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SCRIPT-BASED READING LESSONS AND  
SOCIALIZED LANGUAGE USAGE

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

English Composition:

Applied Linguistics and Teaching English as a Second Language

---

by

Joseph James Spencer

June 2013

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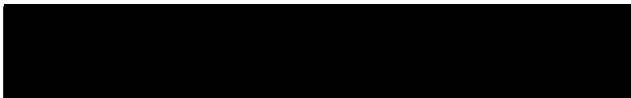
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## ABSTRACT

Following the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, educators and curriculum developers worked towards publishing school texts that included script-based lessons that addressed new federal and state standards for reading and other subjects. In the state of California, school districts have been adopting these new reading and language arts curricula despite resistance from teachers. The current study addresses the effects of script-based lessons on students' reading comprehension, with particular attention paid to how contextualized orientations to texts are encouraged. Two fifth-grade classes were observed and audio recorded for the duration of one reading period to describe what transpired during script-based reading lessons. The observations highlight some of the useful script-based routines, such as vocabulary development. However, this study identifies a lack of transition between learning objectives and activities. Although the teachers seemed to be modifying the scripts to better connect with students, teachers are struggling to maintain their professional identities while following a script. The results of this study suggest that the modifications teachers make to the script-based reading lessons may improve students' comprehension, but can create student confusion due to a disconnect between the script and teacher and the teacher and students. It is recommended that future research consider the limitations that may be implied by the "scriptedness" of the teacher talk and the types of modifications teachers and students use to open or reorient the discussion surrounding a text.

To my dear wife Emily, who always supports me, and to my friends and family who listened to me. Thank you.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 set about a new movement in education. Secretary Margaret Spellings (2007) of the U.S. Department of Education says that the effects of NCLB are positive and that students' achievements are increasing rapidly in literacy. NCLB set up the guidelines for the Reading First program that was intended to increase time for literacy instruction and improve students reading skills to the extent that by third grade students are reading at or above the grade level standard (Gamse, et al., 2008). However, the *Reading First Impact Study: Interim Report* (2008) states that the Reading First program did not show statistically significant effects on students' reading comprehension. This calls into question the effects of NCLB. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2007), the four guiding principles of the education reform embodied in NCLB are: "(1) stronger accountability for results, (2) expanded flexibility and local control, (3) expanded options for parents, and an (4) emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work" (Introduction, para. 3). In response to the fourth principle, many states and school districts have adopted "script-based" curricula with pre-composed explanations, questions, and possible student answers (Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 2004; Madhuri, 2006). Script-based curricula are part of a larger curriculum development plan in education called "direct instruction" or explicit instruction



(Solcum, 2004) and will be discussed later in this chapter. Many educators and curriculum developers suggest that using these new script-based curricula will help teachers systematize and close gaps in teaching and learning.

This project is intended to describe how a script-based curriculum functions during and shapes the outcomes of reading lessons. More specifically, by analyzing script-based reading lessons delivered by different teachers, I will illustrate how the lessons facilitate or hinder elementary students' understanding of texts, with particular attention paid to how the delivery of the lesson encourages (or not) contextualized orientations to texts. Studies such as Poole's (2003; 2008) have examined spoken and written language usage between teachers and students and have focused specifically on reading texts as part of small reading group discussions. One of the goals of this project is to apply Poole's findings and methods to whole class reading lessons to describe how script-based reading lessons socialize language usage and orientations to texts. This chapter will further review scholarship on script-based instruction and principles of reading instruction reflected in the lessons.

### Language and Literacy Socialization

Beginning at infancy, people are shown or taught how to interact and what language behavior is valued by society (Barton, 2007; Heath, 1983). Experienced language users like parents, teachers, and older siblings model valuable and appropriate forms of language usage. As people grow and mature,

interactions with various people and in different settings are inevitable. These interactions unfold differently, depending on the community of practice a person is participating in. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe a “community of practice” as a group of people with diverse backgrounds sharing similar approaches to making meaning. These approaches to making meaning are observed and tried by participants within “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

People convey who they are and what they know about participating in a community of practice through discourse (Gee, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Some ways of using language to talk about a text are unfamiliar or inappropriate in different social settings. Thus, depending on the setting and situation, newcomers to a community of practice are dependent on other more established individuals to teach and model appropriate language usage for particular interactions. This includes modeling how people read and talk about a text. Researchers have identified numerous activities within particular communities of practice that share common literacy practices. Barton (2007) discusses Heath’s efforts to see literacy in the form of “literacy events,” acts of reading and writing that are central to an interaction (p. 26). These events may include writing letters or emails, talking about an article in the newspaper, writing a grocery list, reading a bedtime story to a child, and many more. These literacy events not only exist in the home, but also in the classroom as literacy practice (Barton, 2007). The classroom and the home are two examples of common communities of practice with varying forms of participation.

Language usage and instruction in the home are often different from school and vary between households. Heath (1983) discussed her observations of three Carolina communities, Trackton, Roadville, and the Townspeople, or mainstream citizens, and how they developed and used language. It is important to note that neither Heath nor this study is intending to create a literate vs. illiterate comparison. In fact, the summary of Heath's description of the three communities describes some of the ways each of the communities uses language and surrounding texts in literacy practice. Trackton an African American working-class community with generations of experience depending on the land for their livelihood, and at the time of Heath's study was transitioning into working in the mills. They encouraged their children to learn how to "talk right" in formal situations, read, and write so they could advance in life (p. 29). The community emphasized oral communication and promoted flexibility in language used for informal interactions. Staying with the community's oral tradition, storytelling was encouraged, and talk about print was featured when it was relevant to daily practices, such as discussing a letter received from a friend or family member. Reading the bible was often practiced socially, but if done individually, regarded as antisocial behavior. Children received their initial reading knowledge through social print, for example, traffic signs and food packaging.

Roadville, a white working-class community, had a longer history of working in the mills. They focused on correctness of talk and truthfulness, which

was less flexible than in the Trackton community, who encouraged embellishments. Reading for pleasure and learning, both individually and in groups, were encouraged, and as a result, the children of Roadville were surrounded by texts. Talk about writing, on the other hand, was not highly valued unless it was about a school assignment. Parents spent time consciously exposing their children to texts, questioning them about illustrations and events from the stories.

The third community, "The Townspeople," consisted of mainstream African American middle-class and mainstream white middle-class families. They supported literacy patterns and expectations that more directly related to school literacy norms. Reading and writing were used for both leisure and work. Young towns children learned how to recognize connections between texts and real life knowledge, which is similar to the literacy practices of the Trackton community. Heath (1983) notes that often before the children of The Townspeople could read, they were able to differentiate between contextualized and decontextualized experiences. Heath's (1983, 1993) work demonstrates that the way children are socialized into reading and writing at home influences their literacy development and practice in school contexts.

Heath's description of these three communities' literacy practices in their daily lives suggests that children from each of these communities bring different literacy skills with them to the classroom. Teachers, therefore, have an important

role in helping students to build on their home literacy practices as they acquire academic literacies

### Literacy Socialization through School Instruction

Researchers have suggested for decades that teachers must modify their teaching to better fit their students' needs. However, in some cases teachers may perpetuate what they think are the social needs, or norms, of the students' communities without significantly and effectively facilitating learning that may be useful to their social progression. Anyon (1980) studied fifth grade classrooms in five different schools in New Jersey and observed a "hidden curriculum" that was based on the school majority's socio-economic status (p. 68). That is, she identified the students' social class "and the income, occupation, and other relevant available social characteristics of the students and their parents" (p.71). She identified four different types of schools in her observations: (1) Working-class School, (2) Middle-class School, (3) Affluent Professional School, and (4) Executive Elite School (p. 71-73). Anyon (1980) observes that each of the four different school types posed its own approach to teaching students. In the two Working-class Schools, the teachers were observed enforcing control over their classes. The language arts teachers focused on simple punctuation, following directions, and answering questions on handouts. Teachers in the Middle-class School were focused on the students getting the right answers and being able to interact clearly in a working environment. For example, the language arts

teachers had students practice simple grammar and write business letters. The reading discussions focused on the teacher questioning the students on particular sentences. Anyon identifies an emphasis on creative learning among the teachers in the Affluent School. Students are encouraged to express their ideas. Compared to the previous two school types, the Affluent School allows student and teachers more room for negotiating what happens in class. The Executive Elite School emphasized the development of logically sound concepts and students' development of analytical skills. Similar to the Affluent School, the Executive Elite School values creative representations of concepts that prepare students for leadership roles. Anyon (1980) urges educators to be aware of the activities going on in classrooms because these activities facilitated by teachers might be preparing students for a future, one chosen or imagined by their sponsors rather than themselves. This argument might be extended further to the discussion of script-based reading lessons. The scripts may be intended to narrow the learning gaps in reading education, but there is the risk of teachers using the script-based lesson without understanding its effects on students' reading comprehension or practices.

School instruction also influences language and literacy socialization significantly. Lea and Street (2006) describe how language changes depending on the topics brought to our attention during class discussions and our thoughts about these subjects. They suggest the current approaches to literacy instruction rely prominently on the 'study skills model' and 'academic socialization model,'

which assume that literacy rules are generally stable and that students can transfer the skills and knowledge to work for them in other social contexts; moreover, these models focus on knowledge deficits, that is the knowledge the students need for the class and academic community, which can potentially overlook skills and knowledge that students already possess (Lea & Street, 2006). Lea and Street promote the 'academic literacies model', by contrast, which allows teachers and students the room to reflect and make connections between their existing knowledge and the new information. Their study of two different academic programs highlights the connections teachers were able to see between how diverse student backgrounds made sense out of texts and "how meanings are negotiated through engagement in written and multimodal texts..." (Lea & Street, 2006, p. 376). Many researchers, including Lea and Street, have encouraged teacher flexibility to address various student discourses and how they can be incorporated into reading and language arts lessons. Lea and Street's study demonstrates that how a teacher approaches literacy can expand or limit the potential learning in a curriculum.

Sometimes, teachers are not able to anticipate the connections they or the students might make between texts and their own prior knowledge, particularly when the content of the texts may be disconnected from some students' experiences. Done. It is also noted that the presumptions these literacy programs make often overlook the social backgrounds of the students exposed to them (Dutro, 2009). In the language arts lesson Dutro (2009) observed, some

students responded to the text and the concepts highlighted in the curriculum, making relevant connections from their own lives that sounded very different from the ones discussed in the text and from their peers; yet the emotions communicated were similar. This suggests that pre-developed lessons can assume the students will respond with similar answers, discounting other responses that may also be valid. Dutro and the classroom teacher agreed that the student responses required more attention and time than the curriculum allowed. Thus, it would seem teachers are in the position to mediate different student responses to a text or emerging topic (Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

The responses that Dutro analyzed were written, so it is interesting to consider whether similar findings would emerge in students' spoken responses as well. Researchers have discussed how people participate in social interactions differently depending on the mode of communication they are using (Gee, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lea & Street, 2006), such as spoken vs. written language usage, for example. Often, though, written language and spoken language occur simultaneously. Poole (2003) analyzed three co-occurring speech-writing connections in classrooms: "spoken reference to a written text or segment, spoken repetition or paraphrase of written language, and text as determiner of topics of talk" (p. 103). She points out that literacy studies applying discourse analyses often separate spoken and written language in relation to literacy events. In her study, by contrast, she focuses on the interplay of co-occurring spoken and written language during literacy events. Poole's



research points out that literacy instruction focused on literacy events can be complicated by the knowledge and practices with which students are equipped. Poole observed that texts seem to act as the support for topic control and do the negotiating work of topics discussed in oral and less institutionalized settings. This draws into question how language usage and discussion topics become socialized or appropriated in classroom literacy events.

In a subsequent study, Poole (2008) examined language socialization in small reading groups. Poole observed and transcribed teacher-student interactions, and found that within reading groups, certain kinds of activities led to teachers and students using “decontextualized” language around the text, whereas others facilitated “contextualized” language uses. Poole defines contextualized language as having explicit connections to author, audience, or the immediate context, e.g., the use of first and second person pronouns and the assumption of previous knowledge. On the other hand, decontextualized language—associated with “essayist literacy”—is characterized by structures such as relative clauses, indefinite articles, and omission of deictic expressions and first or second person pronouns. When the discourse in the observed reading groups pertained strictly to the information in the text, students incorporated the teacher’s verbal displays of the decontextualized language more often than written displays. However, students used more contextualized language and made personal connections to the texts when the discussion was linked to visual aids such as pictures, even referring to pictures over captions.

Poole's study suggests that student and teacher orientations to texts are worked out in interaction, and that certain activities may be more facilitative than others in helping students develop connections to texts and potentially encouraging comprehension and retention of knowledge.

Previous research thus depicts a very intricate picture of the language and literacy development taking place in classrooms. While students come to the classroom with very different ideas about how to participate in academic settings and diverse world-views, teachers come to classrooms with different ideas about teaching and learning. Aware of their objectives for a lesson, teachers stimulate students' thoughts and background knowledge about new topics in different ways. One of the objectives of this study is to identify different ways script-based lessons incorporate prior student experiences, academic or personal, into new lessons and how they affect the ways the students and the teacher talk about texts. The following is a survey of how teachers commonly help students comprehend new or unfamiliar texts.

### Connecting Students' Ideas and Learning to Texts

Reading research over the last several decades has considered how the complexity of reading includes not only the decoding and recognition of written symbols but also the reader's background knowledge (Madhuri, 2006; Barton, 2007). Often teachers try to connect the new information from texts to students' pre-existing background knowledge, or "schema." According to constructivist

views of cognition, which are applicable to reading comprehension, chunks of knowledge and individual details are not only arranged logically into pre-existing schema, but they are also “meditational tools” that affect and are effected by interacting in situations (McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005, p. 543). The organization of schemata is individualized, so the task of the teacher is to tap into these schemata and help students recall information they may see relevant to the new topic or text they will be interacting with.

Related to this focus on reader schemata has been an emphasis in reading pedagogy on preparing students to read a text because reading of the same text can differ according to students’ existing knowledge (Toledo, 2005). Aebersold and Field (1997) suggest three main reasons for preparing students to read a text: “(1) to establish a purpose for reading a given text, (2) to activate existing knowledge about the topic and thus get more out of reading the text, and (3) to establish realistic expectations about what is in the text and thus read more effectively” (p. 66). Aebersold and Field add that in order to establish purposeful reading, it is important to consider students’ language proficiencies to match appropriate reading activities with students. Some texts do not require detailed reading and may only call for students to scan the text for pieces of information, for example, dates or names (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). This suggests teachers consider topic knowledge and reading skills when planning appropriate activities. In whole class reading lessons, some students may perform tasks more

efficiently, while others with topic knowledge may need class time to develop reading skills necessary for completing tasks.

The second key reason for careful preparation of reading lessons is the need to activate students' background knowledge; this may or may not incorporate lengthy formal reading strategies, but it will include short sessions of recalling related ideas that tap into students' schemata. Aebersold and Field suggest that an introduction to the reading topic helps readers recall relevant information such as vocabulary, textual characteristics, cultural differences, and personal experiences. The instructional goal is to increase the students' potential to comprehend the main ideas in the text and situate them in relationship to background knowledge (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Toledo, 2005). Additionally, this introduction acts as an informal assessment, providing the teacher with information about students' comprehension, relevant knowledge, and potential need for supplemental information.

The third key reason for preparing students to read a text is to set realistic expectations for reading the text (Aebersold & Field, 1997). Previewing a text does not require the reader to read the whole text. By previewing a text, the teacher and students are establishing textual characteristics such as communicative intentions of a text (Toledo, 2005). Students might identify the author, subheadings, photographs, charts, tables, words in bold or italics, etc. These cues help students formulate predictions about the reading and anticipate

the information in the text. The negotiation of these predictions and anticipation often begin on the periphery.

If following the principles above, teachers may strongly encourage students to share different ideas and ways of interacting with texts during reading lessons, which promotes the usage of schema. Such schema-activating practices may come in different forms. McVee et al. (2005) suggest the new task for schema related theories and literacy studies is to investigate new methods for studying language processes and their effects on schema development. Furthermore, research in second language acquisition suggests that students and teachers work towards socially acceptable ideas and language usage through talk (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Markee, 2004). Thus, the talk teachers and students engage in is likely setting up a negotiation of ideas that can clarify or mediate comprehension of a text or topic. Markee (2004) refers to the “talk that occurs at the boundaries of different classroom speech exchange systems” as zones of interactional transition (Markee, 2004, p. 584). To identify these zones of interactional transition (ZIT), Markee used conversation analysis to identify the structures created by the speakers and listeners. For example, question-answer sequences begin with a question, yet a question can be inserted within a response to a question-answer sequence, ultimately resulting in discussion. In addition, counter questions are noted as being a way for the teacher to redirect the conversation, and likely the agenda. With the direction that education has taken, these ZITs could become highly

relevant areas to study, more specifically, a point of reference to mark the negotiation of ideas between the teacher, students, text, and script.

Direct instruction (DI), as will be discussed later in this chapter, relies on script-based lessons to organize teachers in their sequencing of input and interactions in reading lessons. In using script-based lessons, teachers might feel bound by the curriculum to limit meaningful discussion about background knowledge and interpretations before and/or while reading a text. ZITs are likely sites where teachers and students may stray from the script to negotiate their knowledge about texts and ways of understanding or making their thoughts known.

### Direct Instruction and Script-based Lessons

Since the passage of NCLB, K-12 teachers have been adapting to a nationwide trend of using “script-based lessons.” The practice of writing a script for teachers to follow dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Venezky, 1990). Venezky (1990) suggests that reading scripts did not grow out of teacher necessity but out of publishers’ needs to market their teaching texts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, teacher education had been improving consistently, yet the inclusion of scripts for reading teachers to follow also increased. It would not be until the 1960s that Bereiter and Engelmann would formally develop the Direct Instruction Method that included not only principles for deciding what should be taught and how new skills and information should be taught, but also required

that procedures indicating teacher and student interactions be written explicitly (Slocum, 2004). In other words, this method is a formal way to refer to script-based curricula, similar to the Reading First program outlined by NCLB.

DI, as a method for organizing a curriculum, is based on three principles: (1) curricula are organized by generalizable strategies; (2) curricula outline specific instruction for building skills by systematizing lessons, skill introductions, support reduction, student practice, and specifying teaching procedures in specific detail; and (3) lessons contain explicit details about how teachers and students will interact to maximize “active and productive engagement with tasks” set at appropriate instructional levels (Slocum, 2004, p. 81). Generally, DI concentrates on the “Big Ideas.” As Slocum (2004) and others state, these are the specific “skills, concepts, generalizations, and other knowledge structures that enable the student to generalize appropriately” (p.82). One example of a big idea in reading is phonetic awareness. Students often use this skill when they are learning how to pronounce letters and, eventually, sounds in words.

The intent behind the DI teaching method was, and is, to increase reading development in inner-city schools (Commeyras, 2007). The passage of NCLB in 2001 directed attention towards “proven,” or “research based” curricula, such as DI. It was under NCLB that Reading First was established. Reading First required states applying for federal funding to adopt research-based reading curricula that focused on: “phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension” (Gamse et al., 2008, p. 2). In addition, the curriculum

adopted had to provide “professional development and coaching for teachers in how to use scientifically based reading practices [...]” (Gamse et al., 2008, p. 2). Some states, such as California, adopted curricula that used the DI method to achieve these Reading first requirements. So Reading First was not akin to DI or script-based teaching, but if the curriculum had significant scientific support, scripted or not, Reading First supported it. Congressionally mandated interim reports examined the effectiveness of the Reading First program (Gamse et al., 2008). The 2008 interim report for the program found that the impact of the Reading First program had no statistically significant effects on student reading comprehension test scores. More specifically, the Reading First program did not significantly improve reading comprehension; moreover, it reduced the amount of student engagement with text. However, explicit reading instruction did increase and the program did increase reading instruction time in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Although such programs as Reading First utilize script-based lessons to systematically improve literacy, the scripts, or explicit instruction, seem to be yielding mixed results.

Commeyras (2007) and Paez (2003) have discussed the important role teacher knowledge plays in planning lessons and understanding how students read and write. In addition to learning how to conduct reading lessons, new or pre-service teachers are also asked to write their own DI lesson plans. This current practice in student teaching programs can give pre-service teachers some insight into creating and following DI lesson plans, but once they are



working for a school district, the emphasis seem to be on the new teacher following the curriculum. Gelberg (2008) reflects on her own teaching and how it evolved over three decades. She learned and applied new teaching strategies, adding to her repertoire. Gelberg also experienced the push for using new teaching methods and strategies. For example, she notes that in the mid 1970's there was a growing trend to include phonics education in early primary grades, or K-3. The curriculum she began teaching encouraged her to create lessons that addressed students' language needs at their skill levels. She was able to rely on supportive colleagues and, over the following years, learned how to adapt to the new teaching trends. Gelberg's experience clearly suggests that the teaching profession undergoes many changes and adopts new teaching trends. Gelberg (2008) adds that new teachers can make use of scripts associated with DI curricula, but as they develop as professionals, they will likely learn the limitations of a script and devise methods for modifying scripts. Some educators may agree with Gelberg (2008) that script-based curricula do not work the same for every student, and the teacher needs to adapt the curricula based on assessed student needs.

McIntyre, Rightmyer, and Petrosko (2008) studied differences between scripted and non-scripted reading and phonics lessons in elementary school classrooms. Their findings demonstrated no significant differences between the students' performance scores in scripted and non-scripted models. Interestingly, they did observe clear consistent instructional patterns among the teachers using

the scripted and non-scripted reading curricula. One difference McIntyre et al. (2008) observed was higher usage of eclectic instruction patterns teachers displayed during non-scripted lessons. To better understand why these instructional differences might be, it is important to understand what DI entails.

What is of interest to this study is the focus on teachers following explicit details written by someone else. Margolis and MacCabe (2006) warn of a potential dilemma that looms over teachers when they struggle to meet the needs of readers and are mandated to use specified curricula. Moreover, McIntyre et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of teacher knowledge being a necessity to implementing any curriculum. This emphasis echoes the need for teachers to be able to implement and assess the effectiveness of curricula and adapt script-based lessons to students' needs.

Adhering to the requirements of NCLB, publishers have developed curricula that entail different activities and readings for different learners. In some of these scripted curricula, teachers are allowed more room to adapt lessons, while others supply scripts that allow very little room for teachers to alter lessons. Commeyras (2007) describes a continuum for pre-service teachers to think about the kinds of lesson plans they may come into contact with; on one side of the continuum she places lessons developed by other sources outside of the classroom, and on the other side she places lessons developed by the classroom teacher.

Although one might predict that scripts on the one end of the continuum could hinder the kinds of rich, contextualized discussions that Poole (2008) found enhanced students' connections to reading, many teaching manuals, or teacher editions, currently include full unit and daily lesson plans that provide scripts that at least on the surface seem to be aimed at helping students to connect their background knowledge to the reading text and thus to lead to contextualized talk around the text. For example, in a whole-class reading groups lesson for a weekly Language Arts plan, the script often looks something like this one from a fifth grade reading class:

Remind students that this theme focuses on interconnections between people and wild animals. Students have just read a selection about grizzly bears. Next they will read about efforts to save the golden lion tamarin from extinction. Discuss with students the challenges of reintroducing captive animals into the wild. Then use the Get Set to Read on pages 626 – 627 to learn why the tamarins need help to survive. (Cooper & Pikulski, 2003, p. 626A)

The excerpt from the teacher's edition guides teachers to help students connect previous readings in the unit to the future reading passage. In addition, engaging the students in discussion about the upcoming topic is a common way for teachers to activate students' schema and set up a cognitive point to add new information. However, script-based lessons could potentially inhibit opportunities for negotiating language use and information according to student needs

because of their limited, static examples and prescribed social interactions. By looking at scripted, whole-class reading lessons as they are actually delivered, I will explore the extent to which script-based lessons facilitate or hinder students in making personal connections to their reading, as seen through their contextualized language use around the texts in focus in their reading lessons.

### Purpose of the Present Study

Script-based curricula, as an outgrowth of NCLB, aim to respond to documented low state test scores. The intent of this study is to describe how the script influences teaching practices and students' comprehension and orientations to texts. This study focuses in particular on the connections students make to their reading as seen through contextualized language usage. If unwritten teacher questions and statements are used to redirect students' comprehension about texts occur during the reading lesson, these will be described and analyzed for their effects on the lesson goals and objectives. Effectively, students may negotiate different ways of orienting to class readings, and in whole class reading lessons, these interactions may be supported or not by the teacher and the script.

According to Poole (2008) "classroom interactions surrounding written text and illustrations can differ in ways that call [...] into question" assumed goals of "learning to comprehend, produce and orient to [...] decontextualized texts" (p. 401). It is the purpose of this study to:

1. analyze how script-based lessons affect students' comprehension of and orientation towards texts
2. identify ways teachers modify the script to validate (or not) students contextualized orientations to the text
3. identify ways students and teachers negotiate language usage regarding text during script-based lessons

The emphasis on socialized and contextualized language usage attends to the potential and assessed needs of students. While teachers are encouraged, and in some cases required, to stick to the script, there are linguistic features in the script that may allow for teaching accommodations. The accommodations may exist as planned reading segments or any number of spoken negotiations of meaning.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

The focus of this current study is to analyze how script-based reading lessons facilitate or hinder students' understandings of texts in elementary classes, with particular attention paid to how the delivery of the lesson encourages or does not encourage contextualized orientations to texts. Prior to this study, I have noticed in student-teacher interactions that language usage has a deeper effect on reading comprehension than merely reading the text. The intention of this study is to analyze the linguistic interactions between teachers and to identify how the script and teacher accommodations to the script influence the teachers' and students' language use around the text. This requires a multifaceted look at the classroom discourse.

This chapter will begin by explaining the institutional context being examined and the general goals for the literacy program. A description of the participants and their relevant linguistic characteristics is given. The methods used for data collection and analysis will be further described towards the end of this chapter.

#### Academic Context: The Institutional Context

NCLB has required states to adopt literacy programs that demonstrate significant learning results. Several states have developed state standards that

identify the learning goals and strategies to be taught in schools. The California State Content Standards were part of the agreement with the federal government, which further outlines how the state's schools will meet higher learning expectations. In California, many districts have adopted script-based curriculum in an attempt to meet this mandate. For this study, I examined script-based reading lessons in two fifth grade classrooms in one California school. The California school that I have solicited consent from uses scripted reading curricula that meet the California State Standards.

In 1999, California's State Board of Education adopted the content standards for English-Language Arts. These content standards affect the skills, knowledge, and abilities that teachers emphasize in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade (Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission, 2007). The content standards since 1999 have been revised, and along with it, program guidelines have evolved. The content standards and guidelines of 1999 have since defined different Reading/Language Arts program types for grades kindergarten through eighth grade: (1) Basic Program, (2) Basic Program with English-Language Development, (3) Primary Language/English-Language Development Program, (4) Intervention Program, and (5) Intervention Program for English Learners (California Department of Education, 2012). California's Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission, now currently the Instructional Quality Commission, "[oversees] the development [...] [of] the evaluation criteria for instructional materials and then recommending

them to the [State Board of Education] for adoption (Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division, 2012, p. 4). California's State Board of Education accepts publisher submissions that adhere to one of the above program types. In addition, each submitted curriculum is then reviewed for alignment with English-Language Arts content standards, Social Content, appropriate assessments, support for English learners and students with disabilities, and instructional planning and support (Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division, 2012). After the review process and deliberations, the commission would vote on whether to recommend the curriculum or not. The report is then made available to California's schools for deciding on textbook and curriculum adoption.

The initial proposals for this school's literacy plan begin with the school district's teaching philosophy. The school district promotes comprehensive planning, utilizing input from the community and the individual school site. The committees, or school site councils, formed on each campus create a literacy plan for their school site, governed by laws and district requirements. Each elementary school site council consists of the principal, teachers, school personnel, parents and/or community representatives. Teachers and school personnel representatives are chosen by their peers to take part in the council meetings. The council must approve a plan that outlines the school's participation in state and in federal programs. The plan identifies goals for improving achievement and is based on analysis of verifiable state data. Review of the plan



is required annually, and the school site council must approve any changes to the literacy plan (BUSD, Language Arts Instruction, 2006).

The school district emphasizes literacy being the foundation for learning in other subject areas. Similar to Heath's findings and many other researchers, the district acknowledges reading, oral language, and written language skills as important for acquiring and communicating ideas and knowledge. The school district is mandated by education code to meet standards in reading, speaking, and writing. Additionally, faculty must also be provided opportunities to develop their knowledge about how students develop literacy/language skills. California State standards state that teachers "shall" use a variety of instructional strategies to accommodate students' needs. The school district incorporates differentiated instruction in line with their mission statement. This allows teachers to individualize lessons according to assessed needs.

The school site I have observed has a diverse population. According to the number of families qualifying for state nutrition assistance, or free meal plans, and its participation in other federal programs, the school is categorized as a Federal Title 1 school. The state of California holds an annual student assessment called the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR). The school site has an enrollment of over 650 students. Since only grades 2 through 5 were required to be tested, 485 students have recorded test scores in Language Arts (California Department of Education, 2010). Out of 485 students with test scores, 86 were English Language learners (ELL) and 302 students were economically

disadvantaged. The average class size was 32. According to the test results from Spring of 2010, the fifth grade recorded 63% of its students scoring either proficient or advanced in Language Arts. An estimated 28% of the fifth grade population scored within the Basic level, 4% were Below Basic, and 5% were Far Below Basic (California Department of Education, 2010).

The textbook selection committee for this school site has reviewed several of the curricula and texts recommended by the California Board of Education and decided on Bear et al.'s (2010) *California Treasures*. According to the California Department of Education (2012), *California Treasures* is a type 1 program, or basic. The committee also selected a type 4, reading intervention curriculum (California Department of Education, 2012), *California Gateways* (Scarcella et al., 2010) for students who are significantly below their grade level. Both of these programs adhere to the California English-Language Arts Content Standards, which is also one of the requirements to be recommended by the curriculum commission.

Each of the previously mentioned curricula contains scripts for the teacher to read and pacing suggestions. *California Gateways* requires the teacher to follow the scripts to ensure the effectiveness of the program. The program also boasts a minimal amount of preparation time for the teacher. *California Treasures* provides scripts for selected activities and discussion questions for teachers to use with readings. This program encourages fidelity to the text/curriculum, but it does not contain the same quantity of scripts and teacher

directions as does *California Treasures*. These two programs were intended to cover the school sites diverse student population.

### Participants

The two lessons observed were taught by fully credentialed teachers who have taught in the district for more than five years. Class 1 was taught by Teacher 1, and Class 2 by Teacher 2. Class 1 consisted entirely of fifth grade students. The curriculum text used in this class was *California Treasures*. Teacher 1 taught fifth grade the previous academic year, but was using this new text for the first time during the academic year of the observation. The curriculum text, *California Treasures*, allowed Teacher 1 flexibility in speech and lesson activities; in other words, she was able to change the lesson as needed. Teacher 2 taught a lower grade level the previous academic year. Teacher 2 used *California Gateways*, the explicitly detailed and scripted program designed for rapid literacy intervention during the academic year of this observation. Teacher 2's class consisted of mixed grade levels from fourth and fifth grade. Teacher 2 was required by administration and the publisher of the curriculum text to follow the lessons in the teacher's edition faithfully and without deviating from the script. Both teachers were adjusting to new curriculum texts. Teacher 1 was more familiar with the grade level standards, while Teacher 2 had to adjust to a combination of fourth and fifth grade content standers

The number of students in each class differed significantly. Class 1 typically had between 32 and 34 students. Class 2 had 17 students. One of the differences in class make-up was class 1 was arranged according to reading level across the collective fifth grade class. Teacher 1's class, class 1, was the intermediate reading level. Teacher 2's class, class 2, was the remedial class receiving intervention assistance. Both classes were similar in linguistic make up. There were students whose first language was not English in each class. Class 1 was designed to follow the scripted lessons that came with the *California Treasures* teacher edition, but allowed for teacher accommodations. Class 2, as stated earlier, is designed to rapidly improve literacy skills of struggling readers. The differences among the mixed grades and reading levels in this class are supposed to be accommodated by the curriculum. This will be discussed further in Chapter 3. In both classes, each student had his or her own book. Also, both classes arranged students' desks into groups of four or six.

Each of the three reading lessons observed and recorded was taught within the regular academic year during the third trimester. Each teacher has a scheduled block of time, roughly, 90 minutes, for Reading/Language Arts. Teacher 2's lesson is often carried over into the next day because it is highly scripted and requires her to follow sequential steps for each lesson and without variation; after a lesson ends, the next lesson begins. Teacher 1's text has pre-planned lessons and scripted questions and teaching directions for her to follow.

The school site council encourages fidelity to the curriculum, but there is some flexibility allowed in how the instruction is carried out.

### Data Collection

Prior to approaching teachers about participating in this study, the principal of the school site was briefed about the study. The principal provided permission to solicit participation from fifth grade teachers. Before beginning data collection, IRB approval for this research and teacher informed consent was obtained. Following teacher consent, students took home a parental informed consent form explaining the project and what kind of data will be collected. The participants were informed that there would be no researcher manipulation of the lesson and all students, with or without permission would have access to the material. Prior to observations and audio recordings taking place, students were read a student appropriate briefing to gain their assent.

Once the ninety minute lessons began, the audio recording device was turned on and placed towards the center of each class and slightly closer to the teacher. As students began to talk and respond, the recording device was moved to better record the students who spoke more softly. In each class the students sat in desks that were arranged in groups and rows. Class 1 had 32 students in attendance on the day of recording. Class 2 was smaller in number, yet all 17 students were in attendance. Observations and recordings included only the teacher and students with parental consent. General observations about

classroom interactions were recorded on a notepad. After the lesson was completed, three students from each class were interviewed (See Appendix A). The student interviews were recorded using the same audio recording device as used during the lessons. In the interest of time, students were interviewed at the same time in the library, and for Class 2, inside the hallway leading to the classroom. The interviews lasted between 5 and 10 minutes.

Before the lessons began, the teachers were made aware of the placement of the audio recording device. Each of the three teachers had script-based lessons to teach. Following the recording of each lesson, the teachers were asked to be interviewed. Due to schedule constraints, Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 were unable to conduct an audio-recorded interview. Instead, the interview protocol was adapted into a written format and emailed as a word document to both teachers the same day the lessons recorded (See Appendix B). The responses were then emailed back within 24 hours of the lesson.

### Method of Analysis

Following the completed audio recordings of the reading lessons and the teacher and student interviews, the dialogue was transcribed and analyzed using a discourse analytic approach. Discourse analysis is an analytical tool that allowed the tape-recorded lessons and interviews to be analyzed for significant relevant segments. These interviews were then compared and contrasted between the teachers and their students to gauge perceived effectiveness of the

lesson and whether or not the learning objectives indicated in the textbook were met. The teacher and student adaptations to comprehension questions were general sites of contextualized and decontextualized language usage. It is important to note that it is presumed the teachers are treating the script-based lesson as the minimum guideline for the lesson. Additionally, there is a significant difference that this analysis is focusing on, and that is the two lessons are using two different curricula. There were differences in the texts and the organization of the lesson, but there were general similarities that allowed for a comparison to be made, such as vocabulary development and teacher think alouds.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

As discussed in Chapter Two, two separate script-based reading lessons from two different fifth grade teachers were observed. Each lesson, although script-based, was carried out in different ways. Teachers at the school site were given freedom to exercise discretion when delivering the lesson but were still encouraged to use the DI methods supplied by the curriculum's script-based lesson format. The approaches to delivering the script-based lessons varied from reading the script exactly as written in the teacher's edition, to reading some of the script. In some cases, the teachers followed the interactions described but inserted their own dialogue to deliver and solicit information from students. This chapter will present an analysis of the teacher's script as it appears in the teacher's text and the kinds of modifications the teachers make to the scripted lesson. Following a brief description of the two lessons, the analysis will begin with the more positive aspects of the script-based lessons in terms of enhancing student reading comprehension and language development and then examine the negative aspects of the scripted nature of lessons in terms of student reading and comprehension and language development. A discussion of the findings and implications will highlight the possible directions this research may head.



### Class 1 Short Overview

The two script-based lessons observed are from different texts. Class 1, which used Bear et al.'s *California Treasures*, begins with Teacher 1 (T1) reviewing the objectives and parts of the lesson agenda. The objectives of the lesson are to teach students how to make inferences about texts and to incorporate academic language. After the initial introduction to the lesson, T1 reads a short story entitled "Who Says Robots Can't Think," and the students are instructed to listen. When the teacher finishes reading, she and the class discuss highlighted vocabulary from "Who Says Robots Can't Think." The vocabulary words will appear throughout the lesson. After the vocabulary review, T1 and the class locate the focus question at the beginning of the story, "Zuthera." As they read the story, T1 stops to ask comprehension questions that are provided in the teacher's edition as well as other questions that she developed. As the class and T1 reach the end of the story, the teacher continues to ask modified comprehension questions, and students continue to respond to the questions.

### Class 2 Short Overview

According to the fifth grade teachers at this school site, the teacher's script in Scarcella et al.'s *California Gateways* is more regimented than the script used in the other fifth grade language arts classes. There are similarities between the two language arts approaches to the curriculum, such as reading comprehension

questions pertaining to the objectives and vocabulary for understanding the reading; however, Class 2's script is more regimented. Class 2's *California Gateways* text, as mentioned earlier, is intended for struggling readers and includes both fourth and fifth grade students. What might come across as being more regimented are the scripted teacher actions in the teacher's text.

Additionally, Scarcella et al.'s text requires teachers to sign an agreement to follow the script as it is written in the teaching manual. Class 2's lesson begins with a preview of the lesson, and the script instructs the teacher and students to review the objectives of the lesson. Additionally, the preview portion of the lesson instructs the teacher to display "discussion frames," or discussion starters, for students to use throughout the lesson. Discussion frames will be explained in more detail later in this chapter. The script details a transition into step one, "making connections," and the teacher reads the rephrased objectives for this step: "The first objective is to connect what you already know to the read-aloud "Discovery in Egypt," by Jonny Zucker. The second objective is to discuss what makes a great explorer" (Scarcella et al., 2010, p. 527). The teacher explains the interactional routine that is expected to take place between the student, the teacher, and the text. As the teacher reads and the students follow along in their anthologies, the teacher stops to write down new discussion frames for students to use as they answer questions aloud. Step two of the lesson is "developing vocabulary," which consists of 6 words. Students listen and respond individually

after the teacher reads each question that corresponds with a picture. The students then complete a page in their practice books.

### Positive Aspects of Script-based Lessons

In both script-based lessons observed, organizational patterns and scaffolding tools in the teacher's script were designed to help students practice new vocabulary and develop ideas about the text. These organizational patterns are intended to assist the teacher in creating a routine for the class to implement. Class 2 provides evidence that the organizational pattern called discussion frames was useful for the students to use when answering certain scripted questions. A "discussion frame" is a portion of a sentence that assists students when answering a question about a text. Students fill in the empty portion to complete the "discussion frame" and answer the question.

Additionally, these script-based lessons incorporate activities that help students learn and develop new vocabulary. The scripts for Class 2 provided Teacher 2 with a description of a "corrective routine" for helping students better understand the new vocabulary. Class 1 illustrates how even when teachers modify the scripts, and the modifications cause some confusion, the teacher can still resort to key points in the script to clarify the new vocabulary. The next two sections that follow will look at these two scripted elements, discussion frames and routines for vocabulary development, within Class 2 and Class 1 that worked to improve students' comprehension of and orientation towards texts. Each

section will include a discussion of modifications the teacher made to the script. However, the findings of these observations may vary due to the script-based curriculum adopted by the school and different teachers modifications.

### Discussion Frames

As mentioned earlier, discussion frames aid students in answering questions about a text. Moreover, they frame student responses into acceptable academic forms using decontextualized language. The teacher typically writes the discussion frames on the board before class. When the teacher reaches a discussion question that is related to one or two of the discussion frames, she reads the question and then points to the relevant displayed frames as seen in Class 2. In Class 2's lesson, T2 prepared the class for the discussion question. The teacher explained what she wants the class to do after listening to the question and points to the discussion frames. The discussion frames T2 instructed the students to use in this step of the lesson were:

1. Dr. Sharp thought the twins were helpful because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The twins were \_\_\_\_\_. (Steck-Vaughn, 2010, p. 529)

After she asks the discussion question, she reminds the students to "think about it first," and then she rephrases the question to highlight important words and phrases, such as "allowed to" and "explore again."

#### Example 1

- 28 T2: Okay, think about this question I'm gonna ask you. I want you to  
29 think about it first and then with your partner you're gonna take a

30 few seconds to answer this question. Remember to use the  
31 discussion frame. Why were the twins allowed to go to the  
32 mountains to explore again? Why were they allowed to go  
33 explore again up in the mountains? Think and discuss with your  
34 partners please. (Teacher 2, personal communication, March 18,  
2011)

In Class 2, the script instructed the teacher to give the students “a few seconds” to “discuss with partner[s]” (Steck-Vaughn, 2010, p. 529) their responses to the discussion question. It is important to note that Teacher 2 did not limit the students’ discussion to only a few seconds nor to just filling in the blank portion of the discussion frame. Even though this is the more regimented program, and Teacher 2 signed a contract agreeing to follow the script, she modified her lesson to allow more time for student discussion if needed and allowed elaboration when students felt inclined to add more detail.

The discussion that surrounded the question and the discussion frames required students to make connections to the text. The discussion question solicited a reason and provided students with the subject(s) and the action the subjects were allowed to do: the subject being the “twins” and the action being “allowed to go to the mountains to explore again.” The idea conveyed is that there was some reason for the “twins to go to the mountains again. The discussion frames provided the students with words from the text, such as, “the twins”, “Dr. Sharp”, and gave the student two choices for starting to respond with

their reasons or Dr. Sharp's reason. The word "helpful" suggests to the students to look for a positive reason for the twins going to the mountains to explore again. The students were able to make connections between the question, the text, and their own ideas, which lead to their responses.

#### Example 2

35 Ss: (Talking) Because Mr., Dr. Sharp said that they were good luck  
36 and if they came again, the twins might find more new  
37 discoveries, like they found a second amulet. Because they  
38 are really special and good luck. (Students from Class 2,  
personal communication, March 18, 2011)

Some of the language the students supplied in example 2 was from the text, which connected the question to the text and to the students' comprehension. For example in lines 34 and 36, phrase "good luck" was used to describe the twins and complete the first discussion frame. Although the question and the discussion frames were scripted, the interaction between the students depended on the students finding relevant words and phrases that completed their responses. The students' return to the text's language and the students' elaborated responses demonstrate the students' comprehension of the questions and their ability to find support in the text for their responses. The discussion frames seemed to provide students with ideas that guided them as they began thinking and discussing their responses, such as "the Twins were helpful because..." and "Dr. Sharp thought." Example 3 illustrates the student's

comprehension of and comfort with the text's language they chose for their answers.

### Example 3

39 T2: Okay, thank you for sharing. Let's have [Student 1]. Can you

40 please use the discussion frame to say your answer?

41 S1: Dr. Sharp gave permission for the twins to go explore because

42 they found the two amulets.

43 T2: They already found something very important.

44 S1: And Dr. Sharp

44 T2: And?

45 S1: said that they were good luck, and when the old lady gave them

46 the first one she said that it's gonna be good luck and that they'll

47 get good luck. (Teacher 2 & Student 1, personal communication,

March 18, 2011)

Even though the discussion frames are good scaffolds for helping students demonstrate their comprehension of texts, the students' responses suggest that the teacher still may need to modify the script. Teacher 2 modified the question and even added more prompting for the students as they prepared to share their responses with other students. The teaching script, the actual words the teacher was supposed to read, is as follows: "With your partner, take a few seconds to answer this question: Why do you think Dr. Sharp said, 'Maybe having you two here wasn't such a bad idea'?" (Steck-Vaughn, p. 529). As we

saw in Example 1, what Teacher 2 actually asked is different from the script, but she still engages the students in a similar discussion that utilizes pieces of the scripted discussion frames. In the post interview, Teacher 2 said that she “adapted” the script “to help students understand the questions.” When the students began discussing in small groups, they began using parts of the discussion frames, namely “Dr. Sharp,” the “twins,” and some relevant example of the twins being “helpful.” When the students shared their final answers with the class (Example 3), they began answering with pieces of the discussion frames and finished with their textually-relevant input. This illustrates an effective use of scripted scaffolds with some minor modifications. The point of the discussion frames seem to be aimed at encouraging students’ relevant thought and discussion in a way that is appropriate for the situation.

#### Whole Class Support for Vocabulary Development

Script-based lessons are intended to introduce new vocabulary that is important to comprehending the text. The script may outline or describe a routine for the teacher and students to implement in class. More specifically, the observed vocabulary routines were defined in the script; however, teachers made many modifications. In Class 2, Teacher 2 modified the scripted questions, but still followed the “Corrective” routine described in the teacher’s edition. Below is the “corrective” action the teacher is instructed to take if students are not clear in their answers:



If an answer does not seem to be related to the vocabulary word, ask students to explain further. If students respond in a way that shows understanding of the word, congratulate them and move on. If students respond in a way that does not show understanding, restate the explanation and ask the question again. (Steck-Vaughn, 2010, p. 530)

The corrective routine provided in the Steck-Vaughn (2010) text appears to improve student comprehension among the whole class, as illustrated in the teacher-student interaction in example 4.

#### Example 4

224 T2: Today we will continue discussing the six words we've learned in  
225 this chapter. We'll review these words by participating in a word  
226 chat. Remember the goal of the word chat is to have a fun  
227 discussion that shows you understand the meaning of the words.  
228 So we will discuss these words together. I will ask you a question  
229 about each word, and then I will call on a few of you to answer.  
230 Then I'll ask you to please explain your answer. Take a few  
231 seconds to answer each question. Be prepared to share your  
232 thoughts with the class. Are you ready?  
233 Ss: Yes  
234 T2: Everyone point to the first word, and say the word *expert*.  
235 Ss: Expert  
236 T2: Would an expert hairdresser give you a good haircut?  
237 Ss: Yes, no.  
238 T2: Thumbs up or thumbs down? An expert hairdresser would they  
239 give you a good haircut? Okay, thumbs up. Very good. Now  
240 discuss with your partners why or why not, cause I think two of  
241 you guys said thumbs down. So if you still think thumbs down,  
242 then maybe you have your own reasons why. Okay, you need to  
243 put it up or down because you know, not because someone else  
244 knows.  
245 S1: Yeah, but it's too easy to get confused.  
246 T2: Okay, think about the question: "Would an expert hairdresser  
247 give you a good haircut? If they're an expert, would they give  
248 you a good haircut?"  
249 Ss: Yes

250 T2: Yeah. Okay, so discuss why. Go ahead.  
 251 Ss: (Talking) Because they're experts and they already know how to  
 252 do it. Like you already studied it and you already have practice.  
 253 Yeah, they already have years of practice and  
 254 T2: Okay, very good. Thank you guys for sharing. Uh, I want Student  
 255 2. Student 2, why would an expert hairdresser give you a good  
 256 haircut?  
 257 S2: An expert haircutter  
 258 T2: Hairdresser  
 259 S2: Hairdresser would be an expert because it wants to cut your  
 260 hair and it wants to make it nice.  
 261 T2: Okay, if they're an expert what special skills do they have?  
 262 Uhm, Student 3  
 263 S3: Cutting your hair.  
 264 T2: And why would it be a good haircut?  
 265 S3: Because, uhm they have the special skills. They know how to  
 266 do them how the person wants it.  
 267 T2: And someone in this group. I don't know if it was Student 4 or  
 268 5? What did you guys say? I heard you guys say something  
 269 really good.  
 270 S4: I said that that like if they're an expert like they have years of  
 271 practice (Teacher 1, Student 1, Student 2, Student 3, & Student  
 4, personal communication, March 18, 2011)

Teacher 2, after explaining the interaction that will take place, identifies some confusion within the class (lines 240-241). The teacher gives the students an opportunity to respond again, and after they affirm that an "expert hairdresser" would give someone a good haircut, she also instructs them to discuss with each other why (line 247). This interaction allows the students to confirm their understanding of the word "expert" with their partners and then later with the teacher followed by some praise. The routine present in example 4 illustrates how this teacher applied a helpful script-based routine with minimal modification of the routine.

Scripted Presentation of Routines. In some situations, the script may outline routines like vocabulary development differently and possibly more clearly than a teacher's modifications. It was observed in some situations the teacher resorting back to some inherent attributes of the script. One example is T1's modified vocabulary routine resorting back to scripted attributes in the McMillian/McGraw-Hill (2010) teacher's edition. The script describes the following interaction for vocabulary: "Introduce each word using the Define/Example/Ask routine" (p. 469). One of the scripted examples is as follows: "Rotated means turned around on an axis or a central point. The student rotated the globe to locate China. What other kinds of things can be rotated?" (McMillian/McGraw-Hill, 2010, p. 469). The scripted example presented in the teacher's edition follows the scripted routine providing first the "definition," second an "example," and third "asking" students to give examples. In the following example (5), the teacher begins with asking the students to provide the definition.

#### Example 5

77 T1: See if you remember them. [Student 1] what does rotated mean?

78 S1: Uhm, [unintelligible] can move?

79 T1: How though?

80 S1: [unintelligible]

81 T1: You rotate you go like this or you go in one spot and turn.

82 S1: [unintelligible]

83 T1: One spot and turn, yes. Student 2, what is a robot?

84 S2: It's a machine that (2.0) helps people.

85 T1: It helps you do things, yes. Um, S3 what does reverse mean?

(Teacher 1, Student 1, & Student 2, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

Class 1 had previously reviewed the vocabulary, so T1 modified the vocabulary routine by soliciting the definitions from the students. The teacher's modification of the routine seemed to elicit a little confusion from the students as line 78 shows the student responding with a question instead of a statement. This suggests some uncertainty from the student, which could be due to confusion with the routine or vocabulary. However, in the explanation, the student and teacher work together to supply the "definition," and an "example." The "ask" step of the routine did not appear as a separate student supplied example, but as a co-constructed example between the teacher and the student. The following vocabulary word, "robot," does not get the same treatment as the word "rotate." The teacher only asked for a definition of a robot, and no example was given by the teacher or students. This modification reflects inconsistency in the routine, and led to a less robust description of the word "robot". As the first part of example 5 illustrates, the routine around "rotate" solicited clearer comprehension of this word. To sum up, sometimes the scripted routines can provide clarity in the lesson and, teacher modifications of them may not always be helpful.

## Negative Aspects of Script-based Lessons

Negative aspects of script-based lessons were also observed in this study. Script-based lessons were found to have potential negative effects on lesson coherence. As well, scripts can limit the validation of students' responses, as validation requires teachers to exert more intellectual effort connecting with students than just comparing student responses to a list of scripted acceptable answers. In addition, when a teacher perceives his or her effectiveness as a teacher being inhibited by script-based lessons or other constraints, it can weaken the teacher's perception of his or her own professional identity. These three aspects all influence students' reading comprehension and the ways students and teachers interact in future lessons.

### Lesson Coherence

Script-based teaching can also impact lesson coherence. Script-based lessons typically provide teachers with scripts for the teacher to say, scripts for teacher actions, and scripts for anticipated student responses to questions or discussions. Connecting each of these script-based elements into a unified lesson can be challenging. Problems with coherence can particularly occur when teachers try to adhere too closely to scripts.

The coherence in Class 1's lesson, for example, was slightly obscured at times. As noted above, the focus of Class 1's lesson was on making inferences and drawing conclusions. It is important to note that this scripted lesson is not sequentially outlined in the teacher's textbook, but there is an implied logical

organization: anticipation, input, guided practice, and independent practice. In T1's script, she was instructed to read a brief two- page text, "Who Says Robots Can't Think," to introduce new vocabulary for the following reading of "Zathura." A portion of the script reads: "As you read 'Who Says Robots Can't Think?' with students, ask them to identify clues that reveal the meanings of the highlighted words. Tell students they will read these words again in 'Zathura'" (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2010, p. 468). After reading the short story, each vocabulary word was described individually. Following this part of the lesson the teacher is instructed to explain each "focus point" as follows:

#### **MAKE INFERENCES AND ANALYZE**

What is it? Explain to students that good readers use information from the text as well as their own prior knowledge and experiences to make inferences, or logical conclusions, about characters and events that are not directly stated in the story.

Why is it important? Authors do not always tell readers everything that takes place in a story. Instead, they often provide details that allow readers to figure things out for themselves.

#### **DRAW CONCLUSIONS**

##### **EXPLAIN**

What is it? Good readers can follow the plot development of a story by drawing conclusions.

Why is it important? They use logical reasoning to consider various pieces of information in a text, such as a plot event and its effect on a character's feelings. Then they use this information to arrive at a new understanding about a character's actions or some other plot developments.

(Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2010, p. 469A)

After the teacher introduces the above information and models how to "draw conclusions" by reading a teacher "Think Aloud," which is a script meant to be read as the teacher's own thoughts, the script instructs the teacher to have students reread the short story and complete a conclusion diagram with

“evidence” pointing to a “conclusion” (Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, 2010, p. 470).

There is no scripted transition between parts of the lesson introducing the vocabulary and new focus points and the reading of “Zathura.” This may additionally obscure the connection between different parts of the lesson.

Though some scripts lack transitions between parts of a lesson, there are sometimes additional organizational challenges found within one step. Following the section that explained the “focus points,” the teacher is to follow scripted “pre-reading” activities. The pre-reading is described in a series of brief scripts for the teacher. There are no transitions scripted between each of the pre-reading activities; therefore, confusion in the implementation of the activities may be problematic. T1 is instructed to have students read the definition of the genre of science fiction. Furthermore, according to the script, the teacher is supposed to instruct students to identify “imaginary events based on some aspect of sciences or technology” (p. 470). The script also tells the teacher to remind students what it means to “make inferences” and “draw conclusions.” The students are also given instructions in their text to fill in a “conclusion diagram” and answer the question, “What can you conclude about the relationship of the two brothers at the end of the story?” (p. 470). There is also an additional section for vocabulary review. Furthermore, the script instructs the teacher to have students read the title, “Zathura,” and preview the illustrations in the story so they can write their predictions about what they think will happen in the story. However, T1 modified the lesson and bypassed most of the script and shortened the pre-reading

exercises. She read the information appearing in the students' text regarding "science fiction" and reminded the students that they would be making inferences and analyzing the text to answer and draw conclusions about the two main characters in the story. T1 omitted the asking student to identify "imaginary events based on some aspect of sciences or technology" (p. 470). Additionally, she left out pre-viewing the illustrations and students writing down predictions about the story. By omitting prereading activities and minimizing the role of the students in discussing pre-reading questions, the teacher may have saved time but has also created a more teacher centered classroom environment. The script may be detailed and overwhelming, but there seemed to be time constraints T1 was trying to accommodate that may have added to the brevity of the pre-reading and possibly overlooking students' comprehension needs.

### Teacher Connection to Students

Validation of student responses is an extremely important part of teaching. Students need some form of validation in order to gauge the correctness and appropriateness of their responses. The script-based lessons analyzed validation of student responses is implied. In both lessons there are some activities with described interactions that instruct the teacher how to explain, discuss, and apply concepts such as figurative language and literary devices as seen in the McMillan/McGraw-Hill text. These activities may also instruct the teacher to ask questions or tell students to "read and explain what the author means" in a particular sentence (McMillan/McGraw-Hill, 2010, p. 474). This text,



however, does not give a clear sense of corrective action for a teacher to take or how to acknowledge a student response. What is provided is a sample student response. The following is an example of a script-based activity from the McMillan/McGraw-Hill text.

Comprehension: Literary Devices: Suspense

Explain: Suspense is a state of excited or worried uncertainty about what will happen or how events may turn out. Authors use the technique of suspense by placing appealing characters in danger. Then readers will worry about whether the characters will escape.

Discuss: Ask students to describe some of the events on page 476. Have them explain what makes these events suspenseful. (The meteor shower, the boys finding themselves in outer space, not knowing how they will get back to Earth.)

Apply: Ask students if they think the author-illustrator's use of suspense holds the reader's attention. (McMillan/McGraw-Hill, 2010, p. 476)

What seems to be missing from the above activity is the script for acknowledging students' responses and any supportive or corrective action that might help struggling students. Furthermore, this script-based activity has implied spaces for teachers to adapt their own system for validating students' responses. For example, a teacher might read the explanation of suspense then enact the "discuss" part. How a teacher initiates discussion might vary from asking students to discuss suspenseful events on page 476 in small groups to writing

their responses down in a journal. At some point a teacher might have students share their responses with the whole class. During this time, the teacher may choose only a few students to share their ideas with the class. The observed teachers sometimes acknowledged responses with an “okay” or “yeah” but then used questions to redirect students who were heading off topic. Moreover, in large classes, 34 or more students, many student responses can go unacknowledged by teachers, and validation is left to the students to negotiate. Without the teacher or a more advanced classmate, some student responses may be superficial and lack advanced comprehension. Furthermore, the script’s loss of connection to students and limited time for reading discussion can lead to passive engagement in a reading lesson.

Depending on the particular curriculum or step in the script-based lesson, the “teacher think aloud” does not always involve checking the students’ comprehension of what the teacher just read as his or her own thoughts. In the McMillan/McGraw-Hill (2010) text on page 472, a teacher think aloud was supplied for teachers to read as a demonstration of how he or she analyzes and makes inferences about a text. In this particular teacher think aloud, the script did not include instruction for checking what the students understood from what the teacher just read.

After reading the first page, I can make some inferences about the relationship between Walter and his brother. Walter says that Danny “breaks everything,” so this probably isn’t the first time the brothers have

fought. It's probably also not the first time Danny has broken something that belonged to Walter. I wonder if they'll get into any trouble when their parents aren't around, especially since Walter is already mad at Danny. As I read I'll continue evaluating the events of the story and think about how Danny and Walter's relationship may affect the development of the plot. (McMillan/McGraw-Hill, 2010, p. 472)

This scripted "Teacher Think Aloud" does not connect the demonstrated analysis and inference making to the students' reading practices. Therefore, the script seems to miss the opportunity to check and validate students' comprehension of the reading strategy and its practice in reading. In the case of Teacher 1, she made some superficial modifications but maintained the general format of the think aloud. She also did not check the student's comprehension.

#### Example 8

132 T1: Okay, I can make some inferences here. (3) This is pretty much  
133 how your thought process should go. As you're thinking this is  
134 kind of I'm gonna read kinda what I'm thinking. After reading  
135 the first page I can make some inferences about the relationship  
136 between Walter and his brother. Walter says that Danny breaks  
137 everything. So this is, this probably isn't the first time the  
138 brothers have fought. It's probably also not the first time Danny  
139 has broken something that belonged to Walter. I wonder if they  
140 get into any trouble when their parents aren't around, especially

141 since Walter is already mad at Danny. As I read I'll continue  
142 evaluating the events of the story and think about how Danny  
143 and Walter's relationship may affect the development of the plot.  
144 Okay that's what I'm thinking as I read. Just one of those  
145 duntudun things right? (Teacher 1, personal communication,  
March 16, 2011)

Teacher 1 continues on with the lesson without including any feedback or observations from the students about what they just heard. This further suggests that the potential weaknesses of the script, such as lacking connection to the students, can persist in a lesson even with teacher modifications.

Despite the previous script-based example, there are instances when teachers modify the script in ways to clearly and effectively validate student comprehension. Some of the basic forms of validation and corrective action observed in the lessons were teachers confirming student responses to questions and asking for clarification if a response was not clear. In example 9, Teacher 2 asked about the sun causing damage, and several students had something to contribute. The script provided a brief time allotment for students to share with each other their ideas. Teacher 2 chose to not use the scripted question, "Everyone would you want to damage a television before watching it?" (Steck-Vaughn, 2010, p. 591), but composed her own as seen in example 9, "Can the sun cause damage?"

### Example 9

428 T2: Okay, thank you. [Student 1] knows firsthand. Tell us your

429 story. Can the sun cause damage?

430 S1: Yes, cause I already got sun damage right here.

431→T2: Yep, and how did that happen?

432 S1: I was just playing and my skin started burning, so I went to the

433 bathroom.

434 T2: Okay, so [Student 2] was saying that there's something you

435 can do to protect yourself from that damage.

436 →S2: Sun block

437 →T2: Sun block

438 →S3: Sunscreen

439 →T2: Sunscreen. Very good. Use different lotions. (Teacher 2,  
Student 1, Student 2, & Student 3, personal communication, March 18,  
2011)

In this example (9) the teacher asks a question of clarification, “[...] how did that happen?” (line 431), which seemed to demonstrate the teacher’s interest in the student’s response. After the student continued explaining, Teacher 2 further guided the student’s response by connecting it to Student 2’s response. This connection Teacher 2 made seemed to act as validation for both students 1 and 2; moreover, it continued the discussion about the new vocabulary word, “damage.” Teacher 2 demonstrated an additional form of validation by repeating

words the students were supplying, “Sun block” and “Sunscreen” (lines 436-439). This co-constructed response seemed to not only validate but also promote interest and comprehension in the new vocabulary, whereas this may not have happened if the teacher merely followed the script.

Just as there are forms of validating contributed responses to an academic discussion, there are forms of correcting misdirected responses. In some instances the teacher may rely heavily on the script for activities and possible answers to questions, and when students provide inaccurate or misdirected answers, the teacher might quickly identify the response as incorrect without adequate corrective action. Example 10 illustrates how this form of corrective action might look. In Class 1, Teacher 1 and a few students described a scene the author wrote about in the text. The activity was a modification of a scripted activity following the previously discussed “Teacher Think Aloud,” from example 8. Teacher 1 stated that the description the author gave was not a picture in the book. Student 1 disagreed, saying the described picture was in the book.

#### Example 10

195 T1: Okay, so how did you picture Danny and his brother? What did,

196 what did you picture was going on in the story?

197 S1: Fighting

198 T1: Okay, so Danny was on top of

199 S1: His brother

200 T1: On Walter, and he was  
201 Ss: Pulling his nose  
202 T1: Tweaking his nose right? That picture is not in the book  
203 S1: Yeah, yeah it is  
204 T1: No the picture of them on top of each other is not in the book.  
205 The picture that they put there is after, that's another time later,  
206 Okay? (Teacher 1, Student 1, & Other Class 1 students,  
personal communication, March 16, 2011)

As this example (10) shows, the teacher and student disagreed (Lines 202-204). The action the teacher takes seems to argue a point that she had not addressed in her modification of the lesson, which is sequence of events. The student referred to a later scene illustrated in the book depicting Danny and Walter in a similar position described in the current part of the story. Instead of redirecting the student's attention to the part of the text they were discussing, Teacher 1 defends her statement, "That picture is not in the book." The teacher's supporting evidence from the text helped to support her statement and invalidate the student's response (Lines 204-206). The use of "no" and the extra support are quite different than the more commonly seen rephrasing of a question or asking students to rephrase their responses. Furthermore, the teacher's modification of the activity resulted in a description as intended by the script, but it also elicited a disagreement that could have been a teachable moment.

Some modifications of the script produce effective teachable moments. Clear intensions of modified questions and activities may allow a teacher more confidence in corrective action taken to guide students. Example 11 illustrates both an implied “no” and a rephrasing of a question. Teacher 2 begins with an unscripted question directed towards the students. After the students discussed their responses in pairs, Teacher 2 asked Student 1 to share her answer.

#### Example 11

109 T2: Here is the next question: “What did the twins mother discover  
110 when she read those hieroglyphs?” Cause their mom studied  
111 this type of writing, so she knows how to read it. So when she  
112 read it what did she discover about the writing, what did it say?  
113 Go ahead and discuss with your partners.  
114 Ss: (Talking, unintelligible)  
115 T2: Okay, [Student 1]. Listen [Student 2], [Student 1] is gonna  
116 share what she discovered.  
117 →S1: (unintelligible) She discovered like some, like uhh... recordings  
118 → on the wall.  
119 →T2: Okay, let me ask the question again. Put your hands down.  
120 → “What did she discover when she read the hieroglyphs?”  
121 S1: Uh, she discovered that there is something in the cave.  
122 T2: Okay, very good. What is it though? That’s what I wanna  
123 know. [Student 3]  
124 S3: She discovered a king pharaoh’s tomb.  
125 T2: What do you mean by king pharaoh? Is that his name?  
126 S3: Yes  
127 T2: Lets see if someone else can help out.  
128 S4: She discovered a pharaoh’s tomb.  
129 T2: Very good. She discovered that it was the  
130 T2+Ss: entrance to a pharaoh’s tomb. (Teacher 2, Student 1, Student  
2, Student 3, Student 4, & Students from Class 2, personal  
communication, March 18, 2011)

In lines 119 and 120, Teacher 2 rephrased the original question due to a response from Student 1 that was more or less a restatement of the question.

After the rephrased question, Teacher 2 asked Student 1 to respond again. In



line 122 the teacher acknowledged the student's response but requested a more specific response. Teacher 2 then asked Student 3 to respond. Though the correction was subtle and not as overt as the "no" in example 10, the discussion was seemingly continuous. Whereas the teacher stated "no" in example 10 seemed to end student responses to the question, the implied "no" in example 11 allowed for students to revise their thoughts and responses. Furthermore, rephrasing the question and asking the student to explain his or her response implied a "no" but did not curtail the discussion. Rather, the implied "no" redirected students' responses and comprehension of the reading and achieving validation from the teacher. It would seem that a script for this type of teacher-student interaction might be highly impractical. A script cannot include teacher instructions for every possible scenario regarding student responses; however, it can provide some space or guidance in the lesson for teachers to validate or redirect students' thoughts about a reading.

Extension of Modified Teaching Practices. Even though validation and corrective actions of student comprehension may be unclear in the scripted lesson, the teachers themselves can implement modifications modeling effective academic practices that can encourage students to resolve misunderstandings themselves. During the student interviews for Class 2, students actively listened, borrowed information, and offered support to each other. In the following example, the researcher asked the four student volunteers, "what did we read

about in class today?” Example 12 illustrates some of the responses with peer validation.

#### Example 12

4 S1: We read about like um we read um that Egypt is where the

5 Twins were looking for (unintelligible) stuff

6 S2: Good explanation um like what [Student 1] said um I would like

7 what we read about is when these two twins went on an

8 expedition with [their] mom then after then they were going on

9 their expedition so the twins found something that looked like the

10 same one that the lady gave them like a disk and it was actually

11 one of the uh

12 S1: an am uh at uh

13 R: amulet

14 S2: amulet

15 S1: yeah I can't say it right

16 S2: like the lady gave them (Student 1, Student 2, & Researcher,  
personal communication, March 18, 2011)

This example shows Student 2 validating Student 1's response (line 6). This is similar to the validation that Teacher 2 illustrated in example 11, line 129. Later in example 12, Student 1 tries to help Student 2 by trying to offer the word “amulet” in line 11. With a little help from the researcher, both students were

able to recall the word. The validation exhibited in this example shows that students are using forms of validation and corrective actions that they experience in classroom discussions. Therefore, it is important for teachers to assess and reflect on the types of interactions created in the class whether due to the script or the modifications made.

### Potential Loss of Teacher Identity

Teachers represent the educational institutions they are teaching within. This means they may be bound to institutional statutes in addition to state and federal statutes that constrict their professional teaching styles. However, along with the statutes teachers must follow and their teaching styles, script-based lessons can cause teachers to feel a loss of professional identity. The scripts often provide teaching guidelines that teachers do not identify with, causing them to resist the script in ways that they feel fit the students and their teaching better. The resistance that both teachers showed appeared in different ways.

One of the issues with script-based lessons teachers struggle with is pacing. Script-based lessons like those observed for this study sometimes include more information and activities than a teacher can incorporate into a 90-minute Language Arts lesson. Unfortunately, the amount of material and the limited time teachers have for reading and other Language Arts may force the teacher to facilitate the pace of the lesson at a faster rate and exclude teacher modifications to comprehension activities. Pacing can limit teachers and students' class time for discussion of readings and vocabulary among other

topics. When asked, "Are there any changes you would make the next time you deliver a whole group reading lesson? Why or why not?," Teacher 2 responded:

What I believe is still my weakness in this program is time management. I struggle with the time I spend on each step and I think it's because I allow students to talk too much. However, I feel that the interaction and oral responses are necessary. The majority of these students don't get very many chances of feeling success in their homeroom classes since they are usually the intensive students. In my class they feel comfortable enough to raise their hands and say something. It's a non-threatening environment, so they love to talk about what they're thinking and learning about. I still don't know how I can manage my time to get through one lesson a day. (Teacher 2, personal communication, March 18, 2011)

Teacher 2 is explaining the importance that she places on allowing students time to talk during class. By not allowing her the time for some more lengthy discussions in class, the script is limiting her professional belief that students learn from classroom discussions. The following is an example of the time restraints Class 2 was facing: 10 minutes for making connections to the reading, a few seconds for students to think to themselves, 30 seconds to discuss with partners, and one minute for students to share their responses with the class (Steck-Vaughn, 2010, pp. 527, 529). The script's limited talk time may overlook individual students' comprehension of the text and the teacher's ability to address misunderstandings. Similar to example 11, a teacher feeling rushed due to time

constraints can unintentionally ignore students' signs of comprehension. This limitation of student expression suggests that the scripts could be reinforcing either a working class or middle class approach to teaching. As Anyon (1980) suggested, focusing on controlling student activity and accumulating correct answers can be a result of how students make sense of their roles in their communities. The teachers being urged to teach in this manner, suggests that curriculum is encouraging the teacher to conform to particular expectation of social class. Anyon (1980) describes a middle class teaching curriculum as following steps or rules to get to correct answers found in books. Allowing teachers to hear student expressions can facilitate comprehension and encourage cognitive development (Wilson & Smentana, 2011). Additionally, these script-based lessons may be implying that teachers are middle class and discouraging teaching modification that could promote more complex thinking. If teachers are sensing this, they may be more likely to resist the curriculum in ways that fit their students' needs and professional expectations.

It was common in the observed lessons for the teachers to rephrase or even replace scripted questions with questions and explanations that held closer to their teacher identities. Both teachers reported making this type of modification to assist student comprehension. Teacher 2 responded:

I try not to alter too much because I've been told to not stray away from the script. However, I often find myself giving certain students extra moments for responding and may ask certain questions in other words. I

try to make sure that my students will be able to understand the questions, so I may have to ask in a different way. (Teacher 2, personal communication, March 18, 2011)

It was observed that Teacher 2 rephrased several of the questions and replaced others with what may have been more appropriate ones. The discussions that followed these questions conveyed clearly students' interest and reading comprehension. Similarly, Teacher 1 stated:

I changed the script because the language in the teacher think aloud often sounds stilted and unnatural at least for me. The kids know when you are reading a script and when you are speaking naturally. I think the students connect better with you and the text when your language with them is more natural and personal. If we are asking them to connect with text we should show them how we connect with the text. I like to ask the questions that pop up in my head as I read or to tell them the inferences or conclusion that I have made. Sometimes my responses to the questions they ask are different than the scripted answers. (Teacher 1, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

In both of these responses, the teachers seem to be resisting the "scriptedness," trying to maximize their communication with the students. This resistance to the script seemed to be more obvious with Teacher 1, who seemed to dislike the script-based lesson. She said, "I don't think the scripted portions are all that useful most of the time. I usually read them but do not use the script with the

students. I change it as I need to depending on the group of students I am working with" (Teacher 1, personal communication, March 16, 2011). Teacher 1, although exhibiting signs of resisting the script, did not report a loss of "teacher voice" or "personality" as Teacher 2 had. This suggests that teachers may not be aware of their own signs of resistance to script-based lessons, which seems to be an important issue since there are many signs, some successful and some not, of resistance.

Teacher 1 rephrased questions. Teacher 2 allowed students more talk time along with rephrasing questions. However, in some of the teachers' attempts to modify the lesson in favor of improving students' comprehension, there was a difference in the resistance to the script. Teacher 1 omitted sections of the script, and Teacher 2 replaced questions with others. These modifications may have something to do with pacing and time management, and the fact that Teacher 1's class was more than twice the size of Teacher 2's class. Class size may have some effect on how teachers modify the script-based lesson. In a class of 32 students, there were fewer instances of Teacher 1 listening to individual students. Teacher 1 exhibited more teacher talk and allowed students less time to explain their ideas more deeply. Furthermore, Teacher 2 had a class of 17, which may have allowed her to hear individual students more clearly and promote student interpretations that showed complex thinking. While discussion and comprehension about the text occurred in both classes, the length and quality of the discussion and student signs of comprehension differed. Moreover,

larger class sizes seem to suggest there will be less class time for teacher-student interactions and inhibit some forms of teaching modifications, such as allowing students more class time for discussing reading texts.

### Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this research project was to describe what effects script-based lessons have on the reading lessons in two observed elementary reading classes, what modifications teachers make to the script to contextualize the reading lessons for students, and the potential impact of the reading lessons and modifications on students' text comprehension. After analysis of the observed lessons, it is clear there are some aspects in script-based lessons that pose significant complications for the teachers and students. However, there are positive aspects that, if implemented and modified effectively, can contribute to students' literacy development. The ways teachers modify the script should receive more attention since teachers' intentions are to maximize student reading comprehension.

Two positive aspects of the observed script-based lessons are the use of "discussion frames" provided by the teacher or lesson script and whole class support for vocabulary development. Initially the discussion frames may seem awkward due to the way the discussion frames are phrased, and the speech may seem formal or unnatural to both students and the teacher, but as a way to socialize students into academic literacy, these frames allowed students some



scaffolding to at least begin their discussions. Heath's (1983) study of literacy practices and ways young children can acquire various literacy skills through social interactions might suggest further reason for using discussion frames in decontextualized academic discussions. Discussion frames, although scripted, can be modified by both the teacher and students and are essentially conversation starters for discussions about readings. Heath's (1983) description of the three different communities, Roadville, Trackton, and the Townspeople, outlined different cultural preference for literacy which suggests newcomers to one of the communities might require some guidance when interacting in one of the unfamiliar communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The discussion frames provide students with the academic expectations about how to phrase their responses to the related question using the decontextualized language and meet community expectations. Students, such as in Class 2, can be observed identifying important ideas and vocabulary from the questions, and the discussion frames guiding their responses and perhaps their identification of relevant information in the text. Similar to our social frames we might use when we meet friends and want to discuss our previous weekend activities, we borrow and change words from previous conversations and fill in relevant information to fit the needs of the situation.

Script-based lessons also provide teachers and students routines for introducing vocabulary to the whole class. Both scripts in the observed lessons described practical and explicit ways to introduce and build vocabulary

comprehension. Class 2's lesson script in particular provided a clear and easily modifiable routine. The same could be said for the vocabulary routine discussed in Class 1's lesson, even though it was not implemented as scripted. Class 1's vocabulary routine was perhaps more explicit and began with the new word's definition, then an example from the teacher, and finally a request for students to give their own example. Sokmen (1997) suggests that there are times in students' learning when they need explicit teaching of words, such as seeing the word's definition first. In each of the script-based lessons observed, there seems to be a preference for explicit vocabulary instruction. This is not to say that incidental word learning or learning words from context is not encouraged, but learning words incidentally may be a practice students conduct during their own reading (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1987). However, Manzo, Manzo, and Thomas (2006) suggest that vocabulary instruction may be preparing for a new shift. They point out that in the early 2000's teachers had been under pressure to simplify vocabulary and use more common everyday language to convey information to students (Manzo, Manzo, & Thomas, 2006). In the current script-based lessons, the shift seems to be moving towards including a variety of vocabulary, both high-frequency and low-frequency words, and routines that support students' background knowledge and vocabulary development strategies such as word analysis and context clues (California Department of Education, 2008; 2012). While there is evidence in script-based lessons of explicit vocabulary teaching and support for different word learning strategies, a question

still might be: are scripts-based vocabulary lessons allowing teachers and students to vary vocabulary development strategies, or are the scripts hindering students' use of strategies that may have variable uses? Regardless of which vocabulary development methods are included in the script, it is important not to overlook the potential of the script in helping students develop vocabulary and comprehension.

Although there are some positive aspects in script-based lessons, scripts can't account for all possible interpretations of lessons or all of the methods and strategies that might be appropriate for a particular classroom situation. Complex discussion of responses to comprehension questions can blur the intentions of a rigidly applied script, which may require teachers to modify scripts when they see the lesson does not fit time constraints or student background knowledge. As a plausible modification, teachers may cut out parts of a lesson in favor of maintaining coherent comprehension. However, parts of the script that are left out may affect coherence and confuse students who are trying to anticipate a teacher's expectations. In the case of this study, transitions seemed to be lacking between activities and concepts. Transitions may help highlight important ideas as well as connect the flow of activities and concepts (Buck, 1999). Furthermore, if the teacher's expectations and practices become unclear due to ineffective modifications and a vagueness in the lesson, students may likely share frustrations which could inhibit student reading comprehension and discussion. Moreover, the teacher may even be reluctant to let students

contribute to a discussion gone awry. This can shut down the socialization intended by the teacher and the script, further limiting the potential learning in the lesson and the teacher's ability to redirect the lesson ways that might highlight main points and increase student engagement with the reading, the teacher, and other students.

One of the more noticeable observations in this study was the variation in validation and correction. Script-based lessons provide minimal direction on how to validate student responses. In some instances, such as in Class 1, there was only implicit instruction for validating student responses with only correct answers to questions supplied by the script. In some instances, students were overlooked or received unclear validation. This is not to say the teachers frequently overlooked students, but there were important points of discussion that students seemed more interested in and the teachers may not have explored for additional learning benefits.

There were instances of redirection and missed discussion cues also within many of the question-answer sequences. The reasons for redirection and missed, or passed, discussion cues were not always evident; however, the following research may highlight potential reasons for further study. Markee (2004) explains the concept of Zones of Interactional Transition (ZIT). A ZIT "involve[s] talk that occurs at the boundaries of different classroom speech exchange systems" (Markee, 2004, p. 584). Markee (2004) writes that within these instances is the existence of "potential interactional trouble" (p. 584), which

is often remedied through talk. One example of a ZIT is a “counter question,” which may, as seen in this study, include students altering the interaction by posing a question to the teacher and soliciting clarification. Teachers may receive a counter question from students then reposition themselves in the interaction by posing a rephrased question to the students. One of the challenges with script-based lessons is anticipating where in the lesson these ZITs might occur. In the current study, some of the observations illustrated how teachers and students began with a question that would evolve into another question leading to a more comprehensive discussion of the original question. A script-based lesson can only anticipate a few possible responses. If a teacher is to follow the script, some students who are not given a chance to explain or ask questions might be prepared for a ZIT but lack the teacher’s acknowledgement of their responses (which may not have been in the script) they need to become more active participants in the lesson.

The occurrence of ZITs suggests that students are capable and even willing to try and understand new texts and vocabulary, yet there are sometimes conflicts with the scripted teaching strategies and time constraints curtailing opportunities to listen to and validate students’ ideas or provide students redirection. Researchers Wilson and Smetana (2011) hold that “teacher-dominated interaction patterns permeate classroom instruction” (p. 84). They further suggest that the pattern of “Initiate, Respond, and Evaluate [...] leads students to maintain a passive stance towards learning and non-engagement

with text” (Wilson & Smetana, 2011, p. 84). It is further suggested that this pattern inhibits the development of comprehension strategies. Wilson and Smetana (2011) discuss the Questioning as Thinking (QAT) framework for promoting reading comprehension. The purpose of QAT is to promote students’ metacognitive development, which for reading includes “monitoring, understanding, and self-regulating mental process” (Wilson & Smetana, 2011, p. 85). The discussion pattern for QAT begins with a “Think Aloud,” similar to the scripted “Teacher Think Alouds” but the point of this strategy is to develop questions and then develop answers based on their relationship to the question and the text (Wilson & Smetana, 2011). Researchers further state that the “Question Answer Relationships (QAR)” provide the person in the midst of the Think Aloud and the audience with “language for [...] discuss[ing] different types of questions” (Wilson & Smetana, 2011, p. 85). Thinking aloud provides the class with a situation for discussing relevant comprehension questions and responses that can maintain student engagement with the text, other students, and the teacher. When teachers are limited to a script, they may not be prepared to coach students to actively engage with texts. Some of the scripted elements, such as teacher Think Alouds, are intended for modeling metacognitive strategies. However, the scripted Think Aloud can appear unnatural if they are merely read and diverge from the teacher’s actual metacognitive process. Furthermore, a teacher’s teaching of the reading skill or strategy may be obscured due to the script. In order for the teacher to maximize engagement

with the text, QAT allows for teacher-student collaboration in understanding the text and student responses, which can incorporate a teacher's personalized Think Aloud, such as in example 6, lines 27 through 32. The QAT may also allow for ZITs such as "counter questions" that can further student comprehension. These two concepts encourage the teacher's role as facilitator and not just an actor performing a script. This further suggests that the scripted acceptable student responses may be less effective than if the students and teachers were able to co construct the discussion naturally. It is the teacher's professional experience that is essential in mitigating the scripts lack of sensitivity to students' needs.

Scripts are intended to help organize and include various types of literacy learning, but in practice they can undermine teachers' professional knowledge and previous practices. It seems that some teachers are effectively modifying the scripts and others are trying to use parts of the script that might fit the teacher's agenda for the lesson. Regardless, it would be helpful for teachers to discuss and perhaps learn what modifications of a script-based lesson are effective and what elements of the script they should maintain. Many teachers are open to discussing how a script-based text might work in their class, and if not, what they might do to modify the script to better fit their teaching style (Commeyras, 2007). In the observed lessons, both teachers faced situations requiring them to modify the lesson discussion. For example, Teacher 2 used a method similar to QAT, which lent itself to effective modification to reading

comprehension questions and the adoptions of new reading strategies. Teacher 1, on the other hand, seemed at times to modify the script in superficial ways that moved the lesson forward, like omitting some activities and telling students the answers to questions without redirecting students who may have had non scripted questions. It is likely that teachers are in constant negotiation of their teaching style due to the variation in student background knowledge and responses to the reading text. Furthermore the community of practice a teacher is a part of may also influence how teachers negotiate their teaching style and sense of authority (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Cobb, et al., 2003). The script seems to assume a significant role in informing teachers. Without an active community of practice, methods such as QAT may not be adopted and teachers may feel limited to the script or their previous experience and unaware of other potential strategies that might strengthen their sense of teaching style or authority. Moreover, it is important for administrators to acknowledge teachers' voices or like reticent students, teachers may choose to not acknowledge their own teaching practices in fear of looking incompetent.

The intention of this study was to observe and discuss the effects of script-based teaching on students' reading comprehension. While this study sheds some light on issues teachers and students face when lessons are planned and scripted by outside sources, there are some limitations. The sample size of only two classes does not provide a substantial sample for generalizable results. More classes and teachers need to be observed for a more significant account of



teaching strategies, scripted or not. Furthermore, this study provided a brief cross section of one grade level, one school site, one school district, and one state. The generalizations from these observations are limited and are not intended to account for all applications of script-based lessons or the potential *teacher modifications used for helping students connect to the text*. However, the findings of the present case study provide some insights into the pedagogical effects of script-based instruction, which can be further explored in future research.

### Conclusion

Script-based teaching provides teachers and administrators with a large body of information that is often intended to be the basis for literacy programs. These reading objectives, vocabulary, and strategies may sometimes be useful in addressing learning standards for reading, but teachers, students, administrators, and publishers are facing a complex future. With increasing adoptions of script-based curricula, K-12 education may be losing effective teaching strategies due to an enforced script that is intended to replace, or at the very least organize teachers' classroom instruction. Students are being overlooked, and teachers are struggling to be the kinds of reading teachers that facilitate reading comprehension and active engagement with texts. While the No Child Left Behind Act was intended to reform and improve teaching practices in the United States, script-based lessons have created a layer of extra teaching

considerations that may be ignored or elided in teaching communities. Without continued open teacher discussion about the effects of scripts-based lessons and how the limitations are addressed, teachers may lose opportunities to enhance literacy development.

What is scripted is not always what is happening in the classroom, and what happens in the classroom cannot always be scripted. The purpose of this study was to describe how script-based lessons function in reading lessons and how the scripts influence elementary students' reading comprehension. The findings support a complex situation developing in the classroom that does not rule out some scripted elements for establishing helpful routines, but also illustrates the need for teachers to be permitted to exert professional judgment when modifying script-based lessons to improve student engagement and reading comprehension. Increased student engagement can allow the students more room to think for themselves. If students are labeled remedial, or basic, readers and need "highly script-based lessons" to "catch up", then it is possible both the teachers and the students are struggling with a stigma that "these students can't think." If teachers and scripts intend to facilitate students' independent thinking, but penalize them when they think differently from the script, students may likely conceive that they can't or shouldn't think in school until the teacher explains how, which is contrary to education's intent. Furthermore, this study highlighted the range of "scriptedness" that is possible in a classroom and welcomes future study of how teachers modify pre-scripted

curricula to fit the needs of students and how administrators influence classroom modifications and academic discussion of lesson modifications.

APPENDIX A  
STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### Student Interview Protocol

1. What did you read about today during reading time/Language Arts?
2. What do you remember about the reading passage?
3. Was there any part of the reading passage that you liked? Why/why not?
4. Was there any part of the reading passage that you did not understand?
5. Is there any part of the lesson today that you would like to know more about? If yes, what?

APPENDIX B  
TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Teacher Interview Protocol

1. What were the objectives of this lesson?
2. How well do you think students understood the reading passage?
3. What signs of comprehension/non-comprehension did you observe among the students?
4. How well do you think the students connected personally or not to the passage?
5. To what extent do you feel like this lesson was successful?
6. Are there any changes you would make the next time you deliver a whole group reading lesson? Why/why not?
7. To what extent do you believe the scripted portions of this lesson were helpful?
8. What portions of the script, if any, did you alter?
9. Why did you alter the script?
10. Do you feel that the script improves your ability to help students with their reading comprehension? Or would you be able to design a better reading lesson without the script? Explain.

**APPENDIX C**  
**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM**





Academic Affairs  
Office of Academic Research • Institutional Review Board

January 14, 2011

Mr. Joseph J. Farago-Spencer  
c/o: Prof. Sunny Hyon  
Department of English  
California State University  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, California 92407

**CSUSB  
INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARD**  
Full Board Review  
IRB# 10029  
Status  
**APPROVED**

Dear Mr. Farago-Spencer:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Script-Based Reading Lessons and Socialized Language Usage" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The attached informed consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. Your application is approved for one year from January 14, 2011 through January 13, 2012. One month prior to the approval end date you need to file for a renewal if you have not completed your research. See additional requirements (Items 1 – 4) of your approval below.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

- 1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are made in your research prospectus/protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research.
- 2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,
- 3) Too renew your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,
- 4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Coordinator/Compliance Analyst.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, IRB Compliance Coordinator. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at [mgillesp@csusb.edu](mailto:mgillesp@csusb.edu). Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely, *Sharon Ward, Ph.D.*

Sharon Ward, Ph.D., Chair  
Institutional Review Board

SW/mg

cc: Prof. Sunny Hyon, Department of English

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APPENDIX D  
ASSENT FORM



Department of English

**Script-based Reading Lessons**

**Assent Form**

My name is Joseph Farago-Spencer (Mr. Spencer). I am trying to learn about how a teacher's lesson affects what language or words we use to talk about things we read in class because I think this will help me understand what teachers and students find most interesting about the book. If you would like, you can be in my study.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will be part of a regular reading lesson taught by your teacher. This lesson will be tape recorded. All you have to do is participate in the lesson the way you normally would. I will choose four students at the end of the lesson to interview. The interview will be spoken, not written. I will record our voices only. Don't feel bad if you are not chosen for the interview.

My goal for this research is to help teachers and myself to better understand how we can make reading lessons interesting. I think that the results from this study will help teachers connect new information from a textbook to students' ideas more easily.

Other people will not know if you are in my study. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other fifth grade students, so no one can tell which ideas came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell whom I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian have to say it's OK for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don't want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that's OK. You can stop at any time.

I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later. Remember, there is NO video recording.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD COMMITTEE

APPROVED 01/14/11 VOID AFTER 01/13/12  
IRB# 10029 CHAIR Shannon Ward, Ph.D.

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APPENDIX E  
TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT



Department of English

### Informed Consent

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the effects of script-based lessons on students' connections to and comprehension of reading passages during whole-class reading lessons in a scripted curriculum. This study is being conducted by me, Joseph Farago-Spencer, under the supervision of Professor Sunny Hyon, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

*Purpose:* The purpose of this research study is to identify how script-based lessons facilitate students' learning and retention of information presented during whole-class reading lessons. To understand the students' connection to the reading material, I will be analyzing language features in student and teacher commentary during the reading lesson.

*Description of Project Participation:* To begin your participation, we will decide on a date for an audio recorded observation of a reading lesson. An audio recording device will be situated in the class two or three days prior to the lesson to judge sound quality and to help the class become accustomed to the recording device. I will be transcribing the student and teacher language by listening to the lesson and writing the exact words spoken. Physical interactions will be described if relevant to the lesson. This will be the data I will describe and analyze. After the lesson is completed, I will interview four students who were present for the lesson, asking them what they remembered, liked, and/or did not understand about the reading passage in focus, and whether they had further questions about the reading and would like additional information. Following the lesson and within the same day, I will interview you regarding your thoughts about the reading lesson. The student and teacher interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed.

#### Confidentiality

Any information provided will be confidential, and at no time will names be reported in any presentations or publications of this research. All students mentioned in the study will be given pseudo names. Your participation in this study is purely voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time. Only myself, and possibly my advising professor, will listen to the audio recordings. When the project has concluded, the audio recordings will be destroyed/erased by recording over the audiotape and then destroying the data storage device.

*Risks & Benefits:* There will be no risks to participants. This study will help illuminate limitations and strengths of script-based lessons. Results from the study can help guide future research and development of teaching materials.

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APPROVED 01/14/11 VOID AFTER 01/13/12  
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 CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
 SAN BERNARDINO

Department of English

Consent to Audio Recordings:

1. I understand the reading lesson conducted for this project will be audio recorded.

Initial to permit: \_\_\_\_\_

2. I understand the interview following the lesson will be audio recorded.

Initial to permit: \_\_\_\_\_

3. I give the researcher permission to study the audio recordings collected.

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

4. I give the researcher permission to publish excerpts of the transcribed audio recordings for the purpose of conveying the findings of this study.

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO  
 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD COMMITTEE  
 APPROVED 01/19/11  
 IRB# 10029 CHAIR *[Signature]*

<p><b>I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.</b></p>	
<p>Participant's Signature _____</p>	<p>Date _____</p>
<p>Researcher's Signature _____</p>	<p>Date _____</p>

*If you have questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact my advisor, Professor Sunny Hyon at: (909) 537-5465  
 A discussion of the results will be available upon completion through California State University, San Bernardino's English Department.*

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APPENDIX F  
PARENT INFORMED CONSENT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SAN BERNARDINO

Department of English

Audio Recordings:

1. I understand the reading lesson conducted for this project will be audio recorded.

Initial if you give permission: \_\_\_\_\_

2. I understand that some students may be randomly selected to be interviewed about the lesson.

Initial if you give permission: \_\_\_\_\_

3. I understand the interview following the lesson will be audio recorded.

Initial if you give permission: \_\_\_\_\_

4. I give the researcher permission to study the audio recordings collected.

Initial if you give permission: \_\_\_\_\_

5. I give the researcher permission to publish excerpts of the transcribed recordings for the purpose of conveying the findings of this study.

Initial if you give permission: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Sign and Return this Form:

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parents Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator or Researcher:

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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