

“OKAY, MISS, I WANT TO TALK IT OUT”: TEXT-CENTERED DIALOGUE SUPPORTING ADOLESCENT LITERACY

Kelli Bippert
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Abstract

The question posed in this analysis is: What is the relationship between text-centered dialogue and reading comprehension? This article examines one student's behaviors while reading challenging texts. This qualitative case study explored the verbal behaviors of Robert (pseudonym), a seventh-grade student receiving reading intervention. As his text-centered dialogue increased, his comprehension increased as well. Over the course of 11 weeks, Robert (pseudonym) improved his success rate in an online reading intervention program from 3 successful attempts mid-year to 31 successful attempts by the end of May. Using a comprehension-as-sense-making theoretical frame, findings suggest that providing at-risk adolescents opportunities to engage in dialogic strategic behaviors could encourage successful problem solving when working with challenging texts, an asset-oriented approach to intervention.

Keywords: reading, middle school, dialogue, asset-orientation, strategy, engagement, intervention

Introduction

With the passing of House Bill 4545, public schools in Texas are required to provide accelerated intervention support to students who were not successful on their State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) for reading and mathematics (TEA, 2021). As a result, schools have ramped up their efforts to provide this required intervention to their students. Post-pandemic, the teaching field has experienced an increase in teacher retirement as well as teachers leaving the profession. In the state of Texas, the numbers of teachers leaving the profession rose to 12% in 2022, up from the previous academic year of 9%; teachers retiring the profession rose to 8,000, up by 1,000 from the previous academic year (Lopez, 2022 July 25). On the national level, a survey conducted in May of 2022 (Marshall et al., 2022; Steiner & Woo, 2021) indicated that 75% of respondents considered leaving their teaching positions in the coming academic year. While there are several factors contributing to why we are seeing the increase in teachers leaving the profession in Texas, House Bill 4545 complicates the issue by intensifying the need for an adequate number of teachers and tutors in public schools. Schools in Texas are scrambling to find ways to provide intervention in reading and mathematics to students. However, schools should consider the ways in which this intervention is delivered.

According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), it is recommended that middle schools provide the following to support readers who had not performed proficiently on the STAAR Reading (TEA, 2019):

Guide students during text-related oral and written activities that support the interpretation, analysis, and summarization of text. Foster student small-group discussions and enhance understanding through teacher-guided conversations... Have student take part in partner reading... Organize students into collaborate groups for reading tasks. Implement strategic reading practices within these groups or implement team-based learning to clarify, apply, and extend students' understanding of text and content (p. 2).

The purpose of this study is to explore how one student's reading comprehension were met through the use of strategic dialogue. While the TEA acknowledged that collaborative dialogue is beneficial for student reading comprehension and content learning, teachers should be provided with an understanding of how collaborative dialogue can be utilized by teachers and schools effectively.

Typically, reading strategies have been taught to students using a "comprehension-as-procedure" method (Aukerman, 2008; 2013). This method addresses comprehension as dependent on teacher modeling, guided practice of a set of strategies, and reinforcement of a "correct" use of strategies in an effort support comprehending a text. The intent is that through teacher modeling and student practice of strategy procedures, strategies become automatic and used by students at times when they are in need of support during independent reading. While studies suggest that there is little evidence that independent strategy use occurs with students (Rand Reading Study Group, 2002), teachers should consider how student engagement and strategy use are related (Goldman et al., 2016) and involve various cognitive processes.

This article provides a close analysis of one seventh grade student, highlighting the reading strategies that allowed him to engage with challenging texts, subsequently supporting his success with reading. While schools grapple with providing the human resources necessary to deliver required reading interventions, they first need to consider the assets that all students bring to literacy tasks. In the example that follows, this asset consisted of text-centered dialogue.

Robert (pseudonym) was a 7th grade student in an urban middle school in south central Texas in 2016. The situation that schools are facing bring to mind the ways in which students like Robert engage with texts to support comprehension. Robert, like many students, had his own strategic repertoire that was not recognized or valued in the classroom. However, his school utilized a computer-based intervention program in an effort to provide assistance to as many students as possible. Such programs often support a limited set of reading strategies, such as making predictions, summarizing, and making connections. While these strategies are important for students to apply, they do not constitute the various ways that students may engage with a text. Tapping into students' existing strengths as readers may help them recognize and utilize their strengths, an asset-oriented approach to reading comprehension instruction. Often, these strategic behaviors are rooted in dialogic behaviors, such as think-alouds, read-alouds, asking questions, text discussions, and collaboration. The question posed in this analysis is: What is the relationship between text-centered dialogue and reading comprehension?

Robert, the focus of this article, talked a lot. Over the course of 11 weeks of computer screen and audio recording, the investigator noticed that in most of the transcripts, Robert spent

much of his time talking to himself and to others in the classroom during the reading intervention period. Robert relied on self-talk and social interactions while reading to aid in comprehension. This was Robert's strength as a reader: engaging in dialogue about texts and using spoken language to problem-solve through difficult comprehension questions. These types of strategies helped him become increasingly successful over the course of the 11-week study.

Theoretical Framework: Comprehension as Sense-Making

An individual's text comprehension is not reducible to a set of strategy procedures, but often involves hypothesizing about texts through collaboration (Aukerman, 2008; Boardman et al., 2017). Whether a student's hypothesis about the meaning of the text is correct or not is less relevant than the fact that decisions are made about the meaning of the text. Only through collaboration and discussion of the text can the student clarify if they hypothesized correctly or not. This is at the expense of valuing a more dialogic, sense-making ideology of reading comprehension, which would embrace student discussion and collaboration.

In addition, strategy instruction should not be limited to a small set of visible and quantifiable strategies. While students should be provided instruction in summarizing and paraphrasing, inferring information from the text, and making connections, teachers need to also stress the importance of comprehension monitoring strategies that may not necessarily be as clearly visible to teachers (Maniates & Pearson, 2008; Pressley, 2000). Students should be encouraged to actively engage with the text; they should be provided a variety of ways to engage with texts if we want them to move beyond declarative and procedural strategy use, and toward the development of conditional strategy use tailored to the students' reading needs. For students to be able to choose strategies that they find most beneficial, they first need a selection of strategies that does not minimize nor lessen the importance of those that may not be tracked either in written format or on a computer-generated student report. Relying on a limited set of conveniently identifiable and visible strategies will not meet adolescents' strategic needs.

How schools approach comprehension instruction suggests a culture that values certain strategic behaviors from teachers and students in the classroom (Bippert, 2020; Handsfield & Jimenez, 2009). This curricularization of strategy instruction and student responses would carry what Bourdieu (1991) would describe as "capital" within the classroom. Guided by the teacher, a particular way of showing textual sense-making is honored, while other genuine student interactions with the text may be disregarded, discouraged, or even dismissed (Aukerman et al., 2015). However, shared reading and peer collaboration has shown to positively benefit students' strategy use (Boardman et al., 2017; Farkas & Jang, 2019). Teachers become so entrenched in how strategy instruction should look according to the dominant culture in the classroom that they may miss opportunities to foster text engagement with students who may be identified as struggling readers.

Review of Literature

Struggling Reader Identity

The most common label used to describe individuals who find difficulty in reading or engaging with texts is "struggling reader." Over the years, concerns about student reading achievement have resulted in a series of deficit-oriented labels designed to describe and remediate the reading proficiency of students who fail to perform well on state and national reading assessments. Over the past century, these deficit-oriented labels have placed the learner at the center of the problem surrounding their achievement disparities (Brooks & Frankel, 2018; Dudley-Marling, 2011; Marsh, 2019). These labels potentially affect an adolescent's perception of their ability, without taking into consideration other variables that play into how students are deemed proficient at reading.

The term "struggling reader" has been commonly used in an attempt to encompass the variety of explanations for how students find difficulty reading and connecting with texts. This term expresses the students' struggle with a multitude of factors such as difficulty with vocabulary, English language proficiency, cultural differences, and the inability or unwillingness to relate to texts used within schools. The label "struggling reader" was an attempt to not only describe the complex mix of students who, for many reasons, were not engaged in literacy activities in ways that are valued by schools and the traditional ideas that encompass reading and literacy, but also intended to counter such highly student-deficit labels as remedial or low reader (Alvermann, 2001; Dudley-Marling, 2011).

An adolescent's reading identity can lead to multitude of consequences, both positive and negative. The development of a negative reading identity can affect the adolescent's connection and belonging in the school context, and events that seem simple for a typical student, such as visiting the school library, may be overwhelming and alien to a struggling, adolescent reader, resulting in their belief that they are not only incapable but unworthy to take part in the school literacy Discourse (Moje & Dillon, 2006; Hall, 2009). Their reading identities are often shaped through negative interactions in and out of school that ultimately shape the student's identity in detrimental ways, causing the adolescent to associate reading with emotions such as anxiety, fear, and avoidance (Tripplett, 2007).

According to Klauda, Wigfield, and Cambria (2012), an adolescent's motivation for reading can be affected by teachers and peers in two ways: affirming aspects and undermining aspects of motivation, based on the peers' attitudes toward reading. The norms and expectations that exist in school also shape students' reader identities in either positive or negative ways (Tripplett, 2007). Interactions and feedback from teachers and peers can affect not only the student's identity, but also the willingness that a student has to participate in school reading contexts. For example, in a case study conducted by Hall (2009), one adolescent student admitted to resisting participation in class not because she did not care about improving her reading abilities, but because she feared the negative responses she may have received from her fellow classmates. Although this student quietly followed along with the text when it was read aloud by the teacher and other students, her silence had been misinterpreted by the teacher as apathy toward reading.

Additionally, the power that teachers and peers hold in the persistence of students' in-

school reading identities often conflict with these students' desire to enter into the school reading Discourse. However, many students realize this change in identity can be difficult to overcome, despite the efforts of the struggling adolescent reader. In a case study conducted with two adolescents described as struggling readers, Enriquez (2011) found that despite the efforts of these participants to improve in school reading activities, their identity as struggling readers appeared to be "fixed" in the minds of teachers and peers (p. 117). Although the two adolescents described in the study had taken steps toward becoming a part of the school literacy Discourse, these steps were not acknowledged by teachers, administrators, or classmates, and their change in personal identity remained unrecognized.

Creating a descriptor or label to help educators support students who experience difficulty with traditional school texts, and yet does not imply a deficit within the student, is difficult considering the reality of high stakes testing in the United States and schools' push to improve these test scores. The struggling reader label places a deficit within the student's reading ability rather than a lack of flexibility regarding teachers, schools, and curriculum to fit the students' needs (Risko et al., 2011; Dudley-Marling, 2011). However, to address the present needs of schools, educators should provide students with adequate instruction in comprehension and critical thinking skills, allow students to use their existing knowledge in literacies used outside of the classroom to support in-school literacies, and focus on decoding and word-recognition skills for only the small number of adolescents who need it.

Early Adolescent Readers

Early adolescent students are defined here as students aged 11-15 years. These students are found to be in the process of adapting from elementary to secondary modes of instruction, where they often experience less direct adult supervision and more freedom and choice during the school day (Roeser et al., 2000; Cipriano et al., 2019). Early adolescents are typically in the middle school grades 6-8.

Students at the middle school level have unique needs that cannot be generalized based on findings from studies based on elementary or high school participants (Allington, 2011). Research with students at the middle school level who are experiencing difficulties with reading and/or learning in the classroom is needed in order for schools to be better informed of the most effective tools and teaching methods for improving student reading achievement. Otherwise, based on the research available that addresses this student population, it is difficult for many of the currently marketed computer-based reading intervention publishers to claim improved achievement and motivation for students experiencing reading difficulties in our middle schools.

While elementary readers may have difficulty in decoding words and poor fluency, a very small number of adolescents need word-level instruction (Dennis, 2009). Middle school readers positioned as struggling have needs that cannot be met by reinforcing isolated phonics and comprehension skills alone; they need support and direct instruction in comprehension strategies (Reynolds, 2021). While behavioral engagement with texts is an expectation in a reading intervention program, a study conducted by Daley and colleagues found that this will not necessarily result in improvement in reading comprehension (2020). However, when a

socially constructive model of literacy instruction is provided alongside strategy instruction, including student collaboration, students' motivation and attitudes toward reading can improve (Farkas & Jang, 2019). Adolescents also benefit from opportunities to share their reading experiences with teachers and peers and engage socially with texts (Farkas & Jang, 2019; Ivey, 1999). While it is important for adolescents to have access to texts that are at a difficulty level that they can successfully and fluently read (Allington, 2007), schools need to also provide authentic purposes for reading, allowing students the agency to choose texts that they relate to, on topics that are relevant and that they are interested in exploring through extensive reading (Allington, 2011; Fisher & Ivey, 2006; Ivey, 1999; Ivey, 2019).

Studies that measured the motivational effect of activities that promoted student agency and social engagement support these claims. In one study of sixth grade science students participating in an inquiry-based project (Harmer & Cates, 2005), students worked collaboratively to actively find solutions to stop the spread of the West Nile virus. Students were given choices of online articles to read in order to build possible solutions. Results from the study indicated that students were motivated by the freedom they were given in selecting reading materials as well as presentation delivery methods. Students were encouraged to discuss findings during the project and were found to eagerly share text resources with other classmates during these discussions. Another study conducted with a seventh-grade class (Meth, 2010) studied the motivational effect of student inquiry projects. These students, identified as struggling readers, participated in a Web quest activity. Students were given their choice of research topic based on a social justice issue or endangered species. The study found that by giving students the opportunity to self-selected texts based on topics of interest, these students not only increased in text engagement, but improved in comprehension strategy use. While commercially developed reading interventions can provide students some agency in choosing texts at a level they can successfully read, as with the program used by Robert and his classmates, technology-driven interventions still limit students' social interactions and the potential for further inquiry on students' topics of interest.

While strategy instruction is considered important for student success with comprehending difficult texts, a study by Hall (2012) found that students who identified as low reading comprehenders have been shown to have less flexibility in strategy use and will often rely on a limited set of strategies. Although low comprehenders could perform comprehension strategies at the procedural level, these students still relied on some comprehension strategies that served no further purpose than the performance of the strategy. This tells us that even students who identify as struggling readers are capable of performing the strategy "act" and still not be able to strategically use the strategy. This could be an effect of how the act of strategy performance has been valued as a form of social capital within the classroom (Davis, 2013; Handsfield & Jimenez, 2009). Teachers need to recognize when strategies are useful and valuable to a task, and not stress the performance of these strategies for the sake of the strategy performance.

Dialogic Reading Strategy

Dialogic reading strategies are founded in language and dialogue associated with a reading task, and support comprehension through text-based discussion (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011). While typically associated with early literacy development, dialogic reading strategies will be related here to what has been termed “dialogic teaching,” where the “function” of language and dialogue taps into a socio-constructivist model of teaching and learning (Boyd & Markarian, 2015, p. 274), and text-centered language activates cognitive processes (Vygotsky, 1978). In this sense, dialogic reading strategies at the secondary level are closely related to dialogic teaching in that the student engages in dialogue related to a text; the student intentionally or unintentionally applies language or dialogue to assist in comprehending a text. Boyd and Markarian (2015) describe how instructors can support comprehension by taking a “dialogic stance” (p. 273), which would provide an overall classroom culture encouraging and valuing student talk as a vehicle promoting learning through a socio-constructivist lens.

Dialogue as function may be one way to initiate students’ use of dialogue as reading strategy. However, strategic behavior can be enhanced when dialogue becomes part of classroom routines. Teachers who focus on the use of questioning techniques that encourage critical thinking, such as asking questions to elicit additional dialogue closely related to higher-order and critical thinking, have shown to aid in students’ engagement with texts through dialogue. For example, a study conducted in the United Kingdom studied teachers’ use of Talk Prompts to support students’ active engagement in strategic dialogue (Maine & Hofmann, 2016). These Talk Prompts included question stems that focused on higher-order questioning. It was found that when teachers used Talk Prompts and followed them with probing questions to elicit dialogue that would provide more nuanced responses, students become more actively engaged with texts as compared with instructional models that did not provide the teacher eliciting deeper dialogue. Even without a teacher as a guide, students have been found to utilize higher-order thinking and reasoning when provided with opportunities for collaboration and dialogue. Maine and colleagues (2020) found that without a teacher present to guide reading and discussion, students engaged in high-level discussions while integrating their fellow classmates’ ideas related to the text. Peer-to-peer dialogue, when used as a strategic resource, is useful in helping students in co-constructing meaning from texts. Liu and colleagues (2021) found that peer-to-peer strategic dialogue may support comprehension in the following ways:

1. Provides an outlet for students to discuss individual understanding of a text,
2. Clears up challenging concepts, and
3. Provides opportunities for the peer group to generate a collective summary of materials. (p. 11-16)

Aside from reading, writing has been shown to benefit from dialogic strategic behavior as well. In a study conducted with secondary students (Spence et al., 2021), those students found peer dialogue important for aiding them with an increase in personal reflection present in their writing as compared with students who did not engage in peer dialogue. Dialogue as a

strategic comprehension tool has been shown to support students in a variety of ways, particularly when in concert with student collaboration.

Methodology

The focal participant in this study, Robert (a pseudonym), was a seventh-grade student attending an urban middle school in south central Texas. A participant from a larger study, this student had been identified as requiring reading intervention based on his performance on the sixth-grade state reading assessment as well as performance on a campus-wide reading screener. The student was attending a reading intervention class, utilizing a computer-assisted intervention program, Achieve 3000.

This case study occurred across an 11-week period. The investigator collected data between two and four times each week. This case study included data from 12 computer screen recordings. See Table 1 for a description of the timeframe of student recording data. Over the course of the study, the student’s behavior and voice were recorded while he engaged in the online reading program using Krut screen recorder (Östby & Berggren, 2004).

Table 1

Time frame of student recordings

Recording number	Timeframe	Video ID
1	Week 3, Day 1	W3D1
2	Week 3, Day 2	W3D2
3	Week 5, Day 1	W5D1
4	Week 5, Day 4	W5D4
5	Week 6, Day 2	W6D2
6	Week 6, Day 3	W6D3
7	Week 7, Day 2	W7D2
8	Week 8, Day 1	W8D1
9	Week 8, Day 2	W8D2
10	Week 10, Day 2	W10D2
11	Week 10, Day 3	W10D3
12	Week 11, Day 2	W11D2

All verbal behaviors on the twelve recordings that were observed were coded for analysis. A verbal behavior is defined here as any use of language during the recording session. Using an open coding procedure (Saldaña, 2016), the student’s verbal behaviors were coded throughout each screen and audio recording. As new verbal behaviors occurred, new behaviors (codes) were added. These behaviors were then quantified for each screen and audio recording, and simultaneously coded when more than one verbal behavior was evident in the same

recording (Saldaña, 2016). When a behavior was observed during the student’s interaction with a text, the behavior was marked one time; if the student attempted more than one text within the same recording, the behavior was marked again if it was observed during the interaction with the additional text. See Table 2 for the behaviors that were identified for each video.

Table 2

Instances of Verbal Behaviors

Video ID	Verbal Behaviors						Off-task behaviors
	Read aloud	Think-aloud	Textual discussion	Read question/answers	Verbal self-redirection	Requesting help	
W3D1	X						X
W3D2	X	X	X			X	XX
W5D1		X		X			XXX
W5D4	X					X	X
W6D2	X	X	X	X			X
W6D3	X	X	X	X			X
W7D2		X					X
W8D1	X	X					X
W8D2	XX	X	XX	XX	X		X
W10D2	XX	X		X			XX
W10D3	XX	XX	X	XX			
W11D2	XXXX	XXX		XXX			

Findings

Over the course of the study, twelve screen recordings were closely analyzed to identify text-centered dialogue that took place during the student’s screen recordings. The quantified behaviors were then analyzed and compared with the student’s success with reading passages associated with each day’s recordings. The analysis provided an answer to the question: What is the relationship between text-centered dialogue and reading comprehension?

Text-centered Dialogue as Reading Comprehension Strategies

“Text-centered dialogue” will be used to describe verbal behaviors that related to the text; while a verbal behavior was any use of language during each recording, text-centered dialogue referred to language as it was connected with a text or topic within a text. Once the verbal behaviors were coded and collapsed, the themes that emerged were read aloud text, think-aloud, textual discussion, read aloud question/ answers, self-redirection, and off-task

behaviors. All but one of the behaviors were associated with the text. Table 3 shows detailed verbal behaviors that occurred across the eleven weeks. Behaviors were observed between zero and four times per recording. Table 3 summarizes these behaviors, along with the number of successful text quiz completions during that recording period. Success was defined as a successful completion of the quiz associated with a passage, scoring 75% or better. The table shows that not only did verbal behaviors increase, but the number of successful passage completions began to increase as well.

Table 3

Detailed Verbal Behaviors

Verbal Behaviors	Progressive Student Screen Recordings											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Read text aloud	1	1		1	1	1		1	2	2	2	4
Think-aloud		1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3
Textual discussion/ questioning		1			1	1			2		1	
Read question/ answers aloud			1		1	1			2	1	2	3
Verbal self-redirection									1			
Requesting help		1		1								
Off-task behavior	1	2	3	3	1	1		1	1	2		
Successful Passage Completions	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	2	3

Read Text Aloud

Robert’s most commonly utilized text-centered dialogue was reading the text aloud to himself. This was evident in ten of the recordings, and these increased as the weeks and the recordings progressed. Reading the texts aloud appeared to help Robert work through difficult texts, or to concentrate and engage with the text despite any distractions that may have been occurring in the classroom. In recording one, for example, Robert did not begin work on his reading passage until 13’9” into the recording. What Robert was able to accomplish by the end of this first recording, however, was reading article titles aloud to himself to consider which article was of most interest. On recording two, Robert spent some of recording time in off-task behaviors with classmates, discussing matters unrelated to class or to the text. In this recording Robert shares: “I’m wearing this hoodie because it’s too loud, and this year it [the hoodie] is not working.” Later, he was able to begin reading a text and realized that he was having difficulty with vocabulary. This is where Robert, at 10’ into the second recording, began to read aloud in an effort to pronounce the words, ultimately asking one of his teachers for help. Later, in recording 12, Robert more regularly reads the text aloud to aid in comprehension and help with

classroom distractions. In fact, beginning with recording 9 Robert was utilizing reading aloud with each text, and this strategy almost matched with successful passage completions.

Think-Alouds

Robert also engaged in think-alouds, which were evident in ten of the recording. Robert would utilize the think-aloud strategy while reading the text and making textual hypotheses with peers or self, and while reading and thinking through the questions and answer choices at the end of the texts. For example, in recording 5 Robert reads through answer choices and reasons his way through if answers choices do or not fit the text content. This is a behavior that was observed beginning with this recording and continuing throughout the remainder of the screen recordings. While he did not complete the quiz during this particular recording, he began to have more consistent success beginning with recording 6. By the 11th recording, Robert regularly thought through questions and text by thinking aloud. During recording 11, he successfully completed two quizzes, each time utilizing the think-aloud strategy, at one point telling the researcher, “Okay miss, I want to talk this out.” This was followed by Robert talking through each question and answer eventually successfully completing the text quiz.

Textual Discussion and Questioning

While Robert did engage in talk that was unrelated to the assigned readings (as shown in Table 2 as “off task behaviors”), other discussions were related directly to the text or to the topic addressed in the text. When this occurred, the behavior was marked as “textual discussion/questioning.” While this was not always simultaneously coded as a think-aloud, Robert was observed engaging in this behavior with peers and with teachers. This occurred during five of the eleven recordings.

Reading Questions & Stems Aloud

Robert also read questions and answers aloud to himself to aid in comprehension and to problem-solve. This was often simultaneously coded as a think-aloud technique, particularly if Robert was rationalizing between multiple-choice items. For example, in recording 9, Robert began answering questions associated with a story about UFOs by simply reading the questions an answer stems aloud; this may have been an effort to aid in text engagement and counter noise in the classroom. As the questions became more complex, however, he called a teacher to his desk to allow him to talk and reason through the answer choices, eliminating choices that did not make sense. While the teacher did not assist him with the answer choices, the act of talking through these questions supported his comprehension, helping him earn 88% success on that particular article.

Verbal Self-direction & Seeking Help

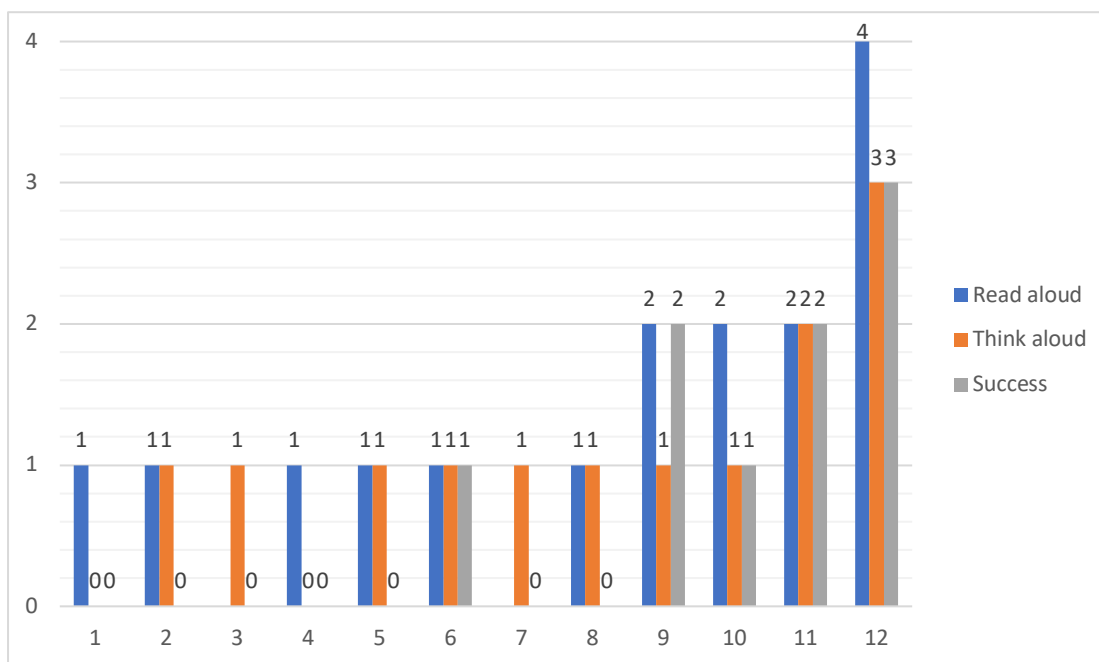
Other verbal behaviors that were seen less often in the screen recordings were verbal self-direction and asking teachers for help. On one occasion, in recording 9, Robert verbally self-directed himself: “This story does not make sense....” He later verbally prompted himself to focus and keep a steady pace through the text. During two screen recordings, Robert requested help from a teacher. This occurred when he had a difficult time understanding a topic in a new text, and was helpful in clarifying vocabulary.

Dialogic Self-Talk

Many of the codes were simultaneous (Saldaña, 2016), such as times when Robert was observed using the think-aloud strategy as well as reading answer choices aloud. Overall, the two most commonly identified verbal behaviors that related to a dialogic reading strategy were reading texts aloud and think-alouds, which are described here as “dialogic self-talk”. Figure 1 compares the progressive screen recording data for these two strategies alongside the number of successful text quiz completions. Robert was making little to no progress on passage completions up to recording 6 (week 7) but began to have much greater success with completing his reading assignments beginning with recording 9 (week 8) through recording 12 (week 11). The figure illustrates how as Robert increased his utilization of these two strategies, his text completion rate become more consistent.

Figure 1

Successful Assignment Completion using Read Aloud Strategy and Think-Aloud Strategy



Conclusion

Robert became increasingly successful at completing the assigned text quizzes at the end of each recorded session, as are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. By engaging in text-centered dialogue, and utilizing verbal reading strategies, Robert went from having completed three text quiz assignments in between October and February of the academic year, to a total of 31 by mid-May (Table 3).

Table 3

Robert's performance across eleven weeks

	Successful Text Completions
Beginning of study in February	3
End of study in May	31
Increased performance	28

Limitations

Because this analysis focused on the verbal behaviors of one early adolescent student, the findings from the study are not generalizable. Additionally, the data covered 11 weeks, and only for those days when the investigator and student were in the classroom. Therefore, the twelve snapshot videos did not reflect all of the students' behaviors over the course of the academic year. The presence of the investigator in the classroom may have unintentionally been a motivating factor for the student's behavior during data collection days as well.

Discussion

Teachers need to identify ways to help students become more actively engaged in reading in order to help support comprehension. One-way teachers can do this is to provide opportunities to engage in authentic talk about texts. Because a student is not using a particular set of visible reading comprehension strategies, this does not mean that the student is not successfully interacting with the text; and the use of visible, curricularized reading comprehension strategies does not guarantee that the active text engagement and comprehension will happen (Aukerman, 2008; Daley et al., 2020).

There are likely other metacognitive reading comprehension strategies that are used by students yet are far more difficult for the student or teacher to observe. Dialogic strategies such as think-alouds, comprehension monitoring, collaboration, and text-based discussions are far more difficult to report by a student and are much less likely to be measurable by the teacher. This does not mean that these important and powerful comprehension monitoring and

cognitive strategies should be disregarded.

Comprehension as sense-making takes into consideration a students' genuine engagement with texts, providing a space for students to work through problems, hypothesize, and collaborate (Aukerman, 2008; Boardman et al., 2017). While it can be a challenge to view student talk as a strategic, teachers can be encouraged to recognize certain verbal behaviors that assist students in comprehending challenging texts, and provide encouragement to students who may otherwise not identify themselves as strategic readers. By focusing on students' strengths, we can help many more adolescents see themselves as engaged, successful readers.

Schools have been challenged with providing the necessary human resources to support instruction in the classroom (Lopez, 2022; Marshall et al., 2022; Steiner & Woo, 2021), particularly in light of recent state requirements for student interventions (TEA, 2021). There are, however, some ways that teachers can help students in the classroom. Provide students the opportunity to engage in authentic reading, based on their personal interests.

Student Choice and Voice

Student choice for reading and writing in the classroom may not always be possible. However, providing students with a variety of modes for reading and writing, such as small group reciprocal teaching (Lazarus, 2021; Palincsar & Brown, 1984), and collaborative fanfiction and popular-media inspired story writing can support all students regardless of perceived reading and writing strengths and challenges (Bippert, 2017; Bippert, 2021). Modes of reading and writing such as these lend themselves to collaborative and strategic dialogue, and can enhance student learning and performance on reading and writing tasks.

Teaching Students to Use Think-Alouds

Teachers can also model think-alouds and allow students to try and integrate these into their existing strategy toolbox (Bannert & Mengelkamp, 2008). Utilizing questioning techniques, similar to the Talk Prompts used in the study by Maine and Hofmann (2021), teachers can guide students into reflective thinking and dialogue, and can help students recognize when comprehension needs repair.

Focus on Assets Rather than Deficits

Just as important, teachers can discover which reading and writing strategies students are already employing. This can be done through observations, during small group instruction, or by providing students with a metacognitive survey such as the Revised Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARS-I) (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Mokhtari et al., 2018). This will provide students with the understanding that they are in fact strategic readers, who can then build upon their existing strategy toolbox.

Conclusions

Texas educators have increased responsibility for supporting students who did not perform proficiently on the STAAR Reading exam. When considering the types of materials used with students, schools and teachers need to become aware of the unique needs of adolescent readers. Providing a socially constructive environment will allow students to engage with texts in meaningful ways, and help students hone dialogic strategies that can serve as powerful reading comprehension tools.

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About the Author:



Dr. Kelli Bippert is Associate Professor of Literacy Education at Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi. Prior to this, Dr. Bippert taught grades 4 through 8 for fifteen years in elementary and middle schools where she served as reading specialist, designing, and implementing literacy instruction for adolescents in the middle grades. She holds both Texas Master Reading Teacher and Reading Specialist Certifications. Dr. Bippert earned her Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Learning & Teaching in 2016. Dr. Bippert's research and scholarship center on adolescent literacy, the utilization of technology-based literacy interventions in the middle grades, and the integration of popular culture/ media texts to support in-school literacies. Her university teaching experience includes undergraduate and graduate-level content and disciplinary literacy education courses, as well as courses related to intervention and support for students identified with reading and writing difficulties.