extra time. We're able to slowly build in the literacy components without making them feel like they're different, or without making them feel like they're not smart enough, if you will.

Most students in Ms. Yellow’s class said that they trusted Ms. Yellow because she supported them well to be a better reader and many students felt they became a better reader

through the year. Ellen and Jamie shared their experience with Ms. Yellow in the interview. Ellen, a Caucasian female student, who described herself as a not-confident reader due to her low-score on the test, appreciated Ms. Yellow and Ms. Purple's help in the year-long English I class. Ellen thought the year-long English I course was helpful because she could get as much help as she needed from the teachers. She liked the books they read in class, *The Odyssey* and *Mice and Men*, and the slow pace Ms. Yellow talked in class ("adjustable"). She confirmed that she enjoyed working with the teachers in this course and their willingness to help her was the biggest resource of the course. She thought the only reason she was in the year-long English class was because she recently got out of an IEP, and hoped to be in "regular" English class next year. For Ellen, the rigor of the course content and activities were not enough to get her where she wanted to be.

I actually don't want to be in year-long English next year. I feel like I need to do more extra activities to get where I want to be, having a whole block taking the way with what class that I want to do, it's just an interruption of what I want to do in future.

Another African American female student, Jamie shared her thoughts. She said she has always liked reading, and she felt confident in reading when she could help others to understand what they read. She had difficulties in the vocabulary, and that was what she said she worked through the course with Ms. Yellow and Ms. Purple. Jamie enjoyed the small-group instruction with stations, because she could learn more in those classroom settings. Also, she appreciated that there was more individual work time, because "things will get messed up" when working with "a whole bunch of people." She pointed out there were "one or two people that really don't do anything," and "they're very distracting."

They get in trouble a lot. That's one thing, when somebody does something in class, the teacher just stops. It's on that one person and it's annoying. [...] I'm trying to learn but then the person is doing whatever, so the teacher [Ms. Yellow] just stops and starts fussing instead of keep teaching.

Because it was usually Ms. Yellow, the classroom teacher, who did the classroom management more, Jamie thought Ms. Yellow yelled more while Ms. Purple was “more calm and soothing.” She thought she was in Ms. Yellow’s class because she was not good at reading before, and to be a better reader she thought she needed to concentrate more on her task, not get “sidetracked.” She wanted to stay in this year-long setting more than other semester-long classes because she could learn “new things throughout a year” without moving one class to another by semester.

It wasn’t on pedagogy of what a reader is, it wasn’t on literacy.

Similar to Ms. Orange, Ms. Yellow said that she learned about who readers are and how to teach them in her teaching practices, especially working with Ms. Sky, the district ESL specialist who developed this year-long English course and curriculum. Ms. Yellow said that it was after working with Ms. Sky that she learned that reading education is not teaching a piece of literature. She shared that she did not learn about who readers are or how to teach them in teacher education. She explained that it was because she got her degree in English and then got the teaching license. She took courses on English, courses on Education, and courses on teaching literature, but none of them helped her to learn about literacy education. Ms. Yellow expressed her concern about that subject teachers did not get training about literacy education in their teacher education.

Years of experience as a teacher and we've had a lot support from the district, specifically Ms. Sky that you work with. She's been instrumental in training, but also helping us to understand the importance of teaching reading and not teaching a piece of literature. I would say those two things. Just figuring it out over the course of my first few years as a teacher and then with the guidance that she's given us. [SJ: Was there any knowledge from your teacher prep program or professional development that- MO: No.] Well, because my degree is English and I have a teaching license. If you look at the curriculum for those, for the degree, for an English degree there's no pedagogy involved. Then my education classes had pedagogy, but it was focused on teaching English literature. It wasn't on pedagogy of what a reader is, it wasn't on the literacy. I would say that would probably be a disservice to high school English teachers, but also it's probably something that all teachers at university level, when they're a student in the university probably need some training with. Because it's not about-- I assume that literacy specialist get training in literacy, but from my experience teachers don't. Yes, true. I'm sure in elementary-- I'm

sure they get literacy training because have to prep for that. For us, I've never heard of a single English teacher having literacy work in university much less, some other content area teacher.

It makes it feel like they're trying to get us to fail.

In the interview and in the focus group, Ms. Yellow expressed her frustration toward the high-stakes, state-mandated, standardized tests. First, she explained how much score the test occupied in the final grade. Then she described the test as “long, boring, and difficult,” and “it’s mean, they’d [the year-long English I students] devastated.”

The more she talked about the standardized testing, I learned that part of her frustration, at least, came from the fact that she could not prepare her readers to be successful with the exams. Ms. Yellow was troubled because the process of grading of those exams were “not transparent at all,” and the rubric was “very vague.” The feedback the exams provided were not helpful for the teachers to make their “teaching better to fit the exam.”

We don't get specific feedback other than students' scores. Even the 10th grade EFC (English for College) that has the writing component on there, we don't know exactly how the writing is graded or what they're looking for. We think we figured it out, but it's not transparent at all. The rubric we have is very vague. It could be understood differently by different people. Here's an example of last year's print out of the year-long grade. This is literally all the information we get about the test. We don't get frequently missed questions or which standard they were. We don't see examples of test questions, we don't know the Lexile of the test. This is all the information we get. In other words, I have no idea how I can make my teaching better to fit the exam. There were 50 questions on the test, and they did all 50. They've all put something in. You would expect to be able to see like frequently missed questions. There are reports that we can get, but they don't provide us what we need.

Ms. Yellow concerned that she would not be able to prepare her year-long English I students for the high-stakes standardized exams. Even though teachers monitor students the entire exam hours, they were not supposed to see the exam questions or the reading passages in the exams. She was especially worried the way how the prompts in those exams were worded, because “wording is everything for them.” That is, she knew that the way of wording could distort and affect students' performance and eventually their score.

What if I'm not wording my questions the same way the test is, maybe I just need to word them differently in my classroom. Maybe it's something as simple as that. Maybe I am teaching the same thing, but I'm not using the right words or phrases. We don't even know them. For year-long students, that's really bad because wording is everything for them. It is what it is. It makes it feel like they're trying to get us to fail. It doesn't seem like that it's in the student's best interest or the teacher's best interest. It seems like they're too concerned about test security to bother with any of that that might help teachers or students. What's the purpose of the assessment? It's huge. When students are taking the exam, teachers have to walk and monitor the entire time, but we're not supposed to even look at the test. We're not supposed to look over a student's shoulder to see the piece of literature they're reading or how the question is worded. We're not supposed to do any of that.

10th Grade Year-long English II with Ms. Green and Ms. Purple

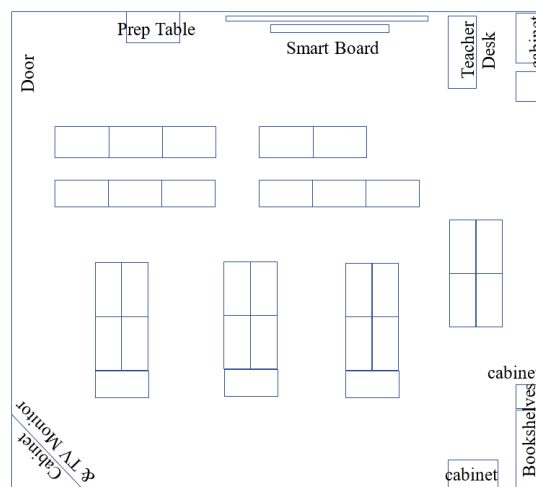


Figure 5. Classroom organization of Ms. Green's

A Typical Day in Class

In Ms. Green's classroom, you would first notice many students' artworks on the wall in the back wall. When you look around, you see posters with English content knowledge such as the use of punctuation and dash, and vocabulary cards listed under the part of speech. In her teacher station, she had her personal bookshelves, a poem poster with Pablo Neruda's 'Queda Prohibido,' a city map of New York, a drawing similar to Van Gogh's starry night. She also put a humorous poster about punctuation ("Eat Grandpa vs. Eat, Grandpa").

This is a 90-minute-block Class begins at 1:00 pm and ends 2:30 pm after lunch A and B. Students comes in, and they sit down where they usually sit as Ms. Green and Ms. Purple greet

them. Three or four Latinx students sit together at the space close to the TV cabinet. Two (or three) other Latina students sit the next desks. Two Caucasian female students and one Caucasian male student (and sometimes a Latino student) sit at the next desks. Two white boys and one biracial boy sit the desks by the windows. They sometimes switch their seats and come in front of the Smartboard to write down the direction or contents on it. Ms. Green and Purple allow the students to move around during class and provide them with bean bag chairs and other cushion students could put on their seats.

The classroom routine here in year-long English II for 10th-graders did not seem as strictly structured as that of year-long English I with Ms. Orange or Ms. Yellow. During the whole-class instruction, Ms. Green teaches grammar, letting students do the note-taking. For the note-taking, Ms. Green provides the student's handouts with tables and blanks the students could fill, then glue it in their notebooks. Or, the whole class read books aloud including a graphic novel, *The Pride of Baghdad* by Brian. K. Vaughan, and share their understanding and interpretations of the graphics and sentences in the book with Ms. Green's facilitating. On another day, Ms. Purple lead vocabulary instruction for the whole class, and the *Kahoot!* , a vocabulary game, letting students compete for the 1st place. After an hour or so of whole-group instruction, the class also had station-rotating sessions and Ms. Green and Ms. Purple taught grammar in a small-group setting. However, the teachers skipped the station-rotation when they did not have enough time. Then students moved on to the individual work using *Achieve 3000* website and did one or two sets of reading questionnaires that came with the articles. During the individual work, students were allowed to listen to music with earbuds on. On Fridays, students from year-long English II and American History I worked on their 20/20 presentation project in the media center. It asked students to use 20% of class time to work on a creative project. Student

picked their own topic, wrote a project proposal, and collected data if needed. The format followed Google's 20% project.

Ms. Green

Ms. Green was awarded as the teacher of the year once. She was 33 then, and it was her tenth year of teaching and she started her career as a teacher at the C high from her student teaching. She was a Caucasian woman with dark-brown mid-length hair with brown eyes. She had a slender figure, and her voice was clear but sounded like it would get hoarse easily. In my first week, I benefited from her warm welcoming. She was willing to help me, but she was too busy to take care of a novice researcher. Every time I asked questions, though, she was more than willing to help.

During my observations, I saw she managed to do a lot of school work – not just teaching. She did the Yearbook class. She helped to manage the ball (it was originally Ms. Yellow's work, but she had a family emergency when the ball came, so Ms. Green stepped in and took the charge). Ms. Purple once or twice told me that Ms. Green was doing too much work alone. I could see that. Even during my interview, students came up to buy the ball tickets and Ms. Green always greeted students with a smile. Ms. Green was teaching AP language and composition, which is a class composed of only Juniors – a college level course. She taught Yearbook (it was her second year teaching it). She taught year-long English II, inclusion class. It was her first time trying to do the year-long A-day B-day period structure with American History with Ms. Blue. She worked with Ms. Purple (EC) and Ms. Blue (American History I) as well as Ms. Navy (ESL).

A reader is...

Ms. Green defined a reader as a “someone who, with ease, can digest a written piece, whether that’s prose or poetry. Someone who with ease can glean with an idea, [such as] a tone and a mood, and impact on an audience.”

She said that the assumption that if a kid was in the AP language class, they were good readers “is not always the case,” and another assumption that students in her inclusion class are not readers was also not true.

Once you get passed the stereotypical, like for my AP kids, the assumption that is that if they are already enrolled in the course, but that's not always the case. That's where we start and, honestly it's the opposite. Two, when you come into my third period that you've been in, that is the assumption that we're working with mostly people who are not considered readers based on their lifestyle levels. That's the next step, is really a lot of us will start our courses with, whether informal or formal, a series of diagnostics that let us know. With the last two years we've had the Achieve3000 program and that's our diagnostic often to know what a reading level a student is placed on. Now with my third period we have additional support. Ms. Sky and Ms. Purple, who's in here with me, will do some hold apart testing which means they'll pull kids and do hold apart to get that reading level as well. Once we know what kind of level they are reading, then we work to grow that.

She mentioned Lexile levels and other testing her colleagues had done which helped them to know which reading levels the students were on. However, once she got to know the students, she more relied on the informal assessments she did with her students. Even though the formal assessment results were used as an identifier of struggling readers in schools, she personally did not “think it's [EOG results] a good indicator of their ability.”

In the beginning it's usually pretty helpful, but as you'll probably notice or you probably already noticed, there are some kids in here who in the beginning of a reading program will put a little more stock into it and then they don't. Then it's using previous data but also just some individual testing like informal, "Hey read this for me."

She enthusiastically shared an example of one student showing that you could not solely rely on the data. Her description of Franco (“using emphasis correctly,” “creating tones,” “knows the major components of the reading”) matched her definition of a good reader.

Like Franco, I know that he's somebody who's returned your paperwork that you can interview. Franco is a phenomenal reader, he does not test well. His Lexile level was incredibly low. He's a beautiful reader and he – How I know that is because I called on him to read *Pride of Baghdad*, and ever since then, that really literally was an illuminating moment because he's someone who doesn't produce much. Now he's brought in a whole lot the second semester, but as far as in, you know in the beginning, it was like wow data says he's probably not a very strong reader but he's actually a really good reader. [...] When he starts reading the book, which is a graphic novel, he is using emphasis correctly and he's creating tones for different characters. Not one word, with the exception of maybe one word, which understandably tripped him up. He knew, like just the inflection and the way he read that, and the way he stressed the important parts showed that he knows the major components of the reading.

She shared another example, arguing the readers have strengths that were “beyond the reading diagnostics whether or not they are readers more than they like to.”

They're informal checks along the way or just even something like today. SS read-- What we were reading was-- We split apart. We were working with articles for their chosen research topics, and really what we wanted to do today was walk them through a rough annotation guide. Also, ‘what's important and what's not’. For my topic, like ‘what's on topic? What's relevant?’ And SS was blowing it away. He asked he was reading he'd say “oh that's something we should all underline” or “oh BB, you're arguing the opposite you underlined that.” They did a really good job of that but it's things like that that tell you beyond your *Achieve3000* and beyond your reading diagnostics whether or not they are readers more than they like to.

With the resistance to the formal assessments, she told me her plan to add more informal assessments in her class with Ms. Purple. The teachers planned to pull out some students to do harder reading tests to evaluate their reading level because they believed the formal reading assessment results and *Achieve 3000* did not reflect the readers' ability well.

Out loud reading is always something-- We're getting ready to—Ms. Purple and I have been talking about this, just kind of on the fly, putting it, just pulling a student-- Like two of our readers according to *Achieve3000* who are not performing as well as they are projected too, we're going to pull them and give them some harder reading tests, just to kind of gauge where they are. [...] it's things like that that tell you beyond your *Achieve 3000* and beyond your reading diagnostics whether or not they are readers more than they like to.

Readers in the year-long English II.

Ms. Green started explaining how the students were coming to the year-long English II. Most of the students in the year-long English II came from the year-long English I from the previous year. She framed the year-long English II setting as an environment with more of a

support system than a semester-long class. It was impressive that she did not use the word struggling reader or low Lexile level to describe the students.

So the kids-[are identified from] last year and again the semester-long is just not the support system that they need. The year-long has been much better for providing support and I would say that this group is a much better targeted group than last year's groups as well, but there are kids most a lot more of the kids that I have were actually in the English one year-long last year.

When I asked if she saw differences between readers in the year-long English II and those of AP English courses, she said: "they're just different worlds." Then she repeatedly argued what she was saying was generalizing the group, whenever she talked about the qualities of readers in the AP course or in the year-long English II. She seemed uncomfortable to describe the readers as a group and tried to resist by repeatedly reminding me that what she said was not always the case to every student in each course. The first thing she pointed out was that the readers in AP courses did more outside reading than readers in year-long English courses, so she needed to do the reading activities in class for the year-long English II students.

Yes, there's not much overlap. As in they're just different worlds. AP language students for the most part and I'll have to generalize they have habits. Their base level they can scheme and read something with ease. They're also really good at annotating or they the work ethic to really be investigative. They look up words they don't know. They spend time with texts that challenge them and they're okay with that. They can talk to some degree of confidence about pretty much any text you give them. AP students do a lot of reading outside.

I don't do much reading-reading, just straight reading in the classroom. No, it's usually the analysis part the working with the text that they've read outside of the classroom and they will do that. Third period most of the reading happens right here. We're getting ready to do night which is a longer work for them my third period. If I looked at my AP kids well first of night would be too easy for them like excel wise. If I handed them that they could have it read it outside of class independently probably in a couple of days. [...] I feel like I'm generalizing when I speak about the differences. Yes, the entire structure of the class then an approach to literature is completely different.

When asked about the differences between the year-long English II and her AP English class in terms of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, she pointed out that there were more male, more students of color, and more "affluent" students in her year-long English II courses. She also told that the students in the year-long English had more attendance issues,

troubling home lives. When she used the word “lack of support,” she immediately rephrased the wording to “their parents have to work so much that they’re trying to get themselves here.” I could see she tried not to use deficit languages.

Absolutely. We were actually just having a loose conversation yesterday about some of our standard classes and our inclusion classes they're predominantly male. They're predominately male, predominately not white. Socioeconomic class I would say also is a factor. I don't know too-too much about-- I would probably say that a third or less of our classes, like third period is affluent to quote unquote. That's being loose. I don't know how I would even define affluency. A lot of the kids that are in my third period like I told you they'll stay and get something to eat, they don't have something to eat. They have home lives that are really troubling. Attendance issues due to problems at home. Lack of support, not lack of-- I don't mean that. I just mean either their parents have to work so much that they're trying to get themselves here. Again, I am generalizing. This is not the case across the board by any means.

Then Ms. Green shared her discussion with her discussion in AP English class the other day about the upward mobility. She quoted one student described the AP classes as “white-washed.”

In AP I'll quote one of my students from the other day. We were talking about, what were we talking about? Upward mobility and she referred our AP classes as white washed. [...] We talk about themes like that, like socioeconomic biases, privilege. We talk a lot about privilege et cetera. Some of the conversations we talk about how they themselves view themselves view themselves as more privileged students. Again, generalizing cross the board. There's definitely- [...] If I'm generalizing my AP students are less minority and more secure in socioeconomic status. We also talk a lot about how currently a lot of the things that we do.

While she continued to talk about her AP English students, she mentioned they did not have behavior issues. She furthered her argument to the point of asking if the school was rewarding the academic performances or rewarding compliances. Due to time constraints, we could not continue this conversation, but she was the only one teacher who talked about the possibility of schools' controlling student behaviors by rewards even though she did not explicitly say that.

Your AP classes behavior is not an issue. A lot of times we talk about how are we rewarding like merit, like true academic merit or are we rewarding compliance? Your AP classes are super compliant. My AP kids are going to do virtually anything I ask them to do without question. That is not necessarily the case with.

She added that the students in the year-long English II did not have many behavior issues. For Ms. Green, their being talkative or non-working issues were not behavioral problems. Comparing her previous inclusion English class, she did not see much negativity in the year-long English II class.

Also like, I mean look at my third period, they are not a behavior problem. We have our talkative issues, our non-working issues but these guys have non-behavior issue. No. Very minimal acting out. We do have one kid on OSS right now but it didn't happen in our classroom or in a classroom. [...] I don't think we have as much negativity in this third period than a lot of times I've experienced like last year I had a lot of-- there are at least three or four that I had in my inclusion sections last year that I've dropped out for sure. There are a couple of kids in here that we keep our eye on for dropout risk.

For the question of explaining the different reading needs the readers in the year-long English II, she did not even look into her roster and listed almost everybody in her class with their different needs. She first grouped the readers in two groups. The first group was reading well but interpreted the text only in a literal way. The second group was readers who misread completely.

Sure, absolutely. For example, I mean, yes, the range of needs is so diverse in these two sections. You have kids who read very literally but read well. Don't really interpret figurative, figures of speech very well. We have kids like that. XX is one of those kids. She is a very concrete thinker and literal thinker and the abstract might cause her a little bit of a problem. We have kids who just completely misread. YY for example he in every other class but English has read aloud. He can't process it correctly and so same with ZZ. They're going to misread words. If they can't read the word then it's going to interpret – hinder their ability to understand.

Next group she listed was ESL students. I saw the students listed here used a Google translator in her class.

We have a large section of English language learners in this class. Michael and Hugo for example they will rely heavily on translators which can also change a meaning of a text if we're not careful. Their reading needs are different.

She continued to describe struggles of the readers in her year-long English II. It included readers who read too fast to absorb details, readers who need more background knowledge, and readers struggled because of their personal history. Every time she listed each struggle, she listed

students' name and then their strengths as readers together. She made me see not only their struggles but the understandable reasons behind them and/or their strengths.

Then the kids who read too fast and too, like AA he's a big fast reader. He doesn't absorb details. He doesn't pay attention to details, BB same way. They don't, CC, they don't read for accuracy as much as to be done with it. The reading needs are expansive. Pretty much every one of these kids are different as far as how they read. [...] Okay, I think background is a huge component of it. For example, DD, who is probably one of the top students work ethic wise and he's really working hard. He has only been in the country for I think this is the second year in the country but his father is incredibly involved with him. And so his father really wants him to succeed and to--he plays a pivotal role in that family. There are a lot of our students who are like that and so they're motivated in the classroom. You know FF, you know she's motivated in the classroom for those types of reasons. EE, he's more motivated in the classroom because of the family pressure outside that says, "We need you, we need you." [...] Students who are really, really struggling in apathetic often times have had-- like HH, II, JJ. HH is a hard one, he's a college career ready reader. He's a hard one but he experienced the death of his father last year so his apathy comes towards really rough like personal history.

Additionally, she told me how she wanted to "paint" her English class and reading for the students with "rough personal history." She wanted them to use reading as an escape from their lives. She also thought that the students need the support from school to make them work harder in classroom and on reading.

A lot of our kids have really rough personal history and that hinders their ability to focus in the classroom because they cannot put aside all of the other tasks and things that are haunting them to focus on reading something and immersing themselves. Though I try to always paint it as an escape, come in here and pick up what I'm asking you to do and what I'm asking you to read is a way to leave all that stuff out there. So we have a lot of that. I think support from home and support from--The kids that we have are well-known and well supported by other staff members and administration. The administration really knows these kids' stories and when they do and when they have that support you see that making them work a little harder in the classroom and make them work a little harder with the reading.

Then she moved on to the non-readers in her class. She relabeled them as "non-learners by choice," because they could "perform pretty well" and she thought the year-long English II was not necessarily working for those students. Ms. Green described them as someone who "should not be in here."

When you have certain students who are nonreaders so to speak but they're just non-learners by choice because of behavioral issues or whatever it is but they can actually perform pretty well. Then this is not necessarily the best environment for them like in mass quantity. What we have

this year speaking of my group is I probably have four kids who are in this room misplaced their college and career-ready identified readers and testers that should not be in here.

The students she listed were white male students. She described them as “students who won’t push themselves” to the courses which were “a little more rigorous” and “more independent.”

The students told her numerous times that they did not want to “do that much.”

Now they're underperforming because they're not being challenged the way that they should be with the text level et cetera because by choice they're students who won't push themselves to take honors where they should be or a class that's a little more rigorous more independent. Because of the desire not to really do that much. They'll tell you that, they've told me that numerous times because very early on Ms. Purple and I were like no-no-no, you don't need our strategies and our help and they're like “yes, but I'm not going to do well in another class because I'm not going to put in much effort.”[...] At least one of the students has cited that as their reasoning for being in here.

Then Ms. Green explained the test anxiety many students of year-long English II had, and how the accumulated experience of failure made the readers passive and disengaged with the testing.

A lot of these kids (Year-long English students) are readers but they don’t want you to know because they don’t test well. They’re uncomfortable with testing and they’ve been tested so much on their reading levels that they’d rather just not. [...] No, she didn't do it but GG was another one. GG is someone who is incredibly ever, like he hates all forms of reading tests because he's never been successful on one. When Ms. Sky pulled him and did *Whole-to-Part* testing, he tested on grade level. [...] Now GG and I have been doing one on one tutoring after school, and I can confirm he absolutely is much more of a reader. He has much of a better vocabulary than he'll let you know in here. He would much better portray himself as a non-reader than as a reader because he does-- Just because of testing anxiety etc. [...] It took us a little bit to figure out with GG but then we figured it out. Now he's also, you know, identified to have some learning disabilities etc. We work with him on that of course, but he's definitely super capable, just like Franco.

With their test anxiety, Ms. Orange worried about the year-long English II students’ lack of focus and reading stamina. These were the biggest weakness of year-long students’ she thought of. She thought it was difficult for her year-long English II students to maintain focus for a long time, which later revealed to refer to the time to take a four-hour-long EOC test.

But those I think are the perceived that's going to cause differences among who sitting in here and who's out there reading and because focus and lack of focus and reading stamina are the two biggest hurdles and I really actually have not figured out how to increase reading stamina too much. I can get them through a little bit longer but really increasing reading stamina is a really hard thing and it's because of focus and the ability to maintain focus.

She said the reading stamina as “the number one thing,” meaning the most important thing for students to pass the exam. Ms. Green, then, described what it would like for the student to take the EOC, and how hostile the design of EOC was.

You'll see them try so hard, I know that. [...] He'll go in there and he will try but he beyond that 20-minute mark he won't be able to maintain that focus because it's a daunting task in time period amount of reading but he will try his hardest, and then he just at some point will hit that wall. He just reminds me of some of the kids that I see having done that on the exam because I know passionately he wants to do it and I know he works his butt off for all of us everyday class, every day. But that task and that reading stamina is going to really get him on that final. He'll be fine because he should be, because he should pass, because he deserves it, he's worked so hard, [...] but I don't know the reading stamina will get him on that EOC. We started 8:00 or 8:45 and it's not over until noon or something like that. It's 60 questions, three written responses are mixed in there, and usually the text, they have to scroll the screen for a little while.

Their relative reading stamina was the most standout difference she saw between the readers in year-long English II and the readers in AP course, she said. She interpreted that the history of success they had made them maintain the focus on the testing. She thought that confidence that the students could succeed on the test was a big factor distinguishing readers in the higher- and lower-track courses.

I've taught several honors classes and they take four hours to take the test but they can do that with a little bit because they've beaten tests before so they have the confidence. The staying power it doesn't really scare them as much as our kids. Buying in and remaining focus is already for most of them just a mental obstacle that they can overcome. [...] I think that's a big factor that's just my personal opinion.

She continued to talk about how the high-stakes testing hindered some students from being readers.

I think that one of the things that I know Ms. Purple and I are successful with is what have been in the past is building some confidence as a reader but I don't know. The thing that's always at the end of the tunnel is that in order to pass the English EOC these kids have to be reading it above an 11 or a thousand lexile level most of our kids weren't there. No matter how much growth we can get from them, they're still like for GG he's like “there's no point I'm not going to pass the test, I'm not going to pass the EOC.” The high stakes that are often placed on reading and the ability to read I think deter some of our students from being readers.

Then she added how the testing was not designed for ESL students. She said the ESL students would be only allowed to use Spanish-English dictionary in EOC, which would be “overwhelming amount of English in front of their face.”

I'm thinking about too a lot of our ELO students will be given Spanish-English dictionaries but I always watch them and I'm like, "How in the world?" They would have to commit to really taking hours to unlock these texts with that dictionary, and I haven't seen very many of them willing to do that because it's an overwhelming amount of English in front of their face, and they have a dictionary and it's like, "I'm I going to look up every single one of these words?" XX and YY are really good about translating their text and then keying it on their screen they don't have that luxury when it's on the EOC.

Teaching practice.

Ms. Green explained how it was decided to pair up English II and American History I. An English II class for students from the year-long English II was needed, and the semester-long English II was not successful in terms of its EOC and EN results. The decision to pair was made by the district, and Ms. Blue, the American History teacher, has been very accommodating focusing on reading skills.

The English II paired with the American History I was the idea that they implemented a couple of years ago the English I year-long with the literacy and testing the waters where you tried to keep the students that were placed there because of middle school testing together to some degree in a semester-long English II. With the daunting English II EOC and EN was not very successful. Then they decided that well maybe we look at continuing that year-long support where they're engrossed in literacy for an entire year we carry that over for those kids that are in English I year-long so that they have the English II year-long. Now the English I year-long pairing is the English I in literacy but for this, they pulled in history. Ms. Blue has been really accommodating with really focusing on literacy skills and skills and she's even forgone a lot of the quote unquote traditional content in order to be focused on skills.

Ms. Green said that the teachers tried to grow the students as readers with “extra support where there can be constantly immersed in literacy.”

We try to the best of our ability map out and constantly talk about what we see our kids in need of as far as literacy strategies so that's where the idea came from.[...] I think it's going to continue they're are playing around with the idea of even extending that now into English III so that, students have that year-long support until we can grow them because these are kids who are quote-unquote reading well below grade level and so giving them that extra support and environment where they can be constantly immersed in literacy.

She continued that she wanted to increase their comfort with texts and grow their proficiency. Because the level of proficiency EOC was asking would be “just too much to” set as a goal for some of the students, Ms. Green wanted the students in the year-long English II could increase their “function in society as a contributing member and a contributing citizen.” That is, she wanted them to have a “basic communication skill, basic.”

Increase literacy increase comfort with texts, growth proficiency, I don't ever want to say that all of them passing the English II EOC is my goal because for some of them it's just too much to say that's where we're going that's what we're going for. Because of the level of which you have to be able to read and process, and it's a cruel test actually. It's like three hours of looking at a computer really long things. So just increase comfort, increase stability as a speaker and as a reader because at the end of the day when they walk out of here if they can't read and they can't speak, then there's not much else we can do. Increase your function in society as a contributing member and a contributing citizen. Basic communication skills, basic. That's our goal like with the 20-20 project we're doing that to increase the amount of speaking and listening we have them doing, the writing component of it, and trying to find that investment piece right because if we can get them to buy in for two more years then get them to the finish line you.

Ms. Green grouped students based on their ability to serve them better. She grouped them in four groups, and then the four teachers working for the year-long English II got their own parts to meet each group's needs.

One of the things that works really well is obviously we have four teachers. It's Ms. Purple and me, and then Ms. Blue and Ms. Navy. And we divide them all the time based on ability--They also make us take these benchmarks so this is a good example. These benchmarks are predictors for how they're doing for the English II EOC. They took one and based on their scores we grouped them for the second one that was like half a year later, and each of us like I had the bubble kids, the kids who are could pass the EOC but are not quite there. Ms. Navy had predominantly ELLs that were still scoring one range, Ms. Blue had the high flyers. We mixed in two that were not to put them in an environment that would hopefully promote that. Ms. Purple had a lot of her EC like Lia, and XX, and YY who need a lot of EC support.

Each teacher had their own strategies in working with them, and the strategy Ms. Green used was using a sticky note to ask vocabulary questions so the readers could keep working on the texts rather than getting distracted to look up words every time they needed. These interventions were to “make sure that they grew on that benchmark,” which predicted the possibility of students' passing the EOC tests.

In those rooms you would see us doing different things for Ms. Blue it was very hands off, for me it was we have post-its on the desk, if you have a question word that tricks you up or an answer word you put on that post it, and we would put them on the board, we would talk about those words that were because that's probably for these guys the bubble kids and focus, maintaining focus. I'm very like, "Okay, that was ten minutes look up from your computers, take a second, breathe," and if they're falling asleep there are undoubtedly going to fail the test. Pick your head up staying on them like that. Depending on whose room you were in you saw a varying degree of intervention to make sure that they grew on that benchmark and across the board they did.

Ms. Green believed in a rapport built into the teacher-student relationship was key in instruction. She wanted to know more about the students and develop a meaningful relationship with them because she knew that was the key to students' growth and reading. It was impressive that when she said she felt disheartened sometimes when students in her year-long course felt closer to Ms. Purple due to the amount of time they spent with her. She really needed them to grow, and she wanted that to happen through the rapport she built with the students.

Yes, I have one folder to many and then what we did just no cards, just visuals, and one-on-one, and joking, and the rapport pieces are huge ones. I'll tell you speaking candidly I operate so heavily on rapport and I feel like especially with growth and reading, rappers everything. Having this situation where I'm not alone with my students it has been a little bit of an adjustment because I don't feel it is easy. [...] A lot of these kids have been with Ms. Purple for years. They are comfortable with her and so it's much of a slower process for them to comfort with me. That's really hard for me because that's to be the key to success is to be able to build that rapport with them. It's a little harder in a room where there are four teachers and they had some of them for a long time as their support person. [...] I love it. I wouldn't change it but it's been an adjustment for me and I still get disheartened often because I want to be able to interact. Often, in the beginning, I would complain that I wouldn't have a good pulse on the kids' levels or abilities because we couldn't get to that. We need questions or weaknesses or anything or cries for help go to Ms. Purple or Ms. Blue and not me. I'm like the big bite wolf sometimes in the beginning. [laughs] By now I think we're at the point where-- I still had to call Ms. Blue the other day to talk about XX review for a minute because I just felt there is a wall there that I can't get over to get them to grow like I need them to grow or want them to grow I guess I should say and need them to grow really. I really need them to grow. [laughs]

One thing Ms. Green thought she should have done better was growing students as independent learners. She knew that her instructional style was "hand-holding."

Yes, and I think next year too I think one of the things that we're continually talking about is increased independence. A lot of these kids haven't been trained that they don't have to be but so independent and it's hard to break them of some of that hand-holding and I know I'm guilty of it and Ms. Purple and I both talked about it where we try very hard especially with target kids like we've got to pull back and let him or her do this on their own.

However, she thought she really needed to build their ability to work on their own because the students would not be in her class anymore. Because there was no year-long English III class, the students would be probably placed in the Standard English III. The size of the class was so big in the previous year, and Ms. Green and Ms. Purple knew that setting would not support the students from the year-long English II. She said she fought hard to keep the size of the standard English III small and would try hard to increase the students' independence.

Because if they end up next year and again our school and our department is making a concerted effort to make sure that this doesn't happen again next year but a lot of our standard classes are huge and like 36, 35. We don't want that to happen because those are the learners who need the support so we've made really clear to administration next year we're scheduling that if we're going to big Honor's classes, it's fine. You got to keep the standards down low so that we can really meet individual needs a little bit. Two-fold, we are trying to increase independence so that if that whatever ends up with their path next year that they could be in a situation where they know how to flourish no matter if they're in a class of 36 or not.

Ms. Green believed that current readers in the year-long English II will be able to exit the program.

Absolutely. I think this group all the way across the board will be fine with the exception of maybe two kids like JJ and NN and that's not because they can't. They'll be fine but because and I think both of them will have strategies so I think they'll actually be fine. [...] I think this group will be absolutely fine in moving into a standard.

Students in Ms. Green's class loved her. In her class, I could see the students did not need to be controlled by the teacher. They participated in the class activities, sometimes they got distracted but soon came back. They listened and responded to Ms. Green and Ms. Purple, and they often smiled, laughed and showed me that they enjoyed the class. The students said she was interested in students' progress, approachable for assistance, respectful for the students' viewpoints. They agreed that Ms. Green helped students to understand difficult subject matter and encouraged students to participate in class activities. Students' comments were "She teaches good," "She engaged with us and is interested," and "Anytime a student needs help she comes and helps us and she breaks it down for us and gives examples for us to understand."

Challenges.

For Ms. Green, lack of co-planning time was the biggest challenge to work with the year-long English I course. They only had one PLC per week, and even during the hour, and Ms. Navy or Ms. Purple need to work with their ESL and EC students. Also, Ms. Blue and Yellow needed to prepare other courses they taught as well.

We do PLC once a week but that's really hard to do but so much in advance, so much in advance. Now, this summer they are giving us four days as a PLC to get together over the summer to really try to align a little better what we want to do and hopefully that will make it even stronger next year. But we also have 4th-period planning, the problem is I have three preps, Ms. Purple has a caseload, Ms. Navy has a caseload, and Ms. Blue has other preps too so it's very hard to just say I'm going to devote my entire planning today to English II. No, there was not a lot of advance notice. [...] Hopefully, there is some continuity where it would be nice to like the English one-year long cohort has been the English one-year long cohort since it started so that makes things much more well-oiled. Hopefully next year it's the same group that tackled it this year and we can just get better but when there's a lot of turnovers and a lot of movement as far as who's teaching what, that's really hard to do. [...] Ms. Blue and I have a lot of--we're two different curriculums, we're not both English. We're both English and History and so there's a lot of challenges that faces. We're not only just that this is quote-unquote World Literature traditionally and she's American History. A lot of the American texts are English III in our department. There's a lot of figuring to do.

She thought with more time to sit down, talk, work together, and reflect would grow them as a team to serve her students better.

Seriously, more time to sit down, and talk, and to work through resources, and to reflect. Yes, I don't feel I have the time to do as much reflection as I used to. I think if we had more time as a PLC to reflect, as a group then we could continually grow.

She wanted the support year-long English I got from the district for English II. It was not she being selfish, she said. Ms. Green wanted her students to experience an English class at that level. She also wanted to experience success as well, given the failure she had the previous year.

What I wanted was what English I had where there was common planning. They got some days with subs where they could get together and plan, and just reflect, and work. That's what I wanted. They had gone on a couple of training and that's what I wanted. It's not because I consider myself to be a struggling quote-unquote teacher with this but its vertical alignment that I want to. I want to know because it wasn't successful last year. They're successful I want to know what it is that I'm not doing that they're doing to make sure that my kids aren't suffering because I don't want my kids to suffer. That's really where I get, It's not at anyone it's just at myself and at the program. It's like that across the board in education though a lot of times, it does this and feel your way through it. I don't want that to be at the expense of the students. It's just because I just

want the same support. It's not for me and I'm not trying to be selfish it's for the kids. Like, holy cow they come out of an English-1 program that has been very highly structured and it's successful and I want them to have the same experience.

The high-stakes standardized testing was another challenge for her. Ms. Green shared her experience from the previous year. Even though her students and Ms. Green worked very hard, there was no students who achieved proficiency in the EOC English test.

Last year I was so upset. I had a really hard time last year with the English student inclusion because that was the year that the county really started pushing data. It's the first year that I was teaching this inclusion class, zero. My data is 0% across the board, 0% projected to pass, 0% males, 0% females, 0% white, 0% black. That's really hard. Here I am at the end of the year maybe two kids passed the EOC and that's my data like, "That's my data." I was really upset last year. Also, I felt I was very alone with no time. [...] I've taught so many standard classes, so many with struggling readers but somehow this was different. I think it was the data pushed that really push me over the edge. I remember at the end of the year I walked into [the administrator] and I'm like, "Get me training and get it to me now. If you don't send me on training and I mean a lot of them I need to know more about what your expectations are for me with this class. Because I feel I'm drowning." Basically, Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow did it, too. You throw out everything you know how to do and you start from scratch like, "How am I going to approach this completely differently to grow them as readers and learners?"

She knew that she worked hard and her students worked very hard as well. Still, with the data on the paper, Ms. Green felt "completely unsuccessful as a teacher and that was hard."

Last year was a really rough year. This year my data is a little better. [laughs] I also have resigned myself to not looking at that as much. I think was It this year or last year? One of the administrators didn't even put my data into the-- they make us present it to the superintendent. Like talk about what we're doing and he did not even make me do that with my zeros, he took out the slot. [...] I felt a little relieved when that happened because last year was really rough, really rough on my psyche. [laughs] I also felt completely unsuccessful as a teacher and that's hard. Because at the end of the day you want to sit down and go, "I've had this success. I can hang my head on and there was none of that. There was none of that with English II. It was just zeros across the board. That's really hard. I'm just a little bit feeling better this year I feel we've done some things better. I've done some things better. I've done some things worse. [laughs] We'll see but I just begged for training because it was a really rough year. [laughs] It was really rough to not experience any success.

The experience seemed traumatic to her. When she heard from Ms. Sky, the district ESL specialist that the end goal was "proficiency on the EOC," Ms. Green got scared. She believed that she and other teachers were growing the community of trust with the students, but the proficiency level required for tenth-graders to pass EOC was too much for the students. She did

not want to focus on the test, but “it’s hard” not to “when everything is data-driven.” She admitted that the stress on the EOC testing affected her teaching practice.

The EOC is incredibly daunting. It’s scary. Because I asked Ms. Sky the other day when she was talking about this new program down there I said, “What’s end goal? What do you want from me?” She’s like, “Proficiency on the EOC and I said, “Wow.” [...] that scares me so much because that test in the next higher level and the expectations it’s just so hard for these babies, for the kids that you just learned to love. I feel like the peace that we have figured it out is the community piece. I feel like our kids trust Ms. Purple and Ms. Blue and me. I think they trust us but growing their stamina still a weakness for me. I don’t know how to do that yet. I’m trying a variety of things. I don’t know. A lot of growing room or a lot of things I need to figure out with them. I know I need the first step is getting them to open up to me a little bit to get them to learn something. [...] I feel I’ve worked a lot predominantly what I have said all day long and I hate that. Because I don’t want to sound like I’m focused on the test. It’s hard when everything is data-driven like that. It’s hard to not.

It’s a lot of intangibles.

After ten years, Ms. Green thought the concept of struggling reader or the instructional strategies for them were intangible. She thought she could know who they were as readers or what struggles they had only by interacting with them.

You know it’s funny but it’s a lot of intangibles. After 10 years or even just a couple of years of being around students, and watching their habits, and watching the processes, and looking at what questions they’re missing, you start to intangibly be able to figure out. [...] It’s not a test that tells you it’s not a -- it’s just as you interact with the kids, it’s like that meter that says, “Okay, that person is struggling because they’re not able to focus. Or that person is struggling because you know the phonetic part of it is really getting in their way.” It’s a lot of intangibles. I think that a lot of things that can’t be tested or said or put. You can’t put a finger on it but you know that that person is going to be okay with reading on grade level, that person is not because of x, y, or z. It’s a lot of intangibles. Just interacting with the kids, reading their writing, looking at what the types of questions they’re missing and just piecing sit together.

In terms of teacher education, she had several professional development sessions focusing on literacy training which were helpful. Other than that, she did not recall the professional development workshops that were helping her at all.

Last year focus was literacy training. Was that last year? No, I think it was two years ago. That was really helpful. I enjoyed that. This year we have had a lot of that, I probably shouldn’t say that either. [chuckles] This year I feel like we haven’t had a lot of professional development contract at all. [...] That’s probably wrong maybe, I’ve just not paid attention the way I should have but I don’t feel like there’s been a lot. Two years ago, there were so many literacy training in it. Like I said I don’t mind those that all. I think we’ve had a couple this year at the district level which had been super helpful.

Instead, she remembered the workshop she wanted to attend. The topic was about how to address the issue of racial language in classrooms and how to teach. She was interested in it because she saw students made racial comments to each other in several occasions.

Yes, because this year, they've let us-- sorry, they have been super supportive but they let us pick. Some of the things I've invested in my time in is-- one of the training I went to was talking about race in the classroom. Which I thought in gender in the classroom, those touchy subjects how do you talk about them well and educate with—That was interesting super pertinent to my third period. I don't know if you've ever noticed how like they just make racial comments to each other all the time. It's not so much the group with Francisco, those guys don't do it but Jamie was the one that was just in here that group. They just make the racial conversations to each other all the time.

From the pre-service teacher education, she said she learned from her student teaching experience. Her mentor teacher back then, who became a colleague later, taught her how to be a teacher. The mentor teacher's style was tough but it helped Ms. Green to reflect. They were working together at the C high during my observation.

Pre-service, the best teacher for me at pre-service was a student teaching, was the most important part of my education. I was under this teacher. She's our current librarian. Phenomenal teacher, a phenomenal teacher and so I just learned so much and she was so supportive. She also was not the kind of like, "Hand me the lesson plans and say, 'This is what you're teaching.'" She said, "Figure it out." I loved that. She allowed for the reflection. She was brutally honest and I love that. I react well to that.

Ms. Green also added how much she learned from the English department from the C high. She said that she worked her "butt off" because she wanted "to be just as good as them because everybody in this department works their rear end off and like constantly is on cutting edge technology trying to figure out." She listed every English teacher's name and their strengths.

10th Grade American History I with Ms. Blue and Ms. Navy

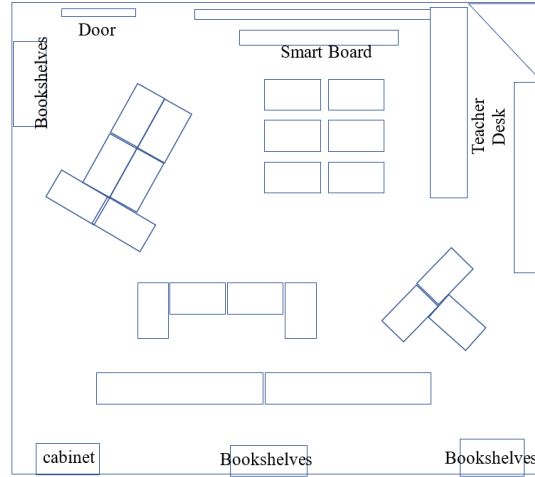


Figure 6. Classroom organization of Ms. Blue and Ms. Navy

A Typical Day in Class

Many posters and maps were on the walls of Ms. Blue’s classroom. When you step inside the classroom, you would notice a bright blue flag and poster of one private university in the area was attached to the wall. She also had a poster saying “Hero’s wanted.” She had many other posters and maps on the wall – “the constitution and you” poster, Declaration, Federal government, state government, and local government empty map model, 2012 electoral college map, portraits of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, and many other rolled posters and maps also were placed on the bookshelves. There was also a sign written, “Critical Thinking the other national deficit” stuck on her mailbox attached next to the classroom door. On the wall behind the teacher’s desk, manila folders with papers (blank, notebook, notes copied, assignment sheets, etc.) were hung. The bell schedule and tutoring schedule was written on the side of the whiteboard, and near the classroom door, she had hung a poster saying “IB learner profile”.

In the cabinet in the teacher's area, Ms. Blue always kept snacks for the students. during the classes, she provided the snacks for the boys because she knew that they were always hungry and need food.

Ms. Blue

Ms. Blue was a Caucasian woman with a bob and short dark blond hair. In her early 30s, she identified herself as young. With a small-medium figure, she had a strong and clear voice. When you were in her classroom, it looked like that she was yelling at students all the time, but it was not. She was talking to students that way. She had 10 years' teaching experience and she has done American History, World History, and the Civics in government class mostly in 9th through 11th grade. She has taught the honors level and standard level, so she thought she taught she has experienced the wide range of students in both. It was her third year at the C high. In 2016, she taught a world History that was combined both levels and an Honors American History I as well as Standard American History I in the fall.

As a classroom teacher of American History I, she co-taught the group of students with the year-long English II class with Ms. Green. The students studied year-long English I class in Ms. Green's class one day, and then American History I in Ms. Blue's class the other day. Ms. Blue said, she and Ms. Green was a very good friend (their kids go to the same sports club), and they texted each other after school talking about the classes and they do that even on weekends as well. She co-taught the class with the ESL teacher, Ms. Navy.

At one session when they had studied the history of immigrants in the United States, a Latino student in her classroom referred to Donald Trump as 'not my president' and Ms. Blue neither stopped him nor encouraged him. She let him finish his sentences. She was the only one teacher who wanted to get the interview questionnaire in advance. Other teachers did not ask me

to send them a questionnaire when I asked if they wanted me to. Then in the interview, she gave me very structured answers even before I told her the next questions.

At the end of our formal interview, Ms. Blue described her experience of the first year with year-long course “has been fun,” and made her “better teacher.”

It's been fun. It's been interesting but again I think we've lucked out with a good bunch of kids to try it on. We did not have any real behavior. What we were able to really try to play around with was skill based without other distractions [...] It's been interesting. I'm glad that I'm participating in it. After 10 years of teaching I needed something new and different. It's been fun. I'm looking forward to trying some different things next year with it. [...] I think also my focus on doing this with the lower [readers in a lot of ways has made me even a better teacher for the upper-level ones because I'm forced to break down reading and strategies and say, "Okay, how can I apply this here even at a higher level?" I think in a lot of ways this renewed focus, because again my learning of this has been through experience, has made me a better teacher overall.

Reading as a skill-set.

Ms. Blue said a good reader is someone who can use their background knowledge to understand the text:

[A good reader is] someone who can put into context what we're reading. Someone who can pull outside information in and related it to what we're currently studying. Maybe pull something that we previously studied and understand how it builds on each other, cause and effect.

She said she could identify students with reading difficulties fairly easy “by giving just a pretty standard reading text” and she did it all at one level to then ask different levels of understanding questions, some basic level questions, and then some questions that the teachers would ask them to see what kind of prior knowledge the students brought in. Then she could understand what level the students were.

I can do that fairly early on by giving just a pretty standard reading text, I do it all at one level to then kind of ask different level of understanding questions, some basic level questions and then some questions that we'll ask them to see what kind of prior knowledge they bring in. So I can understand what level they are.

Ms. Blue could identify good readers by their engagement and willingness to answer questions. If a reader understood the text, they tend to answer the questions.

I can also tell by their engagement with the text. Some students come in, a few knowing how to annotate the text, of course, that would be someone who is a stronger reader, but I don't typically see that on a standard level class. Yes, really just their engagement with the text and their willingness to answer questions, even one on one. If they're not a strong reader, they're not going to be as willing to offer information because they may not have quite understood what the text is telling them.

There were some exceptions as in readers who understood but chose not to share the information they had, but Ms. Blue continued to argue that not engaging with the text and not answering the questions were evidence of that readers have difficulties.

Occasionally, you will have that, that will come more as they get comfortable with you in the semester. Sometimes you do see that and for example in my World History class there's a student who doesn't complete much work but he is a strong enough reader that in class discussion and when we talk notes and one on one, he'll give me answers and we can actually discuss the context, but then he doesn't follow through with the work level. Occasionally, we'll see that but more often if they are not engaged with the text and not responding to the text, it's because they are not a strong reader.

Ms. Blue said she could also identify struggling readers through verbal and written interaction with them. She separated the two assignments because writing and speaking were “two totally separate skills” so she could see where the readers’ gap was.

Yes, again it's just through different types of assignments early on. That's verbal interactions with them, trying to pull information out but also written. Those are two totally separate skills so they may comprehend the text but not be able to spit it back out in writing or they may not feel like they don't know how to write it but they can at least tell me. Really understanding where their gap is.

She talked about understanding their comprehension as one key to evaluating the students’ output – either as a verbal form or written form. For Ms. Blue, once the readers understood the text, they could show their understanding in discussion or written assignments.

Also, she added that student engagement with the text was one key to identify good and struggling readers. When she talked about the year-long English class, she said she identified struggling readers with their vocabulary level which was low.

Readers in year-long American History are.

It was her first year with the year-long English class, and she said: “it’s definitely been an interesting experience.” She said she’d never had that large of a group that was that low of readers in one class. Usually, it was more like 5 low readers in a class of 25. Ms. Blue described the students in the year-long English II class as “their working vocabulary might be at a middle school or even fifth-grade level.”

This being the first year that we've done it, it's definitely been an interesting experience. I've never had that large of a group that are that low of readers typically like I've said before, I'll have maybe five or six out of a group of 25, that I would identify as struggling readers whose vocabulary level is just that low. Their working vocabulary might be at a middle school or even fifth-grade level.

I give them a text that’s eight, ninth grade level and they’re just that they really struggle with that. Overall, this year-long group probably hovers around the sixth grade maybe seventh on average, that might even be high. It has been interesting trying to step back and really look at struggling readers and the process of developing them.

In the class, she said she focused more on the students’ literacy development more than that of content knowledge. Both Ms. Blue Ms. Green focused more on “skill-based” Instruction. Ms. Blue said that there were not many overlaps between her American History I and the year-long English II but she wanted to focus “more on how can they [the students] use different skills that will help them in other classes and in the future and display proficiency with the content that I’m giving them.”

Really I'm developing the literacy more than I'm developing the content. Whereas in high school, a lot of what we do is content-driven instead of skills-driven but I like the shift in focus to skills-driven versus content-driven and I have to do skills-based, especially paired with English Two and I think that's one of your questions that I saw was, how do we do that together? That's the focus and that's as we plan the summer for next year, it will be more of a skill-based focus. We started with trying to do a content like, "Where can we kind of overlap?" But we found that overlapping the skills is something that's a lot more beneficial to them to help with English.

And by “skill,” she meant “skills being writing a complete thought [...] we desperately need to be working on. [...] just getting their thoughts down in a complete idea because no matter what job they’re going to have, they’re going to need to communicate either verbally or in

written form.” She said that the skills she wanted the students to have were universal everywhere.

Skills being writing a complete thought? Speaking that's what you saw today that we desperately need to be working on. I guess, just getting their thoughts down in a complete idea because no matter what job they're going to have, they're going to need to communicate either verbally or in written form.

Just being able to express whatever it is that they want to and have confidence that they can do that and not feel like they don't know what it is, and be able to research and research is different than when we grew up versus with modern technology now. But understanding the skills of how to research and really what is at their disposal because some of them struggle to pronounce things, when all you have to do is Google, "How to say this." I don't know if they don't know that that's really available or-- Skills like that, how can you improve yourself to make yourself more marketable, not just with history but understanding how all of these joins together because we still get that this is an English class. Well, it's the same. It really is the same. From Science to English to History, it's all still the same skills no matter where you're doing it.

Ms. Blue pointed out the students' home environment. She knew the home environment of students and the differences that might stem from different cultures, and yet saw that as negative rather than (possibly) positive and diverse.

They [year-long English II students] may want to but they almost don't know how to want to do it. I think sometimes it's because it's not reinforced sometimes at home for different reasons. Some of their parents have to work two jobs and so they just don't get the interaction there to reinforce the study habits or the schooling habits or they don't have the foundation because they didn't read growing up. There's definitely a difference and we see it with ESL kids, we see it with kids who have been to school, who come from Central America, there's where a lot of our ESL kids come from here in the last couple years. If you can tell the ones who have been to school for years and those who have been off and on, it's really their attitude towards school, not just they don't like it but do they understand what it means to be a student and what the expectations are.

Then she brought up the attendance issue. Some of the Latin@ students in her American History I missed classes. Ms. Blue connected this to the home environment as well. For her, the attendance rate showed whether the family understood the value of education and being in school. Those behaviors are directly connected to discipline and schooling.

Well, there's a kid from the group today that was absent whose mother went back to Mexico to visit family for a week or two and he just hasn't been coming because his father's working a lot. Again, the importance of coming to school and what that will do for him or why he's here, is missing. Not knocking his parents at all but just he doesn't have that focus of, 'I am a student.' [...] Sometimes our Hispanic students they go for maybe three weeks over our two-week break, this one student told us ahead of time he was leaving, asked for his work ahead of time, made up

his work promptly when he got back, this other-one didn't tell us he was leaving early, didn't tell us he was coming back late, it was just a difference in attitude.

Ms. Blue thought students in the Honor's course paid more attention to their class work with less distraction because they understood what it meant to learn. In the year-long course, she could tell some students who have been taught the importance of education focused more on the task even when they struggled with the task.

They [Honor's students] understand what it means to learn, that the appreciation for learning maybe. There are some few kids that are here [year-long course] because they have to be and then there's others that you could tell have been taught the importance of education and what it will get them and so they're a lot more focused. Even if they struggle with it they pay more attention to what they need to be doing, less distracted.

Comparing Honor's class and the year-long English II class, Ms. Blue pointed out socioeconomic status and connected SES to the expectations from home. Then she mentioned the demographic differences in Honor's class and the year-long English II. She saw the racial differences – more Caucasian in higher-track courses.

Honestly, you're going to have a little bit higher socioeconomic status I've noticed overall on average in the honors level, I think sometimes that is because, again, they're pushed more from home to do that. Sometimes even if they should not be in honors, those that are pushed into honors who shouldn't be are a little more higher socioeconomic. We really have to pull out and find our standard level kids to challenge them sometimes to do honors. The two schools I've worked at have been at least majority white, Here [year-long English] is a heavier Hispanic population, and we do see some minority students but primarily I would say 60% of your honors classes are going to be White here. Again, we do have a regularly and 60-70% White here. [...] We're heavy majority white here, even in my old school when that was a good 40% African-American, your honors classes and even your AP classes are mostly Caucasian.

Ms. Blue saw a lack of engagement from the students in her American History I. While students in Honor's course sit and stuck to the task even when they got bored with it, the students in American History I would not engage with the text.

The difference is, again is their willingness to engage with a text. My struggling readers it is like pulling teeth to engage with the text, my honors level I can give them something and they may think it's boring but they will sit and engage for the most part with the text, then sometimes what I have to work on is pulling discussion out of them, not just, "Let me answer these questions and move on." The discussion piece is still a work that I have to do for honors whereas the engagement is the struggle for lower level.

She attributed the reason for struggling readers lack of engagement to the issue of confidence. She thought students in the American History I would not fight the task because they assumed they would fail again. Ms. Blue thought the fixed mindset (Dweck, 2008) hindered them from learning. Some ESL students in American History I had the confidence, so they could tackle the task even with the language barrier.

I think a lot of it is confidence, if you have the foundation and somebody gives you a text, if you feel confident that you can tackle it, you're going to do that, if you do not feel confident in your reading ability, a multi paragraph text, I just see them shut down. I think a lot of its confidence and they know that they're struggling readers. They see text that's difficult in other classes or the past, they know that they have this, "I can't do this," I think that's a lot of the fight that we have. [...] Yes, definitely. Now, in Yearlong we also have ESL students and the language piece is also a roadblock for some of them, is they're good students. There's two that really come to mind out of that Year-long group that we have in there are in my Tuesday/Thursday, not the group we had today, who are good students who will approach a text with confidence but the language piece is what is a roadblock for them but they're students so they are willing to attack it, approach it, engage with it. Whereas some of my even lower-level readers really just they don't have the confidence piece.

Ms. Blue then pointed out gender as another source of struggles. She explained, girls matured faster than boys. Interestingly, she mentioned students' birthdays mattered when it came to students' maturity as well. She thought being a better reader, one should be more mature.

Part of that also needs to be said that girls mature faster than boys. In ten years I can tell you my brother and I were the exact same, over five months apart, he's adopted but we're five months apart and I was much more studious. Girls will mature, that's why we are holding my son back an extra year before starting because he has that August birthday. I think that is important also to keep in mind that your lower level, especially ninth and 10th grade classes, due tend to be boy heavy but part of that is maturity and maybe not fostering that low level of maturity in elementary and middle so then they're prepared here. Because I do have immature honors level boys. I can tell the difference. I can tell you in September and October who has August, September, October birthdays. I can easily tell you that because they're less mature. They're less able to handle time management, they're less able to handle distractions. I think that's an important point, not knocking boys. It's a maturity thing in some of them.

Similar to Ms. Green, Ms. Blue knew the difference amongst the readers in the year-long American History I. She was able to name each student's name and their issues as readers. She gave me an example of students whose reading was not low but had an attendance issue, and the other students whose reading was good but unable to complete writing assignments, and other

students whose reading was capable but chose not to work. The description of students she gave me aligned with that of Ms. Green.

AA is an attendance issue. He came from another school halfway through fall semester from another school, but he is an attendance issue. I see him twice a week, two to three times a week and I bet he misses one day a week. [...] He is probably below average but not low. Franco is ESL and we're trying to find Francisco's strengths. He is a better speaker and for English. I don't know if Ms. Green told you of him specifically. If he reads something, he can read it in the right inflection. But if you ask him to sit and read it and then respond to it, I don't know, there's a gap. I don't know how much of that as he doesn't want to do it. It's like pulling teeth to get him to complete something in writing. [Franco is] Reading at a certain level. But writing it is-- But he has an IEP. Some of that may be that learning disability, that processing to writing. But Francisco he can communicate, below average but with you. Getting that writing piece is difficult.

Teaching practice.

Ms. Blue's instructional goal was helping students become "more marketable" by helping students to have skills, especially reading for students in the year-long course. The idea of making students more marketable aligned with the neoliberal educational climate nowadays.

How can you improve yourself to make yourself more marketable, not just with history but understanding how all of these joins together because we still get that this is an English class. Well, it's the same. It really is the same. From science to English to history, it's all the same skills no matter where you're doing it.

To meet the goal, she developed skill-based instruction. She incorporated summarization in the year-long English II & American History I class as well as paraphrasing sentences.

Especially for the students in the year-long class, she focused on the text summarizing skill.

Again, skill-based and again then reading, it's summarization is something that I've been trying to focus on who, what, where and why of what we're doing. Then can you write that down in your own paraphrased sentence or multiple sentences but again your own words not restating exactly what this person says but pick out the pieces and then put it together. Summarization is something that I definitely have been trying to do at much lower level with the struggling readers.

In Honor's class, what Ms. Blue would do was quite similar – giving articles to read, visiting some vocabularies, providing a series of questions, and sometimes asking writing assignment. However, she could do that in "a lot less structured" way and that was how it would look different in an honor's class. She saw the differences between Honor's class students and

Year-long English II students in their work ethics – their willingness to engage with a text. She thought confidence was the reason behind the difference; “They know that they’re struggling readers. They see texts that are difficult in other classes or the past, they know that they have this, “I can’t do this,” I think that’s a lot of the fight that we have.” She said, even the ESL students with “the language piece” as “also a roadblock” could try to attack the task with their confidence. “Whereas some of my even lower-level readers really just don’t have the confidence piece.”

In honors I really don't have to do as much prep for giving the article, sometimes we do some vocabulary, I'll have pretty read it and I'll have just a short little vocab and we'll talk about what some of these words mean or what they think they mean or I'll have them look them up, so they have that reference. These are not just basic vocabulary words, in a Abraham Lincoln assassination one today the word capitulate was in there. It's things like that, that's just strengthening their vocabulary on that level so that I can do the basic vocab intro and then give them the article with a series of questions. Typically I'll have some type of writing, summary or a response piece, opinion or something at the end of there. I can give that a lot less structured and then we can come back together and discuss, is how it would look differently in an honors class.

Ms. Blue used instructional websites such as Achieve 3000 or newsELA to modify the text level so Honor’s readers could challenge whereas students in the year-long course could “pick the content out without being overwhelmed with the vocabulary.”

[Using *Achieve 3000* or *newsELA* website] I'll give it at a higher reading level, I would give it at an 11th or 12th grade level for my 10th grade honors to challenge them, whereas in year-long for example I'm giving them the fifth and sixth grade reading level just so they can pick the content out without being overwhelmed with the vocabulary.

She not only adjusted the text level but also modified the depth of content for each course. She would push Honor’s students to the more complex concept, but she would teach a simple and basic concept for the year-long group students.

The level of depth I go, I do a lot more economic policy with an honors level group whereas I really maybe talk basic supply and demand. I teach inflation just because that affects them with rise of prices but that's about the extent of policy. I don't do a lot of banking conflict with the lower level. In honors I'll go into a little bit more depth.

For Ms. Blue, teaching vocabulary was really important. I could see that in her class that she focused on teaching vocabulary, as she talked about not only the content vocabulary related to American History, but academic vocabulary such as analyze, inference, informational text, and so on. Ms. Blue intentionally used the academic words used in the year-long English II so students could be exposed to the language repeatedly.

Vocabulary. In history I focus on vocabulary, both academic vocabulary and the content vocabulary. I try to balance that out so that hopefully when they see those words they come in context with them in their text. I try to use some of the academic words that Ms. Yellow is using in English to pair that up and again that's a skill overlap.

Other than the instructional needs, Ms. Blue took care of the students' nutrition. She knew that many year-long American History I students were not fed well. She connected to meeting their "physical needs" to building a trust relationship between teachers and students.

Other needs, I'd feed them. I found that they focus, they just come from lunch but some of them don't get a lot and they're growing teenage boys, so I found just meeting the physical needs of that kind of thing. With the struggling readers again, it's confidence and so it's just building them up and developing that relationship that you're going to be hard on them but you're going to still expect A, B and C out of them. With some kids that's easier to develop. Like, GG is one that I have that with. He doesn't do well with the Ms. Navy for some reason but he's bought into my system. Then, hopefully when they have that trust need met, then they're willing to put themselves out there because they are at fifth grade reading level trying to read a high school text, they're putting themselves out there trying to answer a question.

Ms. Blue acknowledged the wide range of reading levels of students in the year-long group. She and other teachers decided to group students based on their ability and the relationship the students had with their peers. During the semester, the teachers flipped the group if the other group would fit better for the students' learning. Based on the reading ability of students, she even differentiated the texts for different groups of year-long American History I students.

We technically, probably should have kept him in the other half, but socially we thought that it was going to be a little bit better to engage with the higher up. I don't know if that was the right decision at this point in May, but too late to do anything about that. [...] She's one of the three girls in that class. We had kept her originally with the lower group, but we realized that she was not. She's about a eighth, ninth grade reading level, that she was not being challenged in that

lower group that averages about 700. We did flip her and she's for the most part done pretty good there. She's willing to do some of the reading that we ask. [...] I even give different readings for A day and B day depending on if we're all looking at the same text and I print it. On the computers they can change. It's based on whatever they achieve but if we give a text, I may print the 700 or 800 for my A day so B day group, and I may print the 1100 for the other group. Even though that's above where some of them are at in that group, that group can tend to handle that a little bit more. So yes, there's a wide range, but we're trying to minimize that gap, some for next year.

I have learned a lot through teaching.

Ms. Blue said that she got the knowledge of students and how to teach them reading through her experience as a teacher. She recalled that her undergraduate teacher education focused mainly on the content. Through experiencing different levels of readers and constant trial taught her how to teach readers at various levels.

I have learned a lot through teaching. I went to [a state university] which is a great education school, but unfortunately for secondary education, a lot of programs for secondary Ed, you major in your content and then the slight is tucked on. Or you get your masters in teaching but it's really a second thought kind of thing. I feel like a lot of what I've learned is through teaching of over 10 years, just experiencing different levels of readers and engaging with them and trying to find what works for different levels of students.

Unfortunately, the professional development about struggling readers she was provided was for elementary or middle school, so she could not apply much of that to her older students.

Ms. Blue added that the readers in the year-long courses might have their reading level of fifth-graders, but “their social and their understanding of what we’re trying to get them to do” was that of tenth-graders.

Professional development is not very good three quarters of the time unfortunately. Partially because a lot of professional development that we get is more geared towards elementary and middle school. Now granted that our struggling readers are there, but socially they're not, trying to get them to do cheesy elementary school games that 10-year-olds would find fun, is really hard with 15-year-olds, while their level is there, their social and their understanding of what we're trying to get them to do is up here.

Challenges.

The biggest challenge Ms. Blue had with this year-long American History I paired up with year-long English II was the part of pairing-up. She did not have any experience in co-teaching, and she joined the project at the very last minute.

[After a male teacher who was supposed to teach pair-up class with Ms. Green] She and I were talking this summer and I was like "Well I'll do it" It worked fine because she and I know each other. I think this would be harder if you didn't know them. [...] It has been a work all year and Ms. Green and I are friends and so we hang out, our kids play soccer together and stuff, our husbands get along so we get together once a month maybe. We find ourselves earlier in the semester, early in the school year, talking at our kids all the time and we be like, "Oh, this is exhausting." But I think we really figured out now the skills based is what we need. We do have the same planning this semester which has been helpful. Last semester, the fall, we did not. It was hard to find that time to meet. We do have more time.

It took her time to figure out how to make it happen. She said it was tough for her, but she thought she figured it out this year with Ms. Green. Ms. Blue thought she would focus more on reading skills incorporated into her content instruction because she believed the reading skills were applicable to other subjects as well.

English II, the literature that's taught is worldly. Just in the progression that it's been taught and so there isn't a lot of overlap. We can overlap with identity development like as I do colonies and she was looking at identity development in different cultures and we can do slavery and we can do conflict and war, larger themes. But I think and I've been planning out next year my content for American I, I'm going to step back and I've picked eight major ideas or areas and I'm going to do what are the skills that I can build within this? I'm really paring down the content not making it easier, but focusing more on how can they use different skills that will help them in other classes and in the future and display proficiency with the content that I'm giving them. [...] Compare, contrast summarizing, analyzing. What are the skills that we can overlap? How can we support each other, just basic grammar? What's our focus these few weeks? Capitalize your proper nouns, correct punctuation. I mean just simple grammar, run-on sentences, where do you stop, where do you breathe? What punctuation do you need? Just simple things. How can we overlap those at the same time to hit them twice a day? That's really how we're going to pair these two classes.

Ms. Blue emphasized on the importance of collaboration in this paired-up year-long course and shared her challenges working with Ms. Navy. She appreciated Ms. Navy as an ESL teacher doing the differentiation and helping students to focus more on the task. However, it seems that Ms. Blue had hard time to interpret Ms. Navy as co-teacher as Ms. Purple was in Ms. Green's year-long English II, because Ms. Navy did not have content nor experience with a large

group of students. At the end of the conversation, Ms. Blue accepted that it was a struggle for her because she felt the need to control 'her class' to be she wanted it to be.

For me, it's a little harder because she [Ms.Navy] doesn't have the content. She knows the foundation especially when she's heard it before but there's some things that she just doesn't know because she isn't a history teacher. That's the challenge for me. Whereas Ms. Purple can do the grammar stuff. For Ms. Green to help out, so it's been kind of finding that piece. They're really supposed to be the inclusion-- I don't say assistance because they're not, but the second teacher in the room to really help keep focus. Hopefully, help us meet the needs of the students. [...] he hasn't taught. I mean I like her a lot but she hasn't—[...] I've had like 12 to 15 hundred students in 10 years. I have classes of 32. I've had classes of 10, but I on average will have 25 students to manage. I'm pretty good at that. I'm used to it. I know when to be forceful. I know when to let them be-- She doesn't teach large classes. [...] I'm not perfect by any means but I can manage a class of 25 all year long. [...] She just hasn't had that. I think this good experience but that is a struggle sometimes too. I almost feel like I'm still having to watch everything instead of being okay with trusting that this happening here. That's totally a control piece on my part that I struggle with. Ms. Green and I joked that we both are controlling anyway since we like to control what's going so giving that control is hard. That's a work in progress in terms of collaborating.

Other than the paired-up teaching and collaboration, Ms. Blue was worried about the next year's year-long course, in terms of who they would serve. With other teachers working for this year-long project, they tried to select the students who could benefit from this year-long setting with additional support and resources. Similar to what other teachers said earlier, Ms. Blue would love to have students with reading ability who could benefit from the year-long setting, but did not want students who could read but were not engaged in class work. She called them non-starters.

They were supposed to have been students who were in English One the previous year. Some other students were put in there and those were some of the ones that are higher reading levels that we feel should never have been in there. Right now as we look at who's in there next year, the two English One teachers, Ms. Green, myself, and Ms. Purple, are looking at the list they've given us and the list for semester American One for next year. We're saying, "These students should not be in there." There's a girl right now that is not in Yearlong English I who they have put in Year-long English II and Year-long American I next year and she technically could do honors but she doesn't push herself. Both Ms. Yellow and I have commented on the spreadsheet they sent us, "Do not put her in here." [...] but then there's some kids that are in the semester column right now that we think really would benefit from this. We're really trying to work amongst each other since we know more of what we want the class to look like but we also don't want students who are non-starters. [...] We're trying to figure that out. Who is the behavior and who is really a struggling reader. Who's a behavior that could manage it with a teacher for a semester? That is something that we see that we're trying to figure out. We're trying to make it reading level based.

She did not want the non-starters because their attitude would distract other students in the courses, and eventually, it would hurt the learning community the teachers working for year-long course wanted to develop.

They may fail classes and they may be low readers but we're really trying to foster the English II to be a class where we can really build kids up. If you have 10 kids in there that are non-starters that are going to be a distraction, who are not willing to put forth the work even in English I right now, not that we're not trying to help them but we're really trying to create the community that we want, that our kids who need the support. They may need a kick in the butt too but they need the support to improve and they are struggling readers. We don't want kids with 1,000 and 1,100 Lexile levels. We don't want kids on ninth and 10th grade reading levels in Year-long English and American I.

Ms. Navy

Ms. Navy was an ESL teacher with Ms. Red. She was a Caucasian woman with curly brown, shoulder-length hair. She was about to turn 40 and had a small figure and voice. She rarely raised her voice in the classroom. She has been teaching since 2006 after being certified. After working as a teaching fellow in New York for two years, she moved down to South and started working at C High from 2008. She had experience teaching in a community college and adult ESL before C High.

That semester, Ms. Navy taught an ESL class for newcomer ESL students, co-taught semester-long (standard) English Three, and ran lunch workshops with ESL students with their assignments and other school work. She worked with another inclusion English class before the year-long English course, which was a prototype of year-long English class. Then she had worked with the year-long English class since the beginning of its development with Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow. 2017 was the third year of year-long English I and the first year of year-long English II paired up with American History I. She said in 2017 she started off in the year-long English II and going back and forth the English II and American History I classroom. Then Ms.

Sky made a decision for her to stay in American History I, and Ms. Purple in year-long English II.

At first glance, she was not an active teacher in the American History I classroom. She did not seem shy but rarely raised her voice. While Ms. Blue led the class, Ms. Navy did her work with small-group instruction. I found it difficult to talk to her at first because I felt she saw me as an outsider. It was almost at the end of the semester that she accepted me as part of the class. With the student's final 20/20 presentations, Franco from year-long English II presented his small cooking class. It was not my observation day, but I went and volunteered to be a photographer of the day for the student and the class. Then I ended up helping clean the lounge with Ms. Navy. She said that I did not have to do the chores, and I said I appreciated the opportunity to be part of the class. After that, she started talking to me. In the interview after the semester, she referred to the event again and thanked me.

A reader is.

Ms. Navy defined a good reader as someone who has an affinity for reading. She believed that as long as a person liked to read, then the comprehension would come out of it.

I think when I talk to students and students who have an affinity for reading and I think because I've always been a reader, I know that like for example this student of mine brought in this book to me and was, "Oh, you should read this book. This is a great book about a person trying to cross the border into the United States." We talked about it and I think having those conversations is definitely something that demonstrates that the child has a leaning towards reading and their comprehension will come out of that. [...] Now this particular student because I know that she sometimes struggles with comprehension, I know that sometimes she doesn't necessarily apply those meta-cognitive strategies. However, the fact that she's showing some interest in learning those in the stories, I think the stories really are what builds students interest a lot of times. Now there are students that are more interested in non-fiction but at the same time the conversations about non-fiction and again building the interest is what can be motivating.

She said she put the love of reading over the reading skills or strategies because she worked with ESL students. Ms. Navy explained that ESL students had their own background and interests, and the interests push the students to grow academically. An ESL student came in "as a student,"

which meant that they had academic skills, got the second or third language very quickly, she added.

For me it's a little different, because we have students that they don't speak the same language as we do. They're almost developing in a different way, because you have to start with the interest rather than starting with the skills, because a student who doesn't know the language may already have some background, and have some interest that are strengths that are propelling them forward in that way, if that makes sense.[...] Those are the students that are usually the most successful. You can come in as a student, and not know any English, but have the academic skills, and those are the students that usually learn English very quickly. We don't necessarily have a diagnostic for a student, to diagnose their literacy level in their home language, however you can see the process of academically noticing cognates, or being able to identify in a picture what the word is in English. Those skills, it's hard to put a finger on it sometimes, but they can pick that up a lot faster in a second language or a third language.

When asked about reading difficulties ESL students experienced, Ms. Navy grouped the ESL students into two groups: ones with academic skills, and ones without them. For the first group, their struggles were with language, especially vocabulary. She thought those readers would be able to be successful quickly.

It really depends on the student. Again, with those academic skills, a student who has been in traditional school, and has a good background with that is usually quite good with the critical thinking aspect like, "Can you infer what this character is feeling?" That type of thing, and it's just getting them to understand the vocabulary around that.

The latter group, she thought, they needed to learn from the beginning reading. It should not be the way kindergartners were taught how to read, but she argued that what the readers without educational background needed were vocabulary, sentence structure, and comprehension. Ms. Navy added, if the ESL students were not fully developed with their first language and did not know how to spell in Spanish, they could not even get help from Google translator. She pointed out the latter group, without educational background, also needed to develop their content knowledge.

Whereas a student who doesn't have that educational background, and hasn't developed that critical thinking, it's really going back to beginning reading. [...] I feel as though it's different than as if it was a kindergartner learning to read, again because that interest has to be there and that motivation has to be there, but it's sentence structure, and understand. Spelling for instance have a lot of students that will come in, and their spelling in Spanish is not correct, when they go

to translate something they really can't, like Google Translate, it has a hard time figuring out what are you trying to say if you can't spell it in Spanish. There's a lot of that phonics and learning sight words and that sort of thing. Meanwhile, you have to get them caught up with content. [...] There's a lot of differences in that way, but it would be the same thing if you were teaching all native speakers, you have students that will lack certain skills, but I think sometimes we just really don't know what they don't know.

Struggling readers in year-long English II and other courses.

Ms. Navy first argued that the students who struggle most with literacy were the ones who did not see themselves as readers, meaning who did not like reading. They thought reading was a chore, not necessarily a hobby or enjoyment.

For me, I think what I've been taught over the years with teacher training and then what I have experienced with students is there are different types of readers and for the most part I think the struggle with literacy has been that students don't see themselves as readers. We'll traditionally have students that see reading as a chore, as something they have to do as opposed to someone who reads as a hobby or to learn information just for fun.

She attributed the reason the students did not enjoy reading was due to the home environment. Then she added that students could learn reading skills and strategies academically, but they needed their interests to grow. That was why she allowed her ESL students to choose books of their own interests.

I do think that it starts very early and since I have my own children, I've noticed that when you read with your kids every day when they're little that develops the love of reading whereas when you come in and you're not maybe starting in kindergarten or pre-school and not having that experience at home, maybe it's a little bit more difficult for students to just naturally develop those skills. I do feel there's a deficit when you don't have that background. That being said, I do think students can learn the skills and the strategies that would be beneficial for them academically, and when you develop those interests then they are more likely to follow up. In my ESL class we do independent reading and they chose their own books and I think that's good for them though a lot of time they'll complain about it.

Talking about newcomer ESL students, Ms. Navy shared her concern about having them in the year-long English courses. She thought, in yearlong inclusion English classes, there had some friends who were not necessarily academically inclined. She was worried that the newcomer students could “pick up the bad habits” even though the year-long course could provide the student support.

He was in the yearlong class as a new comer with Ms. Orange and I, and that was a case where we sort of realized this may not be the best idea. Because we had three newcomers in that class, like they had just got there this year. We put them in the newcomer class so that I could help them. I think it was good in that they were receiving support. But I also feel like they probably picked up some bad habits by being in a class where the other students were not necessarily academically inclined.

She continued to explain what she meant by “habits.” The habits she listed were the behaviors required by schooling including sitting in a seat during class, taking notes, and other behaviors exhibiting the student participated in teachers’ instruction.

The habits would be-- for example, being able to focus for an extended period of time. Being able to sit in a seat for over 20 minutes without being so distracted, you can't think of anything else. Taking notes, being able to sit, copy notes, and at the same time be thinking about what you're writing down. Other skills would be understanding the reasoning behind your reference tools, like a dictionary, like a thesaurus.

She thought it was really important for newcomer students to be exposed to the more academically inclined environment because at this point, they needed to someplace they can fit in. Ms. Navy believed that if a newcomer student was in with academically inclined students with good habits the newcomer would perform better and vice versa. She thought the newcomer ESL students were disoriented, trying to figure out the new country and they needed a good example of academic performances.

If there are gaps, and the student comes in and sees other students who are not able to focus, and that are not able to-- another thing is stamina, not able to have that stamina when reading a text, then it's more difficult for the— [...] it's like, if you have an example of a student who is doing those things, you're more likely to do those things. But if your examples are students that are not able to do those things, then it's hard to overcome. Especially with our new kids, it's like really the social aspect is the most important thing. Because they're so disoriented by being in an entirely new environment. I'm sure there's a lot of ups and downs at home, of parents trying to figure out what it's like to be in a new country. Having those academic influences are very important. That's why in the ESL class, I like it if there's a mix of students.

Ms. Navy talked about the struggles the ESL readers experienced as coming from cultural differences. She shared an example of a student who came to the USA and was isolated without connections that could support his life and education in the United States. She felt bad about there was nothing “that a teacher could necessarily do to help with that [his isolated situation].”

Certainly, the cultural aspect is a challenge. [...] I think it's background knowledge. I think it's just learning how to adjust to the expectations that they're faced with. [as a high school student.] But then, even outside of high school, there's a lot of adjustment. I think a lot of our kids are isolated, and they don't-- Because of their lack of English, or even sometimes not-- I mean, we have students that come in that are quite able to communicate and fit in on a cultural level. I'm thinking one student in particular. This particular student taught himself English through movies and music. He did not take an English class when he was in El Salvador. He moved here to live with his aunt. I think as far as language goes, he would easily be able to communicate and to go to Walmart, and go shopping, anything like that. But I just found out that he may not be returning next year, and I think that it's the isolation. His mother is still in El Salvador. He doesn't have the connections and he doesn't-- I'm sure he has some friends, but it's just-- It's a totally different type of situation. Just the culture shock is something that-- It's hard to understand, unless you go through it. I don't know if there's anything that a teacher could necessarily do to help with that.

She assumed her newcomer ESL students might have traumatic experiences on top of the culture shock of being a high school student. She thought the experiences would impact on their reading performances.

Right. It's almost like the culture shock of being in a high school, which is hard enough, and then also just the general being in a new country. That is absolutely a challenge. And then there's a lot of trauma that goes along with some of the ways that some of our students do get to this country. That's not addressed, the students don't-- For the most part, I don't think they're-- Our students are wanting to discuss that with the teachers. [...] It's not something that we know in detail about what each family is going through. I think that definitely plays a part.

She added that the newcomer ESL students knew the importance of education whereas “American students” did not necessarily understand that.

I mean, our ESL students at-- particularly the newcomers, understand how important their education is. So that's not an issue. I do think with American students, they don't necessarily understand that. They understand that, and that's why they're here.

Ms. Navy thought the challenges coming from cultural differences was not only newcomer students' issues. She explained the cultural challenges second generation ESL students experienced. She pointed out even though the students were not newcomers, they experienced struggles at home and that hindered their academic achievement.

In our second-generation kids, I've noticed this more in the American history class as well, there's the aspect of racial identity. There's figuring out how they fit in because they're not newcomers, but their parents are first-generation. How do they help their parents, and how do they -- some of the kids have a lot of responsibilities outside of school. [...] I do think that influences a lot our attendance, and whether they do homework. Even some of the students that are not ESL anymore, or maybe never were ESL, but if they have those issues at home, that obviously will play into

how they do in the classroom. I'm sure you notice that in that particular group, we have a lot of Hispanic kids. And a lot of them were not ESL. But for whatever reason, they're still struggling to have-- what I guess what we would consider academic success.

She understood the second-generation students' struggles included a language barrier as well.

She explained the students had not developed their first language fully, and the lack of the first language had impacted on their reading. She added, the students' lack of the first language interfered their communication at home, which limited their exposure to language and eventually made the ESL readers struggle with their reading.

I would say that there are language barriers. We have many students that they are at home, their family speaks Spanish, so they come to school and they speak English. We have many students that don't speak Spanish, or maybe speak it a little bit, and they often will have trouble communicating with their families. Because for whatever reason, they haven't fully developed a language in either language. There is a lot of--, at least with the students that are new, they've had that time to develop their first language. [...] I think that leads into their reading ability as well, because, again, the language exposure piece, what sort of language they hear at home. Were they reading books at home? What did they have a pre-K education, those are all-- it's still languages, still a major factor.

Then she stated other struggles she had thought of. The struggles were mainly behavioral problems. She thought the behavioral problems stemmed from the students' lack of responsibility, which had developed over time. For Ms. Navy, the behaviors were not a new thing, and thus rather difficult to change.

Yes, for sure behavior issues, I think the lack of responsibility on their parts. The simple fact of putting them into a class with other students who might have behavior issues, and on top of it we don't necessarily know. If they've been force-fed the curriculum from an early age, it's something that we have a very difficult time with overcoming. If they are not independent, which by the time you get to high school you have to be at a certain level of independence, just looking at the simple schedule. If you're not showing up to class on time, that's something that's I'm sure been a problem before. This is not a new thing. It's dealing with things that they've more than likely had problems with for a long time.

Ms. Navy attributed reading struggles to the students' mindset. She thought they had a fixed mindset that they would not be successful in reading or in schools. Then she added the students with more resiliency overcame that mindset and performed better as readers.

I think it is the psychological-- I don't know if psychological is the right word, but it's the mindset. It's a mindset of, I'm not able to achieve in school. I'm not smart. I'm always going to

fail. That sort of mindset, which adults also have that, that mindset. Having the ability to look at it in a different way is really important. [...] There's like a psychological flexibility there that -- maybe that goes along with learning the academic skills, is that they have to be able to make those-- what's the word I'm looking for? They have to be able to meet those challenges. I think that as far as ability and strengths, our ESL students have so many strengths when it comes to being flexible.

“By the time they’re in ninth-grade,” she added, the negative experience of failing had gotten into “a pattern that’s hard to break.” She felt it was “just difficult to help them to see another side of it.”

I think it's a matter of teaching them, how they can overcome challenges. As I was saying with the newcomers, they've already experienced some pretty large obstacles that they've had to overcome. A lot of our students that have been here for so long, I think they maybe have just gotten into a pattern that's hard to break. If you're at the elementary school level, it's maybe a little-- I don't know for sure, because I haven't taught elementary school, but I would think that it would be a little easier to get them if they're in second or third grade. [...] Whereas, by the time they're in ninth grade they've had so many negative experiences with school and it's just difficult to help them see another side to it.

Teaching practice.

Similar to other teachers, Ms. Navy thought that having a good teacher-student relationship was important in teaching (ESL) readers. She thought being familiar with students would help teachers to know more about students’ situation and enable them to make better decisions about the students. She shared an example that she was able to recommend a better educational setting for a student she was familiar with.

Yes, we're pretty familiar with each other, and it's good to have that kind of relationship. I think it in this particular situation too, he was thinking about trying to change his schedule so he can be in a different English class. But I was able to recommend that he stay there, so that I could work with him. I think that was good, too. Because part of the reason he wanted to switch is so he could be in a class with his friends, more of his friends, which is not necessarily a good thing.

She also thought that as a perk of having a year-long setting. She could know more about the students that she was unable to with the semester-long setting, and she called it a “real advantage.”

For me, the biggest benefit is the kids may not agree but as a teacher, I like getting to know the students having more time with them at least with the year long. I like getting to see some of the students that I don't normally see because as an ESL teacher you're focused on your group. I work

with students of all different walks of life and I get to see some different perspectives and get to interact with them. I think that's a real advantage.

For the newcomer ESL, she taught beginning vocabulary, expressions, idioms, and the “mechanics of the English language.” For the non-newcomer ESL students with IEP, her approach would be differentiated. Ms. Navy said she would teach the students listening comprehension and sight words, but not the basic vocabulary they already had.

With a newcomer ESL student, I would say that the strategies are those related more to beginning vocabulary, expressions, and idioms, and making sure they understand the mechanics of the English language. Whereas with a student with an IEP with a similar reading level, there are some times when you would probably need to do some of those *Whole-to-part* strategies, with the listening comprehension, the sight words and things like that. But you wouldn't start with those, but particularly the beginning level vocabulary.

She detailed the vocabulary instruction she would use for the ESL students. Newcomer ESL students need a beginning vocabulary instruction because they were new to the English language itself, whereas the ESL students grew up in America had used many vocabularies in their lives.

A word, like a more specific word, let's say for example "goose". A student that's been here in the United States for a long time, or even was born here is going to know that word, whereas our newcomers are not going to know that. I think that's the main difference that I see as the vocabulary, and also, I think that the social language is there, and that maybe-- that's related to the "goose" thing is that are newcomers need that social piece, and how to understand the social aspect of high school, but also like the cultural aspect.

Ms. Navy also taught ESL readers to make inferences in the context of American culture as part of building background knowledge newcomer ESL readers. For the ESL readers who have been in America, the reading strategy instructions focused more on developing the reading strategies per se, whereas the purpose of instruction for the newcomer ESL readers would help them to understand the American culture.

This last unit I did was--, we did making inferences, but we did it in the context of American culture. We had a lot of activities and texts that was related to understanding things that people do in the United States. That's just not really something you would do with a student who's been here. I would say that would be the big difference. [...] I think also just navigating-- one aspect we talked a lot about in the newcomer classes is navigating our school. At the beginning of the year, we go in a little field trip around the school and talk about this is the library, this is the main office. [...] A student who has been here for a really long time, I mean, I think that those-- the reading strategies are really where they need to begin for the most part of -- questioning, making

inferences, context clues. Whereas, the newcomers may not be ready for that, or at least that could be kind of staggered in.

At the end of the interview, Ms. Navy said that the readers in the year-long English course already knew why they were there. Her instructional approach was being honest with them and worked from there. She believed the honest approach was her work ethic and a way to build trust with the students.

They all know why they're in the class. I think that's sort of an elephant in the room that's not always addressed with those classes is, they know why they're there it may not be in academic ability. For example, we had several students that were quite high reading level, college ready with reading level, but their grades were horrible. They know that, from my perspective, I don't want to come across to them as if I'm doing you a favor by putting you in here. [...] Or I'm going to solve all your problems by having you in this class. I think that it's when you're dealing with teenagers, there's a certain level of trust and responsibility to them to be honest with them. I think that goes a long way as far as I'm actually having a work ethic in class, in my journey.

Challenges.

Ms. Navy said her biggest challenge with the year-long courses were that most of the decisions were made for the teachers before they started. She did not want to make any excuses, but she did not think the expectation from the district for the year-long courses, teaching the students to be proficient enough to pass the EOC, was unrealistic. She pointed out they did not have enough time to teach students with a fixed mindset from with a long history of failing in exams.

I think the biggest challenge is that, the way these classes are designed, we don't necessarily know, we're talking about why we're doing. [chuckles] Sometimes we're just placed in a situation where you're co-teaching these students, obviously struggling with a lot of things, and we're still responsible for them achieving proficiencies so to speak. The mindset of that honestly doesn't make sense, we're talking about students that have never been successful on a State Exam. [chuckles] To put us in a situation where-- not to make an excuse, but if you have a year, I think as Ms. Yellow said the other day, that's not enough time to make up for the students that passed. You know what I mean? [...] I think that there are new ways that we can think about those challenges, but it is difficult, that's very difficult.

She continued to explain how the teachers got an order to make the paired-up courses even without knowing who made the decisions. They had to spend the time to figure out what to do

and how to do the pairing-up the two different subjects, English II and American History I. Ms. Navy thought it was not “fair” to judge if the first year was successful or not only based on the data, the standardized testing results.

It was also not, I wouldn't say that it was. From the beginning, there wasn't a, "This is what we're thinking about doing and what do you guys think?" It was just like, "We're going to do this and you are going to be in there." [...] I don't know who made the decision, to be honest with you. [...] I don't think that Ms. Blue and Ms. Green made the decision. What I think happened is that they were approached do you want to do this? Then it was, "Okay, Ms. Purple and Ms. Navy, you're going be in there." [...] We thought this, it's a lot of making our own time as we can. I think one of the biggest difficulties has been that English two and world history-- not world history, American history are not related in any way. It's very difficult to make connections when the curriculum for English two is a world literature perspective and that's mashed together with American one which is American perspective. I almost feel that this year was somewhat of an experiment to see what's going to work and what's not going to work. For anyone to be judged on state exams and data at this point is not fair. [...] We're figuring out how we're going to conduct a class and knowing that the two classes are not related in any way. Then us just now realizing ways-- not just now I think we've been realizing it over the course of the year but ways we really can integrate.

Ms. Navy also thought the lack of planning time was challenging. Given the fact that the teachers for this year-long English II did not have time to design the course in advance, they needed more time to prepare each week's lessons. However, as other teachers said, Ms. Navy did not have enough time to co-plan the lessons with the other teachers. She was worried if she sometimes overstepped the content teacher's teaching practices because they did not have time to figure out their roles in the classroom.

On Fridays we have a PLC, which is just a 30 minute lunch, but we mostly talk about-- It's somewhat planning, but you can't really do a whole lot in 30 minutes. [laughs]We communicate as much as we can and reach it but it's the planning piece. It's having or not having the time. [...] I think again it has a lot of a lot to do with the planning aspect. Because if you know from the very beginning that you're going to be teaching with the teacher particularly the whole year, it needs to be planned out from the very beginning about who's doing what. I don't think you need to go crazy with it like, "You're in charge of the bathroom passes." It doesn't nest it, but it's the confidence level of the teacher. [...]If you don't have that, it's almost-- it doesn't make sense for a specialist to come in and try to take over anything if it's not already established what you're going to be doing in the class. It also doesn't make sense for the content area teacher to back off from what they've already done. Because they've already designed this class and this is how they do this class. Over time again, I think we were able to work out certain roles for what people would be doing but that lack of planning from the beginning is hard.

The teachers, however, tried to find time to work together and figured it out, Ms. Navy added. With Ms. Blue, Ms. Navy seemed to volunteer to be in a supporting role in the classroom. She understood it was the content teacher's room and tried to find what she could contribute to the course, such as developing and modifying the activities.

Ms. Blue and I have the same planning period this semester, it just so happens that we do. We discuss things, it's not formal though, it's just like, "Okay, well, I'm going to do this tomorrow. and you can help with this." For example we are doing this civil war project, and I suggested, I have a lot of experience doing projects, I said I would design the project, and we will do it in the class, and she's like, "Okay". It's just communicating when we can. [...] This is my first time being in American One. I'm going by what her curriculum is, she has a certain path that she's headed on with the things that she needs to teach, and preparation for the test, that's the direction we go. [...] it's a trial and error thing. Again, she has a certain way of doing that in American history class because she's been doing it for a long time. That's something that we've just have had to figure out.

She wanted as much support from the district as the other co-teaching classes or as the year-long English I got. Because she worked with the year-long English I in the past, she knew what support the course had in its initial stage.

What I've heard from other districts is that they don't even do co-taught classes unless they have that planning time already in place. I'm not sure what the criteria is for. How the class is moving together. [...] And to be completely honest, when those content area teachers have asked other people in the district for directions about how those things can be integrated and not getting responses on that. There's a lot of things that could be considered the responsibility of others and in that we've been basically asked to design a course from scratch without any planning time. [...] I think with the yearlong English one, there was more of a plan from the very beginning because we did and it was a similar thing and that we did have-- already we had a year at least of trying the co-teaching thing and figuring things out that worked or didn't work. That next year, we were given time to plan some strategies from the very beginning about how to communicate with each other.

She thought they needed hands-on training from an outside source, preferably from teachers who have experiences of co-teaching.

The training. I think it needs to be from an outside source to be completely honest. I know there's a lack of funds but I would like to see an example of what they consider to be a successful co-teaching model actually in action. Potentially, have a person who's actually been co-teaching for a long time give us some training and some more guidance [...]

Ms. Navy also wanted some more responsibility and authority in making decisions about the classes. She wanted to implement reading strategies – which she knew more about than the content of American History I. She was confident in scaffolding reading and writing activities.

I would say that particularly when it comes to implementing the reading strategies. I think that there're more ways that we could incorporate those things which is what we've been talking about, about how to get the English and History together. Honestly, with reading and writing as well that's where-- I know a lot about that stuff. [...] I've been doing it for a while and I know how to scaffold it. I think that that's something that I definitely would want to do more of.

She felt that the special teachers were not respected as much as content teachers. She explained it was not only from the colleagues but also the administration. Even the district reinforced the perception of “specialist teachers are different” by pulling them out during semester to work on other aspects of their jobs. She was worried what messages students got when the district, administrators, and teachers viewed special teachers differently than content teachers.

When you don't just get it from a co-teacher, you get it from administration. Like when you get an email saying that so and so, so and so designed this class but you're not on that list. Or when they go on a field trip, and the content teachers are going and the specialists just stay back and babysit whoever's still at school. That's the thing that-- it eats away at the ability of the content area teacher to see you as a true professional and equal. I've not seen it not just coming from the school, but it comes from the district as well when you're taken from classes on a regular basis to do ESL meetings. In fact, we were taken from the first day of classes semester, so that we could be in a testing meeting. I know that's a federal requirement but what type of message does that send to the students. It's either sends a message that we are not [...] part of the routine, we're not even going to be there the first day. I don't know if there's necessarily a way around that but it-- there are subtle ways that's reinforced and it does make it difficult to be in authority in your area. [...] I think just a general level of respect that the specialist knows what they're talking about is again-- I know that it's not just here at this school because it's come all up in other situations.

She then noted that the data from the external standardized exams as another challenge. She thought the data oversimplified the complex growth of students as readers. The test data were focusing on the students' deficiency rather than their growth, and the goals were vague and unreasonable for the students in the year-long students.

It's just difficult when you don't have that from the beginning and then you're told at the end of the year "Well, your students did not meet the proficiency levels." In general, that's always the

goal but again, when you're given a set of students that-- is that a reasonable goal? You know what I mean? That may be the overarching very vague general goal but at what point do you say, "Wow. These kids were making a lot of growth in achieve." or "These kids made a lot of growth and whole-to-part." When are we telling ourselves, "Okay, there is some success and these are things we still need to work on." as with anything that you would explain to a student, right? That's lacking. [...] I know that it's not happened just with those classes because it's happened in other areas as well where it's-- we may have excellent growth in one area but all of a sudden there's different data being used just to say, "Oh well, you're not meeting this. You're not meeting these criteria." When that criteria is never discussed from the beginning. Those are the types of things.

The other challenge she had was that the year-long English courses were not necessarily the best setting for the ESL students. It was because the texts used in the courses were heavily relied upon the American culture and the students were not offered additional time to build their background knowledge.

There were some-- and then also the fact that their reading levels were so much lower than the other students, because they hadn't been in the country. And they didn't have that-- they didn't have the background knowledge. And so something like the *Odyssey* or-- Actually, *Of Mice and Men*, that was a struggle because we didn't have time, I didn't have time with them to develop the background knowledge. [...] It was just jumping into something that they had no historical context for. [...] that would be an example of a situation we realized that was not going to-- it's just not a good fit necessarily for a newcomer to be in that class where they may need the support. It's just not a good fit academically. [...] I think the ideal-- the ideal would be sheltered instruction with an ESL teacher, where the curriculum is designed for ESL students, and it's designed with that extra piece of building-- not that we didn't do it in the year long, but it was a different building. We did a lot of prepping them for a text. For example, for the *Odyssey* or for *Romeo and Juliet*, by using nonfiction texts that were theme based, that were related.

Ms. Navy thought that sheltered instruction with only ESL students would be beneficial for the ESL students. However, there were not enough ESL students in C High for this to be feasible. Instead, the teachers tried to offer more small-group instructions based on the testing results. That does work for a student who can already access those texts, but if you can't access that, then you're not-- that's not going to help you with that kind of knowledge. Ideally, yes, it would be a sheltered situation with just ESL students. But we don't have enough ESL students to just do an ESL English class. That's been an issue in this district the whole time that I've been there, there's just not-- we have a lot of ESL students but we don't necessarily have enough to teach freshman English, English II, English III for just ESL students in that situation.[...]What we're finding is that clustering them and making that

determination is based on all the factors that we know, whatever the testing results are, their Lexiles, their academic skills in trying it that way.

Ms. Purple

Ms. Purple was the only EC teacher of seven participating teachers. She was in her early 30s. She had her shoulder-length brunet hair in a pony-tail, a bun, or down. With her boots on, she was always dragging a small trunk filled with papers with a shoulder bag with her laptop in. Her personality was bright and fun, and she loved teaching her students. She told jokes to her students in year-long English classes, and the students teased her back. Also, she was the one I talked to the most. From where teachers' lounge was to how an IEP (Individual educational planning) meeting was going, she was more than willing to help me during my observation. As a third-year lateral entry teacher, she was in the graduate school studying Special education. As a part of her graduate school work, she pulled out students from the year-long English class and did the qualitative reading assessments.

She had worked on the year-long English courses for three years, and started nine weeks after she started working at the C high. Ms. Purple has worked with the year-long English I from its beginning, and she worked both Ms. Yellow in the year-long English I and with Ms. Green in the year-long English II when I was there for the observations. Because many students in the year-long English II were in the year-long English I in the past year, many students in year-long English II had more experience with her than other classroom teachers. She described herself as a “co-teacher” and one of the “lead teacher” with the other teachers.

Well, I'm a co teacher I'm a lead teacher with them. The kids do not know, they don't understand that there's a difference all of them between either Ms. Yellow or Ms. Green and me. The kids in the school a lot of them think I'm an English teacher they don't know I'm an EC or IEP teacher as they call it. You basically have to have an IEP to know what I do, but I mean I plan lessons and I make worksheets and stuff [for students with IEP].

In the year-long English classes, she usually led the vocabulary activities – from planning it to grading – and did the small-group instruction. I saw her teaching grammar to the students during the station-rotating sessions. She checked in with the students during their individual work if they had difficulties or if they were on task.

In general, I take on the portion of the class that is more on like the fundamental skills, like I do a lot more the vocabulary development and then the worksheets. Over the years we've [the teachers] worked together to modify they've made a lot of them and then I'll make improvements and grading but that varies.

Throughout my interviews with her, she remembered all students' names and walked me through what their struggles were and why or why should not they be in the year-long English classes.

A good reader is...

Ms. Purple defined a good reader as someone who were good at comprehension and able to connect the text to the real-life to improve their lives.

A good reader is somebody who is able to really understand and analyze the text and then use it to make connections to themselves and to the world. They take the literature and it helps improve them as a student and a person.

It aligned with her vocabulary lessons. She always added a visual image of the words that would be familiar to students in their everyday lives. In the handouts, she also asked students to find a sentence using the exact vocabulary from the song lyrics the students listened to, or from the movie scripts, or from the conversations in the students' lives.

The identification of good readers with signifiers such as fluency, decoding, and intonation to see if the reader processed the text with understanding. However, she added that there were readers who could comprehend the text without fluency.

There are things that we consider signifiers of good readers' things like fluency for example, but a lot of times somebody might not be as fluent but their analytical ability of a text is on level. A good reader does have the fluency and with the decoding down. There's a normal pacing and you recognize that in the intonation how they're able to express emotions and feelings and naturally and quickly interpret the text into the emotional meaning.

To identify readers with struggles, Ms. Purple checked their fluency and decoding skills. Also, she thought vocabulary was also a struggle for many readers. Similar to what Ms. Yellow said about slipping in the crack, Ms. Purple pointed out that the evaluator should be careful to catch if the readers pretended to be good readers to avoid being embarrassed in front of their peers by skimming and/or not comprehending the meaning of the text.

Well that again with the fluency and decoding you see a lot. The problem with struggling readers is that to really understand a text you need to have a comprehension of about 60% of the vocabulary. For a student who can't decode a word quickly and smoothly their brain is focusing more on how do I say this so that I don't sound like an idiot in front of my friends and less on what is this sentence meaning, what am I supposed to be analyzing? These struggling readers have to -- there's an extra step and you can see them having to take the extra step. You can hear it and I mean if they are stumbling over their words when reading or sometimes, they might be reading at pace but you notice that they switch their letters either in the prefix or the suffix of the word or multi syllabic words they -- I'm trying to get a good example, like they'll switch them out. [...] You can tell that they're skimming over it because they're more focused on the speed so that they can pass as a good reader. [...] and again, that's another sign that they're not able to absorb the words.

For her, readers' struggles in reading were directly connected to their disabilities. When I asked about struggles the readers might have, Ms. Purple immediately understood the question as asking about reading disabilities and/or learning disabilities. It was understandable given her position as an EC teacher. She listed six different literacy-related disabilities in the IEP such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, auditory processing disorder, or language disorder. To know what disabilities the reader might have, she would "go back" and "read the psych report." Her understanding of struggling reader aligned with a description of a reader in the medical model.

Readers in the year-long English I are.

When asked to talk about the readers in the year-long English classes, Ms. Purple started from the category of students in the classes – EC students, ESL students count as standards because they did not have "mental deficit," and "unfortunately" "behavior kids in these rooms." She said the teachers "worked really hard on making that not happen," and she thought those students with behavioral issues should have been in standard inclusion or standard English

classes. However, the students with behavioral issues ended up being placed in the year-long English class because the decision makers saw “this kid needs the extra help.”

She did not want to have the capable readers with behavioral problems because they could negatively influence on the “vulnerable” readers in the classroom by ruining the classroom environment. Ms. Purple felt that she needed to “protect these vulnerable kids” and other “standard kids that can benefit from the extra setting” such as slower-paced students and ESL students. Even though she would not put all students in the year-long English class because students “need to be challenged to grow,” she believed that the slow learners would benefit from the year-long English class’s setting and resources. Legally they would be put in another English courses without EC teacher’s help, but she said they would try to put standard readers with slower-paced readers in the year-long English class so they could graduate with the support and resources from the courses.

Those kids wouldn't legally be told to be put in my class and they would or they could be put in a standard class without even inclusion services. Chuck is so low, so sweet but so low that we put him in the inclusion class so that he would get my help and he could come into my tutoring even though he's not, he doesn't have a disability technically. That's the kind of kid. Next year we're putting him in our year-long [English] two. He'll be one of our standard kids but is in that room because he really needs the help so that he can get a stronger base so he can graduate.

When I asked if she saw differences between the readers in the year-long English classes and the readers in higher-track courses, pushing her to describe the sociocultural differences between the two groups, if any. She pointed out the socioeconomic status first, saying learning disabilities were more found in students from low-income families. She started talking about race and ethnicity, hesitated a little, and then said she did not necessarily see the factors in practice. It was impressive that she used the statistics to explain how it aligned with what she saw in practice (or not).

The statistics say, and you can see it, that students from lower-income families are more prone to have disabilities. Also, students of some type of color be it, you know, they say are more prone

to-- I don't know that I necessarily see the ethnicity factor with learning disabilities in my individual research more-- advanced visual practice more.

Then, Ms. Purple mentioned the linguistic differences – how it was “not always fair” to identify many ESL students as EC. She added that one of the evaluation questions to assess students whether they were EC or not was about language barrier. She said she did not see the ESL students being placed as EC because of language barrier only, but she knew that was what statistics said.

A lot of times, students that are ELL are identified as EC because-- I mean, that's not always fair. It's actually one of the questions when you're being considered for EC is, did we consider whether or not the language barrier is why they can't answer the questions, like if they were tested in Spanish, where they have the same difficulty? I don't necessarily see that in practice although I know the statistics say that it's so.

Then she pointed out that the gender differences in learning disabilities. In “kids of all colors,” she saw more boys with hyperactive disorder than girls.

I do see that that there are more boys with attention deficit hyperactive disorder than there are girls. Girls tend to not be as hyperactive. I have seen that, noticed that in practice. Yes, but I mean, kids of all colors, I think-- I don't know. Yes, I'm sorry. I'm trying to like answer the question. I don't—

Then she shared various examples of students who were cognitively challenged due to biological issues or accidents. Then she connected the issue to the question of if the learning disabilities were genetically influencing because she believed many parents of students with learning disabilities may have learning disabilities as well, even though there was no scientific evidence saying the learning disabilities or autism are genetic yet.

People are trying to figure out if learning disabilities and autism are genetic. They don't know yet. I do seem to see a connection, but I don't know that it's scientifically based. In my practice, I'll see parents and I'm like, "Yeah," and the parents like, "I know, I probably have a learning disability too," but in my head I'm like, "Yeah, maybe." But I'm not a doctor. I can't-- But yes.

Ms. Purple continued talked about the home environment as resources. She said she did not see ethnic differences in the learning disabilities, but she noticed there were more rich white kids in the higher track courses, yet she only pointed out the socioeconomic status. She

mentioned “a lot of rural kids that are also white” with IEPs, and analyzed that parents’ education level would affect students’ learning disabilities.

In our IB program, students from outside of Cedar Ridge’s district come in to go to the IB program here. Those are going to be the richer and unfortunately but usually normally white kids too. Because that's just the world, I guess. I mean, that sounds terrible. I don't mean it like that but you know it's just that's the socioeconomic, whatever. You know what I mean, right? We have a lot of rural kids that are also white and they're in my classes too. A lot of them might be like parent education. I think I imagine parent education has a lot to do with where they end up and whether-- Because you know where they're able to be at home with their kids reading to them when they're three years old.

Also, she cared about the readers from low-income families with regard to their nutrition. All these socioeconomic contexts around the students made her question if it was the learning disabilities or the socioeconomic (and cultural) gap coming from their families that made the readers struggle. However, she did not continue further with the question.

We have kids who don't get fed at home, that's why Ms. Green and I almost always have food in our office, like in our storage. Yes. We all have-- We all have food. Does that [socioeconomic status] influence it [reading/learning disabilities]? Do they actually have like a mental disability or is it just that they never-- they didn't get to start on an equal playing field so they're always playing catch-up?

Lastly, she thought of the attitudes and the behaviors of the students with disabilities in the year-long English class.

A lot of them. Some of them like us comes from a perfectly nice family and not that, but-- He's -- well his reading level we don't have data on because he won't work but I think he's just ADHD. He's already in reading and writing and he's ADHD. He has no problems. He doesn't have problems in English. He just won't work. The kid won't work.

She continued to discuss students’ work ethics, especially how they do not know how to work individually and always shared their work. To Ms. Purple, students sharing their handouts were cheating as listed in the student handbook.

I'm probably going to separate XX and YY because they're best friends and XX needs the help and YY doesn't need the help and XX uses YY as a crutch. He lets YY help him with his work. AA does the same thing with Jamie so I'm going to separate AA and Jamie too. They need to be forced to work individually. [...] It's nice [to help friends] except where it's like, "Hey dude that's a worksheet. I'm using it for accuracy. You know you're cheating right?" Okay. Just making sure. [...] You know I love TT in Ms. Green's class but I handed him his vocabulary to do. It was 25-points so it's basically a quiz grade and he handed it to SS to fill out. SS already finished so then

SS got TT's. I'm like, "TT, look. This is cheating" and he's like, "it's getting done, Ms. Purple. It doesn't matter who's doing it. It's getting done" and I'm like, "Oh honey, it matters." [laughs]

All students were introduced to the student handbook and what was considered to be cheating, Ms. Purple said. She thought the students were able to get away with these activities in the past without consequences, so they did not know the meaning of cheating or at least did not take it seriously, which made the students irresponsible in their work. She needed their individual work in order to assess where they were as learners, and she believed that working on the tasks by oneself would enhance the students' learning as well. For Ms. Purple, students' sharing their answers on activities was evidence showing the students did not take the tasks seriously because they would behave differently when taking high-stakes standardized exams.

I think they're used to getting away with it without it being a problem. I think they have great faith in our love for them that we don't want to get them in big trouble. I don't think that they really understand it fully. Like they wouldn't do it on an exam and they wouldn't do it on a test.

She thought it happened due to the students' immaturity, and assumed that such immaturity and irresponsibility were generational because the "IB kids (students in higher-track English courses) do it, too." Though she added she saw the immaturity in "a lot with kids with disabilities," because they were "emotionally underdeveloped compared to their peers."

I think it's like a generational not recognizing responsibility. They don't understand. They think that it's okay. They don't get that it's not like we're working on it. [...] To them that they think it's like just a completion and they don't understand that they're supposed to be working on the accuracy of it to help them. They don't understand the working part of learning but the individual work and that's probably an immaturity thing and you see them a lot with kids with disabilities. Kids with ADHD are emotionally underdeveloped compared to their peers.

Ms. Purple shared another example of a bright but irresponsible year-long English I student, who lost her privilege to use a laptop in the classroom because she wanted "the male attention" more than "being a good student." She said that with the irresponsible behavior, she creates more work for both her and the teachers.

She just needs the attention. She wants the male attention. That matters more to her than being a good student which is too bad, because really, she could do it. She's bright. [...] She will not stop

socializing. Yesterday, she lost her privilege to use her laptop. We have to print out everything and give it all to her on paper and she has to return it to us, for us to grade. Basically, because she acted like an idiot, we get more work. Both in the preparation and on the grading. We're the dog. The tail wags the dog.

Teaching practice.

Ms. Purple thought the year-long English I as more about disciplining than teaching, because many students come with “no regulation,” so the students needed to learn “how to sit down, be calm, do your work.” After a year of discipline, then the students could learn how to work independently with a structure.

Yes. Well English one. A lot of English one is about teaching them how to be focused learners and a lot of English two is learning -- They come in wanting to be independent and crazy and no regulation so a lot of English one is about teaching them how to sit down, be calm, do your work and then English two is again is releasing them to independent work again but with a structured rotation. [...] (Year-long English I is more about) Teaching them how to be students. Teaching them how to be learners.

She continued that teachers in the year-long English classes work hard to teach the students schooling because they would “get failed” in high school without it.

We very we work so hard just to get them to learn how to be learners because in middle school if you don't-- you're likely to get passed along if you don't do well but in high school you get failed.

Her instructional goals for the year-long English II was that the students were on the ninth-grade reading level in order to pass the EOC as well as having a deeper comprehension of the text. Ms. Purple said that she did not care much about fluency or speed as much. Because the EOC has a writing component, the teachers designed the class activity with *Achieve 3000* to be applicable to the writing portion of the test so students could perform better in the exam.

The goal by the end of year-long English 2 is that they're on the ninth-grade reading level because to pass the EOC, this is your last English EOC the formal advance state one, you have to be in a ninth-grade reading level. That's just what they say. Not sure, whatever. The goal is to get them -- I don't care so much if they don't become more fluent. [...] The goal is definitely deeper comprehension of the text and I don't care so much about speed as long as they can understand the tricks of how to do it. And writing too because the English EOC has the writing component. That's why we start having them do written response and we train them in what's called the ACES method. Answer, cite from the text Explain how that text relates to your answer. The highlighting we have been doing in *Achieve 3000* is so that they start to recognize it and then when they do the written format in their papers. It's like, "Okay, guys your cite, that's your blue, your answer is

your yellow, your explanation is purple." [...] The goal is to take the *Achieve 3000* and we teach them in color coding and then we say, "Hey now here it is in writing." Then that's how the computer grades it [in the exam].

Ms. Purple made it clear that she participated in the year-long English classes using her expertise in special education. While the subject teachers taught the students the content, her job was differentiating and modifying the content for the students in need. She knew that she was "trained differently" to study "how brains work and how these different disabilities affect their brains." Because the standard courses are just "taught in this one manner," Ms. Purple brought these strategies for her students with learning disabilities and needed to teach her strategies to the subject teachers as well.

Well, the thing about being the EC teacher is that we're trained differently. Like Ms. Green and Ms. Blue and all those people [Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow] like they learned how to teach English, they learned the content of English. I have learned how brains work and how these different disabilities affect their brain. Then strategies to help them learn it. A standard class would just be taught in this one manner and then maybe they would teach diagramming sentences or something and then I'm going to come in and be like, "You know what? A lot of my kids can't just learn in lines, let's talk about colors, let's talk about graphic organizers and just different tricks."

They get that from having an EC teacher in the room. They get a smaller group setting and just a different way of explaining things. I think it really helps them to have the conversations of the teachers. Like when Ms. Yellow and I are bantering back and forth I think they get it more.

As that point, after working together in the year-long English classes, she said she also taught some content as well. However, she knew she was more in charge of differentiating the instruction for the students. When Ms. Purple found Ms. Green and Ms. Blue planned to do the 20/20 project, she stepped in and helped them to plan it for students with learning disabilities, using *Whole-to-Part* approach (Cunningham, 1993). She believed that students with learning disabilities needed to see the big picture with end product in mind before they started working on their task.

I don't want to undermine how amazing the genre teaches I work with are a differentiation, but I just -- and we all do teach content at this point because we've worked together for so long, but yes I'm definitely more in charge of, like looking at the 20/20 project I was the one that was saying, "Okay guys -- Are you familiar with whole-to-part?" We had this project and they wanted to take

the kids, like okay today you're going to do this and today you'll do this and at the end of the semester they wanted there to be this project and so I had the EC coming in saying, "okay guys we need to give them this big picture." Like we have to tell them what it's going to look like at the end so they know what to work towards.

She said the *whole-to-part* approach was also the way the students with reading disabilities in year-long English classes should be taught. She thought the students needed to see the goal of activities that they were working toward, rather than just working on small activities without knowing where they headed.

That's exactly how students with reading disabilities need to be taught. Because without understanding what the big picture is, they don't know what their little pieces are supposed to look like.

When I asked if the students got other individualized instruction, Ms. Purple told me how she designed the vocabulary activity to meet the students' needs. She made a video of each week's vocabulary, so the students who needed additional support could go back and repeat it as much as they needed when they wanted. She said the other reason to upload the vocabulary video was to make the year-long English students more independent.

That's one of the reasons why one of our vocab days is a video, the recording that we do because some of our kids need repeated readings, repeated listening. They might not listen in the classroom. They may or they may not but the goal is that they can always go back and hear it again, hear me explain it again whether they choose to use it. That's on their end but that's the strategy is that they have that so then I'm explaining to their face and then they have this -- and then the idea that they're not going to like, "We can pop around and be like, "Okay hey, how's this?" It works a lot easier when they're more independent.

She added that individualized instruction was not always needed, and sometimes whole class instruction would work. In the past year, the EC and ESL teachers switched classrooms during class to meet the individual needs because the differences in the year-long English last year was "vast." Ms. Purple said the group in year-long English II that year consisted with readers at a similar level and the teachers on their own had made a handout scaffolded enough to meet students' needs.

Sometimes, it would be good to go to provide individualized or sometimes it would work in the class, I guess, not always -- not all students needs individualized lesson. Some of them get -- Yes, you know, it's like two years ago, we had kids that were such -- The differences in the class were so vast that we had different worksheets at four different levels that we gave to other handouts [...]. I worked with the lowest group and that was when we had ESL kids on both rooms so the specialists were both going across. That's when we actually had the lessons that were differentiated. This year we didn't need to do that because their abilities were so close that we didn't -- We didn't even have -- I mean, Henry sometimes would be given -- I think some of the ESL kids were sometimes given a modified assignment, but in general, they were all given the scaffolded assignments. Now, they're all lower than the standard inclusion class assignments. It's like they're already differentiated, but they're just all on the same level.

She and Ms. Green implemented a grouping strategy to serve the readers in the year-long English II. After trying random assignments, the teachers decided to group students with similar cognitive level and who work well together in order to prevent students' distraction.

The year-long English two classes, we divided at, I think the nine mid-point this year. We had them just randomly assigned. Then we decided to separate them based on reading level and they don't know that. A day has from 'X' to 'Z' or 'A' to 'B' and then this one is the second part. Then within those groups we consider both their abilities cognitively, but also how they work in a group together and that's how we divide and work on them. Then, that way and then within those groups, we're able to try hit not as much as we'd like. There's so much to do in a year, but we try. Then they come to our tutoring and they get individualized attention there.

Ms. Purple enjoyed working with both year-long English I and II because she could take care of her “kids” who are “more vulnerable emotionally.” She said, because she knew what the readers learned in the year-long English I, she could remind them of their knowledge by making connections. She did not explicitly verbalize this in her interview, but I could see she thought the teacher-student relationship between her and her students as an important teaching strategy.

It would be great if they were able to put one more [EC teacher] in No, I like that I work with both. My kids are more vulnerable emotionally and it helps them to have a connection between the two. I'm able to pull back in English II, I'm able to cite things from English I. And then they're like "Oh." And they make the connection that they wouldn't have made otherwise. And when they say "I don't know this word." I'm like "Yeah you do. Remember this?" And they're like "Oh yes." and stuff.

Ms. Purple added how the readers in the year-long classes behave differently in other classes.

The students she mentioned were not acting out and worked on their tasks in the year-long classes as I observed. She shared how they exhibited negative attitudes and behaviors in other

classes, attributing their behaviors in the year-long class to the time they had spent together. Ms. Purple thought the students behaved well in the year-long classes because the students got “used to” the teachers, understood their expectations, and had been subdued by the teachers. That is, with more time, the students and the teachers in the year-long English classes have built relationships and rapport.

They do better actually with year-long English than they do with other things. FF for example, he behaved moderately well for Ms. Orange. But in his other classes he is like hell on wheels. I know, right? This one thing, I don't ever see that. DD is a real butt head in other classes. I know. Our classes have, I think with the slower pace, they're more used to us. They've just accepted our expectations. You have seen there, we have beaten them down. You see their subdued versions. By the time you came in, we'd already spent a semester with them. [...] Is that we finally have them. Like I said, teaching them to be a learner. We don't normally get them to be real learners until, around Thanksgiving, Christmas.

Students in the year-long courses worked well with Ms. Purple. Jamie in the year-long English I said she liked working with Ms. Purple, because she was “calm and soothing,” and broke things down for the students:

I wouldn't say to pick sides but I work more better with Ms. Willard. She is more calm and soothing, she doesn't yell all that much like Ms. Yellow does. [...] It's like they teach the same but Ms. Purple, she does break things down a little bit more for the people that don't understand everything. She goes right, she finds examples of things, then she'll explain it again. [...] If I don't understand anything, she would go up online, show pictures and explain the picture more. It helps me understand it.

Challenges.

While there were two ESL teachers, Ms. Red, and Ms. Navy, Ms. Purple was the only EC teacher out of the seven participating teachers. Ms. Purple drew a line between ESL and EC teachers, saying “We're both specialists but we're different kinds of specialists,” which suggested Ms. Red or Ms. Orange's ESL and EC students could not be taught using similar strategies. When I asked Ms. Purple about if she would benefit from having one more EC teacher on the team, she did not think that would happen because the EC teacher was hired to

serve students with IEPs and the caseload decided the number of EC teachers of the school. She added that only the students with IEPs “counted” as those she was supposed to serve.

Yes, they’re both ESL. But yes, it’s based upon the numbers. You have clearance of all the stuff, we’ve talked about this before. This is the list of EC kids here at C High, and the ones are highlighted are on my case load. [...] These are all the kids at C High that have IEP’s. You’ll see some names you know. When says here, this tells you what his thing is, and he needs inclusion services so that’s in his IEP that he needs to have me in the room. [...] the standard kids? [...] they’re not counted in the numbers. The IEP kids those are counted on the numbers. I’m not considered in that classroom for him [student without IEPs but benefited from year-long English class]. I’m in that room for the EC kids.

Ms. Purple led vocabulary activities for the whole class, did a small group grammar instruction with Ms. Yellow and Ms. Green, did the grading, and yet her work with year-long English students without IEPs was not counted. Given the expectation of classroom teachers, Ms. Sky, and the district ESL specialist that Ms. Purple was to be an active co-teacher in the courses, it did not sound fair to me. While she was expected to work with the year-long English courses with the rigor as much as the classroom teacher, her work with the students was only partially recognized by district who had the power to hire or fire her.

What challenged Ms. Purple was putting students with behavioral issues who did not have reading struggles in the year-long English courses. She was almost furious about it, saying that made the teachers unable to support “this quieter kid who really needs the extra help.”

But the kids who are in there because of being just behavior problems, that have just been along and they decided I’ll just throw them in with the EC kids. You know? Put them in there that way the two teachers will help them. And people are so worried about this kid’s behavior issue that they’re not paying attention to this quieter kid who really needs the extra help, and how this kid is damaging his education and his chances.

When those students with behavior issues created a distraction, the teachers got distracted from the lesson to deal with the students, and the students who actually needed the additional support were forgotten, Ms. Purple said. She shared the stories that the students with only behavioral issues got bored and then developed this “toxic environment” in the year-long English class. She believed that because the students with behavioral problems took the resources and the teacher

attention from the readers with difficulties, for whom the year-long courses were supposedly provided.

Because the loud kids get all the attention and the quiet kids get swept under the rug. Then this quiet kids end up not being able to graduate, or they end up being 30 years old and they can't read a magazine. That really grates my nerves. We try to have these meetings and I say things like last year tried to tell them that I didn't want SS to go into year-long English II. He's a nice kid, I love the kid, but he doesn't want to work with the strategies. I saw him in English I, he speeds through the work. He wants to boss all the kids around. He doesn't like working in a group. And what ends up happening is because he gets so argumentative to them then they get argumentative and it becomes this toxic environment. And they're fighting with each other, and they're bullying each other. Yes, a lot of kids pick on SS, because he won't do the work, so he doesn't need to be in there. You know? He's not EC, they just put him in there because he likes to run the halls, or he falls asleep, and they don't feel like dealing with his behavior in a standard class. And that's my hardest challenge. The JJ's, the LL's, who are cognitively able to do it and are just choosing to be butt heads. [...] But that child and when doesn't feel like working and insists on so much attention being drawn to him that my Lia's aren't getting the attention they need. And Lia needs the help. That's just this constant battle with guidance and why we have to protect who comes into our rooms.

Ms. Purple thought that the reason those students with behavior issues were in the year-long class was because the schools or the administrators denied the students' issues and did not understand the purpose of the year-long English class. She shared her experience of when she was assigned to look after an acting out student instead of a student she thought required actual help from EC or ESL teachers.

They [School] don't want to deal with the fact that this kid is a behavior problem, so they say send them to the class with two teachers. And they're not thinking about the fact that the class with two teachers has two teachers because these kids are vulnerable and they don't need that sort of behavior in there. I had the same thing in my exam this morning, and I had this one kid who has separate setting he shouldn't have it. He has it because they're worried that he will interfere with a larger group administration. [...] MM (other student with reading difficulties) needs the small group. Then this other kid is just a butt head who wants to act out instead of doing his work. And so he gets to be in this room and I spent all my energy squashing him. And granted this was an exam so I wouldn't be helping. But if they were in a classroom together, I would have had to have all my work my attention focused on this kid, just to keep his behavior in check. And I wouldn't be able to help MM. These kids are vulnerable they need the help, they need a small quiet setting. And people just keep dumping these behavior concerns. And that really, it does, it flat out pisses me off.

Ms. Purple suggested the teachers might get rid of the with students only with behavioral issues in the year-long English courses by checking rosters in advance. She understood that might

prevent the students from growing and learning, but still, she thought that it was needed to protect “the vulnerable kids.”

It would really benefit us though if we had some planning time at the beginning of the year or now. If we got our roster early enough that we could call their teachers and say (what are the students’ issues) [...] that’s a dangerous line because you want to give every chance the kid to grow, and to change their educational history. And you don’t want to assume that JJ was this way in the ninth grade and he’s going to be the same next year. But you kind of have to.

Similar to other teachers, one of the biggest challenges for Ms. Purple was the lack of planning time, especially co-planning time with other teachers in the year-long English courses. She explained that she was required to attend professional development sessions which had “nothing to do with” her work at the expense of time for planning with her colleagues. She said the teachers needed to plan after school and during weekends, which was not their work hours.

We give so much of our time to professional development that has nothing to do with us. Or like we have these teacher work days and then we all have to go around all of these different like classes. I think I’ve spent two teacher work days learning about how to make a *Kahoot!*. I’ve made a *Kahoot!* for the last three years. I have this time because they need to hit their numbers or whatever. Then I don’t get the time to actually sit down with the people I’m in the classroom with unless we do it after school. Which we can’t do because people have kids. Or we do it on the weekends, and we’re already if you’re in these year-long classes you’re already really focusing a lot of effort and energy. That’s it, more time and we want more planning.

We have a good team.

Ms. Purple said at first that she learned about readers from her graduate school work – the textbooks, case studies, articles, and other resources provided her knowledge. She made the connection between that knowledge and her students to decide what she could do to support them to be better learners.

I’m in school, so I get it from like the thing I just showed you. It’s a book on exceptional children. [...] Different chapters talk about different types of reading disabilities. It’s all just actual information. Then you read case studies, and you gather different pieces of information from all the different case studies. And you figure like how does this affect me, and how can I use this with my kids. It’s just constantly just creating and sharing resources to make-- Yes, I learned it from school. Or I learned it from--like I just read an article about music helping kids with reading disabilities. Because as you learn the pace of rhythm you can start to expect the pace of grammar. You’re just constantly reading and learning, and then implementing what you learned.

like what I think of, because I don't think any of these have ever told me what a struggling reader is. That's me making a connection. Remember like I said a good reader is somebody who can read something and make a connection to their life.

She also emphasized how much she has learned from the team for the year-long English courses. Ms. Purple thought she was in an “amazing team” which was a blessing for her as a third-year lateral entry EC teacher. It aligned with what other participating teachers have said.

Experience and being able to work with such an amazing team of--I mean I am blessed to have like Ms. Yellow, Ms. Orange, and Ms. Green, Ms. Blue, Ms. Red, and Ms. Navy. These are really good teachers. Have been doing this for so long. We just--we really complement each other in the classroom. [...] We have a good team.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have shared individual teachers' narratives and themes that emerged from the individual case analyses. Each teacher shared their perception of struggling reader, their teaching practices, and the challenges they had in working with the students in year-long English courses.

Ms. Orange defined a reader as someone who could comprehend the text and understand the author's purpose and technique used to convey the purpose. By listening to what students said in the peer discussion after reading texts, she could figure out if they were good or struggling in reading. Even though the decisions were made for her for the year-long English class, but she made her own judgment about how to effectively teach them in her class. She taught majority of Latin@ and Black male students from low-incoming families in her year-long English class. She attributed the students' struggles lack of reading stamina, lack of parental involvement that held students accountable, and lack of parent education so that the parents could teach students how to school. Ms. Orange wanted to improve the year-long English I students' Lexile level. To meet the goal, she built a good teacher-student relationship, engaged students by developing background knowledge, taught students to use strategies such as color-coding to find a topic and supporting

sentences in the text, and most of all, she focused on behavior management to ‘school’ them. Ms. Orange said that she did not learn any of these from her teacher prep course.

Ms. Yellow defined a good reader as someone with comprehension, reading skills and vocabulary. She had different expectations for the readers in the year-long English course and those in higher track English course. She saw more males of color from low-income families in her year-long English I. She said she checked the reader's fluency first to identify them as good or struggling reader. For her, readers in the year-long class had low Lexile-levels, lack of engagement, and behavioral issues. Ms. Yellow also pointed out a lack of discipline, a lack of background knowledge, and a lack of parental involvement as attributes of their reading struggles. For her, the biggest challenge in teaching the year-long English I was the required state-mandated standardized exam which, according to her, was set to fail them. Ms. Yellow said she did not learn any literacy pedagogy from her teacher education program.

Ms. Green was the teacher of the year-long English II paired up with American History I. She defined a reader as someone who can digest a text, understand the idea and discern its impact. She thought the reading assessment results did not reflect the readers' capability in reading. Rather she relied on her classroom experiences to identify readers. During the interview and the observation, I saw she resisted generalizing readers as a group. Instead, she recognized the readers in her class as individuals with strengths and weaknesses. She was the only teacher who mentioned her higher-track English course as white-washed. However, she felt the need to meet the standards of the high-stakes testing, and her teaching practice was shaped in a way to help the readers in her classes to be prepared for the unreasonable goal of so-called proficiency.

Ms. Blue was a classroom teacher of American History I paired up with Ms. Green's year-long English II. She saw a good reader as having reading skills sufficient to understand the

text. She would identify a good reader or not by the readers' willingness to engage the text and to answer the questions. The willingness and engagement piece were what she found often missing from the year-long course students. Ms. Blue attributed their struggles in reading to the home environment that did not teach the students the value of education. With the pairing up with English II, she focused on building reading skills in her American History class. She modified the text level and the depth of instruction depending on the ability of student groups. She learned the pedagogical knowledge of teaching reading through her experience. She said the teacher education or professional development had not been helpful. Pairing up with different subject areas and collaborating with other teachers have been challenging for her, but she thought she figured it out after a year. With other year-long teachers, she tried to develop a community so struggling readers could grow in their reading skills and reading stamina.

Ms. Red defined a good reader as someone who could decode and comprehend with vocabulary. She identified struggling readers with formal assessment results and by talking to the students in classes. She described the readers in the year-long class as students with learning disabilities. In many cases, she thought, they struggled in reading because of their behaviors -- getting easily distracted, not doing the work, and being rude to female teachers. As an ESL teacher, Ms. Red taught vocabulary in class and modified the readings to make them simpler and easier for the readers. She talked about the importance of behavior management for the students but did not enact that in practice. She said she learned about readers and how to treat them in her practice with colleagues.

Ms. Navy was an ESL teacher worked with Ms. Blue in the American History I paired up with year-long English II. She defined a good reader as someone who had a love of reading. She grouped her ESL readers into two groups, the newcomers and the ESL students who have been

here in the U.S. for a long time. She saw a language barrier as the biggest struggle for the newcomers, and the behavioral issues and fixed mindset as struggles for the ESL readers with IEPs. She thought the reading instructions for the newcomers should focus on the language itself while the ESL students who have been in America needed to learn more about reading strategies. She found the lack of planning and lack of authority as her challenges working in the year-long courses.

Ms. Purple was the only EC teacher. She defined a good reader as someone who can comprehend text and make a connection between the text and the world. With her expertise in special education, she identified students' reading disabilities and reading difficulties as coming from learning disabilities. She saw a connection between students' disabilities and their socioeconomic status in her practice. The struggles could be genetic, and she also saw students who chose not to work. She has been working with the year-long English courses, and she had built a good teacher-student relationship. For Ms. Purple, the year-long English I was to teach students discipline and the year-long English II was more about helping them to be an independent learner. She modified the instruction by providing scaffolded handouts or grouping based on reading level and/or cognitive ability. Her biggest challenge in working with year-long English courses was the students placed in the year-long English course only because of their behaviors since they had (above) grade-level reading ability. She thought the students' behaviors got extra attention and resources which were needed for the quiet students who could benefit from the course. She thought she learned about learning disabilities in school, but it was her experience and teaching experiences with other teachers who connected the knowledge to teaching practice.

Whereas each case was analyzed as a separate case in this chapter, there were overarching commonalities across the cases emerged during the process of analysis. Also, the analysis led me to look at the social construction of struggling reader, which was connected to a larger sociocultural context than reflected in my original research questions. The cross-case analysis with the significant themes and contexts is shared in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5. CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF STRUGGLING READER

I shared my analysis of individual teachers in the previous chapter. Each teacher had their own idea of a (struggling) reader constructed socially. Their perceptions were not the same, but the perceptions of teachers were impacted by their everyday practice with students in the year-long English classes. In analyzing the teacher cases, I found some themes repeatedly emerged amongst the different teachers. With the “common themes,” I am not attempting to generalize with my analysis, as that is not a goal of qualitative research. I am trying to identify how the concept of ‘struggling reader’ was constructed with these teachers in this school. Yet the ideas from this study may be informative beyond this study even if the data is not generalizable.

In this chapter, I share the common themes from the cross-case analysis. My two research questions were (1) How do teachers identify and define the *struggling reader* in classrooms? and (2) How does this perception assist and inhibit teacher practices? While the previous chapter shared my findings and analyses addressing the questions from individual teachers, in this chapter I try to dig deeper and share my understanding more collectively about how the teachers have socially constructed the perception of struggling readers.

Three main constructs and four contexts will be detailed in this chapter. The constructs include (a) reading assessments, (b) schooling, and (c) students’ cultures. The contexts around this social construction of struggling reader in the teachers studied include (a) deficit view, (b) high-stakes tests, (c) everyday communications in schools, and (d) absence of teacher preparation. A detailed explanation for each construct and context follows.

Constructs of Social Construction of Struggling Reader in Teachers

After analyzing my observations and conversations with teachers and students, I found three constructs repeatedly came up in the construction of struggling readers by teachers. They were reading assessments, schooling, and the students' cultures they bring to classrooms. If I place the constructs within a graphic organizer, that will look like below (see figure 7). The circle in the middle would be the concept of struggling reader in teachers' mind and in their enactments as well. I intentionally left some area not covered by the three constructs because there could well be other constructs which I was not revealed due to the limitations of this study. Further research may well reveal more constructs. Explanations for each construct follows below.

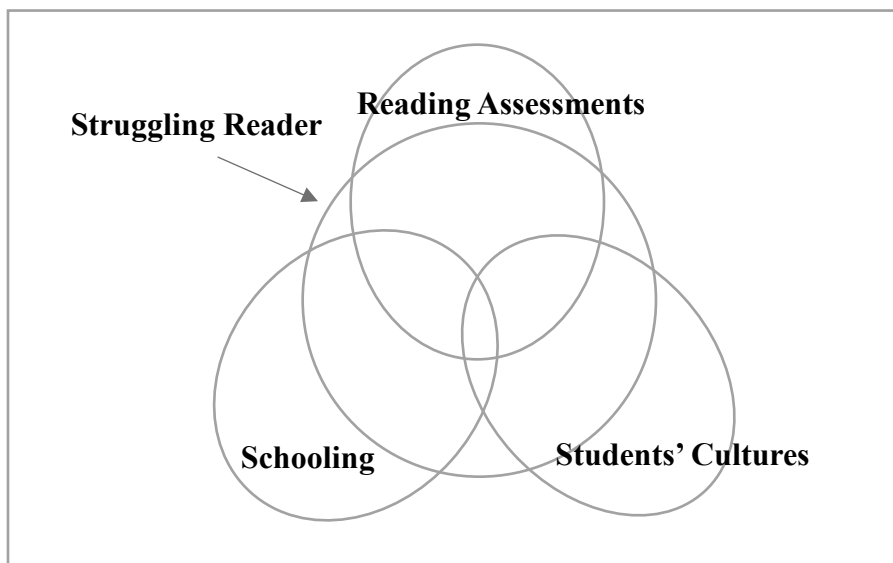


Figure 7. A model of social construction of struggling readers in teachers

Reading Assessments

All teachers said that their students were in the year-long English classes which were designed for struggling readers because they were screened by reading assessments. Reading assessments here included both formal and informal assessments teachers mentioned that they have used to evaluate student reading ability. When a student was not doing well in these reading

assessments, teachers saw the student as a struggling reader. These reading assessments are a tool for stratification and a basic construct of ‘struggling reader’ that was revealed first to me.

By formal assessments, I mean evaluations with results as a form of numbers or others left as official school records including Lexile level, state-mandated EOC and EOG tests, any diagnostic assessments related to reading ability of students (such as dyslexia). Informal assessments include mostly in-class assessments such as read-aloud, classroom discussions, activities, and handouts in class, and questions teachers asked students to see if they understood texts they read.

With the analysis, the official records from formal assessments were used to initially screen students to determine if they were eligible for the year-long English classes or not, but teachers more relied upon their informal assessments done by themselves or their colleagues in class. Teachers made it clear that they knew the limitations of state-mandated standardized tests such as EOG or EOC and Lexile level and knew the results should be considered as only one reference of a students’ reading capability. Even with a low EOG or EOC score, which would not allow students to pass the year-long English class, the teachers said they could advocate for the students if they show enough capability in reading and made growth in classes. It was fair to say that the formal reading assessments play a role as a rough initial screening procedure for selecting students with low scores, but at the end of the day, it is a teachers’ call based on their accumulated informal reading evaluations whether a student will be placed in the year-long English classes or not. Thus, the program’s existence is predicated on the assumption of stratification in reading capability but it is the teachers themselves who place students’ bodies into the stratified typology. This then ‘embodies’ the struggling reader concept with students, reifying the concept.

Students also knew that those formal and informal assessments placed them into the year-long English classes. In the interviews, students did not mention the reading assessments with regard to their reading difficulties in reading such as “I have difficulties in vocabulary because I often miss vocabulary questions in the test”. However, they knew that the formal assessments were used as screening tools and they should be successful with the assessments to be in standard English classes.

SJ: Why do you think you are in the year-long English?

Shannon: Probably because I fail my exam last year.

Schooling

Next to reading assessments, the teachers mentioned students’ behavioral qualities in classes as contributing to their ‘status’ as a struggling reader. Those behaviors included asking questions in class, not acting out, being more engaged in classes, being in class (attendance issues), ‘tackling’ the exams even when they are too difficult for them. Even though the behaviors were referred during teachers’ descriptions of the year-long course students as readers, the behaviors obviously were not necessarily related to reading per se. Even though the behaviors themselves are not technically about reading performances, teachers have identified those behaviors (or absence of it) as connected to struggles in reading. These behavioral issues were more connected to behaviors required in schools rather than in reading per se they were more evidence that shows students are schooled and know how to ‘do school’ successfully. Ms. Orange even mentioned that students in “upper level” knew how to do school.

However, I did not witness many acting out occasions in those year-long English classes during my semester-long observations. There were several occasions students got bored and talked to each other, or talked back to teachers (my first observation in Ms. Orange’s class after winter break), but other than those several occasions, students in year-long English classes did

not disturb their peers' learning even when they were off-task. The off-task students were listening to music or watching video clips with earbuds on or just did not listen to the teachers' saying. The classes were interrupted, however, when the teachers' responded to the students' behaviors. The students who did not behave in a traditional way of schooling got punished twice, not only by verbal scold (or consequences such as pull-out from class, a phone call to the basketball coach or parents) but also by not being taught. The second part was the same for other students who did not behave in problematic ways. I am not implying teachers should not respond to students' behaviors since those were also a moment of instruction. By their reactions stopping the whole class and reacting to certain behaviors, the teachers sent clear messages to the students in classes about how (not) to behave to remain in their classes. The teachers taught schooling as well as reading through their classes.

Reading stamina.

Reading stamina is located where reading assessment and students' schooling overlaps. All teachers mentioned reading stamina in interviews the students interviewed mentioned it as well. Reading stamina referred to students' capability to pursue and be engaged in the reading task (Reading Rocket, 2012). Teachers said that many students in year-long English classes did not have as much reading stamina as readers in other English classes. Most teachers suggested building reading stamina as one of the instructional goals for the year-long English classes. Even students used this concept to identify their reader identities and struggles in reading.

However, reading stamina was not solely about reading itself. In my classroom observations, I saw students read the whole passages and finish their Achieve 3000 articles while other students tried to fill in the blanks of the handouts with texts and questions after skimming passages. The students who were able to finish reading of a book also showed disinterest in different reading activities. Sometimes, even when the students got distracted and talked to their

peers and then came back to their reading activity. What I observed from these students were very similar to what I do as a reader. I sometimes read from beginning to end uninterrupted especially when the topic is interesting and engaging, but sometimes I stop my reading and then come back later (or not). I have never considered myself to have a lack of reading stamina or had difficulties in my reading due to something like reading stamina.

Reading stamina was required of the students, not because of their reading itself, but because of the reading assessments they needed to be successful in to graduate from the year-long English classes and ultimately their status as struggling reader. By the way teachers and students used reading stamina, reading stamina was closer to the ability to not give up on reading assessments (mainly) during state-mandated standardized reading tests. Reading stamina was, then, more about persistence with an assigned reading task. The expectation built into the readings assessments was that students should remain attentive to the reading task regardless of the coerced nature of it or their relative interest in the reading excerpt offered in the assessment.

The teachers knew the four-hour long reading test was unrealistic and the texts students would read in the standardized tests would not be very engaging. Especially for ESL students with only with a thick dictionary for support, the four hours would be simply a torture. Even for many non-ESL students in the year-long English classes, it was common to have a history of consecutive failures with standardized tests, which, of course, would make them want to avoid the tests. The teachers knew all of above and yet deployed the construct of reading stamina to overcome these onerous conditions. The teachers needed the students to have the reading stamina and maintain their focus until they completed the tests if students were to be moved out of the program –and if the program was to be seen as successful as well. They wanted their students to have the level of engagement in coerced reading that students in standard or AP English classes

displayed. When a student fails to stay on the reading task, mostly reading tests with long, boring, and irrelevant passages, the teachers perceive the student as struggling.

Students' Cultures

With reading assessment results and students' schooled behaviors, each student culture they brought into the classroom played a part in the construction of struggling reader in teachers' minds. By students' cultures, I included students' personal history, family literacy, socio-economic status, gender, and ethnicity. Different from reading assessment or student behaviors, not all of students' cultures directly impacted on the construction of struggling reader in teachers' mind. For example, teachers did not see a student as struggling reader only because they are men, student of color, or coming from economically challenging family. The way that students' cultures constructs the perception of struggling readers was more sophisticated – students' cultures are connected to the resources the students are considered to deserve or should have had by the time the students come to the class. The qualities teachers expected to see a good reader were connected to their culture outside school include discipline, family literacy, home situation, value in education, and parental involvement.

Discipline is connected to the schooled behaviors of students' I mentioned in the previous section. Ms. Yellow in the focus group shared that if the students were not disciplined by the time of high school, there was no way schools could develop that by the time of graduation. She shared her concern as a mother, saying she knew that she was not a perfect mother, but at least she was trying to teach her children to be disciplined. Many other teachers shared similar concerns with regard to the year-long English students' schooled behaviors also often attributed those schooling issues to students' home culture.

In her class, Ms. Orange pointed out and corrected an African American boy's black English use of a double negative. She let the student repeat the sentence she fixed. Also, she corrected Latina students' pronunciation as well. For her, students' accents and linguistic patterns different from "standard English" indicated the students had difficulties with their English.

To the teachers, students in the year-long English classes struggled in reading because they did not come from a home valuing education, or a home reading books together instead of watching television, or a home having educated parents. The teachers did not suggest this was the only reason behind the reason of struggles, but they emphasized the importance of home culture by telling me the differences between students in the year-long English program and Honors' English – parental involvement. Personal history of students was sometimes used to understand the student's temporal struggles in readings but also used as a good attribution for struggles the students had. As Ms. Orange said, "it is all coming from home."

It is interesting that the word helplessness that the teachers used during the interview or the focus group interview. They said that "there is no way" teachers could do to change it or "it is all home." However, if the discourse around the supporting home culture is flipped, it means that schools and the teachers are unable to support students. It is a confession of their incapability. Teachers relying on resources students bring from their home culture, and specifically from the family, that shows the inability of schools to teach reading to all students. Not all of students are able to pull resources from their home and education is expected to support the students by decreasing the gaps amongst students with resources of various levels. But these teachers do not actually believe in the power of schools to counter this.

Parental involvement.

Parental involvement was discussed repeatedly during all interviews with teachers, and interestingly this issue never appeared in conversations with students. Teachers said that the level

of parental involvement was different for students in the year-long English classes and other classes. Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow shared their stories about parents of students in Honors' English who never missed parent-teacher conferences and were easy to reach out to, and parents of students in the year-long English classes who rarely came to teacher conferences, rarely responded to teachers, and were hard to reach out to – even with translation services provided by the school.

The teachers themselves put much value in their own children's education. Ms. Orange expressed her strong view that parents must place “eyes” on children to be successful (she came back to teaching so she could take care of her daughters in the same high school), and Ms. Yellow put her daughters' drawings on her cabinets and shared her episodes from home as examples in classes. Ms. Blue also used her family picture as her screensaver showing her interests in her family and children. The teachers seem to say that if all parents were like them then there would be fewer struggling readers.

Contexts of Social Construction of Struggling Readers in Teachers

Deficit View: Caring Yet Patronizing

All the teachers cared about students' lives. This was different from how teachers in Compton-Lilly (2007), a qualitative case study with two Puerto Rican families, did not know about their students' cultures. Teachers in my project tried to learn about students and their background. They knew they needed to know what students brought to the classroom to engage them in learning reading. They tried to learn about their students and tried to incorporate the knowledge in their teaching practices. They talked to students, shared students' stories in teachers' lounge, and sometimes reached out to school counselors to know more about the students. Teachers used students' name as the student wanted to be called, and were able to talk

about what has happened to certain students without looking for other information when the students appeared in our conversations.

As mothers, teachers even cared about students' eating and food consumption. Ms. Blue always kept snacks in her cabinet knowing many Latin@ students often missed their lunch. Ms. Purple also shared concerns about students who did not come to school counselors to ask for free lunch because the students felt ashamed. Ms. Navy and Orange were also worried all the processed food would harm the students' cognitive ability.

Interestingly, most of student cultures brought to the year-long English classrooms were, for the teachers, connected to negativity. Teachers tried to learn about student lives, and tried to incorporate that in teaching practices. However, between acknowledging students' culture and using it in a pedagogical enactment, understanding and appreciating student culture seemed to go missing. Students cultures other than that of white-middle-class culture was often viewed as a deficit. The first thing the two ESL teachers mentioned when asked about students' cultures was Latino boys' attitude towards women teachers, which led the boys to not follow teacher directions. Parents from the Latinx group were often described as uneducated, not very involved in students' education, failing in disciplining children, or not valuing education, which, for the teachers, were big reasons behind students' struggles in reading. Even though the teachers try to know more about students' cultures, teachers brought biases and prejudices to this knowledge that attributed student struggles to their culture.

Whiteness (or whiteblindness).

In the interviews, teachers seemed to hesitate to mention racial or ethnic differences between students of the year-long English classes and those in Honors' or AP English classes. This led me to relate the teachers' deficit view to a colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2003) or lack of understanding of other cultures in the initial observation and analysis stage. However, they

tried to see and know about the colors of students and the diverse cultures students brought to school in order to incorporate them in their teaching practice. Even though the understanding of students' cultures was not deep enough to appreciate the diversity, the teachers did not pretend not to see students' colors or different cultures they brought. This is different from color-blind white teachers in previous studies (e.g. Ullucci & Battey, 2011).

They saw the students' culture as a deficit, and it was because they judged students' cultures based on where they stood – where they have grown up, educated, and lived – as White women. What the teachers did not see, or failed to address, was their whiteness which had affected and shaped their view of the different cultures their students came from. The issue of the teacher themselves being white have never been addressed throughout the whole semester. Not during the classes, not during the interviews, and not during lunch. It simply never came up.

Dray (2008) defined whiteness as:

a system of privilege based on race whereby White ideology is viewed as a reference point from which all other identities are compared. [...] The term Whiteness refers to the ideology that White identity has become the ideal and is viewed as the norm, whereby other identities such as African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian are viewed as multicultural subcultures within society” (p. 856).

It was the teachers' whiteness that let them view and assess students' cultures using their white, middle-class life as a norm. This total absence of acknowledgment on their whiteness paradoxically confirms the teachers' whiteness. Bettez, Chang, and Edwards (2018) suggested the term *Whiteblindness* in their meta-ethnographic study, meaning “an intentional or unintentional failure to acknowledge—and thereby consider implications—that all notions of racial identity and contentions around racialization are filtered through and permeated with White supremacist ideology” (p. 95). I do not think any of the teachers were explicit white supremacists, but the basis of their standards, when it comes to evaluating students' cultures and making a determination of struggling readers, was rooted from their whiteness.

Ms. Orange's correction of students' accent or grammar coming from a different culture without explaining why she was doing this is also a part of her whiteness. For her, the norm of English grammar and accent was that of the white middle class. Because she wanted her students to learn how to speak good English and to be better readers – following her norms – she had to fix them.

Sharing their plan for the next year's year-long English I, Ms. Yellow and Ms. Orange described their dream classroom. With Ms. Sky, the ESL specialist from the district, they planned to have different sections in one big classroom.

Ms. Yellow: I think it's just going to alleviate the stigma that these students have on a classroom. They're used to walking into a classroom, and struggling, and not being successful. If we can take them into a new environment that's taught differently, hopefully, they won't bring in those attitudes. [...] We about doing like little reading nook with different kinds of seating, we talked about possibly having a little tea kettle in the kitchen. Treating it more of like a learning lab than a classroom where you have to walk in and be quiet and do your work. Each area of the room would have a different purpose. You would have a reason to be there, and you would have a time to be there. Some reading work, some writing work. You could do it by literary content, some with thematic station, a characterization station...

She said she was excited about the new idea of the classroom. It sounded nice, but the room was what I would imagine when I read a book filled with white girls with dresses. The room was designed by three white women. That definitely did not reflect my culture, and is unlikely to reflect the cultures of their students as well.

High-stakes Standardized Tests

One thing that emerged from all teachers from the initial stage of analysis was their strong resistance and/or complaints about the EOG test, the state-mandated standardized, high-stakes exam. Their negative feelings about the test were coming from the fact that the test was not aligning with the students' lives or what they learned from classes and the fact that the test became an assessment tool not only for the student performance but also for the teacher

performance. However, regardless of their negative feelings about the test, their teaching practice has been shaped following the standardized tests.

Negative emotions toward standardized test.

Ms. Yellow, at the end of her interview, expressed her anxiety and annoyance about the test very clearly. She repeated her concern again in the focus group interview. She said the exam was designed to fail “us”— meaning both students and teachers, sharing the fact that the design or procedure of the testing did not allow her to help her students succeed on the test. She complained that teachers were not allowed to know what the questions were or what questions their students have missed so the teachers could not prepare their students to perform better at it. The other teachers who participated in the study also shared these complaints about the test.

In the current educational climate, it is not just the students but also the teachers and the schools who became the victims of testing. Based on the test scores, the number of students who passed the EOC and EOG also gauged the success of teachers. Even though the teachers know that the students made growth, they cannot help but feelings of failure if students do not reach proficiency as defined by the test. So it is also the teachers who are taking the test and they're with the students in the same boat. That's why Ms. Yellow said the "us" not "them."

Ms. Green shared her experience with another inclusion class (meaning students with low achievement). I cannot even describe in writing the level of frustration she expressed.

Ms. Green: Last year I was so upset. I had a really hard time last year with the English student inclusion because that was the year that the county really started pushing data. It's the first year that I was teaching this inclusion class, zero. My data is 0% across the board, 0% projected to pass, 0% males, 0% females, 0% white, 0% black. That's really hard. [...]I think it was the data pushed that really push me over the edge. I remember at the end of the year I walked into my administrator's office and I'm like, “Get me training and get it to me now. If you don't send me on training and I mean a lot of them I need to know more about what your expectations are for me with this class. Because I feel I'm drowning.” [...]last year was really rough, really rough on my psyche. [laughs] I also felt completely unsuccessful as a teacher and that's hard. Because at the end of the day you want to sit down and go, “I've had this success. I can hang my head on and there was none of that. There was none of that with English-2.[...]It was really rough to not experience any success.

Teachers pointed out the disconnection between standards and standardized testing. Ms. Yellow mention that how the standards they were supposed to teach in classes – grammar – were not even tested in the state-mandated standardized testing.

Ms. Yellow: What I'm gathering is that this is similar to the comment I made about grammar, about how we are supposed to teach it but it's not in the test. So we are supposed to teach writing but it's not in the test. And I remember when I started teaching we had the English 2 writing test, and so in ninth grade we were doing certain kind of essays, introduce them to it. Tenth grade was building on that. I would say the students overall are much better writers. But because they don't have to write an essay now [they don't take it as much seriously] --

Ms. Green also mentioned the misalignment between the subject and the standardized test for the subject.

Ms. Yellow: And there used to be a grammar portion on the ninth-grader test. All these ties into what you were asking is because it seems like they're going away from assessing the curriculum. Ms. Green: I could be completely wrong about what common about it, got company making the test. When you think about, they do have to know grammar for the SIT and the ACT, so why wouldn't it be a part of their assessments in their classes? It's all over the place, as far as what's happening with these assessments.

Ms. Yellow: No alignment.

Ms. Green: Yes, no alignment, it feels like.

Teaching practices shaped by standardized tests.

It is also interesting that the teachers seem to feel some sort of embarrassment about making their lessons a test prep course. They both denied and admitted they did so.

In the focus group interview, Ms. Purple brought up how they had to put a lot of energy to prepare students for the test. Teachers reacted differently.

Ms. Purple: Did anybody say anything about the fact that so much of our energy is put towards teaching to the test? We kind of touched on that a little bit.

Ms. Yellow: I don't feel like I teach to the test very much.

Ms. Blue: I used to.

Ms. Green: I think I do.

Ms. Orange mentioned in her interview said that her class was not about prepping her students to take the test until two weeks before the test.

Ms. Orange: We're trying to develop their stamina and to teach them what do I do when I-- what are my strategies for encountering difficult literature. What we do at the end of the year, [after students read *Romeo and Juliet* and *Of Mice and Men*] probably only the last two weeks of school before the test. During those two weeks, we'll say, "Okay, all year, here's what we've been doing. Now, you come to this test, what do you do? What are your strategies?" Well, first I'm going to find the main idea, then I'm going to find the supporting details as I'm reading, right? Then, I'm going to go to the questions and I'm going to go back to the text. I'm going to look up any difficult vocabulary, right? Using vocabulary in context. [SJ: basically, test prep?] That's right. We don't do any test prep during the year. We're just hoping that it all works.

However, the routine of classes – vocabulary, comprehension, all reading questionnaires with Achieve 3000, seemed to mimic what the students would do in the state-mandated exams. The teachers knew that the test was not designed for students to succeed or learn how to read, but their understanding or analysis of the test did not go further into the testing system itself – how it was written by people from a dominant culture or how the test is written on behalf of the single dominant group. The teachers knew that the test was not really rational or just for their students, but they did not mention why the test was not addressing what really should be tested for the purpose of reading assessment. The complaints about the test were connected to their teaching practices – that they could not prepare their students properly for the test, and how what they taught was not reflected on the standardized tests. It was about the mismatch that made the teachers be not capable and thus leaving the students to fail. This led to a combination of dedicated effort and denial of that same effort.

Ms. Yellow: In other words, I have no Idea how I can make my teaching better to fit the exam. [...] What if I'm not wording my questions the same way the test is, maybe I just need to word them differently in my classroom. Maybe it's something as simple as that. Maybe I am teaching the same thing, but I'm not using the right words or phrases. We don't even know them. [...] For year-long students, that's really bad because wording is everything for them. It is what it is.

Everyday Communications in Schools

All seven teachers said that they learned about who readers are and how to teach them from their practices in school, from students and great colleagues they have worked with.

Teachers' communication with colleagues: reinforcement.

During my observation of 6 months, I witnessed teachers talk about their students all the time. They shared their opinions on students in the hallway, at the lounge during lunch, and at each other's classroom in planning time. While the teachers don't have an explicit perception of struggling readers, they reinforced their prejudices and biases in day-to-day communications with other teachers. They had continual conversations about students in their teachers' lounge during every lunch. They seemed to really love talking about students. I saw the teachers used that information of their students to understand or advocate students' behaviors or attitudes. Unfortunately, it was not always very positive. They expressed that they did care about students and they wanted to know about their students. However, without active reflection on the nature of these conversations, they reinforced and reproduced their biases and made the social construction of struggling readers more real in teachers' minds.

Teachers' communication with students: no resistance.

Teachers have encountered struggling readers, in their minds, every day in classrooms and these experiences have shaped their perceptions of struggling readers. There was no active resistance from students about teachers' perception of struggling readers in classrooms. In fact, students would use the same words their teachers used to describe how they were with reading. Ironically, it seemed that the students picked up these words and contextualized them within the perception that the teachers 'care' about them. Instead of resisting deficit views, students in this class said they knew that the teachers loved them, a perception which emerged through the year-long rapport they had developed. In this history between the teachers and students, the students

picked up teachers' ideas about readers and made them their own ideas about who they are as readers.

Other working conditions.

Not only with the communications, but other working conditions also affected on the construction of struggling reader in teachers' minds. The lack of time for co-planning and reflection as well as a feeling of unappreciated about their work were repeatedly coming up in the individual interviews and the focus group interview. Teachers said that they did not have enough time to plan with their colleagues to meet the individual needs of students since they only had 30 minutes a week or less. The teachers had to talk to each other during lunch, after school, and even during the weekend to plan the next week's classes. For the first year, Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow had three days of paid planning days to structure the whole year's lesson, but Ms. Green and Ms. Blue or other ESL and EC teachers did not have that luxury.

Ms. Yellow pointed out that teachers were not respected enough to do their work, and because of the missing respect, students and parents did not trust and support what teachers did to make students better readers. Ms. Purple supported with a recent example from the year-long English I class.

Ms. Yellow: It is not going to sound politically correct. I think one of the reasons why readers struggle to read is because of the emphasis is on the student, and the student being happy, and the student feeling motivated, whatever. I think there is a missing expectation for respect for the teacher. It reminds me of that, you guys have seen it, the little single or two-framed cartoon where it's like 30 years ago, the parent gets a call from the teacher and they look at the kid and say, "Why did you do this?" Then the other frame is the call from the teacher and the parents asking the teacher, "Why did you do this?" [...] Sometimes, I really think that I could do a lot more in the classroom if I have the respect of students, the respect of the teachers and the respect of the general population. Because I feel like now, that the students don't understand, don't trust us. Like if I tell you to read this thing and do this task, it's not because I'm trying to make you bored and it's not because I'm trying to waste the last 30 minutes of class, it's because you're going to gain something from this. If they could trust that, and believe that, and respect me enough, then I thought I can do a lot more in the classroom, but we are constantly battling their expectation to be entertained and to be happy.

Ms. Purple: I both want to piggyback on this and I have a comment on my own. An example is with David, who you chose. The student, the perfect average student of ours who isn't doing his work, he goes home, he tells his mom some lie about how we don't let him do-

Ms. Yellow: Something.

Ms. Purple: -whatever, and then mom comes back and she is like [claps] at the educators. Then once we explain and send home data that says, "No really, this is-- He says he doesn't have to do this assignment. Well, let me show you his electronic log of how much time he actually spent working on this and the 15-minute break in between or whatever."

Ms. Yellow: But we had to prove that-

Ms. Purple: We had to prove it.

Ms. Yellow: -to her.

Ms. Purple: Which is why we have this student who thinks he doesn't have to work and he doesn't have a consequence, and here it is at the end of the year. So this is what makes him the average year-long student, just to piggyback [on Mrs. Orange's statement].

Absence of Teacher Education

When being asked about where they got the idea of (struggling) reader or teaching practices for them, most teachers did not mention their pre-service teacher education at all. Even when I directly asked if teacher education has helped them to shape their idea, they insisted that they did not learn it from teacher prep courses. Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow further continued to point out the lack of literacy and literacy pedagogy in pre-service teacher education.

SJ: Where do you think you get these concepts of-- Readers are supposed to understand this structure or intention and language of the authors. Do you think it is coming from what you learned from the schools or teacher prep courses or your experiences?

Ms. Orange: Definitely, it wasn't teacher prep courses.

Ms. Orange: You know where that's [content area teachers deny that they should teach reading and writing] coming from right? They don't know how to do it themselves so they don't feel confidence in teaching it.

SJ: Right, it's all – I don't want to blame teachers at all. It is all from teacher prep.

Ms. Orange: Teacher prep, exactly.

SJ: It's from this – teacher education's work. We need to work on it.

Ms. Orange: Yes. I agree.

SJ: Was there any knowledge from your teacher prep program or professional development that-

Ms. Yellow: No. [...] Well, because my degree in English and I have a teaching license. If you look at the curriculum for those, for the degree, for an English degree there's no pedagogy involved. Then my education classes had pedagogy, but it was focused on teaching English literature. It wasn't on pedagogy of what a reader is, it wasn't on the literacy. I would say that would probably be a disservice to high school English teachers, but also it's probably something that all teachers at university level, when they're a student in the university probably need some training with. Because it's not about-- I assume that literacy specialist get training in literacy, but from my experience teachers don't. [...] For us, I've never heard of a single English teacher having literacy work in university much less, some other content area teacher. [SJ: When English teacher doesn't get that--] Who else would?

In interviews with other teachers, teacher prep program did not come up as one of the contexts for the social construction of struggling reader in teachers.

Ms. Purple was in a graduate school then, and she said she learned some strategies from readings for schools. However, she also said she did not learn about struggling readers and how to teach them. It was her and her experience to connect the strategies she learned and the students she met in classrooms, she added.

Ms. Purple: [...] I'm in school, so I get it from like the thing I just showed you. It's a book on exceptional children. [...] Then you read case studies, and you gather different pieces of information from all the different case studies. And you figure like how does this affect me, and how can I use this with my kids. [...] Yes, I learned it from school. Or I learned it from--like I just read an article about music helping kids with reading disabilities. [...] You're just constantly reading and learning, and then implementing what you learned. [...] because I don't think any of these have ever told me what a struggling reader is. That's me making a connection. Remember like I said a good reader is somebody who can read something and make a connection to their life. Basically, that's what I did. I see this and I see these kids and I think, "Okay, not only what do they need to do to read this book. But why do they need to be a good reader?" It's a basic life skill they need. Yes, then constantly talking to people. [...] Yes. Experience and being able to work with such an amazing team [...]

It could be possible that the teachers forgot what they have learned in teacher education. However, it was clear that the teacher preparation programs failed to impact on the teachers' current perception and teaching practices for the year-long English students even though the teachers had between two and four years of teacher training.

Teacher Perception of Struggling Readers: A Spectrum

One thing I noticed during the individual case analysis and the cross-case analysis was that the perception of struggling reader was widely varied depending on each teacher as well as their definition. For example, Ms. Red showed a very negative attitude towards students in the year-long classes attributing their difficulties to the students, accusing them as lazy and disrespectful, while Ms. Green mostly portrayed her year-long English students as capable readers and attributing their so-called reading difficulties to the high-stakes testing. During the interviews and analyses, I found those teachers' perception of struggling reader could be placed on a spectrum. My attempt here is preliminary. Rather than a single continuum, it could be something other than a single, straight line and it requires deeper analysis. Since the purpose of this dissertation was learning about teachers' definition of struggling readers, not lining those teachers based on their negativity or positivity towards struggling students, I only attempted to draw a rough spectrum (see figure 8).

I placed Ms. Red, the ESL teacher who clearly perceived the year-long English students as negative, on the left end and Ms. Green, the English II teacher who showed the most positive understanding of the year-long English students, on the right end. Placing the other teachers on the spectrum was a little more difficult because they did not show a clear evidence of either negative as Ms. Red or positive as Ms. Green. However, in the interviews and field notes, the teachers taught ninth graders (Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow) commented more negative aspects of students while the teachers worked with tenth graders (Ms. Navy, Ms. Blue, and Ms. Purple) shared more positive aspects of their year-long students. The distance between the teachers does not have any meaningful idea.

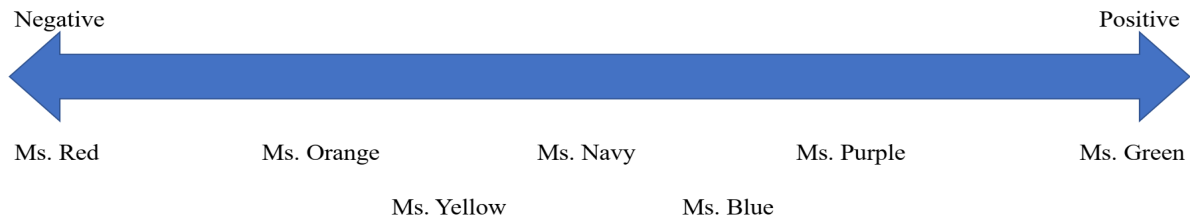


Figure 8. A rough spectrum of the teachers based on their perception of year-long English students

The teachers' identification and definition of readers were varied as well, and their definition and identification of struggling readers were related to different theories of reading. For example, Ms. Orange and Ms. Yellow (the ninth grade English teachers) said that they could grow good readers by repetition of reading skill drills, and by acquiring reading strategies that would help readers to understand the process of reading. Those teachers also identified the year-long English students because they seemed disinterested and disengaged in (class) reading. Those understanding of (struggling) reader and their teaching practices could refer back to the reading studies based on behaviorism, cognitivism, and engagement theory. Ms. Purple, the EC teacher, also shared a behaviorist's and cognitivist's view of reading (e.g., emphasis on reading skills and strategies), but medical model of reading had more influence on her perception of struggling readers (e.g. she worried about the possibilities of reading and learning disabilities for some students), probably due to her expertise as a special education teacher. Ms. Green, the year-long English II teacher, could be described as following sociocultural idea of reading than other reading teachers observed.

Because analyzing each teacher's perception of reader and learning about where it came from was not the main purpose of this project, I did not have enough time and resources to conduct deeper analyses for which theory influenced how much of each teacher's understanding, identification, and definition of (struggling) readers. However, I thought it was problematic that

teachers working on the same project did not seem to share, at least, the similar understanding of the group of students they served and a vision (or learning goal) where the students should be after the courses. With the limited co-planning time, the teachers did not have time to learn about how each other and students defined reading and thus emphasized different aspects of reading on top of each teacher's personal biases as analyzed in the previous sections above. It could confuse students having different messages of what they should do as readers. It could also confuse co-working teachers which would discourage effective and focused co-teaching.

Chapter Summary

With a cross-case analysis, three substantive constructs and four contexts were implicated in the social construction of the struggling reader in the participating teachers' minds. Formal assessments worked as the initial screening tool and the teachers have relied on informal reading assessments to make the final decision to put students in the year-long English classes. Teachers reported that the informal reading assessments were also used to identify students' different needs in their readings. Students schooling behaviors including listening to teachers, questioning, and other on-task behaviors also affected teachers' judgements on whether a certain student was a good reader or not. As well, the teachers suggested that struggling readers lack reading stamina, the ability to pursue their non-voluntary reading performances. In fact, reading stamina was about students' capability to work through a 4-hour-long EOC exam, not necessarily for the students' reading itself. Students' cultures also shaped the teachers' perception of struggling reader. The teachers connected students' cultures to the resources the students brought, and when the students were considered as lacking the resources, teachers attributed the struggles to the students' homes. In particular, the teachers mentioned lack of parental involvement as an important attribution for the students' reading struggles, because, to teachers, lack of parental involvement in students' schooling showed the families did not value in education.

The contexts of the social construction of struggling reader in the teachers' minds included teachers' deficit views, an education system shaped around high-stakes testing, everyday communications in the school, and absence (or denial) of teacher education. All teachers cared about their students in classrooms, and tried to know more about the students and their cultures to incorporate such in their teaching of reading. However, due to their whiteness, meaning their making judgements based on their white-middle-class culture, the teachers saw the students' cultures as deficit and connected them to the reading struggles. Because current education system asked teachers and students to be successful on the high-stakes tests, the teachers' instructional goals and teaching practices for their readers in the year-long English has shaped by the tests. Even though the teachers knew the misalignment of standards and the standardized tests and their students' lives, the teachers were pushed to the edge – they had to make the students pass the exam to prove their capability as teachers. Without the active reflection on their privileges, teachers' shared opinions on their students that often reinforced their deficit views of the students. Teachers' communication with students also affected on teachers' construction of struggling readers, however, there was no resistance from students' end on the deficit view of teachers because of the year-long rapport they have built together. Instead, the students seemed to accept the teachers' perceptions of the students as struggling readers. Interestingly, all the teachers have reported that the pre-service teacher program did not do their work to help them to learn about who are readers and how to support their diverse needs. They recounted that they had to 'connect the dots' on their own—or, put differently, had to construct their own views of readers and struggling readers through their experiences as teachers and with other teachers. The 'struggling reader' is socially constructed by teachers through discourse and practice.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

When I first started this project, I wanted to explore the processes of the social construction of struggling readers by teachers in the classroom context. Given that the prior research had failed to agree on the definition of struggling reader, I expected to draw a working definition(s) from teachers who have been working with a group of students considered as struggling. In my chapter 4 with analyses of individual teachers, I was able to get a broad answer for the two research questions. As I moved on to the cross-case analysis, I realized that the construction of struggling reader was not only happening in the classrooms with students and teachers, but was embedded in a larger context of education as institutionalization. The teachers knew the construction of the struggling reader was not limited to the classroom and was connected to the externally mandated standardized testing, which the teachers described as disconnected from the students' reading and learning to read. It became apparent that social construction of the struggling reader with these teachers was directly connected to what Valenzuela (2010) described as subtractive schooling. The contexts that have shaped the construction of struggling reader was not limited to the subtractive schooling, but also included the powerful societal context – teachers' whiteness. My discussion of this is provided in chapter 5. Similar to what Gee (1990) suggested about how big D Discourse sets a larger context to interpret the small d discourse, the larger contexts of whiteness and subtractive schooling provide a fuller understanding of the social construction of struggling reader in teachers. The larger context was situated in inequity and impacted the construction of struggling readers in teachers deeply and viciously, to the extent that the teachers highly valued caring about their students was

distorted to patronize (caring as condescension) and institutionalize (caring as disciplining and controlling students' behavior) the students. Even the most caring teacher was unable to escape the deficit view of student culture.

In this last chapter, I offer the summary of study, significance of the study, implications, and the concluding remarks.

Summary of the Study

The Social Constructionism and New Literacies Studies literatures supported the idea that the concept of (struggling) reader is not given but constructed in social interactions. With the literature review, I found that the frequently used term, struggling reader, was ill-defined and felt the need to see how the concept is used in reading classrooms. In this dissertation study using collective case study method, I explored how secondary teachers working with a group of students considered as struggling in reading construct the concept of struggling readers in their perceptions and practices with the two guiding questions: (1) How do teachers identify and define the *struggling reader* in classrooms? and (2) How does this perception assist and inhibit teacher practices?

While trying to answer the two questions through analyzing individual teachers and teachers as a whole group, I induced three constructs that the participating teachers heavily relied on in their social construction of the concept of struggling reader and the four contexts shaping teachers' perceptions as well as their teaching practices.

The three constructs include (a) reading assessments, (b) students' schooling level, and (c) the diverse cultures that students bring to the classroom and were implicated in how the teachers identified struggling readers. Formal and informal reading assessment results were initially used to situate the students as struggling or good readers. While the teachers' reported definition of (struggling) reader was only about students' reading, the identification of struggling

readers in class was heavily intertwined with the other two constructs – students’ behaviors and their cultures – which were not directly connected to students’ reading performances per se. For the teachers, students’ capability as readers was unable to be separate from their schooling as students (schooling over reading), and when the students failed to address what the teachers think as schooling, that inhibited the teachers’ judgement about the students as readers. As a result, the teachers could make a statement such as, “he is capable of reading but not a good reader because he easily gives up his task.”

Student culture also was an important construct in the teachers’ construction of struggling readers. Student culture was understood to the teachers as students’ resources or support they brought to the classroom and school. If the resources or support from home seemed insufficient, then this became an identifier of struggling readers to the teachers. In turn and at the same time, they attributed students’ struggles in reading to the deficient resources from the home

Four contexts that affected the social construction of struggling reader in teachers were (a) a deficit view of student cultures, (b) high-stakes standardized testing, (c) everyday communications in school, and (d) absence of teacher education. Even after more than a decade of emphasis on understanding students’ cultures in pedagogy through culturally responsive-, culturally relevant- and culturally sustaining pedagogy, the white female teachers still viewed student culture as a deficit. It was because of their whiteblindness (Bettez, Chang, & Edwards, 2018), meaning they have failed to critically reflect on their whiteness. It was not only the individual teachers’ fault that they were unable to reflect on their whiteness because the educational system highly shaped by high-stakes standardized tests which interfered with their taking the time to reflect on their teaching practices. The teachers knew about and addressed the misalignments between students’ learning, what the teachers taught in class and the standardized

tests. However, in the current educational climate, standardized testing results adjudicate not only students' performance but also teachers' and schools' performance. With this, it was unsurprising that the teachers' idea of teaching reading was tied to the mandate to prepare the students to perform better in the testing even though teachers acknowledged this did little to support students to read better.

Not supported by a critical reflection on their privileges, the teachers' everyday communications with other teachers about students they taught (e.g., their performances, anecdotal episodes of the students in other classes, students' personal lives, and other information about the students, etc.) had reinforced the teachers' perceptions of this group of students. Also, because of the deep rapport the teachers have built in the relationships with the students in the year-long English classes, students rarely resisted to the teachers' instructional decisions or their perceptions of the students as readers. Students picked up and accepted the teachers' description of the students as struggling readers as well as accepting their teaching practices which were shaped by the teachers' perceptions, often coming from a deficit view of their cultures.

In all this, the teachers commonly suggested that the teacher education, especially the pre-service teacher education, did not help them or prepare them to work with struggling readers. It could be either teacher education program did not teach them about such content and practices or that the teachers forgot what they had learned in the teacher education.

Significance of the Study

Teaching students how to read to the level of proficiency is one of the most important goals of public education. Based on the belief that many students need assistance, many studies have researched efficient teaching strategies for a group of students labeled as struggling readers. Many reading programs have been developed for teaching struggling readers and enormous amounts of funds have been spent in the process. Recent studies suggested that the concept of

struggling reader is a product of social construction as are the concepts of reader and reading (Triplett, 2007). They also suggested that the definition of struggling reader is often too broad and too vague (Alvermann, 2006), and so it harms students' reader identities and not very helpful in teaching them reading (Alvermann, 2006). Nevertheless, the term, struggling reader, was used the most frequently used term in the reading research. But it was used without an agreement on its definition. Literally, this is mindless activity but with dire consequences for students and for their learning.

Exploring the context where teaching practice for a 'struggling readers' was happening, this study was able to analyze the social construction of struggling readers by the teachers. The results from this study confirm that the concept of struggling reader is socially constructed, and is not either static or definitive in nature. Rather it is a result of set of interrelated constructs and contexts embedded in teacher perceptions and practices. This study also unpacked these constructs and the contexts, revealing how the assessment of students' abilities and struggles in reading is closely intertwined with socio-historical-cultural context of teachers and students, much more than just an assessment of one student's reading performance or cognitive level. Specifically, this study revealed the good teacher-student relationship have more harmful impact on students' reader identities when the teachers lack a critical reflection on their privileges such as their whiteness. This study also confirmed what previous studies (Hatt, 2012) how the idea of a good reader is intertwined with the ethnicity and language, showing how the idea of teaching for assimilation and for institutionalization is deeply engraved in the idea of teaching reading – asking students to subtract their culture from their learning in order to be successful (Valenzuela, 2010).

Caring Teachers Hurt More

Learned (2014) in her dissertation project on the social construction of struggling readers in classroom focusing on students suggested that struggling readers' struggles are not static and the readers could perform a better and even a proficient reading in the context of a classroom with teachers treating the readers with good intention and understanding. What my study found was, however, suggests that the good intention or good teacher-student relationship was not enough. Rather it could hurt students' identities as readers more and more deeply. Teachers good intentions without active reflection on their privileges including race, socioeconomic status, education level, and the home culture, could have more negative impact on students' identities as readers.

The teachers I observed had a clearly good intentions to improve the students' competency as a reader. Teachers knew that a good teacher-student relationship is needed to effectively teach students, and they genuinely cared about the students. I could see how much the teachers cared about the students, and how hard they have worked to build the teacher-student relationship with a deep rapport. Moreover, the students knew that the teachers deeply cared about them, and believed in the instruction the teachers implemented in classes. They believed that these activities would build in them the stamina they believed they needed and make them better readers. They picked up the teacher words describing the students without resistance or even a doubt.

The tragedy is this. What students have accepted and absorbed into their identities as readers has been affected by the teachers' perception of struggling reader and the teaching practices shaped by a deficit view, naming stereotypes and biases coming from their whiteness about which they were uncritical. If the students had not trusted the teachers, they would have

been able to actively resist the deficit view or refuse to accept the conceptions of the teachers. However, because the students knew that the teachers cared about them, the students internalized the teachers' messages including a deficit view of these students saying that the students were immature so they should be controlled by the teachers, they should act in certain ways, they should read in certain ways, and most importantly that they were not a good enough reader, especially as long as they were in the year-long English course.

Reading Program as Institutionalization

Throughout the analysis it was clear that teachers consciously or unconsciously valued students' schooling over students' reading. Students needed to show proof of being disciplined to be considered as (good) readers, and they were considered as struggling readers when they failed to. Their schooling was a more important quality than the reading assessment results to the teachers who in the end decided which students would be defined as good readers or as struggling readers. The schooling or disciplined attitudes the teachers expected students to perform include asking questions, following the teachers' directions, sitting silently while the class was on. These behaviors and attitudes of schooling were historically valued in the mainstream culture marked as White, middle-class, English-speaking, and male.

One of the instructional goals reported commonly by the teachers for the students seen as struggling readers was the students' being successful in the external high-stakes standardized tests. Given the current educational climate, standardized testing results become the evidence of not only the proficiency of students' learning but also the proficiency of teacher performance. The teachers felt considerable pressure for their year-long English students to pass the exam. The teachers questioned the validity of the tests – they explicitly said that the tests did not reflect the curriculum the teachers were supposed to teach in class, and that the texts in the tests were long,

boring, and irrelevant to the students. The teachers also understood the test as failing the students and the teachers. However, their understanding and analysis of the tests went no further.

This study revealed that what Valenzuela (2010) found was still true in 2017 in the United States. The emphasis on schooling and testing in reading program over teaching reading aligns with what Valenzuela (2010) had already stated – those external standardized tests are developed based on the dominant culture and do not reflect any of students' culture especially coming from a historically marginalized group. To pass the exam, exit the lower-track English classes, and be considered as good readers, the students coming from different cultural background in the classroom need to be assimilated to the dominant culture and to deny their culture in important ways (Valenzuela, 2010).

Implications of the Study

I offer the implications of this study based on the findings, analysis, and the conclusions of this study. The implications that follow are for future research, practices of teaching reading, and teacher education.

Implications for Research

First, this study poses a set of fundamental questions to the theoretical works on reading research. What does *reading* or being a *reader* means? What would we mean by adequate/proficient reading in this world? How does the current definition of reading stratify readers and/or interfere of our understanding of reading as phenomenon? Then, what would be the purpose of reading relative to the definition of reading?

Second, this study problematizes the historical research on reading education and calls for systematic critique of research on reading and research on reading education. There is a massive research literature and there has been a massive funding effort to address struggling readers, yet under it all there was no agreement on the meaning of 'struggling reader'. This

whole body of research and practice seems nonsensical without some level of agreement on the phenomenon being addressed. All this work needs interrogated to ascertain what, if anything, of worth can be found in it.

Third, with the understanding that the concept of reading or being a reader is socially constructed depending on the specific contexts, a new research agenda on what it means to read in a very particular contexts, (and not only a traditionally valued in schools) seems called for. To address this, more research should be done on what it means to read in a host of contexts and without the presumption that reading itself is a known phenomenon. We should be leery of descriptions of historically “good readers” as the basis to understand the phenomena of reading itself. “Good reading” is likely to socially constructed in ways similar to that of the concept of ‘struggling reader’. It may be contextually situated rather than a universal concept. We educators have let the evaluation of reading shape our definition of reading because we had only partial knowledge of what reading is and what reading looks like. The reading assessments currently used are developed to not reflect the diverse characteristics or qualities of reading from diverse cultures – it values one form of reading (yet undefined) over other possible diverse forms of reading.

Fourth, the study calls for more research on reading teachers and their roles in the construction of ‘struggling readers’ given the power of teachers identifying students as struggling readers. How teachers construct the concept of struggling readers in different school contexts (in different grades, with variable stakes on the external standardized testing, with different demographics of schools, in different locales, etc.). We need studies of how similar or different teachers’ perceptions of, and teaching practices for struggling readers affect what is possible for students. But most importantly, we need studies of teachers who create possibilities for reading

without a stratifying concept of reading hopefully to find ways to subvert the persistent deficit view of students of color.

Implications for Practice

First, the findings from this study questions the purpose of reading education. What is the purpose of teaching reading? The reading program for struggling readers addressed here had as its purpose the assimilation the students over and above supporting them to be lifelong readers and this was structured by the press of the standardized testing results and the seeming demands of schooling as a set of institutional processes. This study recommends teachers to reflect on their teaching practice and to separate instruction for teaching reading from the disciplinary routines of schooling.

Secondly, the study suggests critical reflection is needed on the part of teachers concerning their privileges in every step of teachers' decision-making for students, especially when teachers embed these privileges in relations of caring for their students. Caring instruction does not necessarily lead to appropriate instruction for diverse students. The findings here suggest that the good student-teacher relationship based on a genuine caring, without critical reflection on teachers' privileges, can hurt students because the students believe caring is sufficient justification to see teacher privileges as appropriate and consequently removing the students' will to resist. Continuous and critical reflections on the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and socio-economical privileges of teachers is needed.

Third, teacher education should play an active role in supporting teachers of literacy (and other subjects as well), and one of the possible ways to do that is providing resources for, and methods of, critical reflection for pre-service and in-service teachers. Teachers from this project also clearly stated that they had gained little pedagogical knowledge about struggling readers

from teacher education. However, since there is no agreement on what is a ‘struggling reader,’ teacher education must consider taking this on actively as a project. Teacher research on what is a non-deficit view of reading built into teacher preparation programs, for example, maybe a place to start.

Last but not least, teachers can work on their own definitions of reading and a reader. It will take time for reading research to come up with an agreement on the definition and purpose of reading. Teachers cannot wait for the researchers to do the job for them since they have students who are required to read in front of them each day. The data in this study suggested that the students already knew how to read but did not do so in testing performances and/or the with patterns of persistence that seemingly are expected of students. Teachers could invite students to explore what reading means to them and teachers could connect their teaching of reading with the students’ views. Rather than assuming and deciding what would work for the students, teachers could do their own research on what it means to read in their own classroom contexts.

Really, Who Struggles with What?

I remember when I became a struggling reader. I was still reading texts and was able to comprehend, but because I was unable to perform up to the standards of a faculty member, I was suddenly considered to be a struggling student, and rejected by the faculty member as incompetent in general. The feelings of embarrassment came first. The imposter syndrome that came along with the experience of being rejected is still following me.

I remember seeing the students in the year-long English, the classes designed for struggling readers, reporting themselves as okay readers with some difficulties. The students said they were not good readers because they did not have reading stamina, fluency, vocabulary, and, most importantly, good scores on the standardized tests. This view persisted among the students even though I saw them read books, handouts, and on-line materials from an educational website

in class. Indeed, at some point, some students even begged to their teacher for more time to read and finish their books before moving on to the next activity (which was problem-solving handouts). Students shared their understanding of the books with peers and teachers, and they knew how to look up the vocabulary when they did not understand the meaning. Even the students who said they did not like reading had particular topics or genres they liked to read from beginning to the end. Still, the students described themselves as just an okay reader, not a good reader. They knew that they were capable to read, but they described themselves as not-good readers, using the teachers' language.

The struggles I observed were not about students' reading. Students were considered as struggling readers because of their (standardized) testing scores. The teachers working with those students were struggling because the standardized testing affected on their teaching practices, which was not necessarily fitting what they thought important in teaching reading. The teachers also were struggling because of the current educational system which made students' standardized testing score public evidence of the effectiveness of their teaching practice. The system also impacted schools as well using the students' testing score to assess the performance of the school itself.

I am not trying to say that the students did not need the support and resources they got from the year-long English classes. I am not trying to argue that there were no difficulties in reading. Vocabulary, comprehension, and engagement were what teachers suggested the students in year-long students were lacking as readers. The argument I make here is that, in the processes of judging a student as a good or struggling reader, there are constructs that are not connected to the students' performance as a reader per se. In every step of constructing the concept of struggling reader, even in the processes of defining it and making instructional decisions for

them, the patterns of historical social inequity find its way to affect these students and we, as educators, are not countering this with even a process of critical reflection on the privileges we have. There needs to widespread changes towards equity in the US, and teachers may be activists in this process. Yet in our everyday work, we could start with developing processes of critical reflection on how our work is embedded in wider social inequities and what resources we have at our disposal to lessen the impact of the inequities. Clearly, students can experience challenges in reading. They need to have the resources and supports they need. What they do not deserve are the labels and negative connotations attached those supports due to the lack of critical reflection on the deficit views embedded in schooling, in subtractive teaching, and how social inequities become educational inequities.

APPENDIX A. INITIAL QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER INTERVIEW

- 1) Please describe your current teaching position (grade level, subject, school context).
- 2) Who is the readers' workshop for? Describe them for me.
 - a. What specifically do you work on with the students?
- 3) What differences, if any, do you see with these (struggling reader) in your class?
- 4) Are you or were you working with struggling reader in your class?
- 5) Who do you think your struggling reader in class?
- 6) How do you identify struggling reader? What made you think they are struggling in their reading?
 - a. How would you define good readers?
 - b. What are your criteria in grouping readers in your class?
- 7) What instructional approaches do you use for different struggling reader?
 - a. How would you think did those instructions work with students?
- 8) Would you talk about your reading curriculum/program?
- 9) You work in a school system that both helps and limits you.
 - a. Which elements of the school system help?
 - b. Which elements of the school system limit?
- 10) Describe the readers' workshop.
 - a. What works well?
 - b. What would you change?
- 11) Is there anything you would like to add about your working with struggling reader that we may not have addressed?

APPENDIX B. INITIAL QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT INTERVIEW

- 1) Please describe your grade and class.
- 2) How would you describe yourself as a reader?
 - a. When do you see yourself like/enjoy reading?
 - b. When do you see yourself as good or having difficulties at (reading strategies/skills/test-taking)?
- 3) Would you talk about the things do you like/dislike about reading?
 - a. What, if anything, makes reading difficult for you?
- 4) Would you talk about your English I/II class?
 - a. How do you like it?
 - b. What do you think works best for you?
 - c. What do you think makes you a better reader?
- 5) What would it take for you to be regarded as a “good” reader?

APPENDIX C. FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Give an explanation

Good afternoon. Thank you for coming today. Today we're going to do a focus group. A focus group is a relaxed group discussion.

Present the purpose

We are here today to talk about your experience working with struggling reader in class. The purpose is to get your perceptions and identifications of struggling reader. I am not here to share information, or to give you my opinions. Your perceptions matter. There are no right or wrong or desirable or undesirable answers. You can disagree with each other, and you can change your mind any time. I would like you feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel.

Explain procedure

I will be taking notes and recording the discussion so that we do not miss any of your comments. I explained these procedures to you when we set up this meeting. As you know everything said in this focus group is confidential. No one will know who said what. I want this to be a group discussion, so feel free to respond to me and to other members in the group without waiting to be called on. Don't feel like you have to respond to me all the time. Feel free to have a conversation with one another about these questions. However, I would appreciate it if only one person did talk at a time. The discussion will last approximately 45 minutes.

Semi-structured Questionnaire

Would you describe your experience with struggling readers?

Probe: Would you give me an example of what you mean?

Would you explain further?

Is there anything else?

How would you describe struggling readers in class?

Similar probes to above.

How would you describe your experience with the struggling readers with this readers' workshop?

Similar probes to above.

What works well for you?

Similar probes to above.

For whom, the readers' workshop works well and for whom, that doesn't?

Similar probes to above.

Closure

(Summarizing the discussion) Does anyone want to add or clarify an opinion on this?

Is there any other information regarding your working with struggling reader or working with them in the readers' workshop?

Thank you very much for coming today. All your comments have been helpful. All the researchers appreciate your time.

Adapted and modified from http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/1997/nsf97153/c3app_c.htm

APPENDIX D. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

Specific focus of observation

- The major purpose of observation is to examine how teachers and students identify struggling readers, what type of instructions are given to whom, how reading difficulties of students (and their expressions) vary. Also, once teachers identify specific students as their struggling readers, teacher's interactions and instructions with those specific students should be observed more carefully.

General focus of observation

- Objectives of the lessons in terms of reading
- Class activities
- Classroom settings (e.g., date, organization of furniture, number of students, etc.)
- Student interest and engagement in the lesson (e.g., stay on task, persist during difficulty, evidence of boredom, evidence of enjoyment, evidence of responding to a challenge, etc.).
- Student interest and engagement in reading outside the lesson (signs of reading but not necessarily connected to the lesson)
- Quality of interpersonal interaction/group dynamic (e.g., number of teacher-student interactions, dominating members, quiet members, level of participation, distractions, etc.).
- Other aspects of the lesson that influences the quality of students' reading

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