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COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION IN SECOND GRADE CLASSROOMS: INVESTIGATING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT COMPREHENSION ACQUISITION

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COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION IN SECOND GRADE CLASSROOMS: INVESTIGATING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT COMPREHENSION ACQUISITION

by

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Dedication

To my family who support me, challenge and push me when needed, and give me unconditional love. I would not be the person I am today without each and every one of you. I am blessed by your love and presence in my life.

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COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION IN SECOND GRADE CLASSROOMS: INVESTIGATING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT COMPREHENSION ACQUISITION

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the ways in which teachers scaffold students' acquisition of reading comprehension skills. This semester-long study employed ethnographic methods of data collection, including classroom observations, teacher interviews, and video and audio recordings of classroom events. Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and discourse analysis, informed by Mercer (1987). Two case studies offer detailed portraits of the nature of comprehension instruction in second grade classrooms. Findings indicate that teacher directed scaffolding of comprehension strategies and a classroom environment that supported engagement and understanding of text afforded young readers opportunities to acquire strategies that assist in making meaning from text. Study findings also suggest that a continuum of support within teacher-led lessons provided the students occasions to observe and to participate in comprehension strategy use in a supportive context. This study offers insight on pedagogical practices that support young readers in acquiring comprehension skills and strategies.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The ways in which readers comprehend text and reading comprehension instruction has drawn much attention from the educational community. Unlike other areas of reading research and development such as phonics instruction and word recognition, there has been little contention in the educational community concerning the efficacy of comprehension instruction and the importance of research that may inform pedagogical practices (Duke 2002; Pressley, 1997). Over the past 40 years, educational research in the area of comprehension has deepened our understanding of the factors that influence comprehension as well as effective methods for teaching comprehension strategies to students (Pearson and Fielding, 1991; Pressley, Collins, 2002).

As the field of educational research continues to expand, however, what we learn influences how we view comprehension and has implications for comprehension instruction. For example, as educational researchers begin to investigate the role of culture, identity, and learning in socio-cultural contexts, the knowledge gained from these studies has an impact on what we know about how the student comprehends and how he/ she learns to comprehend. Understanding comprehension instruction then becomes about understanding not just how to teach strategies but how comprehension instruction fits within the classroom community. Recent research suggests that not only strategy instruction is important but also the discussions students make about texts (Nystrand, 2006; Pressley & Collins, 2002). As we continue to learn more about strategy instruction and discussion in the classroom, we recognize the importance of these

two areas but do not yet fully know how these two areas work together in supporting students' overall text comprehension within a classroom culture.

Further, while much research (Kong & Pearson 2003; Pressley, 1997; Pressley & Collins, 2002) has been conducted on comprehension instruction, the majority of this research has taken place with students in the upper grades (Stahl, 2004; Ivey, 2002; National Instrute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Historically, early reading instruction has focused on decoding and fluency rather than attending to comprehension skills (Stahl, 2008; Duke 2002). However, there is a research base to support comprehension instruction in the primary grades and researchers such as Duke and Pearson (2002), Block and Pressley (2002), Baker (2008), and Stahl (2004) call for more research on comprehension instruction with novice readers. Few studies have considered the demands of reading acquisition and developmental needs of the novice reader with the comprehension strategies that have shown to be effective with older readers (Stahl, 2004; Smolkin & Donovan 2003). An exception to this trend, Smolkin and Donovan (2003) argue that teachers who engage in comprehension instruction in the primary grades are supporting students in what they call "comprehension acquisition." Smolkin and Donovan propose gradually devoting attention to text comprehension and comprehension strategies beginning in preschool and continuing through second grade. While Smolkin and Donovan propose such a comprehension building time, there is little research "on how teachers in primary classrooms incorporate comprehension instruction and small group student-led interactions into a balanced literacy program for novice readers" (Stahl, 2009, p. 335).

Moreover, there is evidence that comprehension instruction is not taking place in classrooms in the ways nor with the frequency that educational researchers advocate (Ness,

2011; Pressley 1997; Pearson, 2002). Duke and Pearson (2002) found comprehension instruction to be rarely addressed in primary grade reading curriculum, and the small amount of attention devoted focused predominantly on narrative text rather than expository text. Block and Pressley (2007) found core reading programs lacked multi-strategy instruction and frequently suggested teaching one strategy per week. As we begin to think about classrooms as cultures, we need to think about instruction within that culture, not instructional activities in isolation. Perhaps we are not seeing comprehension instruction to the degree researchers advocate because of the inattention to the embedded nature of strategy instruction within the classroom community. Pearson (1996) recognized "what goes under the name of skill, strategy, or structure instruction is much more accessible, interesting and sensible when it is embedded in a real problem, a real text, or a real body of content… the best way to help students develop highly transferable, context free literacy tools is to teach these as if they were entirely context bound" (p. 271). Portraits of classroom instruction that illuminate the ways teachers support students in comprehension acquisition, specifically in primary grades, can inform the ways in which comprehension instruction occurs.

The core of this study is comprehension instruction in second grade classrooms – not just direct strategy instruction, nor solely the discussions around texts; but rather how comprehension instruction is integrated within the classroom and how it lays the foundation for students to acquire strategies for understanding texts as they grow more complex. In the following section, I discuss, from a socio-constructivist theoretical perspective, the ways in which the discussions in the classroom aid students in constructing meaning around text.

Theoretical Frame

Sociocultural theories of learning suggest that language plays an important role in cognitive developmental processes (Vygotsky, 1978; Mercer, 2000; Wertsch, 1991). In opposition to traditional theories of learning, suggesting knowledge is transmitted to the student by the teacher through practice and memorization, sociocultural theorists emphasize that people use language to make sense out of experiences, individually and jointly (Wells, 2001; Mercer, 1995). From a sociocultural perspective, learning is interactive with language serving as a mediator of children's thinking and learning (Hicks, 1995; Kong & Pearson, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978).

Sociocultural theory views teaching and learning as a culturally sensitive, interactive process where both the learner and the teacher play important roles in the learning process. When the learner and a more knowledgeable other engage in a joint activity, initially the learner's situational understanding might be different from that of the more knowledgeable other. Over time, through joint participation where the more knowledgeable other assists the learner, offering support gradually in what Vygotsky (1978) called "zone of proximal development," the learner increases his understanding (Hicks, 1995; Wertsch, 1984; Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976). According to Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development is a learner's range of ability with and without assistance from a more knowledgeable other. What a learner can do with help from a peer today he will be able to do tomorrow without assistance, thus preparing for collaboration new tasks and continued learning. Talk within the zone of proximal development is central to the development of understandings and knowledge, and acts as a mediator between the more knowledgeable other and the learner (Wertsch, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978).

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) used the metaphor of scaffolding to describe the learning that takes place with the zone of proximal development. According to Wood, Bruner, and Ross, the task itself is not changed, but is made easier with assistance from the more knowledgeable other. Like scaffolding supports on a building under construction, instructional scaffolding begins with a greater amount of assistance, supporting the new structure (or in our case the novice learner) until it reaches a point where assistance is no longer needed. Scaffolding within the learner's zone of proximal development enables the novice learner to perform at a higher level than he or she would be able to independently. As the novice learns throughout the engagement in the activity along with the scaffolded support of the more knowledgeable other, there is a shift in the responsibility for the performance as the learner takes over a greater role in task completion and the more knowledgeable other gradually reduces the level of support. Bruner (1983) described this shift in responsibility as the "handover principle," when the learner accepts and acquires new skills as the support is gradually reduced.

In classrooms and other academic settings, research from the sociocultural perspective has shown us how discourse, or the language used while scaffolding learning, is a mediator of students' learning (Cazden, 1983; Hicks, 1995; Moll, 1990). Cazden, (2001), Mercer (1995), and Edwards and Westgate (1987) have paid close attention to classroom talk and its contributions to the context of learning and the use of language as a tool for knowledge construction. If we view teaching and learning as guided participation, as Tharp and Gallimore (1988) do, the language between the students and teacher becomes integral to the ways in which skills and understandings are supported and appropriated. Rather than knowledge being handed over to the child, the child is apprenticed (or inducted) into learning as he or she interacts with others.

Through this joint or guided participation, students and teachers engage in conversations and discussions that, over time, may help form a community of learners, centered around common purposes. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that communities of practice establish ways of thinking and patterns of problem solving based on the shared experiences of the group. Participation in group activities "can be both a means to learning and an end in and of itself, inasmuch as learning involves the engagement/participation in the practices of the particular communities or cultures" (Maloch, 2008, p. 323). When those experiences are centered around text, the discussions afford students the opportunity to engage in shared literacy practices and students are apprenticed into ways of approaching texts.

The interactions between teacher and student, as well as those among students, afford students the opportunities to build shared purposes and shared understandings that contribute to a community that supports students' learning. Instead of thinking of the apprenticeship model of learning as two-dimensional, a relationship between a novice and a master, Lave and Wenger (1991) recognize the more dynamic nature of learning that occurs within a complex set of social relationships. Apprenticeship in learning occurs among apprentices of varying levels and more knowledgeable others. Because classrooms have a group of students and a teacher present for the specific purpose of learning, each participant takes part in the community. In a classroom community of practice the enacted curriculum is organic, ever changing, and evolving based on the contributions of the participants. Because members of the classroom engage in joint activities and discussions, shared practices evolve enabling the members of the classroom community to draw upon one another in order to enhance overall learning. Even those students who do not appear to "actively participate" are still peripheral participants, learning from the

shared experiences and thought of other group members. Many times these learning discussions take place in whole group settings where practices are shared and made public. These practices add to the repertoire of an individual who might not have otherwise approached the learning situation in the same ways as his/her peers. The community of practice then may influence a learner's approach to an independent task.

The talk the teacher uses is especially important in mediating the construction of knowledge and adding to the community of practice (Cazden, 2001; Mercer, 1995; Maloch, 2002; Wenger 2006). Nystrand (2006) stated, "positive effects of classroom discourse are best understood not mechanistically (x practice yields y effect) but rather as organically related to the epistemic environments various modes of classroom discourse create for learning" (p. 393). Much in the way Lave and Wenger speak to classrooms becoming a community of practice, Au (1993) found classroom discourse significantly shapes literacy strategies due to the way it establishes classroom epistemology. What counts as knowledge and understanding in any classroom is largely shaped by what questions the teachers ask and how they respond to their students.

Reading and writing are personal processes, which reflect the developing skills of the individual learner (Rogoff, 1990). However, learning, especially literacy learning, is not a linear, isolated skill acquisition process; but rather a social process rooted in the interactions between the learners and the more knowledgeable other. Scooter and Rudge (2005) argued that the most productive classroom learning discussions are when teachers retain considerable control of the text and topic while still allowing students the opportunity to freely contribute their ideas. Allowing students interpretive flexibility and the opportunity to elaborate their ideas for

extended periods of time often is referred to as dialogic instruction (Mercer 1991; Nystrand, 2006).

Dialogic instruction highlights relationships among teachers, students, and content where content is the major focus of the instructional conversation. Dialogic instruction includes a sharing of power. The actions of a dialogic teacher can be understood on a continuum with an autocratic instructional method at one end and an overly permissive method on the other. In the middle of the continuum are dialogic-enabling behaviors (Guilar, 2006), which make possible pedagogical practices where teacher and students co-construct meaning. Dialogically organized instruction is thus more student-centered and more conversational than recitation. Nystrand (2006) draws upon Bakhtin (1981) to understand the role of dialogue, instruction, learning, and specifically the development of reading comprehension. Dialogue between a teacher, students, and their peers around texts afford the conversants the ability to dynamically figure things out together. These learning situations are dialogic because of the juxtaposition of perspectives, which gives shape to the discourse. The discourse associated with the juxtaposition of ideas and the figuring out around text contributes to comprehension as a dynamic, dialogic event.

Other educational researchers working from a sociocultural perspective have looked at language as a social tool and also as a pedagogical tool (Cazden, 2001; Dyson, 2003; Mercer, 1991). Studies have illuminated the sophisticated ways in which teachers use language to apprentice students' literacy practices (Almasi, 1995; Maloch, 2002; Sipe, 2000). Likewise, O'Connor and Michaels (1996) suggest the importance of investigating how teachers engage in sophisticated ways of orchestrating classroom discussions as a means of apprenticing students into intellectual processes. Similarly Tharp and Gallimore (1988) call for assisting students'

performance so that they might gain the abilities to form, express, and exchange ideas in speech and writing before they are able to fully perform these skills independently. Goldenberg and Patthey Chavez, (1995) in their look at instructional conversations in a classroom, found students picked up the language the teacher introduced in whole group conversations. Students appropriated "teacher used terms" by using specific vocabulary and concepts in individual writing and later conversations. The appropriation of the "teacher used terms" indicated the teacher language provided a scaffold and a way for students to express their thinking around text. Goldenberg and Patthey Chavez argued the teacher language created context for apprenticing students in constructing understandings around concepts and ways in which to approach text.

Thus, prior work suggests that teacher discourse supports students as they acquire new strategies and skills. Additionally, educational researchers have found the efficacy of direct and scaffolded strategy instruction to enhance readers' comprehension of text. How teachers meld these findings into instruction that supports young readers in their acquisition of comprehension skills is not well-known.

Research Questions

Working from Vygotskian principles, observing the language used for instruction is important to understanding the dynamics of teaching and learning. Langer and Applebee (1986) argue for educational researchers to consider teaching and learning that systematically relates individual development and the social processes in which the development occurs. Instead of treating the development of literacy skills as individual development or separately examining effective instruction, Langer and Applebee argue that it is through the intersection of development and instruction the learner gains the skills needed to use language to understand and

act within their world. In *Improving Comprehension Instruction in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade*, Shanahan and his colleagues (2010) assert that teachers should provide direct explanation of comprehension strategies and model how strategies assist young readers in learning from text. Although minimal evidence exists that discussions around text enhances comprehension of young students, the NCEE panel draws upon positive effects of research with older readers to assert that high quality discussions around text should be included in primary comprehension instruction (Shanahan et al., 2010). To that end, this study intends to investigate the pedagogical practices around text that foster and support comprehension development. Given the theoretical framework described above, attention will be paid to the instruction, the discursive practices, and the classroom in which the instruction is situated. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

- What is the nature of comprehension instruction in two second grade classrooms?
- What is the nature of teacher and student interactions around text in these classrooms?
- Specifically, in what ways do teachers model and scaffold comprehension strategies?

The remaining chapters of this dissertation address these questions in a number of ways. Chapter II includes a literature review of the research and provides a context for exploring the nature of comprehension instruction as it occurs in classrooms of young readers. Chapter III describes the methods used to investigate these questions. Chapter IV provides two cases that offer thick description of the two classrooms where the investigation occurred and addresses the

questions from the perspective of each classroom. Chapter V offers a cross case analysis of the two cases, along with theoretical and practical implications and possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is much we have learned from educational research on the comprehension process and comprehension instruction. Over the past quarter of a century education researchers have sought to define comprehension and the nuances associated with successfully comprehending text Pearson, 2008; Stahl 2004). As the educational community has learned from the studies on the nature of comprehension, comprehension has become more clearly defined and specified (Block & Duffy, 2008). In 1992, Pearson, Roehler, Dole, and Duffy described an expert reader as one that comprehends what she reads, which requires a level of engagement, competency in decoding, and fluency. Ten years later, the RAND report (2002) offered a definition of comprehension stating that it is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Close to ten years after the RAND report, Shanahan and his colleagues in their Institute of Educational Sciences report (2010) drew upon the RAND report definition of comprehension, emphasizing the importance of both what the author has written and the readers' ability to use background knowledge and thinking to make sense of text. Similarly, we have considerable research on the teaching of reading comprehension that continues to define instructional best practices for the teaching of comprehension; (Beck, McKeown, and Jucan, 1997; Block & Lacina 2009; Collins & Duffy 2002; Israel & Duffy, 2009; Stahl, 2004) research suggesting the important role of the teacher in modeling comprehension strategies and explicitly teaching comprehension strategies (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Kong & Pearson, 2002; Smolkin & Donovan, 2002). In this literature review, I will explore the research in these two broad areas—what we know about the

process of comprehension and what we know about the teaching of comprehension. To frame my discussion of the literature, I will utilize the following questions:

- What is the history of research on comprehension, and how has the educational research community come to define comprehension?
- How does research on comprehension inform us about how comprehension should be taught?

History of Comprehension Research and the Evolution of the Definition of Comprehension

In this section, I will discuss the history of comprehension instruction research and the surge of research that informed the educational community in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Before the research of the 1980s and 1990s, comprehension was viewed as something that was "caught rather than taught" (Pearson, et al., 1982). The prevailing belief in reading was that if students were able to successfully read the words, they also understood the words they were reading. Not surprisingly, research on comprehension instruction, at the time, indicated that what teachers named as comprehension instruction actually was much closer to assessment (Durkin, 1979). Compounding the issue was a heavy emphasis on phonics instruction and the fact that word identification dominated much of instructional practices (Pearson, et al.1982). Over the past 30 years a considerable amount of educational research has focused on defining comprehension and what effective comprehension instruction entails. As a result, we have seen comprehension instruction evolve from a list of product oriented "questions at the end of the

chapter" to include discussions and activities designed to more actively involve students in the construction of meaning around text.

To trace this evolution of comprehension instruction, I begin with Durkin. Arguably, the focus on reading comprehension instruction began with Durkin's (1979) controversial article in the late 1970's that called attention to the lack of reading comprehension instruction in middle-grade classrooms. Durkin observed over 4, 400 minutes of reading instruction in 24 middle grade classrooms looking specifically for comprehension instruction. She found little evidence of teachers showing or teaching students how to successfully understand texts. Instead, Durkin's study revealed the teaching of comprehension occurred in less than 1% (28 minutes) of all reading instruction observed. What teachers were doing in classrooms related to comprehension amounted to assessment more than instruction: assigning students to read and demonstrate their comprehension of text by answering questions. Durkin's work revealed there was "nothing instructive about (comprehension) instruction" (Durkin, 1979; Pearson & Fielding, 1991). As a result, Durkin's work sparked what has been referred to as "The Golden Age of Comprehension" (Pearson, 2009; Yopp, 2003), over two decades of research on comprehension and comprehension instruction that has informed the educational community (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Tierney & Cunningham, 1984).

While Durkin was investigating the comprehension instruction in classrooms, educational psychologists were investigating how a reader's schemata influenced comprehension (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Smith, Adams & Schorr (1978) discovered that subjects were much more successful in learning sentence combinations when they were readily integratable rather than unrelated. In their study subjects were presented with two sentences, seemingly unrelated such

as, “The banker broke the bottle.” And “The banker did not delay the trip.” Subjects were then presented with one additional sentence that either linked the topics of the previous two sentences or was not related. Subjects needed much less time to learn the third sentence when it was related to the two the previous two topics than those that were presented with the unrelated sentence. The researchers found that interconnections among concepts allowed participant to relate the sentences to existing schema and thus facilitated retrieval and verification (Smith, et. al. 1978; Anderson & Pearson, 1983). In a study investigating the role of schema and text inferencing, Anderson, Reynolds, Shallert and Goetz (1977) presented college students with reading passages that could be interpreted as either a prisoner trying to escape from his cell or as a wrestler trying to break a hold. A second passage presented could interpreted as a musical quartet getting together to practice or as four people getting together to play cards. Musical majors and physical education majors selected the specialized schema (wrestling or quartet) for the passage consistent with their experiences rather than the more common schema (Anderson, et. al. 1977; Anderson & Pearson, 1983). These studies as well as other in the field of educational psychology found that schema, what the reader already knows, helps them to better understand the text they are reading (Pearson & Anderson, 1982; Pearson, et. al, 1992).

Durkin’s study as well as the growing understanding about the connection between schemata and reading comprehension caused researchers and educators alike to consider the nature of comprehension instruction, what it is, and how it should be realized in classroom instruction. Therefore research on comprehension in the 1980’s mainly consisted of two groups, one seeking to define and answer what comprehension actually is; the other group seeking strategies that support students’ comprehension of text (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984; Pearson,

et. al. 1992). For the purposes of this literature review I will discuss the research investigating the nature of comprehension instruction in this section. In the next section I will discuss the research dedicated to comprehension instruction.

Research in the 1980's was strongly impacted by the emergence of schema theory in the field of educational psychology (Anderson, 1977, Collins, Brown & Larkin, 1980; Pearson, 2010; Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). A prevalent metaphor for reading that emerged during this period was the "reader as builder" – an active constructor of meaning, sifting through the raw materials of reading (the text and clues left by the author) and the vast knowledge held within the reader to revise a dynamic model of text meaning (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Collins et al., 1980; Pearson, 2010). Even though schema theory is a theory about the structure of human knowledge as it is represented in our memory and not a theory solely about reading comprehension, it resonated with educators and educational researchers and was appropriated to comprehension models throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Pearson, 2010; Rumelhart, 1981). An example of a study that connected the role of schemata and reading comprehension conducted by Hansen and Pearson (1983) investigated the role of pre-reading and prediction questions before reading. Their study, conducted with fourth-grade readers, found that pre-reading and predicting questions as well as discussion about the purpose of reading the text greatly improved students' comprehension of new stories. Similarly, Johnston (1984) investigated reading comprehension questions on a reading passage with over 200, eighth-grade students from two distinct subpopulations within three school districts. Students were given an intelligence test as well as a reading passage with 18 questions. Johnston's results indicated a student's bias over the subject matter of the reading had a greater influence on their ability to answer the reading

comprehensions questions correctly than intelligence test scores. One major influence of the studies that drew upon schema theory to explain comprehension was the greater importance placed on the reader of the text than the text itself (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Pearson, 2010). Thus, educational research shifted from studies aimed at attempts to improve students' comprehension by focusing on text variables to attempts to improve students' comprehension by teaching strategies for approaching text and activating background knowledge (Tierney & Cunningham, 1984). Many of these studies will be discussed in the later section on strategy instruction.

Much of the research in the 1980s and 1990s sought to identify ways in which proficient readers comprehend as a means to operationalize reading comprehension and identify strategies for instruction (El-Dinary et al., 1992; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pressley & McDonald, 1997). These studies also drew upon the work occurring in the field of educational psychology and increased understandings of schema theory and background knowledge (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Pearson & Fielding, 1991) to help define what might assist a reader. As a means of identifying what successful readers do to comprehend, many researches asked their study participants to verbalize or think aloud about the processes in which they were engaged in order to gain insight into the otherwise unobservable processes (Anderson & Pearson, 1985; Johnson, 1992; Pressley et al., 1995). For example, Bereiter and Bird (1985) collected verbal protocols from good adult readers, who reported a variety of comprehension strategies they used as they read. The researchers identified the strategies most frequently used by the adult readers such as prediction, making connections, re-reading to clarify and taught these strategies to 80 students in grade 7 and 8 of average reading abilities. Pre-tests and post-tests of the students were given and

the results indicated the comprehension strategy instruction taught positively impacted students' reading comprehension. Similarly, Pearson et al. (1992) profiled readers of different abilities comparing and contrasting readers of different levels of expertise as they read text. Their inspection of the ways readers interacted with text yielded a list of characteristics that thoughtful, expert readers engage in while reading and comprehending text, which included activating background knowledge, making connections between texts and their lives, and re-reading when they realize that their understanding had been compromised.

Pearson and Raphael (1990) in their chapter, "Reading Comprehension as a Dimension of Thinking," drew upon three students' verbal protocols as a means of grounding their conceptual framework for comprehension. Drawing upon student talk for examples, Pearson and Raphael depicted reading comprehension as a series of concentric circles symbolizing the inter-relatedness of all the factors that influence how one constructs meaning. They argued the historical/cultural context of the nature of school and the social context (what is established as good reading) influenced the reader's comprehension of texts just as much as the personal goals and motivation of the reader and familiarity with text type. In 1995, Pressley and Afflerbach reviewed all the published studies through 1995 that sought to identify comprehension processes used by proficient readers. From this exhaustive review the researchers were able to synthesize the findings and developed a list of comprehension processes involved in skillful reading to serve as a framework for determining what strategies should be taught in classrooms. This (and other) research indicated that direct, explicit instruction on comprehension strategies yielded positive outcomes in the ways readers' comprehended text; much of this research will be discussed in detail in the next section (Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pearson et al., 1992).

Additionally, educational researchers interested in comprehension produced several reviews of the research in efforts to synthesize and offer ideas for future research (Levin & Pressley, 1981; Pearson, et al. 1992; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pressley, 1997; Pressley, 2000; Pressley, 2002). Most comprehension studies included in these reviews were studies assessing the impact of a particular strategy on students' comprehension. Tierney and Cunningham's (1984) review found there to be a considerable amount of research attempting to define comprehension and ways researchers advocated for comprehension to be taught, and they raised issue with the trend of emphasizing systematic, sequential aspects of strategy instruction with little emphasis on aesthetic aspects of reading. Similarly, Pearson and Fielding (1991) in their review for the *Second Handbook of Reading Research* noticed a similar trend and found it regrettable that little attention had been given to the aesthetic side of comprehension and comprehension instruction. Perhaps partly as a result of these reviews, research on comprehension instruction began to include more qualitative studies that looked at the nature of direct strategy instruction, rather than just the impact of this instruction. El-Dinary, Pressley and Schuder (1992), for example, conducted descriptive studies aimed at describing the nature of comprehension instruction in classrooms where there was evidence that direct strategy comprehension instruction was occurring. They found that a rich weaving of direct explanation and instructional discussions contributed to students' understandings of text and building of comprehension strategies. He and his colleagues labeled this instruction Transactional Strategy Instruction (this approach will be further explored in the next section of this literature review).

The end of the twentieth century left the educational community with much information on comprehension and comprehension instruction (Block & Pressley, 2002; Pressley, 2001;

Smolkin & Donovan, 2003). Studies indicated direct teaching of particular strategies such as summarizing or re-reading positively impacted student comprehension. The National Reading Panel report (2000) identified a list of core strategies that students should be taught to facilitate their comprehension. Although, the panel recommended the comprehension strategies be taught to primary grade students, almost none of the studies they sited were conducted in the primary grades. No Child Left Behind legislation, which set the expectation that all children will read at or above grade level by 2014, placed an emphasis not only on phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, and fluency for primary grade students but also emphasized the importance of comprehension instruction (Block & Lacina, 2009; Ness, 2011; Snow et al. 1998). Overwhelmingly researchers agree helping students to become independent comprehenders of text is hard work (Duke & Martin, 2008; Pearson & Duke, 2002; Stahl, 2009). The quality of teacher and student interactions around texts can assist students in acquiring meaning-making skills and strategies (Almasi 2009; Beck & McKeown, 1982; Maloch, 2002; Stahl, 2008). In the next section, I will review the research related comprehension instruction and how researchers advocate comprehension to be taught.

Comprehension Instruction

Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) found that directly teaching students to replicate the cognitive strategies found to be useful by skilled readers improved students' overall comprehension. Many educational researchers have proven that strategies play an important role in students comprehending text (Cartwright, 2008; Duke & Martin, 2008; Ruetzel et al., 2005; Stahl 2004). In this section I will discuss research centered on comprehension instruction. For the purposes of this portion of the literature review, I have chosen to organize the research

review around the following three instructional trends (1) single strategy instruction (2) multiple strategy instruction (3) discussion based instructional approaches.

Single strategy instruction.

Two types of research models have influenced the support of comprehension strategy instruction: studies that looked at good readers in an attempt to delineate techniques readers used to comprehend texts and experimental studies showing the efficacy of teaching students a particular strategy or group of strategies (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Pearson, Roheler, Dole & Duffy, 1992). These recommended strategies focused on techniques that encouraged students to approach texts in ways that would enhance comprehension, many of which are closely tied to schema theory mentioned in the previous section. For example, Morrow (1984) found kindergarten students who received instruction focused on story structure performed better on comprehension questions and story retelling when compared with students who did not receive the specific instruction. Similarly, Idol and Croll (1987) found teaching students story mapping, and Taylor and Beach (1984) found instruction on text structure to positively affect students' comprehension of text. Brown and Day (1983), in their study of fifth grade students, found that summarization or the ability to synthesize chunks of information read greatly assisted one's overall comprehension of text.

Another single strategy study shown to improve comprehension was using mental images to represent text while reading (Gambrell & Bales, 1986). Additionally, Graves, Cooke, and LeBerge (1983) found that building background knowledge by orally previewing the text before reading significantly aided in struggling students' comprehension of the story. Hansen (1981) investigated second grade readers who participated in pre-reading discussions designed to predict

story events based on previous experiences and practice in answering questions. Students who were taught strategies to connect prior knowledge and experiences with texts and to make inferences between text and prior knowledge were better able to successfully answer comprehension questions when compared with the control group not participating in the target instruction.

Between 1978 and the present we have seen an explosion in strategy instruction research (Block, 2008; Duke & Pearson 2002; Pearson, 2009; Stahl, 2004). In fact, Block and Duffy (2008) list over forty five recommended comprehension strategies researchers found to be effective between 1978 and 2000. Similarly, Dewitz, Jones and Lehy (2009) conducted a curriculum analysis of comprehension instruction in grades 2, 3, 4, and 5 present within the five most widely used core reading programs. The researchers found a plethora of reading skills and strategies advocated in the programs. So many, in fact, the researchers expressed concern that the programs may place more importance on the variety of skills and strategies and may dilute the emphasis on critical strategies that aid readers in comprehending texts. Block and Duffy (2009) suggest teachers focus on instructing students in nine strategies: predicting, monitoring, self-questioning, imaging, using fix up strategies, inferring, summarizing, evaluating, and synthesizing. Each of these core nine strategies, many of which draw upon and combine the 45 aforementioned strategies, have been researched and validated to be highly successful.

Many of the educational research studies that focused on comprehension strategy instruction not only identified the usefulness of the strategy but also addressed how the strategy should be taught to readers. Pearson and Gallagher (1983) supported what they called "direct strategy instruction" in which teachers demonstrate to students how to carry out particular

strategies, engage them in guided practice, followed by independent practice. Pearson and Gallagher summarized their approach by creating a visual model adapted from Campione's (1981) cognitive learning model, which was the basis for their popular gradual release model of instruction (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Pearson & Fielding, 1991). Dole et al. (1991) echoed the usefulness of explicit instruction in their list of instructional recommendations for comprehension strategies included in a cognitively based curriculum.

Roehler and Duffy (1984) proposed that direct instruction including teacher explanation and thinking-aloud while modeling strategy use positively impacted students' ability to use comprehension strategies. Following this type of introduction (direct explanation and modeling of strategy use) students then had an opportunity to practice the strategy with teacher assistance and feedback. Roehler and Duffy's model for effective strategy instruction drew upon Pearson and Gallagher's gradual release model and mirrored many of its pedagogical premises. Duffy et al (1987) evaluated the effects of direct explanation strategy instruction by researching third grade students who were taught reading using the direct explanation of strategies approach. After a full year of instruction, conditioned students outperformed control students on standardized reading assessments. Duffy, et al.'s research had a significant impact on the reading education community. Their results were widely popularized in many education periodicals read by teachers and administrators.

The work of Dole and Duffy and Pearson et al. (1992) greatly informed the educational community about comprehension instruction. Their studies showed the efficacy in explicitly and directly teaching students comprehension strategies and providing contexts that supported them in their use of the strategies. Sadly in Dewitz et. al's (2009) analysis of comprehension

instruction the researchers found that rarely did one of the five core reading programs follow the gradual release of responsibility model in comprehension strategy lessons, nor did the programs provide the amount of practice of strategies that were employed in the original studies.

Multiple strategy instruction.

While the work on single comprehension strategies greatly informed the educational community on effective reading practices and instruction, other researchers questioned the efficacy of teaching readers to use just one strategy at a time (Duffy et al, 1987; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Dole et al, 2009; Stahl, 2008). Building on the previous research recommending specific and explicit strategy instruction, researchers began to investigate teaching students to use a group of strategies, bundled together in a framework, to enhance reading comprehension (Palincar & Brown, 1986; Dole et al., 2009; Pressley et al., 1992; Duffy et al., 1987). For example, Palinscar and Brown (1984) found that careful and explicit modeling of reading strategies-- specifically, summarization, questioning, clarifying, and prediction—and then teaching students to use these strategies while reading, improved comprehension. Through what they called Reciprocal Teaching, Palinscar and Brown's students learned the four strategies in the context of small group instruction, where each student took turns being the teacher. As students participated in reciprocal teaching, they were explicitly taught the strategies of prediction, questioning, summarizing, and rereading in order to enhance their comprehension of the story. The results of Palinscar and Brown's study showed statistically significant differences in reading comprehension between students who were taught reciprocal teaching strategies and those that were not, and also added efficacy to explicitly teaching a small "bundled" group of comprehension strategies to students (Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Pressley & McDonald, 1997).

Like Pearson and his colleagues, Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Hampston, and Echevarria (1989) found that successful strategy instruction included a great deal of direct explanation of comprehension strategies, introduced gradually over time with cues to students to transfer the strategies to other situations. Harris and Pressley (1991) extended the description of direct strategy instruction to include a description of the constructivist nature of the direct explanation model. The findings from this research were echoed in the studies conducted by Brown and Coy-Ogan (1993) and Pressley, El Dinary, et al. (1992). Both qualitative studies investigated classroom strategy instruction over time and found direct explanation of strategies and teacher coaching, including mini-lessons, modeling strategy use throughout the day, and mini-lessons geared to student's needs attributed to the successful student acquisition and use of comprehension strategies.

Pressley and his colleagues (1992) completed an extensive qualitative study that intensively studied what they perceived to be the best comprehension strategy instruction in schools. What the researchers found was a much richer picture of strategy instruction—one that moved beyond the explicit, direct instructional model in earlier work to what Pressley and his colleagues called a transactional approach to strategic processing of text (Pressley et al., 1992). This study marked a shift in thinking about comprehension instruction from a more teacher-directed, skill set of text processing, where the purpose of reading was to take information away from the text, to a transactional view which combines the use of background knowledge, schema theory, and reader response theory, with comprehension strategy instruction, along with student and teacher transactions around text.

According to Pressley et al. (1992) transactional strategy instruction is dialogic in nature and occurs around student and teacher discussions of text. The term “transactional” was purposefully chosen to name this type of strategy instruction because of the ways it had been used in other educational research. As Pressley and his colleagues explained, strategy instruction is transactional in a psychological sense in that, although the teacher has a plan for the discussion of a text, activities and topics of discussion shift and evolve throughout the discussion of that text due to the transactions between the participants. Throughout the transaction, student responses affect the responses of other students and the teacher. How students respond to the teacher’s instruction shapes the teacher’s subsequent responses. Therefore, students have an active role in the type of instruction that occurs (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996).

Strategy instruction is also transactional in a literary sense in that understandings are jointly constructed as students interact with the text (Morrow, 1990). Their background knowledge, interests, and motivation influence the meaning one reader constructs from a text. However, when read as a group, the interpretations of the text are informed by the many interests, different backgrounds, and various motivations of each group member and are, therefore, richer because of the multiple perspectives, which in turn give way to community generated interpretations (Brown et al, 1996; Pressley et al., 1992).

The Pressley group conducted a variety of descriptive studies designed to reflect the day-to-day realities of comprehension strategy instruction in schools. As Pressley et al. (1992) state, “Pearson and his coauthors (as well as most other researchers who had designed and evaluated direct explanation of strategies) had relied exclusively on quantitative, hypotheses testing analysis in arriving at their conclusions, usually depending on outcome measures that only

indirectly reflected teaching and student learning. It was time to put flesh on the skeletal descriptions of strategy instruction provided previously" (p. 515). By interviewing and observing 31 teachers perceived to be the strongest in strategy instruction in a variety of grade levels and schools, Pressley and his colleagues found commonalities in the ways comprehension occurred (Pressley & McDonald, 1997). Although the nature of instruction differed across setting and grade levels, the instructional programs included a small repertoire of strategies validated as useful by previous research studies, including prediction, question generation, clarification seeking when confused, mental imagery, relating prior knowledge to context, and summarization.

Building upon the educational research of direct strategy instruction came transactional strategy instruction. Transactional strategy instruction recognized the importance that instruction focused on particular strategies, while at the same time considering the ways in which teachers scaffolded students appropriation of the named strategies. Pressley and McWharton (1997) found during transactional instruction there were no restrictions to order of strategy use or student jobs or roles. The flexibility of transactional approaches to comprehension instruction differed from reciprocal teaching and direct strategy instruction in that it succeeded in stimulating dialogue, which led to construction of meaning around text and improved comprehension.

Discussion based approaches to comprehension strategy instruction.

Sociocultural theory and the instructional models that root themselves in this theoretical perspective highlight learner collaboration and participation in a social, community context. Educational researchers have come to advocate dialogic instruction as a way of scaffolding literacy instruction (Rogoff, 1990; Tharpe & Gallimore, 1988). Studies on comprehension

instruction advocate active classrooms where students and teachers converse about texts in order to facilitate comprehension. These researchers argue that a low-risk environment where students are free to share ideas and opinions assist in the co-construction of meaning around texts (Cazden 2001, Mercer, 1999; Maloch, 2002). Book clubs (Raphael, 2001) and literature discussion groups (Almasi, 1996) encourage students to set their own purposes for reading and to share aesthetic and efferent responses to readings with peers to deepen thinking and enhance comprehension.

Research on classroom interaction patterns has revealed that a predominant interactional sequence during classroom instruction is IRE, or initiation, response, feedback or evaluation (Cazden 2001, Mehan, 1979, Mercer, 1995). In this interactional sequence the teacher holds the power over content and discussion turns, positioning students as passive encouraging students to contribute only to material the teacher directs and controls. Educational researchers have come to advocate for a more decentralized discussion format as a way of apprenticing students in comprehension strategies and approaching texts (Maloch, 2002; Sipe, 2000; Goldenberg, 1993; O'Connor and Michaels, 1981). Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) found that dialogic instruction had positive effects on student achievement when compared with more traditional instructional formats of lecture, recitation, and seatwork. Dialogic instruction draws from sociocultural perspectives on teaching and learning and involves teachers and students contributing ideas to a discussion where understandings evolve and meanings are co-constructed (Christoph and Nystrand, 2001; Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991; Mercer, 1995). Collaborative discussions around literacy events such as interactive read alouds and literature discussion groups provide opportunities for scaffolding of discursive practices in classrooms.

Tharp and Gallimore (1989) describe several classroom discussion patterns in which teachers and students co-construct meaning drawing upon spoken and written language, prior knowledge, and literary experiences in order to help students think, reason, comprehend, and understand important ideas. O'Connor and Michaels (1996) state that in order for students to gain facility in these intellectual practices they must receive social support and practice the relevant ways of talking and thinking. Interactive discussions around books provide students with a form of guided instruction, where the teacher serves as a co-participant in discussing story sequence, plot, text features, and connections with the intention that students begin to appropriate the active meaning-making strategies for use while reading independently. Instructional conversations scaffold students into more complex ways of thinking about text by offering space where interactions between more and less knowledgeable individuals contribute to knowledge development around texts as a shared process before having readers do so independently.

Goldenberg and Patthey-Chavez (1995) identify and explain salient and distinctive characteristics of instructional conversations that yielded positive learning outcomes. Here, I use the term "instructional conversations" to refer to interactive classroom discussions that scaffold students in their construction of sophisticated thinking and meaning-making strategies (Tharp & Gallimpre, 1991). Goldenberg and Patthey-Chavez describe a more specific form of instructional conversations outlining ways in which teachers and students are responsive to what others say, so that each statement builds upon, challenges or extends a previous one. This collaborative talk (Wells & Chang Wells, 1988) is orchestrated by the teacher so that students are engaged, and certain ideas are extended and elaborated upon creating shared knowledge around the text (Mercer, 1984). Although this dialogic form of instruction varies greatly from the

traditional IRE pattern, it is still somewhat traditional in that it is typically conducted as a whole group and the teacher is still an active participant in guiding the talk. The difference is that instead of the teacher giving the students the information in a lecture or "this is important so learn this" way, the teacher artfully picks up students' contributions, questioning, and elaborating on those ideas that are more relevant so that understandings are initiated by students and jointly crafted with peers.

The interactive read aloud (Barrentine, 1996) is another example of a type of instructional conversation and shares many of the same decentralized discursive features of the instructional conversations Goldenberg and Pathey-Chavez describe. During interactive read alouds students are encouraged to verbally interact with peers, the teacher, and the text as a means of constructing meaning and exploring the reading process. Traditional read alouds position the students in a more passive role where they listen to the text read and then answer teacher questions after the reading. During interactive read alouds, students are encouraged to respond personally and interpersonally throughout the reading of the text in order to socially construct shared meaning by verbalizing the active meaning-making that is taking place. Sipe (2000) found students' talk during and after picture book read alouds to yield sophisticated aspects of students' literary understanding including analytical, inter-textual, personal, transparent, and performative. It was through the guided and supported conversations during read alouds where the "interwoven nature of literary lived-through experience" supported students in their comprehending of texts (Sipe, 2000; 2002).

Literature discussion groups are another form of student-led talk around text where the teacher takes on the role of facilitator and students actively construct meaning. Different from

instructional conversations and interactive read alouds, students in literature discussion groups meet, discuss, and analyze text with little or no direct support from the teacher. The teacher, as facilitator, has set parameters for the group meeting and scaffolded the group organization as well as scaffolded students' use of conversational strategies, including ways to talk about text (Maloch, 2002). Eeds and Wells' (1989) study of fifth and sixth graders that focused on child-centered talk around texts, found that talk about narrative elements of literature emerged though student responses, and deeper comprehension was fostered through aesthetic responses to reading. Short (1995) speaks to the efficacy of literature circles by explaining students do not simply contribute their part of completing a task; but rather they listen carefully and think deeply with group members to create understandings that go beyond those of individual members. The dialogue in literature circles leads students to new perspectives on literature. Research by Almasi (1995), Eeds and Wells (1989), and Maloch (2002) indicate that discussions that are more student-centered and less teacher directed, foster more in-depth problem solving and understanding of literature.

Decentralized discussions around texts provide an instructional format by which teachers can scaffold meaning-making strategies and sophisticated ways of approaching literature. The language used by students and teacher becomes an integral aspect of guided participation through which skills and understandings are appropriated. Rather than knowledge being handed over to the child, which is the case in more teacher centered instructional formats, the child is apprenticed (or inducted) into learning as he or she interacts with others. The co-construction of meaning-making strategies scaffolds students' appropriation of literate thinking, providing the

guided practice that supports independence. De-centralized discussion patterns, thus, become an effective pedagogical tool for apprenticing students into literate behaviors.

A host of studies related to decentralized discussions support its use in classrooms. For example, Applebee et al. (2003) examined classroom discussions and related them to middle and high school students' performance on literary writing tasks and found that dialogic interactions and emphasis on curricular conversations supported students' understanding of text. Fall, Webb and Chudowsky (2000) found that students that had the opportunity to discuss the story had an increased understanding of text when compared to a control group that did not have discussion opportunities. Results of a meta-analysis of studies on various forms of text-based discussions concluded that quality of student talk around text was important; merely increasing student talk did not suffice in raising comprehension (Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey & Alexander, 2009). Text based discussion formats such as Instructional Conversations and Question the Author improved students' literal comprehension of text. The overwhelming majority of research investigating discussion based approaches and comprehension instruction occur with older students (Murphy et al.; 2009; Almasi & York, 2008; Donaldson, 2011).

In sum, as I mentioned at the onset of this literature review, there has been much work within the educational community on comprehension and comprehension instruction. Thanks to this wealth of educational research we now have a list of processes good comprehenders of text engage in while reading. While we know direct and explicit instruction of those specific strategies is beneficial for students, we also have learned isolated strategy instruction is not enough. Transactional strategy instruction, or dialogically based instruction that includes modeling and direct instruction with shared and independent practices, taught over time with

relevant re-visiting and prompting of strategy use helps to scaffold students' appropriation of strategies.

Many researchers have concluded that a lock-step heuristic of learning strategies does not always work. The quality of student and teacher interactions, especially during scaffolded teacher assistance, positively impact students' strategy acquisition (Shanahan et al, 2010; Duke & Martin, 2008; Block & Pearson, 2002). Comprehension is a multi-layered conceptual endeavor, not a technical one. Instruction must be similarly layered and conceptual, not technical – the technique itself is not as important as the teacher's ability to be thoughtful and sensitive in making adaptations that account for the multilayered and situational nature of comprehension instruction (Stahl, 2009; Duffy, 2002).

Much of the research on comprehension strategy instruction that has been completed to date has studied students in grade three and above and generalized to the primary grades (Stahl, 2004; 2008). Research in primary grades is most often centered on decoding and word recognition attention (Stahl, 2004; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Snow 1999). While it is true that a student's ability to decode has profound impact on whether they will be able to comprehend, automaticity in decoding does not necessarily result in comprehension of text (Snow, 1999; Pressley 2002). Smolkin and Donovan (2003) echoed that much of the research on comprehension instruction and focus for teaching is centered on intermediate grade students and older. Their case study revealed teacher modeling of comprehension strategies during read alouds with young students reflected many of the same comprehension strategies suggested by other educational researchers to be directly taught to older and/or struggling students. Similarly, Stahl (2004) found that there are comprehension strategies that have been proved to be effective

with novice readers; however, there are still many unknown factors. She states, “The demands of reading acquisition and lack of automaticity are likely to make the developmental needs of the novice reader different than those of the of the older readers that have been studied more extensively” (p.607).

Sadly, with all the knowledge we have accumulated on comprehension and comprehension instruction, Pressley (2002), Duke and Pearson (2002), and Ness (2010) all note that comprehension instruction is not occurring at the level, nor with the frequency, that researchers recommend. Ivey (2005) found that comprehension instruction in the primary grades is even less evident stating, “Strategy instruction, designed to help readers become more metacognitive in their approach to reading as a route toward increasing comprehension, is possible to achieve at the early elementary level, though it is infrequently seen.” (p 230). Similarly, Shanahan and his colleagues advocate primary grade teachers navigate their students through high quality discussions of text despite the lack of empirical evidence proving its usefulness with young readers (2010).

The purpose of this study is to generate detailed portraits of two primary classrooms where comprehension instruction is occurring. Additionally, this study seeks to extend the work of Smolkin and Donovan (2003), Stahl (2008), and Duke and Martin (2008) by investigating the ways in which second grade teachers apprentice students in comprehension strategies and thinking more deeply about texts. This investigation of pedagogical practices will focus not only on comprehension acquisition during read alouds but also on how comprehension instruction is

integrated within the classroom and how it lays the foundation for students to acquire strategies for understanding texts as they grow more complex.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The goal for this study is to explore and to describe comprehension instruction in and across two classrooms. I describe and explain the complexity and nuance involved in teaching comprehension. For this reason I used qualitative methodology, specifically interpretive case study methodology (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). In this section, I will discuss the site selections and field entry. Secondly, I will discuss the phases of the study as an overview for the project. Thirdly, data collection, documentation and record-keeping, as well as data analysis will be discussed.

Site Selection and Participants

The study was conducted in two second-grade classrooms, located in two different schools, over a 12 week time period. Both classrooms were located in a large, suburban school district serving ethnically diverse and socio-economically diverse families. The two elementary schools had previously been awarded blue ribbon distinction and had achieved recognized status as awarded by the state's accountability system. I chose to conduct the study in this particular school district because I had previously been employed by the district and was familiar with the schools, staff development models, and philosophy of the district. Furthermore, my existing relationships assisted in me in identifying teachers and campuses that would be willing to participate and would be a good fit for this study.

The two campuses, Waller Elementary and Green Elementary (all names are pseudonyms) were located approximately seven miles from one another and served the students from the surrounding neighborhood in which they were located. Waller Elementary, at the time

of the study, had been open for 28 years, and over the past 10 years had seen a shift in the demographics of the school population. It was a fully funded Title I campus and the cluster campus for Vietnamese bilingual students in the district. Green Elementary, at the time of the study, had been open for twelve years. The school was built as a relief school for a nearby campus that had become overcrowded. Green Elementary had established an English as a Second Language (ESL) program the year prior to the study because its student population was beginning to reflect the need for that service. The two classrooms differed from one another in the populations of students served, which I will describe in greater detail in the next section.

Participant selection.

Each of the two teachers chosen to participate in the study were named by their campus principal as "a strong reading teacher," particularly in the area of comprehension, and were leaders in their school community. Additionally, both teachers served as cooperating teachers for university field-based teacher training, which suggested they were considered exemplary teachers by the university faculty. Participants were recruited through my relationship with the school district where I had been employed and my collegial relationship with campus principals.

I began by soliciting suggestions from both University of Texas and Texas State University faculty, both of which have placed intern teachers and conducted research in second grade classrooms. I then spoke with both campus principals soliciting suggestions for potential teachers they considered exemplary literacy teachers and whom they recommended to be part of this study. I then compared the list of teachers recommended by university faculty with that of teachers recommended by campus principals, selecting those named by both sources as potential participants. I emailed all of the potential participants regarding the nature of my study, asking

for their participation. Because I had observed in each classroom as a university facilitator and the university faculty had confirmed that the teachers were strong teachers, particularly in the area of literacy instruction, I felt comfortable that they qualified for participation in this study.

I had an existing working relationship with both of the teachers chosen for this study. As a university facilitator, I observed intern teachers in each of the selected teacher's classrooms. When I began my search for participants for this study, each of these teachers was recommended by their peers and campus principals because of their literature based instruction. Through informal observations, it appeared to me that their classroom environments were both inclusive and student-centered. Literacy instruction in both classrooms included read alouds, whole group instruction, small group instruction, independent reading time, writers' workshop, and literature circles.

Classroom and participant description.

Rebecca Sims' classroom, second grade at Waller Elementary, was one site selected for this project. At the time the study began, Ms. Sims served as grade level chairperson and was in her seventeenth year of teaching. Ms. Sims had been awarded "teacher of the year" by her school community and was selected as the primary reading grade school representative at district meetings. Ms. Sims held English as a Second Language and elementary teaching certifications, both of which she obtained from the nearby state university. She drew upon Richard C. Owen Literacy Network training and Heart of Texas Writing Project training to inform her literacy instruction. Ms. Sims was a member of the district's literacy cadre and was often called upon to offer district literacy instruction staff development sessions. At the time of the study, Ms. Sims was in her ninth year of teaching at Waller Elementary.

Waller Elementary is a suburban school located between an industrial park and a working-class neighborhood. Waller Elementary served as the cluster bilingual Vietnamese campus for the district and received both state and federal funding as a classified Title I campus. The campus ethnicity at the time of the study was 30% Caucasian, 22% African American, 18% Asian, and 28% Hispanic. Forty percent of the students at Waller Elementary participated in the free or reduced lunch program and 22% were classified as English Language Learners.

Cindy Long's classroom, second grade at Green Elementary, was the second school site for this project. Ms. Long had 15 years of teaching experience and served as a district "model teacher" for staff development at the time of the study. Her classroom included 20 students, who were representative of the school population. Green Elementary is a suburban school in a working, middle-class neighborhood. 30% of the school's population qualified for free or reduced lunch. The campus ethnicity comprised of 45% Caucasian, 25% Hispanic, 16% Asian, and 14% African American, with 17% of their students qualifying for English as a Second Language services. Ms. Long held both elementary and English as a Second Language certificates. Additionally she held a master reading teacher certificate from the state and had recently received National Board certification.

After obtaining recommendations and determining the two teachers for this project, I approached each individually asking them to participate in the study. After explaining the study and obtaining verbal permission, each teacher signed a consent form that explained the scope and assurances of the study. After obtaining teacher permission, I asked the students in both classes orally if they would like to participate in the study. The same day I asked the students to participate, consent forms were sent home with the students seeking parent approval for their

students' participation in the study. I requested permission to audio and video tape instruction, access state and district assessment data, as well as permission to record informal conversations with students about the books they were reading. In the permission letter, I noted I would be available to answer questions or speak to the parents about the study if there questions or concerns. I was available at each campus during parent conferences to answer questions. No parents requested to meet with me concerning the study. All but three families gave permission for their students to participate in the study.

I explicitly stated to both of the teachers, the students, and the parents through oral and written communication that (1) participation was strictly voluntary; (2) participants could withdraw from the study without penalty at any time; (3) interviews, discussion, videotapes and audiotapes would be kept confidential, and (4) pseudonyms would be used to protect the identity of the participants.

Phases of Inquiry

The following sections outline the timeline of data collection. The phases were adapted from Kong and Pearson (2003). Peer debriefing continued throughout all phases of inquiry.

Table 1
Research Phases

Phase and duration	Phase 1 (1 week in each classroom)	Phase 2 (6 weeks in each classroom)	Phase 3 (1 week)
Focus	• Field entry • Familiarize self with settings • Negotiate role as participant observer • Identify case study students • Teacher • interviews	• Developing Initial themes • Analysis and development of categories • Theoretical sampling to refine hypothesis • Student interviews	• Confirm/ refine hypothesis • Collect district assessment data • Final teacher interviews • Final case student interviews • Field exit
Frequency of observations	• 3 times per week in each class • Teacher interview (approximately 1 hr./teacher)	• 18 observations in each class over 6 weeks (2-3 observations per class per week) • 2 interviews per case study student / class (15 minutes per interview)	• 1-2 times per week in each class • Formal teacher interview (approx. 1 hour) • Student interviews (approx. 15 minutes per interview)
Data Collection	• Participant observation • Field notes • Audio/video tape • Formal teacher interviews • Artifact collection	• Participant observation • Field notes • Audio/video tape • Student interviews • Informal teacher interviews • Artifact collection	• Participant observation • Field notes • Audio/video tape • Student interviews • Formal teacher interviews • Artifact collection
Data analysis	• Expanded field notes • Weekly review of audio and video tapes • Peer debriefing • Analytical memo at the end of collection phase	• Expanded field notes • Weekly review of audio and video tapes • Constant comparative method • Triangulation • Peer debriefing • Analytical memo at the end of collection phase	• Expanded field notes • Weekly review of audio and video tapes • Constant comparative method • Triangulation • Member checking • Peer debriefing

Phase 1: Field Entry.

Phase 1 of the study began in March of the school year. During this phase, I spent one week in each class, made general observations during the language arts instruction and interviewed each teacher for approximately one hour. These general observations were approximately 90 to 120 minutes each on three separate days. The purpose of the general classroom observations was to familiarize myself with the students and the classroom environment, to gain a sense of the types of literacy events that took place in the classroom, and to negotiate my role as a participant observer. The purpose of the interview was to learn about teachers' views on comprehension instruction, specifically: (a) how does each teacher describe the benefits and challenges of teaching comprehension, (b) how does each teacher report comprehension instruction that occurs within language arts instruction. Additionally during Phase One, I identified particular literacy events where comprehension instruction occurred based on what teachers reported and my initial classroom observations.

Interview data were audio recorded, transcribed, and cross referenced with the notes I took during the interview. Because the interviews were meant to explore what the teachers know and implement with regard to comprehension instruction, the interviews were open ended and guided by the teacher response. Therefore, they did not follow the exact same format with each teacher. See appendix A for guiding interview questions.

Classroom observation data included audio and video recording, as well as field notes. While collecting data during classroom instruction, I made brief field notes, and then expanded them at the end of each day. Videotaping was introduced during this phase so that the teachers and students became familiar with to this potentially obtrusive form of data collection. The

videotape collected during these initial visits informed data analysis at a general level but was not drawn upon for examples of student or teacher responses.

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Phase 2: Focused observations.

Phase 2 of the study involved more focused exploration of comprehension instruction in each classroom. Observations occurred over a 10-week period, with 3 observations occurring each week. In order to observe continuity of instruction, I observed for three consecutive weeks in one classroom before observing in the second. Classroom observations focused around the literacy events where comprehension instruction occurred as described by the teacher during Phase 1 interviews. Additionally, I focused observations on literacy events found to be noteworthy as identified during Phase 1 general observations and teacher interviews. In both classrooms, I focused on both science and social studies instruction in addition to the reading block of instruction because the conversations occurring while reading non-fiction text appeared noteworthy. I acted as an observer rather than a participant throughout the observations. The field notes were expanded at the end of each week, using the videotape as an aid. The expanded field notes served as an index of videos.

Outside of formal instructional time, during sustained silent reading, I informally asked case students to "think aloud" while reading. Applebee (1984) has found think aloud protocols to be useful for trying to discover thinking processes during literacy tasks. Informally, I asked students to read a self-selected text and share with me their thinking while they are reading. My goal was to gain insight into the types of things students were doing that were assisting or hindering their comprehension.

Also during this phase, I collected teacher lesson plans and copies of student activities related to my project. After each observation and interview, I recorded personal notes. Weekly, I expanded my field notes incorporating my personal notes, adding theoretical and methodological notes where appropriate. Expanded field notes were reviewed bi-weekly to look for emergent themes and hypothesis.

I periodically checked my field notes, interview data, emerging hypothesis with the classroom teachers as a form of member checking. I showed the teachers copies of my field notes, however, they did not read or review them closely. The teachers were given access to the video recordings and asked to respond to the accuracy of the notes. However, neither teacher found the time to closely review them and said they felt comfortable and agreed with my emerging hypotheses.

Phase 3: Closure.

The final phase of the study lasted one week. During this phase, the teachers were interviewed on how they viewed the growth of their students' comprehension abilities over the course of the school year. I collected the beginning and year-end state and district mandated reading assessments in order to quantify students' growth. Additionally, I observed each classroom two times for an entire school day for the purpose of confirming and refining developing themes. Teachers were asked to evaluate my hypotheses and interpretations for accuracy, as another opportunity for member checking.

Data Collection: Documentation and Record-Keeping

Although data collection methods were mentioned in the previous section, I will detail each of the methods used in this study.

Observation by the researcher.

My role in the classroom was participant-observer. During Phase 1 of the data collection period (where I conducted more general observations during the entire language arts block), I participated similar to a volunteer in the classroom. While I took notes during observations, part of the time I walked around the classroom assisting students when needed and more closely observing individual students and group work. During Phase 2 and 3, I focused more closely on comprehension instruction. My role was mostly observer during teacher-led instructional times and classroom discussions. When students were working individually or in small groups, I periodically engaged them in informal interviews about the passages they were reading. The goal of these observations was to record pedagogical techniques the teacher used during comprehension instruction. Later observations focused on patterns and processes I noted during instruction and the development and refinement of hypotheses that emerged. I recorded written notes (field notes) during the classroom observations.

Expanded field notes and analytical memos.

Within 48 hours of completing a classroom observation, I took my written notes and added more detailed context. As suggested by Corsaro (1986), I also recorded personal notes, theoretical notes, and methodological notes based on these observations. Additionally, I reviewed video data adding more detailed information to the expanded field notes, noting specific places that may be useful for future transcription and closer inspection. After each three-week data collection period, I wrote an analytical memo documenting pedagogical practices and emerging hypotheses before changing data collection sites. I shared these notes with the classroom teachers for the purposes of triangulation and member checking.

Halfway through data collection, after nine observations in Ms. Long's classroom and three observations in Ms. Sims' classroom, my computer crashed and all field notes, interview notes, and audio data were lost. After conferencing with my chair, I wrote extensive analytic memos capturing all remembrances of the data collected. I referenced teacher lesson plans to aid in recalling particular lessons observed. Additionally, I used video recorded data and teacher lesson plans to reconstruct all expanded field notes.

Interviews with the teachers.

Each teacher was formally interviewed at the beginning and the end of the data collection period. These interviews occurred either after school hours or during the teacher's planning period and lasted approximately one hour each. General topics addressed in these unstructured interviews were factors of comprehension and comprehension instruction, and considerations the teachers take into account in planning comprehension instruction. The second interview included sharing of my initial findings with examples from field notes so that the teachers had the opportunity to respond to my early discoveries. Notes were taken during all formal interviews.

In addition to these formal interviews, there were frequent informal interviews with each of the teachers. These informal interviews occurred throughout all phases of data collection and took place in the classroom either during breaks or transition periods within the school day. Notes from these informal interviews were added to the field notes of the day in which the conversations occurred.

Audiotape recordings.

Audio tape recording was used during teacher and student interviews and to record interactions within the classroom. This material was used to expand field notes; however, the quality of the audio recording was often inferior to the video recording and served more as a backup data source.

Videotape recordings.

A video recorder was used to record classroom instruction during all phases of this study. These video tapes ensured classroom activities were portrayed accurately and assisted in expanding field notes and hypothesis development and refinement. Salient events were transcribed to support hypotheses and findings.

Artifact collection.

I collected teacher lesson plans and student work samples as it related to my project. Artifacts enhanced my field notes and helped refine hypotheses.

Assessment data collection.

I collected beginning and year-end state and district mandated reading assessment data (Texas Primary Reading Inventory, Developmental Reading Assessment, District Reading Benchmarks). By collecting this quantitative data, I was able to speak to my findings within the context of measures that are valued by the district and the state.

Data Analysis: Constant Comparative Method

Data analysis procedures were constant and ongoing. The constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used to generate hypotheses. As described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the constant comparative method involves deriving categories from data over time, and

using categories to build theory. I began my analysis by reading and re-reading my expanded field notes with the purpose of finding patterns, categorizing, and comparing data within categories and between categories. Because of elapsed time between data collection and the expansion of field notes with the in-depth analysis that led to developed findings, I returned to video recordings of the classrooms to gain further clarification and detail of the occurrences in the classrooms for the purpose of confirming potential hypotheses and analytic memos. Exchanges from audio and video tapes where the teachers and students engaged in meaning making discussions were transcribed and submitted to microanalysis of communication and interactional patterns. For the purposes of this study, talk was analyzed similarly to Maloch (2002), Edwards and Mercer (1987) and Cazden (2001). Events that appeared to be significant and supported or discounted my emerging themes were examined in detailed and exposed to closer, more detailed analysis.

For example, early analysis indicated the ways in which Ms. Long prompted her students was important as a pedagogical technique. I reviewed my field notes and transcriptions, looking specifically for instances of Ms. Long prompting students to make sense of text. Any instances of prompting that had not yet been transcribed were transcribed fully at that time. I then closely examined the instances of prompting found in the data, looking for patterns and distinguishing factors. Initially, seven different categories of prompts emerged from the data. After defining the distinguishing characteristics, searching for negative cases, and peer debriefing, I collapsed my initial categories to prompting for visualization, prompting to make connections, and prompting to take an active stance toward text. Similarly focused analysis of transcripts occurred with modeling and language of instruction. Transcripts and expanded field notes were

closely reviewed. As categories emerged, definitions and distinguishing characteristics were developed to assist in identifying and justifying categories, as well as a means for coding data. As hypotheses were formed, observations became more focused and purposeful in order to confirm or reject emerging beliefs. I sought negative cases, those that did not fit categories, to revise and check categories.

Credibility

Trustworthiness involves establishing the credibility of the human instrument to collect data, the transferability of the findings to other contexts, the dependability of the findings, and the conformability of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Practices such as member checking, peer debriefing, and multiple data sources, which have been described in previous sections of this section serve to ensure triangulation of data and trustworthiness. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define triangulation as the multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, or theories to confirm findings. Additionally, prolonged engagement and persistent observation made the research findings of this study more credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I observed in each classroom several days a week for 13 weeks, which allowed me to become less obtrusive and to better understand the research issues. Persistent observation allowed me to identify events that were most relevant for understanding the pedagogical practices of the teacher. Peer debriefing provided me with an outside perspective on the research that helped to refine and/or redirect the inquiry process. Because this study seeks to understand the pedagogical practices of teachers, member checking aided in establishing credibility and trustworthiness of this study.

Transferability

Transferability relies on thick description of the findings to allow interested readers to determine if the findings could be transferred to other settings. This interpretive case study includes thick description to enable readers to make judgments about the transferability of my findings to other settings. Purposive sampling allowed me to maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained in this context.

Dependability

Dependability is established by providing the reader with evidence that replication of the study would yield similar findings. Dependability of this study is strengthened by triangulation of methods and creation of an audit trail. This record of the process of data collection and analysis includes raw data (interview transcripts, observation transcripts, field notes, and documents), data analysis and process notes, data reduction and analysis products, and synthesis pages. A written history that tracks changes that occur in the setting enhances the dependability of this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is established by showing that the data, rather than the researcher, are confirmable representations of the participants. This study safeguards confirmability by utilizing an audit trail, triangulation, peer debriefing, and case reporting, which provides examples of raw data to illustrate conclusions. These safeguards increase the confirmability of this study by providing the reader with access to the data so they can draw their own conclusions about the accuracy of the representation. Interpretive case reporting, which includes examples of raw data, will further illustrate how the interpretations are supported by the data.

Ethics

Information gathered from this research was shared with participant teachers for member checking and triangulation of data, members of my doctoral committee, my peer debriefer, and in professional meetings. The data may undergo further analysis by me in the future. Inconveniences of the study were mainly to the teachers, who spent time before and after school talking with me. The only risk to participants was loss of their confidentiality, and I have made make every effort to safeguard the anonymity of all study participants.

Pseudonyms were assigned to each teacher, student, school and school district used in all written products of the research, including reports and transcriptions. Students' names that were on documents collected for this study, were replaced with pseudonyms when they were photocopied. Every effort was made not to include the individuals who did not give consent in audio and video recordings. The events in which accidental recording of a student that did not give permission to participate was not used as raw data now nor will it be in the future.

During the course of the study, raw data was kept in my home. Participant teachers, my doctoral committee, peer debriefer, and myself are the only ones who have access to the raw data. Each classroom teacher only had access to the raw data associated with her particular classroom and not that of other participant in the study. All tapes and notes remain in my possession, in a locked cabinet, to be used by me for research purposes only. As in the current research, any future research from this data set will ensure subject's confidentiality.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had several strengths and limitations. The collegial relationship I had with both teachers afforded me the opportunity to enter the classroom with minimal disruptions.

Students and faculty at both campuses were accustomed to my presence in classrooms; therefore, my presence as a participant observer was minimally obtrusive. By collecting data in three week time spans, I was able to observe units of instruction, how lessons evolved from day-to-day, and how teachers made instructional decisions based on the previous days' learning experiences. By alternating classrooms, I was afforded a break in observation that gave me the opportunity to observe pedagogical practices with a fresh lens upon my return.

One limitation of this study was that I was not able to collect beginning-of-the year data. Both teachers frequently referenced comprehension instruction that occurred at the beginning of the year that served as a foundation for the discussions they were having with students at the time of this study. Having data from the beginning of the year would facilitate a discussion on the ways in which comprehension changed over time. Additionally, not having student data from the beginning of the year limited my ability to see how students were acquiring comprehension strategies throughout the course of the year.

A second limitation is the limited data obtained from student interviews. If the students were more practiced at verbalizing their strategy use, perhaps the student think alouds of their reading would have provided more insight to comprehension strategy use.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings related to my primary research question: What is the nature of comprehension instruction in second grade classrooms? As described in previous chapters, this research question emerges from a growing body of literature about comprehension instruction. This body of literature coalesces around the importance of explicit strategy instruction and thoughtful and adaptive teachers (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991) who implement this instruction within engaging, textually rich classrooms. As of yet, however, there is limited research showing how this instruction plays out in real classrooms, and particularly in classrooms of young readers. Smolkin and Donovan (2003), as well as Block (2008), suggest the need for research rooted in the context of early literacy and primary-grade instruction. Duke and Pearson (2002) argue, “we cannot blithely assume that because a particular instructional strategy is effective with fifth graders, it is necessarily going to be effective with first graders” (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p.256).

Therefore, my purpose in this chapter is to add to existing research by providing two descriptive case studies portraying second grade teachers engaging in comprehension instruction. It is important to note that these two cases showcase instruction that is actually occurring in classrooms and is not necessarily intended to be understood as best practice. These teachers were recommended to me as exemplary teachers of comprehension and, in fact, much of their instruction was exemplary. At the same time, aspects of their practice—particularly the limited opportunities for student talk—are problematic. My analysis is directed not towards portraying model practices, but rather towards portraying actual practices—what these teachers were doing

and how it worked in the classroom—in order to better understand how comprehension instruction may work in classrooms full of young children.

These two cases are presented in chapter four and conclusions drawn across the two cases are presented in chapter five. In order to provide a cohesive structure and flow to these cases, the findings are organized across the following three dimensions: (a) teacher beliefs and intentions, (b) classroom structures and norms that supported comprehension instruction, (c) and key events in which comprehension instruction occurred.

Case 1: Ms. Sims

Upon entering Ms. Sims classroom, one immediately notices the wealth of language charts and environmental print that documents the variety of subject matter in which the class has been engaged. As described by the teacher in the classroom next door, Ms. Sims' classroom "is a place where learning is always happening." At the time of this study, Ms. Sims was the grade-level chairperson, served on the school leadership committee, and was in her seventeenth year of teaching, nine at this particular school. Two years previously, she had been voted by her peers as the "Teacher of the Year. " She lived in the school community and both of her children attended this particular elementary school. When recommending Ms. Sims for this study, her school principal described Ms. Sims' instruction as "truly artful. I can go in there (her classroom) and she is challenging those gifted ones (students) while building language skills with our most recent immigrants. I'm continually impressed with level of growth that occurs for the kiddos in her classroom."

In terms of comprehension instruction, my observations and analysis suggested that Ms. Sims' classroom structures and norms, as well as her intentional instruction, helped establish meaningful contexts for her young readers to develop comprehension strategies. Particularly,

teacher modeling and questioning, which occurred across the school day, emerged as important in the ways Ms. Sims facilitated comprehension acquisition. These findings offer a real-world account of the ways in which comprehension acquisition was scaffolded with young readers.

Teacher Beliefs and Intentions

Ms. Sims started the school year with the important goal of teaching her students to become fluent readers and writers “able to read and understand what they read and to be able to express their thoughts in their writing.” Interview data revealed that Ms. Sims felt strongly about laying a core foundation with skills and literacy behaviors that would enable her students to achieve in the upper grades. While the majority of the students entered her classroom with concepts of print and basic decoding skills, Developmental Reading Assessment data indicated over 70 percent of her students were still? beginning readers, needing much practice with word analysis and decoding. In two separate interviews, Ms. Sims stated that she felt it was not only her job to help her students to become better readers but also to help them see how reading and writing are enjoyable experiences, noting, “As they get older they have to read this or learn about that. If I help them to see how reading and writing can be fun, hopefully, that will stay with them through the upper grades.” Teaching comprehension, Ms. Sims expressed, was an important aspect of laying the foundation for a long-lasting love of reading. In this section I will describe how Ms. Sims’ beliefs about comprehension instruction influenced her planning and preparation for teaching her students.

Ms. Sims described her classroom as literature-based. This assertion was confirmed by the myriad print resources around the room and her use of shared text to assist in her instruction. In all twenty-seven lessons observed throughout data collection including lessons in science,

reading, and math, Ms. Sims either began her lesson with a shared piece of literature or read an excerpt of a book to help illustrate her teaching point. One wall of the classroom was dedicated to writing and displayed a variety of writing tools for the students to reference: ways to generate a topic, proofreading marks, and characteristics of "good stories." Also present throughout the room were anchor charts, some of which were dedicated to ongoing science investigations or classroom procedures. Prominently displayed in the classroom were charts about books. For example, one chart highlighted the characteristics of fiction and non-fiction stories. Another bulletin board held student-generated recommendations for books they had read and advertised for their peers to peruse. The vast majority of charts were co-created during class; I observed many charts in the construction phase during the observation period.

When asked to describe her philosophy of teaching, Ms. Sims replied that it was her goal to lay a strong foundation and to help students use what they already know to learn more. She stated,

> All of the kids come to my class already knowing many things . . . they all have lots of experiences . . . My job is to help them use what they know and strengthen that and then teach them how to apply their school skills and their knowledge from home, to put the two together to prepare them for school in the upper grades. That's one of the reasons I love to teach second grade, it's about merging those early skills with their interests, sparking new interests, and applying all that so they can continue to be self-supporting learners.

Interview data suggested that Ms. Sims thought deeply about the educational needs of her students and sought out advice from colleagues and books to assist her in designing effective instruction. Ms. Sims described both early literacy training she received with Richard C. Owens, as well as the Heart of Texas Teaching Writing project, as influential in her practices. In reflecting on these two teacher development programs Ms. Sims stated, "You know, they really

aren't all that different. Of course one is focused on writing, while the other with reading, but the idea of recognizing what students are doing and building on that for your next instruction are foundation pieces to both programs."

In staff development sessions and through her reading, Ms. Sims learned ways to gather information on student behaviors and how to use that information to plan her instruction. Ms. Sims shared her anecdotal record-keeping system consisting of a simple grid-like photocopied paper with a student's name listed in each square. She explained that she experimented with several systems before settling on this method, saying that this system allowed her to realize whom she still needed to observe and helped her to keep all her notes in one location. Multiple times throughout data collection I observed Ms. Sims making notations or referencing her data collection when meeting with students or before starting a lesson. This system indicated the ways in which Ms. Sims intentionally observed her students' literacy behaviors and reflected upon those in order to provide the "next step" of instruction. Ms. Sims explained, "I use this [record] to know what to teach next. I've got kids on level, below level and above level and every place in between. If I didn't make a note of where they were, I wouldn't know what to teach next." Ms. Sims also explained that if she was unsure what instruction the student might need next she referenced *Matching Books to Readers* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000), *Growing Readers* (Collins, 200X), or sought advice from her colleagues. This daily, systematic data collection was one indication of the way Ms. Sims valued analyzing student literacy behaviors and differentiation of instruction.

When specifically asked about comprehension instruction, Ms. Sims noted that it was experience with her own children that first informed her comprehension instruction. Explaining

that much of her attention and learning early in her career was focused on teaching word identification, decoding, and phonics, she only began to reflect on the ways to foster comprehension in her classroom when she had noticed her son struggling to summarize or remember what he was reading.

> It was a kind of perfect storm. [Two years ago] I realized my son was needing some instruction on comprehension . . . at the same time, our school was also starting to talk about our students needing stronger comprehension skills. Our teacher appraisal is tied to a teacher set goal and our learning so my ABC goal (Appraisal by Collaboration) was on comprehension. I joined a book study led by our reading recovery teacher. That is where I learned the specific strategies I should be teaching and we brainstormed ways to make that work in our classrooms. I'd go home and try them out on my son and they worked for him, so I knew it would be good for my class. Nothing is perfect, but that started me going on teaching comprehension, before that, I'm not sure I was really doing it.

Propelled by a personal experience with her own child, Ms. Sims sought out professional resources. In her interview, she reported most recently reading Kathy Collins' book, *Growing Readers,* (2004) but also cited *Classrooms that Work* (Cunninghan & Allington, 2007) and *Mosaic of Thought* (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997) as influential to her comprehension instruction. The structure of her reading block and her instruction was reflective of these resources. First, she structured her reading instructional time in a way that allowed for whole group, small group, and independent reading time. Her comprehension strategy instruction showed up during her mini-lessons, as well as during read alouds. She reported beginning the year with focused, direct instruction as explained in these teacher resource books. She told me, "[After reading and studying these books] I am much more direct in teaching each comprehension strategy. I show them how to integrate these strategies in their reading. Then I go over and over it with different types of books." My observations of her classroom instruction, discussed in the following

sections, showed this to be true. Ms. Sims worked hard to make comprehension strategies explicit and to show, or model, for students how to integrate strategies while reading.

Classroom Structures and Norms that Support Comprehension Instruction

Because data collection occurred in the spring semester, I was able to see the classroom community in its established state. In this section, I report on the norms and structures of the classroom that worked to support comprehension instruction. Instruction shifted from whole group to small group to independent learning throughout the day and across subjects. Whole group instruction provided the opportunity for modeling and direct instruction on the given topic, skill, or strategy. With reading, and specifically comprehension instruction, Ms. Sims' modeling during whole group read alouds afforded the opportunity to illustrate comprehension strategy use. Small group and independent learning activities provided students with opportunities to engage in discussions and try out the strategies shared during whole group instruction. Ms. Sims encouraged independence and autonomy in her students, often reminding them to "think, use the resources around you, ask a friend, and then ask me last."

In terms of classroom structures, throughout data collection, I observed Ms. Sims engaged in a workshop approach to instruction. Whole group mini-lessons set the tone for small group and independent learning. During students' independent time, Ms. Sims would work one-on-one or in small groups with students while the other students worked independently in small groups on various learning tasks. This structure held true for math, reading and writing instruction. Often Ms. Sims could be found sitting on the floor with a group of students around a tub of math manipulatives, playing a probability game, and reinforcing the concept on her traveling white board where she would illustrate the mathematical principle.

Writer's workshop followed a similar structure. Ms. Sims would begin with a shared piece of literature or student writing and then center the mini-lesson on a particular writing skill or craft present. Students would then move into writing, all at different parts of the composing process. Ms. Sims had a list of students who had signed up for conferencing so that she could offer suggestions and assist in publishing their pieces. Similarly, during reading instruction, students worked independently on various literacy tasks, ranging from spelling to partner reading, while she pulled a small group to her table for direct instruction. Readers' workshop began with a picture book mini-lesson. This picture book, and the lesson built from it, was at times connected with science or social studies topics, other times related to an author study, and other times was selected based on a particular reading or comprehension strategy Ms. Sims wished to make explicit to the group.

Whether reading, writing, or math workshop, the structure of instruction followed a familiar sequence of events. Ms. Sims gathered students to the center carpet where she sat with her large easel and basket of books surrounding her. Once the students were comfortably gathered, Ms. Sims began conversationally with the students about the topic of interest. For example, one readers' workshop began with, "You know Abigail and I were talking yesterday about the book that she was reading and we were confused about what was going on in the story because sometimes what was happening in the book seemed like it was happening today, and then it they would switch back to when the character was a little girl. Have any of you ever read a book like that?" This seemingly casual introduction was typical of the way Ms. Sims began a lesson, often calling attention to the need for learning a particular strategy or skill based on the experiences of a person in the class. Ms. Sims then opened the discussion for other students to

offer their own personal experiences about a similar situation and followed with the direct instruction of how to approach the task or confusing problem. Quickly she would share a story or an excerpt from a book that would help to illustrate her point. In this particular situation she read an example from Abigail's book, and then shared the picture book, *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney (1985), which led to a rich discussion about how authors sometimes use flashback to help them tell the story. The students and Ms. Sims identified clues in the book that could help the reader know when they were switching time periods, and Ms. Sims listed these on chart paper for emphasis. She then made the connection to a class favorite, the *Magic School Bus* series, stating that although they don't always flashback in time, they do change their location and ways of addressing the reader within the story line. The common connection to *Magic School Bus* and this type of text structure seemed to model for students how knowledge of this type of text structure might help in understanding future stories.

To the casual observer, this lesson could almost appear happenstance or unplanned. However, interviews with Ms. Sims indicated that she was very deliberate in selecting her teaching points and would intentionally guide conversations in ways that allowed her to introduce particular strategies in meaningful and relevant ways. Although it is difficult to make claims about the internalization of comprehension strategies by the students, Ms. Sims established a context that supported student acquisition of strategies. She planned ways to connect strategy use to students' lives and prompted students to activate background knowledge in order to make the modeled strategies relevant.

After the whole group mini-lessons, students moved to group or independent learning tasks. This independent work afforded Ms. Sims the opportunity to work with small groups or

individually with students. I found it noteworthy that these small groups and individualized instruction periods rarely appeared consistent in format nor were the groupings of students stagnant. For example, one day Ms. Sims pulled three students with like instructional goals and reading level into a guided reading setting, calling attention to word attack skills using a leveled text. She then asked another group of students grouped on interest rather than level reading a particular novel to meet her for a literature circle discussion where she monitored students' discussion and entered only when the discussion waned. Lastly, she worked one-on-one building vocabulary with one of the ESL students. The following day the guided reading students participated in the literature discussion groups and the new guided reading lesson with a leveled text was one-on-one with a different student. I asked Ms. Sims about this structure and she remarked, "I'm transitioning many of the kids to literature circles, but I have a few who still need some focused reading work, but I don't want to keep them from literature discussions, so I try and do a combination of both to make sure I am meeting everyone's needs." By providing opportunities for students to participate in literature discussions while also receiving needed focused small group reading instruction, Ms. Sims supported her developing readers by balancing word reading instruction with integration and reading for meaning instruction.

Content area instruction was also grounded in text. The majority of the data collection occurred while the students were engaged in an extended science unit on animal classification. Each science lesson I observed began with a non-fiction read aloud about a particular animal that was part of the animal group studied. The main focus of the read aloud was to extract information about animals to add to the list of characteristics of that particular group. However, instruction about non-fiction text features or ways to distinguish fiction and non-fiction texts also

occurred. Many times these questions and short discussions offered a springboard for the next day's or next week's mini-lesson in reading workshop. It was during science instruction that I observed the most extensive use and construction of interactive anchor charts. Ms. Sims used a variety of graphic organizers such as T charts, webs, and Venn Diagrams to help students organize the information presented in a book. I observed these same graphic organizers being used by students to help plan writing or compare and contrast story elements during literacy stations and writing during the literacy workshop, however, the teacher introduction/primary use or development of charts during lessons occurred during science.

Another daily event that occurred between special areas and the end of the day was whole group read aloud. Although there were also occasions when Ms. Sims picked up and read aloud before lunch, or on a rainy recess day, the last 30 minutes of the school day was consistently dedicated to reading aloud. During my observations, only chapter books were read during this time. Ms. Sims stated that there were so many other times during the day where she shared picture books and non-fiction texts, this was a time for her to model and share reading extended text. During the shared read aloud, I had the opportunity to observe Ms. Sims modeling comprehension strategies over time and scaffolding students' thinking over extended text. For example, the read aloud always began with a brief discussion about what had occurred in the story up to this point in the reading. This time became an opportunity for the students to recap and synthesize the important parts of the story collectively as they worked together practicing summarization in an authentic setting. The reorientation to the story that occurred through conversation between the students and the teacher not only offered an authentic purpose to summarize but also provided Ms. Sims with an opportunity to model predicting and questioning

strategies that set the purpose for the next chapter. The summarizations and quick, casual comments such as “I wonder what funny things Pippi is going to do in this chapter,” actively oriented the students in the reading and invited them to engage in the reading, while simultaneously modeling comprehension reading strategies.

The classroom structure, which included many times throughout the day for students to work in small groups or individually, provided opportunities for the students to learn from teachers and peers alike. Ms. Sims encouraged the students to be self-reliant and independent, often prompting students to ask a friend if they needed assistance. I observed the students often asking a peer for assistance or offering a helping hand. One example of the classroom community was the way in which the students offered assistance to their peers. In the class there were three students who spoke Vietnamese as their home language, one of whom had been in the United States a matter of weeks and spoke almost no English. The Vietnamese students would step in and translate when it was evident meaning had broken down and the new student was confused. In the same thoughtful and helpful manner, I observed one student who had just finished reading a highly desired Miley Cyrus book she had borrowed from the library. The student advised her classmate that she had finished the book, which prompted both students to approach Ms. Sims, with a sense of fervency and importance. “May we go to the library together so that I can turn in this book and she can check it out? Lots of people want it and if she doesn’t go with me she will never get to read it.”

Independence and responsibility were values that Ms. Sims continually tried to instill in the students. She encouraged them to solve problems on their own, “How do you think would be the best way to solve this situation?” In the above situation about the library book, Ms. Sims

praised the students for coming to her with a solution and allowed the students to go to the library together. She offered choice for students in some of their assignments, and during reading workshop, allowed students an opportunity to choose the order in which to complete their workstations. Ms. Sims was quick to step in and offer guidance or the gentle nudge to help students stay on task, but often communicated to the students that she wanted them to be in charge of their own learning.

Although the students had assigned tables and seats, I often found students working on the floor with a clipboard, in the hall with a peer, or sitting at a different table in order to complete an assignment. Ms. Sims' frank approach with her students extended to their working spaces. She often stated, "I don't care where you choose to work as long as you make a choice that will let you get your work done." Ms. Sims named her table groups by academic professions such as "mathematicians" or "authors." Because table assignments frequently changed across the school year, each student would be referred to as a reader, scientist, or other subject specific profession. Johnston (2004) advocates teacher talk that positions students as capable and knowing. Ms. Sims teacher talk subtly reinforced that she viewed the students as capable and knowing learners in the classroom. This is one example of Ms. Sims' frequent use of naming desired behaviors and learning their characteristics that I will describe in more detail later.

Ms. Sims' workshop format of instruction allowed for students to experience a variety of levels of support as they acquired their new learning. Opportunities for direct instruction in whole, small, and individual groups allowed Ms. Sims to balance her instruction to meet the needs of individual students and the class as a whole. Likewise, student joint participation in

whole group conversations around text and independent literacy activities provided the context and situation for comprehension skill acquisition. Ms. Sims' deliberate way of connecting lessons to literature allowed students to encounter a variety of texts and multiple opportunities to practice literacy skills.

As evidenced by the above description of Ms. Sims' classroom, comprehension instruction occurred across the school day in a variety of instructional formats. Close analysis of the data showed direct comprehension instruction occurred most frequently during literacy workshop mini-lessons, which were brief whole group read alouds before students began their independent work. Across the data set, Ms. Sims also provided direct instruction, modeling, and scaffolding in both small group reading instruction and during science instruction. Further, the end of the day read alouds also emerged as a venue by which Ms. Sims made her reasoning about text public and scaffolded students in their acquisition of comprehension strategy use. These events are presented and analyzed in the next section.

Important Literacy Events for Comprehension Instruction

Comprehension instruction appeared throughout the school day with threads of learning opportunities focused on meaning-making apparent across all the content areas. As I portrayed in the previous section, classroom norms and structures provided a context for scaffolding students in their acquisition of meaning-making strategies. Additionally, data revealed particular, teacher led events where comprehension instruction occurred. Teacher read alouds during language arts and content area instruction emerged as particularly salient events for comprehension instruction. Because nearly all instruction, regardless of the subject, began with a teacher led, shared piece of literature, teacher read alouds occurred multiple times throughout

the school day. To aid my explanation, I parse the teacher read aloud into two different categories, story (fiction) read alouds and non-fiction read alouds.

Story read alouds occurred most frequently during language arts instruction. Ms. Sims stated in interviews that she felt the read aloud time was an opportunity to share great stories with students and help them to grow their love of literature. These read alouds were contexts for direct instruction of comprehension strategies (described more in later sections). The second set of read alouds, non-fiction read alouds, occurred when introducing or explaining concepts within the content areas. During these read alouds, Ms. Sims' purpose was to share the text in order to gain information. However, while sharing the text in order to gain information, Ms. Sims simultaneously provided direct modeling of strategies used in comprehending non-fiction text.

During both fiction and non-fiction whole class read alouds and smaller guided reading groups, Ms. Sims employed a number of pedagogical strategies in her efforts to teach comprehension. Two strategies most evident in the data were: (a) Modeling her reasoning, and (b) Questioning. While modeling reasoning around text, Ms. Sims engaged students in a discussion how readers make sense of text while making her in-the-head thinking and text processing explicit. She used questioning as a way to direct the students in employing these meaning-making strategies. As I referenced in the earlier section, each of these key events occurred on a nearly daily basis and over time provided students with a series of events in which comprehension instruction was modeled while inviting students to co-construct meaning around text with the assistance of their teacher and peers. These pedagogical strategies are discussed in the following sections.

Modeling reasoning.

The most prominent theme across the read alouds was the multitude of ways in which Ms. Sims modeled her reasoning with text. Thinking aloud (Oster, 2001) while sharing texts with the class provided Ms. Sims a venue to engage students in meaning making work, modeling her reasoning and drawing upon meaning-making strategies as they were needed. In this theme, we see most clearly Ms. Sims' intentions of being explicit and direct with her students. Given the limited research regarding comprehension instruction with younger children, it is interesting to note what aspects of comprehension Ms. Sims focused on in her modeling. Specifically, Ms. Sims focused her reasoning on three comprehension areas: determining the importance of a character's action and synthesizing plot development in fiction text, making sense of the information and facts presented in informational texts, and using context clues to realize the meaning of an unfamiliar word or phrase.

Reasoning around character and plot development.

The majority of the books Ms. Sims chose for a read aloud were more sophisticated than the books the young readers could read independently. These selections were intentional. Because Ms. Sims' young readers were still learning to read, often their readiness to understand complex stories exceeded their ability to access more sophisticated text independently. Some examples of the complex stories I observed Ms. Sims reading aloud include The Adventures of Pippi Longstocking (Lindgrin, 1997), Miss Rumphius (Cooney, 1982), and Freckle Juice (Blume, 1971). The texts that most of the students were able to read independently often did not feature extended character development and plot structures. Teacher read alouds provided the students access to these more sophisticated texts. Therefore, comprehension skill instruction and acquisition occurred through teacher-led texts. One way in which Ms. Sims promoted

students' comprehension was through modeling her reasoning around plot and character development.

In the following transcript we see Ms. Sims reading a fictional story about a boy who is looking for an appropriate hat. While this story is written at a word recognition level that exceeds the level of the students, it is about a subject in which the students can identify and understand. During the read aloud, Ms. Sims paused and modeled meaning-making strategies, showing the readers where in the reading it makes sense for strategy use and how summarizing and synthesizing could be useful strategies. In the story, all the townspeople wear hats associated with their job. The transcript begins at the point in the story where it is time for the boy to choose his hat (and thus his profession.)

Teacher: *Ivan's father had made her a special music hat.*
Look at that. Uh-hum. Wide, round and tiny guitars on top and piano strings dangling from the brim.
Since each string had a bell on the end, everyone knew when Miss Anita was near. It was a different sort of hat but it was perfect for Miss Anita. No one else would want to wear it but Miss Anita would not be without it. She loved the hat and she loved Ivan and she loved it when he stopped to hear her play. Of course on this day she didn't recognize him. All she saw was a tall hat on a small boy. Who are you, she asked? From within the hat came a muffled voice. It's me, Miss Anita, it's Ivan. He heard her quick steps on the wooden floor. That's not the hat for you, she declared, as she yanked it off his head.
Is it for her to decide what hat he should wear?

Students: No.

Teacher: Not really. One more page.

Students: Ahhhh (disappointed).

Teacher: *It's not, he replied*? So he wasn't sure. It says he replied, but he actually, kind of asked a question: *It's not the hat for me? Of course not, there is only one hat for you*. And what can you tell by the picture? What kind of hat does she want him to have?

Student: Musical hat.

Student: Musical hat like hers.

Teacher: So the baker wants him to have a baking hat and the music teacher wants him to have a music hat. *Suddenly Miss Anita disappeared into*

her studio and came out with a very different looking hat. *(continues to read)*
... He didn't know what else to do except keep walking to school, but the hat maker's son was barely down the street when he met a new problem. Okay. So, it says he's going to meet a new problem. So the problem we talked about is he doesn't know what kind of hat he'll get and what else is the problem that we've seen so far?

Student: People keep wanting him to wear that, the hat [fades out]

Teacher: Very good. People keep wanting him to wear hats like theirs, right? You know what I'm wondering too is it said that the hats, your hats should be about something that you love and something that you're really good at. I'm thinking that if you get the right hat, do you think if you get the right hat it's going to be uncomfortable or cover your face or make you not see where you're going?

This transcript provides one example of the many ways in which Ms. Sims stopped and modeled summarizing and synthesizing. First, we see her orient the students to the picture to help predict what hat the music teacher will produce. Then, she summarized what has happened thus far by stating, "So the baker wants him to have a baking hat and the music teacher wants him to have a music hat." This restating of the plot calls attention to the important facts from the story that she will be taking forward as she reads to help in constructing meaning. In the last part of the transcript we see Ms. Sims having an almost one-way conversation with herself, or making explicit her internal thoughts of connecting the text with what she thinks might be true in the story. Ms. Sims' modeling makes explicit how she, as a reader, is working to understand and synthesize the plot development in the story.

Ms. Sims also modeled her thinking about characters as they developed in the story and thought out loud about how their actions influenced the story. For example, while reading *Stellaluna* (Cannon, 2005), Ms. Sims paused to speculate,

> I can see why the mom wanted Stellaluna to act like a bird, because she doesn't really know how to take care of a bat, and she didn't want her children to get hurt trying to do the things that bats do but birds aren't really good at. But, I bet it

> made Stellaluna a little sad and maybe miss her mom. I think it is important to notice how other characters in the story talk to our main character, that often gives us important information about the story.

Here we see Ms. Sims conversing with herself about Stellaluna, the main character in the story. Ms. Sims speculates on the character's feelings and then explicitly states for the students why this is an important process for understanding the story. Young readers, who commonly encounter flat, unchanging characters in the texts they read independently, need exposure to how complex characters are portrayed in books and how that enhances story meaning. By Ms. Sims having this conversation with herself about the character, she is modeling character development in context so that students are familiar with ways of thinking about complex characters when they encounter them in their personal reading.

Charts posted around the room provided additional evidence of class discussions on character development. One interactive chart was divided in half and listed on one side "characters that change in the story"; the other side read, "Characters that stay the same in the story." After a read aloud, or a literature circle book discussion had ended, Ms. Sims and the students would visit the chart and discuss where to chart the characters in their just read story. After one literature circle group had finished discussing the book *Freckle Juice* by Judy Blume (1971), I observed them standing by Ms. Sims and the chart discussing where to place each of the characters in the story. Ms. Sims prompted the students for examples from the text to support placing the character on one side of the chart or the other by stating, "How do you know that?" or "What happened in the story that makes Andrew belong on the characters that change side?" Here, we see students having opportunities to experience and witness thinking around different types of books and in different types of settings (small group, whole group, teacher led,

and student led). At the same time, this conversation encouraged the students in the group to distinguish between round and flat characters and to recall text evidence before adding them to the chart, laying the foundation for character analysis activities students will be asked to do in later grades.

Reasoning with information presented in non-fiction texts.

In addition to modeling her reasoning around plot development and how that contributes to meaning-making, Ms. Sims modeled how to synthesize information in non-fiction text in order to facilitate content learning as well as text comprehension. Data from the classroom show Ms. Sims highlighting important concepts and modeling her reasoning and generalization strategies with non-fiction texts. For example, while previewing a book on spiders before she read it aloud to the class, Ms. Sims paused at one of the pictures to talk about her thinking.

> Teacher: Oh, look. This is the one I think Hailey talked about. See, it, it's called a water spider.
> Student: A camel spider has all the ability and power to make a strong web.
> Teacher: (nodding) Because it is a spider, remember we talked about generalizing information. We know some things about arachnids, I mean, with insects, we can take that insect information and apply it to any insect. We can also take the arachnid information and apply it to any spider. We know that arachnids can make webs, so we can generalize that this spider, or any other spider we might come across, can most likely spin webs as well.

This short transcript shows Ms. Sims capitalizing on a student's statement. One student contributes to the group what he knows about a camel spider. Ms. Sims, nodding, affirms the student's statement as accurate and then extends the comment to show how we can generalize information across species. Ms. Sims explicitly references earlier lessons on insects, and

connects how the same strategy of generalization also applies in this context. Here Ms. Sims moves from making her own generalization and modeling that thinking for the class to capitalizing on how one student is making generalizations, and explicitly sharing it with the rest of the class. By extending the student's statement, she is both adding value to his contribution but also providing another example for the class. Her modeling and naming of the strategy illustrates for students the application and authentic use of a strategy previously learned. By making these connections explicit, Ms. Sims is showing her young readers that knowledge learned from books or classroom discussions does not apply to only one context, but rather can be useful in understanding new information.

Analysis of the data from lessons that occurred at the end of the school year showed the students beginning to take up some of the reasoning Ms. Sims modeled during her whole group lessons, specifically generalization of information in non-fiction texts previously mentioned. In the following transcript, the students are engaged in a science lesson and getting ready to read a book about salmon. They are charting the facts they already know about the fish, and then they will add facts from the books as they discover new information.

Mark: Fishes skin is not smooth
Holly: A fish has scales
Teacher: Okay, that kind of goes with this one. What do you know about how a salmon lives, what it does, where it lives?
Mai: We learned they live in water and also normally when I eat sushi it has salmon in it.
Teacher: Okay.
Holly: Cold blooded.
Teacher: Cold blooded, but do you know that? So did you figure that out?
Holly: Because it is a fish
Teacher: And all fish are?
Steve: [inaudible]
Teacher: Good, so Holly knows, Ross, all the things we've talked about, about fish, about all fish this week, we can apply that to salmon, even if

> she didn't already know, she goes, hey, a salmon is a fish, fish are cold blooded. So a salmon must be cold blooded. She did the same thing with scales as well. What else can you figure out?

In this exchange we see Holly take information from a previous lesson and apply it to the current discussion on salmon showing that she is connecting the information from the previous lessons with the learning taking place on this day. This mirrors the same way Ms. Sims modeled reflecting back to previous lessons to connect prior learning with the new topic. Ms. Sims echoes and expands Holly's meaning-making and generalization process by spelling out the connection for all the students. Her restating makes explicit the generalization for all the students, to confirm that they understand the connection while also adding value to the thinking that Holly had shared with the class.

Reasoning around vocabulary.

Interestingly, Ms. Sims focused much of her modeling on vocabulary. She was intentional about illustrating for students how to use the context and background knowledge to make sense of an unknown word or phrase. Because many of her students were second language learners, Ms. Sims continually strived to help students build their vocabulary and provide them with strategies for finding the meaning of unknown words. In one interview she stated,

> I don't want them to be OK with not understanding because they don't know what a word means, skip it and go on could be every other word for some of my ESL kids. I want them to recognize when they don't know what a word means and then know how to find the meaning.

Ms. Sims' emphasis on vocabulary reflects researchers' recommendations for intentional work around vocabulary (Beck & McKeown, 2001). The following excerpt shows one way in which Ms. Sims modeled for her students to connect what they know to infer the meaning of an unknown word. When reading a nonfiction text about spiders Ms. Sims paused and stated,

> I read on the other page all spiders have eight legs, here it says arachnids have eight legs. Hmm, arachnid is a word I'm not sure about, I'm thinking arachnid and spider might mean the same thing, especially since there is a picture of a spider on both of the pages. Arachnid, hmm, may be a more scientific name for spider.

As in the above example, approximately one third of the modeled reasoning occurred around vocabulary words presented in the text. This pedagogical move may have been particularly useful for the large number of students in her classroom who spoke English as their second language. Rather than pre-teaching a list of vocabulary words to her ESL students, Ms. Sims modeled how to figure out these words in the context of their reading. In doing so, she provided students a glimpse into the ways a reader might use context clues to make sense of an unknown word or phrase in reading.

In another example, Ms. Sims was reading The *Adventures of Pippi Longstocking* (Lindgren, 1997) with students when she came upon a potentially unfamiliar word and asked the students to act out the meaning of the word based on the context clues.

> Teacher: *The girl looked crestfallen*. Crestfallen. Hmmm, how do you think she looks? Can you show me a face that might be crestfallen? Because she thought they had seen her dad and then they hadn't. So crestfallen is like – yeah. She probably got a little excited, thinking Pippi had seen her dad that she was looking for and then she went (making a frowning sighing motion). Crestfallen. *The girl was crestfallen and went off without a word.*

In the transcript we see Ms. Sims modeling her reasoning around the unknown word, re-phrasing parts of the text that may help to illuminate the meaning. Ms. Sims turns to the students and asks them to help her in constructing the meaning. Students then act out the emotion and Ms. Sims restates for emphasis and rereads the phrase, one now better understood by the group. In a later

section, transcripts will show how students began to stop and take note of a misunderstood word, often interrupting the reading with questions about a word meaning indicating they were beginning to take on monitoring for understanding.

Because of her classroom population, she found modeling strategies around unknown vocabulary important, and it was prominent throughout the data set. Additionally, Ms. Sims explicitly showed students meaning-making strategies with fiction and nonfiction texts. The verbalization of her metacognitive processes provided an opportunity for her young readers to see and participate in Ms. Sims' thinking and reasoning processes around texts observing these processes with texts they were not yet able to access. Drawing on Vygotskian principals, Cazden (2001), Mercer (1995), Pearson (1991), Allington (2002) among others state the importance of using language to assist in the scaffolding of new learning. Throughout the school day, and particularly within reading instruction, Ms. Sims put words to her thoughts in order to make them explicit and public and to scaffold important reading processes.

Ms. Sims' modeling supplied an important comprehension learning scaffold (Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976). Her metacognitive talk around text allowed an otherwise silent, often unobservable, process to become observable for Ms. Sims' young readers. If we look closely at the modeling that occurred with shared text, we see the conversations were predominately teacher-led. However, rarely were the students passive participants. Students, at times, would enter into the conversation asking questions or responding to Ms. Sims' statements. Other times, Ms. Sims would draw students into the conversations by asking a question or prompting students to respond to her thinking. We can speculate that if there were more room for student participation in the conversations, comprehension acquisition might have been facilitated to a

greater degree. However, with these young readers, the data indicate Ms. Sims' modeling provided a real world glimpse into comprehension strategy use in a way that provided support for students as they began to take on meaning-making strategies. If we consider the conversations around texts within Pearson and Gallagher's (1993) model of gradual release of responsibility, Ms. Sims' modeling initiated the scaffolding of comprehension strategies. Her prompting of students and the students joining in the conversation moved beyond Ms. Sims' direct modeling and encouraged students in their comprehension acquisition.

Questioning.

During shared reading experiences and while modeling comprehension strategy use, Ms. Sims also fostered comprehension acquisition through her questioning techniques. Over time, students began not to only respond to Ms. Sims' questioning but also generated their own questions indicating their participation and use of meaning-making strategies. Transcriptions from whole group read alouds showed both teacher and student-generated questions prevalent throughout the data set. Analysis generated two broad categories of questions: (a) teacher-asked, and (b) authentic questions from the students. In this section, I will provide examples of the questioning techniques Ms. Sims employed in order to elicit deeper thinking and meaning–making. Additionally, I will provide examples of the ways in which students interrupted the reading to clarify understanding and often drew upon their peers to assist in negotiating understanding.

While questioning in a classroom is not necessarily a unique practice, the data indicated questions that occurred during Ms. Sims' whole group shared reading gave way to lengthy discussions between the teacher and students that may have aided in a deeper understanding of

the text. Ms. Sims often would pose a question to the group to recap an important part of the story. Her purpose behind many of these questions was to elicit student thinking about the text and prompt comprehension strategies. When students interrupted the conversation or the reading of the text in order to seek clarification or to gain understanding, I coded these questions as student-initiated. Transcripts for read alouds below illustrate the ways in which Ms. Sims' questions were purposeful in scaffolding comprehension strategies. Across the data, nearly all of her questions about the text prompted students' use of comprehension strategies. Additionally, I will show how student-initiated questions provide evidence of the beginnings of students' self-monitoring of meaning-making.

Teacher questioning.

Teacher questioning is a well documented pedagogical strategy that has received much attention in educational research (Beck, et. al., 1996; Guzak, 1967; Ogle, 1986; Palinscar & Brown, 1984). I found Ms. Sims' purposes of her questions and the extended conversations that occurred as a result of the questions noteworthy and important to the ways in which Ms. Sims scaffolded comprehension strategies. Before the reading of a text, Ms. Sims questioned students in order to activate background knowledge or to help set a purpose for reading. Throughout reading of both fiction and non-fiction texts, Ms. Sims posed questions to the group that elicited comprehension strategy use. After reading, Ms. Sims' questions spurred discussions around the shared text. Close analysis of the types of questions Ms. Sims asked indicated their purposes could be divided into two sub-categories: questioning to elicited deeper thinking from the students and clarifying questions that encouraged students to articulate their thoughts.

Questioning to elicit deeper understanding followed the same structure in each of the read alouds analyzed. Ms. Sims, while reading to the students, would pause the reading and ask a question. These questions where short and directive and prompted the students to use their previously taught comprehension strategies in order to answer the posed question. Ms. Sims' questions did not follow a specific protocol nor were they scripted. Rather, each question was text specific, prompting the students to think more about the shared text. The following table outlines each of the questions in which Ms. Sims elicited deeper thinking from the students. The examples from transcripts illustrate how Ms. Sims' questioning prompted students to use a comprehension strategy and their purpose in promoting the students to achieve a new level of understanding.

Table 2 Questioning

Purpose of Question	Strategy Eliciting	Example
Prompt comprehension strategy use	• activating and applying background knowledge	Teacher: Ah, okay. I'll read the title of this chapter; it'll help you remember something that we've already read. This is chapter 6 we're about to start. Asking Permission. So what happened in the past few days? Nick, can you fill us in a little bit? (WBE 4.29) p. 17
	• summarizing	Teacher: *Poppy walked around the bend and noticed the red flag hanging from the branch.* Oh, so Poppy got home and there was a red flag and the red flag meant what? Student: That there was a meeting and something bad happened. Teacher: So what has happened that is going to make them to need to have a meeting? (WBE 4.23)

Table 2 (continued)

	• prompting visualization	Teacher: *The horse trotted around in the sawdust, and Miss Carmen Seta stood calmly on its back and smiled and then something happened. Just as the horse passed Pippi's seat, something came swishing through the air—oh, you don't want to miss this. I'm serious. Something came swishing through the air and it was none other than Pippi herself. And there she stood on the horse's back, behind Miss Carmen Seta. . .* Students: Ahhh. Teacher:. . . *At first Miss Carmen Seta was so astonished that she nearly fell off the horse. Then she got mad.* Close your eyes and see if you can create that picture in your head. I can, can't you just see it? (WBE 4.2) p 18
	• calling attention to text features/ story grammar	Teacher: "Let's think a little bit about, as we listen to a little bit of the story, uh when is this taking place? Sometimes when you read a story, the pictures really help you decide if it's past, present or future. Uhm, what do you think?" (WBE 4.7) p 2
	• Synthesis/ Question generating	Teacher: *"I spin a web tunnel linking the two nests that I scurry through to make. A female does not lay her eggs immediately. First she builds an air-filled nursery on top of her own nest. Next she lays her eggs inside a special white bag. Then she seals the entrance with silk.* Why do you think she's sealing it? What does she want to—what is sealing it going to accomplish?" (WBE 4.23) p. 16

Above we see examples from across the data set that show how Ms. Sims' questioning invited students' use of comprehension strategies in order to increase understanding of the shared text. Ms. Sims' language is text specific and encourages students to think in specific ways about the text in order to enhance meaning-making. For example, the question, "So what happened (in the story) that is going to make them (the characters) to need to have a meeting?," prompts the students to summarize. Although this question does not specifically state, "summarize what has happened to this point," the question implies and prompts the students to think about the recent actions in the story and draw upon that knowledge to help explain why the imminent meeting is an important next event. In the same way, "Why do you think she's sealing it? What does she want to—what is sealing it going to accomplish?" calls upon the students to think about the spider facts they are hearing read and use this information to understand how sealing the sack will help the mother protect her eggs. The specific information is implied in the story but not fully stated; yet it is an important concept for the students to understand. By Ms. Sims' questioning the students at this juncture in the reading, she is calling attention to the important information but also prompting students to think about the information heard, synthesize, and infer so that meaning is enhanced. Instead of Ms. Sims telling the students what information needs to be gleaned from the text, she questions the students engaging them in the thinking work. Not only does the questioning make the reading and meaning-making processes a co-constructed experience, but her questions also provide a model and a scaffold of how students may use these same comprehension strategies in their independent reading within a supportive, shared setting. In a classroom full of young readers, Ms. Sims' questions direct students' attention to thinking

and meaning-making and beyond word identification. Her questions alert students to the idea that reading is about thinking and connecting, not just decoding or word calling.

Ms. Sims also used direct questions to encourage students to clarify their thinking. Often, her questions occurred within an extended conversation that began with a direct question prompting comprehension strategy use. For example, when reading a blended fiction and non-fiction book on turtles Ms. Sims questioned the students:

Teacher:	So what did these two pages tell us about turtles?
Ross:	That they eat plants and lay eggs
Teacher:	What else?
Ross:	They cover up their eggs when they lay them
Teacher:	Why do turtles bury their eggs? Why do you think they do that Kami?
Kami:	Keep 'em covered
Teacher:	To keep them covered. But why? Why does she need to do that?
Student:	Because she (fades out)
Teacher:	Okay, to keep them warm, that's a good idea, to keep them warm and safe
Jason:	Oh I know
Teacher:	Jason?
Jason:	Or because she wants to hide them from animals that will eat them like snakes
Teacher:	Yeah, the book doesn't say snakes, but says predators, right? Which could be a snake or an owl or another kind of animal. Predator, and animal that would want to eat the turtles eggs
Jason:	Uh-huh
Teacher:	Yes, that's true too, that's kind of what I was thinking, the mother turtle hides her eggs to protect them from predators, but also to keep them warm.

In the above transcript, we see Ms. Sims directly questioning the students to clarify their thinking. She revoices one student's response, "to keep them covered," and pushes for more clarification with, "But why?" This question extends the conversation and pushes the students to

go beyond just surface level answers. She pushes for further clarification and justification of a student's response by questioning, "Why does she need to do that?" Interestingly, this is not a question-response between one student and the teacher, but rather a group conversation where several students are joining in and participating. One student offers a response, and another student clarifies and adds deeper meaning. This "piggy-backing" off one another's ideas and extending of peers' responses points to co-construction of understanding. Ms. Sims' direct questions push students to clarify their thinking, and in the process, they yield more detailed information that is public and important for all students' understanding. Lastly, Ms. Sims re-caps the discussion, and adds value to the group's responses and thinking, by stating, "That is what I was thinking too."

Student initiated questions.

During the read alouds, Ms. Sims was not the only person initiating questions and prompting comprehension strategy use. Often students interrupted the reading to ask clarifying questions or questions to aid in making meaning. These student-generated questions stemmed from a breakdown in meaning in the story they were hearing. By interrupting the reading to ask clarifying questions, the students seemed to be showing engagement in reading and textual meaning-making. Also, the students' comfort in interrupting the teacher in order to clarify meaning indicated the cooperative relationship between Ms. Sims and her students. The following section will provide examples of the students interrupting the reading to gain meaning and how the subsequent conversations not only helped to clarify meaning but also illustrated how the students were monitoring their own meaning-making.

One example of a student-initiated question is taken from a transcript in which the teacher was reading aloud *Pippi Longstocking* (Lindgrin, 1948). The transcript begins with a student-generated question aimed at figuring out unknown vocabulary in the text. As the transcript shows, a short group discussion ensues in which students and the teacher negotiate meaning.

> Teacher: *So she closed her eyes real fast. She said, and here I go goggling—looking—at everything all day long, I wonder how much money I've used up? Then little by little she opened her eyes very carefully and rolled it round and round in her head. Cost what it may, she said, I must take a look. At last, Tommy and Annika managed to explain to Pippi what a circus really was and she took some gold pieces out of her suitcase. Then she put on her hat, which was as big as a millstone.*
> Student: A what?
> Teacher: A millstone.
> Student: What is a mule stone?
> Teacher: A millstone. Anybody know what that is? That's kind of a tough one cause a millstone is not something we talk about very often. What do you think?
> Student: [inaudible]
> Teacher: It's definitely big, you're right, you can tell. Uh, in a mill, that's where they grind like wheat into—Amy? Wheat into, Amy?
> Amy: Grind wheat like the Little Red Hen?
> Teacher :Kind of…(interrupted)
> Student: What is a millstone? A grinder?
> Teacher: So they have a big stone that grinds the wheat and like turns like this (motioning with hands) and it's really kind of big and round and about this thick. So that's what I'm picturing. A hat as big as a millstone. I'm picturing a heavy hat. Maybe it's not heavy, but it, it's big as a millstone, it's pretty big. *Off they all went.*

Above, we see one student interrupt the reading because a word was unfamiliar. It is important to note that Ms. Sims doesn't reprimand the student for interrupting, nor does she offer a quick answer and quickly return to the reading. Instead, Ms. Sims revoices the student question turning it back to the group. The teacher encourages the students to share their ideas

and understanding while guiding them to a correct answer. She then places the new word back into the text, "A hat as big as a millstone. I'm picturing a heavy hat." Finally, Ms. Sims shares her visualization of the text, which enhances the meaning of the word within in the passage. As quickly as she was interrupted, Ms. Sims shifts back to the reading of the text.

In the above transcript we see one example of a student-elicited question focused on clarifying the meaning of an unknown word. Other student-elicited questions focused on clarifying a fact or confusing concept in a social studies or science read aloud. Interestingly, the majority of student-generated questions about shared text occurred while reading non-fiction texts. In the excerpt below the teacher is reading a non-fiction story about spiders to the class.

> Teacher: *Scientists call this spider Argyroneta, Argyroneta. A name made by the Latin words that mean with a silvery net. Okay, gotta go, Marie (inaudible) I live under water because of all the food there. I eat shrimp and the young of insects. I also enjoy tiny fish. I'm a hunter, you see. If a tasty snack comes within reach, I dart out and capture it. I kill it with a bite from my poisonous fangs. Then I carry my catch back to my nest. To feed I turn my victim's body to liquid using my digestive juice. Why do I go home for meals instead of having an underwater picnic? Because you can't eat soup under water. The water would wash the liquid away. I don't lose a drop in my nest.*
> Student: I don't understand.
> Teacher: You didn't get it? Okay, so it catches it, well we—what?
> Ross: So it catches whatever it wants to eat, takes it back to the air bubble, then turns it to liquid, with its juices then it eats it.
> Teacher: If it turned it to liquid out in the water, it would just wash off into the pond and wash away. Does that make sense?
> Student: But how does it get the food?
> Kami: I think it bites it?
> Teacher: Let me explain a little bit better. So we read this before about spiders, that they catch something, then they turn it into liquid so they can eat their prey. This (spider) has special digestive juices in its fangs, I guess. That would turn this fish into liquid. But if it turns it—you turn a liquid into a liquid—if you turn something into liquid in another liquid, like if you pour milk into water, it's just 'gonna all mix together. So it would lose its

food if it's a liquid inside the water. So instead it goes inside this bubble, turns it to liquid there and then—that's why he says he can't eat soup under water. It's just all mixes together so he takes it in here where it's safer to turn the fish to liquid.
Student: [asks inaudible question]
Teacher: No, this is the air bubble in its nest that it made under water. Doesn't ever go to the surface. It has a special air bubble on its web to breathe.
Kami: Okay, so it has air bubbles and food bubbles
Student: The food bubbles are full of liquid.

In this excerpt, we see one student stop the reading to make sense of the text. Again, Ms. Sims encourages the students to offer responses that might help the group gain understanding. After it is evident that the students are not fully grasping the concept, Ms. Sims offers a more direct explanation. The students are persistent in their questioning. Three times, they ask questions in order to make the concept clearer. Ms. Sims rephrases the material read and tries to explain the soup metaphor. Finally, we see two students recap the discussion, confirming their understandings for the group.

It is important to notice how these students' questions indicate a level of engagement in the reading. Because they interrupt the reading to make sense of the text, it is an indication that they want to understand what is being read. In a way, the students are exhibiting early monitoring strategies. By stating, "I don't understand," the student recognized a breakdown in meaning and is turning to the group to assist. Instead of sitting passively and accepting confusion, the student chooses to stop the reading. The students are persistent and place importance on making meaning over the decoding or re-reading of the text by Ms. Sims. The re-reading of the words did not offer an explanation that made sense, and *they* pushed for more clarification. Monitoring meaning is a comprehension strategy that Ms. Sims has taught many

times throughout the year. This whole group read aloud setting allows young readers to practice monitoring their comprehension in a supportive context with text that they are not yet able to read independently yet are able to understand.

The above transcripts and explanations illustrate the ways in which both authentic questions from the students and teacher-generated questions helped the students to engage in meaningful discussions around text. Students felt free to ask authentic questions, and the data indicate that questions became a springboard for elaborated explanations about the text. These elaborated explanations then became joint meaning-making discussions where ideas were shared and clarified in order to assist the entire group with overall comprehension of the shared text. The teacher's questions encouraged students to think more critically about a character's action or what might be occurring with the plot. These questions aimed at eliciting deeper thinking provided a scaffold for students to think about the reading in a way they might not have on their own. Ms. Sims' questioning, then, provided students with an alternative way to think about and to make meaning from the reading.

Student-generated questions also fostered discussions around text. However, unlike the scaffold provided by Ms. Sims in the teacher questions, students' questions requested authentic support from teacher or peers. Although this is a subtle distinction, it is an important one. The students began to take over questioning as a way to gain greater meaning about the texts and subject matter in which they are learning.

Ms. Sims' modeling and questioning offered a scaffold to the students in their acquisition and internalization of comprehension strategies. Her discussions with students around fiction and non-fiction texts alike illustrated for students ways to infer meaning from text as well as

ways to think critically in order to enhance understanding. Her direct questioning prompted students' co-construction meaning as a group as means of guided support. Strategy instruction involves more than explicit instruction of a battery of strategies. Fisher and Frey (2010) state, "Modeling the strategy in action, and using the strategies collaboratively aid students in internalizing the desired reading and learning behaviors" (p.18). Ms. Sims' modeled reasoning and questioning while sharing texts with students demonstrate this collaborative assistance that aids students in comprehension strategy acquisition.

Summary

Ms. Sims' classroom provided students with a literature-rich environment and instructional events focused on the acquisition of complex literacy strategies. Her second graders worked to process sophisticated story patterns and to learn information from non-fiction texts, even though the texts themselves may have been beyond their readability level in terms of decoding skills. Ms. Sims' read alouds afforded opportunities for her young readers to see both comprehension strategies in use and to practice meaning-making in a supported setting. Further, Ms. Sims' modeling of comprehension strategies and reasoning with a variety of texts allowed opportunities for students to develop more nuanced strategic toolkits as they read across different text types.

Quantitative classroom data revealed students' growth in both word recognition and text comprehension as indicated on DRA and TPRI assessments. Table 1 illustrates student growth from beginning to end of year. While it is difficult not to speculate how much growth might have been achieved in a less teacher-centric environment, these second graders made progress, as seen in these assessments, in their text comprehension when engaged with instruction that included

frequent modeling and questioning. Additionally, the classroom environment and supportive context may have allowed these young readers to appropriate what was most meaningful and relevant to them and, in turn, assist them in their comprehension acquisition.

Table 3: Reading assessment scores for Ms. Sims' class

Texas Primary Reading Inventory			
	Fluency	Comprehension	
Beginning of Year	8	7	
End of Year	15	15	
Numbers represent the total number of students who scored at the developed level for the designated skill.			
Developmental Reading Assessment			
Number of students reading independently at the identified reading level*			
	14 and Below	16-22	24 and above
Beginning of Year	9	5	4
End of Year	3	0	15
*students are considered below level if they are reading below a 16 at the beginning of the year. End of year "on-level" reading level is 24.			

Case 2: Ms. Long

Ms. Long's classroom is a lively, active second grade classroom, that was characterized by the school principal as a "true learning environment." At the time of this study, Ms. Long had been teaching for 18 years and was identified by her principal as a "master teacher." She was the grade level chairperson and actively led the school in after-school book studies and workshops focused on early literacy instruction. She received her master's degree in curriculum and instruction and was viewed by the literacy coach (a position shared among three campuses) as a "great teacher that can challenge the strong reader and really bring the struggling ones up to par."

Below, I have organized Ms. Long's case into the same three categories as Ms. Sims. In addition, I have added one section entitled "Language of Instruction" because Ms. Long's language use during instruction seemed to cultivate comprehension of text. Close examination of the data revealed the classroom norms and structures established by Ms. Long oriented her students towards meaning-making across all subject areas. Additionally, modeling and prompting emerged as specific pedagogical moves Ms. Long employed in order to foster student comprehension acquisition. These findings offer an authentic portrait of the ways in which young readers are supported in acquiring comprehension skills and strategies.

Teacher Beliefs and Intentions

In her interview at the beginning of the study, Ms. Long described herself as a "continual learner" explaining that she felt like she was always thinking back to previous years or reading new books and trying new strategies to meet the varying needs of the classrooms. She laughingly stated that she had been teaching many years, but no two years were ever the same. Ms. Long admitted her classroom often did not seem like the most organized, but remarked, "It is their classroom and materials for their learning, so where they choose to work, or how they choose to organize their materials is their choice. Now, of course, I'll offer suggestions if it gets too out of hand."

When asked what influenced her literacy instruction, she mentioned by name Richard C. Owens, Fountas and Pinnell, and Carol Avery. During her interview, Ms. Long pulled out a pile of well-worn books that she continually referenced for planning. She described Richard Owens as introducing to her the concept of the three cueing system for literacy instruction (grapho-

phonic, semantics, syntax) in addition to showing her the importance of teaching students early literacy strategies such as concepts of print and self monitoring strategies.

> Even though that was really a long time ago, I still really draw from his stuff and what I learned about questioning kids to get them to try a different strategy and even the writing, like all of his writing conferencing stuff.

Ms. Long described the curriculum in her classroom as based on the students' strategy use. Ms. Long reported that she often decided on skills and strategy instruction based on what she had observed in her students' reading. Leveled books, as she learned from Fountas and Pinnell, provided guidance in choosing an appropriate text to use for guided reading instruction. Describing how she ascertained an appropriate book for instruction, Ms. Long commented that she might make note of a student who slowly sounded out a word and then kept reading without integrating the word into the phrase or sentence. This recorded information then aided her in choosing a book for the next small group reading lesson where re-reading to self-monitor would be the lesson focus. Throughout data collection I often observed her making anecdotal notes and performing quick running records on students' independent reading. I also observed her using those notes to inform book selection for small group reading instruction as well as independent reading boxes. She admitted that there were particular second-grade knowledge and skills set forth by the state that she must teach, but that the majority of the specific content was in the areas of science and social studies. Ms. Long acknowledged that the mandated state curriculum in reading and language arts could be limiting, and she reported that as a team of second grade teachers, they really worked to introduce mandated skills in context. The state guidelines for reading and writing are "really what you would want any kid to be able to do. (3.3.08)"

> If they want me to teach a diphthong, fine, but I can guarantee there is going to be a book my students come across that has a diphthong so I'll teach it then, in context, when they are ready, and if they already know it, our early literacy assessment tells me that and we just keep moving on. I'm lucky that we are not a ____(neighboring district with a reputation for a very scripted curriculum that teachers are mandated to follow). My job is to take them (the students) and move them forward to be better readers, learners and thinkers.

Three months of participant observation and data collection revealed that while explicit comprehension teaching occurred most frequently during whole group and small group reading time, comprehension instruction occurred throughout the school day, not just during the traditional reading time. Further, the language Ms. Long used for instruction positioned the students as co-contributors to the construction of meaning - making. Ms. Long reported that the majority of her conversations with students were, "to get them to think." The next three sections detail classroom structures and norms, as well as comprehension instruction and instructional conversations around text.

Classroom Norms and Structures that Support Comprehension Instruction

Each morning the students entered the classroom, and Ms. Long greeted them at the doorway with a warm smile and a hug or handshake. Often she inquired about personal details of their lives, such as the previous evening's baseball game in which a student participated, or about the status of a student's mom about to give birth. These exchanges, while often brief, seemed to indicate the teacher and students were a part of a caring community. Students busily chatted with each other as well, continuing conversations that had begun in the school cafeteria at breakfast or on the bus.

Their established morning routine included students removing their homework from their backpack, placing it in the appropriate location, finding their name on a clipboard and checking

that they were indeed in attendance, and marking their choice for lunch. After a couple of turns around the room visiting with friends or retrieving a forgotten note from a backpack, students settled down with a book of their choice at their assigned table and read until the morning announcements. Ms. Long often bustled around the classroom, "Ariel, it looks like you are here today, but I don't see that marked on our clipboard," or "Don't forget we have library today. Place your book in the basket so our leaders can return the books for us"… "Mike, did you bring your permission form back"… "Oh, Sarah, I love your haircut, it really lets me see your beautiful eyes." This morning routine had been established in the fall and was similar to many of the routines that took place throughout the school day. Ms. Long had set forth the tasks and the desired expectations, but the responsibility lay with the students. There was enough flexibility for the students to manage the tasks in the order that worked for them, and there was a fair amount of choice for the students, along with a gentle nudge from Ms. Long when needed. This simple morning routine is important to note because it was indicative of many classroom assignments and work routines. Ms. Long set forth a loose structure that seemed to encourage and foster independence in her students.

After the morning announcements, delivered via live video from the "Jaguar TV station" located within the computer lab, the students met Ms. Long on the carpet for the morning calendar and classroom agenda. The calendar helper walked the students through many of the morning calendar tasks, graphing the weather, tally marking the days in school, extending the calendar pattern. During this time Ms. Long sat at the back of the group, placing a hand on a busy child, or glancing over to stop a side conversation. The calendar leader was responsible for taking the students through this task. Each day a different student took the calendar leader

assignment and advised his or her fellow classmates of the special area class they would be attending. The calendar leader also had the responsibility of tallying the lunch choices and transferring that to the cafeteria order sheet. At the same time, the leader read the menu for the next day's choices and posted the choices for the next day. The independence of the students during this time was noteworthy. When I asked her about the students leading the morning calendar routine, Ms. Long commented that she felt it was important for the students to be in charge of their classroom routines. She was quick to jump in if a discipline issue arose, or offer assistance when needed, but Ms. Long specifically mentioned this was one area in which she felt like the students could be independent. When asked how the students became so independent, Ms. Long explained that she spent several weeks modeling and leading at the beginning of the year, and then slowly the calendar helpers would take over one task and then another. It was not until after the winter break that she fully removed herself from guiding this process. This relinquishing of responsibility with calendar duties closely resembled gradual release of instruction (Pearson & Fielding, 1991) advocated by educational researchers as an effective instructional model.

I highlight these early morning routines as a means of introducing the ways in which Ms. Long apprenticed students towards independence. Ms. Long provided a support or a scaffold for students through her instruction, activities she designed for student practice, and the language she used while instructing students. Although by the spring semester the students were growing in their level of sophistication and understanding of many tasks, there were still young learners solidifying their ways of interpreting new information and handling complicated tasks such as reading comprehension. The description of the calendar routine illustrates the way Ms. Long

would hand over the responsibility of the learning to the students once they no longer needed her direct and explicit instruction. However, Ms. Long was present and quick to jump into the instruction at a time of confusion or to offer clarification. Similarly, comprehension instruction occurred in this same supportive shared context. Ms. Long embedded her instruction in conversations around text and then allowed the students to take over the conversation as they negotiated meaning – making and integrating their strategy use. Through discussions around text students would share their thoughts with the group co-constructing meaning. As I will later describe, the informal discussion around text provided a supportive setting where students could think in more sophisticated ways about texts.

Once morning routines were completed, Ms. Long presented a mathematics problem to the students who would, in turn, begin problem solving in their math journals. Students then shared their ways of solving the problem. During this time, Ms. Long highlighted students who tried different strategies by which to solve the same problem. Direct instruction of the math objective followed with an opportunity for students to solve problems using a variety of manipulatives and practiced algorithms.

Readers and Writers workshop followed mathematics instruction. The majority of my data is from this time within the instructional day. Reading, writing, and spelling instruction was integrated in to this 100-minute block. Typically, Ms. Long began this instruction period with students gathered on the carpet listening to a picture book read aloud. The picture book became a springboard for the direct instruction that would follow.

In interviews with Ms. Long, she reported spending much of the time during the fall semester on direct instruction with comprehension strategies. Much like the spelling lessons,

Ms. Long reported choosing a book and directly teaching a particular comprehension strategy. As a class, they would read various books applying the comprehension strategy of focus. One by one a strategy would be added to the anchor chart hanging prominently in the classroom. Below is a replica of the posted chart.

Things readers do to help them understand:

- *Readers try to picture what is going on in the story.*
- *Readers notice when books remind them of something.*
- *Readers question things that happen or characters do.*
- *Readers stop and think after reading chunks of text.*
- *Answers to readers' questions come from books or from our reading connections.*
- *Readers pay attention to when they are confused and try to fix it.*

READERS ARE THINKERS!

Ms. Long stated that these strategies were taken directly from Kathy Collins' book *Growing Readers* (2004). When I read *Growing Readers*, I found these statements in the book, however, they were phrases taken from different chapters and ideas represented across the book. I mention this, because Ms. Long made it appear as if she was following a prescribed set of pedagogical strategies, when in fact she had synthesized across the book to pull the relevant

resources for her classroom. Ms. Long reported introducing, modeling, and supporting the strategies as Collins described in her book, devoting a week or more to each strategy before introducing a new strategy. In stating how she used *Growing Readers* as a reference for instruction, Ms. Long affirmed,

> It (Growing Readers) really just lays it all out for you and really describes the way you should talk about comprehension strategies with the kids. I tried to follow her timeline, I even try to use the same kinds of words in explaining the strategies to the kids. That poster (referencing the poster of comprehension strategies) comes straight out if the book. It's the best that I have come across so far and it really makes sense to the kids.

Likewise, Ms. Long drew upon resources from her own classroom experiences, peers, and teacher resources to assist the students in developing expertise in applying these reading comprehension strategies. For example, in interviews Ms. Long referenced classes from previous years and how that influenced her planning.

> A couple of years ago, I made every group rotate to an activity or a job and then to me. I saw two or three groups a day, but I found I would never switch up the groups and I really was pulling books for the group not on individual students needs. So I'm not a group now, and I pull 3 or so groups a day, sometimes it is just one student sometimes it is four or five. But I can pull based on their needs, it's just a lot more flexible.

After Readers' and Writers' workshop, the students participated in lunch and recess. They returned to the classroom and gathered on the floor for a chapter book read aloud by Ms. Long. The remainder of the instructional time, before students ended the day in special area classes (art, music, or physical education) was dedicated to integrated science and social studies instruction.

Throughout the day Ms. Long threaded instructional concepts and information learned in content area instruction in her directions and in her conversations with students. Her comments placed importance on making meaning and explicitly pointing out the relevance of what students were learning. One example of this threading of topics in casual conversation occurred when the class was engaged in a shared reading during social studies.

> Teacher: (*reading*) *Finally Ben (Franklin) ran away to Philadelphia. He started his own successful printing business and published a newspaper, The Pennsylvania Gazette, for many years.* (pausing from the book) Oohh that is an important fact, how many of you had written that down as an important fact about Benjamin Franklin?
> *Less than half of the students raise their hands*
> Teacher: (*counting*) one, two, ok, Ariel, Mike, good, five, six! Only six! That is not very many of you. We are studying fractions, who can tell me what fraction of the students in our class write down this important fact of Benjamin Franklin?

This short transcript of teacher talk illustrates the way Ms. Long brought to the forefront the concept students were studying. Her quick and casual references echoed previous lessons and showed the application of the new material in a relevant and integrated way. This short exchange did not lead to a full-blown math lesson but rather showed fraction use in a different context, outside of the morning lesson. Another time students were fanning themselves, taking off their jackets and pushing up their sleeves. Ms. Long simply stated, "I'm looking at you all with hot faces and fanning yourselves. That tells me I might need to turn up the air conditioning. I'm inferring that you all are hot." Again, there was not a long drawn out discussion but rather an "in-time" application of a previously taught comprehension strategy.

Similarly, Ms. Long connected shared literature experiences with content instruction. While reading aloud the *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1987), Ms. Long and her students were negotiating the meaning of one of the chapter titles.

Teacher:	(Reading) *The Country of the Quadlings.* Quadlings. What would a Quadling be?
Students:	[respond with ohs, ums]
Teacher:	What do you think, Adam?
Adam:	Children ______ at the same time.
Teacher:	Five. Five children at the same time?
Adam:	Yeah, born at the same time.
Teacher:	Oh, kind of like twins?
Adam:	Yeah.
Marta:	Like three born at the same time are triplets.
Teacher:	Oh.
Students:	Quadruples.
Teacher:	Quadruples. You know what quadruples are?
Adam:	Four.
Teacher:	Yeah, like Quad, like quart, quadrant.
Students:	Means four.
Teacher:	So Quad, four – so Land of the Quadlings – must be land of something with fours. Good job on figuring that out.

Here Ms. Long chose a word that she recognizes might be unknown to many. She questioned the group and then had the students engage in discussion to establish the meaning. Ms. Long extended the student's response "Four" to make connections to math vocabulary, to add clarity, and add validity to the students' thinking. At the same time, she was explicitly connecting math to reading, modeling how knowledge in math might aid in making meaning. Finally she restated and re-capped the discussion in the last line praising the communicative problem solving of an unknown word. While she posed the question and elicited student thinking, she allowed the students to discuss and come up with a reasonable answer. This exchange, co-constructing understanding and drawing upon experiences and knowledge from across all subject areas, was

characteristic of how questions about vocabulary, story events, or character actions that occurred in many read aloud events were negotiated.

Upon closer investigation of what appeared at first to be casual exchanges between teacher and students, I found important instruction taking place within these conversations. The data showed that Ms. Long embedded instruction within the conversations that occurred with her students in a variety of ways and across literacy events. Consistently, Ms. Long made her thinking known to students in ways that provided a model for students of the ways in which to approach problem solving or application of a skill. Specifically with reading comprehension, Ms. Long capitalized on her conversations around texts to scaffold student comprehension strategy use. Because explicit instruction had occurred earlier in the year, Ms. Long was able to illustrate for students the ways in which readers rely on comprehension strategies to make meaning of text. I found both modeling and prompting of comprehension strategies to be key instructional strategies in which comprehension instruction occurred in this classroom. Although both of these instructional moves were directed by the teacher, the analysis that follows illustrates how Ms. Long employed these pedagogical techniques to demonstrate for students' comprehension strategy use in context. Later my analysis also highlights the language of instruction during modeling and prompting of comprehension strategies. The language is noteworthy because of the ways in which the social interaction nurtured the cognitive processes of comprehension.

Important Literacy Events for Comprehension Instruction

In considering the literacy events where comprehension instruction occurred, the data revealed that interactive read alouds were the primary instructional venue for Ms. Long to think aloud and

model the comprehension strategies that had been taught earlier in the year. Ms. Long's scaffolding of the comprehension strategies occurred as she made an "in-the-head process" public for students, inviting them to share in the meaning–making of shared text. However, also important were the ways in which Ms. Long prompted comprehension strategy use in small group and one-on-one reading instruction.

Many of the instructional conversations captured during data collection tended to be teacher-led and did not resemble student-led conversations that educational researchers typically describe in quality pedagogical practices. However, the assessment data from Ms. Long's classroom show that students made gains in their reading year after year. Scores from the Developmental Reading Assessment, which assesses both words read correctly and comprehension, administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year for this particular class showed 100% of the students making one year's growth in their reading, and 30% making over one year's growth in their reading. Duke and Martin (2008), Block, Gambrell, and Pressley (2002), and Smolkin and Donovan (2002) argue that there has been much attention in educational research given to the teaching of particular comprehension strategies and comprehension instruction with older readers; however, there has been little attention to comprehension instruction with younger students. In particular, these researchers advocate for exploration of comprehension instruction with younger students as they begin to transition from learning to read and as they are developing a disposition to comprehend the text they encounter. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider one teacher's conversations with students around text with the purpose of expanding students' comprehension skills and scaffolding their abilities to take an active stance in understanding what they read. The data set and analysis includes Ms.

Long fostering comprehension strategies and comprehension instruction as it shifted from more teacher-directed to independent use. Particularly interesting is how comprehension instruction occurred in seemingly casual conversations with students around texts. In the next sections I will illustrate the ways in which these conversations with students across literacy events provided an opportunity for Ms. Long to apprentice students' comprehension skills through metacognitive modeling, prompting, eliciting and labeling use of comprehensions strategies.

Modeling.

In interviews, Ms. Long reported that read alouds provided the opportunity for developing comprehension strategies and when they were "worked on together" as a class. My observations confirmed Ms. Long's statement, and the data revealed modeling was the prominent pedagogical strategy in promoting comprehension acquisition. During read alouds, Ms. Long paused to share her wonderings and thinking and to engage students in active meaning-making of the story. It was here where Ms. Long modeled her predictions, commented on her "noticings" of character development, and described her visualizations of the text. Although lesson plans indicate the read aloud time was carefully planned and crafted by Ms. Long, the instructional setting felt more like a book club or a few moments within the day to relax and enjoy a story. However, these carefully planned "side comments" modeled for students comprehension strategy use. Ms. Long made her thinking about the text public for the students, which not only scaffolded meaning-making of the text itself but also provided a context for students to witness comprehension strategy in use.

Ms. Long reported directly and explicitly teaching comprehension strategies to the class in the fall, and I observed her extending these lessons by illustrating comprehension strategies

and co-constructing meaning with students during interactive read alouds. The instructional talk during read alouds allowed students to join Ms. Long in constructing understandings, allowing meaning-making around text to be a joint or co-constructed process. Frequently while reading aloud to students Ms. Long would pause and think aloud about what she was reading, providing an opportunity for students to witness her process for making sense and connecting to what she was reading.

Metacognition is characterized by many as thinking about thinking. Pintrich (2002) stated the importance of teaching metacognitive strategies to students "including explicit labeling and classroom discussions in order to help students connect metacognitive strategies to other reading strategies they may have" (Pintrich, 2002, p.223). The shared language and discourse about cognition and learning between students and teacher helps readers to become more aware of their own metacognitive knowledge as well as their own strategies for learning and thinking. Ms. Long explicitly taught comprehension strategies through metacognitive modeling by labeling her comprehension strategy use, engaging in self talk about strategies, and thinking aloud during her read alouds with her students.

One example of Ms. Long's metacognitive modeling and integration of comprehension strategies occurred during a social studies lesson on economics. Specifically the students were listening to Ms. Long read from a big book about factories that can vegetables.

> Teacher: Okay, so here it shows (pointing to the illustrations) they're putting tomatoes into cans. All kinds of diced tomatoes, chopped tomatoes, stewed tomatoes. Hmmm. All right. *Raw materials.* Let's learn about what raw materials are on this back page. Ready to follow with your eyes? *Ray and Dan need raw materials to produce their goods. They need tomatoes. What could they do without the tomatoes? They grow some themselves and they buy more from nearby*

> *farmers.* Oh, so when they buy tomatoes they are consumers and then when they sell the tomato products they are producers. We learned yesterday and earlier this week producers make things and consumers buy things. Those are important words for our unit on economics. Ray and Dan are producers and consumers. (turning the page) All right. Next we're going to read about workers. Okay, there have to be workers in a factory. They can't run itself, right? So we, we know what kind of factory it is. And saw what they used for raw materials and now we're going to read about the workers in the factory.

In this transcript, we see Ms. Long stopping and thinking aloud about the illustrations and the content of the social studies text. Ms. Long stops during the reading and summarizes the information after reading a portion of the text. We also see her making connections to previous lessons and reminding herself of the important terms: consumer and producer. She comments on the illustrations showing students how this can add meaning and help her to predict what she will read next. All of these comments appear to be a conversation with herself about what is occurring in the text. However, by making these comments aloud Ms. Long is modeling for her young readers ways to summarize and glean information from non-fiction text. Most of the informational texts students are able to read independently do not offer new conceptual knowledge. Therefore, modeling her thinking as she is encountering new information, making it public for students, offers students explicit ways in which her young readers can approach non-fiction texts in the future.

At first glance, the thinking aloud while reading appeared happenstance or impromptu; however, lesson plans indicated that the modeling of comprehension strategies during shared text was very intentional. Posted in the classroom and often referenced was an anchor chart that listed comprehension strategies. Prevalent throughout the data are many instances where Ms.

Long would pause and think aloud, modeling the use of one of the posted comprehension strategies. Her carefully planned "side comments" illustrated for her young readers the way in which the posted strategy is applied to text. The following table illustrates each of the comprehension strategies posted and the ways in which Ms. Long modeled her thinking during read alouds, illustrating for students the ways each strategy could help a reader understand and engage with text.

Table 4 Example of Modeling Comprehension Strategies	
Comprehension strategy	**Example:**
Readers try to picture what is going on in the story.	Teacher : (reading) *If that was the case, the barn would smell of fresh fish. But most of all it smelled of hay. And there was always hay in the great loft up overhead. And there was always hay being pitched down to the cows and the horses and the sheep.* (turning to the students) So. What I'm doing right now is, I'm imagining that. Can you picture all those things? I know some of the things we might not know what they all are, but I can picture the inside of an old barn and all the smells that there are.
Readers notice when books remind them of something.	Teacher: Oh, I have a connection between this chapter and the *Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. When Dorothy, she just wanted to be home. She loved it. And then here, Wilbur really loved being home too. They both realized it after going out and being free and being somewhere else, on an adventure, then they really preferred being just safe at home.
Readers question things that happen or characters do.	I wonder how they are going to get the lion out of the poppy field. Maybe the next chapter will tell us.
Readers stop and think after reading chunks of text.	Teacher: All right. Next we're going to read about workers. Okay, there have to be workers in a factory. They can't run itself, right? So we just read and we know what kind of factory it is. And saw what they used for raw materials and now we're going to read about the workers in the factory. Okay.
Answers to readers' questions come from books or from our reading connections	Let's read to find out what makes a reptile a reptile.
Readers pay attention to when they are confused and try to fix it.	Teacher: I'm going to read that again, that's not right, it doesn't make sense

Lapp and her colleagues (2008) assert that teacher metacognitive modeling of comprehension shows students how to use a range of reading and thinking strategies to make sense of the text reading. The above table illustrates Ms. Long's pedagogical moves to model her thinking while reading as they align to the comprehension strategies that had been taught. Her modeling provided a scaffold for students to observe and to participate in text meaning-making. The posted chart provided students with a reminder of comprehension strategies and Ms. Long's modeling of the strategies provided a concrete example of how each strategy is used with text. Making her thinking about comprehension strategies out loud and public for the students demonstrated how a reader responds in order to monitor comprehension and invites students to join her in her comprehension strategy use. The metacognition is an important step in gradually supporting students' independence in comprehension strategy use.

Prompting.

Prompting is one way Ms. Long both encouraged and reminded her students to employ meaning-making strategies. While Ms. Long's modeling showed her young readers how comprehension strategies are used when reading text; her prompting invited students themselves to engage in comprehension strategy use within a supportive and collaborative context. During reading aloud, Ms. Long frequently paused and peered from around the book, and directly invited students to visualize, make connections, or make predictions about the story she was reading aloud. Although prompting occurred most frequently during read alouds, Ms. Long also prompted students for comprehension strategy use during guided and independent reading. The following sections illustrate the ways in which Ms. Long prompted her students to use particular comprehension strategies.

Prompting for visualization.

Visualization or creating mental images has long been represented in research on effective comprehension instruction (Pressley, 1998). Roehler and Duffy (1984), Palinscar and Brown (1984) as well as Gambrell and Jawitz (1993) all found the efficacy in teaching students to create mental images of the characters and actions in text. Their studies have shown that when students are able to create mental images of text they are able to recall story details with greater accuracy and perform higher on comprehension related tasks. Each of these studies taught students concrete tasks ranging from drawing a picture to completing graphic organizers in order to assist them in visualizing text. Ms. Long explicitly and metacognitively modeled visualizing text while reading aloud to students. She also prompted students to use the strategy of visualization while reading independently. In contrast to these studies, however, her teaching of this strategy occurred in real-time, while reading and without elaborate tools or explanation. These findings portray how modeling and prompting of the comprehension strategy visualization is easily integrated into shared text experiences.

Statements such as "While we are reading today, I really want you to be making a picture in your head" or "Are you seeing this? Are you creating a mental image in your mind?" were common throughout the data set. For example, while reading a chapter in the *Wonderful Wizard of OZ* (Baum, 1987), Ms. Long was reading the chapter entitled "The Dainty China Country." In this chapter, vivid descriptions describe the china characters and their dwellings, Ms. Long prompted for the students to visualize the characters and occurrences their actions.

> Teacher: (reading) *"I suppose not," said Dorothy. "Now there is Mr. Chuckle, one of our clowns," continued the china woman, who is always trying to stand on his head. He has broken*

himself so many times that he is mended in a 100 places and doesn't look at all pretty. Here he comes now so you can see for yourself." Indeed, a jolly little clown came walking by and Dorothy could see that in spite of his pretty clothes of red, yellow and green, he was completely covered in (pause) *Cracks.* Okay. It was clear that he had mended in many places. Okay, so can you picture that?

Student: That's cool

Student: All I could think is it, was it, looks like Christy the Fireman.

Teacher: What are you picturing?

Student: Well a clown in pieces.

Teacher: Yes, and . .

Student: Picturing a clown that has cracks alllll [fades out]

Teacher: Yeah, I bet your picture in your head is better than this one. His picture doesn't even match the words. That's why I don't want to show it to you, because I don't want to mess up your vision that you have.

In this transcript, Ms. Long pauses from the reading to make sure that students are creating a mental image of the characters described. She then checks with the students to make sure they are engaged in the reading. Even though there is a picture associated with this passage in the book, Ms. Long chooses not to reveal it until much later in the reading, because in her words, the picture isn't very accurate and she "doesn't want to mess up the vision [the students] have." This exchange, around a short portion of the text, reminds the students to create mental images of what is being read and positions them as being fully able to create these images independently without the assistance of the illustrator. Prompting for visualization occurred most frequently within the chapter book read alouds and occurred twice as frequently as the other types of prompting found in the data.

Prompting to make connections.

Ms. Long also prompted students to make connections from the text to their personal lives. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) stated that by teaching students to connect prior experiences to text, they are able to better understand what they are reading. Keene and Zimmerman (1997) concluded that students comprehend better when they are able to connect text to other texts, their personal lives and the world. These findings show how one teacher prompted students to make connections to enhance text meaning. By providing multiple models across a variety of texts of the ways in which making connections enhances meaning-making, then repeatedly prompting students to make connections between text and their personal experience, Ms. Long scaffolded this comprehension strategy use. Ms. Long often prompted students to make connections to shared class experience, such as a field trip or a previous unit of study. Ms. Long also prompted students to make connections from a read aloud text to a previously shared text. When working with students one on one, Ms. Long also prompted students to make connections to their personal lives. The table below shows examples of the ways in which Ms. Long prompted the students to make connections to text.

Table 5 Teacher Modeling of Text Connections	
Connection type:	**Language used to prompt students to make connections:**
Text to world	(Reading) *A reptile is cold blooded and has a backbone. Most reptiles hatch from eggs.*(pointing to the pictures in the book) Here are some examples, a lizard is a reptile, a tortoise is a reptile. Remember when we went to the zoo? We saw the tortoises, remember they were huge. Can you make other connections from this reptile book to animals you have seen?”
Text to text	“Does this part remind you of another book we read?”
Text to self	When reading a nonfiction book on spiders: “Have you found a spider in your house before? So you can make that connection here”

Prompting to make connections occurred during whole group and small group instruction alike and most frequently during content area instruction. Pardo (2004) and Ketch (2005) both discuss the importance of teachers instructing students to make connection between text and their personal lives. However, connections with fiction text dominate the findings of these studies. Ms. Long prompted students to make connections between non-fiction subject matter and fictional texts, as well as making connections with non-fiction texts read aloud to what students already knew about the subject matter. In this way, prompting for connections to self and world not only aided in enhancing the meaning of non-fiction text but also potentially contributed to enhancing content knowledge as well. It was very common during a science lesson for Ms. Long to prompt students to connect to a previously shared text such as *The Magic School Bus*. Likewise, during reading, Ms. Long and the students would make connections from what was

being read to another content area. For example, when a particular story mentioned a “crescent moon,” Ms. Long paused and prompted the students, “Remember when we studied the phases of the moon in science? Rob, go look on the calendar and tell us, what type of moon are we going to have tonight?” This prompt urged student to recall a previous science lesson and provided the opportunity for enhanced meaning to the term “crescent moon.” In the same way, recalling the phases of the moon and how it applies within the context of this story potentially could enhance student understanding about the phases of the moon. Additionally, Ms. Long’s prompting students to make connections in a shared context placed value on this type of text interaction and echoed previous lessons that showed students making connections to text was an important way to make sense out of what is read.

Prompting taking an active stance toward text.

Educational researchers have closely documented the importance of students actively engaging with text in order to comprehend what they read (Allington, 2010; Collins, 2004; Gallagher 2004), yet engagement with text is rarely listed in pedagogical texts as a specific comprehension strategy listed teachers should teach their students.(Pearson & Dole, 1987; Block, 2002). Ms. Long prompted students in a variety of ways to predict and to read for enjoyment. These prompts encouraged students to interact with text and to take an active stance towards reading whether in whole group or small group instruction. For example the following two statements are taken from transcribed conversations with students about their independent reading.

> So you want to make sure that when you pick a book just to read on our own, that it’s going to be enjoyable for you. And if you don’t know the words, it’s not going to be enjoyable.

This statement is taken from a conversation Ms. Long had with the class just as students are preparing to go to the library and exchange library books. Here, we see Ms. Long prompting students to be sure to choose what she refers to later in the transcript as a "just right book." However, not only does she encourage students to choose a book that matches each child's readability level, she explains the reasoning for choosing a text with appropriate difficulty – if the book is too difficult it will not be enjoyable to read. This prompt encourages students to be careful in their book selection, but then also anticipates students reading and actively engaging with the book they have chosen to check out.

Similarly, Ms. Long prompted students to think about the texts as they read and to develop a habit of mind for comprehending what they read. Duke and Martin (2008) state, "elementary educators are the *force majeure* for developing the habits of mind to comprehend" (p.242). They characterize the habits of mind as particular ways of thinking when comprehending, such as asking themselves questions as they read, visualizing what is read, and integrating prior knowledge and content in the text. During readers' workshop, Ms. Long crouched beside one student flipping through the pages and inquired about the book she was reading. The student was only able to answer very surface level information about the book, most of which could be inferred from the title and picture on the cover. Ms. Long left the mini-conference with the prompt,

> Make a picture in your mind of what you're reading about. Kind of like make your own movie of the words. It helps you to understand what you're reading and enjoy the story.

Here we see Ms. Long stop to question an off-task student about her book and presumably get her back on task. Her statement prompts the student to visualize or make a

mental movie of the story while reading in order to promote active reading. She proposes the visualization will make the text more enjoyable and thus implies active engagement with text makes reading more enjoyable. After conferencing with another student, Ms. Long checked back in with this student to make sure the student was more engaged in the text reading.

Daily during small group reading instruction, Ms. Long could be overheard asking the question, “Does that make sense?” At times this question was made in response to a miscue or a misread word or phrase; but frequently, she questioned when there were no errors or inconsistencies in text read. Ms. Long mentioned in an interview that she frequently asked this question to prompt the students to question themselves about their reading. She mentioned wanting to remind students to stop and monitor what they were reading so that they understood how to monitor their comprehension when reading independently. By prompting students, “Does that make sense?” Ms. Long oriented students to monitor and thus, take an active stance while reading. The question implies that you must be actively engaged in your reading to know if what your reading actually does make sense.

In sum, prompting for comprehension was one technique Ms. Long used throughout the school day to keep meaning-making in the forefront of reading activities. In the same way a parent is often found gently nudging their child forward, Ms. Long used prompts to nudge students to use comprehension strategies. Her pause and prompt technique highlighted areas where connection-making or visualizing aided in creating meaning. These triggers reminded her young readers of the comprehension strategies that had been taught and urged them to put the strategies to use. Ms. Long modeled taking an active stance toward reading and invited students to remain active in their independent reading in order for text reading to me more enjoyable. The

prompts were quick exchanges that highlighted a way to make meaning and then returned to the story itself; but important for young readers that might not yet have the strategies seamlessly integrated. Ms. Long's prompts, in a way, became a quick "sidebar" conversation and then returned to the actual task at hand, reading.

Language of Instruction

In the previous sections, I illustrated the ways in which Ms. Long modeled and prompted students in order to promote comprehension acquisition. Her modeling and prompting became pedagogical structures that aided in creating the scaffold of support for students as they began to grow in their comprehension skills and strategy use. Embedded within and throughout her modeling and prompting was a second scaffold, the language of instruction, that contributed to the manner in which Ms. Long's modeled and prompted. Drawing on Vygotsky's work, Mercer (2000) identified the use of language in instructional settings as a tool for thinking together. Both Ms. Long's language use while directing students to use a comprehension strategy and her language use while modeling; supported her young readers in acquiring the strategies she was teaching. Maloch (2002), Mercer (1995), Cazden (1983), Johnston (2004) and others have all looked at the language of instruction and found that the language that teachers use for instruction help scaffold student knowledge acquisition. In the next sections, I will provide examples of the ways in which Ms. Long's language use supported students in interthinking and developing students' identities as comprehenders of text.

Fostering interthinking and meaning-making.

During read alouds, Ms. Long's prompting and thinking aloud encouraged students to join her in constructing meaning around this text. The language used while modeling and

prompting offered students the opportunities to engage and participate while Ms. Long was leading the meaning-making work supported her young readers by allowing them to participate in a supportive context. Mercer (1995) used the term "interthinking" to describe the collective thinking that linked the cognitive and social functions of group talk. During read alouds Ms. Long's pausing, modeling, and prompting offered space for the students to engage with her in interthinking inviting students to participate in the meaning-making process.

One example that illustrated the co-construction of understanding and the interthinking that occurred between students and Ms. Long collaborating and negotiating meaning together took place after the reading of the *Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. In the following description, the students had completed the reading of the *Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, watched the movie, and attended a local production of the play. The students and the teacher were gathered on the floor comparing and contrasting the three renditions of the story.

Student: it snowed in the movie
Teacher: remember where they were when that happened
Student: those were poppies
Mike: and in the play there was no snow
Teacher: but they did have the poppy field?
Adam: No
Teacher: and was there a poppy field in the book? Remember?
Student: yes there
Teacher: yes there was a poppy field in the book, remember the colors?
Ariel: but in the play there were poppies
Ron: nuha
Adam: yes, there were
Students: Yes

[Discussion some students said yes and some say no]

Teacher: that's right. In the play they tried to imply there were poppies
Ariel: she came down and she had them in her hand

Teacher: that's right, they tried to, but didn't actually, they tried to kind of imply there were poppies. Remember?
Student: The witch had them and then she went like, "poof," like that and they went asleep
Teacher: that's right. So the field wasn't there, but they tried to imply or infer that there were poppies. Remember they had that little stand with a few little flowers hanging off?
Sarah: (naming something about colors)
Teacher: You know what, I was a little distracted, say that again
Sarah: In the movie there was back and white and then color, and in the play it was all color
Teacher: and what about the book?
Sarah: It was black and white and had color
Angela: It talked about color, but it was all black and white
Rob: No, it was all just pages.
Student: No the pages were all black and white, but it talked about color
Sarah: No, there was color. The field was all red.
Teacher: Where was the color in the book?
Adam: When you showed us the picture of the guy you said it didn't really look good, they were talking about the man and the clothes.
Teacher: You know what Sarah, you and Adam are saying something that I really love to hear. Because you are talking about the mental image you created. The color you created in your head because the words and the pages are all black and white, but you saw an image and color based on the words on the pages. So the book created for you, color. The color was in your imagination – so you created color for yourself. So we can use the suffix we just learned – ful – color<u>ful</u>, full of color. That shows me you were really comprehending and visualizing what we just read. That makes me so happy Sarah.

In this transcript, we see many things. First, the interthinking and negotiating of meaning is evident. The students contradict and challenge one another looking to one another and to Ms. Long in order to confirm their thinking with the reaction of their peers. We also see Ms. Long act as mediator, eliciting responses and eventually finding a common ground where both ideas can be correct. She poses a question to the group, "But did they have the poppy field?" revoicing one student's confusion and turning it to the group to be solved. Rather than providing the answer, which one would expect to see in a typical teacher-led exercise, Ms. Long turns the

question back to the group encouraging them to think together in order to reach an understanding.

Ms. Long questioned the group, elicited assistance in problem solving and inter-thinking about the text. She was quick to offer assistance in ways that offered clarity when students were stuck. "They tried to imply there were poppies… remember they had that little stand with a few flowers." However, she also turned the conversation back to the students, "What about the book?", encouraging them to use all sources of information. Providing an opportunity for students to think together to negotiate meaning was/could have been important for these readers because it offered an opportunity to try meaning-making within the supported context of peers and teacher. The students were not left to go about the meaning-making alone but rather were able to draw from their peers in order to collectively reach understandings.

Also of interest in this transcript is the evidence of one student's internalization and use of the comprehension strategy, visualization. The illustrations in the book were actually black and white; however, Sarah was convinced they were in color. "No, there was color. The field was all red." This indicated that she had created a mental image in color based on the words that were read aloud. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is a text that was beyond Sarah's reading ability at the time of this lesson. The books she was reading offered little opportunities for visualization and comprehension work due to the supportive pictures and repetitive nature of the text. Ms. Long's read aloud provided this novice reader an opportunity to engage in a comprehension strategy with a text and practice its use in a supportive context. This transcript indicates Sarah has internalized this strategy and suggests that when she encounters text in the future she will be likely to employ this strategy to enhance her meaning-making.

Developing identity as a comprehender of text.

The previous transcript ends with Ms. Long highlighting Sarah's use of comprehension strategies. "That shows me you were really comprehending and visualizing what we just read." By calling specific attention to the strategy, naming it, and then praising its use, Ms. Long holds this practice up as a valuable skill for the rest of the class. Ms. Long's language positions Sarah as a comprehender of text. In this discussion, Sarah was challenged by her classmates who argued that there was not color in the book. Instead of simply resolving the issue by stating there was no color, Ms. Long created an opportunity for Sarah to share her thinking by prompting, "Where was the color in the book?" Ms. Long's language shifted the focus from a technically incorrect response (there are actually no color illustrations in this book version) to partially correct response because of Sarah's comprehension strategy skill use. Ms. Long positioning of Sarah's response not only showed value of the visualization skill to the class but also let Sarah know that her visualizing the text was an appropriate and desirable strategy.

Ms. Long also named students' strategy use and praised their thinking in other instances. For example, when reading about factories one student made the comment, "My dad works in a factory where they make computer chips, he has to wear a special white suit." Ms. Long responded with, "That's a great text to self connection Mike, thank you." Many educational researchers have noted the value of naming desired behaviors when students exhibit them, as a way of promoting more frequent use (Johnson, 2004, Maloch, 2000, Rafael, 1986). Here we find Ms. Long calling attention to and naming a comprehension strategy that she had directly taught

and modeled in her read aloud events with the class. By naming the strategy and associating the behavior with the student, Ms. Long positions the student as capable of this desired strategy use.

Ms. Long's language specifically, revoicing, questioning, and eliciting, encouraged students' independent use of strategies and praised them for their use. Text-based discussions afforded the students an opportunity to share the conclusions they had drawn about the read aloud text. Additionally, the context of discussions occurred in a community that had been established over time through shared procedures and shared discussion norms. The established shared norms were evidenced by the way the students felt free to challenge one another and express their opinion in the above transcript. The conversations around text provided context and continuity in the classroom (Maloch, 2008, Mercer, 1987) from which students were able to observe, engage with, and apply meaning-making strategies with the support of their teacher.

Summary

Across the school day in many instructional contexts, Ms. Long encouraged students' independence in thinking and problem solving especially with literacy tasks. One strategic way she fostered this independence was through the pedagogical model of gradual release of instruction (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983). The gradual release of responsibility model of instruction requires that the teacher shift from assuming "all the responsibility for performing a task … to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility" (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 211). The above description of instruction that occurred around text shows the ways in which Ms. Long's strategic pauses during interactive read alouds allowed an opportunity for her to model, prompt, and encourage students to co-construct meaning of the shared text. There are many educational research articles that speak to explicit teaching of comprehension strategies.

There are still more articles for strategies to teach older students struggling with reading comprehension, and still more articles aimed at assessing students' use of comprehension strategies. Pearson and his colleagues (1995) advocated the gradual release of instruction model for teaching comprehension instruction and then worked to explain what the explicit instruction might look like in classroom practice. However, few studies have looked at comprehension acquisition with young readers. Smolkin and Donovan (2001) call for more research on comprehension instruction for students that are transitioning from early literacy and learning to read. Analysis of this data set shows that Ms. Long supported student's comprehension acquisition not in a stage-by-stage process, but rather guiding and shifting her pedagogical moves to support students in the apprenticeship of strategy use.

The conversations in the classroom around text support the students as they apprentice their meaning-making strategies with texts that grow in sophistication. The interactive read alouds are on texts that introduce a more complicated plot and more sophisticated characters than the texts that most of the students are encountering in their independent reading. Ms. Long's deliberate metacognitive modeling, prompting, and eliciting scaffolded students in a supportive context as they continued to grow in their comprehension strategy use.

Comprehension requires readers to be fluid in putting into action multiple processes including engaging with background knowledge, decoding words, recognizing meaning, building meaning as information and characters are revealed more via the words on the page. Effective teachers of young readers understand the complexity of the processes involved and recognize the need to scaffold students as they learn to integrate the multiple sources of information needed to understand text. The gradual release of instruction is well documented as an effective means for

teaching students literacy strategies and specifically teaching students comprehension strategies (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

This case illustrates the ways in which Ms. Long guided students' comprehension acquisition through gradual release of responsibility pedagogical moves. The gradual release of responsibility model of instruction requires that the teacher shift from assuming "all the responsibility for performing a task … to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility" (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 211). I found Ms. Long to metacognitively model comprehension strategy use, elicit interthinking, and prompt students to use comprehension strategies, and then to name the strategies when she found students using them. Often the gradual release of instruction model is described as consecutive stages; with teacher modeling and direct instruction at a beginning stage and student independent practice at the final stage. In between, there is a relinquishing of teacher support as the responsibility for the learning is shifted through shared and guided practice from teacher to learner. Instruction in Ms. Long's classroom, in particular comprehension instruction, did not cleanly move from stage to stage with a gradual release of instruction, but rather shifted between and among the stages throughout the school day and within lessons.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS

Considerable attention has been given to comprehension pedagogical practices in educational research. Additionally, several reports have synthesized extant research findings in the area of literacy development, providing guidelines of effective programs and essential skills for instructing students (Snow et al., 1998; NICHHD 2000). However, little discussion in these reports has addressed how teachers facilitate comprehension acquisition in young students. The individual cases presented in the previous chapter are intended to speak into this void. The cases describe the ways in which these two teachers of young children capitalized on shared experiences around texts to support students in their acquisition of comprehension skills. In this chapter I present the results of analysis across two cases related to the nature of comprehension instruction as it occurred in these second grade classrooms.

Background

Early studies on comprehension instruction focused on the effectiveness of teaching readers single strategies to improve their text comprehension (Dole et al., 2009; Pressley, 2002). After the "first wave" of single strategy instruction studies, a "second wave" of research developed and tested frameworks for teaching students to use specific strategies bundled together to improve overall comprehension (Dole et al.,2009; Duffy et al. 1987). Pressley et al. (1992) advocated a transactional strategy approach to comprehension instruction that teaches students to flexibly use multiple comprehension strategies while interacting with text in order to enhance meaning. Pearson and Gallagher (1983), Dole et al (1991) as well as Duke and Pearson (2002) all call for teachers to employ the gradual release of instruction model when teaching

comprehension strategies beginning with teacher modeling and gradually minimizing the level of instructional support as students assume control of the strategies. Although these seminal pieces recognize the important role of the language of instruction, they do not explore the interactions between teachers and students during comprehension instruction nor do they offer accounts of scaffolded instruction.

While many advocate specific and explicit strategy instruction to promote comprehension strategy use in students' reading, others advocate a more discussion-based approach to instruction. Recent research (Almasi & York, 2009; Wolf et al., 2005) has shown gains in students' literacy skills when engaged in dialogic instruction, which attempts to move towards a more equitable balance of participation between teacher and students. Some researchers argue, however, that students must be apprenticed into more decentralized, dialogic ways of learning and discussing (Mercer 1993, Maloch, 2002). Dialogic teaching requires a different role for the teacher. For example, when engaged in a decentralized discussion around text, dialogic instruction calls upon the teacher to recognize a student contribution that can further enhance the meaning for the group and extend that utterance, making it public for others to offer contributions and deeper meaning to be achieved. Researchers such as Palincsar and Brown (1986) and Beck and McKeown (2006) advocate teaching students to comprehend text by teaching particular strategies that support their discussion of text. The Questioning the Author framework (Beck & McKeown, 2006) encourages students to question the author's purpose as a vehicle for deeper interaction with the text. Reciprocal teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1986) supports teaching students specific strategies such as visualization and summarization, then assigning students roles to apply their strategy so that they are positioned to share with their

peers in order to enhance overall meaning. While I would not classify the instruction that occurred in either of the two classrooms presented as fully dialogic or discussion-based, both teachers' language of instruction allowed for student comprehension acquisition while simultaneously incorporating research-based strategy instruction.

The findings of the current study provide portraits of two teachers of young children engaging in comprehension instruction—teachers considered exemplary by their principals and with a history of strong student achievement and progress. Yet, these two cases portray neither straightforward explicit strategy instruction nor full dialogic instruction. Instead, both cases depict instruction that falls between explicit lessons and student centered, opportunistic teaching. Analysis of the ways in which both teachers instruct their young readers in comprehension yields interesting findings on how the responsibility of instruction is released in the classroom. Two themes emerge from the instruction observed in both classrooms and seem particularly important to answering the question, "What is the nature of comprehension instruction in second grade?": (1) teacher directed scaffolding of comprehension strategies through modeling and questioning, occurring within conversations around text; and (2) fostering an environment that supports engagement and understanding of text.

I begin by providing an overview of the study and a summary of the findings of each case. Cross case analysis and implications for both theory and practice follow. Next, I explore the problems with and possible reasons for the limited student involvement in the discussions. Finally, I discuss practical implications of this research, and directions for future research.

Summary of Findings

Case # 1: Ms. Sims.

The literature rich classroom environment played an important role in Ms. Sims' comprehension instruction. Each lesson I observed (across all subject areas) began with a teacher-led shared piece of literature. Whether science, social studies or language arts was the focus of the lesson, students gathered on the carpet to engage in a teacher-led shared reading that provided the springboard for Ms. Sims' intended lesson objective. For example, a non-fiction read aloud on snakes opened the discussion for characteristics of amphibians during science. Similarly, Ms. Sims' reading aloud of a picture book provided a common example for students to discuss and explore how an author uses flashbacks to provide readers with important information that influences the character's action. These multiple experiences with a variety of texts offered many opportunities for Ms. Sims to model comprehension strategies in real time, applying their use where needed.

Ms. Sims' modeling integrated a variety of comprehension strategies and shifted between summarizing, predicting, drawing upon background knowledge, to name a few, in order to make sense of the text. By modeling her reasoning and strategy use, Ms. Sims made her in-the-head thoughts public for her young readers and offered a concrete example for students of ways to make sense of text.

Ms. Sims also employed a variety of questioning techniques encouraging students to collaborate or join in the process of negotiating meaning-making and eliciting comprehension strategy use. Her questions were text specific. However instead of her taking on the comprehension work, and modeling her thinking through read alouds, she offered a question to the group, encouraging her young readers to collaborate in the meaning-making experience. Although the questions were teacher directed, they served as both a model and a scaffold for

comprehension strategy use. Ms. Sims' direct questioning played an important early step in apprenticing students the type of transactional strategy use Pressley and his colleagues advocate. Her questions began to elicit more student involvement than her think-alouds offered. Ms. Sims questions were the first small step in gradually releasing meaning-making comprehension work to her students. However, her control of the conversation provided a very supportive environment and strong model for students. Over time students began to take on the questioning and would interrupt the reading to question Ms. Sims and the group in order to more clearly understand texts. As we see the students taking up the questioning, they are taking over the direct questioning, instigating their own meaning-making strategies patterned after the meaning-making behaviors Ms. Sims had prompted and modeled in previous lessons.

Case # 2: Ms. Long.

Ms. Long's classroom environment, structures, and routines provided a supportive context for comprehension acquisition. The variety of charts displayed around the room signaled strategies to readers that might assist in their meaning making. Unique to Ms. Long's comprehension instruction was her labeling of the specific comprehension strategy as she was modeling its use. For example, after thinking aloud about how a particular strategy evoked an image in her mind, Ms. Long would conclude with naming the strategy, "I can visualize what the author is saying here." Her naming of strategies mirrored the comprehension strategies prominently displayed on a chart in the classroom. Ms. Long's think-alouds during the read aloud provided direct modeling of the posted comprehension strategies in use with text. Unlike Ms. Sims, who modeled the transactional nature of comprehension strategy use to make meaning

of text, Ms. Long modeled each strategy independently and in a less integrated context. In this way, each comprehension strategy's application was easy to indentify.

Ms. Long directed students to use comprehension strategies during whole group instruction in providing a structured, scaffolded opportunity for students to try on the strategy use. For example, during a whole class read aloud, Ms. Long directly prompted her students to use a particular strategy to make sense of the text. "While I'm reading, try to visualize, create a picture in your head, of what the author is saying." In this way, and similar to almost all of her prompts for comprehension strategies, Ms. Long offered support by walking the students through a step-by-step process of using one particular strategy. Ms. Long paused the reading, prompted the students to use a particular comprehension strategy, continued reading the text, and then checked to see if the students were successful in employing the strategy. This scaffold was extremely supportive as students tried a battery of core comprehension strategies that had previously been modeled and taught. Data from student conversations indicated the students were, at times, appropriating comprehension strategies and using them to make sense of text. However, the majority of students' independent text reading was literal and did not yet have complicated plot structures or character development. Therefore, I want to be careful not to paint a picture of students who did not comprehend text until Ms. Long had directed them; but rather, her direction provided opportunities for all students to employ the strategy in a supported setting and ensured students experienced a practice even if their independent reading books did not yet call upon them to employ sophisticated comprehension strategy use.

While Ms. Long relied heavily on modeling comprehension strategies as a means to foster comprehension acquisition, she also prompted her students to think and make connections

throughout the school day and across subject areas. Ms. Long often made connections between classroom experiences, content area instruction, and literature, such as, "Oh, this is just like what we read about in *Charlotte's Web*." By calling attention to the interrelated aspects of classroom learning she modeled for the young readers ways in which to draw upon multiple experiences to make sense of new or unfamiliar material. Likewise, when readers were struggling to make sense, Ms. Long might nod to a poster displaying a strategy that might help, or she would prompt the student by stating, "What do you know that can help you to figure this out?" Her responses positioned students towards taking an active stance towards learning that applied to the ways in which they approached texts.

Cross Case Analysis

Common to both classrooms was the theme of teacher directed scaffolding of comprehension strategies through modeling and questioning. Thompson (2008), in her chapter on transforming classroom comprehension instruction, supports the need for scaffolding comprehension strategies stating,

> Recent research in the area of comprehension has indicated 3 crucial components to effective comprehension instruction, know your students, plan effective, engaging instruction, and scaffold appropriately. Although this is not new or groundbreaking findings, it is important and deserves reexamining the teachers that provide effective comprehension instruction who adhere to these sound research based practices. (p.166)

In both classrooms, the teachers modeled their active processing of text for students. Data analysis revealed that each teacher made their thinking known for students as they modeled

integrated comprehension strategy use and making sense of text. The language the teachers used during the modeling, together with the modeling of comprehension strategies itself, worked to support students in comprehension acquisition. Specifically, both teachers used what I call "thinking stems," phrases that indicated a reasoning process and signaled for students that the teachers were engaging in comprehension strategy use.

During an interactive read aloud, at the end of the page or an extended piece of text, the teacher would state, "Oh, ok so that tells me…." This phrase and others like it, used by both teachers signaled to students that the teacher was recapping what she had just read. Synthesizing and chunking were comprehension strategies both teachers previously taught and by stopping the reading, they modeled for their young readers when chunking and synthesizing is appropriate and how it works during the reading process. The thinking stem, "so that tells me," served as a signal to students that the teacher is turning away from the text and beginning to engage in self talk and text processing. Research has informed us that students who struggle with comprehension often do not engage with the text, instead simply read the words on the page without engaging in a conversation with the text about the meaning of the words presented (Block & Parris, 2008; Lapp et al., 2008). Interestingly, nearly every turn away from the book, where the teacher modeled her thinking contained one of the four thinking stems, "Oh," "I wonder," "Hmmm," and/or "So." These four thinking stems served as a bridge between occurrences in the text and meaning-making processes the teachers were making public, modeling for young readers what a conversation with the text looks like and how it aids in creating overall meaning. The table below displays the thinking phrases the teachers commonly used and what text processing they typically accompanied.

Table 6 Teacher Language Thant Signals Text Processing	
Thinking phrase	**Connection to ways of processing text**
"Oh, so that tells me…"	Re-phrasing or synthesizing
"So what I'm doing right now, is I'm imagining"	Visualization
"That makes me wonder"	Active stance toward text Questioning the Author
"Hmmm, so maybe this is like…"	Activating or connecting to prior knowledge

Each of these phrases represents the ways in which the teachers connected the reading with a way of text processing. Both teachers modeled active coordination of phonological and semantic features while reading aloud; the thinking stems listed above signaled a shift from word reading work to metacognitive and strategic text processing. Thinking out loud during the read aloud modeled for students how a proficient reader might grapple with meaning in order to understand the text. These instructional comments situated within the students' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) allows students to recognize and try metacognitive reading strategies in a shared, supportive context before they are called upon to do so independently (Lapp et al, 2008; Mathan & Koedinger, 2005). These utterances provided another model for students of the natural conversations that occur between the reader and the text. By modeling the integration of meaning making and word reading, both teachers showed their young readers that reading is more than reading the words, but understanding and comprehending what the words say.

Questioning and prompting

Both teachers questioned students as a way to draw them into the discussion and encourage them to participate in the meaning making and as a means to encourage the students to do the thinking needed to achieve a new level of understanding. Although modeling was the most teacher controlled means of comprehension strategy instruction, the questioning in Ms. Sims' classroom and Ms. Long's direct prompting became a way in which the teachers encouraged the students to join with them in the meaning-making process. Often the discussion patterns followed the traditional IRE pattern and provided little room for authentic conversations between students and teachers. However, the questions moved one step closer to relinquishing the control of meaning making to students by encouraging them to participate, albeit often times in a teacher defined manner. I argue that these questions and prompts were the first step in scaffolding, a bridge between modeling, which was entirely teacher-led, to the beginnings of student participation.

I entered these classrooms expecting to see student centered, dialogic instruction. Instead, I found instruction where teacher talk often dominated the conversations. Upon further reflection on these data and the research literature on comprehension instruction, I came to several conclusions with regard to these talk patterns. First, both of the teachers have been recognized for being effective educators because of the growth in literacy skills the students make. I respect them as professionals and respect their knowledge of their students as learners. They felt their students needed more explicit modeling of the coordination of comprehension strategies while engaged in text. Furthermore, educational researchers such as Pearson and Duke (2002) advocate direct modeling of the integration and strategy use with text. Both teachers

reported referencing resource materials such as *Growing Readers* and books by Fountas and Pinnell. While these books are based on research, they are written from the perspective of what the teacher does. Suggestions for structuring literacy instruction and suggestions for what and how to teach are described by the teacher's actions and the teacher's role. Therefore, it is not surprising that instruction would translate into more teacher-led than student-led discussion. I am left to question—Was too much time spent in direct modeling? Could there have been more control released to the student? Might students have grown even more in their strategy use had more opportunities existed for student led talk? Quite possibly. Both Ms. Long and Ms. Sims, however, *were* successful in growing the literacy skills of their students. It is important to reexamine teachers who plan, model, and scaffold effective comprehension instruction and also important to identify the characteristics of instruction in real-world classrooms. Furthermore, it is important to closely examine the pedagogical practices that support young readers who are beginning to encounter text that will require deeper meaning making and how teachers foster comprehension strategy acquisition.

Instructional Model

Looking across both cases, comprehension instruction with young readers shared common principles that provided opportunities for student comprehension strategy acquisition. The gradual release of instruction model (Pearson &Gallagher, 1993) was prevalent throughout literacy instruction both at a broad level, the structure of the classroom; and at a micro level, within the teacher/student interactions. Throughout this section, I use the terms "macro" and "micro" to help distinguish different ways in which the gradual release model occurred throughout instruction. I am using the term "macro" to refer to the larger structure and spaces of

literacy instruction that the teachers fostered to support comprehension acquisition. The term "micro" refers to the pedagogical techniques the teachers employed during conversations to support students' meaning-making strategies. Table 4 delineates the ways in which I refer to macro and micro gradual release if instruction and the ways in which it was realized through pedagogical practices. Instruction at both the macro and micro levels fostered a supportive structure for students to take on comprehension strategies.

Table 7: Ways in Which the Gradual Release of Instruction Model Occurred Throughout Instruction	
Macro	• Classroom structures • Classroom environment • Classroom norms
Micro	Range of Support that occurred during teacher modeling • Strategy instruction • Strategy use • Invitations to use strategies

Macro Gradual Release of Responsibility.

Broadly speaking the structures and environment of the classrooms followed a gradual release of instruction model. First, the classroom's environment and structure created a space for supported engagement with text. The fact that this space is part of the classroom falls within the above described macro level; however, it still played an important role in the context and setting of instruction, influencing the micro level as well, which I will describe further below. Students were accustomed to participating in literacy experiences throughout the day, and both of the classrooms norms and structures, established by the teachers, apprenticed students in participating in teacher led read alouds and whole group instruction. Second, across literacy

experiences both teachers maintained the expectation that readers make meaning and understand what they read. The extensive modeling of summarization, visualization, and “fix-it strategies” when meaning broke down provided a clear message to students that reading was more than word calling and this meaning-making was important. Thirdly both teachers named students’ use of comprhewnsion skills and strategies. During class discussion when it was evident a student was using a desired comprehension strategy or skill, each teacher named this behavior and made it public for the entire group to witness. This naming of strategy use added value to the student behavior, and aided in establishing a classroom climate where meaning making from text was a desired behavior. This engagement with text and privileging of meaning making strategies established space in both classrooms, contributed to the macro portion of the gradual release, but also strongly offered a foundation and supported the micro gradual release as it was occurring.

The workshop model itself, as both classrooms were structured, provided students with gradual release of literacy instruction at a macro level (see figure 1). Each lesson began with the teacher providing a whole group mini lesson on a specific topic (demonstration). Then the students engaged in small group, guided instruction (shared demonstration and guided practice), followed by opportunities for independent practice. Pearson and Gallagher (1993) and Margaret Mooney (1990) reference the gradual release of the responsibility model by the terms “*to*, *with* and *by*.” The “to” occurs in classrooms when the teacher has the largest part of the responsibility for learning, gradually releasing to the “with” phase in which teacher and student are jointly responsible for the learning, and finally reaching the “by” where students maintain the most control.

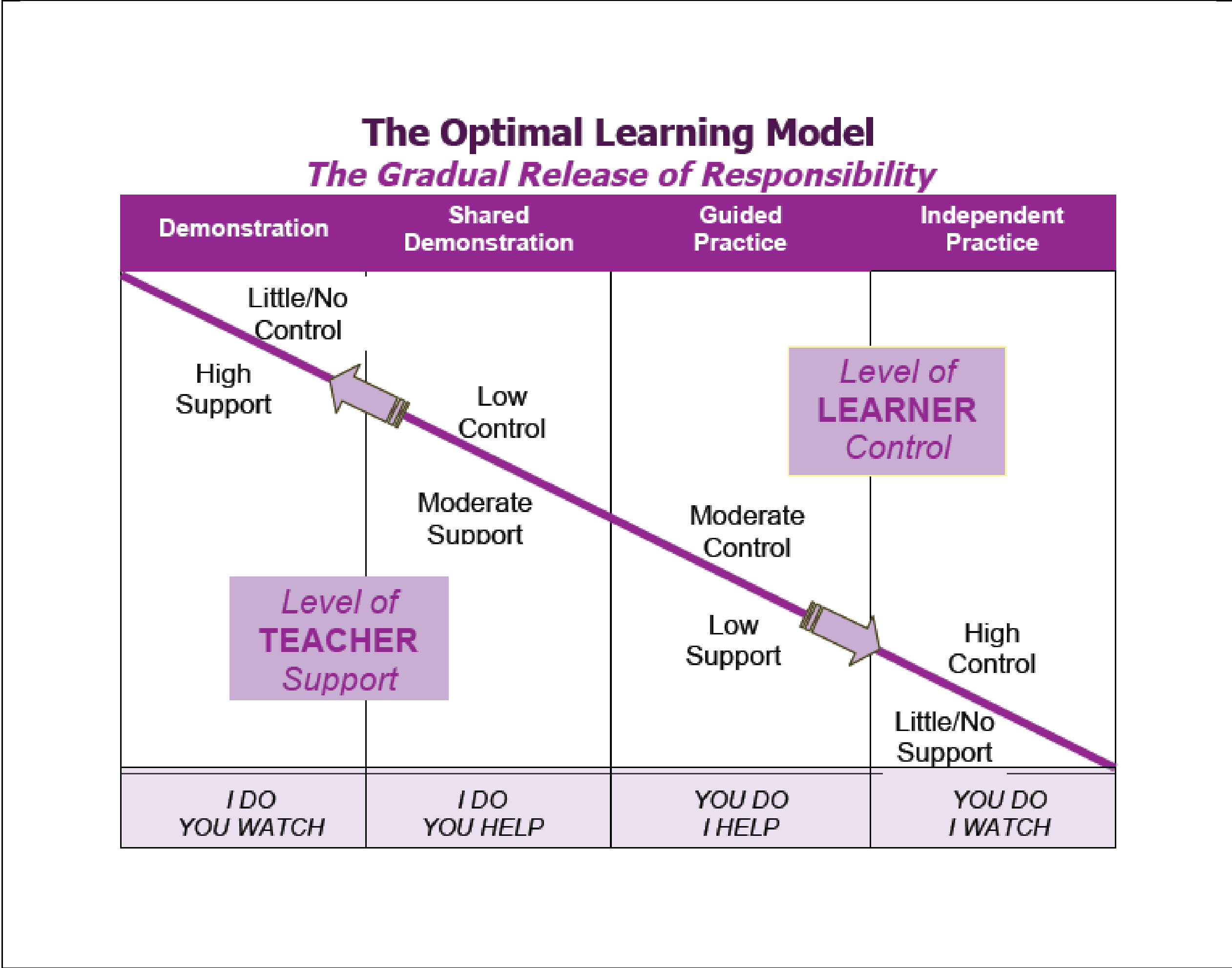

Figure1: Gradual release of instruction model

Pearson, P.D. & Gallagher, M. C (2009, January). Gradual Release of Responsibility. *Literacy Leader*. Retrieved September 10, 2011, from http://literacyleader.com/?=node477.

Comprehension instruction at the macro level in these classrooms followed this model of to, with and by. For example, reading workshop often began with a teacher read aloud where reading and comprehension strategies were modeled for students (by). During the read aloud the teachers might elicit student thinking or participation in discussion around the shared text (with). Later students had the opportunity to read with the teacher in small group or with a partner (with)

or independently (by). Duke and Pearson (2002) advocate comprehension instruction following this model of instruction but there are few case studies that document its efficacy with young readers.

Micro Gradual Release of Responsibility.

Within each of these learning settings (demonstration, shared, guided, and independent), a more micro-level gradual release of instruction also occurred. For example, within small group, guided reading instruction (labeled in figure 1 as shared demonstration and guided instruction), I saw both teachers modeling, working closely with students, guiding their instruction, as well as students reading independently. Even though the instructional setting falls within "guided" or "with" portion of the gradual release of instruction model, the pedagogy exhibited a range of support including modeling, shared and independent practices. Therefore, I observed a mini or micro gradual release of responsibility within the macro gradual release of responsibility learning settings.

The data revealed that modeling during whole group instruction was a prevalent pedagogical strategy both teachers used when teaching comprehension strategies. Ms. Sims' and Ms. Long's "demonstration" part of the instruction shared common factors that facilitated their modeling and teaching. Interestingly, I found a micro-level release occurring within this one part of the gradual release model, "demonstration." For the purposes of explanation, I refer to the common factors as the "micro level" of the demonstration part of the model. In other words, if I were able to drill down within one section of the gradual release of instruction model, in this case the demonstration and modeling section, we would see a more specific mini-gradual release model detailing the range of support that occurred within these teachers' modeling. Figure 2

offers a visual as to how the micro-level of gradual release fits as a within the larger gradual release model.

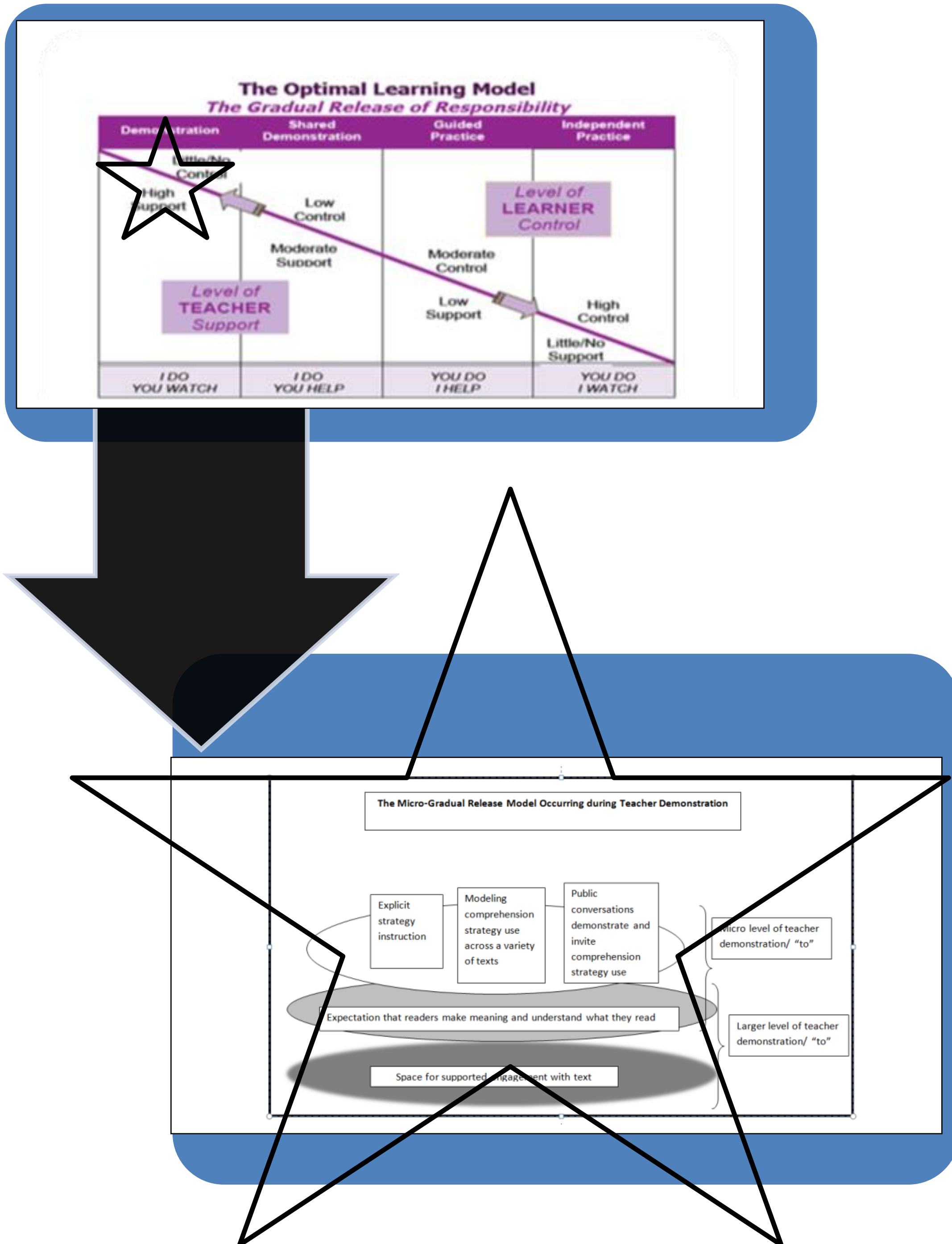

Figure: 2 Relationship between larger gradual release model and mico-gradual release model within demonstration

The space for supported engagement with text and focus on meaning making fostered several facets of the teacher-led comprehension strategy instruction described as the micro gradual release. First, direct instruction of comprehension strategies occurred within the space for supported engagement with text and taught students ways to think about text in order to enhance meaning. If we think about the demonstration portion of the gradual model, where the responsibility of the learning falls to the teacher, the teachers' direct instruction of strategies was the most teacher directed and most explicit. Explicit strategy instruction was where the teachers held the greatest responsibility or the most control for the learning. Moving along the micro-continuum, each teacher's modeling of a variety of comprehension strategies across text types showed students how comprehension strategies aided in meaning making. The pedagogy of *showing* the strategies use without the *telling* left the students opportunities to witness the strategies in real time allowing space for a bit more student engagement in the learning. Modeling the strategies offered students a bit more responsibility for the learning by providing opportunities to witness and connect strategies in real time instrad of being told. The teachers' engagement of the strategies falls within demonstration. Additionally, the teachers' public conversations about text and meaning-making strategies demonstrated for students the ways in which readers use metacognitive conversations with the text in order to aid in meaning making. This portion of the demonstration, the student needs to associate the directly taught strategy with what was being demonstrated in text, which hands a bit of the responsibility of the learning over to the student. Further along the micro-continuum, teacher prompting and questioning began to

invite students to participate in these conversations and provided opportunities to practice meaning-making strategies within a supported literacy experience. Engaging students in the conversations and inviting them to respond to questions was very teacher-led, but handed more of the learning responsibility over to the student.

Just as the gradual release of responsibility model shifts the responsibility of the learning from teacher to student through a variety of instructional settings and pedagogical practices; the micro gradual release of responsibility subtly increases the opportunities for students to take on more of the responsibility of learning within demonstration. Within the broader category of modeling both teachers offered a range of pedagogical practices which provided a micro shift in teacher control of learning from teacher to student. Although the practices were very teacher centric, thus falling in within the most teacher dominated setting of the macro gradual release, the shift from teacher telling to teacher modeling to teacher questioning increases the students' opportunities to engage and begin to apprentice meaning making strategies. Figure 3 illustrates the instructional model occurring within the "demonstration" portion of the gradual release of instruction model.

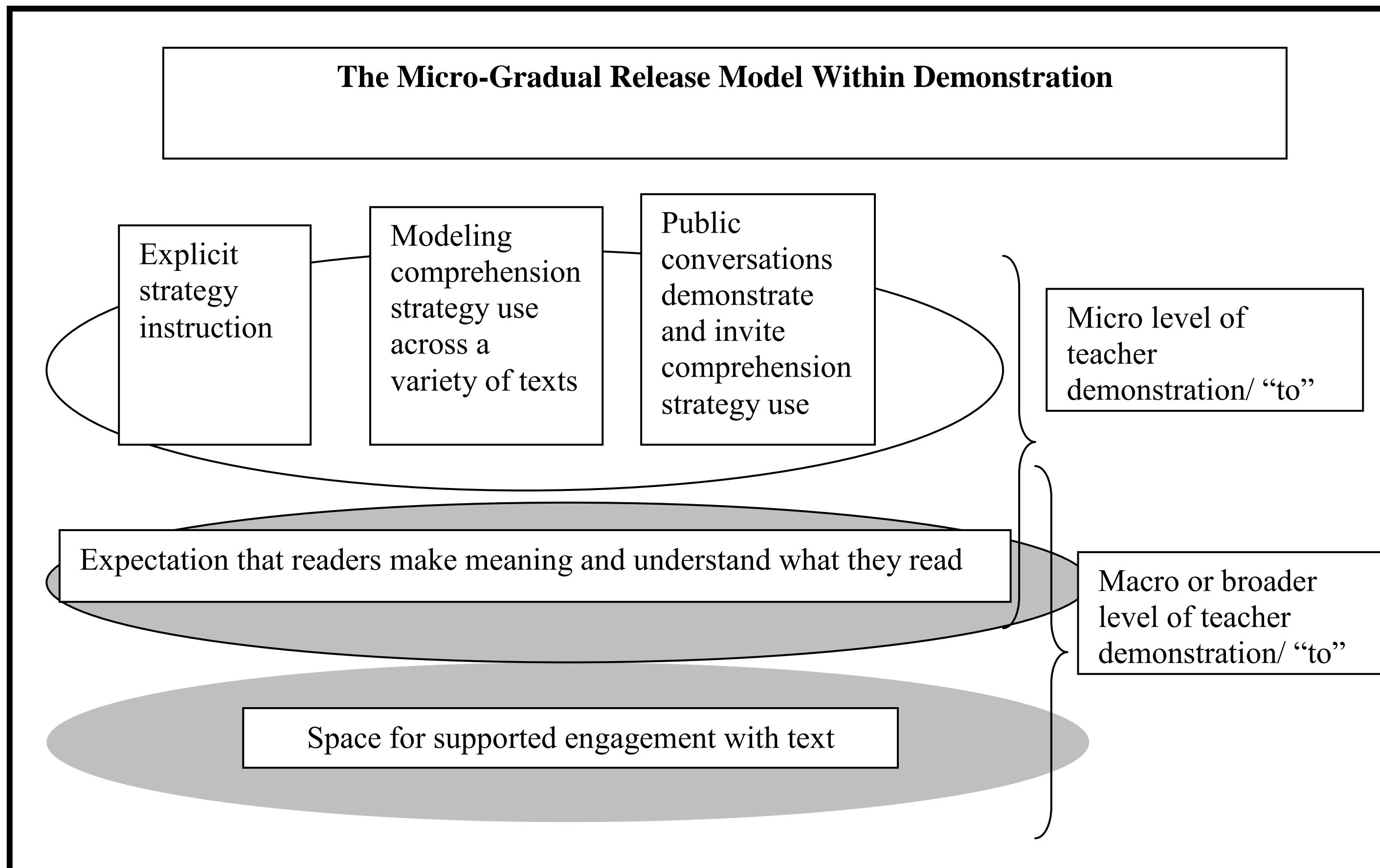

Figure 3: The micro-gradual release occurring within teacher demonstration

The data from these two case studies indicated the comprehension instruction that occurred within the demonstration portion of the gradual release model was significant and deserved closer attention. Therefore, this study closely examined the "to" within the larger, macro, or whole class level of gradual release of instruction. During teacher read alouds the teachers modeled comprehension instruction in a variety of ways. The specifics of that "to" within the gradual release model is important to note and informs the ways in which comprehension strategy instruction occurs with young readers.

Theoretical implications

This study is framed by sociocultural theory including the work of Vygotsgy (1979) and Bruner (1990). Vygotsky recognized the role of the more knowledgeable other in the learning process and placed value on the social interactions that occur within the learning environment. Therefore, this study is framed by the perspective that learning is a communicative process and constructed within a sociocultural context (Mercer, 1995; Maloch 2002). It is important to closely examine the process of learning and instruction and relationships between teachers, students and learning events.

This study examined the comprehension instruction that occurred with young readers and the processes teachers engage in to support their students in acquiring comprehension strategies. Duke and Pearson (2002), Smolkin and Donovan (2002), and Block (2008) all call for studies that examine comprehension instruction with young readers. This study informs the research community about the nature of comprehension instruction with young readers and provides ways in which teachers provide rich comprehension strategy instruction and practice when students are not yet able to read the text.

Additionally, this study informs Pearson and Fielding's work on gradual release of instruction. Traditionally, the gradual release of instruction model is referenced and speaks to a set of classroom practices that supports the learner in acquiring new knowledge and skills. To my knowledge there have been no studies that describe how in many instances the gradual release of instruction model has mini-gradual release of instructional models embedded within and across all stages of the model. This study closely examines the demonstration portion of the gradual release of instructional model and offers what the "to" looks like in scaffolding comprehension with young readers. It also shows that within teacher directed demonstration, there are times within demonstration that shared and guided practices support the teacher modeling.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study relate to the ways in which comprehension instruction occurs in primary classrooms. One practical implication this study reveals is the importance of modeling in teaching comprehension strategies to young readers. The variety of techniques in which teachers show students comprehension strategies in use, thinking aloud about their meaning-making strategies in real time, informs the read aloud and whole group comprehension instruction in primary classrooms. Another implication is the need for teachers to be intentional about building in time for student talk and dialog around text.

Because this study describes the practices in two classrooms, there are many practical applications for teachers of young readers. First, the ways in which both of these teachers independently synthesized books on pedagogical practices such as *Growing Readers* (2002) and implemented these suggestions within a workshop model of instruction will be of interest to

educators. Additionally, the variety of instructional strategies that occur during teacher modeling informs teacher read alouds and the ways to present comprehension strategies to students. By being more cognizant of the range of support that one can provide to students while modeling, teachers can incorporate the micro stages within their demonstration of comprehension strategies that might further facilitate comprehension acquisition.

Another noteworthy practical implication is the lack of teacher-friendly pedagogical material that outlines ways in which to incorporate dialogic instruction into practice. Both teachers drew from teacher materials grounded in research, suggesting pedagogical practices to support their young readers in learning. While each of these teacher resources has their merit, they approach pedagogical strategies from the teacher perspective, advocating activities and structures that the teacher controls and is teacher centric. Specific lessons, books, and charts outlined in these resource materials all place the teacher at the center of the instruction. There are very few, if any, materials that explicitly structure and offer guidance for student led discussions and dialogic instruction models.

Recommendations for future research

While this study begins to help fill the gap of research on comprehension instruction with young readers, there is still much research that needs to be done. In particular, this study illuminates the need for future research with young readers in comparing transactional strategy instruction with the teaching of one comprehension strategy at a time. Along with this notion of teaching isolated strategies or a range of strategies, more information is needed on if there are particular comprehension strategies that are more foundational in nature than others, or if learning one or two foundational strategies generates the ability to acquire other strategies.

These studies need to be grounded within the context of primary grade classrooms so we can see the practices that support readers in not only learning to decode but also read text for meaning. Additionally, longitudinal studies that follow students across many school years may inform the educational community on which strategies and behaviors learned in primary grades remain useful and imbedded with student reading behaviors in older grades. The research community would also benefit from research that compares primary classrooms that have a focus on comprehension instruction with classrooms that focus on incorporating dialogic ways of implementing comprehension instruction with classrooms in which comprehension instruction is not the focus.

Conclusion

This study sought to answer the question, "What is the nature of comprehension instruction in second grade classrooms?" Second grade was selected as the grade level to study because of its unique feature that young readers are still growing in their proficiency in learning to read. They are beginning to encounter text where comprehension is not evident by the pictures and simple text. However, students are not yet charged with the responsibility of reading and synthesizing text in order to gain information. I found it important to look at the practice of teachers who are successful so to inform the body of educational research on comprehension research. I found that classroom environment and gradual release of comprehension instruction are important factors in promoting comprehension skills within young readers. Particularly important is the scaffolding and modeling that occurs within the teacher directed instruction at the beginning of the gradual release model. The variety of ways both Ms.

Sims and Ms. Long modeled comprehension instruction for students is noteworthy and illuminates teacher practices that foster student comprehension acquisition.

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