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Reading Recovery Teacher Understandings About Language and Early Literacy Acquisition

A Dissertation Presented by

Kelly L. McDermott

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Reading Recovery Teacher Understandings About Language and Early Literacy Acquisition

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Graduate School of Education

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Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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Abstract

This study investigated Reading Recovery teacher understandings about language and early literacy acquisition by applying a constructivist grounded theory design. Participants were Reading Recovery teachers working across three varied districts in Massachusetts (N=33). The purpose of the study was to engage Reading Recovery teachers in surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations to understand the degree to which Reading Recovery teacher participants value varied student language patterns. Addressing biases faced upon school entry by children who speak differently than their teachers is essential. When students are identified for early literacy intervention, an asset-based frame is critical to ensure accelerated growth. The guiding question was, "What do Reading Recovery teachers understand about using language/linguistic diversity as an asset in early literacy acquisition?". What might be learned, in terms of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP), from Reading Recovery teachers was also discussed. The theory that emerged is that engaging in reflective processes, communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity, working to expand oral language flexibility, and fostering the growth of collective expertise specifically to support linguistic diversity were all necessary. The observation portion of this study found evidence of Reading Recovery teachers working to be culturally and linguistically responsive to all children including multilingual, multidialectal, and monolingual students. Five examples included in the discussion are 1. Daily explicit instruction around literary structures 2. Personalized instruction 3. Positioning the child as a writer: allowing the syntax and meaning of a child to drive conversations and determine the written message 4. Never invalidating a child's syntax or semantics while fostering syntactic flexibility 5. Embedding a Told and then restating that unknown word in a meaningful phrase. Implications for pedagogical practice included working within a CLSP framework to deepen educator understandings of how to honor and teach into linguistic diversity as a strength and develop more robust theoretical and practical collective expertise on the matter. Implications for further research include deepening the connection between Reading Recovery and CLSP. Finally, in the larger field of education the work of culturally sustaining practices and linguistically sustaining practices may need to be discussed as both individual and intertwined issues.

Keywords: Reading Recovery, language, early literacy acquisition, culturally and linguistically sustaining practices (CLSP), asset-based instruction, multilingual learners, multidialectal learners, early literacy learning, critical friends, syntax, syntactic flexibility, personalized instruction, literary structures, positioning each child as a writer, meaningful phrase units, linguistic bias, early literacy intervention, teacher understanding

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1974 the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC, 2014) adopted a resolution entitled "Students' Right to Their Own Language". Updated in 2014, this resolution stated,

> We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language (p. 1).

In the teaching of early literacy acquisition, respect for linguistic diversity is also critical. This is true for all students, but maybe even more crucial as young students transition from the language of their home and community to the language of the classroom and school. Mother tongue or the language first learned at home, imparts knowledge, insight, and foundational understandings of culture (Clay, 2015; Morgan, 2015; Muhammad, 2021). When teachers view students as capable of communicating ideas, questioning, and developing complex understandings in any language or dialect, students attain higher levels of academic achievement (Baker-Bell, 2020; Brady, 2015; Freeman & Freeman, 2016; Hammond, 2015; Kinloch, 2010; Muhammad, 2021; Slocum, 2019).

Few empirical studies detail how educators can actively support language or literacy learning for students whose dialect differs from that of the school community. Yet leveraging

language as a strength in these early years is essential. In this paper, dialect is defined broadly as in *Dialects in Schools and Communities* (Adger, et al., 2009) assigning linguistic variation to regional or socially defined groups of people who speak in a similar manner based on key cultural characteristics. Bidialectism is the ability to speak in two or more dialects (Oschwald, et al., 2018). These definitions do not imply a hierarchy within or among dialects but acknowledge that language differences are based on social, regional, situational, and cultural factors that are neither positive nor negative (Adger, et al., 2009). If all educators understood this definition, teaching might shift towards an asset-based pedagogical lens honoring each student's language as a unique strength. This could positively shift student literacy outcomes.

In terms of language acquisition, Washington, Branum-Martin, Sun, and Lee-James (2018) detail how "the degree to which a child uses a dialectal or diglossic form of a major language has been identified as an important variable impacting language and reading skill development across languages" (p. 232). All six-year-olds are still learning the language of their community (Pinker, 1996). Tapping into emerging capabilities is something Pinker (1996) calls "the learnability condition". Syntax and vocabulary are constantly evolving and are tied to children's desire to comprehend and to be understood (Clay, 2015; Farrow et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Pinker, 1996). Reading and writing are additional tools for expressing and interpreting meaning. The reciprocal nature of literacy and language learning are irrevocably tied, impacting student learning.

Clay's (2016) Literacy Processing Theory is grounded in the idea that reading, writing, and talking are reciprocal processes with each mutually strengthening and challenging access to the other. From this theory Clay developed Reading Recovery, an early literacy intervention for first graders needing one-to-one support. During the initial training year, Reading Recovery teachers are taught to consider the language experiences of each student as a resource for further

literacy learning (Clay, 2015; Lyons et al., 1994). Teachers, then, engage in professional

development to continuously hone this skill (Clay, 2015; Lyons et al., 1994; May et al., 2016). In

each lesson, students reread familiar books, and the teacher takes a running record of yesterday's

new book. Students engage in letter sorting and word work. Additionally, students learn to

compose and transcribe a message of their own before a new book is introduced and read with

appropriate support and challenges. Reading Recovery teachers craft daily lessons to suit the

individual needs of each student. Within this pedagogical frame, teachers are making decisions

based on the current competencies of the child. When and where they stop to teach has as much

to do with earlier reflection on student strengths as it does with contingent teaching, which is

also known as in-the-moment decision-making. Observing each other teach behind a glass,

deliberately listening to language interactions, and talking to colleagues, allows teachers to

sharpen their ability to see and hear student strengths (Clay, 2015; Lyons et al., 1994; May et al.,

2016). The nuance in the language and literacy interactions during lessons is contingent on

preplanned and moment-by-moment responses (Clay, 2015; May et al., 2016).

In this next section, I briefly explain the work of Reading Recovery, providing an

overview of data collection, outcomes, and the research on Reading Recovery for students

learning English as a second language as well as for varied subgroups. I also consider Reading

Recovery teaching and the use of student language patterns as support for early literacy. Further

details and research can be found in Chapter 2, an overview of the literature. A statement of the

problem follows this next section.

The Work of Reading Recovery

Despite recent podcasts strongly rooted in opinion and eschewing facts (Hanford, 2022),

efficacy data from over thirty years of successful Reading Recovery implementation, both

qualitative and quantitative, details the rationale for investing in this early literacy intervention

p(Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Borman et al., 2019; Egan, 2014; Escamilla et al., 1998; Every Child a Chance Trust, 2009; IDEC 2009-2019; Kelly et al., 2008; May et al., 2016; Thompson & Gardner-Webb University, 2019). Recent research revealed the cost of adult illiteracy may be impacting the U.S. economy at a rate of over 2 million dollars annually (Nietzel, 2020). Tangible evidence exists that this early literacy intervention for first graders can be instrumental in closing opportunity gaps for an array of students (WWC, 2020). Multiple external evaluations have been utilized to ensure the replicability and reliability of Reading Recovery data (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Every Child a Chance Trust, 2009; May et al., 2016; Torgerson et al., 2011; WWC, 2020). Evidence-based literacy interventions posted on the United States Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse have undergone rigorous evaluation of student outcomes including a comparison of results between a group of students who received the intervention and a similar group who did not. (Richardson, 2018; WWC, 2020). Multilingual learners and those impacted by opportunity gaps due to a myriad of factors including poverty or bias based on race, ethnicity, or culture, have made similarly consistent gains in Reading Recovery over many years of implementation (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Borman et al., 2019; Egan, 2014; Escamilla et al., 1998; Every Child a Chance Trust, 2009; IDEC 2009-2019; Kelly et al., 2008; May et al., 2016; Thompson & Gardner-Webb University, 2019; Torgerson et al., 2011). Data also proves that both rural and urban students benefit when afforded Reading Recovery as part of a comprehensive plan (Batten, 2005).

Research points to multiple factors that lead to consistently strong outcomes including the power of the one-to-one setting and teaching from correct and partially correct responding (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Borman et al., 2019; Egan, 2014; Escamilla et al., 1998; Every Child a Chance Trust, 2009; IDEC 2009-2019; Kelly et al., 2008; May et al., 2016; Thompson & Gardner-Webb University, 2019; Torgerson et al., 2011). Zull (2002) suggests that teaching is

about providing the learner with incentives and supporting active use of pre-existing information in their brains. Zull (2002) cites Ylvisaker and Feeny's research on "errorless learning". In this approach, building on correct responses led to stronger outcomes than teacher attention to errors. Expanding on this thinking, Zull (2002) views "wrong" responses as incomplete or partially correct connections instead. Teaching from correct and partially correct responding allows teachers to reinforce attempts made by students so they will learn to initiate and call up their own resources to problem solve (Clay, 2016; Johnston, 2004; Lyons, 2003). When we attend to what children do well, we can solidify and expand their current competencies (Clay, 2016; Lyons, 2003).

Honoring the literacy repertoire of a child, no matter how rich or limited, can give teachers context to introduce new learning (Johnston, 2004). This is also true in terms of valuing the home language of children. Using what children say and mean is a powerful entry into the world of reading and writing. The one-to-one tutorial makes Reading Recovery an ideal environment for inquiring about language and literacy interactions. In Reading Recovery valuing all student language patterns as powerful leverage for early literacy acquisition could directly link Reading Recovery to the current work of culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies.

Too often, teachers of young children do not see student language as a support and a resource for reading and writing text (Clay, 2015). This becomes glaringly obvious when teachers work with second language learners but is also evident when student dialect and specificity in language usage varies greatly from the language of school (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Heath, 2009, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2018). Language acquisition is extremely intricate, yet children seem to effortlessly acquire the rich patterns and vocabulary they hear (Pinker, 1996). New language expands as children monitor, self-repair speech, and ensure their meaning is understood (Clay, 2016; Pinker 1996). In this same circular pattern,

students can learn to steadily increase their literacy capabilities. According to Clay (2016),

"Expanding language networks means having more alternatives from which to choose" (p. 3).

The variety of word choices and alterations of syntactic patterns in speech allows children to

increase control as readers and writers (Clay, 2016).

A Lens of Capability

Ensuring an asset-based frame is utilized to examine teaching and learning interactions is

essential to foster the accelerated literacy growth required in Reading Recovery. Carol Lyons'

(2003) study of expert Reading Recovery teachers detailed how consistently high expectations

for all students led to persistence in building supportive relationships, to valuing student ethnic,

cultural, linguistic, physical, and intellectual differences, and to the constant conveyance of the

belief that students would succeed. The reciprocal nature of dialect, oral language and early

literacy skills demands that teachers observe student language negotiations from a strength-based

perspective to facilitate becoming literate (Clay, 2015).

Though all languages include an array of dialects, and each follows varied logic and

grammatical structures, there is still an assumed presumption that there is a "standard" form of

English, and many teachers work under this false assumption (Baker-Bell, 2020, Chisholm &

Godley, 2011; Green, 2012; Heath, 2009, 2012; Wolfram, 2017). Brady (2015) detailed the

derision of working-class language usage in the United Kingdom, linking varied dialectal

English language usage in students with teacher assumptions about behavior and morality.

Studies of language, power, and dialect in Appalachia elicited similar findings (Slocum, 2019).

These assumptions can negate the home language of some children while over-privileging the

language of others rather than acting as invitations for students to analyze varied lexicons and to

understand the history of dialect diversity as outlined in the Common Core State Standards

(2019) and in multiple research studies (Chisholm & Godley, 2011, Heath, 2012). African

American English (AAE**)** is a predictable and rule-governed linguistic system utilized in the United States. Though this system is highly developed and allows for communication with family and community members (Green, 2012; Smitherman in Baker-Bell, 2020) Anti-Racist Black Language Pedagogy has had to develop in response to a constant devaluing of the linguistic, cultural, racial, intellectual, and self-confidence needs of Black students. (Baker-Bell, 2020; Muhammad, 2021). For young children, it is possible to affirm the meaning they are making and to recognize the "everyday construction of knowledge through the interaction of culture, language and action" (Licona, 2013, p. 868). Producing this counter-narrative moves teachers away from a deficit view (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005, as cited in Licona, 2013, p. 868). From a strength-based lens, much can be accomplished (Heath, 2009, 2012).

Findings from Heath's (2009) study remain vitally important. Difference was never defined as deficit. This mindset is critical to the foundational understandings defining culturally and linguistically appropriate education. A range of ways of knowing were valued and schools were charged with providing opportunities where all children could learn (Heath, 2009). Heath's (2009) recognition of the rich intersectional power of oral language and literacy learning still resonates. My study of Reading Recovery teacher understanding is also rooted in findings from Heath's (2009) research in that moving away from a singular model of language acquisition would allow for the valuing of cultural diversity and the development of varied modes of cognition.

Statement of the Problem

The reciprocal nature of language and literacy learning requires an asset-based lens when students are identified for early literacy intervention, however cultural assumptions lead to both negative and positive value judgments regarding the way others speak (Baker-Bell, 2020, Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Green, 2012; Heath, 2009, 2012). These assumptions have led to the

overcorrection of student home language patterns rather than invitations for students to analyze varied lexicons. Race, class, socioeconomic status, and country of origin impact linguistic bias.

Historic bias regarding varied language usage is common (Compton-Lilly, 2005). Close links exist between individual discourse patterns and the language of families and communities. Much early identity is rooted in home language, therefore care and consideration are warranted as teachers work to honor and expand rather than negate the syntactic patterns of young children (Compton-Lilly, 2005). Delpit (2006) writes of the tendencies of teachers to correct student language though the research points to the ineffective nature of this response. What children know and experience before arriving at school should be validated, "prior knowledge is persistent. The connections in these physical networks of neurons are strong. They do not vanish with a dismissive comment by a teacher or a red mark on a paper" (Zull, 2002, p. 93). Teaching from correct and partially correct responding honors student's prior knowledge and problem-solving attempts and teachers can work to expand rather than reject student attempts. If, "prior knowledge is the beginning of new knowledge" (Zull, 2002, p. 93), then teachers must work against tendencies to shut down opportunities for growth and flexibility. The power of interacting through dialogue, reading, and writing in meaningful contexts could offer a new way to value the lived experiences of students and work against linguistic inequities (Baker-Bell, 2020; Muhammad, 2021).

By observing teachers with a long history of academic success, cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness, Ladson-Billings (2014) identified key structures that supported African American students and provided critical insight into replication of these success criteria for other educators. Linking this query to language is a logical next step. Addressing biases faced upon school entry by children who speak differently than their teachers is essential.

This section serves as an introduction to this study and is followed by the purpose, and the guiding research questions that will organize and frame the study. I have included definitions of key terms, an articulation of why and how this study is potentially significant and delimitations. A review of literature important to the field will preclude a description of the research methodology and provide further evidence for the research design.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this constructivist grounded theory study was to engage Reading Recovery teacher participants in varied rounds of qualitative data collection including surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations, to understand the degree to which they value varied student language patterns as leverage for literacy learning. All grounded theory studies work to explain or understand a problem not fully detailed in existing research through systemic coding and recoding of data into themes to extrapolate a tentative theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I applied a constructivist lens in grounded theory research. This was conceptualized by Charmaz (2014 as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018) and is rooted in co-construction between the researcher and participants. Not all grounded theory works out of a constructivist frame, but this study was specifically structured so that I, as the researcher, could engage teacher participants in exploring the degree to which Reading Recovery teacher interactions around student language might promote or inhibit literacy learning. In the Vygotskian manner social constructionism of knowledge is firmly grounded in social interactions (Quay, 2003). Language and experiences act as levers capable of building and expanding understanding. I did this as I thought collectively, we might be able to clarify or unearth the role of interactions that lead to accelerated literacy acquisition. An additional aim was to observe how teacher participants support and expand language in service of learning literacy in both reading and writing. Finally, this study will

consider the degree to which Reading Recovery teacher participants are working within Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP).

Epistemology, Ontology, Axiology & Praxeology

"We carry around our histories, social class, gender, sexuality in our thoughts and bodies and notice these in others (Western, 2008, p. 57)". My visible self, how others see me in the world, holds all the privilege of an educated White, cisgendered woman in a white-collar profession (Western, 2008). My invisible self, the baby born to parents in their junior year of high school, raised from the age of two by my single mother working multiple jobs and accepting public welfare and support from extended family to keep us fed and housed, holds less power within mainstream society (Western, 2008). There are moments when the nuances of who I am and where I have come from allow me to cross boundaries that others may find challenging. Though I still work with children daily, for the most part, my job for the last decade has revolved around adult learners. Human learning theory has taken precedence as I work to foster powerful foundational understandings and an ongoing stance of inquiry for young and old. The co-construction of knowledge is key to foster true inquiry and structures for ongoing learning. These understandings have greatly influenced the design of this research.

I believe true literacy leads to liberation and that human development is situated in social interactions and that knowledge is constructed through those interactions with others. Because I believe teachers do not often willingly or consistently partake in work, they have not co-constructed, their ontology plays a significant role in the research. Questions of how education works and how research is situated within and yet remains outside of education seem to demand engaging teachers as participants in my research (Biesta, 2015). Praxeology as described by Freire (2012) allows humans to contribute to each other's growing knowledge, conscientização or consciousness-raising. This idea of collective knowledge building is explained by Lyons

(1994) in the work of Reading Recovery as teachers working to "construct chains of reasoning", connecting one idea to another and expanding until all walk away with deeper understandings. Thus, individuals are empowered by the group. The praxeology and epistemology of constructing knowledge together drives this study.

This reality, or ontology, of liberation, independence, and empowerment guides this study to pragmatically leverage teacher participant knowledge and ensure that early literacy educators are the primary beneficiaries of this work. I am in charge of seeking out any useful patterns that may emerge, but if teacher voices are not valued, there is little we can do as researchers to alter teaching and learning and impact student outcomes. Two Reading Recovery Teacher leaders who are not participating in the study accepted invitations to serve as critical friends, helping to clarify ideas and provide feedback during data collection, analysis, and in the detailing of key findings. Teachers are the heart of the knowledge and value of this study (Gormley, 2005). It is they who directly impact the ability of children to grow into the literate life around them. Utilizing a constructivist grounded theory frame and relating this research to specific issues of racial, cultural, and linguistic oppression and the power that underlies our educational institutions may allow for increased student learning (Creswell, 2013). Overtly stating this axiology as a researcher, seemed necessary to ensure a sense of clarity for the reader.

Guiding Research Questions

The questions that drove this study are listed here:

- What do Reading Recovery teachers understand about using language/linguistic diversity as an asset in early literacy acquisition?

- What are the various ways Reading Recovery teachers believe they support varied student language patterns to help each child grow as a reader and a writer?

- What might be learned, in terms of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining

    Practices (CLSP), from Reading Recovery teachers?

- How can reading achievement be attributed to understanding linguistic diversity

    as an asset?

Definition of Terms

Some of the terms discussed in this research are defined as follows.

African American English (AAE): A predictable and rule-governed linguistic system utilized in the United States. This system is highly developed. AAE has a phonological, morphological, semantic, and lexical structure that may vary in pattern by region but is governed by set linguistic rules that have developed over time. AAE has been called Black Language, African American Language, Ebonics, African American Vernacular English. At times subtle variations between these titles are defined and debated (Green, 2012; Smitherman in Baker-Bell, 2020).

Anti-Racist Black Language Pedagogy: A pedagogical approach that intentionally and unapologetically centers the linguistic, cultural, racial, intellectual, and self-confidence needs of Black students. (Baker-Bell, 2020; Muhammad, 2021).

Becoming Literate: As children are taught about stories, words, letters, and sounds, successful readers show a gradual control in working with print. This inner strategic control supports the independent processing of texts. Children do this in interactions with parents and teachers but come to control ways of working on print which free them to learn independently from literacy encounters. The more they read, the more they learn to read and the more they write, the more they learn to write. Clay's Literacy Processing Theory (detailed below) is essential to building this inner strategic control (Clay, 2015).

Multidialectal: Being proficient in or facile in using more than one dialect. Related words are bidialectal and bidialectalism (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

Contingent Teaching: Contingency in teaching is one of two actions; a teacher either moves in to give more support when a student cannot solve a problem on his own or holds back on support (known as fading) to provide an opportunity for the learner to act. (Wood, 1998).

Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practice (CLSP): Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices are grounded in an educator's ability to recognize students' cultural and linguistic displays of learning and meaning making. In recognizing students as culturally and linguistically rich humans, teachers respond positively, constructively using each child's knowledge as a scaffold for further learning. Relationships and social-emotional connections are leveraged to create safe spaces for all students. (Baker-Bell, 2020; Boykin & Noguera, 2013; Freeman & Freeman, 2016; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Kinloch, 2010; Hammond, 2012; 2015; Licona, 2013; Muhammad, 2021).

Dialect: Dialect is defined broadly as in *Dialects in Schools and Communities* (Adger, et al., 2009) assigning linguistic variation to regional or socially defined groups of people who speak in a similar manner based on key cultural characteristics. This definition does not imply hierarchy in varied dialects but acknowledges that language difference is based on social, regional, situational, and cultural factors that are neither positive nor negative (Adger, et al., 2009).

Evidence-Based Literacy Intervention: Evidence-based literacy interventions have undergone rigorous evaluation of student outcomes including a comparison of results between a group of students who received the intervention and a similar group who did not. Multiple external evaluations are involved in evaluations to ensure replicability and reliability. (Richardson, 2018; WWC, 2023)

Literacy Processing Theory: Clay's (2015) Literacy Processing Theory argues that reading and writing are complex language-based processes. As learners engage in reading and writing activities, they assemble a system of perceptual and cognitive competencies that helps them

solve problems as they arise. (Clay, 2015, p. 224). Readers and writers anticipate, attempt, confirm, reject, solve, monitor, substitute, omit, and insert as they work to send or receive a message through written text. In this work, reading is defined as a message-getting, problem-solving activity which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practiced. Writing is defined as a message-sending, problem-solving activity which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practiced. This theory explains how young children become literate.

Multilingual Learners: Formerly called English language learners or students learning English as an additional language. These labels represent a broad swath of students working to learn English in addition to one or multiple other languages in schools. Many students are able to use several languages with equal fluency or are developing the ability to do so (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

Observation Survey: The Observation Survey, developed by Clay (2019), includes six literacy tasks; Letter Identification determines letters known and the child's preferred mode of identification. A word list determines if the child is building a personal resource of reading vocabulary. Concepts About Print determines what the child knows about spoken language represented in print. Writing Vocabulary determines the child's personal resource of known written words. Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words assess phonemic awareness based on how the child represents sounds in graphic form. Text Reading determines an appropriate level of text difficulty (Clay, 2019).

Reading Recovery ®: Reading Recovery is a short-term intervention for first graders having extreme difficulty with early reading and writing. Specially trained teachers work individually with students in daily 30-minute lessons lasting 12 to 20 weeks. After a full series of lessons, about 75% of these formerly lowest students reach grade-level standard (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2023).

Reciprocity: Knowledge from language flows to and informs understanding in reading and writing. What is learned in one area can help with learning more in the other. This flow of knowledge is the reciprocity of the two activities that use language in written form (Clay, 2016).

Response to Intervention: Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Literacy learners who need support in addition to good classroom instruction are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. Progress is closely monitored to assess both the learning rate and level of performance of individual students. (Allington, 2009; Johnston, 2010; RTI Action Network, 2021).

Science of Reading (SOR): Science of Reading is a term that has been used variously, but its use within research, policy, and the press has tended to share one important commonality: an intensive focus on assessed reading proficiency as the primary goal of reading instruction. Although it could refer to any synthesis of rigorous reading research; over the past few decades, much of the scholarship attached to the label (e.g., Castles et al., 2018; J.R. García & Cain, 2014) has drawn on the simple view of reading, which holds that decoding proficiency and language proficiency (typically operationalized as listening comprehension) fully account for reading comprehension proficiency. (Aukerman & Schuldt, 2021)

Social Constructionism: In the Vygotskian manner social constructionism of knowledge is firmly grounded in social interactions (Quay, 2003). Human development is situated in social interactions and that knowledge is constructed through those interactions with others. Language and experiences act as levers capable of building and expanding understanding.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): Defined by Vygotsky (1978) as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of

potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86).

Expected Contributions to the Field

I expected to gain greater understanding of how teacher participants could support and expand student language in service of learning literacy and share this with the field. I also sought details of useful interactions between teacher participants and students regarding language and foundational literacy learning to expand current research findings. I inquired as to how theoretical understandings impact daily practice so I also assumed that the conclusion of this study might result in an outline of some theoretical and practical implications linking how valuing varied student language patterns might lead to stronger early literacy outcomes. Any indications linking reading achievement to teacher participant understandings of language as an asset were also to be noted in the findings. Finally, I worked to overtly connect Reading Recovery and Clay's (2015) Literacy Processing Theory to the work of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices.

Delimitations of the Study

The potential purposeful sample of the wider Reading Recovery teacher community was too large to gather the layered data this study required. Additionally, the constructivist grounded theory nature of the design invited teachers to be active participants in constructing new understandings together, therefore, the group size had to allow for conversations, frequent meetings, and repeated interactions. A Massachusetts Center for Reading Recovery was utilized. This center included 35 Reading Recovery teachers from three districts, ranging from large and urban to small and suburban. I engaged teacher participants in focus groups to review my coding attempts of the initial survey to help ensure their intended messages were conveyed. I found power in working with two Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends who were not

participating in the study but were knowledgeable about the work (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). These structures were put in place as a means of ensuring there was a constant iterative reflective process regarding the information gathered and the processing of data throughout this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study took place over five months with meetings monthly and as needed in between. In utilizing this site and this group of teacher participants, the convenience of access, cost efficiency and effort were afforded without minimizing access to a useful data set. The structure of a constructivist grounded theory design seemed to me to have the potential to empower Reading Recovery teacher participants during the study and for a wider array of teachers with the publication of the results.

Researcher Assumptions and Theoretical Framework

In any research study the assumptions of the researcher must be considered. It is my belief that it is in the integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening that students learn to navigate the complex understandings essential for functioning today. The early language experiences of students and how their language is viewed in the classroom can be perceived as an asset or a barrier to literacy acquisition (Clay, 2015; Galloway et al., 2019; Wisniewski et. al, 2020). There is no one way to ensure positive outcomes for all the unique language variations that occur in each classroom during every day. Thus, an array of specialized responses is required as teachers differentiate instruction and deliberate on interactions with students to foster growth over time. Many early literacy interventions teach isolated skills but the theoretical underpinnings in Reading Recovery prioritize language and literacy learning (Clay, 2015; Schulz, 2009) making Reading Recovery teachers an ideal participant group for studying the interactions between early literacy learning and children's oral language. Valuing language and culture as a gift from home and community allows educators to work with a student as an

individual and to differentiate instruction appropriately without turning entire swaths of the population off from school (Boykin and Noguera, 2013; Diehm & Hendricks, 2021).

This study drew specifically on three bodies of research: language acquisition theory (Clay, 2015; Freeman & Freeman, 2016; Morgan, 2015; Pinker, 1996; Wolfram & Christian, 2009), Clay's (2015) Literacy Processing Theory, and Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Pedagogies (Baker-Bell, 2020; Boykin & Noguera, 2013; Brady, 2015; Freire, 2012; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Hammond, 2015; Kinloch; 2010, Ladson-Billings, 1995; Licona, 2013; Muhammad, 2021). Language acquisition theorists provide the clarity we need as educators. From them we come to know how children learn to speak in a myriad of languages by hearing and using language to make meaning and understand the world. In linguistics there is a consistent message that many teachers have not yet internalized, there is no standard form of English (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Labov, 2010; Wolfram, 2017). Embracing this would allow educators to value all the varied dialects and various syntactical choices students are making as they read, write, and engage in discourse. For this research, discussing how to consistently honor and expand student linguistic and literary choices is crucial. Clay's (2015) Literacy Processing Theory guides the preplanned and moment-to-moment decision making Reading Recovery teachers engage in every day. Teachers observe closely and record student attempts to anticipate, attempt, confirm, reject, solve, monitor, substitute, omit, and insert as they monitor their errors and search for more information. This helps teachers view attempts as correct and partially correct problem solving and to teach from a place of strength. Understanding Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Pedagogies is essential for educators to honor the brilliant variation they will encounter when teaching an array of students. Engaging in CLSP work has the potential to tie the teaching of language and literacy acquisition directly to the work of teaching from a strength-based lens.

As I searched for ways to view how teacher participants value all student language to easily facilitate access to first encounters with print many assumptions were raised and a few conclusions arose. Key, for me, was the empowerment of early literacy teachers and developing a plan for addressing racism and cultural and linguistic bias through the lens of strong literacy and language teaching and learning cycles. Much of why I teach has been driven by personal experiences that have revealed the injustices created in our society when illiteracy exists. My experience in education thus far has proved collective efficacy to be the most powerful way to resolve these injustices, therefore rooting this research in a theoretical frame that ensured collaboration was essential.

Chapter 2: Overview of the Literature

In a comprehensive literacy frame, the work of solving letters, sounds and words often takes place as students interact with texts. Teachers provide varied support while reading, talking, and writing to, with and near young children as they honor the ability to use language and leverage children's desire to seek meaning in the world and the words around them. Immersing students in texts and talk while making explicit key foundational understandings is the work of early education. Strong, empirically reviewed research is clear on the fact that the early language experiences of students and how their language is viewed in the classroom can be an asset or a barrier to literacy acquisition. Yet, much of the work in schools is currently focused on isolating discriminate aspects of literacy learning such as phonics, phonemic awareness and vocabulary and then teaching without the language and meaning supports found in connected text and a comprehensive literacy frame. Though explicit instruction is quite necessary, in each of these areas, it is in the integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening that students learn to navigate the complex understandings essential for functioning today. Students who read, write, and engage in discourse daily learn more than students who do so occasionally (Allington, 2014).

Current reporting on the science of reading (SOR) overemphasizes phonics over multiple literacy domains, including the development of writing, oral language, the sociocultural and identity-related aspects of becoming literate, and necessary supports for multilingual and multidialectal learners (Allington, 2014; Aukerman, 2022; Aukerman & Chambers, 2021; Graham, 2020; Shanahan, 2020). Aukerman (2022) and Shanahan (2020) critiqued the imbalance of Hanford's (2019) media report where she mentions phonics instruction 86 times with only one single reference to the other literacy domains. "The *NYT* article (Goldstein, 2022) follows a similar pattern: aside from scattered mentions of having children read complex text, only phonics

is given attention" (Aukerman, 2022). In this argument, the oral language supports and challenges afforded to young children as they navigate the demands of reading and writing print during their early encounters are largely ignored. Literacy instruction that ignores the oral language, prior print experience, and early knowledge of the world that children bring with them from home to school risks teaching a narrow range of skills that neglect to address a broader research base that demands robust instruction fostering joy, engagement, critical thinking, text-based reasoning, fluency, comprehension, and strong writing throughout a child's lifetime (Aukerman, 2022; Graham, 2020; Scanlon & Anderson, 2020). Shanahan (2020) argues educators are spending too little teaching time on phonics in primary classrooms but also finds similar gaps in thorough and explicit teaching of reading comprehension, fluency, and writing. There is a tendency to suggest that overemphasizing one aspect of literacy instruction over another will help when strengthening our knowledge across all domains could actually be the most powerful solution (Graham, 2020; Scanlon & Anderson, 2020).

Language acquisition, language development, early literacy acquisition, and issues around language diversity and teacher bias are explored in this chapter. In terms of bias, race, equity, and impacts on Multilingual or Multidialectal learners, each warrants scrutiny. Attention will be paid to teaching from a lens of capability, research on the language-based literacy intervention model of Reading Recovery, and the influence of utilizing language to build more literacy experience.

Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is extremely intricate, yet children seem to effortlessly acquire the rich patterns and vocabulary they hear (Pinker, 1996). Development is predictable for most children, though each will take their own path, and a few will vary greatly (Connor et al., 2018). New language learning expands as children monitor, self-repair speech, and ensure their meaning

is understood (Clay, 2016; Eckert & Labov, 2017; Labov, 2010; Pinker 1996). Lyons (2003) discusses the role of non-verbal expression including hand, eye, facial motions, and the use of signals such as movements made through a gesture, the implied meaning from the stance of a person and proximity as part of ways humans can communicate. These nonverbal expressions allow for demonstration of love and other emotions, ensure ways to connect or disconnect and allow people to display emotional assuredness, to express wants and needs (Lyons, 2003). In short, verbal, and nonverbal languages are used to comprehend the world and its people (Eckert & Labov, 2017; Labov, 2010; Lyons, 2003). Language is developed and constrained by daily social interactions as young children adapt to their family and community (Eckert & Labov, 2017; Whittingham et al., 2018). Each child learns the language of their environment, family, and culture.

Neuroscience is now able to show that during the first year of life, babies are forming an auditory map of the language around them (Kuhl, 2000). Eye contact, facial expressions, and other nonverbal interactions are produced to communicate messages prior to comprehensible speech (Gopnick, Meltzoff, and Kuhl 2001). As adults modify and adapt input, young infants can be heard and seen, copying the patterns, stress, and motions of caretakers, and demonstrating an early preference for the rhythms of their native language (Kuhl, 2000). Listening intently and then being given massive amounts of time and opportunity to experiment through exaggeration and mimicry, children parse early auditory units of speech, detect patterns, produce clusters of language, and, with caretaker feedback, adjust based on interactions (Kuhl, 2000).

Eckert and Labov (2017) discuss the linguistic variation that emerges as social contexts drive meaning making. The interactions between individuals and groups allow for constructing understandings. This patterning of meaning shifts across local settings, situations, and communities. Their results imply that variations between language interactions at home and

language interactions at school can impact comprehension positively or negatively without support (Eckert & Labov, 2017). They detail differences in communication deemed polite or rude, variations in vocabulary usage and in phonetic pronunciation that indicate membership or exclusion from certain groups. Social communication and shared cultural experiences can allow for increasing flexibility in language learning (Eckert & Labov, 2017; Lyons, 2003). New sentences are formed by combining words in new ways and children are driven to make meaning and utilize unconscious rules to represent ideas (Chomsky, 1980; Eckert & Labov, 2017). Ideas grow increasingly complex and are revised through more language input (Connor et al., 2018). Though the language acquisition infants and young children engage in appears easily learned, it is a long term, circular patterning, cycle of organization and reorganization (Gopnick, Meltzoff, and Kuhl 2001). Later, oral discourse and narrative skills will become essential for making meaning in the increasingly complex manner necessary for writing and ongoing academic achievement (Orizaba, et al., 2020). Palinscar and Schleppegrell (2014) found that when opportunities to read, write, and speak in the language of school are limited to school hours, there are tools and practices that can explicitly engage students in rich language. These practices allow time and space for students to talk and analyze texts, to expand their own English language development and to utilize emerging language in writing. Additionally, linguistic flexibility arises as individuals move in and out of varied social situations and jointly engage in meaning-making (Eckert & Labov, 2017).

Multiple studies have shown that emphasizing only one aspect of literacy and language learning will not have as powerful an impact as will the flexible support from teachers attending responsively to the current capacity of students based on ongoing observation of their strengths and needs (Allington, 2013; International Literacy Association, 2019; Johnston, 2012; Morrison & Connor, 2016; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Wisniewski et. al, 2020). Explicit teaching

while immersing students in reading, writing, and discussing connected texts across varied contexts matters (Allington, 2013; International Literacy Association, 2019; Johnston, 2012; Morrison & Connor, 2016; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Wisniewski et. al, 2020).

One instance of the danger of overemphasizing only one aspect of literacy learning is a widely cited study by Hart and Risley (1992) that focused solely on comparisons of a vocabulary gap between students from economically disadvantaged households and the children of university professors. This study did provide initial insight on oral language exposure in different contexts and questioned cognitive and linguistic support provided to young children in the early years (Kamil et al., 2011). Yet, the researchers focused on deficits in the language of children from economically disadvantaged households and declared there was a 30-million-word gap between rich and poor children impacting academic learning from the start (Hart & Risley, 1992). The discrepancy between the two groups was declared a catastrophe and led to changes in educational policy (Hart & Risley, 1992; Kamenetz, 2018). Since its original publication, Hart and Risley's (1992) research has been criticized as culturally biased, utilizing too small a sample size, and for being methodologically flawed (Adair et al., 2017; Gilkerson et al., 2017; Kamenetz, 2018; Sperry & Miller, 2019). Follow-up studies have been unable to replicate the original findings (Adair, Colegrove & McManus, 2017; Kamenetz, 2018; Sperry & Miller, 2019).

Viewed as groundbreaking at the time for inquiring about the relationship of word exposure to foundational literacy skills and language development, Hart and Risley's (1992) one study of 42 children, went on to be cited in research over 8000 times. The line of inquiry was useful in that it made educators and researchers more cognizant of the density and complexity of varied oral language interactions between children and adults and that it pointed up differences that emerge early on in children's language development (Kamil et al., 2011; Moje et al., 2020).

Yet the difference as deficit angle taken by the researchers lead to policies and instruction that often denied students access to broader language and literacy opportunities that have been proven to close student opportunity gaps (Adair et al., 2017; Boykin & Noguera, 2013; Katz, 2013; Ladd & Duke University, 2011; Moje et al., 2020). The deficit lens utilized both by researchers and educators during the "war on poverty" and subsequent policies of No Child Left Behind seriously impacted interactions between schools, families, and children and still have far reaching implications today (Adair et al., 2017; Boykin and Noguera, 2013; Kamenetz, 2018; Katz, 2013; Ladd & Duke University, 2011; Sperry & Miller, 2019). Newer studies recommend focusing on high standards, culturally responsive teaching with complex and engaging texts and tasks, taking a strength-based view of children's knowledge and addressing the needs of individual children (Adair et al., 2017; Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Beneke & Cheatam, 2014; Boykin & Noguera, 2013; Briceno & Klein, 2018; Compton-Lilly, 2005; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Ladd & Duke University, 2011; Licona, 2013; Lyons et al., 1994; Sperry & Miller, 2019).

The compilation of this research implies there is no one way to ensure positive outcomes for all the unique language variations students bring into varied classrooms. Thus, an array of specialized responses is required as teachers differentiate instruction and deliberate on interactions with students to foster change over time. Again, matching interventions to student need is critical and classroom teaching from a comprehensive frame that prioritizes both language and literacy learning is essential. Ensuring teachers have the expertise to deliver explicit instruction as needed based on children's current capacity is also crucial (Clay, 2015; Graham, 2020; Scanlon & Anderson, 2020; Schulz, 2009).

Language Development: Between Home and School

The emerging and evolving capabilities of young children are constantly in flux as they learn to understand and be understood in varied contexts and social constructs (Clay, 2015; Farrow et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Pinker, 1996). Clay (2016) provides guidance to teachers regarding the need to accept the language of young students as it exists and to honor meaning rather than emphasize accuracy by self-correcting grammatical structures. This points to the need for authentic conversation between teachers and students and between students and their peers. Change will occur as children engage in meaningful talk, hearing and using new words and phrases repeatedly rather than by having their syntax corrected in a punitive manner. Research done by Evans and Hulak (2020) found that children supported at home by parents who assisted young readers in word solving, often made meaning and enjoyed texts. Many of the children in this study appropriated conceptions about reading from home but a few highlighted the key role teachers play in the role of early literacy acquisition stating, "my parents send me to school to learn to read" (Evans & Hulak, 2012, p. 42). Rich language experiences in the preschool years are predictive of the ability to produce coherent utterances, to speak and be understood (Orizaba et al., 2020).

When home and school language have similar patterns, switching between the two tends to be an easy task (Whittingham et al., 2018). When home and school language vary greatly, negotiation is often necessary (Whittingham et al., 2018). When individual educators, schools, or systems value one language form over another, this only increases the likelihood of limiting the achievement of a group of students (Whittingham et al., 2018). The correlation between variations in home and school language and literacy outcomes is not a new idea in educational research; Wolfram and colleagues have been writing about this since 1971 (Connor et al., 2018; Hart & Risley 1992; Heath 1982; Labov, 2010; Terry et al., 2010; Wolfram et al., 2007).

There is a growing body of research pointing to the impact of teacher bias regarding linguistic diversity that leads to lower expectations for multilingual or multidialectal students (Diehm & Hendricks, 2021; Thompson & Gardner-Webb University, 2019). Early research from White (1976) and Weaver (1983) detailed the work of students speaking African American English as they actively searched to solve problems as readers, and to make meaning from syntax previously unfamiliar to them in their home register. In this study, teachers overcorrected these young learners, moved them into lower reading groups, interrupted them, or gave them isolated reading work (Allington, 2014; Thompson & Gardner-Webb University, 2019). Valuing the funds of knowledge students carry with them from home to school, including language, and the ability to negotiate meaning, is key in acknowledging that difference does not equal deficit and for raising expectations of student learning (Adair et al., 2017; Beneke & Cheatam, 2014; Boykin & Noguera, 2013; Briceno & Klein, 2018; Compton-Lilly, 2005; Diehm & Hendricks, 2021; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

In Heath's (1982) influential bedtime story study, the significance of reading and talking with family before bed was a predictor of school achievement. In this study linguistic variation was honored rather than the researcher taking a stance that prioritized one form of dialect over another. By studying the conversations and rituals around early literacy within three distinct cultures residing in the same town, Heath (1982) detailed how, "the ways of talking employed in the school may in turn build directly on the preschool development, may require substantial adaptation on the part of the children, or may even run directly counter to aspects of the community's pattern" (p. 70). The lack of a solid body of research regarding how children learn the language of literacy while participating in negotiating the meaning of written texts at home was noted as an issue needing addressing (Heath, 1982). Additionally, Heath (1982) observed that what each group learned was based on implicit rules surrounding reading, writing, and talk

within each of their communities. This study concluded by stating that a "strict dichotomization between oral and literate traditions is a construct of researchers, not an accurate portrayal of reality across cultures" and that "a unilinear model of development in the acquisition of language structures and uses cannot adequately account for culturally diverse ways of acquiring knowledge or developing cognitive styles" (Heath, 1982, p. 73). The implications for education are strong, schools and researchers must be careful not to set students up for failure based on random expectations and observations that do not honor diverse ways of knowing, speaking, and making meaning.

Schools, themselves, need to adjust and welcome the language of a wide array of students rather than holding to the myth of a "standard" form of English or to monolingualism as the norm (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Whittingham et al., 2018). Though some families actively work to prepare their young children for school by shifting expectations around language, early literacy, discourse patterns, and adult interactions, the flexibility required within each school community varies greatly. The research also demonstrates the idea of school readiness as another social construct too rigid to be useful (Whittingham et al., 2018). Cummins, McCracken and Rikers (2020) found that sharing language acquisition research with families and educators led to intentional teaching for the reciprocity of language and learning, and that valuing home language and culture led to richer classroom experiences. Celebrating the necessary flexibility of multilingual learners was deemed powerful and maybe just as necessary an experience for multidialectal and monolingual students.

Fostering change over time in learning anything requires much deliberation. McNaughton (2018) cautions teachers to consider the role of instructional risk in education. What we choose not to teach, often has as much of an implication on student learning as what we do choose to teach (McNaughton, 2018). Pearson (2019) details the need for teachers to attend to key research

findings as they engage with students daily. Intentional deliberation is required to ensure strong instructional routines, the promotion of authentic reading, writing, speaking, and listening experiences and planning for expansion of the individual competencies of the children on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis. Since teachers can and do consistently impact student learning outcomes, attention to the language of children as an asset to inform academic learning is necessary (Galloway et al., 2019; Wisniewski et. al, 2020).

By listening intently, teachers can hear how the social language of children's speech shifts to utilizing some of the language of the teacher (Lyons, 2003). Students take on this self-regulatory speech in many aspects of learning, but in reading and writing, the transition from overt usage to private speech, to action can signify increasing levels of independence (Lyons, 2003). The limited amount of research available regarding children's home language and early literacy acquisition that Heath (1982) uncovered is still an issue decades later. Deliberate and intentional teaching for the expansion of student language acquisition while honoring their current competencies is not discussed in detail, if at all beyond prekindergarten and kindergarten practitioners (Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016). Home language can lead to the expansion of reading and writing experiences, oral discourse can lead to increased literacy learning, in turn leading to more flexibility with language and storytelling structures (Clay, 2014). Learning to read and write leads to expansion of language as students encounter new vocabulary, more complex phrases, and sentence units. This expansion of language can lead to more complex reading and writing (Clay, 2015). Attention to language development is necessary throughout a child's academic career but is absolutely essential in the earliest stages of a child's journey to becoming literate.

Leveraging Student Language for Literacy

Just as language learning takes a circular acquisition pattern, so too can students steadily increase their literacy capabilities. According to Clay (2016), "Expanding language networks means having more alternatives from which to choose" (p. 3). The variety of word choice and alterations of syntactic patterns in speech allows children increasing control as readers and writers (Clay, 2016). Souto-Manning and Martell (2016) argue that teacher commitment to valuing the strengths of multiple languages, literacy, and cultural practices is productive for all students and grows more flexible over time. They cite Ladson-Billings' (1995) research on culturally relevant pedagogy as critical to ensuring an increase in respect, inclusion, and cross-cultural interactions that allow teachers to maintain high expectations while navigating a variety of academic needs. Ladson-Billings (2014) argues that culturally sustaining pedagogy leads to explicit questioning of equity, justice, and a much-needed fluidity when working to understand another's culture (Ladson-Billings, 2014). As students attempt to map their language onto texts, teachers can hear meaningful attempts and honor the partially correct manner students are utilizing to work out problem-solving. This can lead to the searching and solving of finer orthographic and phonetic information in addition to understanding varied syntactic and semantic patterns.

Validating the sociocultural experiences of students is key as is ensuring schools do not maintain a false divide between the oral and literate traditions students were exposed to at home (Heath, 1982). Valuing language and culture as a gift from home and community allows educators to work with a student as individuals and to differentiate instruction appropriately without turning entire swaths of the population off from school (Boykin & Noguera, 2013; Diehm & Hendricks, 2021).

Valuing linguistic variety and eschewing the assumption of a "standard English" can allow for the provision of more robust and flexible learning opportunities where the language of home and the texts of school are seen as interdependent and meaning is co-constructed through social and academic interactions (Whittingham, et al., 2018). Strekalova-Hughes and Wang (2019) found that students could internalize storytelling structures and leverage this knowledge to comprehend genre and connect morals across stories from home and school. Discourse drives storytelling patterns and not all cultures follow the same conflict or resolution structures (Lwin, 2015). Recognizing that there are many ways to generate and interpret ideas, messages, and phrase units can lead to more flexible text selection and deliberation when teaching students to make meaning and understand complex language structures and word usage (Lwin, 2015). Teacher-student interactions are a key variable in early literacy learning. Ensuring student contributions are honored and expanded rather than negated is essential to maximize positive student learning outcomes (Galloway et al, 2018). Each interaction in a new book, read or written, carries weight.

A recent research brief by Pearson and colleagues from the International Literacy Association (2020) stated, "language drives every facet of reading comprehension" (p. 28). Early letter and sound links, phonemic awareness, hearing and using word parts, and the ability to solve and understand vocabulary drive early meaning-making attempts (Pearson, et al., 2020; Whittingham et al., 2019). Though this is well known, instruction in isolated skill development is often mandated and when prescribed, rote reading programs can lead to disengagement on the part of both teachers and students (Allington, 2012; Shamberger & Thompson, 2015). Student choice and attention to teaching diverse strategies including opportunities to discuss, check on understanding, and to model comprehending are key (Shamberger & Thompson, 2015).

Advanced comprehension relies on complex disciplinary language, register, and argument to comprehend and discuss texts (Pearson, et al., 2020).

Each child takes their own path to becoming literate, though there is a continuum of learning that marks development and can help teachers foster change over time (Clay, 2015). Emergent readers and writers are developing an awareness of concepts about print in their world and often attempt to read or write as it has been modeled for them (Clay, 2019; Ehri, 1997; Teale & Sulzby, 1992). Ehri (1995) describes these paths as four developmental phases that include the pre-alphabetic phase, the partial alphabetic phase, the full alphabetic phase, and the consolidated alphabetic phase. Each phase leads to the development of new sight word knowledge and an expansion of the ability to decode words (Ehri, 1997). Beech's (2005) critique of Ehri's phases points to a continuum that is less rigid than earlier age and stage models. Beech (2005) cites this flexibility as a strength and a weakness since it provides a framework, but Beech argues the lack of a final phase beyond the end of first and second grade competency leaves the work incomplete. Though Beech does not discuss Ehri's (2020) consideration of semantic (meaning) and syntactical information (grammatical structure) as another weakness here, her framework only considers word level knowledge. The literary work of understanding an author's meaning at the phrase, sentence, paragraph, and text level are not discussed. Once again, in this commonly cited literacy study (Beech, 2005), the orthographic and phonetic knowledge students bring to the task is more, rather than equally significant to the semantic and syntactical work required by readers and writers.

Early or beginning readers typically map their oral language and knowledge of the world onto print as readers and writers. They learn to visually scan in serial order, to link what they see to what they hear, and that print carries messages (Clay, 2019). The way they produce sounds and words, and patterns of language will help them anticipate print on the page (Briceno &

Klein, 2018). Understanding student language structures from home can lead teachers to view a young child's substitution of *gonna* when reading for the words *going to* as a close approximation needing support rather than as a guess or completely incorrect response and overcorrection of the child's oral syntax. Responses like *yes, that makes sense, but be sure it looks right too,* honor children's use of their own structure while ensuring opportunities to expand formal language structures and academic learning in reading and in writing. Those who advocate for systematic phonics instruction to be taught as a set stage rather than alongside use of morphemic, syntactic, orthographic, and phonetic information call the act of substituting a "psycholinguistic guessing game" (Ehri, 2020, p. S46). Expert adult readers also make substitutions, sometimes inserting one word for another when tired or encountering an unfamiliar term for the first time and this provides the rare opportunity for us to monitor and search for more information. Now, a child who is less facile with oral and written language who substitutes an unknown word in print with a known word from their working vocabulary is seen as guessing rather than actively searching their oral language repertoire for a solution as the adult reader is clearly engaged in. This monitoring, searching, and correcting is the problem-solving work strong readers and writers engage in all the time. A young child's early attempts can be built upon, and their approximations can be used to strengthen phonetic and orthographic knowledge rather than negate their tentative endeavors.

Transitional readers are interacting with meaning, language, and visual information in print with more automaticity and across varied texts and formats (Bear & Templeton, 2000; Clay, 2015). They are growing increasingly accurate in writing spelling patterns and high frequency words and have developed ways of writing more detailed narratives and informational texts (Bear & Templeton, 2000; Ehri, 1997; Clay, 2015). Intermediate and advanced readers are fast processors, much of the problem-solving and comprehending has gone underground, they

make connections and read for multiple purposes, writing across genres, often anticipating what will come next based on patterns in language and text, adjusting their reading rate to ensure comprehension, and often discovering new information within and beyond the text independently (Allington, 2014; Clay, 2015; Kuhn, et al., 2006). At this stage, the act of reading and writing more, leads to increased proficiency as readers and writers (Allington, 2014; Clay, 2016).

We have decades of research on literacy acquisition and the complex nature of varied sources of information that come together to aid early readers and writers as they map language onto literacy and reap the reciprocal gains of reading, writing, and engaging in increasingly complex language patterns in a circular acquisition pattern (Allington, 2013; Clay, 2016; Connor et. al, 2018; International Literacy Association, 2019; Johnston, 2010; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Yet recently, the education media has conflated outdated arguments known as the "reading wars" (International Literacy Association, 2019). "Many of these pieces have created confusion and provided misinformation by oversimplifying both the sources of reading difficulties and how to address them" (International Literacy Association, 2019, p. 2). A limited view of the Science of Reading is leading to a greater emphasis on phonics instruction in grades two through five. Phonics only or too much time on phonics instruction without authentic reading and writing can lead to diminished reading growth (Johnston, 2010). Denying students access to the complex language found in text is problematic (Beneke & Cheatham, 2105; Palinscar & Schleppegrell, 2014). Too often students who enter schools with early literacy skills that measure below their peers, end up falling further and further behind because they are never asked to read, subskills are overemphasized rather than being taught as a means to an end (Allington, 2013).

Language Diversity and Teacher Bias

Many sociocultural factors impact implicit biases based on the current language usage of young children. Educators may assume socioeconomic status, capability or class based on the grammatical structure and word usage of their students. Multilingual, multidialectal students and students receiving speech and language support may experience language bias when teachers alter instructional pace, levels of support or task difficulty, barring or allowing access to the rich academic instruction necessary to shift learning outcomes (Meissel et al., 2017). Even when standardized assessments showed similar outcomes, teacher judgment often leads to larger achievement gaps (Meissel et al., 2017). The need to see students for what they can do is complicated further by research regarding typical interactions between White teachers and students of color (Boykin & Noguera, 2013; Diehm & Hendricks, 2021). Thompson and Shamberger (2015) reviewed work by Delpit (1995), Landsman (2004), and Bonilla-Silva (2003) to explain how educators often hold low expectations for students of color, using a colorblind mantra to hide inequitable practices and racial views of intelligence. Black and White teachers can be at fault in this arena, but research indicates that having one to two Black teachers over the course of an educational lifespan can positively impact students of color (Dee, 2004). Implicit and explicit biases are at fault here.

Race and Equity

Concerns regarding persistent gaps in student learning outcomes across racial, economic, and linguistic lines cry out for immediate and profound attention, "it is abundantly clear that students from certain ethnic groups, most prominently African Americans and Latinos, do not fare well in U.S. schools" (Boykin & Noguera, 2013, p.vii). Race and equity play a key role in how educators view language as a strength or a weakness. Baker-Bell (2020) challenges educators to note the connections between, "linguistic hierarchies and racial hierarchies" (p.2).

The language of White mainstream America is privileged, and other dialects and forms are devalued, particularly African American English (Baker-Bell, 2020). Anecdotal evidence from conversations throughout my career implies the same is true as teachers pre-judge students who have recently immigrated. White European multilingual learners are often privileged whereas students of color who are new to the country are quickly coded as multilingual learners in a manner that seems to devalue their cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Teacher linguistic bias may have a larger impact on our opportunity gap data than has yet been reported.

Black linguistic patterns and storytelling structures are a rich aspect of U.S. culture (Abdurraqib, 2021; Meier, 2010). Folktales, rap, poetry, speeches, novels, and discourse patterns are deliberately passed from one generation to the next (Abdurraqib, 2021; West, 2016). The National Council for Teachers of English makes clear the need to value all languages in a resolution statement, "language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another" (NCTE, 1974, para. 3). Though this position was adopted long ago, researchers have detailed multiple instances of linguistic inequities (Baker-Bell, 2020; Clay, 2015; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Kinloch, 2010). Clay (2015) writes of the power of honoring approximations and how student language is the strongest source of information at the disposal of young children as they become literate. Teachers who make negative comments as students tentatively communicate through their community grammatical patterns discount student attempts to match speech to text, slowing literacy growth or impeding the development of foundational understandings (Clay, 2015). Baker-Bell (2020) cites instances of teachers silencing, invalidating, and policing students for speaking the language of their homes in school. Kinloch (2010) details systemic issues of the pervasive devaluing of the

language and experiences of students, altering self-perceptions along the way. Flores and Rosa (2015) write of subtractive language approaches in which students are expected to replace the language of their home and community with the language of school. Though there is no validity to a standard dialect, U.S. schools are fraught with instances that imply otherwise.

Linguistic bias can impact teacher-student interactions. Baker-Bell (2018) describes classrooms where the language of Black students is overtly negated, where "some classrooms operate like linguistic and cultural battlegrounds instead of havens where students' language and literacy practices are affirmed, valued and sustained" (p. 1). This echoes the work of Slocum (2019) in the United Kingdom and Brady (2015) in Appalachia where issues of class and dialect, rather than race or ethnicity and dialect, impacted teacher perceptions of student capabilities. There is significant evidence that when teachers have the skills to differentiate, take responsibility for student outcomes, and build solid relationships across social constructs of race or culture, or class, students are likely to achieve strong academic outcomes (Boykin & Noguera, 2013).

The texts utilized in schools must also be considered from a culturally and linguistically proficient lens. Only a third of the books analyzed by Bishop (2019) were rich in messages truly reflecting the daily lives of children of color. Massive exposure to a wide array of texts and text types is essential (Allington, 2014; Thompson & Shamberger, 2015) if we are to expand student ability to anticipate the varied language and word choice they will encounter. These experiences foster flexibility as students search for increasingly complex alternatives while reading, writing, and talking across genre, form, and for multiple purposes (Clay, 2015, Galloway et al, 2018).

Students are the heart of any school community, and finding books where they see themselves and find their interests reflected back at them is key. Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) clarified the need for teachers to provide books as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors for

students. Mirrors provide children the chance to see themselves in texts. Windows provide the

opportunity for children to view the lives of others. Sliding glass doors allow students to

experience links between themselves and the world as they become increasingly literate. Yet

publishers struggle to move beyond overt social constructs in the creation of children's books.

Table 1 details the percentage of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds and some

details about the authors and illustrators creating those texts. An explanation follows.

Table 1: Diversity in Children's Books

Books Depicting Characters from Diverse Backgrounds	Percentage of Books	% of Authors and Illustrators from that same diverse group
American Indian/First Nations	1%	83%
Latinx	5%	57%
Asian Pacific Islander/Asian Pacific American	7%	47%
African American Characters	10%	49%
Animals/Other	27%	N/A
White Characters	50%	N/A

DIVERSITY IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2018

Percentage of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds based on the 2018 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison: ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp

23 BOOKS 1% American Indians/First Nations   170 BOOKS 5% Latinx   864 BOOKS 7% Asian Pacific Islander/Asian Pacific American   301 BOOKS 10% African/African American   27% Animals/Other   1,656 BOOKS 50% White

Illustration by David Huyck, in consultation with Sarah Park Dahlen
Released under a Creative Commons BY-SA license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/

The CCBC inventory includes 3,134 books published in 2018. This graphic would not have been possible without the statistics compiled by the CCBC, and the review and feedback we received from Edith Campbell, Molly Beth Griffin, K. T. Horning, Debbie Reese, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, and Madeline Tyner. Many thanks.

A 2018 analysis done by Huyck and Dahlen (2019), revealed that 50% of characters in children's books were White, and 27% of characters were animals. Of the 10% of books that had significant African or African American representation, only 49% were created by authors from this same group. The 7% of texts representing Asian Pacific characters in children's books had similar representation with only 47% of authors coming from this same group. 5% of the texts with significant Latinx representation had 57% of authors coming from this same diverse group. 83% of the authors or illustrators writing First Nations texts identified as First Nations members but only 1% of these characters were represented across all children's books (Huyck & Dahlen, 2019; Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2018). Kathleen Horning, director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center for 20 years until her retirement in 2020, noted how slow the publishing industry can be to change (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2019).

Helping students map their language onto early texts is challenging enough, but when books do not represent a wide array of cultures, families, faith, and perspectives, students may disengage (Bishop, 2019; Young et al., 2020). The authenticity of the experiences represented in texts matter as well. Valuing the oral stories of students and families may be the only way to ensure that rich community traditions are present in classrooms (Ward & Warren, 2020). There are layers upon layers of culture, language, and intersectionality that the publishing industry has not yet contemplated so, as educators, we must invite an array of student writing and storytelling into our classrooms (Ward & Warren, 2020).

The reciprocity between reading and writing can act as leverage for student language to be valued and for them to dig deeper to unpack the language of others. Ivey and Johnston (2013) found that adolescent readers could use social interactions around books to expand their sense of self-identity, agency, relational, moral, and intellectual lives. Teachers working to expand the capabilities of each reader and writer through dialogue and feedback may be a way to foster the

immediate and profound attention Boykin and Noguera (2013) deem necessary to alter student academic learning outcomes for Black and Latino students (Galloway et al, 2018).

Class and Language

Race, cultural and other social and economic factors impact implicit biases based on the current language usage of young children (Baker-Bell, 2020; Compton-Lilly, 2005). Educators may assume socioeconomic status, capability, or class based on the grammatical structure and word usage of their students (Chisholm & Godley, 2011; Heath, 2012; Meissel et al., 2017). This is not helpful. Compton-Lilly (2005) reminds us that, "language is public; when we speak, we reveal information about ourselves to others. It is important to consider that all ways of speaking are not equally valued in our society and these differences can become problematic in classrooms" (p. 44). Brady (2015) details findings from a study of teachers degrading students for using structures from their home working-class language patterns in the United Kingdom. He notes how student communication patterns led teachers to assume ideas around behavior and morality. In the United States, studies of language, power, and Appalachian dialect elicited similar findings (Slocum, 2019). Learning from one's home language and dialect is often easily transferable; meaning, language structure, and patterns can be compared and contrasted to build and expand communicative capacity and flexibility (Bamberger-Hayim, 2018). Valuing linguistic diversity as an asset must become the norm if we are to close opportunity gaps.

Multilingual Students

Linguistic diversity includes multilingual students (Hartshorne, et al., 2018). English language proficiency will vary for first-generation immigrant students and their families based on past educational experiences, both formal and informal, on wealth and immigration status, and multiple other factors (Freeman & Freeman, 2016). Students with strong academic vocabulary and understanding in their native language, tend to arrive with increased access to

fast acquisition and success in English, as they are able to map new complex words, concepts, and ideas over from previously learned understandings (Rodriguez, 2009). Students with limited or no exposure to educational experiences in their native country or newly arriving students may need an array of opportunities (Rodriguez, 2009). Reading, writing, and talking more, both in English and in students' native languages enhances and expands the chance for accelerative learning (Rodriguez, 2009).

Research has shown that instructional routines with powerful efficacy data in teaching multilingual students are strong teaching practices for all learners (Fillmore, 2014; McCracken, et al., 2020; Ucelli et al., 2015). However, beyond daily, or weekly teacher-led vocabulary instruction, many other recommended routines are not consistently implemented (Sparapani et al., 2016; Ucelli et al., 2015). Student discourse around nuance and rich meanings within vocabulary is underutilized when compared to the teaching of basic rote-memorization practices (Sparapani et al., 2016). Though the needs of all students can be addressed through effective strategies for second language learners, these literacy instructional routines are often only utilized with students newly acquiring English (Ollerhead, 2018). For students who are learning English, neglecting to deal with meaning at the phrase and sentence level can lead to long-term struggles with word-solving and comprehension (Palinscar & Schleppegrell, 2014). For all other students, implementing strong language and literacy-based instructional routines, can positively impact academic outcomes. There is no rationale for not utilizing this research base to reach more students.

Multidialectal Students

Neglecting to deal with meaning can also lead to long-term struggles for students who speak in patterns other than "White mainstream English" (Alim & Smitherman, 2012). Washington and colleagues (2018) identified dialect as an important variable impacting language

and early literacy development. Additionally, they found direct correlations between dialect and early gains in reading and language, indicating that reading, writing, and talking should be taught hand in hand. However, the researchers conducted their work through a speech and language lens and concluded that the obvious prescription to increase accelerated literacy learning would be the implementation of explicit phonics instruction. Phonics instruction and word study are beneficial when clearly and systematically taught as a "means to an end" to allow access to daily reading and writing experiences (National Reading Panel & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Without an additional focus on language-rich, culturally responsive interactions driven by comprehension, fluency, and meaning-making within and across texts, there is little to suggest that one dimension of teaching would be powerful enough to shift both language and literacy access. Incorporating strong phonics, phonological awareness, morphology, and orthography instruction in a comprehensive frame and taking an asset-based view of multidialectal learners would make more sense (Freeman & Freeman, 2016).

Teacher observations of students from a deficit-based lens do not leave room for teaching and learning (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2018). All students arrive at school with their own ways of communicating. For young children, it is possible to affirm the meaning they are making and to recognize the "everyday construction of knowledge through the interaction of culture, language and action" (Licona, 2013, p. 868). Producing this counter-narrative moves teachers away from a deficit view of multilingualism, multidialectal learners, and other linguistic diversity (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

The closer their discourse patterns and communication usage is to that of schooling, the more competent and able they are often perceived (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Heath, 1982; Souto-Manning, 2013) but all students are ready to learn more and will learn more when their language and home experiences are valued (Clay, 2014). Close observation of how students use verbal and

non-verbal cues to interact is critical. Teachers who declare that some students have no language are setting students up for academic and social frustration (Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016). Every child is a language learner, and every language learner is capable of understanding increasing complexity over time when we utilize a strength-based lens (Clay, 2016). Teachers must dissect their own language biases to value a wide range of pronunciations, queries, ways of oral, non-verbal, and written expression, and various perspectives when assisting children in making meaning (Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016). Authentic interactions matter (Compton-Lilly, et al., 2020; Lindfors, 2008; Uccelli et al., 2015; Verhoeven, 2010). Language demands vary in each content area and are entwined within each context; the language of science is not the language of mathematics, the language of art differs from that of instruction in poetry (Uccelli et al., 2015). Teachers must trust and facilitate in students a desire to comprehend the many new and varied language patterns they will encounter (Heath, 2012). Expanding language throughout development is necessary to allow access to more complex texts over the years (Galloway et al., 2018; Uccelli et al., 2015).

Deliberating on Strengths

To build and expand proficiency across the grades, continuous work is needed on the part of educators to grow flexible with strong instructional routines, to deepen their content knowledge in both language and literacy, and to grow more deliberate in observing and expanding the capacity of each child to read, write, speak, and listen. Teacher intentionality, reflection, and deliberation regarding student language and early literacy learning is necessary to ensure strong achievement outcomes for all students (McNaughton, 2018). In this section I highlight the role of teacher perceptions, culturally responsive pedagogy, a lens of capability, and touch upon the need for more language-based literacy intervention models like that utilized in Reading Recovery. A more in-depth exploration of Reading Recovery follows.

Impacting Student Learning

Teacher judgment can greatly impact student achievement in either direction; positively or negatively (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Meissel et al., 2017; Varghese et al., 2019). Teachers may require home and community to prepare students for early school experiences rather than welcome students into the new culture of the classroom by deliberately outlining clear expectations (Whittingham et al., 2018). The limited training many preservice teachers receive in literacy and language can impact their perceptions of older students who struggle as well (Moreau, 2014). When teachers view students as capable and ready to learn, Wisniewski and colleagues (2020) found that teachers could consistently impact student learning outcomes with timely feedback, though the specificity and timing of the feedback in relation to student self-regulation mattered greatly. Rodgers and colleagues (2016) were able to highlight the power of scaffolding student literacy learning with domain-specific support. Teachers with strong content knowledge provided explicit teaching the moment students' needed information while reading or writing (Clay, 2015; Schulz, 2009). Pearson and colleagues (2020) argue that classrooms need to serve as learning communities where educators build a culture of collaborative oral and written discourse that engages authentic student interactions. For young students, learning to read other people's narratives and structures and learning to write one's own narratives and structures is a multilayered process (Heath, 2012). Students must be recognized as people who have lived outside of the classroom and their stories must be invited in (Clay, 2015; Heath, 2012).

For all young students, deliberate teaching is important (McNaugton, 2018). For multilingual, multidialectal, and other linguistically diverse students, the connection between literacy and language may need more explicit teaching to allow for clarification and understanding. Fillmore's (2014) work in New York City highlights the search for meaning young children engage in. She researched the work of multilingual learners as they noticed the

structure of the new language of school and required support. Educators helped students dissect meaning to build towards larger ideas. This link between meaning and grammatical structure was made explicit by deliberate teaching (Fillmore, 2014). Similarly, Briceno and Klein (2018) determined that the errors first-grade English Learners made when reading related to their primary language patterns more than half (54%) of the time. Their research indicated the need for further work with teachers to help them interpret the difference between language-related and literacy-related error patterns. This study advocated for the teacher to observe and utilize the linguistic resources of the student's current language capacity to foster further literacy acquisition. Deepening teacher content knowledge is work that needs to occur continuously in ongoing professional development (Hargreaves & Fullan 2012).

Ollerhead's (2018) work with pre-service teachers in Australia revealed that teachers who were deliberately taught to "assume responsibility for their students' language and literacy development (abstract)" allowed for the facilitation of student access to necessary content knowledge in the curriculum. Uccelli and colleagues' (2015) research reiterated earlier findings that distinguishing between social and academic registers supports and expands student learning. They highlight the power of this distinction in assisting both monolingual and multilingual learners. In other words, providing time and support for students to analyze and critique the word and phrase choices authors make as writers can lead to increased language awareness. Fostering clarity in the difference between social and academic languages allows students to intentionally frame their own language usage (Galloway et al., 2018). They can utilize this frame to clarify meaning and grow increasingly aware of purpose and audience (Galloway et al., 2018). So much of the language work necessary to access academic achievement is just strong teaching in the English language arts and in fostering more complex literacy capacity. Yet, an additional layer has to do with the deep practice of inequity systemically embedded in our educational

institutions and the explicit and implicit biases held by individuals. These inequities and biases influence a myriad of factors right down to student-teacher interactions and daily practice.

Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practice

Schools and teachers engaging in Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP) need support developing the expertise necessary to combat the ongoing impact of a confluence of sociopolitical factors, including racism, poverty, and cultural and linguistic biases. These sociopolitical factors lead to inequitable practices in schools across the country (Baker-Bell, 2020; Compton-Lilly et al., 2020; Diehm & Hendricks, 2021; Flores & Rosa, 2015). "Given the complexity of reading, it is impossible to justify a single approach, even for a group of students who share certain characteristics or challenges" (Compton-Lilly et al., 2020, p. S192). Culture matters. Equity requires teachers to differentiate, recognizing language as a function of culture and home and as a strength to leverage when matching specific books, instruction, and interventions in response to student need (Artiles, 2011; Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Beneke & Cheatham, 2015). There is no single answer. A robust, multi-text approach is warranted to ensure time and space for leveraging language as a support to access complex ideas (Rainville & Enriquez, 2016). A wide array of narrative and informational texts representing families, cultures and ideas can increase student ability to take perspective, comprehend themselves, and expand academic understandings (Bishop, 2019; Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016). This is an important aspect of building inclusive classrooms. Teachers often falsely believe they have taken a neutral stance regarding the race, class, culture, and language of their students (Boykin & Noguera, 2013). Caution is warranted. Varied dialects must be honored as representative of this student's larger community. Student language, knowledge, and experiences must be viewed as assets and tied to ensuring strong academic gains.

A Lens of Capability

One important consideration in this research review is the role of framing students as inherently capable. A sense of agency allows students to work strategically, engage more fully, and to persist in the face of challenges (Johnson, 2017; Johnston 2012; Wager, et al., 2019; Yoon, 2009). Valuing the social, linguistic, and cultural identities of students is critical in ensuring they become academically successful and sustain engagement in long-term educational opportunities (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015; Delpit, 2006; Diehm & Hendricks, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2018). Ensuring cross-cultural work is situated firmly in the language arts allows students to, "learn language, learn through language, and learn about language" (Halliday, 1976, p. 37). The role teachers play in valuing or devaluing the home language of students cannot be understated (Baker-Bell, 2020). Many students, speaking with complexity, are often being made to feel their language is not rich enough to interact with the language and ideas of texts.

Meaning in books is built from the syntactical choices authors make at the phrase, sentence, and textual levels. Halliday (2005) argues that with each grammatical selection a speaker or writer 'transforms experience into meaning" (p. 63). He considers how grammar plays multiple roles, both in constructing meaning and as evidence of the multiple layers of meaning as displayed through varied word and phrase selection (Halliday, 2005). These linguistic choices impact how students comprehend texts across genre and form (Palinscar & Schleppegrell, 2014). Just as Heath (1986) noted that wider variations between the language of home and school could impact academic outcomes, the variation between student and book language patterns can facilitate or hinder comprehension (Diehm & Hendricks, 2021; Terry et al., 2010). Without rich discussions, students may miss the nuanced meaning of the text. Teachers can support deeper understanding by drawing student attention to meaning at multiple levels across an array of texts, by honoring student questions, and by inviting varied interpretations (Ivey & Johnston 2013).

Letters, sounds, and words can be attended to as part of language learning and the construction of meaning. Short, intentional detours can be taken to teach specific item knowledge and solidify new behaviors (Clay, 2015). To make these short intentional detours, educators must know enough about language and early literacy acquisition content to decide when and what warrants attention. Additionally, valuing the richness of varied dialects and language patterns allows teachers to reflect on student writing and grammatical patterns as leverage for further learning.

Reading Recovery: A Language-Based, Early Literacy Intervention

When students are identified for early intervention, an asset-based frame is even more critical to ensure all teaching and learning interactions fosters the necessary accelerated literacy growth for students to catch up to peers. In this section, the work of Reading Recovery is explained, an overview of data collections and outcomes is detailed and the research on Reading Recovery for multilingual learners and for varied subgroups is discussed. Reading Recovery teaching and the use of student language patterns as support for early literacy are also considered.

In Reading Recovery, emphasizing both language and literacy learning includes attention to sociocultural and linguistic strengths, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, writing, spelling development, and student discourse (Clay, 2016; Connor et. al, 2018; Hruby et. al, 2016; International Literacy Association, 2019; Johnston, 2010; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). The reciprocal interactions between language, literacy, and learning can impact an individual student in a variety of ways (Allington, 2013; International Literacy Association, 2019; Morrison & Connor, 2016; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Teaching should reflect deliberate support for student effort to work from a strength-based lens.

Reading Recovery Data and Research

Reading Recovery has consistently strong outcome data (IDEC, 2022). The US Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse research criteria analyzes the research behind literacy interventions and translates effect sizes on student outcomes across four domains. These domains include alphabetics, fluency, comprehension, and general reading achievement. Critique of the What Works Clearinghouse's stringent review requirements and timeline led Johns Hopkins University to create their Best Evidence Encyclopedia, while the American Institutes for research formed the National Center on Intensive Intervention to review and compare reading programs. "Each has different criteria for screening and evaluating programs and there is very little overlap in what they recommend. Only two programs, Reading Recovery and Success for All, make the top five reading interventions (overall) on all three lists" (Gabriel, 2020, p. 11). Gabriel (2020) notes the theoretical perspectives of these two programs differ greatly, though both prioritize daily intervention for students and ensure teachers engage in ongoing professional learning.

Reviewing the available data on the What Works Clearinghouse for similar programs requires searching for beginning reading interventions delivered individually or in small groups for grades K, 1, 2, and 3. Only *Read Naturally*, *ClassWide Peer Tutoring*, *Little Books*, and *Leveled Literacy Intervention* (an intervention crafted from the theoretical and practical framework of Reading Recovery) showed statistically significant gains in reading achievement but none of these had positive gains across more than one or two domains. *Voyager Universal Literacy System* and *Fluency Formula* both were found to negatively impact reading comprehension. *Wilson Reading System, Waterford Early Reading Program, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies, Stepping Stones to Literacy,* and *Daisy Quest* each documented statistically significant gains in alphabetics, but not in any other domain. These varied results highlight the

importance of ensuring highly skilled teachers are trained in a myriad of interventions so that student needs are tied tightly to intervention goals to ensure the strongest academic outcomes.

In Reading Recovery, two different studies detailed the statistically significant gains students made across alphabetics, comprehension, and general reading achievement (Pinnell et al., 1988; Schwartz, 2005). The Schwartz (2005) study also proved statistically significant gains in reading fluency and a joint study by multiple authors provided additional data to demonstrate that the intervention led to increased reading achievement (Pinnell et al., 1994). Updated reviews of the i3 scale-up study from the 2016 four-year evaluation met the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations. Student learning outcomes showed strong evidence of effectiveness (May et al., 2016). This follow-up evaluation utilized the Iowa Test of Basic Skills word reading and reading comprehension tasks in addition to the six subtests from the Observation Survey Assessment (May et al., 2016). "Inclusion of the i3 study increased the outcome domains of alphabetics, comprehension, and reading achievement to the category of 'medium to large' and increased the rating for the alphabetics and comprehension outcomes from 'potentially positive' to 'positive'." (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2019). The fact that Reading Recovery is one of the only early literacy interventions to have positive gains across all four domains made focusing on the understandings of Reading Recovery teachers a logical decision.

A recent follow-up randomized control study by May and colleagues (2022) found regression in third and fourth graders who had received Reading Recovery. This was evidenced on a myriad of state standardized achievement tests. The study is not peer-reviewed and due to large attrition rates, researchers were only able to collect 25.7% of the original sample from third grade students and 16.5% of fourth grade data from the original students. "The implications of long-term explorations of a short-term intervention with first grade children are very difficult to

interpret with confidence" (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2022). There have been few studies that have even attempted this, and most research has involved Reading Recovery (May et al., 2022). Until other studies are done on other early interventions, not much can be said for how to sustain long term gains. The findings did confirm prior outcomes, that Reading Recovery strongly impacts first grade literacy learning, fulfilling the goal intended (May et al., 2022). Ensuring continued achievement in the classroom is key. Foundational understanding needs to grow during and after the 12-20 weeks students spend in Reading Recovery. Learning should be supplemental to good classroom instruction with strong phonics, phonological awareness, fluency, comprehension, writing, and vocabulary and language instruction continuing. After learning of these results, the Reading Recovery community posted these questions: for whom is this early intervention most effective? What conditions allow the greatest impact of Reading Recovery? What evidence suggests modifications to further enhance Reading Recovery's effectiveness? (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2022).

Finally, a long-term study of students in 42 London schools was conducted and the findings concluded that at ages 14 and 16, fewer Reading Recovery students were identified as students needing special education support than in the control group (Hurry et al., 2022). Former Reading Recovery students in this study also significantly outperformed the control group on academic measures, the British qualification tests for employment, the first high stakes test students took under government mandates (Hurry et al., 2022). Additionally, Hurry and colleagues (2022) found that not only did former Reading Recovery students maintain their gains, students who had not received Reading Recovery but who attended Reading Recovery schools were outperforming students in comparison schools. This could be explained by the fact that Reading Recovery implementation positively impacted the structures and systems within the schools or that the comparisons schools varied in ways not visible in the research. This study

considers the whole-school effect of Reading Recovery (Hurry et al., 2022), and the long-term outcomes differ markedly from the study undertaken by May and colleagues (2022) during a similar timeframe. Clearly, further research is necessary, the methods of these two long-term follow-up studies were quite different. The regression discontinuity study May and colleagues (2022) utilized was a randomized control study but had a 75% attrition rate whereas the UK study was quasi-experimental with a matched control and only 7% attrition. One detailed the long-term gains of 3rd and 4th graders as compared with students who did not qualify for RR, whereas the other found substantially positive impacts on Reading Recovery students and their peers ten years after the intervention.

On average in the United States, 75% of Reading Recovery students have reached the average reading levels of their classroom in this short-term intervention (IDEC, 2018-2019). Schmitt and Gregory's (2005) follow-up study demonstrated that Reading Recovery students were often reading at or above grade level two to three years later. Multilingual Reading Recovery learners have a long history of strong outcomes (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Egan, 2014; Every Child a Chance Trust, 2009; Kelly et al., 2008; Torgerson et al., 2011).

Prevention of long-term reading disabilities is the first positive outcome of Reading Recovery (Clay, 2016; 2019). Early identification of students needing long-term support is the second positive outcome of the program (Clay, 2016; 2019). Reading Recovery has been credited as the earliest form of Response to Intervention (RTI) for literacy learning (Allington, 2012). RTI is a multi-tier approach that begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Progress is monitored to assess the learning rate and level of performance of individual students. (Allington, 2009; Johnston, 2010; RTI Action Network, 2021).

Therefore, though there have been recent arguments regarding the long-term impact of Reading Recovery (Hanford & Peak, 2022; May et al, 2022; Shanahan, 2022), Hurry and colleagues (2022) found statistically significant differences where eleven years after the intervention Reading Recovery students outperformed students from comparison schools. The four-year national investing in innovation study utilized a randomized control group across 1,200 schools, with 62,000 students. "The growth rate observed in students who participated in Reading Recovery over a five-month period was 131% of the national average rate of progress for first-grade students" (May et al., 2016, p. 3). Research through Every Child a Chance Trust (2009) has repeatedly affirmed the long-term cost saving benefits of providing Reading Recovery as part of comprehensive early intervention. According to the United States Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse many other interventions have little to no impact on general reading achievement. Some interventions do not have enough evidence to be listed on the site at all. Reading Recovery research demonstrates positive effects across all four domains and strong gains in general reading achievement (WWC, 2022). This, and the fact that Reading Recovery is one of the few interventions that include reading, writing, phonics, phonological awareness, and deliberate conversations warrant the pursuit of further insight regarding teacher understandings.

Reading Recovery and Multilingual Students

Reading Recovery is offered in English. Describiendo La Lectura (DLL) is the Spanish counterpart to Reading Recovery and is offered in the home language of native Spanish speaking students. Reading Recovery can also be offered in French and is being translated into additional languages. In this study, multilingual learners who receive Reading Recovery are working with their teachers in English.

The What Works Clearinghouse was unable to draw conclusions of Reading Recovery's impact on multilingual learners having no recent studies meeting their stringent criteria (WWC, 2009). The four-year evaluation of the federal i3 study (May et al., 2016) did include a large sample size of 6888 students, 19% of whom were multilingual learners. Inclusion of this significant national data set should be utilized to update these findings which have not been analyzed since 2009.

Much other research has been done to study the literacy outcomes of multilingual learners participating in Reading Recovery. Annual reports from the International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC) repeatedly display the ongoing success Reading Recovery teachers are having with multilingual learners. Multiple studies have concluded that literacy outcomes are similar to monolingual students benefiting from Reading Recovery (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Egan, 2014; Kelly et al., 2008; Neal & Kelly, 1999). Ashdown and Simic's (2000) findings found that Reading Recovery could effectively close opportunity gaps between monolingual and bilingual or monolingual and multilingual first graders. Several studies also concluded that multilingual learners outperformed English-only students after the intervention (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Egan, 2014). This was evidenced by the six tasks of the Observation Survey and classroom teacher perception (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Egan, 2014). Egan (2014) discovered that the variability in English language competency at the onset of the intervention might impact student learning outcomes and recommended further research to determine when and how students were being selected for Reading Recovery. Egan (2014) also concluded that selection for most students should not be delayed due to English language proficiency. Few interventions, outside of Reading Recovery and DLL, had enough data to rationalize the diversion from classroom instruction (Borman et al, 2019; Egan, 2014). Borman and colleagues (2019) studied the impact of DLL instruction on 152 Spanish speaking students. Positive effect sizes with

statistical significance were found to warrant the use of literacy intervention in the home

language of students when available. Prior research studies investigating DLL detailed similar

findings, but none leveraged such a large data set (Escamilla et al., 1998; Neal & Kelly, 1999).

Just as implications from strong instruction for multilingual learners are applicable to teaching in

general education classrooms, the routines and framework utilized in Reading Recovery as a

means for teaching both language and literacy can positively impact all students.

Reading Recovery and Student Diversity

Even students who enter Reading Recovery speaking English only vary widely.

American English differs by region, class, background, community, and across age-group. This

is true for each racial, cultural, and regional group (Wolfram, 2017). American English is

anything but monolithic (Wolfram, 2017). Variations in the data become even more evident

when disaggregating student outcomes across race and ethnicity. We cannot hear the linguistic

diversity, but we get a sense from the data of how varied student groups are performing. When

researching cost efficacy in Reading Recovery, Batten (2005) discovered that African American

and Latinx students from fifteen schools across three districts in New Jersey made statistically

significant gains in Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery data reviews in the Boston Public

Schools over multiple years has indicated no statistical significance in subtle variations on

measures between linguistically, culturally, or racially diverse groups when examining outcomes

(IDEC, 2015-2019). A South Carolina study of students speaking African American English

found students meeting or exceeding their peers across twelve schools (Thompson & Gardner-

Webb University, 2019). Rodgers, Wang, and Gómez-Bellengé (2004) disaggregated Reading

Recovery data for students from varied racial and economic groups. They concluded that

intervening early is part of a multifaceted approach needed to combat the array of factors

impacting learning gaps and that this systemic approach can alter a student's academic trajectory (Rodgers et al., 2004).

A randomized study involving over 700 Reading Recovery students showed that having Reading Recovery more significantly impacted spring text reading scores than economic predictors (Rodgers et al., 2005). Though acknowledging the multifaceted layers that contribute to student achievement, the researchers concluded that Reading Recovery could positively impact literacy learning, narrowing opportunity gaps (Rodgers et al., 2005). Compton-Lilly's (2011) analysis of African American students in Reading Recovery detailed how students with a full series of lessons had statistically comparable rates to White students; however, her research unearthed the impact of the complex sociopolitical context on schooling. In this research, Reading Recovery was a microcosm reflecting larger societal issues and more Black children had moved or had incomplete programs indicating a need for access to more time in the intervention or consistency as students moved from one school to another (Compton-Lilly, 2011). The structures we work from have an impact on our students therefore teaching with high expectations, deep content knowledge and respect for students can positively alter outcomes. As teachers, we need to acknowledge and check conscious and unconscious racial, ethnic, and linguistic bias at the door to ensure equal learning opportunities for all.

Reading Recovery Teaching

The power of professional development in Reading Recovery has been documented over time (Clay, 2015; Lyons, 2003; May, 2016). Lyons' (2003) study of expert Reading Recovery teachers detailed how consistently high expectations for all students led to persistence in building supportive relationships, to valuing student ethnic, cultural, linguistic, physical, and intellectual differences, and to a constant conveyance of the belief that students would succeed and become

active participants in their own learning. These findings were echoed in the four-year study by May and colleagues (2016) as external evaluators on a federal grant.

A literature review by Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2017) determined that effective professional development is content focused, incorporates active learning, supports collaboration, uses models of effective practice, provides coaching, feedback, and reflection, and is sustained over time. Reading Recovery teachers work to explicitly link and make overt the reciprocal nature of reading, writing, and oral language. This means that in lessons with students and while working with colleagues, teachers notice and note connections between what students are doing as writers that can assist problem solving in reading and vice versa. Links between language and literacy acquisition are constantly discussed to become clear teaching points in lessons. Language and literacy are supports for and beneficiaries of each other (Clay, 2016). Vygotsky (1978) names the ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Considering both language and literacy that are in the Zone Proximal Development (ZPD) of each student is essential to ensure opportunity for accelerated learning in reading and in writing. Rogers and colleagues (2016) found that teacher decision-making on what feedback to specifically provide a student most strongly impacted learning. Several studies have analyzed contingent teaching in this intervention setting (Askew & Watson, 2009; Clay, 2015; Lyons, 2003; Lyons et al., 1994; May et al., 2016).

These moment-to-moment decisions require deliberation and intentionality (May et al., 2016). How we observe and what we observe are key aspects of ongoing professional learning in early literacy interventions (Clay, 2015). When students have been identified for early

intervention, teachers must work more consistently from a strength-based lens and negate any biases about students who are not yet working at grade level (Boykin & Noguera, 2013).

Student Language Patterns as Support for Early Literacy

In Reading Recovery, the work young children engaged in as they acquired the language of their homes and cultures are perceived as foundational in the work they will construct as early literacy learners (Clay, 2015). Harnessing the pre-existing structures in children's oral language is considered the work of a Reading Recovery teacher as a necessary foundation for moving language and literacy processing forward (Askew & Watson, 2009; Clay, 2015; Lyons, 2003; Lyons et al., 1994; May et al., 2016). Clay (2015) argues for literacy and language to be linked and patterned from the start and gives teachers ways to read, write, and talk with children to intentionally and deliberately foster reciprocity between each process.

The empirical research on literacy and second language acquisition supports this argument (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Borman et al., 2019; Egan, 2014; Escamilla et al., 1998; Every Child a Chance Trust, 2009; IDEC 2009-2019; Kelly et al., 2008; May et al., 2016; Thompson & Gardner-Webb University, 2019; Torgerson et al., 2011). Scaffolding comprehension, reinforcing academic language, and connecting lived experiences and multilingual repertoires of students while leveraging cultural competency enhances identity and intellectual development (McCracken et al., 2020). Cummins, McCracken, and Rikers (2020) found that sharing language acquisition research with families and educators led to intentional teaching for the reciprocity of language and learning and that valuing home language and culture led to richer classroom experiences. Teacher observations of students from a deficit-based lens do not leave room for teaching and learning (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2018). All students arrive at school with their own ways of communicating. For young children, it is possible to affirm the meaning they are making and to

recognize the "everyday construction of knowledge through the interaction of culture, language, and action" (Licona, 2013, p. 868). Producing a counter-narrative that holds teachers accountable for taking an asset-based view of a wide array of student language diversity is essential (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

In one of the largest randomized control studies ever undertaken on elementary interventions (May et al., 2016) researchers reported instructional strength emerging as a theme in a qualitative analysis of Reading Recovery teaching (May et al., 2016). Instructional strength was defined as deliberate and dexterous teaching, with optimal use of time and a disposition that demonstrated a belief in student ability (May et al., 2016). This finding can be viewed as a graphic image in Figure 1, originally Figure 5.1 in the 2016 report.

Figure 1: Instructional Strength in Reading Recovery (May et al., 2016)

Figure 5.1. Instructional Strength in Reading Recovery
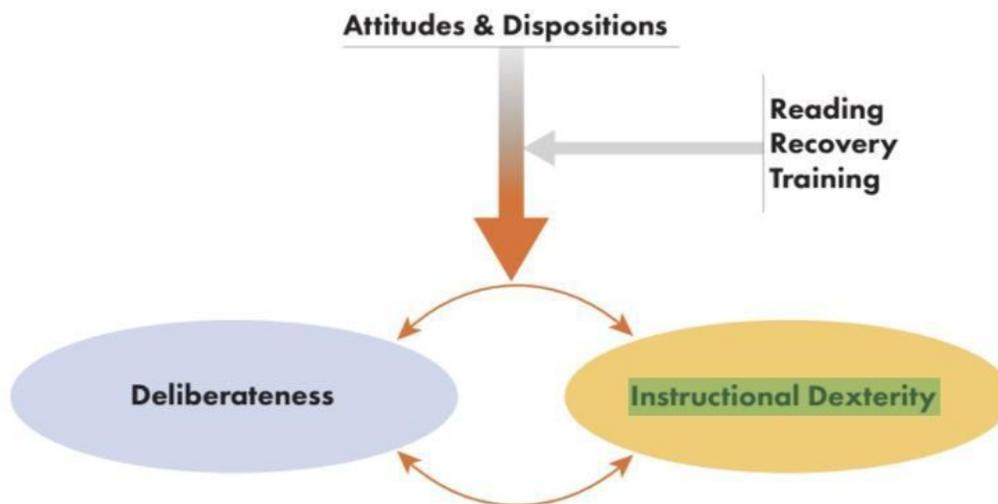
It is in this inner sphere between deliberateness and instructional dexterity that language and literacy interactions are taking place between teacher and student. Flexible application of Clay's (2015) Literacy Processing Theory in Reading Recovery practice directly impacts student learning (May et al., 2016). This study seeks to think more about this inner sphere regarding the interactions teachers are having around language that may foster or inhibit literacy acquisition.

Utilizing Language to Build Language and Literacy

Multiple studies have demonstrated that language-rich interactions, culturally responsive teaching, meaningful contexts, clear and explicit instruction, and massive amounts of time reading, writing, and conversing with intentional opportunities to expand and comprehend academic language and content allows for the accelerated progress of multilingual learners (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Freeman & Freeman, 2016; Neal & Kelly, 1999; Schulz, 2009). There is no rationale for not providing these same learning opportunities to other students working to expand experience with the language of school (Fillmore, 2014, Galloway et al., 2018).

Observing student language and literacy from a strength-based lens is of critical importance. "A child's language is not just a tool, it is the key to a child's identity; it is who they are and where they come from" (Bamberger-Hayim, 2018, p. 1). Research done on scaffolding and domain contingent feedback by Rodgers and colleagues (2016) led me to ponder the power of how high outcome teachers might be observing and responding to the language of their young students as an asset, rather than as a barrier as they assist young readers and writers.

Teaching should work to instill a sense of capability in students (Johnston, 2004). Seeing themselves as learners who problem solve and work to accomplish goals allows for the building of an identity that expands what a child can do rather than inhibiting choice (Dweck, 2006). Baker-Bell's (2020) work with ninth-grade Black girls in a Detroit classroom links mindset to internalized racism, where the concepts of intellect were interchangeable with cultural and linguistic norms from White mainstream society. She advocates for an unbiased language pedagogy, what she calls an "Anti-Racist Black Language Pedagogy" grounded in literature and critical analysis to unpack language, culture, politics, and history. Flores and Rosa (2015) cite García's (2009) argument for a repositioning of multilingualism as the norm and discuss Alim's (2005) work on critical language awareness that not only incorporates minoritized languages into

the classroom but invites students to critique to sociopolitical conditions that attempt to devalue their linguistic practices.

Capitalizing on the funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) students carry with them from home, community, and other layers of their cultures and lived experiences allows teachers to build and expand upon prior knowledge and to transfer what is known in one area to another (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2018). The reciprocal nature of dialect, oral language, and early literacy skills demands that teachers observe all student language negotiations from a strength-based perspective to facilitate becoming literate (Clay, 2015). Incorporating the personal resources of language, experience, knowledge, and cultural competencies into learning increases student engagement and motivation and allows teachers to hold students accountable for what is already known (Kelly, 2009).

Teacher judgment and feedback are linked, with teachers who view their students as capable and learning across a continuum more likely to give timely and content-specific feedback. Authentic reading, writing, and speaking experiences and explicit teaching within a language-rich frame all matter greatly. Culturally responsive schools that can adjust to students as individual learners allow for the necessary complexity in today's educational settings. Each of these intersecting concepts is critical to support early literacy acquisition.

Concluding Thoughts on the Literature

A theory of how strong teachers value the language of all students and utilize this strength to support early literacy learning is not easy to find in the research nor is it clearly explainable to teachers attempting to synthesize theoretical understandings into practice. Though some research explores support for multilingual learners, the work of approaching multidialectal, and other linguistically diverse students from an asset-based lens has not been widely studied. From this review, we can extrapolate a few key conclusions applicable to this research. The

reciprocal nature of language requires instruction to include reading, writing, and speaking, and listening, as each is necessary to ensure language is a resource to and a beneficiary of a student's learning (Clay, 2015; Halliday, 2005). Conversations can lead to the development of children's ability to analyze, critique, and expand current understandings (Lyons et al., 1994). Common purpose can be built upon agreed ways of working together (Lyons et al., 1994). These structures foster a shared sense of ownership (Ballantyne, 2012). Connected text and flexibility are necessary daily as tools to allow teachers to scaffold and differentiate language and literacy learning, ensuring they waste no time in teaching items and ideas already known (Clay, 2016). Linguistic flexibility or translanguaging allows students multiple access points across home, community, and school (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015; Whittingham et al., 2018). Scaffolding comprehension, reinforcing academic language, connecting lived experiences, and multilingual or multidialectal repertoires of students while leveraging cultural competencies enhance identity and intellectual development (McCracken et al., 2020). Building on strengths maximizes opportunities for success. This relates directly to Kegan and Lahey's (2002) emphasis on the criticality of providing both support and challenges. Reminding students of what they know, and offering emotional support and positive feedback for partially correct responses while striving to understand the child's words is necessary (Clay, 2016). The power of active practice and immediate usage is essential in literacy and language learning (Clay, 2015). When early readers monitor and self-correct their errors it leads to higher literacy achievement (D'Agostino et al., 2019). Encouraging these behaviors may lead to accelerative learning (D'Agostino et al., 2019).

Educators must view themselves as professionals engaged in continuous learning (Clay, 2015, Darling-Hammond, 1996; Fullan & Hargreaves 2012). Powerful professional learning opportunities enable teachers to acquire new knowledge, apply it to practice, and reflect with colleagues. Deep structures for ongoing educator literacy learning are strengthened when

curriculum, professional development, and leadership are aligned and coherent (Woulfin & Gabriel, 2020). Systemic changes need to occur to ensure professional development broadens teacher expertise and allows for time and resources to steadily increase teacher content knowledge and capacity (Compton-Lilly, et al., 2002). Language and early literacy development are inextricably linked. Intentionality and deliberation regarding this connection are essential if we are to ensure all students become literate.

Chapter 3: Overview of the Method

In this section, I include the research methodology and rationale and then summarize a condensed description of the study design in Table 2 which is entitled an overview of data collection. Information regarding the participants, setting, and instrumentation follow. I then detail the data collection procedures, recording and analysis steps I utilized and summarize these in Table 3. Additionally, I include the data collection for multiple qualitative data sets. Each data set is presented and summarized in graphic forms in tables 4 through 8 with a comprehensive overview and timetable for collection provided in Table 9. Finally, I list data analysis procedures for each data set and confidentiality methods at the end of the chapter.

Methodology

As previously stated, this study utilized a constructivist grounded theory design (Charmaz, 2014 in Creswell & Poth, 2018). In a grounded theory frame, data collection and analysis occur in an iterative process and the researcher seeks to develop new or expand current theoretical knowledge (Charmaz, 2014 in Creswell & Poth, 2018). The constructivist grounded theory differs from the traditional in that it is less rigid, allowing for adaptations in the study design to flexibly interpret a new theory grounded in the data and views of the participants but owning the fact that conclusions made by the researcher are suggestive and inconclusive additions to the field (Charmaz, 2014 in Creswell & Poth, 2018). Typically, a grounded theory study incorporates theoretical sampling, but I began with participant sampling and later utilized criterion sampling. Rationales and limitations will be explained further. In this study, my primary purpose was to uncover useful theoretical understandings of what these teacher participants know and can do with their knowledge regarding student language and early literacy acquisition. A secondary purpose was to design this study as a collective effort to raise consciousness about linguistic bias. Therefore, I built structures to foster active participation by individuals who are

sometimes marginalized in society, in this case, teacher participants. Though the overarching frame of this study was in constructivist grounded theory I worked to uplift participant voices as is also common in transformative studies (Paris & Winn, 2013). The linguistically diverse students we all serve are to be the ultimate beneficiaries, yet I also desired to maximize collective engagement. By empowering teacher participants and giving them a voice, it was a secondary intent to provide time and space for us to discuss theory and practice to possibly uncover new things that might positively alter our teaching (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Paris & Winn, 2013; Saldaña, 2016).

Rationale

I utilized a constructivist grounded theory frame to allow for reflexivity within the design, to collect and review multiple qualitative data sets, and to analyze them in search of new understandings. The constant comparative method utilized to analyze data in grounded theory work helped me gather information, compare emerging categories, and go back to the field to gather more data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I utilized surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations to produce a reliable and valid qualitative data set. I believe collective engagement or participatory research with multiple interactions facilitated a mutual exchange of ideas and knowledge (IGI Global, 2022). Another rationale for gathering multiple data sets was that I structured this work to allow for several points of collaboration. I enlisted the support of two Reading Recovery Teacher Leader colleagues as critical friends. They did not engage in the research but provided outside support to discuss strengths and weaknesses in data collection and analysis cycles. The objective here was to structure recursive participatory action with external support. This collaboration was important to me both with the work of the two critical friends who supported and expanded my capacity to see and understand the data alongside the work I engaged in with study participants. I sought to strengthen the accountability and research

integrity of my data collection and to triangulate the information as I engaged in a layered

analysis that would inform my findings (Appleton, 2011; Birt et al., 2016; Creswell & Poth,

2018; Saldaña, 2016). As the sole researcher for this study, multiple data points allowed me to

maintain a reflexive stance, searching for ways of knowing among participants. The iterative

process of collecting and analyzing each set of data allowed time and space for reflection and

understanding of a tentative theory to grow.

Utilizing a constructivist grounded theory design helped me search for an answer to the

question: What do Reading Recovery teachers understand regarding how to use

language/linguistic diversity as an asset in early literacy acquisition? Through layered qualitative

data collection there was time and space for participant reflection. This revealed changes in

thinking over the course of this study. Key in this structure was my desire to understand what

participants know. Additionally, I was hoping for the collaborative and constructivist nature of

the work to empower individuals and strengthen ongoing collective action that could positively

impact student literacy outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Sampling

This systematic approach to data collection and analysis is typical in grounded theory

research, the interaction between researcher and participants common to Charmaz's (2014)

constructivist lens. Theories emerged and grew increasingly complex throughout the collection

and analysis and as they emerged were presented to participants and critical friends for review

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). One reflection of myself, as a researcher, is that I did not utilize the

theoretical sampling typical during data collection in grounded theory research. In this study,

criterion sampling was utilized for the selection of the initial group of Reading Recovery teacher

participants, and a homogeneous sampling of similar participants was invited to partake in a

survey and initial focus groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion sampling is when the

researcher decides prior to the study that a set group or participants are necessary (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Then, in the gathering of the data, this group grew to include a narrower set of initial participants. The group changed from 21 to 33 to 19 until the final group of five participants was observed teaching and given time to reflect by means of a final interview. Thus, the following rounds of data collection leveraged participation via convenience sampling.

Participants

Criterion sampling was the purposeful sampling method I used to begin this study. Criterion sampling allowed for the specific criteria needed to select teacher participants trained and currently working in Reading Recovery at a site nearby enough to engage in this research with me (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Further criterion sampling was utilized to narrow the group of participants to a core that had training in both the theoretical and practical aspects of early literacy and early language acquisition. Having a core group of teachers working with me throughout the study allowed for conversations to grow increasingly rich and provided thorough descriptions necessary for a full data set (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion sampling also allowed me access to groups of willing and able teacher participants across multiple data sets, speeding up response times and enabling prompt data collection and analysis.

The original plan had been to invite the 35 participants affiliated with a Massachusetts Reading Recovery site that included three varied districts to engage in the initial survey. From this survey, follow-up focus groups and initial interviews would occur. Due to the additional time required, I was assuming this group would most likely consist of between eight to 12 participants from the original group who would consent. Observations of teaching and a final interview would most likely include between two and six participants.

In actuality, I utilized a Google Form set to anonymous parameters and invited all participants from the site to partake in the initial survey in January 2022. Due to the ongoing

pandemic, several participants affiliated with this site were out on leave or were working in another capacity when we began, therefore 21 participants from the site were available to fill out the survey at that time. In February, when the pandemic had subsided a bit, 35 Reading Recovery teacher participants were invited, and 33 of these accepted and joined three different focus groups. I then employed convenience sampling, inviting a smaller group to take part in these initial interviews. Nineteen Reading Recovery teacher participants (18 on video conference calls, 1 in person) engaged in one-to-one interviews with me. What was interesting was that there was continued engagement by most participants from the initial survey to the focus groups and into the initial interviews. I had assumed participation would drop off once the work was no longer embedded in the pre-established ongoing professional development hours already built into their schedules, but this was not the case. Of the 19 participants interviewed, five allowed me to observe their teaching. Several more of the interview participants offered to be observed if needed but due to time and scheduling constraints, I was unable to continue gathering additional data. These same five participants whom I observed teaching also took part in final one-to-one video conference interviews to reflect on and clarify questions and notes from the observations. Engagement in each portion of the study was voluntary. Participants could opt out at any point during the study and signed varied consent forms throughout the research project.

I did not gather teacher demographic data. This was intentional though in hindsight is cited as a limitation of this study. Reading Recovery teachers' demographics across the state where this study took place mirror national trends where elementary school staff predominately identify as White and female. During the 2021-2022 school, the state of Massachusetts, where this study took place, had 140,800 teachers. Across the state 79% of the educators in publicly funded institutions were women and only 21% were men. 87% of these professionals were white. The overarching numbers from the collective districts where participants in this study worked

did somewhat better with diversity with 60% of the staff identifying as White and 40% as teachers of color. Still 77% of the teaching force identified as women and 23% men. Based on prior conversations I had held with study participants, many, but not all would have identified as White women had I asked participants to state their demographic data. Still, in not overtly requesting teacher participants to state their racial identity I was leaving space for letting their race go unmentioned. As Dyer says (1997) "to apply the color white to white people is to ascribe a visible property to a group that thrives on invisibility" (p. 42). Though not intentional, I left this aspect invisible in my study and would not do so again. All were college educated with advanced degrees and most were between the ages of 27-58. The few teachers of color and male teachers would have been easily identifiable if demographic data had been collected.

Setting

I conducted this research study at a small Center for Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery operates through a tripart network where established university training centers provide initial training and ongoing professional learning to Reading Recovery teacher leaders. The Reading Recovery teachers work for regional and district-based Reading Recovery centers. These centers, in turn, train and support Reading Recovery teachers across the United States. The Center I was working with included 35 Reading Recovery teachers from three varied districts including large, urban, and small, suburban. In grounded theory saturation of each theme is necessary (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This site allowed for enough variation to observe and analyze trends in teacher and student data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This site was selected purposefully because trained Reading Recovery teachers engage in monthly professional development and had a history of engaging in work with me. Additionally, this group of Reading Recovery teacher participants was continuing to work together after having spent much time reading and thinking about language and how it relates to early literacy acquisition over the

2020-2021 school year (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I could therefore gather pertinent initial information in a short period of time to inform my next round of data collection in a manner that seemed useful to both myself as the researcher and to participants as they engaged in continuous professional learning sessions. Each data point informed the next round of data collection.

Instrumentation

From January through March of 2022, I engaged in a recursive process, gathering data, analyzing data, sharing the analysis with critical friends, and gathering more data. I engaged in this cycle five times starting with the preliminary survey, moving into the focus groups, engaging in initial interviews, observing teaching, and then engaging in final interviews. This cycle allowed for enough structure to hold to the constructivist grounded theory frame but left enough time and space for new themes and a theory to emerge (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

First, I gathered preliminary data from an anonymous survey. The survey utilized a mixed methods approach. The first part included four questions using the Likert scale (Likert, 1932) which yielded quantifiable information. Two open-ended questions and a blank space for additional comments by participants followed. I analyzed the open-ended questions and additional comments simultaneously utilizing In-Vivo and Process coding. I then wrote up analytic memos to share with critical friends. After a critical friend meeting, teacher participants were invited to focus groups to review my coding attempts and ensure I had an accurate representation of their ideas.

These three focus groups served as the second round of data collection. At this time, focus group participants were also invited to review and expand a draft of interview questions and observation protocols. Notes from these three focus group meetings were shared with critical friends. In a third round of data collection, participants from the focus groups were invited to take part in initial interviews. Audio transcripts of interviews informed another round of analytic

memos that were shared with critical friends for external analysis prior to the next round of data collection.

A fourth round of data collection involved a subset of these same interviewed participants who were asked to engage in observations of teaching. I utilized the observation protocol (Appendix E) to record field notes which I then used process coding to search for themes prior to the next round of analytic memos. Process coding allowed me to search for key interactions during the lessons that might have positively impacted student learning. I shared these notes with my same critical friends before I engaged in the fifth round of data collection, final interviews with the observed teacher participants. I took audio transcripts to inform this final round of analytic memos.

As stated above, I kept a set of analytic memos to record my noticing and wonderings between each set of data collection and analysis, throughout the study, and after each round of data collection and analysis. These analytic memos informed my conversations with the same two critical friends throughout the study. These two teacher leaders worked diligently to help me ensure validity across multiple data collection points and to clarify any issues with data analysis efforts on my part. Table 2 provides an overview of the data collection. A more detailed explanation follows.

Table 2: An Overview of Data Collection

Data Collection	Number of Participants	Notes
In total: Data was gathered by working with one Center for Reading Recovery. This Center supported three varied districts. 33 Teachers participated. Analytic memos were taken between each layer of data collection and analysis. Critical friends were consulted between each layer of data collection to ensure validity.		
Preliminary Survey	21 Survey participants	• Anonymized Data from 21 participants was gathered through a Google form. • Simultaneous In Vivo and Process coding of initial surveys ensues.
Focus Groups	33 Teacher Participants	• 3 focus groups of 33 total teachers review coding of initial surveys to ensure accurate representation of ideas and provide feedback on interview questions and an observation protocol.
Initial Interviews	19 Teacher Participants	• 18 Initial interviews are held via video conferencing and audio recorded. • 1 Initial interview is held in person (teacher preference).
Observations of Teaching	5 Teacher Participants	• 5 individual teaching sessions are observations with the researcher using the observation protocol. • Process coding to analyze field notes ensues.
Final Interviews	5 Teacher Participants	• 5 final interviews are held via video conferencing and are audio recorded to share analysis of observations. • Observed teacher participants reflect, clarify, or expand ideas from the observation protocol and field notes.

Data Collection Procedures

The preliminary survey, focus groups, and interviews helped me begin to examine the relationship between student language and foundational literacy learning. I then engaged in observations of teaching and follow-up interviews that allowed my understanding to grow deeper.

I leveraged Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends throughout the study, including during data collection and the refining of initial survey questions, after coding and refining protocols and questions for interviews and observations of teaching (Appleton, 2011). I took analytic memos between the five qualitative data collection and data analysis cycles and shared these with critical friends. I worked closely with colleagues as a means of ensuring clarity

across each of the data collection and data analysis cycles. Triangulation of multiple data sets was necessary to cross-check the validity of the data and the findings.

As part of this recursive process, I analyzed each round of data as it was gathered and then reviewed these sets of data before writing up the findings at the very end of the study. This structured approach to data collection and analysis is rooted in the work of constructivist grounded theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, I analyzed stories from the initial survey results and shared these with critical friends and participant focus groups for clarification and to refine interview protocols and questions. I audio-recorded the teacher-participant focus group work and coded the results with In-Vivo and Process coding. I then wrote and shared analytic memos from this initial round of data collection and analysis with critical friends as interview protocols and questions were finalized. Teacher participant interviews followed and allowed me and these participants time to individually discuss observation protocols and ideas as to how they support and expand language in service of learning literacy in both reading and writing. I analyzed this next round of audio transcripts with In-Vivo and Process coding. I then shared analytic memos from this tertiary round of data collection and the analysis of field notes from interviews with critical friends as observation protocols were finalized. Next, I observed Reading Recovery lessons, working to expand my emerging theories, and then engaged in final interviews to allow space for the voices of those observed to reflect and influence my research findings. I took field notes grounded in the observation protocol we had co-constructed (see Appendix E). I analyzed these field notes with Process coding, which were then shared with observed participants for clarification. The analytic memos I took from these notes and a final review of audio interview transcripts influenced my conversations with critical friends and informed our discussion of findings. In this next section I detail the design rationale, data collection, and data analysis

methods for each of the instruments. Table 3 describes the process that I used for data collection, recording, and analysis of these layered data sets.

Table 3: A Process for Collecting, Recording, and Analyzing Data

Data Collection	Recording Method	Analysis
Initial Mixed Methods Survey (4 quantifiable questions, 3 open-ended responses)	Survey Results	In-Vivo and Process Coding to be shared with teacher participants in focus groups. The Likert scale (Likert, 1932) was utilized for quantifiable information.
Analytic memos taken after survey collection and data analysis will be shared with Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends		
Focus Groups	Audio Recording	In-Vivo and Process Coding was utilized, and Analytical memos were shared with external critical friends
Analytic memos taken after reviewing audio recordings and coding the data will be shared with Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends		
Initial Interviews	Audio Recording	In-Vivo and Process Coding were utilized, and Analytical memos were shared with external critical friends. The Likert scale (Likert, 1932) was utilized to quantify information when possible.
Analytic memos taken after reviewing audio recordings and coding the data will be shared with Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends		
Teaching Observations	Field Notes Utilizing the Observation Protocol	Process Coding to be transcribed into Analytical memos
Analytic memos taken after reviewing field notes and analyzing data will be shared with Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends		
Final Interviews	Audio Recording	In-Vivo and Process Coding to be transcribed into Analytical memos to be shared with external critical friends

The Survey

Survey Design Rationale

The first step in this constructivist grounded theory qualitative study was for me to gather the stories of Reading Recovery teacher participants. With enough short stories from varied perspectives, I noticed emerging patterns but then met with critical friends to mitigate the chance of missing data or critical information. Together we worked to ensure little was missed by myself as the researcher. I then presented the findings back to the team of participants who had filled out the survey. I solicited the feedback of survey participants during the next round of data collection. They worked with me in three focus groups. My rationale for gathering short stories in written form proved effective. Participant language in survey responses led to the productive conversation by these same teacher participants and their colleagues in focus groups and grounded the participant in the inquiry I found necessary to gather their thoughts and feedback. They also engaged in a review of interview questions and provided feedback on an observation protocol. I found this inclusionary process had other benefits which I will discuss further when detailing the work of the focus groups.

Description of Survey Data Collection

As part of their ongoing professional learning, Reading Recovery Teachers and Teacher Leaders join in monthly sessions to observe lessons, read, and discuss current understandings to grow more flexible at teaching an array of students and to engage in increasingly responsive contingent lesson planning. Teacher Leaders gave me permission to engage teacher participants in a 15-minute survey response during three separate ongoing professional development sessions in January of 2022. In total, I collected responses from 21 survey participants.

Because these participants were already engaged in an ongoing conversation about language and literacy learning and routinely shared stories that include student examples,

pertinent information could be gathered in a short period of time and in a manner that was useful to both researcher and participants. This information acted as the first round of the multilayered data collection process I had designed. 21 Reading Recovery teacher participants responded to my initial survey.

The survey was comprised of three open-ended questions including:

- Tell of a time when student language was an asset as they learned to read and write

- Tell of a time when student language was a hindrance as they learned to read and write

- Please add any additional comments about language and literacy acquisition here

I then invited them to quantify how often they teach a diverse range of students on a linear scale. For this portion of the survey participants each responded to 4 questions including:

- I always, often, sometimes, hardly, never teach: students learning English as a second language

- I always, often, sometimes, hardly, never teach: students who receive speech and language services

- I always, often, sometimes, hardly, never teach: students whose dialect differs from mine

- I always, often, sometimes, hardly, never teach: students whose oral language errors reflect typical six-year-old English language acquisition patterns (lookeded, goed, etc).

Description of Survey Data Analysis Methods

I engaged in preliminary coding of the raw data through simultaneous In-Vivo and Process coding. In-Vivo coding allowed me to attempt to preserve the language of survey participants while Process coding allowed me to sort out active processes visible in the stories during this first cycle of data analysis (Saldaña, 2016). As I searched the data for codes and sorted these into groups, I noticed some visible patterns across participant understandings which will be detailed in Chapter 4. As I followed up these initial coding attempts with a categorization

of conceptual words and phrases, the surfacing of narrower categories began to emerge (Saldaña, 2016). I also took analytic memos to reflect on and write about these emergent patterns, categories, themes, concepts, assertions, and possible networks among these (Saldaña, 2016). The aim of the work was for me to begin to see possible theoretical schemes to then share with these same teacher participants and gather feedback to ensure I upheld their intended meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Before I led focus groups, I presented segments of the survey data and analysis to critical friends who I invited to search for missing or incomplete themes. They assisted me in structuring detailed steps for the focus groups. These next steps included helping me create instructional slides to communicate the analysis process clearly and effectively to participants. They also suggested that numbering the survey responses would ease conversations between participants during the focus groups and agreed the themes I had identified were useful. Following this meeting, I asked teacher participants to review the data findings in three separate focus groups. Gathering their feedback ensured I did not lose participants' voices at this point in the process. Utilizing these methods helped me elevate the voices of the teacher participants engaging in the daily work of teaching language and literacy. I also felt that by positioning critical friends within the data collection, analysis, and reflection I was facilitating a more nuanced, humanized experience than research sometimes allows for. My next step would be to structure time and space for focus groups and invite participants to articulate emerging theories from the data. Table 4 provides an overview of the survey data collection, recording method, and analysis.

Table 4: Survey Data Collection

Data Collection	Recording Method	Analysis
Initial Survey Collected January 2022 from 21 Reading Recovery Teacher participants via a Google Form set to anonymous parameters	Written Survey Results utilizing Google Forms Four Quantifiable Questions and Three Open Response Questions	In-Vivo and Process Coding to be shared with teacher participants in Focus Groups
Analytic memos taken after survey collection and data analysis will be shared with Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends		

The Focus Groups

Focus Group Design Rationale

Next, I analyzed the survey stories with focus groups of Reading Recovery teacher participants. These groups included the 21 participants who had written the survey responses and additional colleagues who had been absent during the January professional learning session but were present in February. Thirty-three teacher participants worked in three focus groups during these February professional development days. My rationale for inviting their feedback was to ensure I heard and recorded their intended messages and to invite their probing and to go deeper into their thinking. My conversation with critical friends prior to the sessions helped to structure the focus groups into fast and efficient conversations that lead to dialogue that was rooted in participants inquiring about the responses of their peers. I planned a short presentation to provide an overview of the emerging conceptual frame and present the data to teacher participants. The clear overview and directive slides led to productive conversations regarding the review of interview questions and in providing me feedback on revisions to the observation protocol. I had pondered how to give them space and permission to refute my claims and the presentation was crafted with critical friends to attempt to ensure participants were not simply agreeing with my

categories and consenting to my draft of questions and observation protocols. I facilitated this inclusionary process so teacher participants could easily add to, clarify, and expand the questions that would be asked. The result also led to much stronger participation in initial interviews than I had anticipated. In my original plan, I had thought I would be able to engage in interviews with between 8-12 participants but in actuality, 19 people were interested and able to participate.

Description of Focus Group Data Collection

I collected focus group data over video conference calls on three different days in February 2022 during the Reading Recovery teacher participants regularly scheduled ongoing professional development sessions which were taking place via video conferencing due to the pandemic. The teacher leaders facilitating the work allotted me 30 minutes with each group. The groups consisted of eight, 12, and 13 participants respectively. These groups included the 21 survey respondents and colleagues who had been absent during January professional learning. Thirty-three teacher participants worked in three focus groups during these February professional development days. I sent the de-identified survey responses to these 33 participants a week before they would be taking part in Reading Recovery learning sessions. I gave the data to them again during the discussions. In these small groups, participants operationalized the work. They reviewed the categories I had listed and were invited to discuss if category language felt descriptive enough, if any categories seemed missing or confusing and to share any overarching patterns they felt warranted discussion. Participants gave me permission to audio record the conversations and I took written notes as they worked. Most of the time, about 20 minutes of each group, they spent analyzing and discussing survey responses. I used the final 10 minutes to have each group review the initial interview questions and the observation protocol. Revisions to each now included questions and an observational lens on more practical aspects of teaching rather than just on a theoretical lens and the collapsing and expanding of subsections in each

document for more clarity on the types of questions I would ask or the types of behaviors I would observe. I detail specifics in Chapter 4 that can also be viewed in the Appendices. Appendix D shows the original interview questions I presented to participants and Appendix E the final questions I selected after the focus group review and follow-up meeting with critical friends. Appendix F shows the original observation protocol presented to participants and Appendix G the final protocol I utilized after the focus group review and a follow-up meeting with critical friends.

Description of Focus Group Data Analysis Methods

Focus group data consisted of two audio transcripts (because one was lost due to a technical difficulty detailed more fully below) and three sets of written notes, one from each day of Reading Recovery professional development. I also updated Analytical Memos after each focus group to be ready to share information during the next meeting with critical friends. I had anticipated having three audio transcripts but due to a technical error with setting up the internal computer microphone, the first attempt was not recorded. I do not think this impacted the data greatly as I had taken notes while participants were conversing and followed up immediately with analytical notes but some of the specifics were lost and patterns may have been overlooked. The analysis I was able to engage in involved the same In Vivo and Process coding I had utilized with survey responses. As with that process, I found themes emerging that proved useful as I finalized the questions for initial interviews. These themes are detailed in Chapter 4. Table 5 provides an overview of the focus group data collection, recording method and analysis.

Table 5: Focus Group Data

Data Collection	Recording Method	Analysis
33 teacher participants took part in Three Focus Groups	Audio Recording and note-taking	In-Vivo and Process Coding to be transcribed into Analytical memos to be shared with external critical friends
Analytic memos taken after reviewing audio recordings and coding the data will be shared with Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends		

Initial Interviews

Initial Interview Design Rationale

For the next step in this study, I was going to interview between eight and 12 Reading Recovery teacher participants individually as that seemed a solid subset of the group to gather information from. By this time, the three cohorts of participants had grown increasingly curious about the work of their colleagues. Nineteen teacher participants enrolled in this portion of the study. Each gave me 30 to 50 minutes of their time. I found both similarities in the response patterns and a few striking differences to consider when analyzing the responses to the eight overarching questions (Appendix E). The questions were,

- What do you remember understanding about the role of student language in fostering early literacy acquisition prior to Reading Recovery training?

- How often do you administer the Record of Oral Language?

- What do you currently understand about the role of student language in fostering early literacy acquisition?

- What have you seen or experienced in school that may represent bias towards children who speak in varied dialects, discourse patterns and languages?

- Talk about how you use student language patterns as an asset in order to allow for accelerated literacy learning

- What opportunities do you engage in to learn about the language and home experiences of each child?

- What Reading Recovery practices do you think are already explicitly linked to Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP)?

- What critical understandings and interactions around student language do you find positively impact student literacy outcomes?

I will detail these revelations in Chapter 4.

I met again with the same critical friends, this time to validate theoretical and practical findings from this large data set. My rationale for interviewing individuals proved effective in revealing what participants believed they understood prior to Reading Recovery training and what they felt they had learned through the intense training year and in subsequent ongoing professional development required to maintain certification. During our conversations, each of these 19 teacher participants engaged in ongoing reflection, and they all expressed an interest in continuing conversations about language as leverage for literacy learning. Several also gave clear and concrete examples of what they were doing to foster their own independent professional growth on the subject. More details on this are provided in Chapter 5.

Description of Initial Interview Data Collection

I collected data from the initial interviews over video conferences over nine days in March of 2022. I allotted each interviewee 60 minutes, but interviews tended to last between 30 and 50 minutes. I interviewed 19 individuals with each agreeing to be audio recorded for transcription purposes and I took written notes as they talked. I used the interview questions as a guide to note their responses and any additional questions I asked as clarifiers during the

conversations. The de-identified responses were transcribed. Two of the interview audio transcripts again did not record due to a technical issue with the internal computer microphone. I believe because I captured their responses in typed notes very little data was lost but direct quotes were nearly impossible to capture so this issue may have negatively impacted the depth of some findings or the analysis. When transcripts were lost, I utilized my notes from these conversations for the analysis instead. In all other instances, I used the transcripts from audio recordings.

Description of Initial Interview Data Analysis Methods

I began engaging in In-Vivo and Process Coding planning to transcribe these into analytical memos that could be shared during meetings with critical friends. Instead, I found myself exploring participant experiences through the stories told during these interviews. There was so much information coming through their narratives. I found myself sifting and sorting through the data (Saldaña, 2016). I was grounded by the work of Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) who detail "the space between listening and storying" (p. 44) as a means of seeking "multiple, related, and conflicting experiences" (p. 44). There was a quality emerging from the data of both the individual experiences of each participant and the collective experiences they were engaging in as Reading Recovery teacher participants. I began to take notes on which experiences seemed individual and which collective, capturing a bit more of these nuances than I felt possible when first attempting In-Vivo and Process coding as planned.

Saldaña (2016) refers to Goffman's earlier writing and notes that the "nuances of narrative can become richly complex when the researcher explores the participant's subject positioning and presentation of self" and I found myself leaning into this aspect as I worked to unpack their understandings after interviews. Reading and rereading helped me notice words and phrases that were appearing across the interviews, further exploring the stories of teacher

participants as hard data. I worked to maintain the stance of a listener of these rich stories prior

to deeper analysis. Finding patterns across this large collection of stories helped me understand

both individual and collective experiences (Saldaña, 2016). I recorded transcripts using the

dictate tool in Microsoft Word and then corrected them as I relistened to each individual

interview for a second time. I then de-identified each transcript with alphabetic codes and

transferred responses to a chart so I could view responses to each question all aligned in one

space. This allowed me to see all 19 responses to question one under the heading and title of

question one and the same for question two and so on. I could then view the emergence and

frequency of patterns across the eight questions.

The initial analysis offered me an overview of which responses reflected collective

experiences and which were more individual experiences of participants. Coding in this manner

helped me stay rooted in the idea that stories can express knowledge (Saldaña, 2016). In this

study, describing Reading Recovery teacher knowledge is key, thus I explored individual

participant experiences to understand past and current ways of knowing and how these

understandings impact language and literacy interactions with students (Saldaña, 2016).

In a second round of analysis, I coded the frequency of responses as I viewed patterns

emerging across the collective answers of Reading Recovery teacher participants. I was able to

note when different participants responded similarly to questions. I used the following terms

regarding the frequency of participant responses as it proved a systematic and clear way for me

to organize the data. I coded the bits of data in the following manner:

1. Always/Almost Always (16-19 responses)
2. Usually/Most of the Time (13-15 responses)
3. Often (10-12 responses)
4. Sometimes (7-9 responses)
5. Seldom / Rarely (4-6 responses)
6. Never / Almost Never (0-3 responses)

There were two questions that had such varied responses no similar patterns appeared;

thus, I only listed the collective responses in those spaces. One of these questions was: What

have you seen or experienced in school that may represent a bias towards children who speak in

varied dialects, discourse patterns, and languages? And the other was the follow up to this

question: What have you done or are you currently doing to counteract this? Table 6 details an

overview of data collection, recording, and analysis methods for these initial interviews.

Table 6: Initial Interview Data

Data Collection	Recording Method	Analysis
Initial one-to-one Interviews with 19 Reading Recovery teacher participants (18 on Zoom, 1 in person)	Audio recording and written notes	Frequency coding to be shared with external critical friends detailing individual and frequency patterns from collective responses. Analytical memos to inform the researcher.
Analytic memos taken after reviewing audio recordings and coding the data will be shared with Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends		

Observation of Teaching

Observation of Teaching Design Rationale

The next step I engaged in was to analyze the teaching of five Reading Recovery teacher

participants. These participants had taken part in all other aspects of the study, from the initial

survey to the focus group work. They had also engaged in the initial interviews. I asked for 2-4

volunteers to invite me to observe Reading Recovery teaching via video conference during the

natural course of their day. The rationale for my observation of teaching was to see if what

participants say is important can be overtly viewed in their lessons. I was ready to take notes of

what might be visible between teacher participants and students when interactions went well or

when interactions went awry. I used field notes from the observation protocol and then analyzed

these using process coding to understand the interactions. This analysis informed another round

of analytic memos. The observation protocol I used had been designed with teacher participants

and critical friends as we worked to deepen our collective wisdom around varied student language patterns and early literacy acquisition. Next I would attempt to use this protocol with participants to see if what we stated as important values regarding an asset-based lens on student language variation was visible in early literacy teaching interactions.

Description of Observation of Teaching Data Collection

All participants from the interviews were invited to partake in observations. Thus, the responses I received from a subset of five participants out of the 19 that had participated in the initial interview group was an example of convenience sampling. I accepted the first five participants who responded to my request to observe them, and this worked out well, giving me a small enough sample to observe in the remaining weeks before April vacation and a large enough sample to provide several different perspectives. It was sheer luck that the teachers included three teachers working in urban districts and two teachers in suburban districts, three teachers who spoke another language and all who had a history of working with multilingual students. Three other participants expressed interest, but we could not find time in our schedules to make these observations happen. The other eleven teacher participants from this site did not express interest in being observed. This may have been due to time or scheduling constraints, or they may have felt they had contributed enough to the study up to this point. I did not follow up but thanked them for the time they had already given me. The five participants who had volunteered all worked in public schools. Participants were working one-to-one with students at varied levels and had spent different amounts of time in lessons with these particular children, building relationships, expectations, and routines. During my observations, these five teacher participants interacted with multilingual, multidialectal, and monolingual students. I collected data from the observations via video conferences over three days in March of 2022. I utilized video conferences due to pandemic restrictions but also for the convenience that video

conferencing allowed for me, the researcher to "visit" varied schools and districts during times that met the needs of the participants. In other words, with video conferencing, I could observe them teaching during their normal Reading Recovery lesson time and we could easily set up post-interviews when they were available later in the day. I allotted each observation 45 minutes, but lessons ran between 30 and 35 minutes. I recorded field notes utilizing the revised observation protocol from earlier focus group sessions. I then used these field notes to inform my conversations with participants during the final interviews.

Description of Observation of Teaching Data Analysis Methods

I gathered notes from each of the five observations and utilized process coding as I transcribed the teaching into analytical memos and described emerging themes. I then shared these memos and themes during final interviews with the five observed participants. After I observed, these same teacher participants sent me their availability to partake in final interviews. My follow-up interviews with this same subset of participants allowed time for me to share initial attempts at data analysis from these observations. I leveraged these interviews to give participant voices center stage, working to ensure their intended meanings were heard and recorded in this research. The same critical friends who had been engaging in the work throughout the study were again enlisted to answer questions about findings from interviews and observations before I wrote up my findings and implications. Table 7 details an overview of the data collection, recording method, and analysis from the observation of teaching measures.

Table 7: Observation of Teaching Data

Data Collection	Recording Method	Analysis
Five Teaching Observations	Field Notes Utilizing the updated Observation Protocol	Process Coding to be transcribed into Analytical memos
Analytic memos taken after reviewing field notes and analyzing data will be shared with Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders as critical friends		

Final Interview

Final Interview Design Rationale

The final data I collected in this study was an interview with the five Reading Recovery teacher participants who invited me to lessons. My rationale for engaging in this final interview was to allow time and space for a discussion of the observations, for participants to share the plans they had made for each of their individual students, and for me to share with them my initial analysis and five themes emerging from the observations. This would ensure we were on the same page about what had occurred during teaching interactions, again preserving the voice of the participants in the outcomes of the study. This analysis informed another round of analytic memos. I shared these with critical friends as a final sounding board for refining a semi-structured final interview protocol and to discuss emerging themes before writing up findings.

Description of Final Interview Data Collection

I scheduled five interviews during a week in March of 2022. Each participant gave me 30 minutes of their time to finalize this portion of the data collection. I held video conference interviews over four days. I engaged in semi-structured final interviews and took notes while audio recording the conversations for transcription. I invited participants to start each conversation by sharing their intentional plans for that student. I asked follow-up questions regarding their work engaging in deliberate conversations, their book choices, and how they planned for teaching each writer and selecting letters, sounds, and words for this child. Additionally, I invited participants to reflect on changes in the child's language from early lessons to now and what might be observed, in terms of CLSP by others when this teacher participant is working with this child in Reading Recovery lessons. These questions are detailed more fully in Appendix H.

Description of Final Interview Data Analysis Methods

I gathered notes from each of the five final interviews and utilized process coding to transcribe each conversation into analytical memos. I used these memos to confer with participants to see if they agreed with emerging themes and that I had missed nothing key from the observations. I enlisted the same critical friends who had been working with me throughout the study to answer questions about my findings from interviews and observations before writing the findings and implications. An overview of follow-up interviews, data collection, recording method, and analysis appears in Table 8.

Table 8: Final Interview Data

Data Collection	Recording Method	Analysis
Five 30-minute Final Interviews	Audio Recording and Note-taking	Transcriptions of audio recordings turned into Analytical memos to be shared with external critical friends

All data was collected, recorded, and analyzed by April of 2022. Table 9 includes an overview of the timetable for all data sets for this study.

Table 9: Timetable for Multiple Sets of Qualitative Data Collection

Teacher Understandings about Language an Early Literacy Acquisition

Constructivist Grounded Theory Data Collection Plan

January 2022	Initial Surveys
January 2022	Focus Groups
February 2022	Initial Interviews
February 2022	Teaching Observations
March 2022	Follow Up Interviews
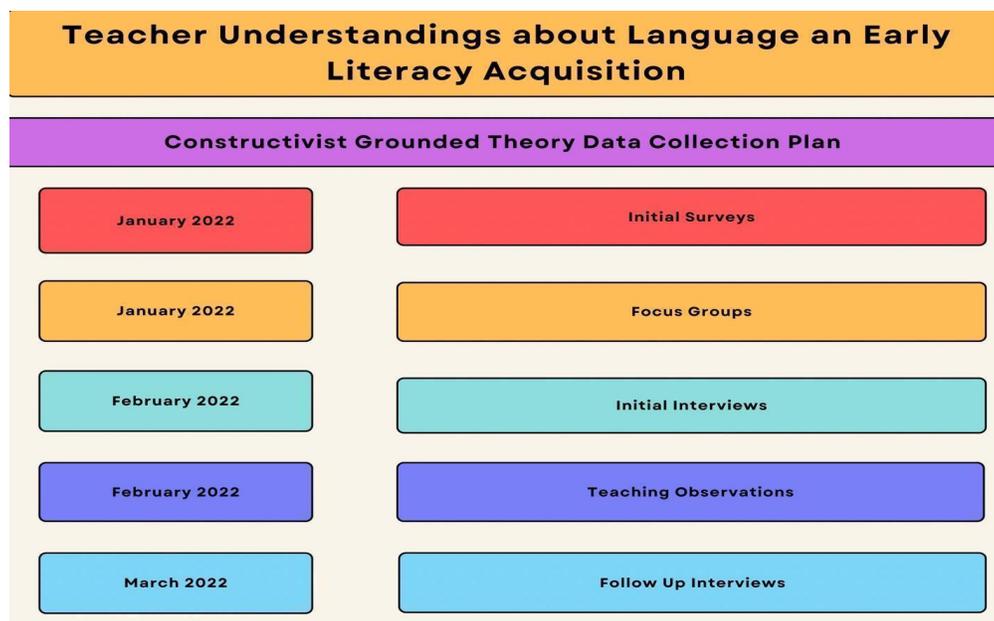
Researcher's Positionality

As the former teacher leader for Reading Recovery in the Boston Public Schools I trained new teachers, facilitated ongoing professional development, engaged in school visits, wrote, and managed grants to offset costs to schools and the district, and gathered and analyzed the data, working with teachers to foster future professional learning. Framing this study with teacher participants evolved naturally from this work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher and former teacher leader, I was already situated in the work and the community (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this grounded theory study, these questions seemed to demand drawing on teacher stories to ensure the voices of those who work closest with children were evident in the research, design, and analysis.

Ensuring all students have unlimited access to the strongest teaching as they learn to read and write remains my driving force as an educator. Since the anticipated outcome of the study is to note any useful implications to improve teaching and learning, teacher participants must be considered the primary source of knowledge, advancing any possible change (Creswell & Poth, 2019). As they sit side-by-side with students learning to read, it seems highly unlikely they will benefit from this research if they cannot partake in it at all (Creswell & Poth, 2019).

Confidentiality

I filed the survey results, audio transcripts, field notes, and analytic memos on a secure flash drive used solely for this purpose in a locked office and will keep them there for five years. I will then destroy the data. I will not use the site or participant names.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

In this study, constructivist grounded theory guided my interactions with teacher participants and critical friends. Utilizing constant comparison as themes emerged from the data allowed for ongoing analysis among and between participants, myself, and critical friends as a tentative theory emerged. In this section, I present a summary of the research findings and briefly reiterate the problem of practice, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the design. Additionally, I present clear data sets and an explanation of the findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of key findings before engaging in a final discussion of findings and the emerging theory in Chapter 5.

Reiterating the Research Problem, Research Questions, and Purpose of the Study

By inviting Reading Recovery teacher participants to engage in conversations, focus groups, interviews, and observations, I was working to unpack the degree to which these participants honor student oral language and how their understandings impact interactions around oral, written, and book language. The ties between oral and written language run deep, yet current practices invite the teaching of skills in isolation in the early grades. Though I have engaged in much professional development designed to expand cultural competence in my almost two decades working as an urban elementary educator, the role of language diversity and teacher bias that is being researched in middle and high school has not often been addressed for me as a teacher of young children. Smith, Warrican, and Alleyne (2020) state the need to expand the work on both culture and language to ensure educators leave teacher preparation programs armed with the knowledge to honor student language and grow increasingly responsive to the diversity they will encounter in schools. Yet, for early literacy interventionists, there is little in the research that details the practical aspects of how educators can actively support language or literacy learning for multilingual, multidialectal, or other linguistically diverse students.

Therefore, the timing of engaging in this work felt urgent. Additionally, at this moment in time, when dyslexia legislation is mandating early phonics screeners for students who often have not yet engaged in formal reading instruction, it seems necessary to offer a discussion of how teachers view student oral language structures acquired through home and community and how their view can limit or expand student pathways to becoming literate (Clay, 2015). Leveraging language as a strength in these early years is essential.

The primary question that drove my thinking was, "What do Reading Recovery teachers understand about using language/linguistic diversity as an asset in early literacy acquisition?". Additionally, I was pondering the various ways Reading Recovery teachers believe they support varied student language patterns to help each child grow as a reader and a writer. Based on my prior experiences with Reading Recovery I was interested in the connection between this early language-based, literacy intervention and the work of culturally and linguistically responsive practices. Finally, I wondered how providing opportunities for accelerated reading achievement might be attributed to participants viewing all language and discourse patterns from an asset-based lens.

My purpose in designing this constructivist grounded theory study was to engage Reading Recovery teachers as participants through conversations, focus groups, interviews, and observations and draw some conclusions about their understandings regarding how to use varied student language patterns as leverage for early literacy learning. This exploration also involved my attempt to observe how some aspects of their knowledge might be visible in interactions during Reading Recovery lessons. I had an additional aim to observe any positive interactions utilized by participants that supported and expanded student language in service of literacy learning. Finally, in this study, I attempted to consider the degree to which Reading Recovery teachers are working within a CLSP framework and talk openly with them about linguistic bias.

Reiterating the Research Design

I employed a constructivist grounded theory framework to allow for the engagement of critical stakeholders so that researchers, participants, critical friends, and peers reading the final product would all be able to benefit from any emerging theoretical understandings from this work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I found the assistance of critical friends essential to keep the research on track. I held regular meetings with these knowledgeable others who helped inform the study, cleared up my confusions as they arose, and provided advice along the way.

I found that the work of unpacking participant understandings necessitated the use of multiple data sets. I present these data sets and the analysis from the survey, focus groups, initial interviews, observations of teaching, and final interview data below. A deeper discussion of the implications of this study will follow in Chapter 5.

Description of Survey Claims and Findings

Introduction to survey claims and findings

The survey utilized a mixed methods approach. The first part included four questions using the Likert scale (Likert, 1932). The scale utilized 5 points of reference, *always*, *often*, *sometimes*, *hardly*, and *never* to invite general comments about the language of the students taught by participants. The second included two open-ended questions and a space for additional comments or questions from survey participants. I discovered several findings and a few key questions evident in this preliminary survey data. The four initial Likert scale (Likert, 1932) questions and responses are detailed below in Table 10. Further explanation follows.

Table 10: Survey Responses to Questions 1 through 4

Likert Scale	Always	Often	Sometimes	Hardly	Never	Notes
Question 1: I always, often, sometimes, hardly, never teach: students learning English as a second language						
	14.3%	57.1%	23.8%	4.8%	0	no participants selected the never category for this question
Question 2: I always, often, sometimes, hardly, never teach: students whose dialect differs from mine						
	14.3%	47.6%	23.8%	9.5%	4.8%	1 participant selected the never category for this question
Question 3: I always, often, sometimes, hardly, never teach: students who receive speech and language services						
	0%	42.9%	47.6%	9.5%	0%	none selecting the always or never teach categories for this
Question 4: I always, often, sometimes, hardly, never teach: students whose oral language errors reflect typical six-year-old language acquisition patterns (lookeded, goed, etc.)						
	28.6%	52.4%	9.5%	9.5%	0%	no survey participants selected the never category for this question

This group of 21 survey participants self-reported mostly teaching students learning English as a

second language. They also self-reported mostly teaching students whose dialect differs from

theirs with 1 participant informing us that they never teach students in this category. This group

of 21 survey participants self-reported teaching some students who receive speech and language

services with none selecting the always or never categories for this question. They also self-

reported mostly teaching students whose oral language errors reflect typical six-year-old

language acquisition patterns with no survey participants selecting the never category for this

question. The remaining, three open-ended queries allowed survey participants to provide

narrative responses.

1. Tell of a time when student language was an asset as they learned to read and write

2. Tell of a time when student language was a hindrance as they learned to read and write

3. Please add any additional comments about language and early literacy acquisition

After gathering their responses, I engaged in simultaneous In-Vivo and process coding. The In-Vivo coding allowed me to hold keywords and phrases from survey participant language while process coding allowed me to categorize their thinking. I identified five action verbs through process coding of the narrative portion of the survey. Though other verbs could have been substituted and several comments could fit into varying categories, participants from three follow-up focus groups and critical friends agreed that recurring categories of qualifying, stating, linking, considering, and identifying literacy processing were all evident in survey responses. These categories can be linked to the three broader themes of engaging in reflective processes, communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity, and working to expand oral language flexibility that emerged when analyzing this round of data. These themes were then used to organize the following findings.

Engaging in reflective processes

In terms of engaging in reflective processes I found survey participants often qualified the specifics of student learning, considered multiple factors impacting the varied rates of progress of their students, and reflected on implications for their own growth as educators. As participants described the specifics of student learning, they used qualifiers like *limited, very rich, relatively strong, great, almost always, very comfortable, strong knowledge, lots of opportunities, impressive vocabulary, strong oral language in both English and Spanish, stronger oral language,* and *story-telling skills*. These types of phrases seemed to me, an attempt to qualify how much or little students knew or were able to use what they knew in each particular domain. When considering impacts on the specifics of student learning, there were often comments regarding the balance of trying to teach between student strengths and weaknesses.

I'm always thinking about our conversations about allowing a child to use his language structures in writing, allowing him to control the sentence structure. Yet I want to

encourage the student to build, grow, and strengthen his sentence structures and word

choices. There is a friction there that is intriguing to me, finding the balance between

what the student controls and getting into what is known, but not controlled.

This friction and need to provide both support and challenge in Reading Recovery lessons were also evident in the comments of other survey participants as they pondered the fast progress of some students' learning paths and the slower growth of others.

Additionally, I found survey participants considering multiple factors impacting their own growth as educators that directly linked to varied rates of progress in their student learning trajectories. Here is one comment that demonstrates reflection on the work of leveraging oral language to power early literacy access,

The last few years this has also been an interest of mine. I try to make other teachers I

work with aware of how a student's language can be used to leverage their reading

progress and how when choosing books, it's important to think about which parts of the

book may be tricky for the student because it's not part of their oral language.

Survey participants wrote about specific aspects of reciprocity between language and literacy that they were working on in their teaching, on revisiting professional texts to contemplate a particular student's progress, and further consideration of what they needed next from their peers and leaders in professional development to leverage student language as a strength more consistently. Each new learning for the educator typically led to increased growth in student literacy acquisition.

As teacher participants reflected on implications for their own growth almost all stories were grounded in student strengths with much attention paid to students who were multilingual learners, "I'm working with a student now, English is his second language, and he doesn't feel as comfortable speaking in front of peers but will take more risks with speaking when he's working

one on one". Survey participants wrote of students who had a rich vocabulary and oral story traditions from their culture and from their home languages making fast progress as they became bilingual and biliterate. Theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity between reading, writing, and expanding oral language flexibility also emerged from the stories that were shared.

> Language and literacy acquisition is such a massive part of our work as Reading Recovery teachers. It is truly amazing to watch students' reading, writing, and oral language grow together over time. There is so much reciprocity and integration of reading, writing, and speaking in Reading Recovery. The lessons feel so organic because we are not trying to change the students' oral language, but rather meet them where they are at and use it to bolster them even higher.

Survey participants considered their own learning, commenting specifically on the need to help students foster a more flexible way of responding. They were unsure about their own linguistic biases and wanted to discuss useful theories and practices with colleagues. Participants wanted to encourage biliteracy and multilingualism and support a wider array of student learning needs. To facilitate this, many teacher participants stated that the more they learned about the reciprocity among the four language domains; reading, writing, speaking, and listening, the more they wanted to learn. Engaging in this reflective process was a theme that emerged from the coding of these survey responses and would continue to reappear through later data sets.

Considering theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity

As stated above, a steady thread across this data set was the communication of theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity. Survey participants commented on their role as educators fostering reciprocity connecting reading and writing to student oral language. They discussed the role of observing students working to independently integrate multiple sources of information while leveraging their own vocabulary, oral, and book language structures and how this informed

pre-planned teaching moves over the next few days, and contingent reactions to student attempts. I noted multiple reflections by participants regarding how student strengths and weaknesses in one area of language provided access or became a barrier to another area. Most survey participants discussed their role in fostering links between books and home culture or language. They were working to ensure students grew flexible and able to understand increasingly complex ideas as they expanded student oral and literary language. Finally, many responses included comments regarding the need to value all student language patterns and the reciprocity for multilingual learners between and across their known languages. Some were unsure they were constantly able to convey this to their students. I linked these patterns of response calling the larger theme consideration of the reciprocity of reading and writing to oral language flexibility. In this section, I include examples from survey participants to illustrate this connection.

Responses included a few short theoretical discussions of the role participants played in fostering reciprocity of oral and literary language by valuing and expanding student speech patterns through books, writing, and conversations.

I'm thinking of a student who, despite significant gaps in literacy knowledge, had an impressive vocabulary. Throughout our lessons, we would have rich conversations, and I learned to lean on his oral language to both talk and write about the texts we read together. Exploring his word choices, and playing with the parts of the words, he learned to take words apart and reconstruct them, the meanings of many common affixes, and the forms of different root words.

Survey participants also shared how, with teacher support, students integrated multiple sources of information and learned to leverage their vocabulary, oral and book language to anticipate, search and check. Some students came into Reading Recovery lessons already working on this independently.

I've worked with a student who loved to talk and ask many questions. She took on new language structures from books and incorporated them into her writing. Some of them became part of her oral language. Because she was flexible, she was also able to anticipate structures when reading.

I found evidence of theoretical understandings when survey participants pointed up instances of students engaging in strategic behaviors as outlined by Clay (2015) in *Becoming Literate.* Understanding the work of becoming literate as outlined in Clay's Literacy Processing Theory led teachers to observe and note when students anticipated, attempted, confirmed, rejected, solved, monitored, substituted, omitted, and inserted as they worked to problem solve as readers and writers. Most teacher participants used this actual language as it is work often discussed in Reading Recovery training and ongoing professional learning sessions while watching students read, write, and engage in discourse behind-the-glass. One survey respondent identifying the processing student were able to negotiate stated,

I am thinking about children who rely on their oral language and the meaning and structure of the stories sometimes overrides their use of visual information. I am thinking of how we can teach in a way that uses a child's strength AND fosters the use of visual information.

Another response noted the work of self-correction,

I am thinking about students who latch on to the language of books and can't yet understand that it could be another way. For example, when a book has one page that says, 'I can see' and another that says, 'I see' My current student could self-correct that using visual information but would be easily frustrated by the change. He says things like, "It should say... or why doesn't it say?"

A third survey participant discussed the role of monitoring for one student,

A student was very comfortable with longer, more complex sentence structures and

scored very high on the Record of Oral Language. This made grasping patterns in

early levels and monitoring for structure as we moved up in levels easier. Because they

spoke with a variety of sentence structures and wanted to write in this way, we had lots

of opportunities to build knowledge and control of a variety of skills/concepts.

These direct connections to Clay's Literacy Processing theory where readers and writers are

monitoring, searching, solving, and attempting to self-correct, integrating multiple sources of

information are all explicitly taught to Reading Recovery Teachers through Clay's professional

text and close observation during and following the training year. Other educators discussed the

actions without using this precise terminology. Both sets of responses acknowledge the

reciprocal nature of oral and written language.

This knowledge seemed to shape comments on how participants utilized student strengths

in one area to support and expand capacity for formerly challenging areas of literacy learning. I

found bits in survey responses that included specific evidence of students using orthographic and

phonemic sources of information as they negotiated the author's meaning, and the varied

language structures they encountered in texts.

There were also moments when participants overtly stated they were aware their students

were utilizing invisible sources of information. Fostering flexibility was mentioned multiple

times and in varied ways, participants noted the work students had to do to call up invisible

information from their oral language and varied funds of knowledge from their homes, cultures,

and background experiences when problem-solving. This was also evident in a previously cited

quote from the participant who was sharing the frustration of her student when encountering the

variety of language in early texts.

As students attempted to map knowledge from their personal repertoire of phonological

awareness, phonetic and orthographic knowledge, prior background information, or anticipated language structures onto texts they revealed to teacher participants when they needed assistance as readers or as writers. The need to value all student language patterns was evident as was the idea of the reciprocal nature existing between oral language and written language. This arose multiple times and is evident in the quote below:

> I have found that when students are able to listen to themselves read, they are skilled at identifying the nuances and differences in what they see in the text as compared to how they speak. It has been so helpful to identify unexpected structures (when I can anticipate this) and name that 'this author says it this way.' By doing this, I have noticed students begin to do the same and it is simply an acknowledgment of the difference in language, not a judgment about which way is better.

Valuing all language structures and incorporating stories from their cultures when available were most often mentioned when participants wrote of their work with multilingual learners. Again, at least three teacher participants stated the need to continuously unpack their own linguistic biases and one discussed the need to learn more about varied language patterns. One response to the question, *tell of a time when student language was harder for you to leverage as an asset as you supported them in learning to read and write* was "When I didn't know enough about their backgrounds". A participant spoke of a student making more progress when they took more time to learn about the child's home language and family culture. Another added the comment, "I find the Record of Oral language very helpful when working with multilingual learners or students who receive speech and language services. I do have questions about how to help students who read lookeded, runned etc.". Some comments expressed overt connections between the reciprocity of a student's first and second languages, others noted connections between oral language, vocabulary, or background knowledge to how students comprehended. There was a

reflective note in the comment below that connects to the ongoing learning necessary to continue this work.

> I am thinking so hard about language lately. I am exploring the ideas of language as an asset, but also how rigid structures can become a 'strong skill to block learning.' I am thinking about children who rely on their oral language and the meaning and structure of the stories, and it sometimes overrides their use of visual information. I am wanting to learn more about how we can teach in a way that uses a child's strength AND fosters the use of visual information. I feel like this is where much of the criticism of RR is coming from.

I find the reflection tangible in this above response which serves as evidence for both learning a child's language and culture and for the ongoing professional learning needed to consistently engage in this deliberate and intentional work. Strong theoretical knowledge often guides decision-making before, during, and after teaching. Thus, the third theme that arose from this data set was how participants believed they were leveraging their understandings into practice.

Working to expand oral language flexibility

The theme of teaching for more flexible oral language usage arose often especially when participant's discussed students who had accelerated literacy learning. Most responses detailed how leveraging student strengths could be used to teach into new skills or to shore up a student weakness. I noted how often participants made references to the role of book language and home language in the writing of texts, reading and understanding of texts, flexible oral language acquisition, and growth of student vocabulary. Survey participants raised issues regarding how oral language impacted sight word knowledge, phonics, and phonological awareness. Some students who made particularly accelerated progress were flexible in two languages,

One student has strong oral language skills in both English and Spanish. She often switches back and forth fluently, and it seems as though her vocabulary grows faster when she learns a new word in English and can say and identify the Spanish word. At times, she will say 'I need to remember to ask my mom that word in Spanish.' Her ability to go back and forth in both languages is quite remarkable.

This idea was echoed by a few other participants and mirrored by some who were working towards similar aims.

The students I have worked with that had stronger oral language skills, have typically made the most amount of progress, and have often successfully discontinued their 20-week series of RR. They often pick up the language structures of books quicker and take them on. They also begin to incorporate them into their writing. In addition, students who speak more tend to have longer writing pieces and can take on longer phrasing when reading.

Survey participants raised issues regarding how oral language impacted sight word knowledge, phonics, and phonological awareness and discussed their role when a student came upon something particularly challenging.

Another student had very little English when we first started but was quite literate and fluent in Portuguese. She began her lesson series only by memorizing the texts and then repeating it. This strategy served her well when learning English but was not helpful when learning to read and write. I had to get her to look at the text first, leverage her phonetic knowledge to say beginning sounds, then hear and use sounds across new words. She stayed at early text levels for many weeks. Now however we are at week 14 and I can prompt her to search for more orthography and phonetic information in addition to meaning and structure.

As they reflected, participants commented on the need to work for increased flexibility and to overtly teach for reciprocity between reading, writing, and oral language.

> I feel like I struggle with children who have very limited control of a small number of vocabulary words. Finding the leading edge of their language structures, and successfully expanding on that has proven tricky for me. I want to ensure as much ease and success as possible, yet when the access points are limited, I feel like I quickly run out of options.

Some participants remarked on the need to value all student language patterns seemingly without judgment but more of this was to come in later interviews after the focus group discussions with their peers.

As participants discussed the necessity of viewing oral language from an asset-based lens, reciprocity for multilingual learners across their known languages and as fuel for literacy learning was mentioned most often. I did not yet find these same types of comments present in responses regarding support for students speaking in multiple dialects. This links directly to earlier limitations mentioned in Chapter 2. When I was reviewing the literature there was a glaring lack of empirical research detailing how educators might actively expand the oral and literary repertoires of multidialectal students. This finding also reiterates the need for continued professional learning around oral language as a resource for reading and writing text (Clay, 2015) to ensure language, power, and dialect do not negatively impact academic achievement for students whose home language varies from the language of school (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Heath, 2009, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2018). This early finding specifically connects to the need to discuss dialect from a strength-based lens and gives educators time to unearth and upend any linguistic biases they might overtly or implicitly hold. This echoes Smith, Warrican, and Alleyne's (2020) call for multilingual and multicultural teachers to understand and document their own predispositions, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences and holds equally, if not more

essential, for White teachers working in the current U.S. context.

Concluding thoughts on the data analysis for the survey

As I reviewed the survey responses and analyzed this first round of data, I could see three themes emerging from the stories participants chose to share; engaging in reflective processes, communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity, and working to expand oral language flexibility. I then had a few questions to raise during that first conversation I held with the two critical friends supporting my work.

The first question I had was whether all participants seemed clear about the distinctions among definitions of dialect and accent, this wondering arose from language written in survey responses. Participant language seemed to muddle the two definitions. I then wondered how the confusion of these two distinct terms might be impacted by unconscious biases or might be revealing unconscious biases. The second question that came to light was raised by one of my critical friends. They wondered what survey participants understood about oral language errors reflecting typical six-year-old language. This seemed an explicit discrepancy in the findings. If participants solidly understood markers for language development, how could a few of them think they were not teaching students making errors typical for six-year-olds? Ultimately the three of us engaged in a conversation about this. Possibly, we surmised, survey participants were expressing that they worked primarily with multilingual or multidialectal learners but possibly the idea of typical language development is confusing. The ideas of dialect, accent, and language development may need to be read about and discussed further during Reading Recovery professional learning. Finally, though most likely a flaw in my design of the survey language itself, the stories of survey participants did not discuss how critical it is that the educators understand a bit about varied patterns as they exist in other languages (Russian has few articles, Spanish utilizes nouns before adjectives). Each of these questions raised new angles that I would

explore in interviews and in further rounds of data collection and made me wonder if we were talking enough about linguistic diversity.

Thus, though this survey was short and one-dimensional, I felt it laid the groundwork to continue discourse about the relationship between honoring and expanding student language to foster early literacy learning. I considered how linking the wording from the Likert (Likert, 1932) scale to numeric ranges would have helped me comprehend the data more clearly. This would have proved useful when teachers selected the terms *often*, *sometimes*, and *hardly*. While the terms *always* and *never* were quite clear, the other three were left open to a wider band of interpretation. This is something that would impact my usage of the same scale later in the study. Now, with a few overarching themes and several key questions beginning to emerge, I was ready to engage in additional inquiry through the next round of data collection with focus groups.

Description of Focus Group Claims and Findings

Introduction to the focus group analysis

Later that January, participants took part in three focus groups. Engaging further in this constructivist grounded theory frame necessitated this second layer of recursive data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After analyzing stories from the initial survey results and sharing these with critical friends I needed time to present the three emerging themes to the teacher participants. We met during their regularly scheduled professional development time in three focus groups (each with a different small set of the same participants who answered the survey and several other of their peers who had been unable to partake earlier). These sessions occurred via video conferencing. With their permission, I audio-recorded each focus group session and coded the transcript findings utilizing simultaneous In-Vivo and Process coding. I then wrote and shared analytic memos from this round of data collection and analysis with critical friends.

As I engaged in this coding, multiple categories surfaced. These categories added detail to the three themes that emerged from the initial survey and expanded to include one more. I noticed that participant reflection and inquiry were grounded in first noticing, asking, and wondering and that these actions seemed to precede the challenging of the ideas of their peers. I took more notes as they talked and heard threads from the themes that had emerged from the initial surveys reiterated regarding engaging in reflective processes, communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity, and working to expand oral language flexibility. Across these three focus group sessions the conversations each grew increasingly complex and the notes I took were filled with more participant comments and questions. Though three different groups of three different sets of teacher participants met on three different days, patterns were consistent across the conversations. A new theme that emerged was a call to continue to grow collective expertise to understand and support a wider array of linguistic diversity. There was more conversation clarifying distinctions among the definitions of dialect and accent that had not been present in the initial survey though these conversations only included a few focus group participants. The theme of growing collective expertise was connected to the reflection focus group participants were used to engaging in during their professional development but more specifically focused on ideas around culture, language, and dialect they spoke of not always feeling prepared to support. These conversations hinted more at the need for educators to unpack their own cultural and linguistic biases than anything overtly stated in the written survey, though this talk still centered mostly on multilingual learners. I found their ideas about leveraging collective expertise to be rooted in both theory and the practical aspects of culture but even more specifically about linguistic diversity as a critical access point for accelerated literacy learning. I discovered this theme in the threads of transcripts from all three focus group conversations. The remainder of this section will be divided into these four themes; engaging in reflective processes,

communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity, working to expand oral language flexibility, and a call to grow collective expertise regarding linguistic diversity.

Engaging in reflective processes

Focus group participants reflected on how to balance the need for accelerated literacy learning while honoring and expanding oral language flexibility and valuing the home, culture, and background knowledge of the children they taught. This was a pursuit that participants in all three focus groups acknowledged would require a longer span of time than the 12-to-20 weeks allotted to a typical Reading Recovery series of lessons. They wanted to be sure they were not making excuses for students who made limited progress when these same students had speech and language plans, Individual Education Plans, or were in early English acquisition stages. Focus group participants wanted more time to read and think about the tension between the slow trajectory that language and literacy acquisition can take and their understanding that both tend to progress more powerfully when learned hand in hand. They asked the following questions:

- If we know that early exposure to talk and stories are a strong asset, what is being done to ensure equal access to these opportunities?

- How are we making decisions about letting some errors go for now vs. dealing with errors that impact meaning and comprehension and deciding to work through confusions to ensure students are navigating multiple sources of information and deeper meaning from the start?

- How do we collectively grow more knowledgeable about specific languages and learn more about students who receive speech and language while they are also learning multiple languages? How do we feel about our current understanding? Do we know enough to support students in this work?

- How do we select books that introduce new structures while keeping new learning in the control of students?

I include these questions because they show the focus group participants engaging in the reflective process so critical to the findings of the initial survey. These questions also detail the need of the participants to grapple with both the theoretical and practical aspects of reciprocity between oral and written language and their understanding of the work of early literacy educators to honor and expand a student's current linguistic repertoire to bolster flexibility.

Communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity

As focus group participants reviewed the initial survey data, they discussed connections between comments regarding students who constantly and flexibly were able to shift back and forth between meaning in books and meaning in their home language. These students were those who asked questions and consistently clarified new learning for themselves. Participants discussed what it looked like and sounded like to value the home language of an array of students with specific needs and as literacy and language work that was applicable for all students. Their current ways of communicating theory about language and literacy learning shifted as a few focus group participants noticed that survey responses seem mostly about multilingual learners. They asked each other:

- What about students who spoke another dialect?

- What about when multilingual or multidialectal students are also receiving speech and language?

- What about students with typical language development trajectories who are not making fast literacy gains?

- Can we talk more about this, disaggregate the data, and collectively figure out what we might do that works and how this work might look?

These points illustrate how the already strong theoretical knowledge of participants was shifting through these conversations. They requested support from each other and from teacher leaders to engage in conscientização or consciousness-raising (Freire, 2012). Participants seemed engrossed in "constructing chains of reasoning" (Lyons, 1994). They connected one idea to another until all had more questions regarding how to honor the oral language of students as leverage for early literacy acquisition (Freire, 2012; Lyons, 1994). The work of communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity was expanding.

Working to expand oral language flexibility

Focus group participants also discussed what they said in lessons, during teacher-student interactions, and how they made contingent teaching decisions during lessons based on all they knew about a particular student. They discussed the practical aspects of working to expand student oral language and shared specific prompts that fostered flexibility. Several focus group participants stated they wanted to be sure they were not unintentionally devaluing a student's home language or culture, acknowledging the role of unconscious bias. These responses led other participants to question the varied levels of support they were giving to multilingual students depending on their current levels of English proficiency. There was much consideration in each focus group discourse regarding the tension between instructing around early literary language in books and making decisions on which incorrect responses to attend to or ignore for the moment, how to foster expansion, acceptance, and flexibility of an array of oral language responses.

In each focus group, at least one participant stated the need for more time to discuss specific student needs including fostering the hearing of letter sounds, sounds in words and across fluent reading, learning how other participants decided when to teach, to prompt, or to reinforce, and what language they were each using to powerfully propel student learning

forward. In each group, as this need was stated, 2-3 other participants concurred.

A call to grow collective expertise regarding linguistic diversity

Focus group participants stated that they wanted more time to talk about students with specific needs and about literacy and language work that was applicable for all students. They also wanted to specifically address linguistic diversity, including the following.

- Fostering the hearing of letter sounds, sounds in words and across fluent reading

- Fostering fast processing of visual information at the letter, sound, word, phrase, and text levels

- Deciding when to teach, to prompt, or to reinforce to meet an array of needs

- How to build, support, and expand oral and book language knowledge

- Supports and challenges given to multilingual students depending on current levels of English proficiency

- The tension between instructing and discovery of early literary language in books

- Expanding knowledge regarding multilingual students

- Expanding knowledge regarding multidialectal students

- Supporting students with typical language development not making fast literacy gains

- Support and challenges given to students are also receiving speech and language

Five focus group participants mentioned articles and books they were reading and two shared titles. There seemed to be a growing awareness of the subtle difference between being a culturally responsive teacher and being a linguistically responsive teacher. This was to become a major finding later in the study.

In addition to the early themes that had emerged from the surveys regarding teacher participant work to engage in reflective processes, communicate theoretical understandings

regarding reciprocity, and expand oral language flexibility, I now saw a call to grow collective

expertise regarding linguistic diversity as a fourth emerging theme.

Concluding the focus group analysis

Following that focus group I met with the two Teacher Leaders who were consistently

acting as my critical friends. After reviewing themes from the focus groups and discussing

participant strengths I wondered aloud if we were spending enough time in the training year and

in ongoing professional development sessions reading, speaking, and observing the varied home

language patterns of students and families from a strength-based lens. It seemed to me at this

point that if we spent enough time on this, we would be growing the collective expertise the

teacher participants had called for during focus groups. The three of us then spent some time

pondering how to clarify and reframe language utilized during professional development

sessions in a manner that might ensure multilingualism and multi-dialecticism were both being

viewed as powerful leverage for literacy learning. I raised the question regarding what might

happen if language around *struggling readers* or *when readers struggle* was altered to something

more along the lines of *when it was hard for me as the teacher to reach a student*. One of the

Teacher Leaders engaging as a critical friend thought that switching the conversation to

incorporate this language might lead to positive changes in both theory and practice.

After this meeting, I edited and revised an updated interview protocol for initial

conversations and altered headings on the observation protocol. Based on the work done both

with the teacher participants and the Teacher Leaders as critical friends, I now had questions that

more accurately incorporated the wonderings of participants from all three focus group sessions.

The initial interview questions had evolved from a theoretical set to a series of questions that

included more specificity regarding some practical aspects of teaching. I was also able to add in

layers that took into consideration the role of both language and literacy as two separate, but

mutually beneficial bodies of data for the final interview protocol. I altered the initial draft of fourteen questions down to eight questions with sub-questions to elicit additional information. These revisions led to a structure more fluidly inquiring about both the theoretical and the practical aspects of Reading Recovery instruction. Issues regarding ongoing sociocultural or linguistic biases present in society and institutional systems were now directly addressed in the questions. Stating these issues overtly was essential as myself and the educators engaging in the study were predominately White and female and involved in educating an economically, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse student population. Many of the participants who had contributed to both sets of data were beginning to overtly state interest in reading the findings of this study. Their increased engagement became overtly evident in the interview sign-up. In the original proposal, I had planned to talk to between eight and 12 teacher participants during this portion of the study, yet 19 agreed to the interview. I had planned on fewer for the sake of time and as it seemed a lower number would still allow for a large enough data set, but, at this point, I was too curious to hear what they all had to say so I went ahead with the larger sample for this interview.

I then shifted the observation protocol headings from *Teaching* and *Outcome* to *Notes on Observations of Teaching* and *Evidence of Teacher Leveraging Student Language for Learning*, providing a more specific lens from which to observe. I also made the shift from housing *Composing and Transcribing a Written Message* in one category to separating the two. The updated observation protocol lists *Composing a Written Message* and *Transcribing a Written Message* as two separate sections to attend to during observations of teaching. I was noticing more consistent connections between language and literacy in transcripts as participants made more overt comments directly linking early language learning to that of early literacy acquisition.

Description of Initial Interview Claims and Findings

Introduction to Initial Interview Analysis

During focus group sessions I found teacher participants demonstrating an interest in exploring the tension between honoring versus expanding student language and talking to each other more about time spent propelling a child's language forward versus meeting them right where they are as oral language users while exploring literacy. In focus groups, they talked about the decision-making they engaged in regarding when to engage in rich conversations and when to shift into short, clear prompts as an essential understanding. They discussed how to catch their own biases to ensure all student languages and home cultures were consistently valued. Participant sociocultural demographics would have shed more insight and deepened this analysis, but I did not ask for it during this study. By the time I considered requesting this information for the study, it was late in the process, and I felt it might interfere with responses and could impact the anonymity of the few teachers of color or male teachers. I would do this initially, in the first questions of the survey if utilizing a similar framework moving forward. Focus group participants wanted to know how and about what their peers were engaging in conversations before, during, and after lessons and how they honored the connections students were making between meaning and their home language. Focus group participants were also curious about the fact that oral language learning takes time to grow increasingly flexible and complex but did not want to use that needed time as an excuse not to teach in an accelerative manner. The one-to-one setting now allowed time and space for deeper conversations so that I was now able to raise these issues in conversations during initial interviews.

In the critical friend meeting prior to interviews, we began talking a bit more about how practices that support multilingual students were essential for the literacy learning of all six-year-olds and how to message this earlier on during the training year. Additionally, when we

discussed participant knowledge about phonological and phonemic awareness all three of us were wondering how flexible we could become as a Reading Recovery community in supporting all students as they learned to hear sounds in words, hear phrasing in fluent reading, and anticipate varied book language and orthographic patterns in spelling. Though these questions arose at this point in time, I did not work to address these issues until the observations and final interviews. I did not do so because I was still deep in thought about how to incorporate these wonderings into the current structure I was utilizing.

Interviews were conducted in one-to-one settings. 18 of the 19 interviews were held via video conference calls with one in-person meeting at the request of the interviewee. Each interview lasted between 30-50 minutes, and I took notes while audio recording the calls. I transcribed the audio into narratives. Two transcripts were lost, so for those, my notes from the conversations were analyzed instead. In all other instances, I used the transcripts from audio recordings. I had planned to engage in In-Vivo and Process coding but instead utilized the Likert scale (Likert, 1932). With this scale, I again had 5 points of reference shown below and used in the narrative explaining the analysis in the following sections.

Likert Scale Points of Reference

- always

- often

- sometimes

- hardly

- never

These points of reference helped me quantify the frequency of participant responses. I did this because the sheer volume of data from 19 interviews was overwhelming. I planned only to start with this method but so much information arose from the analysis that I found I was much

more able to make sense of the data with the Likert scale (Likert, 1932) than when I attempted to engage in the In-Vivo and Process coding I had intended to use. This time I employed numeric ranges to help me comprehend the data more clearly. The term *always/almost always* stood for 16-19 responses, *often/most of the time* represented 13-15 responses. I used the term *sometimes* when 7-9 interview participants responded and the term *seldom/rarely* for 4-6 responses. The term *never/almost never* was used when 0-3 responses aligned. This made sense to me in terms of analyzing the 19 interviews for richer themes.

Themes of engaging in reflective processes, communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity, working to expand oral language flexibility, and a call to grow collective expertise regarding linguistic diversity are explored next. A conclusion of the analysis of initial interview data follows.

Interviewees were talking more about linguistic diversity than had been apparent in survey data or focus group conversations. The word *dialect* was appearing more consistently in the data sets than had been noted during those first two rounds of data collection. Even interviewees who were not using the word *dialect* were talking about honoring student language patterns in writing and working to expand rather than negate syntactic structures.

When asked during interviews what they had seen or experienced in schools that may represent bias towards children who speak in varied dialects, discourse patterns, and languages participant responses varied greatly but included experiences with overt bias. One interviewee mentioned hearing an educator in school asking students not to speak in their home language. Three others discussed hearing students being over-corrected or having another experience that in some way negated their home language. One participant struggle to find the words to explain this:

I know I've done and seen others do the same when they think kids are

neglecting visual information but actually they are just leaning on their own oral

language structures and then the student is totally squashed when we say *we can't say it*

that way or didn't you see these letters? The person saying that didn't mean to do

anything terrible, but they totally negated the child's oral language, and they didn't

understand that a child maybe didn't see those letters because those sounds are not

reflected in the way they talk. I feel like there are a hundred things, but how a child talks

ends up being a huge part of the inequity.

Two interviewees spoke of assessments being scored by proctors who seemed to have little

or no understanding of the role of oral language. One participant noted how this often led to

multilingual and multidialectal learners being penalized or held back from more complex text

due to accents, pronunciations or a grammatical structure not yet controlled. Another

mentioned how perceptions of why students struggle may limit the range of interventions

offered,

I think there is a big problem with the perception that kids that are struggling are only

relying upon their language. There's an assumption with the dyslexia movement that

kids who are struggling know how to use their language and they are affirmed in their

language and it's just the other bits and sounds that they aren't mixing into things. They

seem to want everyone who is struggling to get one specific type of intervention and

that's really unfair. That feels really terrible to me right now as if there is a certain

group of students with a certain profile and only this thing will work.

There were other comments about overhearing statements that clearly implied to students that

varied home languages carried different weights or values by educators. One interviewee

mentioned how this bias impacted student learning often and how a bilingual learner with

parents who were wealthy professors would be viewed differently than a student from a

refugee family who spoke multiple languages. All interview participants mentioned working on issues of implicit linguistic bias in their own teaching, trying to get better at some aspects of teaching, and considering the role of language in accelerating literacy learning. One long reflection clearly reflects this and mirrors what other interviewees implied:

> I think a lot of bias is reflected in putting the parents down. People say this kid is like this because nobody talks to them, and they don't read them to them at home. I feel like that was my thing and I know that I have absolutely had that kind of bias. I think virtual learning has helped me so much. Being able to see and work with families all year. I'm sure I have a long, long way to go but I feel exactly the biggest thing I've learned is how families are doing what they're supposed to be doing for their kids.

Quotes and comments also pointed to the fact that a growing awareness of their own biases led to direct changes in teaching interactions and that ongoing professional learning that included shared professional text, observation of teaching, and discourse with peers helped them alter theory and practice.

Engaging in reflective processes

In most of the 19 interviews participants expressed frustration at not knowing much about how important the role of honoring a student's home language was in their becoming literate prior to Reading Recovery training (Clay, 2015). Two participants overtly stated the need to understand their own linguistic biases to ensure they valued each student's language. I almost always found that those participants who had previously been teachers of multilingual students or kindergarteners had understood the role of student language in teaching writing early in their careers but felt less knowledgeable about supporting readers.

> I was a kindergarten teacher for the first ten years, and it was all about the amount of language or the amount of words students know or acquire before they come to school so

I was doing a lot of stations and centers in my kindergarten class that would foster

language development and scaffolding language for kids.

This example shows that even when oral language is addressed in graduate schools of education

or professional development in the field there is a limit to what can be learned. Other participants

concurred with the introductory nature of any knowledge regarding the power of student oral

language for literacy learning. Six of the 19 interviewees commented on gaining some insight

into the power of teaching vocabulary early but not regarding the impact of student language in

comprehending at the phrase, sentence, and text level. This is detailed in the following quote as a

participant responded to a question about what was known prior to Reading Recovery training:

Any training that I got as a first-grade teacher directly incorporated the use of language.

When I started teaching first grade, I was at a school enmeshed in title 1 and we had

training on the five components from the National Reading Panel. Oral language was not

included in those five components, but it was made pretty clear that vocabulary

instruction was essential in expanding oral language . Then I didn't get a lot of training,

but it was like, 'it's important, vocabulary is important'. Then again during my masters,

it was like you should have kids talk a lot but not a lot of specific techniques about how

you get started in a meaningful way. So, it was recognized as important, but I wasn't

specifically trained in how to make it happen until Reading Recovery.

This comment highlights a common trend I found across much of the interview data where

participants were constantly reflecting on and articulating their current theory regarding literacy

learning. They seemed to do this to collectively comprehend how to better expand oral language

support to meet an array of student needs. These reflective practices appear within and among

each data set across the study. As they pondered their understandings theoretical knowledge

about oral and written language was communicated.

Communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity

Interviewee responses consistently referred to both the theoretical and practical aspects of their work. Regarding the reciprocal nature of reading, writing, and oral language participants discussed how Reading Recovery training and ongoing professional development expanded their knowledge both theoretically and practically. I noted that almost always they mentioned the power of observing each other teach behind-the-glass while engaging in deep discourse to develop these understandings. One participant specifically attributed learning to the experience of teaching behind-the-glass.

> I think I have a better understanding, after talking to colleagues about the role of student language in literacy acquisition, about how to make that happen in a meaningful way because of behind-the-glass lessons watching other people do it in meaningful ways or in ways that I'm like I can see, oh, I do that and go and do it more.

I found interviewees almost always mentioned leaving more space for student talk as a critical understanding impacting their daily interaction with all students. One noted how her theoretical understanding had changed over time.

> Oral language is really important and back in the day it was like, stop talking I want it quiet in here it needs to be quiet and that was like a total 360 for me as an educator when I would have thought of conversation and talking as time away from learning, noisy and distracting and now it's at the top of my list time for talking I add it to my lesson plans now and make time for normal healthy conversation.

> Almost always I found interviewees pointing to the first ten unstructured lessons of

Reading Recovery, called Roaming Around the Known, as essential for learning about the language and home experiences of each child. Conversations on the way to and from lessons were almost always considered a time for rich and informative conversations. Two responses

detailed how critical this was for students from other cultures.

> This year I have a student who is from Ireland, and you know he just has different ways, he says jumper instead of sweater and so I'll ask him, *how would you have said that in Ireland* or *how are you used to saying that* and recognize those differences but also show him how he is going to approach it in a text.

Another participant shared the following story.

> One little guy was talking about making Injera with his mom and then I saw him and was watching him do a writing vocabulary spree and I was like *Can you write some foods? Can you write Injera?'* and he was so excited, he was like *how did you know I eat Injera*? I like to try and use what I know about students to help them learn.

These examples demonstrate how these teacher participants communicated some theoretical understandings regarding the importance of leaving space for more talk to foster literacy learning. Additionally, Roaming Around the Known lessons were times when interview participants were most consciously taking notes about student oral language patterns and ways of responding and engaging in conversations.

> When I asked which aspects of Reading Recovery seemed already explicitly linked to CLSP interviewees viewed all or almost all the practices as overtly linked. Almost always they told me they viewed individualized lessons as essential to the concept of CLSP,

> The one-to-one or very small group gives us the space and the time to do those culturally responsive things in a way that is really, really poignant and meaningful to the kids and really gets them active in a way that whole group instruction cannot.

Most of the time interviewees said the period of Roaming Around the Known or the first ten Reading Recovery Lessons were specifically linked to the relationship-building essential to CLSP. Here is an example of a response that I believe communicates this clearly.

11 days of really getting to know who the child is…and building Relationships. I feel like I was interested before Reading Recovery training, but I feel like I didn't totally understand RATK. I really didn't get it. It's relationship-building. It's building confidence. It's making connections to who they already are, not who I want them to be and that's being celebrated so I'd say that's all culturally very relevant. Also, the emphasis on selecting books that are important or might be interesting to a child, you know, you just see. Sometimes during RATK you put out a lot of books and you see how they are saying I want this, I want this, I want this and notice the books they are throwing to the side, so I can see specifically. They are showing me who they are.

This interviewee is reflecting on practice and delineating the change over time that occurred specifically because of their training in Reading Recovery. The response also expands on how the theoretical understanding of the power of relationships has grown deeper through the practical aspect of engaging in Roaming around the Known with each student.

Almost always interviewees told me the idea of selecting texts and making books specifically rooted in a student's current competencies and interests were powerful links from Reading Recovery to CLSP work. They told me that book collections needed to include more cultural and linguistic diversity and that the assessment texts that had been utilized for decades in the program were considered outdated and quite irrelevant. These assessment books are in the process of being updated by the Reading Recovery Council of North America and are not utilized in other countries (IDEC, 2022). Sometimes they said the idea of leveraging oral language was clearly aligned with CLSP. This is illustrated in the following quote.

I think that the conversation between professionals that happens so frequently in Reading Recovery is huge in those ways (CLSP). I think the focus on oral language in Reading Recovery is pretty massive. It goes a long way in being able to give the kid the idea that

their oral language is correct and valued.

This response overtly links the work of honoring student language to CLSP. The participant also sees a direct correspondence between the professional conversations among Reading Recovery colleagues and the development of this valuation. This response also illustrates the understanding of this participant in two key theories outlined by Clay (2015); taking an asset-based view of children's attempts and the power of oral language as fuel for literacy learning.

The ability of participants in these initial interviews to communicate theoretical understandings came across in responses to these next few questions as well. Most of the time interviewees mentioned the concept of allowing children to speak and write their own language and messages into daily stories as a critical connection. Rarely was an individualized letter, sound and word work cited as a way to personalize instruction rather than waste a student's time learning things they already knew as in some prescriptive programs, though this issue was raised as a part of CLSP work in my conversations with two respondents. When I asked what could be made clearer or invited interviewees to define Reading Recovery practices that don't apply to CLSP, they almost always mentioned book offerings by publishers or assessment measures as bits that don't feel as relevant. Though the interviewees had been actively expanding their collections to include more diverse books the publishers were not matching the demand to meet the needs of all students. Sometimes interview participants raised the fact that constantly linking Reading Recovery professional learning to the work of cultural and linguistic proficiency would allow for more overt connections between the two bodies of work. One felt they had received this message from their Reading Recovery colleagues, "Everything I've ever known about language acquisition and how to speak 'properly' has been challenged in a good way with Reading Recovery". Almost never, though twice, interviewees told me that too much depends on the cultural and linguistic understandings of individual teachers. More than one interview

response pointed to the power of the structure of both Reading Recovery training and the daily

lesson frame as powerful links to CLSP but the following response commented on how these

links need to be made clearer.

> There are definitely times when I think I know I should be doing this better but I'm not
>
> exactly sure what the thing is to say or how to drive this conversation so that the kid gets
>
> the most value out of it and it is the most accelerating teaching for them. I can do the
>
> standard way but that doesn't hit right, we can all teach the standard way. So, the
>
> structure is there in RR for sure can get it done but I think I will forever be seeking
>
> development on how.

In Reading Recovery professional development both theoretical and practical aspects of the work

are addressed. This interviewee seemed to communicate the need for more direct theoretical

connections to CLSP so no one could misconstrue the work of Reading Recovery and negate a

child's home language or meaning. This directly connects knowledge of theory to daily practice.

Working to expand oral language flexibility

As I transcribed and analyzed the audio data sets, I found evidence of multiple

discussions regarding the practical aspects of participant work to expand oral language

flexibility. Right from the start they began responding to questions about the administration of

the Record of Oral Language assessment. This is a practical task that may be given prior to and

following a Reading Recovery intervention (Clay, 2015). In this task, students hear and attempt

to repeat sentences with varied structures. This gives teachers a sense of the outer limit of a

student's zone of proximal development for oral language and is often used to select texts and

ensure conversations are within a child's optimal performance range for negotiating meaning and

expanding their current language capacity.

Interviewees almost always administered Clay's (2007) Record of Oral Language (ROL) to some Reading Recovery students. Most of the time these interviewees administered this assessment at the start of the series of lessons. Sometimes these interviewees did this only for multilingual students, students who had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or students who, themselves as the child's teacher, had questions regarding expressive or receptive language. Often interviewees mentioned using the information to either select books or to engage in conversations to support writing as this participant did.

> I'm thinking about this one child I had during the year I was training, and she was a
> second language learner, and I was struggling with getting books that said, 'I like' and
> then when I had done the Record of Oral Language I learned that she didn't yet control
> 'I like' in her language and all that time I was thinking she couldn't remember the word
> 'is'. I feel like that was a student where I had a real A-ha moment with that.

This response is a reflection on the power and utility of this assessment as a tool for planning. I found other participants often stated they knew how to support either reading or writing but not both with data from the Record of Oral Language. Almost never did interviewees use another language assessment. Sometimes they kept track of a child's longest utterance. Rarely did they state they knew what to do with this data.

Home language, culture, experiences, and family were seen as practical resources when working to honor and expand oral language flexibility. Several participants mentioned not leveraging these resources often enough. One participant made the following comment regarding a common introduction by teachers working with multilingual students.

> It's always so interesting to me when teachers introduce their students and the very first
> thing they say is the student's English Language Development level. It's really, really
> interesting to lead with that. It's not something I've ever prioritized in my introductions.

Sometimes I wonder if that is coloring the expectations of a child.

Seldom did interviewees tell me families were a resource they utilized to learn more about the language and home experiences of students unless they were discussing remote instruction then families were often seen as the key source of this information. One interviewee who did talk to families often told me,

I like to hear what parents have to say, to hear their humanity…One dad gets on Zoom and wants to show you everything he's doing at home with his kid because he's splitting his time with his kid. Another parent I just want to call and say how proud I am, but I feel in a weird spot because during the pandemic this child worked so hard just to learn all his letters. I enjoyed him so much but he's still reading early texts and the teacher is so worried, but I want to share with the family that he was my happy spot all day.

Seventeen of the 9 participants in initial interviews told me they seldom engaged in home visits though those two interviewees who did this work always cited families and the home visit as a powerful opportunity for learning. Sometimes interview participants mentioned daily text messages or conversations with families during pick up or drop off to and from school to gather and share information about experiences, language, and literacy. I almost always heard respondents talking about the role of personalized learning, knowing each child's likes, dislikes, and home experiences, as helpful in engaging in more specific conversations that built and expanded their working relationships, led to better book selections and allowed them to tailor daily conversations around writing. I almost never found interviewees talking about links between letters, sounds, and words and the home language or experiences of a child.

Sometimes interview participants told me they were involved in family conferences and discussed learning more about family language, affect (joy, amount of conversation, level of seriousness, engagement with text at home), positioning (power in family dynamics), and the

kinds of activities the family engaged in at home. These interviewees also acknowledged the

power of these conferences to know family members more intimately and recognize extended

family support where applicable. I found participants had almost always invited families to see

lessons. During remote instruction families often listened to or watched student learning. The

next response specifically detailed the loss when transitioning back to fully in-person school.

> There was more parental involvement online. It wasn't even a formal invitation but like
>
> whole families would gather around to hear the child reading and cheering them on, so it
>
> was informal. The families were so excited to hear their children reading, literally taking
>
> videos and it was very exciting…The pandemic made me feel like a member of the
>
> family, so I think as much it was awful in some ways it was also incredible. In some ways
>
> like dropping off supplies to the family's house on a regular basis, changing the books,
>
> having a system…some of those kids in second and third grade, and those relationships
>
> are still there, families say, *we really miss you*.

Interviewees told me that prior to the pandemic families often watched lessons behind-the-

glass and sometimes came to school to observe. Most of the time they found this space led to

a sharing of knowledge, providing families more clarity about their child's role in Reading

Recovery and what each part of the lesson entailed while also revealing to the interview

participants practical information regarding the level of independence or support the child

might receive at home. Sometimes interviewees expressed their understanding of whether

reading or writing was joyful at home. They told me they found this knowledge gave them

insight into supporting families and inviting help from families as they taught.

Most of the time, when capitalizing on students' oral language, I found Reading

Recovery interviewees noting the power of listening intently and of taking detailed notes to

plan opportunities to foster more language usage when students read, talked, and wrote.

These participants almost always detailed how they selected a few literary phrases to help

expand student language during book introductions. Sometimes I found participants

explaining the work they did when cutting up the child's story. During this portion of the

daily lesson, they discussed the work of deliberately honoring the students' language choice

and offering the same meaning back in other ways with prompts like "another author might

say the same thing this way" and inviting children to provide alternatives. 7 of the nineteen

interviewees talked to me about this sense of flexible play sometimes occurring during

conversations before writing. One stated,

> I don't know if I can say specifically how I use student language as a strength, but I can
>
> talk about how I don't see it as a weakness. I wouldn't hold a student back if I was doing
>
> a Running record on a child and all the endings were wrong. I wouldn't necessarily say
>
> that that child couldn't do that book. I am always really careful when scoring running
>
> records to think about repeated errors on a certain vocabulary word or verb tenses or
>
> things that I feel relatively comfortable with. I am not using language responses as a way
>
> to say a child is not ready to be working on a type of text. And I think I'm good at
>
> suggesting, when a child is composing, more challenging compositions but I am
>
> accepting if they are not ready to take it on.

This details the intentional decision-making these participants are engaged in daily as they work

to expand oral language flexibility. Sometimes interviewees mentioned the power of

conversations before and after lessons as a place to honor and expand a child's longest utterance

or to prompt for how an author could say it this way or that way in different books.

Rarely did I find interviewees sharing that they made comments about oral language in

predictions of progress, a tool leveraged for short- and long-term deliberate planning in Reading

Recovery. Sometimes they spoke of plans for student language work in predictions of progress

when they were concerned about some aspect of a student's current control of book language or flexible use of varied oral structures (verb tenses, pronouns, etc.). One interviewee specifically discussed this in the following quote.

> I'll tend to note when she makes errors in oral language like when tells me a story if she says *my mom is going to the store her came back*. I'll think there were so many grammar tenses in that story, grammar tenses and pronoun things we can work on in there and then I'll also note when she makes these same mistakes in reading because she frequently anticipates structures that are not there and then can't navigate the visual information because it sounds so right to her. Also, for her and kids like her, where she is in her language development is so fluid that so many things sound right to her. I am constantly trying to match which structures sound right because they have solidified an oral structure vs. which led her to be overtaxed by the visual information.

This type of notation details the intentional decision-making that is expected throughout Reading Recovery. Sometimes I found interviewees commenting on how they recorded student language patterns in their lesson records, most specifically regarding book structures planned and utilized during the introduction or first reading of the book by the child or when transcribing a complex uttering made by the student at any time during the lesson. This next response detailed how important this was to work specifically in the writing and reading portions of the lesson.

> Mostly in the writing part of the lesson, having them rehearse literary language structures and practicing sentence structures or phrases that may not be familiar to them. I started taking notes about it and it doesn't matter if a student is an English language learner or not. I usually write in my lesson notes three or four phrases that we are going to practice in a book introduction and then I'll either note if it held and stuck when they got to it in the text and or not. So that's how I've also kept track of it in reading.

This type of deliberation is expected in notes regarding the writing, reading, conversations, and letter and word work whenever possible. Interviewees often reflected on the need to capture more in lesson records. Never did I hear a respondent discuss their notation of literacy processing (monitoring, searching, solving, etc.) around the structure as evidence of this work. This notation occurs in daily running and lesson records, and I have viewed this being done in multiple other contexts.

Interviewee responses regarding work to expand oral language flexibility included the practical aspects of their teaching. They touched upon the utilization of the Record of Oral Language assessment as a planning tool, leveraging the home language, culture, experiences, and family and the role of intentional decision-making. The intentional teaching most often included the introduction of literary phrasing, teaching flexibility through the cut-up story and conversations before writing. Participants also touched upon the role of capturing notes in lesson records and updating predictions of progress as a tool for short- and long-term planning. 4 of the nineteen interviewees reflected on how observing and discussing these practical implications grew their expertise and needed to continue.

A call to grow collective expertise

The call to grow collective expertise regarding linguistic diversity echoed throughout these interview responses. Two respondents commented that they would like to observe their peers in the next round of data collection with me and 15 mentioned how they learned through conversations during lessons behind-the-glass. It seemed from interview responses that much of the work done in schools and districts had revolved around the very necessary cultural competencies that educators need, but little time had been directed to support and expand educator knowledge regarding linguistic diversity beyond state mandates for certification in teaching students learning English as a second language. This call or expression of a desire to

learn more about valuing student home language while focusing on language and literacy learning was a thread throughout all interviews. Additionally, the work of deliberation arose as key in these responses.

I found these 19 Reading Recovery participants always indicated that a lack of honoring varied student language patterns seemed directly linked to persistent early literacy opportunity gaps along cultural, economic, and linguistic lines in varied US schools and districts. One interviewee noted the need to work more collectively to address this, "I feel like maybe the language is the missing piece a little bit and I'm still grappling with how I can do a better job with that". Most of the time interviewees told me they engaged in a more deliberate approach when working to honor and expand the language of students whose language differed greatly from their own.

Responses to the question about what they had seen or experienced in schools that may represent a bias towards children who speak in varied dialects, discourse patterns and languages varied greatly and were not quantifiable. Even when using the Likert scale (1932) of *always, often, sometimes, hardly,* and *never* this was one question with such varied responses there was no patterning I could capture. One interviewee touched upon multiple issues raised by other respondents when answering,

> That's like a seven-hour question, that's like a whole class. We don't give kids access to their dialect and home dialect has traditionally, in public schools, been seen as a detriment and we've worked to negate kids' grammar in a myriad of ways… People come at it like it's from a deficit. The idea of bilingual education allows for clarification and hearing of language two different ways, we don't do that for kids with dialect. We don't do that for most children unless there is a native speaker in the classroom who can do it naturally. We also put a lot of White faces in front of Black kids who speak

nonstandard dialect and who are from Black backgrounds which is a massive, massive

sort of bias. A person's lived experience is their lived experience. You can't connect with

them through yours.

This response details the complexity of the work these participants are engaging in.

Interviewees were talking more about linguistic diversity than had been apparent in survey data

or focus group conversations. The word *dialect* was appearing more consistently, or responses

included talk of honoring student language.

These responses seem to demand ongoing intentional professional development that is

both theoretical and practical and rooted in understanding linguistic diversity. Professional

learning needs to directly link culturally and linguistically responsive teaching to early literacy

intervention and explicitly provide new insight into varied dialects and other linguistic patterns.

Educators need a myriad of responses.

I found that answers to the question regarding what participants had or are currently

doing to counteract these biases varied greatly. Interviewees were often reading and conversing

with colleagues and sometimes inviting peers or administrators to observe Reading Recovery or

small group literacy lessons. Additionally, I heard them speaking about how they were always

working to grow their own knowledge about early literacy and often could identify a specific

area that pertained to leveraging language as part of that ongoing work. Sometimes I found

responses directly linked to a sense that they would always be working against unconscious

biases.

I heard how the power of ongoing professional development, and the use of professional

texts and close observation could provide the opportunity to continuously seek these answers. I

also heard discussion of critical understandings and interactions around student language that

positively impacted student literacy outcomes. These critical understandings and interactions

involved 8 participants discussing the power of letting students lead and engage in conversations more. Twelve respondents mentioned that for students who need additional support, honoring their language and stories and negotiating meaning together positively impacted student reading and writing outcomes. One additionally stated, "Getting kids to talk and talk and talk is the most valuable thing". Another noted, "Well all that language that we use in the 30 minutes - or let's call it 40 minutes if you're counting the transitions to and from lessons - and the modeling you know that we do with them!". And a third responded,

> I think talking with children, I think reading with kids. I think being able to know enough of what the child brings to the table to be able to make the connections for kids. To tell them we say it this way in English, and you say it this way in your language. Like being able to say oh, yeah, we might say ox/oxen there's one ox and many oxen, isn't that weird, so having enough understanding of English to know what is tricky for this child and explain in a matter-of-fact way and come back to it so you can show them another place that works that way. Being able to bring those things to kids' attention without beating them over the head with it. Yeah, so through conversation really co-constructing the language together. I feel like those are the big things.

Interviewees seemed constantly trying to make more space for student language learning as they maintained their stance as literacy educators. They wanted to construct new understandings with colleagues and increase student literacy outcomes. They valued the complexity of the work and were constantly seeking out new knowledge.

Concluding thoughts on initial interview data

For me these interviews revealed detailed understandings of what participants thought they had learned as educators before, during, and after Reading Recovery training. They discussed viewing the current language competencies of children as a strength and pondered how

to leverage varied linguistic patterns into the act of reading, writing, and comprehending texts.

They were considering how their interactions positively and negatively impacted children and

weighed what they said when responding to children. Here is one response from an initial

interview that touched upon this idea,

> I'm trying to just listen more, and I don't know, in the Zaretta Hammond book there's
>
> that tree of culture, that picture, we've talked about trying to make the conversations
>
> coming to the lessons more deep and less superficial based on that.

As a community, all participants in this study had been reading or revisiting Hammond's (2012)

tree of culture in professional learning sessions over the past few years. They had been working

to directly link Reading Recovery practices to Hammond's (2012) concept of Culturally

Responsive teaching. All expressed an eagerness for more opportunities to engage in reading,

talking, and learning collectively about consistently leveraging varied student language patterns

as an opportunity for accelerating literacy learning. This next comment pulled together thoughts

expressed in bits by several other participants.

> I'm grateful this is a conversation being had and that you are doing work to shed more
>
> light and inspire more conversations about how early oral language or the oral language a
>
> child brings with them can affect success or difficulties in reading and writing and that
>
> there is this direct correlation. I am wanting to find out more about it and… I want to be

more intentional about how I'm strengthening oral language in my small groups or 1:1 or

with my multilingual students. So now I'm more interested in the Record of Oral

Language. I used to do it just to do it, I was unaware of the correlation at the beginning.

This interviewee wasn't the only one commenting on work we had collectively engaged in as a

vehicle for shifting theory and possibly practice. There was more talk of dialect occurring as if

the conversations we were having, throughout the study, were forging chains of reasoning and

growing awareness for us all. Another participant commented, "It's gotten me thinking a lot. I

want to go back in on Monday and start using the Record of Oral Language with every single

kid. It's just got me hyper-focused and wanting to pay more attention". These comments made

me wonder if as Teacher Leaders, we needed to be more explicit about Clay's (2015) work and

the links to CLSP from the start. I also began to wonder about focusing on culturally sustaining

practices and linguistically sustaining practices as both individual and intertwined issues.

These initial interviews solidified my commitment to the themes found in the survey and

focus group data; engaging in reflective processes, communicating theoretical understandings

regarding reciprocity, working to expand oral language flexibility, and a call to grow collective

expertise regarding linguistic diversity. Another iteration of data collection and analysis

regarding observations of teaching follows.

Description of Observation of Teaching Claims and Findings

I then analyzed data from observing the teaching of five Reading Recovery lessons. Each

participant observed had engaged in the entire study thus far, from the initial survey to the focus

group work. I utilized the observation protocol designed with focus group participants and

critical friends to take field notes. analyzed transcripts of these field notes using process coding.

As I worked to understand observed interactions, I wrote another round of analytic memos.

Here some descriptions are taken from three of these observations. This first is from a lesson with a participant who primarily works with newcomers to English but was currently working with a student who speaks English only and who was navigating early learning with an Individualized Education Plan.

Description of Observation One
The child finished his first familiar read entitled, *What Will Duckbert Eat?* He was independent, reading in 1–3-word phrases, slowing to point with his finger word-by-word when searching to solve a new word, *swam,* and taking apart and confirming the word, *r-un-ning*. As he read, I could hear him negotiating meaning, engaging in self-talk, *how can the ant be faster than Duckbert?* and continuing, reading in 3-word phrases with no finger. He talked to himself again, *But the bee probably tried to get away first but if Duckbert tried to get the bee first.* He self-corrected at the phrase level quickly and continued reading *oh no what I am going to eat now* as one long fast phrase before putting his finger back in – and returning to word-by-word reading. He read a bit more with a few moments of slowing as if monitoring known words and then rereading a phrase or two quickly. He read the end, laughing after comprehending Duckbert's funny saying, *lettuce can't swim away from me*, and laughed again after Duckbert found the tomatoes and carrots. He read the last line and turned to his teacher to state, *I love it! The silliest part was the lettuce and carrot and tomatoes.* The teacher leaned in (previously she had sat back in her chair, listening intently but holding her body back, as if trying to stay out of his way and foster independence, a physical move she would confirm later was part of her understanding of her role during the rereading of familiar books - to stay out of the way until she was needed). At this point in the lesson, she leaned forward slightly, smiling, and responded, *the*

author was so silly there! What a happy ending to such a silly story, adding, *I thought so too* when he commented on the silliest part.

In the next text, *The Hungry Giant's Shoe,* he continued to engage in self-talk as he worked to make the language structures he anticipated fit the visual information in the print on the page. I saw him searching *giant's/giant* tentatively and then solving *giant* by confirming with a loud *t* sound at the end. He came to the word *found* and tried *f-in-d*. The teacher quietly prompted*, if something doesn't sound right you know what to do* when he hesitated and he quickly altered his attempt, self-correcting to match the author's intended language. He similarly solved *replied* and said, *replied* means… then stopped and turned to his teacher to tell her he forgot the definition of *replied*. She said, *yeah, we talked about it last week it means answered.* He stopped to chat about the giant and to ensure time for the new book the teacher asked if she could read the final two pages to him.

They engaged in some letter and word work where he was consistently the one with his hands on the letters. The teacher supported linguistic flexibility as they played with the difference between *can, can't,* and *cannot*, stating, *you can say I can't do it, or I cannot do it and they both sound right* before inviting him to look at *he is* and *he's.*

I could not hear him engage in the conversation before writing but I would find out later that he had decided to write me a thank you note and didn't want me to know. I did hear him whispering an oral rehearsal of his message. At times this is taught in Reading Recovery lessons as an early writing skill for students struggling to hold their story. He wrote quickly and efficiently, sharing with me when done and stating, *you know what's so cool because I only needed to practice one word.* I could hear the teacher prompting for other early skills since he did not need help with word-solving that day. She said *I think that sounded like the end of that idea, right? An exclamation? Yeah, we usually use one, two, or three remember* and at the end

asked, *is there anything you want to add?* Then she cut up his story and he quickly reconstructed it, rereading it to check that all looked right, sounded right, and made sense. Then the teacher rephrased it and invited him to read his message a different way as if to encourage flexibility.

Finally, she oriented her student to the first chapter of a new book, *Animals at School,* asking, *have you ever heard of a pig at school?* He responded, *that's crazy, it could run through the cafeteria, to the office, our principal would freak out!* The teacher replied, *yeah, that could cause some serious problems. So, you think our principal would freak out, but what do you think the kids and teachers would do?* And he responded *they would run after it.* The teacher set a clear purpose for reading by saying *well let's read and find out what these teachers and kids do.* In this last text, the child read *one day a pig at school* and stopped to state, *that sounds weird,* before the teacher said, *so, reread and check it* and he quickly reread and corrected himself. He talked to himself about the meaning, *they are gonna smack him* and the teacher redirected him, *I don't think so, I think they are just really surprised* before he said he was only being silly. When searching to solve *t-ell....tell the principal* he confirmed his earlier prediction that they would go and tell the principal. The teacher supported the use of punctuation as he negotiated meaning and solved a few multisyllabic words without help. They ended with a conversation about the need to sometimes call animal control and he spoke in long utterances about why this could help and what else the characters might be able to do.

It was in this description that I started seeing hints of the five themes that would emerge from observing participants' teaching. I saw this teacher explicitly instruct this student regarding literary structures; all teacher moves were completely personalized. The patterns that I saw as personalized learning were her response to his strong sense of humor, her tailoring the

comprehension conversations to his desire to engage in self-talk to understand, and her positioning of this child as a writer, allowing him to drive the conversation, and structure the story in his own language. Her awareness of his linguistic diversity regarding his specific use of robust verbs and his rigidity around certain structures were both approached as strengths. There was never a moment when this teacher invalidated the child's syntax or semantics and several clear examples of her fostering syntactic flexibility. She was one of the three teachers who also embedded a Told and then restated that unknown word in a meaningful phrase so he could hear and experience new language units as he learned to read. A Told is given when a child has exhausted all ways of solving or is not yet ready to try something complex, a Told is given to preserve the story so the reader will not lose track of semantic or syntactic patterns that might support further searching and solving (Clay, 2016; 2019).

This second description comes from a lesson with another observation participant who primarily works with newcomers to English. This lesson was with a student who had arrived in the United States within the past year and was working on problem-solving, flexibility with language structure and making multiple attempts at unknown words. The teacher was working to support him with new language structures, honor his sense of storytelling, and work towards writing structures closer to book language by playing with tenses as he is currently alternating attempts in both his oral and written language (*give/gave, blew/blow*) and varying pronouns.

Description of Observation Two
The child began with storytelling, saying, *I played…Balloon…No, they are…You know when I do a party bear in gym?* and the teacher seemed to be working to understand his message, responding with, *say that again* and *oh, like big party balloons?* Until the child fully explained, *I take a sword and my brother and we got it for we can play and*

they let me press a button for they can know.

The familiar rereads were the nonfiction text *The Great White Shark* and the fiction texts, *Animal Tricks,* and *Bully Dinosaur*. He solved multiple words and played with tenses as she said he would. Trying *pull/pulled, being/be,* and linking the new word *free* to a phrase from a video game, *free Roblox*. The teacher pointed up useful information at times, embedded the Told of *away* in a phrase and reread so he could hear the whole meaningful unit. She also modeled a few literary language structures while he played with intonation, and searched to solve new vocabulary words *shack* and *beg.* She helped him confirm his attempt with other sources of visual and meaningful information when he was struggling to access language input. He confirmed *read* vs. *read* for himself and finished the book. She stated *that silly cat! He just recognizes the picture of tuna fish, doesn't he?* He was hesitant, more hesitant, she would tell me later, than usual, and was reading in 1–3-word phrases, checking to see if he was correct more often than he did in the prior week. She praised his ability to check the visual information but also asked him to confirm with meaning and language structures wherever she thought he might be able.

He sorted *c*'s, *t*'s, *e*'s, *d*'s, and *a*'s and she invited him to check the directionality of the letter *a* and engage in rapid letter naming. He read the words *look/looks/looked/looking* noticing the endings and she stated to me that they usually physically maneuvered the magnetic letters around but were short on time.

For writing she invited the stories he had talked about earlier that day, asking, *did you want to add that ending to Bully Dinosaur or write about the balloons that we talked about?* And he decided on the balloons. She asked if he wanted to include the details about the swords from the earlier conversation and they got to work on the sentence, *my brother and me blew balloon swords so we could play*. He wrote *my* then heard the *b* and

anticipated an *ar* in *brother*. She helped with the rest, slowing to invite him to hear the */o/* and */er/* in the word brother while she showed him how to record those sounds. He interjected with another short story about his brother, and she asked him to hold that until later, rereading his current story to remind him of where he was in transcribing. He re-engaged, slowing to attempt the words *blew* and *balloons.* She linked the *b* from *brother* to *b* from *blew,* and *balloons,* showing him the two ll's and helping him hear *n* while modeling the writing of the hard bits. She intermittently attended to both composing and transcribing, asking, *do you want to say balloons or balloon swords?* He slowly articulated to attempt known sounds and then wrote *b* for *d* at the end of *cod/could*. He hesitated, as if unsure and his teacher asked *if this is a b what does the d look like?* while pointing to a nearby alphabet chart. She added, *say the /d/ sound while you write it – fantastic, write it down in your story.* He had a hard time holding the end of his story, rereading it slowly, and changing the meaning and structure. She reiterated his initial message and asked him to decide on either sentence. He agreed to the initial message but continued to struggle to recompose it when engaging in the cut-up sentence. She let it go, moving on in the lesson. Later she would tell me that he usually rehearsed and reread more, that this lesson felt quite atypical, and she would watch him over the next few lessons. She introduced the idea of the new book, *Haircuts for Bella and Rosie,* and invited him to think about his own haircuts so they can talk more and read the book tomorrow.

The five themes re-emerged as I observed this Reading Recovery lesson though the atypical responses of the student did not allow for as much independent action on the part of the child. This teacher explicitly introduced this student to unfamiliar literary structures, often on the

run, during the reading of familiar texts, or in the construction of his written message. She worked to personalize the learning to ensure his message was heard and understood, though he could have discussed his own understanding of the texts in longer stretches the way he did to clarify his story about his brother. She positioned this child as a writer: allowing his syntax and meaning to drive the story, and rehearsing his own language structures might have provided additional support and fostered more independent action. Her awareness of his linguistic diversity, and of his specific needs as he engaged with unfamiliar tenses and pronouns were approached as opportunities for new learning. There was never a moment when this teacher invalidated the child's syntax or semantics and several clear examples of her fostering syntactic flexibility. She was one of the three teachers who also embedded a Told and then restated that unknown word in a meaningful phrase so he could hear and experience new language units as he learned to read.

The next observation was with a Reading Recovery teacher who works with students with varied needs including multilingual students, multidialectal students, students with Individual Education Plans, and students with no listed needs except the need to become literate. She was currently working with a student who had speech and language needs specified on his Individualized Education Plan. He had been averse to engaging with print outside of the intervention and was strongly recommended by his classroom teacher for Reading Recovery. Initially during early lessons, he had balked at writing but now was eagerly adding words like *destroyed* and *spooky* to his stories. This teacher then engaged him in learning the foundational skills of directionality and conceptual understandings of letters, sounds, words, and early phonics skills mostly through writing his own stories. He was currently moving through early levels of reading texts smoothly.

Description of Observation Three

They came into the lesson chatting about the principal and how the principal needed to interact with kids jumping on the bus and he quickly selected *Fat Cat and Kitty Kat* and *Little White Rabbit* as familiar texts to revisit. He solved *look-ing and m*onitored his known word, the self-correcting. He read the phrases *up and down, up and down* rhythmically and smoothly in 3-word phrases. He monitored his known word *he/here* and self-corrected. He quickly engaged in short asides about meaning while the teacher supported deeper comprehension:

Child: *he ran away from Fat Cat*

Teacher: *do you think Kitty Cat is safe now?*

Child: *hmmmm?*

Teacher: *how will he stay safe?*

Child: no response

Teacher: *Can Fat Cat get in the little door?*

Child: *NO!* (Showed the teacher the toys he had in his pockets, both of which had arms and legs that did not move)

Teacher: *Maybe after the next story you can write about your toys today?*

The child finished reading, and the teacher said *that word* ran *used to be hard for you, what helped you today?* The child responded that the word was in his dream. The teacher said *I thought maybe you saw it was like run* and *can* or *an* showing him these known words. She then modeled and invited him to read commas, giving a nonverbal nod as an invitation to pick his next familiar read. He selected *A Friend for Little White Rabbit* and proceeded to point to the words on the pages with one of the toys from his pocket but mostly read in 3-

word phrases with meaningful intonation. The repetitive dialogue seemed useful in propelling him to a faster pace. He still monitored for meaning and checked on *rabbit* vs. *duck* quickly self-correcting. He was able to monitor for structures and navigate *who will be my friend* along with the more literary *oh, who will be my friend*. He slowed to search a few times on the narrative sections and grew more rapid when he encountered dialogue. She prompted him to reread and check one time and quickly reinforced a self-correction, waiting until he finished reading to prompt for fluency by stating, *you sounded like the characters talking! Like when we do plays! And here, you were noticing these commas you said no! You will not. Keep doing that when you read.*

He quickly moved into a conversation about toys that open, his brother's toy that broke *that was a five-headed, that was a five headed fusion Bakugan, this is a Gorgon Bakugan, this is a powerful one too and turn to a fusion Bakugan then the new season hasn't come out* demonstrating his rich Pokémon vocabulary. They engaged in a bit of word work by revisiting known words and he sorted letters slowly on the board. He then linked new and known words using *stop* to get to *mop* and *cat* to get to *at* but when he found *go* in the word *dog* his teacher quickly stepped in and modeled hearing and moving the parts to the left so he could see and hear the necessary serial order.

For writing, they very quickly revisited two conversations from the previous day, one about Bakugan and the other about the spooky house they had written about. The child started writing *one day me and ..*then stopped to reread and find his next word. He heard *Fad* in the name *Frandy* but then stopped himself announcing *No, it's a consonant cluster!* The teacher reiterated known information, *yes*, *Frandy starts like frog. What two letters do you hear?* And invited further construction with the prompt, *do you hear the and part?* She stated, *good noticing* and let him continue independently. He monitored for spacing,

corrected and reread adding, *went to a…* before he slowed to solve *spooky house.* He wrote

the *s* in spooky and hesitated. The teacher told him that *spooky* is one word (not two) and

helped him hear and record sounds to solve *house* adding, *can you hear the consonant cluster*

at the beginning of spooky? She showed him how *mouse* and *house* look and sound alike and

praised his brisk pace as she began to write his story on a sentence strip to cut it up. He said,

we haven't done this in so long (talking of cut up). And tomorrow I'm gonna do a secret

message. To mama, daddy, or Alex. He then continued engaging in self-talk as he searched

and solved his message.

When orienting him to the new book, he seemed distracted, often talking about other

topics, or taking the conversation away from the book. The teacher worked to ensure he

understood the gist of what he was about to read. She said *in Rusty's School Day Anthony*

asked mom to let Rusty go to school. Let's see if Rusty will know what to do at school. The

child wanted to know if it was middle or high school, and the teacher redirected him to the

fact that maybe it was like their school. She linked the phrase *one day* to his written message

and told him that Anthony wanted to show Rusty all about school. The teacher pointed up the

R that starts Rusty's name. She told him about the principal coming to greet Rusty and linked

the word *principal* to his known word *pizza* inviting him to find that long word in the text.

She had him find one more new word *this* and invited him to read to see how Rusty's day at

school went.

During the first reading of the new book, the child slowed at *today.* He solved it when

the teacher prompted him to find the part he knew. He read *I will to* for *I want to* and then

reread, monitoring, and searching for more information but when stuck the teacher told him

the word *want.* He hesitated next at the word *be* until she said, *you can figure out that one*

which he then did. He expressed excitement at reading the phrase *at school* and she

acknowledged this by stating *you wrote that in your story today!* He read a few pages in a more word-by-word manner and she modeled fast problem solving, then told him the word *together.* He read dialogue faster and smoother than narrative. He read *beep, boop* repeatedly in a robot voice and solved the part where the robot took off his seatbelt exclaiming, *he taked off his seatbelt?* She responded to his comprehension with, *I know! That's not safe* and redirected him back to the book with the comment, *somebody is talking, who is telling him to shh?* He solved *bus driver* and connected this to his own life commenting, *like officer Jonny, like at 9:00 so he has that voice he taked the sumo wrestler like with a gate..and then.. he ate some coffee and says Johnny!!*

She chuckled and they picked tomorrow's new book before he headed back to class.

After the lesson the teacher and I talked about how happy he seemed as he expanded his oral language through conversations with the teacher and as a writer. She explained how he came into the intervention with a robust vocabulary regarding familiar content and often inserted descriptive adjectives when talking but when reading struggled with tenses and holding onto new words. In observing this lesson, the five themes emerging from watching participants grew clearer. This teacher deliberately inserted literary structures into the child's writing. He was a willing participant, excited to find words and phrases from his language in the books he read. The personalization of the lessons allowed him to bring toys and play into the work and held space for him to engage in self-talk as he developed new understandings. The teacher positioned this child as a writer allowing his stories to drive new syntax and it was, he, who determined the written message. As a writer, this child was encouraged to select his own words from his varied vocabulary while in reading the teacher continued to provide opportunities for him to navigate new written structures beyond his current oral language capacity. She was not one of the three

teachers who embedded a Told and then restated that unknown word in a meaningful phrase so

he could hear and experience new language units as he learned to read though she was quite open

to trying this for him after the conversation arose in our final interview.

After deeply analyzing each observation, I found five themes emerge from teaching. The

first theme I noticed was what participants said they understood about the power of explicitly

teaching new literary structures through book introductions. This connection between theory and

practice was overtly evident in each lesson. I watched as teacher participants and students

rehearsed and played with early literary language in discussions before reading. Then I could see

students take these structures on independently during the first read of the new book. One

observation participant was orienting a child to a new book about finding mushrooms and said,

"Father Bear comes home after looking for mushrooms and says I did not find one" and then

invited the child to rehearse this structure, commenting, "you sound just like Father Bear" as

they continued working together.

The next theme I saw emerge was the personalization of each lesson. Each teacher

participant I observed knew individualized details about the child's family and home culture and

brought these into conversations about books, writing, and throughout the lesson. I heard some

students exploring humor, others sharing stories from home, and one insisted on discussing a

favorite character. I heard teacher participants contributing names of student family members or

reminding students of relevant conversations from another day. One observation participant

finished the writing portion by commenting, "I can't wait to see what is going to happen to Pippa

and the other cats". I noted as each observation participant offered students choices and options

to expand conversations, but also noted that none negated ' the child's syntactic patterns or the

messages they chose to engage with.

Third, I heard teacher participants allowing each child's syntax and meaning to drive the

conversations and the written messages. Again, I noted varied choices and extensions participants offered, especially as they heard children altering their oral utterances to be understood or to clarify something, but each time the teacher participant placed the child in control as a young writer. One child stated, ``I take a sword and my brother, and we got a for we can play, and they let me press a button for they can know" and was supported to write, "My brother and me blew balloon swords so we could play".

Fourth, I heard each teacher participant offering up language play throughout lessons, commenting on how an author might say it this way or that way, varying structures throughout conversations and pointing up when an author might choose another phrase. During the reading of a new book, I heard a participant say, "That makes sense, but they say it a little differently in this book they say will you play with me? Try and see if that looks right". And during an introduction to a new book another stated, "Sometimes when they talk about both of them, they say *they* instead of Anthony and Rusty find that word *they*…it starts like *the*". These offerings deliberately fostered flexibility and several students were already trying this out as writers, in the cut-up story, or when reading by noticing how the author made a different syntactic choice than they would have. I watched as a child read and reread searching for the meaning and syntax to match up with the visual information of the letters and sounds and words he looked up, confused and the teacher participant confirmed, "Yeah, that was just a different way to say that" and then later in that same lesson, during the cut-up story offered an alternative from the child's oral language to allow for more flexibility showing the child, "Can I play around with one thing" and the participant added the word *great* to the story after the child reconstructed it and the child reread, holding the new structure and chuckling while adding in *lovely*. The teacher participant followed his lead, and stated, "Oh, I did remember when they said lovely in the Giant story, do you want that word too? Let's be sure it makes sense, ok, here you go". This opportunity

expanded and added complexity to the child's oral and written language structures.

Finally, three of the observation participants who primarily worked with multilingual learners, did something quite interesting when giving a Told during teaching parts of the lesson, not during the running record assessment. As explained earlier a Told is utilized when a child is not yet able to solve something independently while reading. A Told is provided at the word level to hold the meaning of a story in a manner that might foster continued independence (Clay, 2016; 2019). Students search and solve after monitoring or noticing that something is not correct. At error, some young readers can get bogged down and lose the meaning or the flow of the language structure at the phrase, sentence, or text level. In these instances, when enlisting a Told during teaching, I heard each of these three observation participants give the word and then restate the word in a meaningful phrase from the text. One child reading a book called *Bully Dinosaur* hesitated at the word *Let's* in the text and the teacher participant, giving a Told said, "Let's find some food". The child not only easily took on this new word as it appeared again and again in the text, he also was able to navigate that phrase quickly and smoothly. The power of this work was evident as a child quite new to English sounded faster and more phrased than the other readers observed. Another child reading a new book tried, *where are they?* in a tentative manner as if unsure of the meaning of that phrased unit. The observation participant followed up with the comment, "he really wants to find them!" and echoed the child with meaningful intonation, *"Where are they?"* before the child nodded in understanding and was able to continue reading. As I analyzed the data of each of the three students who received a Told at the word level that was then embedded in a meaningful phrase (not during the running record assessment) they seemed to be the beneficiary of meaning and structure in a way that expanded comprehension and aided phrasing and fluency reading. This seemed to be providing clear linguistic support.

I was an integral part of the Reading Recovery community for many years before embarking on this research, first as a Reading Recovery teacher and then as a Teacher Leader. Based on what I had seen in my fourteen years of engaging, the first four findings did not surprise me, as I had seen similar patterns often as I observed lessons behind-the-glass or when I engaged in visits with teachers working in schools, but the fifth finding was something I have since given much thought to. In Reading Recovery, emphasizing both language and literacy learning includes attention to an array of strengths including a child's linguistic repertoire (Clay, 2016; Connor et. al, 2018; Hruby et. al, 2016; International Literacy Association, 2019; Johnston, 2010; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). The reciprocal interactions between a teacher and a student in this one-to-one setting can impact an individual student in a variety of ways (Allington, 2013; International Literacy Association, 2019; Morrison & Connor, 2016; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). This finding detailed the deliberate support for the linguistic effort required by students mapping their language onto an array of literary structures that may have formerly been unfamiliar. When students map their language onto text, they use their home language structures, and their syntactic patterns, as a source of information to attempt to read. When looking at print, they anticipate language and use their knowledge of how phonetic and orthographic patterns work to attempt to retrieve the author's message. Students unfamiliar with literary language structures such as *up we go* may look at the print and state *we going up* to map their understanding of language onto the text as they work to understand the story. As Reading Recovery teachers participated in this study, the emphasis on both language and literacy learning was a clear indication to me of the effort and initial action of respondents to work from a strength-based lens and increase the linguistic range of their students in lessons.

As I immersed myself in this research and watched closely for positive and observable interactions linking oral language support to early literacy acquisition, I was allowing myself the

time and space needed to detail the power of this support offered by these teacher participants. I now consider this one of the most significant practical findings of this study and one that warrants follow-up. I feel it could prove essential in supporting and expanding our understanding of how to foster accelerative early literacy acquisition. My two critical friends agreed. I still had follow-up interviews to engage in with this same subset of participants. I was hoping these final conversations would allow time and space for the reflection of participants and give me time to clarify what their intentions had been in the lessons I had observed. I also was looking forward to hearing their thoughts on the five themes I believed were emerging from my data analysis.

Description of Final Interview Claims and Findings

During each of the final interviews with the five teacher participants I had observed engaging in 30-minute Reading Recovery lessons I listened to their questions and comments and shared the five emerging themes from my observations. First, Reading Recovery teacher participants shared with me that they were aware they engaged in explicit instruction of new literary structures through book introductions and were conscious of continually offering options to expand conversations but never negate a child's home language or ideas and messages while engaging in discourse. For one child this required particularly deliberate instruction. The interview participant noted,

> He takes on book language all the time and came in with strong oral language, loving fairy tales and easily pulling new language from books into oral conversations. One day I used the word tessellate when he was sorting letters and two days later, he started using the word tessellate too. I started using multisyllabic words in daily word work quite early because he loves to use multisyllabic words as he talks. The other day he solved the word *recovery* as a reader. We are also working deliberately on contractions which he is quite flexible with in his oral language but in reading often he wants to read 'cannot' even if

can't is written. We are talking a lot about how different authors make different word choices and working to clap syllables into parts so he can hear and see the phonetic information. I use the cut-up sentence every day to foster language flexibility and in our conversations around books we talk about how we would say a phrase, how others might say it. Staying playful around language is helping him search for alternate information as a reader and a writer.

Second, each participant in these five final interviews told me they were confident that anyone watching them would understand the personalization of each lesson. The deep relationship they had built and continued to expand was an intentional part of their work. They stated that personalization meant knowing the student's family and friends and likes and dislikes but also meant selecting a specific teaching language for each student. One interviewee had set aside the following prompts for one student, *"Oh, and then what happened? That's an interesting part! I'm so glad you shared more"*.

Third, I found interviewees were consciously letting each child's syntax and meaning drive the written messages. Each teacher participant varied language structures throughout conversations and pointed up when an author might choose another phrase. These offerings deliberately fostered flexibility but were done to a differing degree in each lesson. One interviewee noted,

She surprises me often. I gave her the book, *Mrs. Wishy-Washy* early in lessons and she could read, *paddled*, and *rolled* easily. In writing a letter to grandma, I assumed she'd be more facile composing because she has such strong control of vocabulary as a reader, but her writing structures were more repetitive, *'I wish I can see so you I can see you'*. This is not how she would talk in her oral language, but I allowed it as a starting point and now, even though her dialect varies from the structures in these little books she is growing

increasingly flexible as a reader, a writer, and a speaker.

The only student who was already trying this out as a writer was experiencing this play during the cut-up story and as a reader and as a writer, but most deliberately in the cut-up story every single day.

Finally, I shared with the three teacher participants who, when enlisting a Told during the teaching portion of each lesson, gave the word, and then restated the word in a meaningful phrase from the text. Each of these three interviewees told me they were unaware they were so consistently doing this. One participant was working with a highly verbal, monolingual student but was so used to engaging in this pattern of response, was still providing this support. Each of these three interviewees could explain the theory behind the work and knew of the power this work held to drive forward comprehension and word learning, but all were unaware that the pattern was so visible and seemed so clearly linked to being linguistically responsive. Additionally, these three students were the most phrased and fluent students observed, a possible coincidence, but more likely a product of the model being provided regularly by participants who understood that *look* and *out* take on an entirely new meaning when phrased as *look out!*

The work of supporting all students as they learned to anticipate varied book language and make meaning from text felt visible in these interactions. So little of the empirical studies explicitly linked instructional practices that could positively leverage varied student language from an asset-based lens and so much of the current research was nested in work regarding bilingual and multilingual students (Brady, 2015; Freeman & Freeman, 2016; Slocum, A. 2019). This small interaction seemed to be a clear recommendation that would minimize dependence on the cultural and linguistic understandings of individual teachers. This finding seems a way to begin a deeper discussion on the practical aspects of ensuring a child's home language and ideas are continually honored in service of fostering the work of becoming literate (Clay, 2015).

Chapter 5: Study Summary, Future Research and Final Reflections

In constructivist grounded theory research, a process is studied over time and with participants to ensure their meanings are clearly conveyed and not misconstrued by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this case, I gathered evidence of participants' understandings, or their theoretical knowledge to discuss and analyze several data sets prior to observations of teaching. Utilizing multiple data points felt necessary to see if I might uncover a new theory of how teacher knowledge of language might impact interactions with students who are becoming literate (Clay, 2015). In this final chapter, I present a discussion of the findings. I have organized this chapter, to begin with, an analysis of the original problem, purpose, questions, and design in terms of the findings. The discussion then turns to the initial questions that guided this study, which is listed in the next section.

Then, the intersection of multiple categories or themes that arose is woven into an emerging theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I explain the vulnerabilities and limitations of the study in addition to validity and reliability. Finally, I include implications for future studies and recommendations for practice.

Analysis of Original Problem, Purpose, Questions, and Design

I did not originally uncover much information in the existing scholarship specifically linking how teacher understandings about language and literacy impact interactions with students in a way that fosters literacy acquisition or interferes with early student learning. What I did find after reviewing the literature was that the constructivist model Clay (2016) utilized to structure Reading Recovery lessons honors reading and writing as complex, language-based work. Engaging in this early literacy intervention leads to greater overall general reading achievement than other interventions that focus on one aspect of reading or that neglect to incorporate student writing (Allington & Walmsley, 2007; Kelly, 2009; WWC, 2020). When the value is placed on

the linguistic patterns of their homes and cultures and it is leveraged as part of the understandings they will construct as early literacy learners' children can grow increasingly flexible as readers and as writers (Askew & Watson, 2009; Clay, 2015; Lyons, 2003; Lyons et al., 1994; May et al., 2016). Children's oral language structures can act as a necessary foundation for moving both language and literacy forward (Askew & Watson, 2009; Clay, 2015; Lyons, 2003; Lyons et al., 1994; May et al., 2016). Linking language and literacy from the start gives teachers ways to intentionally and deliberately foster reciprocity across reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Scaffolding comprehension, connecting lived experiences and the linguistic repertoires of students also enhance identity and intellectual development (McCracken et al., 2020). All too often teacher biases interfere with the work of valuing linguistic diversity (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015; Delpit, 2012; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2018). All students, but especially our young learners need time and space to construct new knowledge through their own cultural, linguistic, and experiential histories (Licona, 2013, Moll & Amanti, 2005). This review led me to a deeper understanding of the urgency to hold us, as educators, accountable for viewing a wide array of student language diversity as a strength and a rich resource for literacy learning (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

Through this study, I engaged in layered transactions with Reading Recovery teacher participants as an attempt to see how multiple data sets might reveal some critical theoretical understandings and practical interactions fostering overt links between language and literacy that could prove useful to others, within the larger Reading Recovery and intervention community and in the broader fields of early language and literacy acquisition. The recursive nature of a constructivist grounded theory frame allowed time and space for reflection between and among the five data sets. The research questions that guided this study were:

- What do Reading Recovery teachers understand about using language/linguistic

diversity as an asset in early literacy acquisition?

- What are the various ways Reading Recovery teachers believe they support varied student language patterns to help each child grow as a reader and a writer?

- What might be learned, in terms of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP), from Reading Recovery teachers?

- How can reading achievement be attributed to understanding linguistic diversity as an asset?

What emerged from the initial survey was then discussed in focus groups and led to a revised plan for interviews and observations of teaching. Focus group conversations and interviews began to raise awareness about a wider array of linguistic diversity, bias, and links between language acquisition theory and accelerated early literacy learning. These were all issues that participants, critical friends, and I felt could use more attention in both our pedagogical knowledge and in how our theory impacts day-to-day instruction.

My original design was an attempt to root this study in the work of Kinloch and Pedro (2014) whose ideas about storying as a way of humanizing research grounds researchers in the work of listening and conversing with participants rather than doing something to them. This design also aligned with the inquiry stance as I understood it from my own work in Reading Recovery, where training and ongoing professional development sessions were structured so that new knowledge was deliberately co-constructed through interactions with others and joint activities (Tharp & Gallimore, 1998). Thus, we read, and discussed Clay's (2015) Literacy Processing Theory, observed practice together, and worked in an ongoing, cyclical manner. I attempted to build much of this study's design around this idea of joint construction so that participant understandings of language and literacy might be revealed throughout the process of gathering and analyzing varied data sets.

I believe the reciprocal nature of language requires early literacy instruction to be equally focused on reading, writing, and speaking, and listening, as each is necessary to ensure language is a resource and a beneficiary of a student's learning (Clay, 2015; Halliday, 2005). In my former work as a Teacher Leader for the Boston Public Schools I observed Reading Recovery lessons almost daily, and through this work have seen how conversations can lead to the development of children's ability to analyze, critique, and expand current understandings (Lyons et al., 1994).

The common purpose of Reading Recovery teachers was leveraged in this study as participants already had agreed on ways of working together (Lyons et al., 1994). These agreements fostered a shared sense of ownership and a common understanding of Clay's (2015) Literacy Processing Theory which allowed us to engage in deeper and deeper conversations. These conversations revealed to me varied participant understandings about early language and literacy acquisition (Ballantyne, 2012). Building on student strengths maximizes opportunities for success and is an essential foundational understanding in Reading Recovery. If teacher participants hadn't been working from a strength-based lens, linguistic or cultural bias may have interfered more with how they conversed with students, with each other, and with how we interacted as we engaged in these cycles of collective inquiry. This lens was evident from the first round of survey data when participants spoke of the need to meet students where they are currently capable of expanding their oral and written language. During this initial survey, several participants also mentioned feeling like their own implicit biases may be interfering with student learning. As they were a group of predominantly White women teaching students from varied backgrounds, they were used to being asked to unpack their biases but hadn't yet talked much about linguistic biases. There was some confusion on the range of linguistic diversity. As participants spoke in focus groups they conversed about how to facilitate a transfer of student oral language into storybook language and into student writing. They wanted to learn from each

other how and what specifically people were doing to foster this work. They asked about prompts and questions that were leading to increasing student control and flexible usage of language. Since they were already used to engaging in conversations around cultural bias we could continue this dialogue throughout the cyclical data collection to include more discussion regarding linguistic biases.

It seems necessary to reiterate here that the current mainstream media version of the simple view of the Science of Reading (Garan, 2002; Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Lonigan, Burgess & Schatschneider 2018; Snow, 2018) does not often take into consideration the impact language diversity, or the linguistic biases of educators can have on early literacy learning. Brown and colleagues (2004) researched the fact that spelling and sound knowledge can be impacted differently by varied dialect patterns. Terry and Connor (2012) studied how letter-word reading skills can vary and teacher perception and assessment of student ability was found to vary in a study by Brown and colleagues (2015). Each of these issues was raised in Thompson's (2019) research specifically unpacking the achievement of African American Reading Recovery students. In response to recent misinformation in the news and media Compton Lilly and colleagues (2020) wrote,

> We empirically support Moje's claim 'that reading is a complex, multidimensional cognitive process situated in and mediated by social and cultural practices'' (National Education Policy Center, 2018, p. 2). In doing so, we agree that 'teaching depends on knowing what students know and can do and then determining what they need' (p. 3).

Responding to students is particularly significant for those who are underserved by schools. Learning to engage in early literacy learning can have as much to do with language as it does with looking at print (Clay, 2016).

> Through listening to children and learning about the ways in which they navigate within
>
> and across texts (official, clandestine, fiction, nonfiction), curricula (reading, writing,
>
> speaking, listening), and broader contexts (home, school, community), teachers can
>
> develop ways of teaching that build on diverse children's strengths, leading to stronger
>
> understandings of learned processes (and of how they are culturally and linguistically
>
> shaped). (Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016, p. 16)

Reading, conversing, planning, and observing language and literacy from a strength-based lens allowed us to unpack some of the unconscious biases that may impact our day-to-day interactions with students. Initial interviews pointed to concern that in varied school settings, students were being asked to "fix" their language or leave their language at home. This recommendation stands in sharp contrast to the research on valuing linguistic diversity (Baker-Bell, 2020; Brady, 2015; Beneke & Cheatham, 2015; Delpit, 2006; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Hammond, 2015; Licona, 2013; Moll & Amanti, 2005; Slocum, 2019). Interview participants were concerned that multilingual learners who were still grappling with new tenses,

new structures of noun and adjective agreement, and other grammatical mapping from one language to another were not being given the time they needed to process new structures and that this often either held them back as readers or led to over-correction. Additionally, during interviews participants spoke of not having enough diversity in the book sets and assessment materials they had for Reading Recovery lessons. They talked of learning to use student writing as a vehicle for them to see their varied cultural, familial, and linguistic diversity valued and appreciated in texts. Focus group participants started the conversation and then interviewees spoke much more of a need to build more collective knowledge of how to honor and expand the language of multidialectal students. By sharing stories with each other we began to raise awareness about both theoretical and practical issues that need ongoing support and attention

regarding linguistic diversity. These conversations led to some insight into the original questions that I asked as I structured this study.

Question 1: What do Reading Recovery teachers understand about using language/linguistic diversity as an asset in early literacy acquisition?

I found that the initial survey and focus groups revealed an awareness that language was important but that teacher participants did not always understand how to leverage this theoretical knowledge into the practical aspects of daily lessons. Research regarding linguistic flexibility or translanguaging shows that students who are more able to anticipate and use varied structures are afforded multiple access points across home, community, and school (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015; Whittingham et al., 2018). Because all participants in this study had engaged in Reading Recovery's year-long training they were quite aware of the need to honor and expand student oral language through conversations about books and in the talk before and after the writing portion of each lesson (Clay, 2015, 2016). Focus group participants were almost always able to separate out the linguistic challenges and supports that existed or that they could employ in honor to help students map their oral language onto early literary structures of storybooks. They were conscious of the tension for multilingual students between literacy learning and proficiency and fluency in the student's native language but not always conscious of the translanguaging multidialectal students might also need to engage in. Honoring the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of an array of students was seen as essential but the practical ways of doing this as they responded to students were often raised as a point of frustration. Participants wanted to support language and literacy learning and knew they often were doing so but wanted to leverage the wisdom of the group to grow increasingly deliberate and consistent in this work.

As focus group participants reviewed the survey data, they spoke about what they wanted and needed to learn more about. Teacher participants wanted time to deepen their understanding

of how to foster learning environments that offered opportunities for accelerated language and literacy acquisition. This was a call to continuously grow collective expertise regarding linguistic diversity but at this point few were clear on how this might relate to students who were not multilingual learners. Participants wanted more time to discuss practical aspects of when to teach, to prompt, or to reinforce and what language was used to powerfully propel student learning forward. Focus group participants very specifically were asking each other about building, supporting, and expanding oral and book language knowledge in service of simultaneously growing a flexible literacy processing system. They were talking more specifically about some of the larger systemic issues impacting language and early literacy learning because of ongoing sociocultural or linguistic biases present in society and institutional systems. A few were asking more about students who were multilingual, multidialectal, or being served by special educators.

During initial interviews, teacher participants discussed the power of observing each other teach behind-the-glass while engaging in deep discourse. Almost all deemed reading shared professional text as essential in developing understanding. They talked about the reflective nature of Reading Recovery and how they were always working to expand what they knew and were able to do. One interviewee described it in this manner,

> Before Reading Recovery training I had obviously thought about how language impacted reading and second language especially, but I don't know that I had really sat and dwelled on it, so I knew it was a thing and obviously it affected student learning, but I didn't have a real deep understanding and it's like I'm still gaining a deeper understanding. There is always more to learn but I don't think I had really dwelled on it and considered it as how vital an aspect it is before training and ongoing professional learning.

Interviewees told me that Roaming Around the Known, those first ten days of reading, writing,

talking, and building a relationship with students, was essential for fostering personalized instruction. Remote instruction was a place where they told me of rich relationships with families being built. This was the one area teacher participants had wished to maintain after the pandemic, but most expressed regret in how difficult it had become again. I found interviewees acknowledging the power of knowing student home and family life more intimately and the reciprocal information sharing that almost always resulted in stronger literacy outcomes for students but not knowing how to maintain this relationship after schools reopened. They also didn't talk about knowing family and home life as a resource for understanding and honoring linguistic diversity amongst their students.

From my observations of teaching and follow-up interviews, I found understandings focusing more explicitly on the exploration of literary structures and offering students multiple options to flexibly grow a child's current control of language without negating structures from home. I observed teacher participants positioning children as writers in charge of developing an idea, structuring the message, and transcribing letters, sounds, and words. I saw observation participants supporting this work but ultimately, in each lesson, the child was put in charge. Interviewees seemed to understand their role was to flexibly expand how a child interacted with the written word and to help children communicate their understandings of stories in an increasingly complex manner over their 12-20 weeks together.

In answer to question one, Reading Recovery teacher participants in this study demonstrated an understanding of both the theoretical and some practical knowledge that the research held as powerful for culturally and linguistically diverse students. They discussed the needs of young students to learn and grow over time, to construct new knowledge with explicit links to their own cultural, linguistic, and experiential histories (Licona, 2013, Moll & Amanti, 2005). They detailed the connection between speaking and listening in home discourses and

learning to read texts that varied more and made it hard to anticipate and search for familiar information. Teacher participants were aware that early literacy acquisition enhances identity and leads to further social-emotional and intellectual development. Though not always using the same verbiage, they were able to discuss amongst each other (in focus groups) and individually (in interviews) and write about (in survey responses) the need to provide books as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Sims Bishop, 1990) so that students saw themselves, others and experienced links between themselves and the world as they became increasingly literate.

Yet the impact of my earlier literature review revealing how little information was available regarding specific practical knowledge that would allow educators to leverage the linguistic diversity of students as an asset also was apparent here. The overt frustration expressed by teacher participants at needing to know more about how and when to help students value their home language while expanding their current competencies as readers, writers, and speakers is a tension that felt salient in their responses. Survey participants wondered how to specifically capitalize on varied strengths in lessons. They were asking each other about procedures, prompts, and moments of contingent teaching that worked. During interviews, multiple interviewees mentioned the need to talk with colleagues more about the importance of connecting oral language to text especially in this era of the Science of Reading. As districts and schools move to more explicit phonics in isolation, more decodable texts with rigid syntactic structures, and lessen the focus in the primary grades on the reading of actual texts several interviewees pondered how an overemphasis on one or two sources of information might be culturally biased. They wondered about the long-term impact on multilingual or multidialectal students. These systemic issues impact student learning. For students who are not multilingual an overemphasis on phonics instruction and their historical experience of learning language may mean that some students believe reading is only solving letter by letter - and is not tied to making meaning. This

experience in school can impact who they are and how they view the role of reading. There was also concern that the linguistic repertoires of students were not being considered in the text sets tied to newer mandates and that this could lead to increased negation of a child's oral language. Teachers wanted to talk more about how student language was linked to identity and valued or devalued by varied members of school communities based on sociocultural constructs. Taken in conjunction with the plethora of research available regarding the impact of teacher bias on persistent opportunity gaps for students of color and multilingual learners the teacher-participant frustration becomes glaring. Further work is needed to ensure educators are engaged in deep, ongoing learning that unpacks linguistic bias, especially for Black and Brown students to ensure their learning opportunities are not limited by programmatic decision making. The work of consistently engaging in culturally sustaining practices needs to continue in addition to building knowledge of stronger linguistically sustaining practices.

In my observations of teaching, I watched the subtle moves teacher participants made as they worked to support students to expand both language and literacy acquisition while trying to also practice culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. Engaging in this complex work with little support in how to do so was something many participants requested throughout the study. A few overt practical examples of Reading Recovery teacher participants supporting varied language/linguistic diversity as an asset for early literacy acquisition were observed and will be discussed in the summary of this chapter.

Question 2: What are the various ways Reading Recovery teachers believe they support varied student language patterns to help each child grow as a reader and a writer?

In focus groups and interviews, there were discussions of the work Reading Recovery teacher participants engaged in to support varied student language patterns and help each child grow as a reader and a writer. They spoke of using authentic texts to engage students in multiple

interpretations at the text, sentence, and phrase levels. Connected text and flexibility are necessary as daily tools that allow for teacher scaffolding to meet the varied language and literacy learning needs of young children (Clay, 2016). Interview participants told me of explicit instructional moves they made to honor and expand student syntactical patterns into texts. In focus groups and interviews, I heard of participants listening intently to students, taking notes in lesson records, and sometimes using predictions of progress to plan how and when to support and how and when to challenge a particular child's language. I could later see teachers listening, taking notes, and supporting and challenging children's language during lesson observations. The intent behind these interactions became even more visible to me when observation participants stopped taking notes when children were telling the teacher stories or talking about books they had read. I could also see when teachers referred to or added to notes during other moments when students worked more independently in a lesson. Interviewees told me about how they considered language structures as they listened to students respond to text. In focus groups and interviews I heard participants talk of their work to contingently teach from these conversations when selecting texts, planning book introductions, and especially in conversations before writing and after reading books.

In surveys, focus groups, and interviews participants wrote of or talked about how they were sometimes using student language to plan for and teach phrasing in fluent reading and they were often using language in the cut-up story to teach explicitly for flexibility. In the cut-up story part of the lesson, I saw observation participants demonstrate to students how a sentence might vary when they heard it at home or with friends, or in different books. Interviewees also spoke of their role as listeners as students spoke and varied tenses or restructured phrases. Participants who were observed in lessons showed me how they played with syntactic flexibility. I heard them honoring how the student stated a phrase and deciding when to show or tell them how it

might sound or look someplace else. I noted examples of this including, *here you go* versus *here you are* and *perhaps she shall* versus *maybe she will.* Additionally, focus group participants and interviewees discussed using a strength-based analysis of the current language competencies of children as a support to map speech onto early attempts at reading print. Survey participants, focus group discussions, interviews, and observations all mentioned or demonstrated the power of letting a child's syntax drive the writing portion of the lesson so the child was in control of hearing and recording sounds in words and transcribing phonetic and orthographic knowledge into their stories.

In response to question two, since all participants had been reading or revisiting Hammond's (2012) concept of Culturally Responsive teaching, our work together during this study expanded the conversation to include more responsive teaching for varied syntactic patterns utilized by our multilingual, multidialectal, and monolingual Reading Recovery students.

Question 3: What might be learned, in terms of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices, from Reading Recovery teachers?

I found links between Reading Recovery and Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices to be quite overt. Interviewees told me about the power of Individualized lessons, Roaming Around the Known, selecting texts and making books, and allowing children to speak and write their own language and messages into daily stories. Focus group conversations that touched upon these ideas arose from initial surveys, resurfaced during focus group work, and grew deeper as we engaged in one-to-one interviews. I was also able to see each of these in action during observations of teaching (I observed one Roaming Around the Known lesson in addition to the four other lessons that occurred after that relationship had been built). Participants in focus groups and several interviewees stated needing more time in Reading Recovery to

deepen their understanding of cultural and linguistic responsive teaching. Across the data sets, participants grew more nuanced in their discussion of dialect, accent, multilingualism, and multi-dialecticism.

What I did not yet see were books reflecting the diversity of the students during the observations. The sets of Reading Recovery books are not diverse enough to represent the broad range of students we teach, but regional teacher leaders had been working to expand text collections over the last few years. This had allowed me to ensure that the students I taught always had a few books which might have mirrored some of their life experiences out as daily selections (even if I was including their written texts as a reading option). The texts provided for children by the teachers I observed were clearly selected for each student by teachers who knew them well. This was obvious in the conversations students and teacher participants engaged in during each lesson. I was hoping to see a richer portrayal, beyond student interests, in the familiar book selection presented at the beginning of each lesson observed. The text sets themselves did not consistently provide an opportunity for students to see their family structures, communities, racial, socioeconomic, or linguistic cultures represented. During focus group conversations and initial interviews, multiple participants raised the issue that not enough diversity exists in the text sets. Even as many acknowledged that teacher leaders had recently been working to access more representative texts, the educators in this study were conscious that writing was the easiest way to engage students in discussions and texts that might provide more culturally and linguistically responsive teaching.

After I analyzed data from the initial survey, I wondered more about unconscious bias. So many biases have been found to be layered and rooted in historical issues of race, class, colorism, ethnicity, and economics (Hammond, 2015). Country of origin (both for the student and the teacher) may play a role in addition to an individual's flexibility and speed of learning

new languages (Freeman & Freeman, 2016). Varied accents, dialects and positive or negative interactions between schools and communities may also impact teachers' perceptions of students (Freeman & Freeman, 2016). The fact that there is no "standard" form of English but that in education this term is utilized often feels insidious, as if it might blind us as educators to invisible values, we may place on one speech or discourse pattern over another (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Wolfram, 2017). The fact that linguistic biases are not often explicitly discussed in education or in research, particularly as they link to early literacy learning, seems to warrant the need for us to work on this more intently. After I sifted through the data from surveys, focus groups, and interviews I was thinking more about how educators need to unpack multiple biases.

In response to Question, this necessity to continually unpack our own unconscious biases and work with colleagues to deepen understanding of the power of the home languages our students bring to early experiences with print was overtly evident in initial interviews. All participants responded that understandings about student oral language might have much to do with persistent early literacy opportunity gaps along cultural, economic, and linguistic lines across varied US schools and districts. Additionally, both groups (focus group and interviewees) stated the need to continually hone their understanding of the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students. Participants in both groups also discussed the power of being provided ongoing professional learning opportunities with their peers to grow increasingly able to meet the varied needs of their students.

During teaching observations, Reading Recovery teachers were engaged in conversations before writing and before and after reading varied texts, their skill at working from a strength-based lens was overtly visible. In multiple instances, student language was validated and invitations to expand and clarify meaning were offered in a manner that did not disrupt the student's home language usage. Continually noticing the strengths in students who have been

identified for early intervention can be quite challenging. Many participants in this study wanted support to consistently value student language and were sure they had inadvertently negated student attempts in the past. New teachers learn Reading Recovery procedures with support from behind-the-glass conversations. These conversations can help teachers value the unpacking of their own biases but if training and ongoing professional learning sessions do not foster this, it is unlikely to happen. Teacher participant discussions about their hardest to teach children made me think about the role of unconscious bias. There were many comments about teaching students learning English for the first time or students who speak in short, clipped structures and do not use an array of vocabulary or descriptive words. Mapping their language onto texts can present a challenge. Ensuring this challenge is ours to work through and not a challenge for the students is critical. The idea of teaching for both Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices as independent and intertwined entities is essential.

Question 4: How can reading achievement be attributed to understanding linguistic diversity as an asset?

During initial interviews, I heard participants ponder and reflect on student learning, their own educator practices, the practices of others, implicit biases and the roles and responsibilities of Reading Recovery in helping or hindering early literacy acquisition. In response to question 4, I found evidence of focus group participants and interviewees speaking of the need to constantly view every student's oral language from a strength-based lens but also heard them admitting there must be moments when they did not. Interviewees told me Reading Recovery training and ongoing professional development had been pivotal in building or expanding their knowledge in theory and in practice. One interview participant noted the role of professional discourse in conjunction with observation of lessons behind-the-glass,

I think I have a better understanding, after talking to colleagues about the role of student

language in literacy acquisition, about how to make that happen in a meaningful way because of behind-the-glass lessons watching other people do it in meaningful ways or in ways that I'm like I can see, oh, I do that and go and do it more.

Interviewees and focus group participants talked about not only knowing that a student's oral language would provide access to their becoming literate but also observing, reading, and discussing how to do this work and leverage language as a resource. They also talked about what they did not yet know, expressed frustration at the limitations of some of the other professional learning opportunities they had been afforded and expressed a desire to grow more flexibly able to meet the needs of all students. When survey participants wrote about all students they often explicitly named multilingual learners, especially those who were newcomers who had recently arrived. Later in the study participants broadened their talk to include students with varied dialects and students receiving speech and language support as part of their special education plan. By the end of the study the need to talk about linguistic diversity and collectively learn to be more responsive practitioners was keenly evident.

During initial interviews, participants detailed some of the work they engaged in to create daily space for listening intently and for deliberate student talk in daily interactions with all students. They stated an awareness of the power of attending to literary language as they worked to flexibly expand student oral language throughout lessons. Roaming Around the Known was a place where they discovered what ideas and books and stories students loved and were curious about and would easily share with their new teacher. Interviewees told me these eleven days were the time used to build a solid relationship that would foster individualized opportunities for accelerated learning. During this Roaming Around the Known time interviewees spoke of creating rich relationships with families, but most expressed regret for not being able to maintain those close ties that had developed during the pandemic after returning to in-person learning.

An Emerging Theory

According to Charmaz (2014), "theory-building emerges through the simultaneous and iterative data collection, analysis, and memoing processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 138)". Within each stage of data analysis during this study, new themes arose. Three early themes emerged at the start of the study; engaging in reflective processes, communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity, and working to expand oral language flexibility. After the interviews, an additional theme emerged. It was a call to continue to grow collective expertise regarding linguistic diversity. This call was rooted in participants' tentativeness in regard to their own unconscious linguistic biases. These four themes were rooted in both the theoretical and practical aspects of leveraging language for accelerated literacy learning. These ideas grounded the observations of teaching in searches for ways to tie the understandings of participants into a framework others can use.

The tension that arose in teacher participant responses seemed to demand that educators be afforded more time and space to learn about cultural diversity alongside and sometimes separately from linguistic diversity and to view both from a strength-based lens in a manner that would be directly applicable to daily practice and meet the needs of a broader array of learners. Thus, the practical theory that emerged from this study is that engaging in reflective processes, communicating theoretical understandings regarding reciprocity, working to expand oral language flexibility and a call to continue to grow collective expertise specifically to support cultural and linguistic diversity were all necessary.

Findings from the Investing in Innovation (i3) study (May et al., 2017) revealed instructional strength as a theme in Reading Recovery teaching (May et al., 2016). Instructional strength was defined as deliberate and dexterous teaching, with optimal use of time and a

disposition that demonstrated a belief in student ability (May et al., 2016). This finding can be viewed as a graphic image in Figure 1.

In my study instructional strength was also evident during observations of teaching and provided insight to both question 3: What might be learned, in terms of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices, from Reading Recovery teachers? and question 4: How can reading achievement be attributed to understanding linguistic diversity as an asset? Five practical categories emerged from watching teaching and these had to do with culturally and linguistically sustaining practices. I observed Reading Recovery teacher participants working daily for systematic and explicit instruction of literary structures and offering options to expand but never invalidate a child's syntax or semantics. I heard participants engaging in personalized instruction and in doing so consciously positioning each child as the writer who constructed the ideas and the syntax for a daily message. In the short span of a series of lessons, Reading Recovery teachers can and must ensure they waste no time in teaching items and ideas students already know (Clay, 2016). At varied levels of intensity, I saw participants working to foster syntactic flexibility. I had seen all these things over my many years in Reading Recovery. Therefore, I was most interested in the work three participants consistently engaged in to restate a Told into a meaningful phrase. I found this to be the clearest and newest example of teacher participants working to be linguistically responsive and this seemed to additionally impact phrasing and fluent reading. Rereading allowed students to consolidate these new oral phrases into their existing repertoires, hearing and seeing the book language each time. This work of restating a Told in a larger language unit, to me, seemed a clear example of an instructional strength, demonstrating a belief in each student's ability to learn increasingly complex oral language structures through written language interactions.

During the final interviews I allowed time and space for the participants I observed to

discuss their thinking with me further and articulate the intentional interactions they had with

students. My thinking was that what these participants know may benefit other Reading

Recovery teachers and early literacy interventionists. I had the opportunity to share the five

emerging themes I captured from watching them teach. During these final interviews participants

discussed the idea I shared with them that these five themes can be taken as observable evidence

of what it looks like to leverage student language as a strength, to foster accelerated literacy

learning, and to link the work of Reading Recovery to the work of culturally and linguistically

sustaining practices. These most overt findings are the five themes outlined in Table 11.

Table 11: Five Themes Emerging from Observations of Teaching

Reading Recovery Teachers Working as Culturally & Linguistically Sustaining Practitioners
Daily explicit instruction around literary structures
Personalized instruction
Positioning each child as a writer: allowing child syntax and meaning to drive conversations and determine the written message
Awareness of linguistic diversity as a strength: Never invalidating a child's syntax or semantics but fostering syntactic flexibility
Embedding a Told and then restating that unknown word in a meaningful phrase

Connecting Findings to the Literature

Much of the current work in schools is focused on educators expanding their

understandings and respect for the culture of their students. This work outlined by Ladson-

Billings (1995), in response to the education debt owed to our Black and Brown children in the

United States, is critical and needs constant attention if we are to alter the persistent opportunity

gaps ever present in our school data. Linguistic responsivity is currently, almost exclusively,

discussed in relation to multilingual learners. Neglecting to also discuss the impact of a rigid

adherence to monolingualism, and the impact this can have on multidialectal students and other

students who speak in varied language patterns alongside the work of supporting multilingual learners closes off the much-needed discussion of linguistic bias. I believe these issues need to be amplified and become more than just an awareness. The linguistic biases detailed by Baker-Bell (2020), Brady (2015) Beneke and Cheatham (2015), Hammond (2015), Delpit (2006), Licona (2013), Moll and Amanti (2005), and Slocum (2019) provide strong evidence that false perceptions of links between intellect and varied language patterns are creating invisible barriers impeding equity and access in our educational systems. Educators need to continuously engage in the work of culturally sustaining practices and leveraging funds of knowledge into academic settings but there also needs to be a focus on unpacking misconceptions deeply ingrained in our cultural and educational practices regarding linguistic diversity and perceived intellect (Beneke & Cheatam, 2014; Compton-Lilly, 2005; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Ladd & Duke University, 2011; Licona, 2013). Until we are aware of linguistic biases we cannot consciously work to learn and change our interactions around them.

Reading Recovery teachers, working side by side with six-year-olds as they become increasingly literate are primed to engage in and actualize this work, taking the subtle awareness evident in this survey response into a space of conscious understanding and working together to positively impact their daily interactions with students. Emerging themes from surveys, focus groups, and initial interviews, provide evidence that there is theoretical and practical knowledge gathered through Reading Recovery training, ongoing professional development, and daily teaching interactions that can be seen and understood as the necessary conditions to allow Reading Recovery teachers to work as culturally and linguistically sustaining practitioners. However, there is still work to do. Future research needs to clearly outline the practical aspects of engaging in CLSP work and directly link protocols, prompts, and direct teaching to Reading Recovery practices. Protocols for unpacking unconscious educator bias need to become a

standard part of Reading Recovery training and ongoing professional development. Additionally, diversity in children's texts, particularly those written for early literacy learning needs to rapidly expand and be made available for students. Finally, the idea that there needs to be renewed attention to educator biases attached to linguistic diversity, not just for multilingual students but for all students speaking in syntactical patterns that differ from their teachers is emerging from this study.

Several focus group and interview participants argued that consistently aligning Reading Recovery to the work of cultural and linguistic proficiency in professional development would allow for more powerful connections between the two bodies of work. I agree and believe this could be a strong next step. Currently, students are dependent on the cultural and linguistic understandings of individual teachers. I believe that building this knowledge collectively may lead to stronger theoretical understandings so that, in practice, no individual teacher could misconstrue Clay's (2016) work and negate a child's home language or ideas. Figure 2 is my attempt to illustrate this alignment.

Figure 2: Reading Recovery Teachers as Culturally & Linguistically Sustaining Practitioners
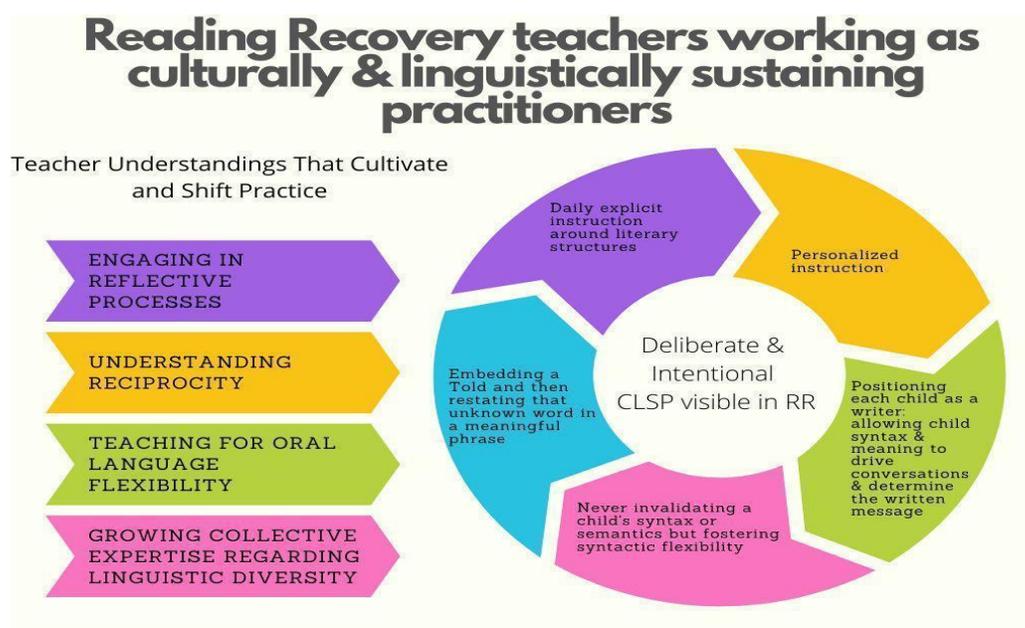
This figure began as my attempt to present the major findings uncovered through this study, but it clearly represents the more practical application of these findings. In the Reading Recovery community, we were already well versed in the idea that daily explicit instruction around literary structures and personalized instruction were critical to the success of our students. We knew that positioning each child as a writer and allowing their syntax and meaning to drive conversation and determine the written message was powerful. We worked to foster syntactic flexibility without invalidating a child's syntax or semantics and often sought each other out to get better at this. What I didn't yet know was how effective it could be to deliberately embed a Told and then reinstate that unknown word in a meaningful phrase each time. Until I observed these three teachers, I had not realized that this form of linguistic support could be essential to accelerating language and literacy learning. Additionally, these students seemed to benefit from phrased and fluent reading. This figure grew out of the idea that this practical application was the essential finding of this study and I do believe this work needs to be lived and breathed to see if it can have the intense impact on student outcomes I saw in these three examples.

Yet, I soon found myself thinking of a larger theoretical implication. From the analysis of initial survey data, the idea arose, that as a collective, we need to continuously learn more about culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, and we also seriously need to intensify our understanding of what linguistically sustaining practices are. We need to take the time in teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional learning to ensure educators unpack what is the same and what is different about culturally sustaining practices and linguistically sustaining practices because it is not enough to root linguistically sustaining practices only in the work of teaching multilingual learners. We need language and literacy learning to benefit every child. Currently, in US schools there are many linguistically diverse students who we are not doing well by. This may be occuring for a wide variety of reasons, but I suspect that we most often are

not doing well by those who speak in patterns that do not match the oral language structures of their teachers. This need for attention and time to learn how to value linguistic diversity has become the essential finding of this study and is a finding with implications that extend well beyond Reading Recovery. Continued work must be done to ensure educators can capitalize on these ideas and expand their own pedagogical knowledge. Learning more about both Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices is essential to positively alter student teacher interactions.

Summary

In this study I utilized a constructivist grounded theory frame to collect and analyze five rounds of data sets from a group of Reading Recovery teacher participants. Layering responses from an initial survey, three focus groups, an initial interview, teaching observations, and a final interview I explored the following questions:

- What do Reading Recovery teachers understand about using language as an asset in early literacy acquisition?

- What are the various ways Reading Recovery teachers believe they support varied student language patterns to help each child grow as a reader and a writer?

- What might be learned, in terms of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices, from Reading Recovery teachers?

- How can reading achievement be attributed to understanding linguistic diversity as an asset?

The study was designed as constructivist so that any new theories would be developed through my interactions with participants and critical friends. In this manner, as we worked through the layered data collection and analysis process, I was able to discuss what might be learned, in terms of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices, from Reading Recovery teacher participants and with critical friends. Through analytic notes and moments of reflection between

data collection cycles, I was also able to consider the idea that reading achievement might be attributable to a strength-based lens on linguistic diversity as leverage for increasing flexibility during early literacy acquisition. The work of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices is complex, unique biases impact both as intertwined issues but also can stand alone, impacting cultural interactions or language interactions.

Kegan and Lahey's (2002) emphasis on the criticality of providing both support and challenges is important when working to provide the opportunity for accelerated early literacy learning. As educators, we can remind students of what they know, offer emotional support, encouragement and positive feedback for partially correct responses while remaining calm and striving to understand the child's words and actions (Clay, 2016). The power of active practice and immediate usage is essential in literacy and language learning (Clay, 2015). When early readers monitor and self-correct their errors it leads to higher literacy achievement (D'Agostino et al., 2019). Encouraging these behaviors in oral and written language may lead to stronger, more lasting positive outcomes (D'Agostino et al., 2019). It is my understanding that the more we act as culturally and linguistically supportive practitioners, the more powerful educators we will be.

Vulnerability and Limitations

As the sole researcher engaging in this study, I did not have the depth or breadth to capture the wider array of Reading Recovery teachers' theoretical or practical knowledge. My work with 33 participants revealed much about what they understood but only tentative conclusions that this work might be understood by the broader Reading Recovery community can be drawn. Luckily, I have found much other research in the field on the power of the collective efficacy of teacher knowledge in Reading Recovery. My research attempts to stand on the shoulders of those studies.

There were several limitations to this study. If I were to restructure the design, I would incorporate theoretical sampling throughout each layer of data collection but did not have access to the full range of participants or the scope of time needed to do so at this moment in time. Theoretical sampling is typically utilized in all grounded theory research. Though a limitation, I believe the flexible guidelines of Charmaz's (2014) approach to grounded theory allowed for variation in participant sampling and thus the criterion sampling utilized later in the study did not greatly alter the overarching findings. To the extent that the variation in sampling did alter the results, working with a group of teachers already engaged in CLSP may have impacted the findings. Though this study did attempt to collect and analyze data that fully explained my research questions, it was a short study. Further research is suggested to ensure responses were not due to the experiences of this group of participants. Replication studies could find that these patterns exist amongst all Reading Recovery teachers or other literacy interventionists.

My initial interviews with 19 participants led to a plethora of data but also left me wanting to continue talking to teachers and sharing these trends in a longitudinal manner. I believe further research is certainly warranted to unpack their understandings more thoroughly. Additionally, in grounded theory studies researchers are constantly faced with the challenge of deciding that categories are sufficiently saturated, and theories fully detailed from the data gathered (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was a challenge I faced as well and hope my findings contribute enough to the field to encourage further study.

Though my initial exclusion of demographic data from the design study was intentional this is perhaps the largest limitation to the study. Participant sociocultural demographics could have shed more insight and strengthened my analysis. By the time I considered requesting this information, it was late in the process, and it felt it might interfere with responses, that the few participants of color and male teachers would have been easily identifiable as I was working to

keep responses anonymous. In a study where issues around Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices emerged as essential findings, educator demographics could have played a key role in uncovering further biases or assumptions. As a White female not including this data may have prevented me from digging deeper than I did.

Finally, my limited observation data set, and my engagement in final interviews with a subset of five teacher participants may have led to results that were more indicative of the educators who invited me in to watch their teaching than of all Reading Recovery teachers. My data set may also have been impacted by the fact that this group of teacher participants spent two years reading, discussing, and engaging in work around student language and literacy acquisition. What I also did not uncover in these five 30-minute observations was how these same teacher participants may have altered their teaching for different students or increased the complexity for these same readers and writers in a few weeks' time. Future observations could reveal this pattern to be reliable or reveal a need to develop further understandings. These vulnerabilities and limitations were due to time constraints.

Validity and Reliability

The fact that I utilized varied forms of qualitative data certainly led to more validity. The themes and reflections that emerged as participants engaged in the survey reappeared in the focus group work only to surface again in the interviews and were confirmed for me by my observations of teaching and final conversations with teacher participants and critical friends.

Human observation and responses are subjective. Human error may have led to less valid data. Other critical friends and teacher participants may have discovered other results. The fact that I was the initial trainer for several study participants could have impacted how they responded. The fact that I was a White teacher working with a group of predominantly White teachers may have led to less reliability. This same study might look quite different if the

researcher and participants were selected because they represented varied ranges of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Additionally, teacher perceptions are always going to grow and change. The data grew richer across the data collection sets, leading me to infer teacher participants had deep understandings of bias and cultural and linguistic proficiency. However, it could be that through our conversations we all collectively built knowledge that was new and not yet fully leveraged in the practical aspects of daily lessons.

Much of the data aligned, yet there were a few discrepancies. Though many teachers spoke of students from a strength-based lens, a few responded to the initial survey as if students not learning were at a deficit, rather than analyzing their own teaching as the thing that was in the way. Additionally, there was the question of errors reflecting typical six-year-old language patterns. A few teachers responded as if they were not teaching these students. The question of who these teachers are and why they think they are not seeing typical six-year-old grammatical structures is a question that still needs to be addressed. Since I didn't track respondents across the data sets, and I saw less and less of this as I went on, further research would need to be conducted to strengthen the validity and reliability of these findings. In other words, the discrepancies between a few initial survey responses responding to the learning of students rather than their own teaching was different than later conversations more focused on analyzing teaching. These differences could have been a result of the solitary nature of the survey response or the fact that the surveys were answered prior to full engagement in conversations with colleagues. These discrepancies also could have been a result of my wording of the questions, or the framing utilized as I set participants up to engage in the work. The results do indicate the need to confirm the validity and reliability of findings through further research.

The emphasis on language and on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching was an angle that this group had been immersed in for the last two years. This allowed for more active participation than I had presumed when setting out the proposal. The use of 19 initial interviews would have provided enough information to form a study by themselves but by adding in survey responses and conversations from focus groups, my observations of teaching and the final interviews led to as much validity and reliability as I could manage. The consistent act of making connections between the findings of each round of data collection was also useful but proved challenging at times. The sharing of study findings and engaging in a conversation with educators and researchers from the broader fields of language and literacy acquisition could lead to inquiries that might affirm or refute these trends.

Implications for Future Studies

The major implications for future research would be to further investigate the practical aspects of engaging in CLSP work and to scrutinize which prompts, practices, and explicit teaching are most impactful. Various protocols for unpacking unconscious educator bias need to be explored. The idea that there needs to be renewed attention to educator biases attached to linguistic diversity, not just for multilingual students but for all students speaking in syntactical patterns that differ from their teachers is emerging from this study. Studies could unpack key implications regarding how to leverage strong practices from the field of teaching students who are multilingual into the work with all students need to be researched. Findings could be shared within the Reading Recovery community, with other early literacy interventions, with early language and literacy educators and with the educational community at large. The work of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices is the work of education.

Therefore, the findings from this study have many implications for the broader community. The collective cultural biases we hold in the United States around who speaks and

how they speak plays a large part in the structural barriers blocking many of our students throughout their years in school. The impossible hurdles we face should not stop us from inquiring further and attempting to grow collective expertise.

Within Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Intervention

for Reading Recovery and other early literacy intervention teachers. Within the Reading Recovery and early literacy intervention community there are many implications. Replication or expansive research could continue. Quantitative Reading Recovery data is collected at multiple levels; nationally, state, site, district, school, teacher, and for individual students. This data compiled by IDEC (2022) demonstrated the strong gains Reading Recovery students continued to make despite the pandemic. This quantitative data was not utilized in this study as it does not reveal connections between teacher understandings of language diversity and linking language acquisition to accelerative literacy experiences to student learning outcomes. Further investigation of the practical aspects of engaging in CLSP work is essential. The idea of linking what teachers know about supporting linguistically diverse students to quantitative outcomes could be explored in a future study comparing varied groups of Reading Recovery teachers, some engaged in deep professional development sessions regarding theoretical and practical understandings from culturally and linguistically responsive teaching against a control group of Reading Recovery teachers not discussing the same issues. Scrutinizing the prompts, practices, and explicit teaching that lead to accelerative learning while observing lessons behind the glass makes sense as does the exploration of protocols for unpacking unconscious educator bias during training and ongoing professional development sessions.

As I engaged in this study, I also considered other explorations that might include how to capitalize on the rich relationships that emerged between teachers and families during remote instruction. Strong practices from the field of teaching multilingual students could prove

valuable here as well, prompts, practices and explicit teaching that works could be explored. Expanding access to texts that enable students to see their families and communities in a positive light is also an essential part of this work and the role of the publishing industries was raised often by Reading Recovery teachers. Researchers might study texts that are available for cultural and linguistic variety. Studies could examine the impact of students sitting down and seeing themselves in books from their earliest moments engaging with texts. This work could expand to include other early language or literacy interventions and engage a wider array of teachers.

Finally, regarding phonological and phonemic awareness, critical friends I spoke with were wondering how flexible early literacy teachers could become. They talked about this in terms of supporting all students as they learned to hear sounds in words, hear phrasing in fluent reading, and anticipate varied book language and orthographic patterns in spelling. Though participants mentioned this only once or twice during interviews, I was surprised that the letter and word work part of the daily lesson was often cited as not culturally responsive. I was first introduced to the idea that phonemes do not all transfer from one language to another by the work of multilingual educators, this knowledge could be further explored to empower linguistically responsive teaching. The five Reading Recovery participants who were observed did say they considered the work of letters, sounds, and words part of linguistically sustaining practice. They told me they thought about the phonology of a student's home language, how students articulated certain words in varied dialects, and the impact that might have on anticipating the orthographic information when reading or spelling unknown words. They mentioned thinking deliberately about words students would take the time to attend to as they worked out the foundational differences between letters and words and sounds. As a former Reading Recovery teacher, I have personally taught students who insisted that the word they first learn was *wolf* or *mom* or *love* or *LOL doll* or *Sonic*, that the sounds they first played with were

sounds represented in their home language, that the letters they learned first were linked to their names, their favorite words, their homes, and the signs in their neighborhoods. Linking the work of phonics, phonological awareness, and word study to valuing varied language patterns is something we could explore more. Researchers could outline the strong practices that allow for linguistic flexibility as this is something not accessible in most packaged curricula as they follow a required set of teaching sequences.

The most critical implication I see for the Reading Recovery and broader early literacy intervention community is the need to deepen the direct connection between early literacy acquisition and Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices. This might be achieved in training, conversations behind-the-glass, reading shared professional texts, and engaging in ongoing professional learning. There are so few early literacy interventions working to connect reading, writing, and talk. I think delineating these understandings in the research would provide strong benefits to both Reading Recovery and other literacy intervention communities.

In short, the larger ideas of investigating the practical aspects of engaging in CLSP work, scrutinizing prompts, practices, and explicit teaching that lead to accelerative learning, the exploration of protocols for unpacking unconscious educator bias and linking strong practices from the field of teaching students who are multilingual into work with all students are all quite relevant for the field of early literacy interventionists.

The Broader Educational and Research Community

This holds true for the larger educational and research community as well. Further investigate the practical aspects of engaging in CLSP work. Much of the current research I found on valuing linguistic diversity was nested in work regarding multilingual students with a bit of new writing beginning to surface regarding the need to honor multiple dialects though this is often targeted to middle and high school students (Baker-Bell, 2020; Brady, 2015; Freeman &

Freeman, 2016; Slocum, A. 2019). Adger and colleagues (2009) do cite research stating that students as young as three to five years old are facing linguistic bias for speaking in varied dialects.Further study regarding how to minimize dependence on the cultural and linguistic understandings of individual teachers and how to ensure a child's home language and ideas are continually honored in service of learning to love reading and writing is necessary. The work of culturally sustaining practices and linguistically sustaining practices needing to be discussed as both a large, complex body of work and also as separate entities, each with its own unique biases is essential across the field of education.

More studies explicitly exploring instructional practices that positively leverage varied student language from an asset-based lens could also prove useful. The need to provide opportunities for accelerative learning has amplified after school closures during the Covid 19 epidemic. Scrutinizing prompts, practices, and explicit teaching that meet an array of student needs could link strength-based teaching more overtly to the language that teachers are using across grade bands. Leveraging what is already known as strong practice in the field of teaching multilingual learners also makes sense here. Research could explicitly align the language that has the most potential to positively impact student achievement outcomes.

The exploration of protocols for unpacking unconscious educator bias could help teachers understand racial, cultural, and linguistic biases to work to mitigate any negative influences that may be impacting their interactions with students. These protocols could also help college professors or students studying education, research, or linguistics to consider the role of implicit biases in their own work. Ongoing professional learning in each of those fields could work to consider the role of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices as both independent and inextricably intertwined bodies of work. My understanding around additive approaches to language education at the start of this work was limited. The reading and conversations I have

engaged over the course of this study has expanded my own practical and theoretical knowledge. In this work of valuing and legitimizing the home language practices of our language-minoritized students, I am learning how the notion of additive approaches to language instruction are being challenged (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Flores & Rosa, 2015). We are being asked to recognize a range of sociopolitical contexts that delegitimize the linguistic practices of some over others (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Alim's (2005) work, on critical language awareness invites us to ask two juxtaposed questions, how can language be used to maintain, reinforce, and perpetuate existing power relations? and how can language be used to resist, redefine, and possibly reverse these relations? (p. 28). Exploring these questions in the world of early literacy acquisition could be powerful. Refer to Table 12 for an overview of implications for further research.

Table 12: Implications for Further Research

Implications for Further Research
Four Recommendations
● Further investigate the practical aspects of engaging in CLSP work. ● Scrutinize which prompts, practices, and explicit teaching lead to accelerative learning. ● Explore protocols for unpacking unconscious educator bias. ● Research how to leverage strong practices from the field of teaching students who are multilingual into work with all students. Findings could be shared within the Reading Recovery community, with other early literacy interventions, with early language and literacy educators and with the educational community at large.

Recommendations for Practice

Participant Recommendations

Participants had a lot to say about recommendations for practice. They wanted to talk more about using Clay's (2007) Record of Language, to embed comments on language and literacy more consistently in predictions of progress and lesson records, to share ways of

leveraging all student language into reading texts and writing stories with each other in a manner that grew their ability to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of all students. They told me they wanted to use the data from Record of Oral Language assessments or track a student's longest utterance to foster more complexity and flexibility in reading, writing, and speaking. They spoke of wanting to hear each other's responses and watch each other teach.

Several times participants mentioned the work publishers need to engage in to create more diverse book collections. Until then, teachers should engage in more bookmaking with students to ensure cultural and linguistic diversity and provide windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors for all children (Sims Bishop, 1990). Assessment texts are under review at this moment in time. Reading Recovery teacher participants told me they are hopeful that more authentic texts will be available sooner rather than later.

I found there was something quite powerful about interviewing individual teacher participants with questions they had helped shape. During the focus group work participants added layers to questions that more directly addressed practical aspects of teaching early readers and writers. In the interviews, all the participants had moments where they reflected on things that they wanted to grow their expertise in. I rooted this study in a constructivist grounded theory frame to directly engage Reading Recovery teacher participants in conversations, observations, and focus groups to allow for reflective growth on their part and on mine throughout the process. I shared the research with participants between and during varied points in the data collection process as an attempt to get at the heart of what we understand as a community and what we need to continue thinking and talking about. The idea that human development is situated in social interactions and that knowledge is constructed through those interactions with others feels quite foundational in Reading Recovery and has become a huge part of the way I interact with teachers and students as an educator.

In this first foray as a researcher, I was pleased to feel the power of this work while engaging in authentic inquiry with this group of open and reflective practitioners. Freire's (2012) work on conscientização or consciousness-raising allows humans to contribute to each other's growing knowledge, and this, for me, felt like another strong aspect of this study. I entered into the work of education committed to the idea of literacy as liberation. His work on social justice has resonated with me each time I've returned to reread his works (Freire, 2012). As a researcher, it did not make sense to me to engage in this work in isolation, but to inquire and uncover new ideas together seemed necessary, to change the lives of children. In sharing interview responses with each other I felt we were "constructing chains of reasoning" (Lyons, 1994), connecting and deepening what we know and how we use this information to strengthen student outcomes. Their recommendations for practice should be strongly considered. Continuing their work seems a logical recommendation or implication for future study.

Researcher Recommendations

As the researcher, for me, two key recommendations seemed logical next steps. The first is working to actualize the five themes outlined in Figure 2. These act as observable evidence of Reading Recovery teacher participants working as Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practitioners. These findings seem to demand we continue to provide daily explicit instruction around literary structures and personalized instruction to students becoming literate. We position young children as writers by allowing them to determine the written message so we can foster syntactic flexibility without invalidating a child's syntax or semantics. Finally, we need to try deliberately embedding a Told and then reinstating that unknown word in a meaningful phrase during our teaching interactions.

The second recommendation for practice I see is the larger theoretical issue of ensuring educators are afforded the opportunity to learn about culturally and linguistically sustaining

practices as independent and inextricably intertwined entities. This work should be encouraged across the entirety of the educational field. To sustain this complexity, I believe that educators must view themselves as professionals engaged in continuous learning (Clay, 2015, Darling-Hammond, 1996; Fullan & Hargreaves 2012). Powerful professional learning opportunities enable us to acquire new knowledge, apply it to practice, and reflect with colleagues. We strengthen the deep structures necessary for ongoing educator literacy learning when curriculum, professional development and leadership are aligned and coherent (Woulfin & Gabriel, 2020). I believe systemic changes need to occur to ensure professional development broadens teacher expertise and steadily increases teacher content knowledge and capacity (Compton-Lilly, et al., 2002). As our student population grows increasingly diverse, we need to become culturally and linguistically sustaining practitioners. In doing so, we must understand the demands our current educational systems put on students from varied cultures, speaking in varied language patterns and reconfigure our classrooms and interactions to value all they are bringing to the table. Refer to Table 13 for an overview of participant and researcher recommendations for practice.

Table 13: Recommendations for Practice

Recommendations for Practice					
Six Participants Recommendations					
Share ways to use Clay's (2007) *Record of Language* and consistently do so.	Embed comments on language & literacy in predictions of progress and lesson records.	Share ways of leveraging linguistic diversity as a strength.	Track each student's longest utterance to foster complexity & flexibility.	Hear each other's responses to linguistically diverse students and watch each other teach more.	Publishers need to create more diverse book collections and we need to purchase and use these. Use student writing more often.
Two Researcher Recommendations					
1. Application of the five themes					
Provide daily explicit instruction around literary structures	Ensure personalized instruction	Position young children as writers, allow them to determine the written message	Foster syntactic flexibility without invalidating a child's syntax or semantics	Deliberately embed a Told in a meaningful phrase during teaching interactions	
2. Ensuring educators learn about CLSP as both independent inextricably intertwined					

Educators must view themselves as professionals engaged in continuous learning.	As our student population grows increasingly diverse, we need to become culturally and linguistically sustaining practitioners.	This work should be encouraged across the entirety of the educational field.

Final Reflections

I began this study in search of insight regarding how to constantly value the powerful role of language and discourse as a support for early literacy acquisition. The multilayered design allowed me to explore this intersection between participant understandings regarding language acquisition and early literacy learning. The time I spent revealed the necessity of ongoing professional development and a community of teachers committed to observing language and literacy through a strength-based lens.

In a literacy intervention with so much powerful data, Clay (2016) has taught us to continuously recommit to cycles of improvement. Engaging in further inquiry and research to make Reading Recovery practices more overt, uncover areas of growth, and grow increasingly consistent in strong educational practice can lead to more students becoming literate. I believe the reflective nature of the Reading Recovery community is a powerful force and one that has positively impacted the lives of many. In research, teaching and solidarity let us continue to do so.

Any flaws in the design are the result of my lack of understanding. I considered Kinloch and Pedro's (2014) stance on humanizing research intently as I engaged participants in cycles of inquiry and conversations. I was encouraged by their work to,

> Meaningfully and openly collaborate with participants to learn about the complexities of human lives, the conditions under which people engage in teaching and learning, and the ways positions (e.g., as researcher vs. participant, or as teacher vs. student) can shift as relationships are fostered (p. 45).

I hope I was able to do this with the participants who willingly engaged in this work with me. They left me with a deeper understanding and much to continue to think about in my practice with students and my ongoing work with educators. I am eternally grateful to them for embarking on this journey with me and to all the Reading Recovery teachers who have and continue to engage in authentic, joyful, culturally, and linguistically rich conversations about books and stories with children.

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Appendix A

Reading Recovery Teacher Survey Permission Form

Dear Colleague,

You are invited to participate in a research study to understand interactions which strengthen or slow students as they map their oral language onto print when acquiring early literacy skills. This constructivist grounded theory study will form my dissertation at Lesley University.

The qualitative data collection begins with a survey to explore stories about what you have experienced when facilitating student language and literacy acquisition. This survey is completely voluntary, but responses will be shared anonymously with Reading Recovery teachers to inform focus group work. There are no negative consequences for not participating. After the survey, if you choose to participate in a focus group, there will be an additional informed consent to sign. Next steps include:

Teacher Understandings about Language an Early Literacy Acquisition

Constructivist Grounded Theory Data Collection Plan

January 2022	Initial Surveys
January 2022	Focus Groups
February 2022	Initial Interviews
February 2022	Teaching Observations
March 2022	Follow Up Interviews
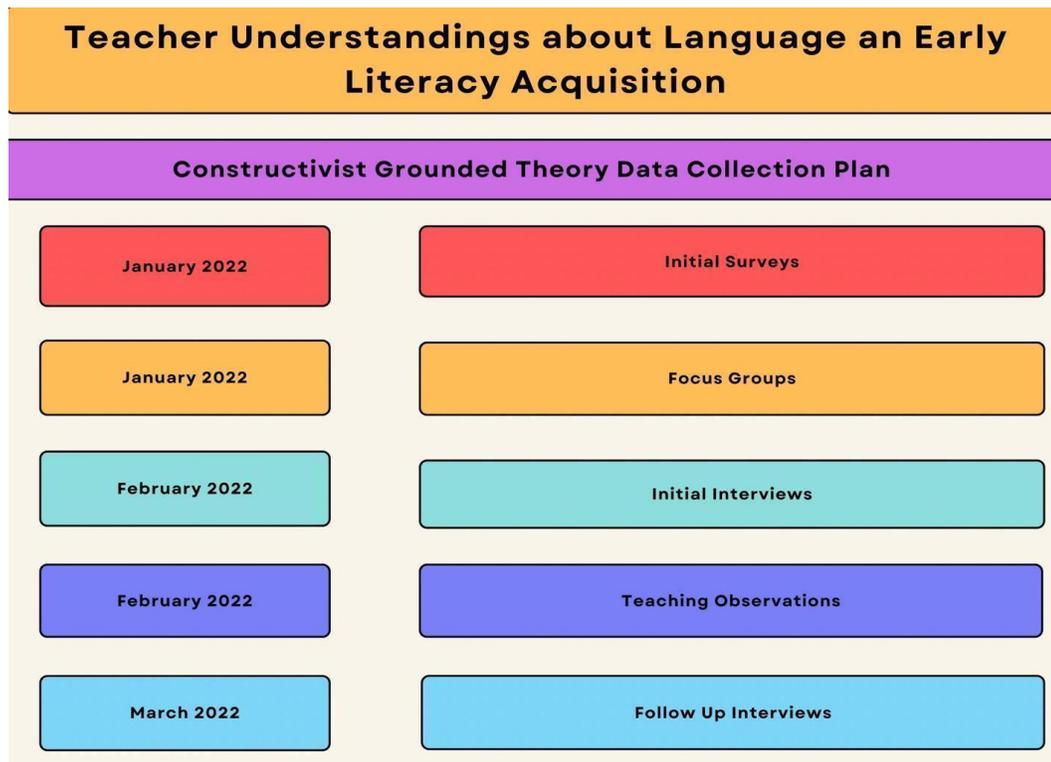
If you begin participating in this study, you can change your mind and opt out at any time. There will be informed consents to sign at each stage of the process. Engagement is completely voluntary.

Thank you for considering sharing your knowledge on this topic collectively,

Kelly L. McDermott

Appendix B

Reading Recovery Teacher Initial Survey

This survey is an initial questionnaire that is investigating Reading Recovery teacher understandings and interactions around varied student language patterns and early literacy acquisition. Please answer honestly and add any comments that could prove useful in the final section. Thank you!

Share a bit about your students:

·   I sometimes, always, never teach: students learning English as a second language

·   I sometimes, always, never teach: students whose dialect differs from mine

·   I sometimes, always, never teach: students who receive speech and language services

·   I sometimes, always, never teach: students whose oral language errors reflect typical six-year-old language acquisition patterns (lookeded, goed, etc.)

Open- Ended Questions:

1.   Tell of a time when student language was an asset as they learned to read and write

2.   Tell of a time when student language was a hindrance as they learned to read and write

Please add any additional comments about language and early literacy acquisition:

Appendix C

Reading Recovery Teacher Focus Group Work

These focus groups give us a chance to provide feedback on initial coding of the survey data and to revise interview questions by engaging in the following steps:

·   Researcher provinces a definition of Simultaneous In Vivo and Process Coding (whole group)
·   Discuss and provide feedback on In Vivo and Process coding of the initial questionnaire that investigated Reading Recovery teacher understandings and interactions around varied student language patterns and early literacy acquisition (small groups)
·   Categorization of conceptual words and phrases to consider conceptual or phenomenological implications (whole group)
·   Analyze draft interview questions and protocols to ensure teacher interviews are reflective of what is consider essential understandings in their work (small group)
·   Implications for initial interviews and observations are discussed (whole group)

Audio transcripts of these focus group sessions will be recorded and analyzed.

In Vivo Coding: also labeled "literal coding", in vivo as a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, "the terms used by [participants] themselves" (Strauss, 1987, p. 33). Attune yourself to words and phrases that seem to call for bolding, underlining, italicizing, highlighting, or vocal emphasis if spoken aloud. Their salience may be attributed to such features as impacting nouns, action-oriented verbs, evocative word choices, clever or ironic phrases, similes, and metaphors, etc. If the same words, phrases, or variations thereof are used often by the participant (such as "I don't know" in the example above), and seem to merit an In Vivo Code, apply it. In Vivo Codes "can provide a crucial check on whether you have grasped what is significant" to the participant and may help "crystallize and condense meanings" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57).

Process Coding: also labeled "action coding" will simultaneously be used since it implies broader concepts. Process Coding uses gerunds ("-ing" words) exclusively to connote action in the data (Charmaz, 2002). Simple observable activity (e.g., reading, play- ing, watching TV, drinking coffee) and more general conceptual action (e.g., struggling, negotiating, surviving, adapting) can be coded as such through a Process Code. The processes of human action can be "strategic, routine, random, novel, automatic, and/or thoughtful" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 247). Processes also imply actions intertwined with the dynamics of time, such as those things that emerge, change, occur sequences, or become strategically implemented through time (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011, p. 253; Saldaña, 2003).

Appendix D

Reading Recovery Teacher Original Questions for Initial Interview

These interviews give us a chance to further discuss themes and concepts that arose in the initial survey and through focus group discussions deepening our collective wisdom around Reading Recovery teacher understandings and interactions regarding varied student language patterns and early literacy acquisition. If you agree, audio transcripts will be recorded for later analysis, which I will share with you if you are interested. Interview questions will be revised during the focus group sessions and may include the following:

In terms of your understanding of the role of student language in fostering early literacy acquisition:

1. What do you remember understanding about the role of student language in fostering early literacy acquisition prior to Reading Recovery training?
2. What would you say your understandings are now?
3. How do you think you learned this?
4. How do these understandings impact your interactions with all students?
5. How do your understandings impact your interactions with students whose language differs greatly from your own?
6. What do you think this might have to do with persistent early literacy opportunity gaps along cultural, economic, and linguistic lines across varied US schools and districts?
7. What have you seen or experiences in school that may represent bias towards children who speak in varied dialects, discourse patterns and languages?
8. What do you do to counteract this?
9. What are some mistakes you have made in past instruction that you are working to rectify?
10. In terms of observing your understandings in daily lessons:
11. What might be seen in your teaching that could be viewed as honoring children's language as a strength?
12. What might be seen in your teaching that could be viewed as culturally proficient teaching?
13. What might be seen in your teaching that could be viewed as linguistically proficient teaching?
14. Anything else you'd like to add?
15. Reading Recovery is an early literacy intervention that systematically trains teachers to consider both language and literacy and to view children from a strength-based lens.
16. Talk about how you use your understandings to leverage varied student language patterns as an asset in order to allow for accelerated literacy learning.
17. What Reading Recovery practices do you think are already explicitly linked to Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices?
18. What do you think could be made clearer or doesn't apply?
19. What critical understandings and interactions around student language do you find positively impact student literacy outcomes?

Appendix E

Reading Recovery Teacher Questions for Initial Interview (Finalized with Teacher Participants)
These interviews give us a chance to further discuss themes and concepts that arose in the initial survey and through focus group discussions deepening our collective wisdom around Reading Recovery teacher understandings and interactions regarding varied student language patterns and early literacy acquisition.

1. What do you remember understanding about the role of student language in fostering early literacy acquisition prior to Reading Recovery training?
2. How often do you administer the Record of Oral Language?
     1. With which students do you utilize this assessment?
     2. How do you use the information you gather?
     3. Are there other tools you use?
     4. Do you keep track of the child's longest utterance?
     5. If so, how do you use this data?
3. What do you currently understand about the role of student language in fostering early literacy acquisition?
     1. How do you think you learned this?
     2. How do these understandings impact or change your interactions with all students?
     3. How do these understandings impact your interactions with students whose language differs greatly from your own?
     4. What do you think this might have to do with persistent early literacy opportunity gaps along cultural, economic, and linguistic lines across varied US schools and districts?
4. What have you seen or experienced in school that may represent bias towards children who speak in varied dialects, discourse patterns and languages?
     1. What have you done or are you currently doing to counteract this?
     2. Reflecting on any of these issues in conjunction with your past instruction, what might you work to rectify?
5. Reading Recovery is an early literacy intervention that systematically trains teachers to consider both language and literacy and to view children from a strength-based lens. Talk about how you use student language patterns as an asset in order to allow for accelerated literacy learning.
     1. Can you give a few specific examples from your daily practice?
     2. Do you plan for this work in your predictions of progress?
     3. Is there evidence of this in your daily lesson records?
6. What opportunities do you engage in to learn about the language and home experiences of each child?
     1. How does this help you engage in conversations with students?
     2. How does this help you explicitly teach individual students?
     3. Are you involved in family conferences with classroom teachers?
     4. Have you invited families in to see lessons?
          1. If so, what have you learned?
7. What Reading Recovery practices do you think are already explicitly linked to Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices?
     1. What do you think could be made clearer or doesn't apply?
8. What critical understandings and interactions around student language do you find positively impact student literacy outcomes?

Appendix F

Original Reading Recovery Teacher Sample Observation Protocol

These observations give us a chance to observe interactions during teaching in order to deepen our collective wisdom around varied student language patterns and early literacy acquisition and to see if what we say is important about an asset-based lens on student language can actually be seen and detailed in teaching observations. Field notes will be taken using the following Observation Protocols. Observation Protocols will be revised after the focus group sessions with Teacher Leaders who are not participating in the study and may include the following:

Reading Recovery Instructional Routine	Teaching	Outcome
Familiar Reading Are efforts to leverage student language into texts visible? If so, what do we see or hear?		
Running Record on Yesterday's New Book Are efforts to leverage student language into texts visible? If so, what do we see or hear?		
Letter and Word Study Are efforts to leverage student language as an asset visible? If so, what do we see or hear?		
Composing and Transcribing a Written Message Are efforts to honor student language visible as they write? If so, what do we see or hear?		
Orientation to the New Book Are students invited into the conversation? Are students given an opportunity to hear and use new language patterns? If so, what do we see or hear?		
First Reading of the New Book Are efforts to leverage student language into texts visible? If so, what do we see or hear?		
Additional Notes		

Appendix G

Reading Recovery Teacher Final Observation Protocol (after teacher participant review)

These observations give us a chance to observe interactions during teaching in order to deepen our collective wisdom around varied student language patterns and early literacy acquisition. Observation Protocols will be drafted during the focus group sessions and may include the following:

Reading Recovery Instructional Routine	Notes on Observations of Teaching	Evidence of Teacher Leveraging Student Language for Learning
Familiar Reading		
Running Record on Yesterday's New Book		
Letter and Word Study		
Composing a Written Message		
Transcribing a Written Message		
Cut-up Story		
Orientation to the New Book		
First Reading of the New Book		
Additional Notes		

Conversations before or after the lesson
Longest Utterance

Appendix H

Original Reading Recovery Teacher Sample Questions for Final Interview

These interviews give us a chance to expand or further explain themes and concepts that arose in the initial interview and during observations regarding varied student language patterns and early literacy acquisition. Audio transcripts of these interviews will be recorded for later analysis if you agree. Interview questions may include the following:

1. Talk about the language interactions in the lesson observed
2. Talk about the literacy progress of this student
3. Talk about efforts you made to honor this child's language in this lesson
   -Do you think those efforts may have been visible?
   -If so, what might have been captured as you were observed
4. Talk about interactions you have had that you think helped this student's learning accelerate
5. Talk about moments you think interactions hindered learning
6. Talk about your current understandings about how to value all student language patterns as an asset for foundational literacy learning
7. Please take the time to expand or explain anything you have thought about or considered during our work together

Appendix I

Reading Recovery Teacher Questions for Final Interview (after critical friend review)

1. Reflect on what you are specifically and deliberately thinking about the conversations you have with children
    (a) What are you introducing? Why did you choose that? Why this book? What about the language in this book as it applies to this child?
    (b) What are you working on with this child as a writer? Why did you choose that? How do you think the conversations you had before and during writing supported and expanded this child as a writer?
    (c) How do you leverage this student's oral language as a strength when selecting these letters, sounds and words for this child?
    (d) Can you share a conversation you had with this child when they were deeply rooted in a meaning they cared about (fix language)?

2. What was this child's language like when you started teaching? What are the ways you are seeing this grow and change? What have you been doing to support and expand this? If you are not seeing expansion what is next?

3. What might be learned, in terms of culturally and linguistically responsive practices from this Reading Recovery lesson?