

Maas, V. Using Pre-reading Learning Strategies to Better Prepare ELLs for Texts in Guided Reading (2007)

This study investigates the use of reading strategies to better prepare English language learners (ELLs) for texts in a third-grade pull-out guided reading class. Five ESL students of varying language backgrounds participated in the action research study for 20-25 minutes daily for three weeks. Pre-reading strategies were incorporated into lesson plans for daily instruction. Checklists, observations, audio recordings, journaling, field notes and anecdotal records document instruction and student learning. The study concluded with an interview of the five participants. The study reveals explicit pre-reading strategy instruction, careful modeling, and scaffolding are beneficial in preparing ELLs for texts in guided reading.

USING PRE-READING LEARNING STRATEGIES  
TO BETTER PREPARE ELLS FOR TEXTS IN GUIDED READING

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Guided Reading.....	1
Role of the researcher.....	2
Background of the Researcher.....	3
Guiding Research Questions.....	6
Summary.....	6
Conclusion.....	7
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	8
Introduction.....	8
Good Readers.....	8
Strategies of Good Readers.....	9
Guided Reading.....	11
Introductions in Guided Reading Texts.....	11
Learning Strategies.....	14
Preparing Readers for Text.....	18
Prior Knowledge.....	18
Vocabulary.....	21
Text Structure.....	25

Modeling and Think-alouds.....	28
Conclusion.....	32
Chapter Three: Methods.....	33
Overview of Chapter.....	34
Research Paradigm – Action Research.....	34
Data Collection and Procedures.....	36
Data Analysis.....	47
Verification of Data.....	49
Ethics.....	49
Conclusion.....	50
Chapter Four: Results.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Adaptations.....	51
Strategies Used by Students.....	54
Usage of Taught Strategies.....	57
Strategy Use.....	60
Transferring Strategies.....	64
Conclusion.....	67
Chapter Five: Conclusion.....	69
Introduction.....	69
Reflections on Major Learning.....	69
Text Structure.....	70

Vocabulary.....	71
Modeling and Think-alouds.....	73
Implications.....	75
Limitations and Future Research.....	76
Conclusion.....	77
Appendices	
Appendix A: Children’s Books Used.....	78
Appendix B: Daily Checklist of Pre-reading Strategy Behaviors.....	80
Appendix C: Checklist for Completion of Graphic Organizers.....	82
Appendix D: Daily Checklist of My Instruction.....	84
Appendix E: Pre-reading Strategies Interview Questions.....	86
Appendix F: Compiled data from interview.....	88
References.....	92

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Learning Strategies.....	15
Table 3.1 Participants.....	37
Table 3.2 Texts and Strategies.....	41
Table 4.1 Strategy Instruction.....	52
Table 4.2 Strategy Usage.....	54
Table 4.3 Strategy Instruction and Usage.....	58

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I took my first, and current, teaching job at a small suburban elementary school with approximately 815 students. Roughly one third of these students are English language learners (ELLs) and that number is projected to continue growing. I have remained at this school because of a very enthusiastic staff that has a unified mission to make literacy accessible for all of our students. Despite the united vision of the staff, I wondered if I was meeting the literacy needs of our incredibly diverse ELLs.

As a new teacher, I made it a point to educate myself about the new trends in teaching literacy. It has been a goal of mine to find a common ground between mainstream literacy education and ESL literacy instruction. The literacy needs of ESL students vary so significantly that a basal reader, a textbook consisting of anthologies combining original works with short stories and excerpts of longer narratives written at or above grade level, could not possibly be an effective tool to teach every student. Fortuitously, I took a teaching position where the other teachers and administration felt the same way.

### Guided Reading

Guided reading is “a teaching approach designed to help individual students learn how to process a variety of increasingly challenging texts with understanding and fluency” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p.193). Students with comparable reading skills are

grouped together. The teacher chooses a text appropriate for each small group, then plans and delivers the introduction to the new book. The teacher supports the students as they read, providing explicit strategy instruction and making teaching points, throughout the reading of the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The overall focus and goal of the guided reading segment of the literacy block is to enable students to develop and use strategies while they are reading for meaning (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

During guided reading, students have many opportunities to make connections to their own lives, other texts and the world around them (Tovani, 2000; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Roit, 2006). Since students come to school with different ideas, preconceptions, and life experiences, especially ELLs, guided reading helps students activate their existing prior knowledge, while expanding skills to learn new information (Cappellini, 2006; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001).

#### Role of the Researcher

My school implemented a 50-60 minute literacy block for reading workshop. All teachers, including special education, ESL, Title 1, and paraprofessionals, are part of the literacy block. As an ESL teacher, I meet with two groups of students during the guided reading portion of the language arts block, which is about 20-25 minutes per group. When students are not meeting with their guided reading group, they are participating in one of the other components of the reading workshop in their classroom.

As part of the language arts block, I viewed myself as an important part of the literacy instruction for ELLs. I wanted the opportunity to collect information about how my teaching was received by the students and how to make my instruction of reading

strategies as effective as possible. I wanted to see if strategies I had been using were working and how to improve them. With this in mind, I chose to implement an action research study so that I could attempt to make guided reading work for ELLs while concurrently seeing if my pre-reading strategy instruction was an effective means of better preparing ELLs for texts.

### Background of the Researcher

My school has adopted a balanced literacy model that is based on the research and program development of Ohio State University called the Literacy Collaborative (2005). As a part of this model, almost the entire staff is receiving training in guided reading as this approach to literacy learning involves a school-wide collaboration to enhance the academic achievement of all students. I, and most teachers, have received ongoing training in guided reading over the past three years. Because students are required to read in almost every subject at school, as well as countless areas outside of school, the reading skills and strategies that students learn in guided reading are of great importance to all teachers. ESL teachers, paraprofessionals, volunteers, special education staff, and especially content area teachers can benefit from the results of this study investigating reading strategies to better prepare ELLs for texts.

In preparing students for texts, guided reading has many strengths. Students meet with the teacher in small groups of no more than six students. The students in each group read at similar levels and possess similar skills. The texts are selected specifically with those students in mind. The texts are introduced to the students and select vocabulary and

important ideas are previewed. Strategies instruction is created based on the needs and skills of the students in each group.

Despite these strengths, guided reading has its shortcomings and limitations for ESL readers. The introductions to the stories do not provide enough of a foundation for ELLs to comprehend the text. In the recommended format of guided reading, not enough time or specific instruction is allotted for students to build the vocabulary and background knowledge necessary to comprehend the text (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Gersten & Geva, 2003; Jimenez, Garcia & Pearson, 1996; Proctor, Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005).

To illustrate some of the problems I have noticed while using guided reading with ELLs, I have included two scenarios. The first scenario portrays a typical nonfiction lesson in guided reading. The second scenario depicts a guided reading lesson for a fiction chapter book.

#### Guided Reading Scenario One

Every day I pick up my students for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade guided reading. On this particular day, we walked back to my room and sat at the table. As soon as they were at the table, they reached for the new book to be introduced that day. I introduced the non-fiction text, focusing on new vocabulary that I thought would be tricky for them. They located some of the difficult words in the text. We discussed the meanings and elaborated on the definitions. We previewed and discussed some of the important ideas. I instructed the students to read to page nine. They were reminded to write down any questions, comments, ideas etc. during and after reading. They opened up their books. They breezed

through them, focusing only on the main chunk of text on each page. They ignored the headings, captions, titles, and bold words, and barely glanced at the pictures, despite all of the genre instruction they had previously in guided reading.

### Guided Reading Scenario Two

At the request of my students, we read an easy fiction chapter book. I had already pre-taught the vocabulary crucial for understanding the story. The students had several opportunities to use the vocabulary. They understood the vocabulary when I used it and they seemed comfortable using the new words themselves. We decided to stop after the first chapter to discuss the story thus far. I had developed several questions to check their literal and inferential comprehension of the story. I asked a question regarding how the main character was feeling and wanted the students to support their answer with examples from the text. They were unable to distinguish the main character from the supporting characters. I decided to completely change my line of questioning and focus instead on basic story elements. I was surprised to discover that they had tremendous difficulty identifying most of the basic story elements such as main characters and setting.

The scenarios above typify some of the problems I had been noticing my ELLs struggle with while reading new texts. I noticed that despite the reading instruction they had received, they were not adequately prepared to read and comprehend texts. They did not read the titles and captions of the nonfiction text, which showed that they were not using text structure to make the text more comprehensible. They could not identify the main character or setting, which indicated that they were not familiar with story elements.

Since they were not familiar with nonfiction or fiction text structure, they could not anticipate or predict the general flow of the text. They did not seem to have expectations of the text, which inhibited their comprehension (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001; Morrow, 1984, as cited in Stahl, 2004; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). In short, students were not prepared for reading texts.

### Guiding Research Questions

How can I make guided reading a better fit for my ESL students? How can I maximize my time during the guided reading session to fit in everything that my ESL students need to flourish as readers? How can I help ELLs become successful independent readers? What adaptations can I make in preparing students for guided reading? What strategies will the students use? Are the students able to use the strategies that they were taught? How can I help ELLs to transfer skills and strategies that they learn in guided reading so that they can use them independently across all subject matters? Bearing in mind all of these questions, I developed a research question to encompass all of these issues and address the problem that I had identified. How can I better prepare ELLs for texts in guided reading?

### Summary

In this study, I have focused on the problems that I have identified with the format of guided reading. Based on my teaching experience, studies and best practice for ELLs, I believe that guided reading can be improved for teaching ELLs how to read. My goal is to discover how to enhance guided reading and to better prepare ELLs for text within the context of guided reading.

## Conclusion

In Chapter One I introduced my research through establishing the purpose, significance and need for the study. I briefly introduced the context of the study and the role and background of the researcher. In Chapter Two I discuss the literature that explores this question. Literacy development in children's second language is discussed. The characteristics and qualities of good readers are examined. The importance of book introductions given in the guided reading session is considered. Furthermore, the significance of prior knowledge and the pre-reading strategies of modeling/think-alouds, vocabulary instruction, and text structure to build prior knowledge are investigated.

In Chapter Three, I present the context and participants of the study. Chapter Three also includes a description of the research paradigm and outlines the methodological approach that I used in order to answer my research question. Chapter Four examines the results of this action research project. It includes a discussion of the results of the pre-reading strategy instruction. Chapter Five contains my reflections, discusses the implications and limitations of this study, and recommends further research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

All elementary students are faced with the overwhelming challenge of learning how to read. Taking into account factors such as language proficiency and background knowledge, this challenge becomes increasingly difficult for ELLs. At my school, literacy is taught through guided reading. Guided reading is a program in which the teacher interacts with small groups of students as they read books that are challenging for them. The teacher introduces the texts, teaches reading strategies, and tailors the instruction to the needs of the students. The overall goal of guided reading is for readers to learn how to use independent reading strategies successfully.

In this chapter the following is addressed: 1) the characteristics and qualities of successful readers, 2) the strategy use of good readers, 3) the fundamental components of guided reading and how they fit into a literacy program, 4) the importance of book introductions in the guided reading session, 5) pre-reading strategy instruction, 6) the significance of prior knowledge, 7) vocabulary, 8) text structure, and 9) methods to deliver explicit strategy instruction of modeling and think-alouds.

### Good Readers

Successful readers, whether beginning readers or adept adult readers, use what they know about the world to understand texts. They consider various meanings of the

text. They take into account the structure of sentences. They think about the significance of ideas, words and letters, and how they appear on the page. Successful readers also think about what they have learned from previous literary experiences (Clay,1995).

### Strategies of Good Readers

Competent readers are active readers (Araujo, 2002a, 2002b; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Clay, 1991a; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Pressley, 2001). Children do not passively receive literacy knowledge, but instead are actively involved in its construction (Araujo, 2002a). Good readers concentrate on a text's meaning, but also balance a variety of information (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Students will have better recall and comprehension if they relate newly learned information to existing knowledge (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Chamot & O'Malley, 1987).

Clay (1991a) elaborates by describing active readers as reading for meaning with divided attention. While good readers are focused on meaning, he or she also needs to monitor for comprehension. The reader focuses on meaning at the word level and comprehension across the text on a larger level. The reader needs to check and verify that the passage makes sense and that the various sources of information are constant. The reader makes predictions about the text based on word choice and syntactic patterns, confirms and/or adjusts predictions, attempts to solve unknown words and searches to problem solve (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Successful readers have expectations of the text that they read. They expect that what they read will have meaning. They want the process to make sense. Prior knowledge influences readers' understanding of text. In order for comprehension to happen, readers

make predictions and anticipate what will happen in the text based on their prior knowledge. They expect their predictions to make sense according to their prior knowledge and the new information they are reading. Comprehension persists after reading when children relate new information to their experiences and extend it (Clay, 1991a).

Capable readers know why they are reading a text; they have a purpose for reading it. Before they start reading, good readers create an overview of the text, generating predictions and formulating ideas about the text before they read it. Good readers selectively read based on their overview, making connections and associating ideas in text to what they already know. Skilled readers pay attention to whether predictions and expectations about text content are being met. They revise prior knowledge when compelling new ideas conflict with it. Good readers are able to figure out meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary based on context clues. Often, they underline, reread, make notes, and paraphrase to remember important points. Capable readers interpret the text and evaluate its quality. They may review important points as they near the end of their reading. Finally, good readers think about how ideas encountered in the text might be used in the future (Pressley, 2001).

O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Mazanares, Russo & Kupper (1985a) conducted a study of English learners viewed as successful readers by their teachers. They asked the English learners to describe all methods they used to make learning easier. From these student interviews, the researchers identified several strategies. The researchers found students used grouping, inferencing, elaboration, imagery and questioning to aid in

comprehending texts. The researchers also found students used many of these strategies in succession and in combination.

In a review of ten studies on ELLs' metacognitive strategies, Fitzgerald (1995) found good readers monitored their own comprehension by recognizing problems and fixing them with a strategic plan. Commonly used strategies include: asking questions, rereading, imaging, using a dictionary, anticipating or predicting, reading fast or changing speed, making associations or connections, skipping and, summarizing or paraphrasing. Successful readers learn new strategies and grow as readers on a continuum. In sum, successful readers have control of a multitude of strategies that they use flexibly to comprehend texts.

### Guided Reading

Guided reading, a method of teaching literacy, was developed by Irene Fountas and Gay Sue Pinnell. The principles of guided reading provide students the opportunity to read numerous and assorted texts, read for meaning while simultaneously problem-solving, use skills and strategies on texts in the reader's zone of proximal development, and challenging the reader with increasingly difficult material in a supported context (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996).

In guided reading, the teacher works with a small group of students, no more than four to six students. Students are similarly grouped based on their development of reading skills and that they can read similar levels of text. The guided reading teacher introduces the stories, helps students' literacy develop, and helps them to use reading strategies independently. The students then read the entire text; the goal is that it will eventually be

read independently and silently. The books become increasingly challenging over time. Grouping is a dynamic process, children change groups throughout the year based on observation and assessment (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001).

### Introductions in Guided Reading Texts

The books selected for guided reading sessions are just beyond what the students are capable of reading on their own, the texts are at the students' instructional level. As such, the book introduction becomes even more important in supporting comprehension. Book introductions prepare and interest students and set the scene for the story they are about to read. Introductions also provide a way to show students how to think for themselves so they can become increasingly independent readers (Cappellini, 2006; Fountas & Pinnel, 2001). The book introduction should support students' independent problem solving, which in turn helps students to construct self-extending systems. In order to help readers build these self-extending systems, they need to be able to attend to information from different sources while maintaining a sense of meaning (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Tovani, 2000). This is made possible with the introduction.

The introduction helps students make connections between the text and their understanding, which makes the text more meaningful and accessible. The introduction illustrates the connection between the new, unread book, and the students' previous knowledge of the world. The introduction also highlights new structures of language (Cappellini, 2006; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Roit, 2006).

Introductions vary in length and content for each book. Introductions are always conversational and allow for the meaning of the text to be negotiated, without dissecting the story (Clay, 1991b; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001). Many things are taken into account, such as the level of difficulty of the text, the students' background knowledge, their interests, their experience with certain text features and structure, experience with the particular genre, and their individual strengths and weaknesses as readers (Clay, 1991b; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

The significance of book introductions is crucial for ESL readers. In order for students to understand and enjoy what they are reading, they need to be able to access the text. Text is inaccessible to students when they do not have the appropriate strategies to figure out the meaning of text, or are unsure of which strategies to use. Text is also inaccessible when they do not have adequate background knowledge of major topics in the text. The text is also difficult to understand if they do not recognize or are unfamiliar with the organizational patterns or the structure of the text, or how the book is set up. Another reason that text can be inaccessible to students is that they may not have a purpose for reading, in which case they either lose interest or are unable to construct meaning from the text. (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Tovani, 2000).

At first glance, guided reading appears to be a good fit for teaching ELLs literacy, because of its focus on preparing the reader for texts. Guided reading builds background knowledge and vocabulary, utilizes literacy scaffolds, and supports significant interaction with text. However, the implementation of guided reading assumes a cultural and linguistic proficiency that is not indicative of English learners. Generally English learners

need these literacy components in much more breadth and depth than the typical guided reading session allows (Anderson & Roit,1996; Cappellini, 2006; Roit, 2006).

### Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are the mental plans that the learner uses consciously and flexibly in order to understand, learn, and/or retain the information they are learning and/or reading (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2004; Fitzgerald, 1995; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). The purpose of teaching students learning strategies is to enable students to be independent learners who are aware of their skills as learners. Students use these strategies to connect new information to their existing personal experiences and create new applications. Chamot and O'Malley (1990, 1994) suggest a relationship between students' successful use of strategies and self-esteem and confidence in academic tasks.

Many good readers employ strategies unconsciously. Fortunately, strategies can be learned (Anderson & Roit, 1996; O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Mazaneres, Russo & Kupper,1985b; Chamot & O'Malley,1994). In a two-phase study designed to find the range and frequency of ELLs strategy use and the effects of training in learning strategies, O'Malley et al. (1985b) found that with training, students learned to use strategies and strategy use resulted in improved reading performance. A subsequent study found that students who received strategy instruction and were given constructive experiences to apply strategies learned more effectively than students with no learning strategy experience. Furthermore, the study showed students applied learning strategies to

new tasks that were similar to the tasks in which the strategies were originally instructed (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

Table 2.1  
*Learning Strategies*

<b>Strategy Name</b>	<b>Strategy Description</b>	<b>Strategy Definition</b>
Advance Organization	Preview, skim, gist	Previewing text to determine main ideas
Imagery	Make pictures Visualize	Using real or mental pictures to problem solve or learn new
Questioning	Ask questions	Getting further explanation or verification
Determining Important Information	Finding main or key ideas, and supporting or important details	Figuring out the importance of information in a text
Establishing a Purpose for Reading	Reading to find information, learn how to do/make something, for enjoyment	Recognizing and determining different reasons to read text
Selective Attention	Read selectively, scan, find specific information	Noting key words, phrases, ideas, and information
Making Inferences	Using context clues, predict	Guessing and predicting information based on clues from the text
Grouping	Classify, Complete graphic organizers	Classifying vocabulary, ideas, concepts by their characteristics
Making Connections	Text to text, text to self, text to world, and text to media	Making personal associations to texts
Elaboration on Prior Knowledge Vocabulary	Using what you already know, making analogies Solving words	Taking new information and relating it to the known Recognizing, decoding, and/or understanding the meaning of words
Text Structure	Using the text features of narratives, compare/contrast, description etc.	Using the organizational structure of a text to comprehend

Adapted from Chamot & O'Malley (1994, p. 62-63)

Students read for many different reasons, likewise, comprehension is defined by the purpose for reading. There are numerous learning strategies depending upon the context and purpose for reading. In this study, the focus is learning strategies used before reading begins. (See Table 2.1.)

To better prepare students for texts, Chamot and O'Malley (1994) suggest that students use the strategy of advance organization. (See Table 2.1 above for a description of all strategies mentioned.) Students should be taught to look at the cover of the book and/or through the book, and to discuss expectations of the text. The students should make predictions about what they think will happen for a narrative text or what they think they will learn if it is an expository text. When students are looking through the text, they are being guided by the teacher, and they are already thinking about what would make sense for when they are reading.

Predicting, questioning, and determining important information are among several of the strategies that proficient readers use across all types of texts. When used, these strategies enhance student comprehension. (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson as cited in Echevarria et al., 2004). They also found that these strategies are teachable and that the more explicit instruction and practice the students had, the more likely they were to use the strategies independently.

Chamot and O'Malley (1994) recommend that students be taught the strategies of selective attention and how to determine important information so that they know how to locate important information, and whether they need to attend to it. This includes scanning and reading selectively to find key words and/or phrases, main ideas, and

different types of information. If there is information that is especially dense or of more importance, the strategy of grouping can be used to make the information more accessible to students. This strategy focuses on classifying information such as vocabulary, ideas, and concepts and/or constructing graphic organizers (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Cooper, 2000; Echevarria et al., 2004; Taberski, 2000).

Students should use the strategy of imagery to study charts, tables, graphs, maps and other elements of text, and discuss how these elements convey meaning. Students should be encouraged to make predictions about illustrations, pictures, genre, or theme (imagery and making inferences). Teachers should suggest that students search for evidence while they are reading that supports their thinking, expectations and predictions. When listening to the expectations and predictions of the students, it is possible to assess their level of prior knowledge and to decide if there is a need to build background knowledge (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Clay, 1991b; Cooper, 2000; Echevarria et al., 2004; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Taberski, 2000).

Strategy instruction occurs in the introduction to the text. In order for introductions to be effective they should motivate students' interest. The strategy of establishing a purpose for reading helps students to figure out why they are reading a text and to set a purpose for reading. While reading, students can use the strategy of establishing a purpose for reading combined with the strategy of questioning to search for the answers to a few questions that the teacher has posed. Students can also search for answers to questions that they have generated during their discussion of the text. This also sets a purpose for reading – the students determine what they want to find out.

Leaving students with questions gets them actively involved in the text and they will continually search for meaning and understanding when they are reading (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Clay, 1991b; Cooper, 2000; Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Dowhower, 1999; Echevarria et al., 2004; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001; Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

All of the strategies discussed are important to help students access and understand texts. However, the strategies of elaboration of prior knowledge, vocabulary and text structure are even more crucial for preparing English learners for texts.

### Preparing Readers for Text

#### Prior Knowledge

Prior knowledge is important for comprehension, remembering what was read, making connections, and general learning. Background knowledge is pertinent for native English readers as well as ESL readers. However, it is even more important when reading in another language. For English learners, background knowledge combines with language proficiency which can relieve some of the comprehension issues due to limitations of language proficiency while reading (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1995; Pransky & Bailey, 2002).

One of the most important elements to prepare students for texts is eliciting students' prior knowledge and building their background knowledge. It is essential for students to be engaged before reading, and given the opportunity to discuss their experiences and knowledge about the theme, important idea, concepts, plot, topic, and/or whole meaning of the text. It is important to help students to remember what they already

know about the topic if it is an informational text, or the setting, plot, and/or characters if it is a narrative text. Students need to connect and relate all new information into what they already know, or their prior knowledge. Students should also be encouraged to make their own connections to their lives, the world around them, and other literary experiences (Cappellini, 2006; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Clay, 1991b; Echevarria et al., 2004; Fitzgerald, 1995; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001; Roit, 2006).

A benefit of guided reading is that literacy instruction is always in small groups of four to six students, which is beneficial for ELLs (Slavin & Cheung, 2003, 2004). The texts are specifically selected for this particular group, so that the texts are meaningful and at the group's instructional level. Fitzgerald and Noblit (1999) held guided reading sessions every day, because doing so enabled them to provide scaffolded interaction with materials that were at their students' instructional level, and in their zone of proximal development, which is just beyond what students are capable of doing independently. When students are given the occasion to work in small groups, they are able to use language and learn from each other (King, 2001; Peregoy & Boyle, 2001; Suits, 2003).

Anderson (1984) suggests that activating and scaffolding a reader's schema, which is his or her organized knowledge of the world, is the foundation for comprehension, learning, and remembering concepts that he or she read in the texts. Anderson states that an important implication of this theory is that sometimes ELLs may be viewed as not understanding reading material simply because their schema is different from that of their new culture. Most basal readers, texts used in the content areas, and standardized tests assume that meaning is part of the words and text structure. If prior

knowledge is necessary for comprehension, it is assumed to be shared in every culture. When novel concepts are introduced, it is assumed that they are accessible to every student equally (Anderson, 1984; Pransky & Bailey, 2002).

Lack of English proficiency and prior knowledge that does not correspond with the text can cause ELLs to experience great difficulty in reading (Echevarria et al., 2004; Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Guided reading provides a context in which background knowledge is not assumed, but it is built together and expanded upon through the text. It is especially important to activate prior knowledge of ELLs because there may be cultural differences that can create misconceptions. Activating prior knowledge can help ELLs combine newly acquired information into conceptual frameworks that already exist, which also promotes memory (Anderson, 1984; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996; Pransky & Bailey, 2002; Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000).

Taberski (2000) maintains that children have expectations of text, specifically, that it makes sense. When the topic is something that they know a lot about, or mirrors experiences that they have had in life, it is easier for them to anticipate what might happen next and possibly even the words that are used. Prior knowledge and experiences stimulate the connections that we make. These connections increase our understanding. When readers learn how to relate the books that they read to their lives, they are enabled to make connections to the bigger world around them. This allows them to eventually think about larger and more global issues that are beyond their immediate world of home, school, and neighborhood (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

## Vocabulary

It is also important to elicit prior knowledge and build background knowledge by introducing and using some of the new and key vocabulary in the text. Students may need to be familiarized with some of the new language patterns or linguistic structures that are critical for comprehension of the story. It is important to point out particular words in context, pronunciation, and letter-sound relationships and even have the students repeat them. In order for students to understand what they are reading, they need to be familiar with most of the words in a text. Vocabulary knowledge is crucial for beginning readers as they use their oral vocabulary to figure out and make sense of printed words. ESL readers need even more support, as they may be completely unfamiliar with not only the vocabulary, but associated words and concepts. (August, Carlo, Dressler & Snow, 2005; Cappellini, 2006; Fitzgerald & Noblit, 2000; Kimbell-Lopez, 2003; Roit, 2006).

Cappellini (2006) discusses the importance of exposing ELLs to as much rich vocabulary in context as possible. ELLs need to be supported yet challenged and provided with instruction that helps them catch up to their native English speaking peers so that they can be successful in school. Decodable texts and books designed to build upon sight words are not good choices for ESL students because they do not allow students to use a variety of strategies to access the text. Guided reading books, on the other hand, do allow for students to use a variety of strategies while reading the text as well as provide a meaningful literary experience.

The vocabulary of students can be developed in two ways, indirectly and directly. Indirectly developed vocabulary happens in three ways: 1) through oral language, 2)

being read to by proficient readers, and 3) reading expansively independently.

Vocabulary that is directly learned is through explicit instruction of individual words and word learning strategies. Vocabulary development is improved through extended instruction that involves active engagement with the new words, as well as repeated vocabulary exposure, especially in a variety of contexts (Armbruster et al., 2001; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echevarria et al., 2004; Fitzgerald, 1995; Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000).

The relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary is well documented (Anderson & Roit, 1996; August et al., 2005; Gersten, 1996; Gersten & Geva, 2003; Jimenez, Garcia & Pearson, 1996; Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999; Proctor, et al., 2005; Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000). The universal components of effective vocabulary instruction are described by Watts-Taffe & Truscott (2000) as providing information about the definition as well as the context for key words, discussions that elaborate on word meanings, and affording students the occasion to actively build on the word meanings.

Gersten (1996) conducted a two-year research project studying the language arts and literacy instruction for ELLs in 18 different classrooms. Gersten observed that in the most successful classrooms there was a focus on developing key vocabulary to foster comprehension, while providing a variety of activities utilizing this vocabulary and the important concepts. Special attention was also given to feedback, focusing on meaning as opposed to grammar or syntax. These classrooms were also viewed to be successful

because the ELLs were actively encouraged to practice expressing themselves, their ideas and new concepts in English in a safe and supportive environment.

In a study spanning seven years, taking place in American and Canadian first through eighth grade classrooms, Anderson & Roit (1996) identified six traits that could increase reading comprehension as well as augment oral language development. These traits include language flexibility, using abstract vocabulary, expanding contexts, determining important versus unimportant text, elaborating responses, and participating in natural conversations. Taking into account these observed traits, Anderson and Roit developed several instructional suggestions based on their reading comprehension research and their experience. These suggestions include vocabulary networking, expanding contexts, and predicting. In vocabulary networking, key words selected from the text are organized graphically with related words. Vocabulary networking can also help students to expand contexts in that it can further contextualize vocabulary because it shows how the key words are associated with related words and/or ideas. Anderson and Roit go on further to state the importance of vocabulary networking and expanding contexts because students learn vocabulary in meaningful contexts, rather than in isolation.

Gersten & Geva (2003) observed 34 first grade classrooms that contained at least 75% ELLs. They identified the successful classes as those in which the ELLs' performance was at or exceeding first grade benchmarks. In all of the successful classrooms, there was a strong focus on the development of vocabulary. Key vocabulary was taught before and during the lessons. The teachers provided opportunities to use new

vocabulary coupled with systematic instruction to develop vocabulary. They also involved students in meaningful interactions with the vocabulary and text. Gersten and Geva (2003) also found that for best possible reading comprehension and vocabulary development there needs to be a blend of defining new vocabulary, discussions about these words, and expanding upon these words through writing activities.

Jimenez, Garcia and Pearson (1996) conducted a study to investigate bilingualism and biliteracy. The strategic reading processes of eight successful bilingual readers were examined. Many strategies the successful bilingual readers employed were the same as the strategies used by successful monolingual children such as resolving unknown vocabulary, monitoring comprehension, connecting prior knowledge with the text, making inferences, drawing conclusions, and asking questions. However, several strategies were identified as being unique to the successful bilingual students, such as the transferring of information across languages, translating from one language to another, and accessing cognate vocabulary. Another interesting finding was that the successful bilingual readers often came across unknown vocabulary, but were able to use a host of strategies to figure out the definitions.

Proctor et al. (2005) conducted a two-pronged study of the reading comprehension of ELLs focusing on decoding and oral language. They found that if the student possessed sufficient decoding abilities in English, vocabulary knowledge was essential in order to improve reading comprehension.

Ulanoff and Pucci (1999) looked at the impact of reading aloud on second language acquisition using two methodologies: concurrent translation and preview-

review. In the concurrent translation methodology, a story was read aloud in English while being simultaneously translated into the students' primary language. In the preview-review methodology, the key vocabulary and concepts were previewed, with support from the students' primary language, and then they were reviewed after the read aloud. They found that children learned and retained significantly more vocabulary from the preview-review methodology than the concurrent translation method. Ulanoff and Pucci further explain vocabulary acquisition as "mediation of meaning." In other words, teachers help students acquire vocabulary by helping students direct their efforts to understanding the text.

### Text Structure

Students need to be familiar with most of the vocabulary that they encounter in a text in order for it to be comprehensible. In addition to this, many studies show that explicit instruction of text structure also improves comprehension (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echevarria et al., 2004; Gersten, [Fuchs](#), [Williams](#), & [Baker](#), 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000; Stahl, 2004).

Text structure refers to the manner in which the author has chosen to organize their text. Both expository and narrative texts follow predictable patterns that readers will repeatedly encounter. The structure in narrative texts includes: the characters, the setting, the problem, the climax, and the resolution. Expository texts are typically organized in one or a combination of the following structures: description, sequence, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, or problem and solution (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Carrell, 1984; Moss, 2004; Stahl, 2004). Text structure also comprises different conventions of

print like punctuation, titles, subtitles, heading and captions and how to use them to navigate through the text (Cappellini, 2006; Clay, 1991b; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001; Kimbell-Lopez, 2003; Roit, 2006; Williams, 2005).

When students are familiar with the genre and structure of the text, their comprehension is facilitated because the reader can predict and anticipate the general direction and stream of the text. When readers are familiar with a text structure, they can predict the meaning of sentences, paragraphs, and even passages, and then confirm the meaning of the text. Several studies have shown that ELLs' comprehension, as well as appreciation and recall, is increased when they are given explicit instruction on English text structures (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Armbruster et al. 2001; Morrow, 1984 as cited in Stahl, 2004; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000; Williams, 2005).

Many of the studies about text structures include the use of graphic organizers to show students the visual representation of the story structure (Armbruster et al., 2001; Stahl, 2004; Williams et al., 2005). Several studies show that increasing primary ELLs' familiarity with text structure improves listening comprehension as well as improves their ability to successfully identify story elements and respond to questions about the story structure (Baumann & Bergeron, 1993; Morrow, 1984 as cited in Stahl, 2004).

In a review of seven studies on text schemata, Fitzgerald (1995) found that the common thread between these studies was that comprehension was affected by varying text structures. When the students were familiar with the text structure, they understood more than when the text structure was unfamiliar. Another interesting finding was that student knowledge of text structure also positively affected the quantity of student recall.

Williams (2005) found that when primary students were given highly structured texts with explicit instruction on the text structure, they made gains in reading comprehension. They were able to transfer these skills to other texts with the same text structure. Another study conducted by Williams et al. (2005) investigated the effectiveness of teaching second graders text structures with clue words, questions, and graphic organizers. The results indicated improved comprehension as well as the ability to transfer the acquired skills to new texts.

In a study of predominately intermediate ESL readers, Carrell (1984) found that more highly structured rhetorical patterns, such as comparison, causation, and problem/solution, lead to increased recall compared to more freely organized texts such as description. Another finding in the study was that if students could use the text structure to organize their recall, they retrieved more information. However, most of the ELLs in the study appeared to be unable to identify how the text was organized.

In conclusion, eliciting prior knowledge, building background knowledge, focusing on vocabulary and teaching text structure are important factors in preparing students for texts. Students need to be taught strategies and given the opportunity to use them while reading for meaning. In order to help students establish effective reading strategies, Taberski (2000) says that our role as teachers in the literacy instruction of children is to assess student reading, teach and demonstrate effective strategies, provide ample opportunities for reading, demonstrate a variety of approaches to text, respond to student reading, and to encourage students to reflect in a variety of ways on the materials that they have read. As teachers, assisting our students in becoming successful and

enthusiastic readers is a difficult, but very important, challenge. The research suggests explicit instruction, modeling and think-alouds as a means to deliver the strategy instruction, as discussed in the final section of this chapter.

### Modeling and Think-alouds

It is important to distinguish between the learning strategies and instructional strategies. Learning strategies are the mental plans that the learner uses consciously and flexibly in order to understand the information they are learning and/or reading. The learning strategies were discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Instructional strategies are any activities, methods, or approaches that the teacher utilizes to encourage and support student learning (Echevarria et al., 2004). In this study, the instructional strategies of particular interest are explicit instruction, modeling and think-alouds because of their suitability in teaching strategies.

It is important that strategies be taught through explicit instruction, careful modeling, and scaffolding (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Duffy, 2000 as cited in Echevarria et al., 2004). It is imperative that learners know what a strategy is, how to use it, when to use it, and why to use it. The procedure for explicit instruction is naming the strategy, followed by a description of what that strategy does to help and support learning. Teacher modeling strategy use before students practice strategies support more successful strategy users (Echevarria et al., 2004; Fisher, Frey & Williams, 2002). Chamot and O'Malley (1994) believe that teacher modeling persuades students to use strategies, but modeling also provides a tape students can replay when they are stuck.

Finally, students are provided ample instructional supports while they practice and apply the newly learned strategies (Gersten & Jimenez, 1994; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

Think-alouds are an extremely valuable tool to teach reading comprehension and strategy use. Think-alouds are when teachers verbalize their own thoughts and processes while reading. Think-alouds can be used to model and make overt the typically covert thought processes that are being used to construct meaning and make sense of the text (Baumann, Jones, & Seiffert-Kessell, 1993; Gersten & Jimenez, 1994; National Reading Panel, 2000; Roit, 2006). The think-aloud process requires the reader to verbalize the strategies they are using to problem solve, figure out words or phrases, make connections, make inferences, make predictions, and how they respond to the text (Baumann et al., 1993; Cook, 1996; Smith, 2006). By modeling these typically covert processes, teachers can show students how and when to use appropriate strategies. Baumann et al. (1993) stated that students need a solid understanding of what reading comprehension strategies are and when to use them in order for them to be able to monitor and have control of their reading comprehension and problem solving.

In a study to determine whether think-alouds help students learn to monitor their comprehension, Baumann, Seiffert-Kessell, & Jones (1992) found that the think-aloud technique was a very effective means to help students learn and utilize many strategies that helped them better understand the text and how to fix any problems that they encountered while reading. The students were also able to verbalize how they solved problems while they were reading. When the students were interviewed about what they

do to help them understand what they read, their answers included many strategies to monitor comprehension and fix misconceptions.

In an effort to teach struggling readers comprehension strategies and how to gain control over these strategies, Smith (2006) devised an approach called “Think-aloud Mysteries.” In the beginning this approach focuses only on comprehension strategies and attempts to avoid any text issues that might keep readers from the comprehension task. With time and practice, the mysteries become increasingly challenging. The text is structured so that at first it is very general information. As the text develops it becomes increasingly detailed. The reader begins with many possible ideas about what the mystery topic is, and with each sentence the idea is narrowed until the last sentence in which the idea is always confirmed. This approach teaches students to be flexible and forces them to use different strategies and reform hypotheses throughout their reading of the text. Smith found that the think-aloud mysteries approach allowed students opportunities to draw and build upon their prior knowledge while questioning and searching for further clarification. She also found that every student was able to share his or her strategy reasoning behind predictions.

Not only has the think-aloud approach been found to be effective, but students enjoy learning from it and using it as well. Oster (2001) conducted a study in which she modeled think-alouds for reading instruction, and then gradually decreased the scaffolds so that over time the students took on more responsibility managing their reading comprehension and strategy use. She began by modeling think-alouds and strategy use by informing the students that while reading, readers are constantly thinking. Oster

described and modeled that readers think about things that they notice in the text, facts or probable facts, predictions, questions, as well as personal reactions. They worked on these strategies first as a class, then with partners, and finally as individuals. She also gradually increased the amount of text that the students were responsible for reading. Oster found that the students were much more involved in and responded much better to this approach than the typical comprehension questions.

The think-aloud approach is especially helpful to use with ELLs. It can establish the purpose for reading a text. It shows students how to build meaning from text. Think-alouds can be tailored to fit the linguistic needs of the students while providing scaffolds so that students can understand and develop more complex language (Gersten & Jimenez, 1994; National Reading Panel, 2000; Roit, 2006).

In a case study of several teachers investigating effective instruction for ELLs, Gersten and Jimenez (1994) found that the most successful teachers provided scaffolded support by modeling, thinking aloud, and expanding on and clarifying student responses. The effective teachers enhanced reading comprehension and language development of ELLs by asking a variety of questions throughout the text, paraphrasing answers and expanding ideas, as well as getting students to elaborate their responses. The teachers also modeled techniques and cognitive processes used to find the answers and also encouraged students to model for each other when appropriate. The effective teachers also focused on vocabulary development by continually checking student understanding of new words and affording meaningful occasions to use the newly learned vocabulary.

Taking into consideration all of the information about good readers, their learning strategies, and the instructional strategies of modeling and think-alouds, it is important to examine the research questions. How can I make guided reading a better fit for my ESL students? How can I maximize my time during the guided reading session to fit in everything that my ESL students need to flourish as readers? How can I help ELLs become successful independent readers? What adaptations can I make in preparing students for guided reading? What strategies will the students use? Are the students able to use the strategies that they were taught? How can I help ELLs to transfer skills and strategies that they learn in guided reading so that they can use them independently across all subject matters? How can I better prepare ELLs for texts in guided reading?

### Conclusion

This chapter began by investigating the qualities and characteristics of good readers, followed by a depiction of their strategy use. The literature indicates that there are many teachable strategies that can better prepare students for texts. The research highlights the importance of the strategies of eliciting prior knowledge, and building the background knowledge, vocabulary, and text structure that foster its development. This chapter closes by focusing two means of strategy instruction which is modeling and thinks-alouds. The next chapter presents the methodology for this study.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This study is designed to explore the pre-reading preparation for students in guided reading sessions. In this study, I want to know: 1) What adaptations did I make in preparing students for guided reading? 2) What strategies do students use when reading? 3) Are the students able to apply the strategies they were taught? 4) Do students independently transfer the strategies when reading other texts?

In order to get the students better prepared for texts in guided reading, I decided to teach pre-reading strategies. I selected modeling/think-alouds, graphic organizers, questioning and explicit strategy instruction to build background knowledge, activate prior knowledge, pre-teach vocabulary, and focus on text structure better prepare ELLs for texts. I selected these areas in particular because they have been shown to be successful pre-reading strategies with ELLs, as discussed in the review of literature, and they complemented guided reading. I incorporated these strategies into my lesson plans for daily instruction. I created checklists for my instruction and student learning. In addition, I used observations, audio recordings, journaling, field notes and anecdotal records to document my instruction and student learning. The study concluded with an individual student interview about pre-reading strategies.

## Overview of the Chapter

This is an action research study based on three instructional cycles over the course of three weeks. Action research allowed me to plan my strategy instruction for my daily lesson plans, instruct, assess, reflect on what happened, change or refine my instruction and then plan for a new cycle. To collect data in these cycles, I designed checklists to monitor my lesson plans and strategy instruction. I also created checklists to document student learning and behaviors. To further record my observations, audio recordings, journaling, field notes and anecdotal records were used. I concluded the study with an individual interview of the participants.

### Research Paradigm - Action Research

Action research is a cyclical method that involves collecting and interpreting data in a repeated set of procedures. A problem or issue is identified. The researcher plans an action to address the issue. After the action is implemented, the outcomes of the action are systematically observed and data is collected. The next step involves reflection on the observations and collected data which lead the researcher to revise and plan further action, causing the cycle to repeat (Wallace, 1998).

One of the most important aspects of the action research cycle is reflection. Reflection is also a tremendously important part of teaching. Reflection on instruction allows the teacher to analyze what was successful or unsuccessful in the instruction. It allows for the teacher to make changes to improve his or her instruction and therefore hopefully improve student learning. Reflection promotes learning, improvement, and growth. York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, and Montie (2001) state that reflective practice

encourages higher-level thinking. Thinking about teaching in this kind of manner can allow for profound understanding that enhances student instruction by teachers.

York-Barr et al. (2001) developed a four-step reflection process to facilitate reflection. The first step is descriptive. What happened during the lesson? What did I do as the teacher? What did the students do? What did I say? What did the students say? Was anything happening around us? Was anything different from normal? What effect did I have on the students? How did the students influence the lesson?

The second step analyses and interprets the lesson from the teacher's perspective. Questions to consider address why I think these things happened. Why did I choose to behave as I did? Why did the students behave as they did? What was going through my mind? How did I feel? How could these thoughts and feelings have affected my actions? How do I think the students were feeling? Did the context have an effect on what happened? Could there be any other possible contributing factors?

The third step considers the general meaning and application of the instruction based on student data. It is essential to ask why this is an important event on which to reflect. What did I learn? How can I improve my instruction? How could my future thinking, behavior, and/or teaching change? Are there any remaining questions?

The final step identifies future action. The question focus is on what will happen next. What will happen now? What are the next steps that I could take? What are some actions that I could take if a similar situation presents itself? Now what?

These steps in reflective practices allow for self-evaluation, an important aspect of action research. Action research provides the motivation to try to improve instruction through observation, reflection and further action (Wallace, 1998).

## Data Collection and Procedures

### The Context and Participants of the Study

This study took place at a suburban K-4 elementary school. There are approximately 825 students in this school, 270 are ELLs. The school is considered a Title 1 school, as the majority of our students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. The Title 1 program provides financial assistance to schools with at least 40% of students from low income families with the purpose of closing the achievement gap between high and low performing students and to ensure that all children meet the state academic standard (U. S. Department of Education, Title I, Part A Program, 2006).

This study was conducted in the guided reading portion of the third grade literacy block. All students are involved in the literacy block. ESL teachers, special education teachers and classroom teachers all work with small groups of students at a similar level. The study focuses specifically on the pre-reading strategy instruction taught to five ELLs during the book introductions in the guided reading program. This instruction lasted 15 days and took place in 20-25 minutes of the daily 50-minute literacy block over a three-week period in March and April of the 2007 school year.

The group of students that participated in this study consisted of five ELL students. This was a sample of convenience as I selected one of the third grade groups with which I work. All student names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of

the students. The participants were one Russian girl named Mariya, three Hispanic girls named Yolanda, Jasmine and Elena, and one Vietnamese girl named Lily. Most of the students were born in the United States, with the exception of Lily, who was born in Vietnam, and Yolanda, who was born in Mexico. (Table 3.1 provides an overview of the participants.)

Table 3.1.  
*Participants*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Country of birth/native language</b>	<b>ESL entry date</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>
Lily	Vietnam/ Vietnamese	9/03	Female	8
Jasmine	USA/Spanish	9/03	Female	8
Elena	USA/Spanish	9/03	Female	9
Mariya	USA/Russian	9/03	Female	8
Yolanda	Mexico/Spanish	9/04	Female	9

The participants have many attributes in common. All of the participants grew up in a family in which only their native language was spoken. They all entered kindergarten speaking no English (with the exception of Yolanda, who came to the United States in the first grade and did not start speaking English until then). They have all remained at the same school during their education in the United States. Another commonality that all of the students share is that when they began third grade, they were still performing below average. Reading has been exceptionally challenging for all of them. Most of them are reading significantly below grade level and are having difficulty understanding what they are reading as based on a variety of district assessments.

## Materials and Procedures

This study took place over a three-week time period. Each instructional phase lasted one week and followed the same format. First I planned my lessons. Next, I implemented my plan. Then, I reflected on the pre-reading strategy instruction by studying the data collected from the checklists, field notes, audio recordings and journals. I speculated upon the successes and shortfalls of the implemented plan. Each phase concluded with the preparation of the next instructional cycle, in which I taught a new pre-reading strategy, and/or refined or made changes to the preceding cycle, consequently beginning a new cycle. Changes were made to each cycle based on observations, reflections, field notes, discussions, and student work. Following is a brief description of each cycle, and how texts and strategies were selected for my daily lesson plans.

Cycle One. The first cycle of action research involved five lessons focusing on explicit instruction of pre-reading strategies to prepare students for texts. I selected five texts, including fiction and nonfiction texts. (See Table 3.2.) I selected appropriate pre-reading strategies for each lesson based on the needs of ELLs (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Echevarria et al., 2004) and transitional readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001). These strategies included advance organization, selective attention, grouping, elaboration on prior knowledge, imagery, making inferences, questioning, text structure, determining important information, making connections, vocabulary, and establishing a purpose for reading. The main goal of this cycle was to expose students to all of the strategies in a context in which students would actually use the strategies.

Cycle Two. The second cycle consisted of five lessons and three texts. The lessons focused on the explicit instruction of fewer strategies, namely the ones that I had determined that the students were still struggling with from the previous cycle. The strategies included, but were not limited to, determining important information, text structure, making inferences, questioning and elaboration on prior knowledge. In order to focus more specifically on the instruction of the selected strategies, I selected texts that focused on lions. The texts were diverse in genre, including fiction, nonfiction, and a fable. However, they all shared vocabulary and concepts, such as predator, prey, teeth and carnivores. In this cycle I also added five minutes of rereading texts at the beginning of each lesson.

Cycle Three. The third cycle of action research contained three lessons on three texts, and concluded with an individual interview of the five participants. The lessons maintained several characteristics of the previous two cycles. The five minutes of rereading at the beginning of the lessons was continued. Pre-reading strategy instruction was still a large part of my lessons; however, it was less scaffolded and supported than in the previous sections. The students had more control in determining which pre-reading strategies would be helpful for each of the texts. My plan was to elicit their responses, but still introduce the book and review the strategies through modeling and questioning.

It is important to note that the students' reading instruction was not limited to the 20-25 minute block that I saw them for in the reading block. Reading instruction and pre-reading strategy instruction occurred across all of the content areas. With this in mind, I knew that it would not be possible for me to attribute all of their gains to my pre-reading

strategy instruction and introductions. Consequently, my goal was to become aware of the effectiveness of the pre-reading strategy instruction that occurred during the introductions through observations of students while they were preparing themselves for reading, and to use this information to constantly improve the pre-reading strategy instruction and introductions.

Choosing texts. I prepared for the pre-reading strategy instruction and introductions by gathering the materials for my lesson. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) highlight the importance of selecting appropriate texts for the guided reading lesson. They recommend that the selected text challenge the students' available abilities to process text but also that it supports these processes. The text must include language and concepts that the students already have control of or that they are able to solve using their current strategies, while offering new things to learn. Fountas & Pinnell (2001) emphasize the importance of thinking about the text in terms of the readers. It is important to consider the content, themes, ideas, structure, and print features of the text and evaluate them. The language and literary features of the text also need to be considered in terms of the readers.

I also followed Taberski's (2000) advice in selecting texts. The text must be worth reading, everyone in the guided reading group should be able to read it, and it supports the selected strategy. Cappellini (2006) suggests determining which reading strategies ELLs are lacking and seeking books that best match those strategies. She also suggests matching books based on students' strengths and weaknesses. Another important factor in choosing books is to match books to the reader in the sense that they

provide opportunities for children to build effective reading processes that ultimately turn into a self-extending system (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). Ultimately, in order for a good book selection, all of these features need to be taken into account so that the readers can be supported yet challenged.

A new book was selected almost everyday. (See Appendix A for a complete list of books used.) In addition to the criteria above, books were selected to fit guided reading. For example, chapter books were not selected as there is not enough time in the guided reading block. I also balanced the selection between fiction and nonfiction texts. In addition, in the second cycle, I selected books based on a similar topic so that I could focus more on strategy instruction and place less emphasis on new vocabulary.

Table 3.2.

*Texts and Strategies*

	<b>Text</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Strategies Taught</b>
<b>Cycle 1</b>			
Day 1	Wolf Watch	F	Grouping, Making Inferences, Vocabulary
Day 2	The Big Balloon Festival	F	Advance organization, grouping, imagery, making inferences
Day 3	Planets of our Solar System	NF	Advance organization, Selective attention, Imagery, Text structure, Determining important information
Day 4	The Crane Wife	F	Elaboration on prior knowledge, making connections
Day 5	Planning A Birthday Party	NF	Questioning, Text structure, Establishing a purpose for reading

Cycle 2			
Day 1	The Lion and the Mouse	F	Grouping, Elaboration on prior knowledge
Day 2	Continuation of previous day		
Day 3	Lions	NF	Text structure, Determining important information, Vocabulary
Day 4	Continuation of previous day		
Day 5	Teeth	NF	Elaboration on prior knowledge, questioning, Establishing a purpose for reading
Cycle 3			
Day 1	Your Heart and Blood	NF	Selective attention, Questioning, Establishing a purpose for reading
Day 2	The Dolphins	F	Selective attention, Making inferences, Establishing a purpose for reading
Day 3	The Frog Prince	F	Elaboration on prior knowledge, text structure
Day 4	Make a Cloud, Measure the Wind	NF	These books were used during the interview so that students could demonstrate or explain their strategy knowledge and use.
	Wilamina and the Weather Conditions	F	

In the next section I discuss the development of lesson plans for each cycle and the data collection. Next, I describe how I used my audio recordings. Then, I explain how I used my checklists, field notes, and journaling. Finally I discuss the concluding interview.

Planning. After careful selection of leveled texts, I created my daily lesson plans. I determined the reading strategies based on the needs of my students, the text and the reading strategies that successful readers use (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Fountas &

Pinnell, 1996, 2001). In order to determine the best-suited reading strategies and the length and content of the introduction, I analyzed the text and determined what support the text offered and what would be challenging for the students. I considered the language, content, themes, ideas, genre, structure of the text and print features. I then planned the introduction I would deliver to prepare the students for reading the text individually. I used my lesson plans to record the plans I had made to prepare students for the text with pre-reading strategy instruction and my introductions to the text. I audio recorded my delivery and student responses to the instruction to aid my reflections and subsequent instruction.

Implementation. The following phase involved the implementation of my plan. I delivered the pre-reading strategy instruction and introduction to the book that the students read individually. After I selected the appropriate reading strategies, I explicitly taught them by naming the reading strategies, describing to students how the strategies help learning, modeling when and how to use the strategies, and then providing scaffolded opportunities for the students to practice using the strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Duffy, 2002 as cited in Echevarria et. al., 2004).

I thought about what prior knowledge the students may have to offer and how to build their background knowledge if necessary. I planned how I could draw out the students' prior knowledge and connect it to the text. When suitable, I selected appropriate graphic organizers to build background knowledge and activate prior knowledge.

I selected key vocabulary items and planned how to pre-teach these items. I developed questions and comments so that students could make inferences and

predictions and share their ideas and to motivate their interest. I also made sure that for each text selected I involved them in setting a purpose for reading. After pre-reading strategy instruction and introducing the text, the students read the entire text individually.

### Data Collection

Audio Recordings. Everyday I audio recorded my strategy instruction, my introductions to texts, and the conversations that occurred before, during and after reading the text. I used these recordings to assist while filling out my checklists and clarifying field notes. I used the recording to reconstruct dialogues that I transcribed. Furthermore, I utilized the recording to aid in my reflections while journaling and analyzing my instruction and student responses. Additionally, I audio recorded the concluding interview.

Checklists. Everyday during and after the lesson I examined student behaviors and responses through observation and listening to the audio recording. I used these sources of information to fill out the checklist that I developed. The checklists included the pre-reading strategies that we were using in the guided reading session (See Appendix B.) I also concentrated on how students prepare themselves for texts. I looked at whether they previewed the story, made predictions, made connections, established a purpose for reading, synthesized information and/or inferred information. I also observed if they appeared to understand and use the new vocabulary. I checked to see if they could identify genre and features of text structure. I examined students' participation by their contributions to discussions and questions. Finally, I noted their overall comprehension of the story by asking them comprehension questions and having them retell the story.

To examine graphic organizers completed by the subjects, I developed a checklist that focused on the pre-reading strategies taught and overall comprehension (See Appendix C.) I looked at student participation in filling out the graphic organizer. When students had completed the graphic organizer, I checked to see if they used new vocabulary and if they appeared to understand it. I noted if they could identify the genre and features of the text structure. I also looked to see if the students appeared to comprehend the text in general.

Everyday I also used a checklist to examine my instruction (See Appendix D.) I looked at my lesson plans, reflected on the instruction through journaling, and reviewed the audio recording after the lesson. I examined my strategy instruction to determine if I named, modeled, and scaffolded the strategy. I checked to see if the strategy matched the text and if I explained how the strategy helps learning while providing ample instructional support. I considered my vocabulary instruction to see if I provided extensive support and if I used new vocabulary frequently. I checked to see if I elicited prior knowledge and built background knowledge of the students. I looked to see if I encouraged student participation in discussions. I also speculated on my learning and what I thought I was learning. Furthermore, I inquired as to the possible outcomes of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; York-Barr et al., 2001).

Fieldnotes and Journaling. During and after the lesson I used descriptive field notes to document what happened. I made these field notes on my lesson plans, checklists, and journal. I focused my field notes on describing what the subjects were doing and saying to prepare themselves for texts. I described what I did and said to

prepare them for the text. I gave depictions on the activities. I concentrated on what the students looked like, their expressions and gestures, and their behaviors. When appropriate, I reconstructed dialogues and gave accounts of certain events that appeared to be of interest for my study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006).

After each lesson, I used journaling and/or reflective field notes to reflect on things that went well during my lesson planning and instruction, and on things that did not go very well, mistakes, confusion, and inadequacies. I also reflected on my understanding and insights about my instruction and the students' learning. I included issues, ideas, estimations, opinions, and impressions. It was during this time that I reflected on my teaching and generated new ideas for my next actions. I made plans for the following and/or future lessons.

Interview. At the end of the third cycle, I concluded my study with a student interview. (See Appendix E.) I met with each student individually and asked them a series of questions. I gave students a fiction text and a nonfiction text to use while demonstrating or explaining strategies. I audio recorded student responses and took field notes during the interview. The following questions were asked of each student: Do you look through a book before you read it to see what it is about? If you want to find something specific in a book, do you know where to look to find the answer? Why would you use a graphic organizer? Do you use information you already know about a book that you are going to read to help you understand it? How do you use the pictures in a book? Do you ever make you own pictures? Do you use context clues to figure out meaning or make predictions? Do you ask yourself questions about what you are reading? How can

you use text structure to understand a fiction story? How can you use text structure to understand a nonfiction story? How can you tell when information is important? What kinds of connections do you make? How often do you make connection? What do you do when you come to a word that you do not know? Do you establish a purpose for reading?

### Data Analysis

With the completion of the three-week cycle of pre-reading strategy instruction and adapting introductions, I analyzed all of the data collected from my lesson plans, audio recordings, field notes, checklists, and reflected upon them. Following is a description of how I analyzed each area of data collection.

To analyze my lesson plans on a daily basis I followed the action research cycle of planning, introducing strategy and story, assessing, reflecting and refining or modifying, and then repeating the cycle (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982 as cited in Bailey, 1991; Nunan, 1993 as cited in Bailey, 1991; van Lier, 1994 as cited in Bailey, 1991). To assess, and make changes to each lesson and cycle, I used the four-step reflective process (York-Barr et al., 2001). Everyday I used journaling to reflect on each of the four steps. 1) I included a description of what I did, what the students did and what happened. 2) Next, I considered what happened and contemplated why through the analysis and interpretation. 3) In the following step, general meaning and application, I considered what I learned and how to improve my instruction. 4) In the final step, the implications for action, I covered the possible actions I could take in the future.

In order to analyze all of the data collected from my lesson plans and journaling, I examined several areas. I looked at my lesson plans for the strategies that I planned to

teach explicitly. I looked at my field notes for any information pertaining to what strategies were actually taught. I listened to the audio recording of the lesson and considered what I planned to teach versus what I actually taught. While examining at the data, I looked specifically at my strategy instruction. I coded my strategy instruction for explicit/direct (D) or indirect (I). I checked to see whether my instruction was clear or confusing. I coded how I presented the information. I coded whether I modeled (M) the strategy, if I gave examples (E), and if I gave students ample opportunity to practice (P) strategy use.

I examined all of the collected data for evidence of student understanding. I looked for themes and trends in student strategy use. I looked for student behavior, questions, and comments that indicated that students were understanding or confused by the strategy instruction. I coded whether students indicated understanding (U) of the strategies, or if they seemed confused (C) about the strategy or my presentation of it. I noted if they used the strategies directly after instruction. I also coded whether they were able to use the strategies independently (Ind).

To analyze the data from the checklists, I compiled the data into a chart. I looked for trends and themes in the data. I used the same codes that I used in the analysis of the lesson plans and journaling.

In order to analyze the data from the student interviews, I compiled all of the student responses onto one interview questionnaire. (See Appendix F.) This enabled me to look for trends and themes in student responses. I looked for evidence that supported student comprehension and/or confusion of strategy use in fiction and nonfiction texts. I

looked for their ability to name strategies and demonstrate strategy use with the provided texts. I also checked if they could explain why they selected strategies and how to use them.

I compared the checklists to my field notes while journaling and reflecting on my lesson plans to look for connections to my strategy instruction and students understanding. I also compared the information elicited from the interviews and compared them to the data obtained during lessons in my field notes, checklists and journaling.

#### Verification of Data

Within the paradigm of action research in this study, data is verified through methodological triangulation (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). Methodological triangulation entails multiple data-gathering procedures. This study gathered data through observation, checklists, journaling, field notes and an interview.

I had a peer examine the data to look for trends and themes. In addition, the peer reviewed the data considering the trends and main themes that I had noticed for corroboration or discrepancies.

#### Ethics

This study employed the following safeguards to protect the participants' rights: 1) research objectives were shared with participants and guardians through an interpreter by telephone, 2) written permission/informed consent was obtained from guardians, 3) anonymity of participants was maintained through changing names, 4) all names were changed written documents and transcripts, 5) audiotapes and the code of names were

kept secure in a locked drawer, 6) no deception was used in this study, 7) commonly accepted educational practices were employed, and finally 8) the participants were observed in their natural setting.

### Conclusion

This chapter presented the research paradigm and reflective practices of action research that were incorporated throughout this study. I described the data collection and procedures that were implemented. I reported the format for data analysis. The verification of data was also discussed. Lastly, the ethics of this study were considered. In the next chapter, the results of this investigation are presented.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of the strategy instruction and student usage of this research project. The data are presented according to the questions driving the study: 1) What adaptations did I make in preparing students for guided reading? 2) What strategies do students use when reading? 3) Are the students able to apply the strategies they were taught? 4) Do students independently transfer the strategies when reading other texts?

### Adaptations

I adapted the pre-reading portion of my guided reading lesson plans to include the explicit instruction of reading strategies. I carefully selected the strategies based on the needs of my students, the text, and the reading strategies that successful readers use (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001). Each day I planned to explicitly teach each strategy that I had selected. (See Table 4.1.) I had planned to model each strategy and to provide support through scaffolding. I also planned to provide students with ample opportunities to use each of the strategies.

Comparing my lessons plans to the audio recordings, field notes, and checklists, the data show that the strategy instruction did not occur as planned. I ended up teaching many more strategies than originally planned. (See Table 4.1.) In the first cycle, I had

planned to explicitly teach each of the strategies at least once. Instead of explicitly instructing all of the strategies, I ended up giving more of an overview of the strategies. Many of the strategies were taught indirectly. I modeled and explained the strategies, but I did not always explicitly instruct the strategies as planned. I often changed the language to describe and name the strategy, and used language that I thought the students would understand.

Table 4.1  
*Strategy Instruction*

	<b>Strategies Planned</b>	<b>Strategies Taught</b>
<b>Cycle 1</b>		
Day 1	Grouping, Making Inferences, Vocabulary	Grouping, Elaboration on prior knowledge, Making inferences, Questioning, Vocabulary
Day 2	Advance organization, Grouping, Imagery, Making inferences	Advance organization, Grouping, Imagery, Making inferences, Text structure, Vocabulary
Day 3	Advance organization, Selective attention, Imagery, Text structure, Determining important information	Advance organization, Selective attention, Elaboration on prior knowledge, Imagery, Text structure, Determining important information, vocabulary
Day 4	Elaboration on prior knowledge, Making connections	Advance organization, Grouping, Elaboration on prior knowledge, Making inferences, Text structure, Making connections, Vocabulary
Day 5	Questioning, Text structure, Establishing a purpose for reading	Advance Organization, Elaboration on prior knowledge, Imagery, Questioning, Text structure, Making connections, Establishing a purpose for reading

Cycle 2		
Day 1 and 2	Grouping, Elaboration on prior knowledge	Advance organization, Grouping, Elaboration on prior knowledge, Text structure, Vocabulary, Establishing a purpose for reading
Day 3 and 4	Text structure, Determining important information, Vocabulary	Advance organization, Selective attention, Questioning, Text structure, Determining important information, Vocabulary, Establishing a purpose for reading
Day 5	Elaboration on prior knowledge, Questioning, Establishing a purpose for reading	Elaboration on prior knowledge, Questioning, Vocabulary, Establishing a purpose for reading
Cycle 3		
Day 1	Selective attention, Questioning, Establishing a purpose for reading	Selective attention, Questioning, Establishing a purpose for reading
Day 2	Selective attention, Making inferences, Establishing a purpose for reading	Selective attention, Imagery, Making inferences, questioning, Vocabulary, Establishing a purpose for reading
Day 3	Elaboration on prior knowledge, Text structure	Elaboration on prior knowledge, Text structure
Day 4	Student Interview	

In the second cycle, I still taught many more strategies than planned, however my strategy instruction was more focused. (See Table 4.1.) I explicitly taught the planned strategies, while providing students with scaffolded support and opportunities to practice the strategies. I used the names and language of the strategy when describing and using it. For example, in the first cycle I described the strategy of elaboration of prior knowledge as what we know about something. In this cycle, I was very careful to name the strategy and use the correct language when describing it.

In the third cycle, the strategy instruction closely followed what was planned in my lesson plans. (See Table 4.1.) I occasionally taught more strategies than planned, but many fewer strategies were focused on in this cycle. Each strategy was explicitly instructed as planned. Careful modeling and support for each strategy was given. Students also had many opportunities to practice each strategy independently.

#### Strategies Used by Students

The data were informed by field notes, checklists, journaling and audio recordings of teacher and students. While students employed many strategies, the most commonly used strategies included advance organization, imagery, questioning, making connections, and elaboration on prior knowledge (These results are presented in Table 4.2.)

Table 4.2  
*Strategy Usage*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Advance Organization	12
Imagery	11
Questioning	11
Elaboration on Prior Knowledge	10
Making Connections	10
Text Structure	9
Vocabulary	9
Determining Important Information	7
Establishing a Purpose for Reading	7
Selective Attention	6
Making Inferences	6
Grouping	5

To prepare themselves for a text, students almost always used the strategy of advance organization. This includes previewing the text, taking a picture walk, or skimming the text to get a general idea of the text. Imagery is a strategy that was often used in combination with advance organization. These strategies were often used together because they complement one another. If a student is looking through the text (advance organization), there is a tendency to use pictures, diagrams and/or chart (imagery) to support preparation for reading.

Questioning was also often used with advance organization. In combination, these strategies were used 11 times. The audio recording revealed that this combination was oftentimes used together because students formed questions about the text to be read (questioning) as they were perusing the text (advance organization). Another reason these strategies were used together was that the students developed questions about the texts and then looked through the text to see if they could find the answer.

Making connections and elaboration on prior knowledge were also frequently used in combination. Together they were used nine times. Coming into the study, the students already seemed to be very comfortable making connections and frequently did this independently. They were making connections to themselves, other books, and the world around them. They were elaborating on their prior knowledge and using what they already know to make sense of the book.

Many other strategies were used in combination, and it is difficult to determine why. I think that there are many possible reasons for this. According to the literature, students are very active as they read and use a variety of strategies to make sense of text

(Araujo, 2002a, 2002b; Clay, 1991; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Pressley, 2001). It also seemed that students most often used the strategies that they understood and were most comfortable using.

The data show several trends in the data about the strategies least used by students. The strategies least used by students included grouping, selective attention, and making inferences. (See Table 4.2.) Grouping was used only five times by students. This strategy can be very time consuming as it involves constructing graphic organizers, and classifying events and characters. Another possible reason that students did not use grouping as much is that making a graphic organizer is not always convenient or appropriate for a text.

Selective attention was another strategy that students did not use very much (six times). It seemed that the reason for this is that selective attention is a skill that is not appropriate for every text or every kind of reading. Selective attention requires the reader to pay attention only to specific parts of the text, or search for answers to questions that the reader formulated. This strategy is very important to know how to use, and is very beneficial to use in content areas as often there is a great deal of complicated reading material required to read.

Finally, the students did not frequently use the strategy of making inferences (six times). This strategy seems to be very difficult for all students, but especially ELLs as the linguistic demands are very high. It requires students to constantly think about their reading, understand the vocabulary, make predictions, make assumptions, and read between the lines.

Reporting the strategy use of students was complicated as I could only record usage when I saw or heard students use them. Another way I was able to report strategy use was if the strategies were discussed, or if the students described their strategy use. Sometimes it was difficult to distinguish between strategies, for example, if a student was quickly reading a page, he or she could be either scanning it for information (selective attention), or he or she could be skimming the text (advance organization).

### Usage of Taught Strategies

The third question that I aimed to answer was: Were students able to use the strategies that were taught? In order to answer this question I first discuss the amount of times I explicitly instructed strategies compared to the amount of times that the students used the strategies immediately following the instruction. Then I discuss the amount of times students used the strategies over the course of the study. Finally, I give examples of the strategy use of the students.

In order to determine if students were using the strategies that I taught, I examined my lesson plans, field notes, checklists and journaling. I compiled the data found into a table. (See Table 4.3.) First I looked for the amount of times that I explicitly taught the strategies. I then checked to see whether students used the strategies that were taught immediately following the lesson. I also looked for how many times the students used each strategy over the course of all of the lessons.

The findings were quite interesting. I noticed that students almost always used the strategy immediately after explicit instruction. The amount of times that each strategy

was explicitly instructed is almost identical to the amount of times the students used the strategy immediately following instruction. (See Table 4.3.)

Looking at my lesson plans, field notes, and checklists, I noticed that the strategies most used by students were not always the strategies that I focused on during my instruction. The students used each of the strategies many more times than the strategies were explicitly instructed. (See Table 4.3.) This could be because the strategies were indirectly brought up or they came up during discussions of the book. Another possible reason is that students were feeling more comfortable using the strategies independently, which is discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Table 4.3.  
*Strategy Instruction and Usage*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Explicitly Instructed</b>	<b>Frequency following instruction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Text Structure	7	7	9
Elaboration on Prior Knowledge	5	4	10
Making Inferences	4	2	6
Questioning	4	4	11
Grouping	4	4	5
Imagery	3	3	11
Vocabulary	3	2	9
Determining Important Information	3	3	7
Selective Attention	2	2	6
Making Connections	2	2	10
Advance Organization	1	1	12
Establishing a Purpose for Reading	1	1	7

As the literature suggests, I selected the strategies to explicitly instruct based on the needs of my students, strategies that were appropriate for the texts, and the reading

strategies that transitional readers use (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001). I had planned to explicitly instruct all of the strategies and give students ample experiences to learn and use the strategies. At the beginning, I thought that I would focus equally on the strategies, however for various reasons that did not work. I focused more on some strategies as they proved to be more difficult for the students, while others were easy for them. I concentrated on select strategies because students did not appear to be using them, while I focused less on others as they were using them frequently on their own. Furthermore, according to the literature, some strategies seemed more important for students to master. All of these findings are discussed in depth.

After I selected the texts, I selected the strategies to explicitly instruct and planned my lessons. (See Table 4.3.) The strategies that I planned to instruct the most were text structure (seven times), elaboration on prior knowledge (five times) and questioning, inferencing and grouping (four times each). These results reflect the importance of these strategies as discussed in the review of literature. I felt that all of these strategies were crucial for students to understand and get the most out of texts.

On the other hand, there are many reasons why I focused less on certain strategies. During my data analysis of my lesson plans, checklists and field notes, I noticed that I focused the least instructional effort on the strategies of making connections, advance organization, and establishing a purpose for reading. Advance organization was explicitly instructed only one time; however students used it independently frequently throughout the study. Making connections was explicitly instructed two times. The students immediately understood when, how and why using the

strategy was important. Furthermore, they regularly used it independently (ten times).

Taking this into consideration, I chose to concentrate on other strategies.

### Strategy Use

One of the most important goals that I had as the cycles progressed was to get the students more involved in using, discussing and identifying the strategies that were taught and that they were using. To determine the usage of strategies that I taught, I drew the students into conversations about the strategies and why we used them in my daily lessons. In a conversation about the strategy of grouping, I inquired as to why the strategy would be useful. The students responded with a variety of answers such as: “[graphic organizers] help us learn more”, “see if we understand”, and “[graphic organizers] show what we know.” These comments illustrate the students' understanding and use of strategies. It suggests their ability to understand and discuss the strategies. This conversation also demonstrates their flexibility in strategy use. Lily knew that the graphic organizer could help us learn more, while Elena knew that the graphic organizer could show what the students know about something and if they are understanding it.

After the lesson just described, I asked the students what they thought of using the graphic organizer, which in this case, was a story map. They all thought that it was useful. They agreed that it was helpful to look at one that was already filled out because the story was kind of difficult. They also indicated that they could look at the story map while they were reading when they got confused. This indicates that the students were using the strategy of grouping to aid their reading comprehension and to help them problem-solve.

Inferencing was a strategy that the students did not frequently use independently. They were using some areas of inferencing, such as making predictions. Reviewing my audio recording, field notes and checklists, I noticed that their predictions had become increasingly accurate. The students were now basing them on the title, pictures, and the names of chapters instead of wild guesses. However, they struggled with other aspects of inferencing. They were unsure of when and how to use context clues to figure out unstated information. The problem was that they could use the context clues when I prompted them, but they were not always doing that independently. Thus, I focused one lesson specifically on modeling how to make inferences. In the following dialogue, we are discussing why the main character only spends time with his dad on Saturdays. It is implied that his parents are divorced, but it never states that.

Researcher     Why do you think Jason only spends time with his dad on Saturdays?

Mariya         His dad is at work?

Elena            His dad lives somewhere else?

Yolanda         His parents are divorced. My friend's parents are divorced. She lives with her mom. She only sees her dad on Saturday.

When prompted, the students were able to make accurate inferences about the main character.

To encourage the students to make inferences independently, I had them each make a prediction about what was meant when the dad says that he is going to take his son on a special swim. Yolanda predicted that the boy would swim with dolphins based

on the title of the book. Elena made the prediction that they would go on water slides. Mariya thought that the boy might swim in the ocean.

I had them check their predictions throughout their reading to see if they were correct. I encouraged them to check or change their predictions, as skilled readers are active readers and continually confirm or adjust their ideas about a text (Araujo, 2002a, 2002b; Clay, 1991; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Pressley, 2001). When I asked the students about how they monitored their comprehension and predictions, they responded with examples that showed their thinking and use of the taught strategy.

Elena            I was asking myself, on this page, if the dolphin was really going to be there, or not show up.

Yolanda        I thought that he was going to go with his dad, but he was taking pictures of Jason with the dolphins.

These examples illustrate that the students were using the strategy of inferencing after it was taught. They paid greater attention to their reading and understanding of texts.

They monitored their comprehension while confirming and/or adjusting their predictions.

These examples show the progress that the students made concerning the use of making inferences.

As discussed in the literature review, when a reader is familiar with the genre and structure of the text, his or her comprehension is facilitated because he or she can predict and anticipate the general direction of the text. Explicit instruction on English text structures can improve comprehension, recall and appreciation of the text (Anderson &

Roit, 1996; Armbruster et al., 2001; Morrow, 1984 as cited in Stahl, 2004; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000).

To explicitly instruct text structure, I explained how to use the table of contents to pick and choose information that they were most interested in reading. I also asked them to brainstorm questions and then to locate where they could possibly find the answers using the text structure. I modeled the strategy by coming up with a question based on the title of the book. I asked the students to tell me where they might be able to locate the answer by using the text structure. They all turned to the table of contents and pointed to plausible answers.

After the strategy instruction, I gave them the opportunity to use the strategies independently. Yolanda wanted to know how you have a healthy heart. All of the students were able to answer her question by using the text structure to locate the section of the text. Their answers included not eating so much sugar, eating fruits, vegetables, eggs, fish and cheese, exercising, and not eating too much fat.

The above conversation is very informative. It shows that the students understood the strategy instruction and were able to apply the strategy to their reading. They used text structure to access the content of the text. It also shows that they were using the strategies in combination; they used text structure with making connections, questioning, and elaboration on prior knowledge. Not only were students able to use the strategies that were instructed, the data shows that students were able to transfer strategies to new texts and to use them independently.

## Transferring Strategies

The final question that I sought to answer was: Were the students able to independently transfer the strategies to other texts? My ultimate goal was to get the students to independently use these strategies during all reading. In answering my other questions above, there has already been some evidence that supports the transferring of strategies. The students used the strategies independently when given no instructions, used the strategies in combination, and were able to suggest appropriate strategies that would help them to better understand the text.

To ascertain whether strategies were transferring to new texts, I decided to see what students would do independently. In several of my daily lessons, I asked the students to look at the first page of a new text and to use the strategy of determining important information without reading it. Every single one of them pointed to an important piece of information, for example, the title, a caption or a bold word. I asked the students to explain why their selection was important and how they knew that it was important. Their responses indicated the main idea of the text, supporting details and/or interesting facts.

Elena pointed to the first sentence, which contained no bold words, or any of the text features that we had been discussing. But when I asked her why it was important, she said that this sentence tells us what we are going to read about. I asked her if she meant that it was a topic sentence and she said nodded. All of these students were able to use what they had previously learned about text structure and determining important information, and to apply these strategies to a new text in preparation for reading.

Occasionally during the lessons, I asked students how they could prepare themselves to read the text in order to determine what they were able to do independently. I also asked them about what strategies that they could use to make the text easier to read and understand. I passed out the text and gave them some time to look through it and figure out which strategies would be helpful. The students were then given a nonfiction text. When I inquired about the strategies that would help them, I was met with several responses that included ideas that would be very useful when reading a nonfiction text. They could describe the strategies, and sometimes explain them, but they were not always able to name them. Lily suggested looking at the pictures. Yolanda said to use the glossary to find words that you do not know, and to think about what you already know about the body. Lily was describing the strategy of imagery, looking at the pictures to better understand the text. Yolanda was describing how to use text structure and using prior knowledge to prepare herself for reading the text. This suggested that they were able to transfer the strategies to new texts. I could see by how they viewed the text and the language that they used to discuss the strategy that they had a good understanding of the strategies, even though they did not use the name of the strategies.

I also gave the students a fiction book about swimming with dolphins to determine which strategies they would use to better prepare themselves to read the text. The students responded with facts about dolphins, information they had previously learned about dolphins from other books, and also suggested looking at the pictures to prepare for reading. These ideas show that the students were transferring strategies to new texts. Jasmine and Yolanda were both using their prior knowledge about dolphins.

Mariya and Elena were using the strategy of imagery to get a better understanding of the text. Additionally, Lily and Yolanda were making connections to other texts that they had read about dolphins.

Further indication of strategy transfer is the following example of text structure. It is possible to tell a great deal about a text just by knowing how it is set up. To check what the students knew about the text structure, I gave them a fairytale. When I passed it out, I asked them to flip through the book and gave them no information about the text or any additional instructions. I wanted to see what they could determine about the story from the text structure. The following dialogue shows that the students could determine a good amount about the story based on the text structure.

Researcher    What do we know...

Yolanda        (Interrupting me) It's a fairytale.

Researcher    How do you know?

Elena          Once upon a time...

Researcher    What else do we know about the text structure of a fairytale?

Jasmine        ...and they lived happily ever after.

Mariya         Something bad happens.

Yolanda        (elaborating on Mariya's idea) in the beginning.

The students were able to transfer what they knew about text structure to this new text. All of this prior knowledge about fairy tales and their text structure enabled them to anticipate the text. Because the students were familiar with the genre and structure of the text, their comprehension was facilitated because they could predict and anticipate the

general direction and stream of the text. Readers that are familiar with a text structure can predict the meaning of sentences, paragraphs, and even passages, and then confirm the meaning of the text. (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Armbruster et al., 2001). These discussions before, during, and after reading prove that the students were able to transfer strategies that were instructed to prepare for new texts, make sense of the text, get more out of the text, to monitor comprehension and to problem-solve.

The students were able to use the strategies that were taught flexibly by using them both independently and in combination with other strategies. All of these examples show that the students were actively preparing themselves to read texts by using strategies and thinking about what they already knew to make the text more accessible.

### Conclusion

This chapter describes the results of my study in which I investigated how to better prepare ELLs for texts in guided reading. I examined student strategy use, my instruction of pre-reading strategies, and the transference of strategies to other texts through careful observation of the lessons, anecdotal and field notes, reconstructed dialogues, and detailed analysis of the collected data. The study revealed that explicit pre-reading strategy instruction, careful modeling, and scaffolding are beneficial in helping to better prepare ELLs for texts in the guided reading session and in becoming successful independent readers.

The following and final chapter of this paper discusses the major findings of this research and investigation and what was learned through the process of action research. I

also consider the limitations and implications of this study. Furthermore, recommendations for future research projects are suggested.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Introduction

In this capstone I investigated the pre-reading strategy use of ESL third graders during guided reading. I also considered several other areas of interest. I sought to discover how to help ELLs become successful independent readers. I also wanted to find a way to help ELLs transfer skills and strategies that they learned in guided reading to other disciplines. To address these questions and areas of inquiry, I implemented pre-reading strategy instruction in their daily guided reading lesson. I collected and analyzed data through daily observations, checklists, field notes and anecdotal notes. My overall goal of this research project was to determine how to better prepare ELLs for texts during guided reading.

This chapter concludes my research project through revisiting the major components of the literature review, relating them to this present study, and reflecting on my major learning and findings. This chapter also includes the implications of this study. In addition, the limitations of this project and ideas for further research projects are also discussed.

### Reflections on Major Learning

In researching the question of how to better prepare ELLs for texts in guided reading and analyzing my data, I deduced there are many successful ways to modify or

enhance the format of guided reading. To build the background knowledge necessary for my ESL students to comprehend text, I focused my investigation on the pre-reading strategies of text structure, vocabulary development, and modeling/think-alouds to better prepare students for texts.

### Text Structure

In order to make texts more accessible to students, I explicitly taught genre and text structure. I found that when students are familiar with the genre and structure of the text, their comprehension improves because they can predict and anticipate the general direction and stream of the text. They can also predict the meaning of sentences, paragraphs, and even passages, and then confirm the meaning of the text. The data I collected corroborated several studies discussed in the literature review. The data showed that ELLs' comprehension, as well as appreciation and recall, is increased when they are given explicit instruction on English text structures (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Armbruster, et al., 2001; Morrow, 1984 as cited in Stahl, 2004; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000).

I found that students were able to anticipate the path of the text when they were familiar with the text structure. The students enjoyed making and confirming their predictions about the text based on the genre and structure of the text. I also found that students were able to notice more of the information presented on the pages on fiction and nonfiction texts. They learned how to determine and find important information, and more importantly, how to transfer those skills to other texts, because they knew, or were becoming more familiar with, the text structure of various genres.

## Vocabulary

In addition to teaching students about genre and text structure, I also focused a great deal of instruction on vocabulary development. Based on my research and teaching experience, I realized how crucial vocabulary is for reading comprehension. To expose students to some of the unknown words in the text, Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001) suggest planting the vocabulary during the introduction to familiarize them. I knew that this was not enough for ELLs. Many studies show the significance of vocabulary development for enhanced reading comprehension for ELLs (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Gersten, 1996; Gersten & Geva, 2003; Jimenez, Garcia & Pearson, 1996; Proctor et al., 2005; Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999; Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000).

For students to fully understand and feel comfortable using the newly learned vocabulary, I found that vocabulary instruction needed to include information about the definition, as well as the context for key words, discussions that elaborate on word meanings, and opportunities to actively build on the word meanings. These findings agree with the study that Watts-Taffe & Truscott (2000) and Anderson and Roit (1996) completed suggesting that vocabulary instruction must contain vocabulary networking, or key words, and expanding contexts because students learn vocabulary in meaningful contexts, rather than in isolation.

Considering the importance of learning vocabulary in many different contexts, I chose to pick books thematically for the second and third cycles. I wanted the students to learn the selected vocabulary in depth and breadth. Vocabulary development appears to be enhanced with instruction in which the students are actively engaged with the new

words. Students also need repeated vocabulary exposure, especially in a variety of contexts (Armbruster et al., 2001; Fitzgerald, 1995; Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000).

Although guided reading does not always allow for thematic-based book selections, it is something that I strive for because the more contexts in which the students see and use the new words, the deeper their understanding of the words will be.

Another reason I elected to choose books based on a common theme was that it allowed me to focus more of my instructional efforts on the strategies, rather than on the instruction of unknown vocabulary for every text. When the texts were connected, they did not have to concentrate as hard on figuring out the new words, and they were able to focus more on comprehending the text.

In addition to trying to pick books thematically, I also chose to add five minutes of rereading to each of the lessons for the last two cycles. I did this because the students enjoyed rereading, and I gathered a great deal of information from it. It allowed me to get a better idea of what the students were capable of independently. In this context, I was able to see their thought process, but at the same time provide scaffolding, modeling and/or support if needed. I believe that repeated readings gave them even more opportunities to enhance and build their new knowledge of text structure, vocabulary and pre-reading strategies. Through rereading, they were exposed to each text multiple times so that they would have more encounters with new language patterns or linguistic structures in the story. From analyzing the data I collected, I found that rereading helped the students to have a more solid background of different conventions of print like punctuation, titles, subtitles, heading and captions and how to use them to navigate their

way through the text, corroborating the findings discussed in my literature review (Cappellini, 2006; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001; Roit, 2006; Kimbell-Lopez, 2003; Clay, 1991b).

### Modeling and Think-alouds

One of the most important findings for me was how effective modeling, scaffolding and think-alouds really were in teaching students how to read and use strategies. The think-alouds allowed me to model and make overt the typically covert thought processes that are being used to construct meaning and make sense of the text (Baumann et al., 1993; Roit, 2006). Modeling and scaffolding allowed a great framework for the gradual release of responsibility to the students, so that over time they became more independent in the management of their reading comprehension, strategy selection, and use.

My findings support those of Roit (2006) in that think-alouds can be tailored to fit the linguistic needs of the students while providing scaffolds so that they can understand and develop more complex language and reading skills. Through think-alouds, I established the purpose for reading a text. Using think-alouds, I showed students how to build meaning from text. Furthermore, in think-alouds, the strategy is named and it is explained how and why that strategy was selected. By modeling these typically covert processes, I was able to show my students how and when to use appropriate strategies.

Based on the materials I read, I knew that strategies should be explicitly taught, carefully modeled, and scaffolded (Duffy, 2002, as cited in Echevarria et al., 2004). In the first cycle, I felt that I was not being as explicit as necessary with the presentation of

pre-reading strategies, in the sense that I was not always naming the strategy. I felt that naming the strategy felt forced, or unnatural, in the flow of the lesson or conversation. I thought it might detract from the conversation to stop and explain the strategy when I could paraphrase instead. I was concerned that using complicated language to name the strategies might interfere with their understanding of the strategy.

To address this issue, I elected to concentrate on the particular strategies that the students demonstrated confusion about their use or understanding. I also decided to be even more explicit in my strategy instruction, do more modeling and scaffolding. In the following cycles, I felt much more comfortable naming the strategies and it seemed to fit into the lesson more naturally. I was surprised to find that the students did not appear to be confused by the language of naming the strategy as I had suspected they would be.

I had wanted and planned to focus on fewer strategies in my lesson plans, however, the students often brought up strategies that were different from the ones that I had planned to explicitly instruct. They often asked about strategies, demonstrated them, or suggested using them while preparing to read texts. This played a large part in why so many strategies ended up being taught explicitly and/or indirectly. This happened more frequently in the first cycle and some lessons in the second cycle. By the third cycle, I realized the significance and value of really focusing explicit instruction on fewer strategies, and tried to focus the students the students' attention on those strategies as well.

I found that focusing on fewer strategies during the lesson made it easier for the students to explicitly discuss the strategy, how they were using it, and why it helps make

reading and understanding easier. Focusing on fewer strategies also allowed me to determine if the students truly understood each strategy without complicating the lesson by talking about extra strategies that they already knew how to use. In future lessons, I will continue to concentrate on fewer strategies to ensure student understanding and alleviate confusion. I will also make it a point to spiral back to review and revisit previously instructed strategies to ensure student understanding.

Taking into consideration everything I have learned from doing this project, examining my teaching experiences, and reflecting on what I have done to prepare students for texts, my most important finding is that learning to read, and how to use strategies, are very personal and a continuous process. The use of pre-reading strategies is something that can not be perfected in one or two attempts. Pre-reading strategies can not be taught with one or two examples. All students are in different places in their understanding of strategies. Students all learn, use, and understand strategies differently. Every student comes with different literacy experiences and they all take away something different from the texts that they are reading.

#### Implications

An implication for teachers is that modifications through explicit pre-reading strategy instruction, modeling and scaffolding can accommodate for ELLs and make guided reading a more appropriate and better fit for them. As with any reading instruction method, modifications need to be made for the success of all students.

Additionally, because reading strategies need to be used for books outside of guided reading that students read for class and pleasure, strategy instruction, and literacy

learning should take place across all disciplines. This allows for increased exposure to pertinent strategies, additional opportunities to use them, and a variety of contexts in which to use the strategies to solidify student understanding of them.

### Limitations and Future Research

The most obvious limitations of this study include the timeframe and sample size. To make my study feasible and manageable, I could only study one group of five ELLs for about a month. Ideally, a study would take place over a longer period of time.

The diversity of students is another limitation. This study only investigated five ELLs struggling with reading. Although their language backgrounds were diverse, their language proficiency levels and reading skills were similar. My sample contained students with a variety of home languages, including Russian, Vietnamese and Spanish. It would be interesting to study an even broader language range, as many schools have students from many more countries. It would also be of interest to include more diversity in English language proficiency levels and literacy skills in a future study.

I also think that the timeframe was a limitation. Even more could be learned about pre-reading strategy use, knowledge and understanding over the span of a quarter, a semester, or even a year.

Additionally, another limitation was that I was the only participating teacher in the study. Much more data could be collected, analyzed, and compared with the involvement of more teachers. This would also provide consistency and repeated exposures to the strategies.

## Conclusion

I have learned a great deal about pre-reading strategy instruction and use through this study. I hope to incorporate this knowledge into my teaching in years to come. I hope to continue to grow in my knowledge of these strategies and to continue to learn how to better instruct them. I also plan to share what I have learned with my future ESL teams and grade level teams as well. All teachers want their students to be successful. I think that this can be achieved through working together.

I want my students to continue using and expanding upon their strategy knowledge and use. I hope that through pre-reading strategy instruction, reading has become an easier task that they can continue to enjoy and practice. My greatest wish for my students is that what they have learned about these strategies will help them to be even more successful across all subject areas and classes that they take in school. I want their success to carry over into their lives outside of school.

## APPENDIX A

### Children's Books Used

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## APPENDIX B

### Daily Checklist of Pre-reading Strategy Behaviors



## APPENDIX C

### Checklist for Completion of Graphic Organizers

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Genre: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-reading strategy: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Checklist for Completion of Graphic Organizers</b>				
	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SOMETIMES</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Participation</b>				
Fills out graphic organizer				
Uses prior knowledge				
Provides own examples/ideas				
Asks questions				
<b>Vocabulary</b>				
Appears to understand new vocabulary				
Uses new vocabulary				
<b>Text Structure</b>				
Identifies genre				
Identifies texts structures/features				
<b>Comprehension</b>				
Appears to comprehend the "big picture"				
<b>Notes:</b>				

## APPENDIX D

### Daily Checklist of My Instruction



## APPENDIX E

### Pre-reading Strategies Interview Questions

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Pre-reading Strategies Interview Questions**

- 1) Do you look through a book before you read it to see what it is about? (Show me)
- 2) If you want to find something specific in a book, do you know where to look to find the answer? (Show me)
- 3) Why would you use a graphic organizer?
- 4) Do you use information you already know about a book that you are going to read to help you understand it? How?
- 5) How do you use the pictures in a book? (Show me)
- 6) Do you ever make you own pictures? When?
- 7) Do you use context clues to figure out meaning? Make predictions?
- 8) Do you ask yourself questions about what you are reading?
- 9) How can you use text structure to understand a fiction story? (Show me)
- 10) How can you use text structure to understand a nonfiction story? (Show me)
- 11) How can you tell when information is important?
- 12) What kinds of connections do you make?
- 13) How often do you make connection?
- 14) What do you do when you come to a word that you do not know?
- 15) Do you establish a purpose for reading?

## APPENDIX F

### Compiled Data from Interview

## Pre-reading Strategies Interview Questions

1) Do you look through a book before you read it to see what it is about? (Show me)

Jasmine: Yes, picture walk, look at pictures

Mariya: Yes, look through the pictures, read some words

Elena: Yes, look at the pictures mostly, sometimes I read some words

Yolanda: Yes, look at the pictures, see if its fiction or nonfiction

Lily: Sometimes, look at the pictures, words

2) If you want to find something specific in a book, do you know where to look to find the answer? (Show me)

Jasmine: Glossary, index

Mariya: Table of contents

Elena: Table of contents, index

Yolanda: Index, table of contents

Lily: Table of contents

3) Why would you use a graphic organizer?

Jasmine: To tell about the story

Mariya: To know about the story

Elena: To see how you are doing on the book

Yolanda: To understand the book better

Lily: Help us understand

4) Do you use information you already know about a book that you are going to read to help you understand it? How?

Jasmine: If you already know about weather, you could just think about what you know

Mariya: Yes (could not explain)

Elena: Yes, because if I already know something I can probably learn more about it

Yolanda: Yes, if I'm reading a book about dolphins, I know that they swim with people and like to eat fish etc.

Lily: Yes...(could not explain)

5) How do you use the pictures in a book? (Show me)

Jasmine: If you don't know a word, you can look at the pictures and it will help you know about the story a little more

Mariya: Look at them, they help you figure out when something happens

Elena: Tells what the book is about  
Yolanda: To help you figure out a word  
Lily: When you don't understand, you can look at the pictures

6) Do you ever make you own pictures? When?

Jasmine: Sometimes, I think about what they look like  
Mariya: Yes to understand  
Elena: Yes, so I can see what's happening in the book  
Yolanda: Yes, if a book has details, it can help me get a picture in my head  
Lily: Yes, sometimes

7) Do you use context clues to figure out meaning? Make predictions?

Jasmine: Predictions help you learn about the story – if you get it wrong you can still change your mind  
Mariya: Yes, I make predictions a lot  
Elena: Yes, yes to see what's happening  
Yolanda: Yes, yes...about 5 or 9 (referring to how many predictions she makes each text)  
Lily: Yes, yes, all the time, predictions help us understand

8) Do you ask yourself questions about what you are reading?

Jasmine: Yes, when I am done reading a sentence or paragraph  
Mariya: Yes, like what she did etc.  
Elena: Yes, sometimes if I don't know something I ask myself questions about it  
Yolanda: Yes, what is it going to be about  
Lily: Yes, one time, what they're doing, where they are going...

9) How can you use text structure to understand a fiction story? (Show me)

Jasmine: They have a glossary in front (showing table of contents) to give you clues like the names of chapters  
Mariya: Princess (was confused and did not understand when I tried to clarify th question)  
Elena: (fairy tale) Like the Frog Prince, Once upon a time...happily ever after  
Yolanda: ...In all fairytales there's a happily ever after  
Lily: Look at once upon a time, happily ever after

10) How can you use text structure to understand a nonfiction story? (Show me)

Jasmine: Look at the back or front cover, table of contents  
Mariya: Pictures, titles

Elena: By the pictures, titles  
Yolanda: Look at sections, what it is about, the pictures  
Lily: Look at the table of contents, pictures

11) How can you tell when information is important?

Jasmine: Sometimes it is very dark (referring to bold words) glossary, index  
Mariya: If it is black (bold)  
Elena: It's mostly in a bubble (caption)  
Yolanda: If it's in big words, if it has pictures of it  
Lily: They tell us more

12) What kinds of connections do you make?

Jasmine: Text to text, text to self  
Mariya: Text to self  
Elena: Text to text, text to media  
Yolanda: For fiction - text to text, for nonfiction – text to self  
Lily: Text to self, text to world, text to text

13) How often do you make connection?

Jasmine: Sometimes, not every book  
Mariya: Kind of  
Elena: Sometimes, almost every book  
Yolanda: Maybe one time  
Lily: Yes, a lot, text to self

14) What do you do when you come to a word that you do not know?

Jasmine: Look at the pictures, sound it out, pick words that start the same  
Mariya: Ask a teacher, glossary  
Elena: Stretch it out, look at the pictures  
Yolanda: Look at pictures, sound it out, ask a friend, ask the teacher  
Lily: Chunk it, look at the pictures

15) Do you establish a purpose for reading?

Jasmine: Yes, sometimes you want to learn about stuff that people made a long time ago or math or science...  
Mariya: Yes, to know something  
Elena: Yes so I can get more information  
Yolanda: Look at the title, see if it's exciting, interesting  
Lily: Facts, maybe it will be fun

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