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Talking to the Text: Thinking-Aloud with Struggling Readers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to guide my students to take ownership of their reading experience, by being aware of what they are reading rather than simply going through the motions. My hope was that implementing the think-aloud process would develop the students' ability to stay engaged and comprehend what they read more effectively. As a special education teacher, this study is not focused on students as learning disabled. This study attempts to provide struggling readers with the skills necessary to become independent readers who are confident in their abilities. These struggling readers come from a very urban community with the majority of the population being of Hispanic origin. At the time of the study, I had eight students enrolled in my supplemental learning support classroom.

The methods of collecting data included student journaling, observations, field logs detailing class and small group discussions, student work and student surveys. The findings suggest that teaching thinking-aloud does not substantially impact students' reading comprehension, but does lead to more motivated and engaged readers. The data also suggest the students' attitudes about reading independently improved, as did their ability to think critically about the text.

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RESEARCHER'S STANCE

Reflecting on my own teaching and learning is something I have found to be of tremendous value throughout my career. Being able to assess various teaching and learning strategies in terms of their effectiveness have been crucial to the development of my students and myself. Unfortunately, I find it very difficult to remember much of what I learned or how I was taught in school. I was placed in high-level classes, was on the honor roll, and was regarded by most of my teachers as a “good” student. But looking back, I didn’t do much homework and certainly didn’t read most of my reading assignments. Looking back, I lacked the strategies needed to read with purpose and I was completely unaware. It would take me so long to get through my work that I was unable to keep up. Oddly though, none of my teachers noticed or addressed the issue.

The first time I remember really reading a book or any assigned reading was in my twelfth grade literature class. I would usually skim through the text just enough to make it look as if I read it. But when my twelfth grade teacher came along, things were different; we had no choice but to read. I actually remember discussing the assigned chapters with my friends and asking each other questions about the assigned homework. For the first time, students from all different classes could share in the excitement of enjoying a novel together. To this day, I come across some of those classics and have the desire to read them again remembering those class discussions and eye opening symbolic references

that would have otherwise passed me by. I couldn't help but wonder, what made that class different?

Unlike any other teacher, this twelfth grade literature teacher took on the responsibility of preparing us for college and articulated that goal with us, stressing the importance of these strategies. She taught us how to actively engage ourselves in the book and look past the words on the page. Every student was required to purchase the texts at a local bookstore, where she had reserved books for all of her students at a discount. Our assignments consisted of reading, highlighting important events, and taking notes as we read in the book. Our final test consisted of this book being handed in with our notes, thoughts, and important information highlighted. Sure we had comprehension questions, but we discussed them as a class and developed deeper meaning by critically analyzing the text. It was more than what we could remember; it was our interpretation of the text that was crucial. It taught me how to get through a text, understand what I was reading, and most of all, remember it. It is disheartening to think it wasn't until my last year of school that someone had finally made that connection for me. That year changed my whole attitude towards reading and has continued to influence the way I teach reading.

Throughout the eight years of teaching reading to special education students, I have seen my students struggle with the same dilemma that I had growing up. Most students fight tooth and nail not to read; they find every excuse

to get out of it. When I ask my students to read a passage, I know most do it to get it done or not at all. They utilize few to no strategies to comprehend the texts while reading and look to me for all of the answers, instead of in the book. As I look at my classroom and am aware of this quandary, I realize I want the same experience for my students that I had in my twelfth grade literature class. From this realization, I knew what I needed to do for my students, teach them how to engage while they are reading.

After many years of trying similar strategies and trying to create that experience for the class, my students still struggled. I have looked to many experienced reading specialists and seasoned teachers for guidance. I examined activities and strategies they use, but it always came down to the teacher reading to the class, the students maybe reading a few pages, which many don't, and then answering comprehension questions. Boring! For the last twenty years that I have been involved in schools, this has been the same monotonous routine of reading teachers. How are students going to become better readers if they don't read themselves?

In a pilot study that was conducted a few years prior, I implemented a high interest novel for my learning support students, which was different from the usually short stories and low readability books. This was a novel that other students in the regular education classes had read as well. I was trying to spark that interest I had in my twelfth grade literature class. The study suggested that

the students' comprehension and interest in reading had increased, but they had no concept of taking their time while reading. They struggled with stopping to think or analyze. They had difficulty anticipating what the events in the story were leading up to. I learned that students needed me to help them make explicit connections between the reading strategies taught throughout the year and the actual reading of a novel.

Through my inquiry, I wanted to ensure that I provided the means for students to be successful on their own, while helping them to apply the strategies they have learned to their reading in a meaningful way. I knew that I needed to encourage students to be aware of their thinking as they read. The process of thinking-aloud incorporates all of the things that proficient readers do automatically and would potentially help my students develop as readers of authentic texts. So my research question came to fruition: What are the observed behaviors and reported experiences of eighth grade special education students when implementing a think-aloud process to improve reading comprehension?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The number of students in need of special education services has been on a rise since the early 1990s. According to Dillian (2007), the number of students identified as having a disability increased from eight percent in 1977 to fourteen percent in 2006, and of those students, only about half graduated from high school (Wood & Algozzine, 1994). In addition to high-stakes testing, strict graduation requirements have put a multitude of additional pressure on our already struggling students. Unfortunately, students with learning disabilities are “among the lowest performing on current high-stakes testing” (Thurlow, Sinclair, & Johnson, 2002). Many school districts have instituted severe consequences for their low-performing students: some will not graduate with a diploma; others may not be promoted to the next grade, and many low performers who are promoted will be required to take extra reading and/or math classes instead of electives. As a result, many students see these consequences as punishment or failure and are convinced they will never be successful, causing many to feel the need to dropout (Thurlow, Sinclair, & Johnson, 2002).

“Without question, the acquisition of reading skill promotes better overall school performance” (Blanton & Blanton, 1994, p. 10). A majority of students who struggle with reading are already behind academically and lack the knowledge needed to be successful on their own. Blanton and Blanton (1994) argue that special education students in their early adolescent stages of education

usually show little progress after hitting a fourth or fifth grade reading level.

Some have shut down due to the many years of futile efforts and begin to believe that they are unable to learn new and challenging things (Vaidya, 1999).

According to Blanton and Blanton (1994), students who have learning disabilities may be somewhat limited in their ability to obtain the necessary strategies that will result in long-term learning. In order for these students to acquire the knowledge to be successful on their own, “Teachers should assume responsibility for directly teaching learning strategies” (Blanton & Blanton, 1994, p. 22). Such strategies will assist in comprehension and give students control over their own learning. Therefore, it is imperative that students are taught these strategies in a structured and direct way (Vaidya, 1999).

Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman and Scammacca (2008) suggest that “Students with LD will need instruction and support to self-regulate their use of strategies; they will need to know which strategy to use, when to use it, and why” (Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, & Scammacca, 2008). In order to do that, teachers need to provide a “multicomponent” approach to reading instruction, implementing strategies such as previewing, mental images, reflection and questioning. This along with “comprehension-monitoring strategies” such as rereading, pausing after paragraphs, and asking questions, will help clarify understanding (Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman and Scammacca, 2008). The majority of the strategies are incorporated in the think-aloud process.

Thinking-Aloud – A Metacognitive Process

Thinking-aloud is a strategy that provides students with a process of constructing meaning out of any text. Wilhelm (2001) defines thinking-aloud as:

...creating a record, either through writing or talking aloud, of the strategic decision-making and interpretive process of going through a text, reporting everything the reader is aware of noticing, doing, seeing, feeling, asking, and understanding as she reads. A think-aloud involves talking about the reading strategies you are using and the content of the piece you are reading. (p. 19)

“Think-alouds are a powerful way to teach because they give students the expert’s key to unlock a text’s fullest construction of meaning” (Wilhelm, 2001, p.9). The implementation of thinking-aloud builds students’ awareness of one’s own thinking and learning. In the literature, this higher-order thinking process that involves the ability to evaluate, plan and regulate one’s own reading is referred to as metacognition (Ghaith & Obeid, 2004). The use of metacognitive strategies by a student exemplifies his or her ability to be aware of the learning process. This type of thinking gives students control over their learning experience and provides students with the skills to learn more effectively (Deed, 2009; Ghaith & Obeid, 2004). “Deficits in metacognition and reading strategies contribute to their inability to comprehend texts, even when they can read the words” (Williamson, Dunn, Hinshaw, & Nelson, 2008, p. 125). Snider and Tarver (1987) agree that

metacognitive awareness plays “the most important role” in being able to read effectively and with purpose (p. 354).

There is an abundance of strategies that teachers may use to develop metacognition within their students. Thinking-aloud is a process that guides students through a series of strategies that assist in self-regulation and place students on the path of independence (McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007). Some of these strategies that can be modeled through the thinking-aloud process are previewing, predicting, self-questioning, making connections and clarifying. First, it is important for students to set a purpose for reading. This can be done through previewing the text. Students look at the graphics, read titles and subtitles, and analyze the organizational pattern of the text itself. By doing this, students can then begin to make predictions they may have about what the text is about. Through this simple process, students are unconsciously activating their prior knowledge and making connections to things in their life and concepts they are already familiar with. Thinking-aloud requires students to stop periodically to monitor their comprehension to check for understanding. Students ask themselves questions, and when something is unclear, utilize strategies that assist in redirecting their comprehension (Baker & Brown, 1980; Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, & Joshi, 2007; Yang, 2006).

In a frequently referenced study conducted through the National Reading Research Center, Baumann, Seiferet-Kessell and Jones (1992) implemented a

think aloud procedure to determine how thinking aloud helps students monitor their comprehension. In a series of ten lessons, Baumann, Siefere-Kessell and Jones taught two groups of 22 randomly chosen fourth grade students “the think-aloud comprehension monitoring and fix-up strategies” (p. 5). These lessons were broken up into three phases: an introduction of the strategy, a teaching modeling portion, and a guided/independent practice section. In their lessons, Baumann, et. al. (1992) compared the thinking aloud process to that of a reporter who previews the scene, gets information from sources, asks questions, asks himself or herself if this is making sense, and clarifies information that is confusing or misunderstood. A control group of 22 fourth grade students received non-interactive guided reading instruction. The researchers gathered anecdotal records and recorded observations in both groups.

They also conducted two small group interviews with students from the experimental and control classes. The students were asked to read a short passage aloud and were stopped periodically to answer the question, “Can you tell me what you were doing or thinking about as you read this part of the story?” (p. 1). Students who had been instructed on thinking aloud gave responses that indicated they were asking questions, retelling parts of the story in their head, and making predictions and checking themselves. Students from the control group responded by saying, “nothing,” and another student was concerned about punctuation and pausing in the right places—not the content of what was being read. Baumann et,

al. (1992) concluded that students who are taught thinking aloud strategies and self-monitoring strategies are much more engaged in the text and are better equipped to overcome challenges in their independent reading (p. 15).

Best Practices in Reading Instruction

Adolescents are at a crucial point in their academic careers. Some researchers and educators assume that those who have reached middle school and not developed the skills necessary to be proficient readers will never catch up. As a response to the lack of comprehension, teachers often take a struggling reader back to the beginning of the reading process by re-teaching them how to decode, but this may not be the best way of closing the gap and developing reading skills, since decoding is merely the process of “saying words on a page” (Schoenback, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999, p. 6). Inherently, decoding is necessary to read; however, when a text challenges the reader, decoding does not provide ways for students to break down texts and develop meaning. Experienced readers monitor their understanding by getting involved with the text. When challenges arise they are able to utilize strategies that assist in adjusting their understanding (Schoenback, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999; Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, & Joshi, 2007).

Author and researcher Marjorie Y. Lipson (2007) believes that too much time and effort are spent on decoding text. As the work becomes more challenging, even the “good” readers may begin to struggle due to the fact they

have never been taught to construct meaning from new and more complex texts, making it very difficult for students to transition into independent readers (Lipson, 2007). Wilhelm supports Lipson by saying:

Reviews of American education show that we spend most of our time teaching students information, filling them with declarative knowledge (the *what*), instead of the assisting them to enact new and more proficient ways of reading, problem solving, and making meaning (the *how*)...Never having learned the how, they are put squarely behind the eight ball and do not know how to learn on their own. (Wilhelm, 2001, p. 7)

Reading and comprehension are usually thought of synonymously.

However, some argue that there is quite a difference between the two. Reading words on a page is essentially the ability to decode words on a page, where as comprehending the words on a page involves more than just reciting the words, but making meaning from those words (Smith, 1986). There are many genres, organizational patterns, and purposes to reading, but the process is the same. Smith suggests that when we fully comprehend a text, we have no further questions or doubt about our understanding. Reading comprehension is not a passive process but rather incorporates many facets of one's experiences and expectations in order to achieve full understanding (Smith, 1986).

What do “good” readers do?

There are many strategies that encompass what “good” readers should do; however too many strategies can be overwhelming for students, so it is important to take into consideration the needs of the individual students when deciding what strategies to teach (Lipson, 2007). A key strategy that has shown to be effective in developing reading skills is the activation of prior knowledge (Hurst, Wilson, Camp, & Cramer, 2002; Mills, 2009). Prior knowledge connects already known information to new information that is being gained from the text. Students become more engaged and interested when they are able to connect to their own personal experiences and interests (Lipson, 2007). This background knowledge will “determine how new information will be interpreted” (Wade, 1990, p. 442). When good readers have the knowledge to connect to the text, things in the text begin to make sense to them. Students can use this knowledge to anticipate where the text is taking them, understand characters’ feelings and actions, and make inferences. The stronger one’s prior knowledge is, the more connections can be made and the easier it is for students to make meaning of the text (Johnston, Pearson, 1982).

One way of developing students’ prior knowledge is through previewing. Previewing material consists of scanning and skimming the text for titles, headings, pictures and captions to give clues as to what the passage is about. By doing this, students are able to get a gist of the main idea and begin to draw on

those experiences and prior knowledge about the topic (Almasi, 2003; Hurst, Wilson, Camp, & Cramer, 2002; Schoenback, Greenleaf, Cziko & Hurwitz, 1999). By previewing the text, one also previews how the text is organized. As Smith (1986) suggests, analyzing the structure of the text gives a basis for comprehension. Making students aware that there are various organizational structures of texts that coincide with the different genres can provide a basis for reading and predicting (Mills, 2010; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000; Smith, 1986).

Developing understanding by tapping into their prior knowledge and by using clues provided through previewing, students can then begin to make meaningful predictions. In making a prediction, students utilize this information to prepare themselves for the events they may encounter as they read. Smith (1986) provides three reasons why predicting is so important to comprehending what is being read. First, fluent readers are always thinking ahead in the book. He makes a comparison to someone driving a car. The driver must be thinking about what could happen in order to be prepared for an unanticipated event. If the driver were focused on what is happening right in front of him and not being alert, it would probably be too late to avoid an accident if something unexpected would occur. Same with reading: if the reader is just worried about the word in front of her, she will have trouble if an obstacle does come up and therefore have difficulty comprehending. The second reason Smith gives for predicting is the

need to limit the amount of ambiguity and confusion that may arise. Hopefully, this will help students to narrow the choices to those that would lead them in the right direction. The final reason for predicting is that predicting, "...reduce[s] uncertainty and therefore reduce[s] the amount of external information we require" (p. 62). Because there are so many things that could happen in a given story, the reader needs to use the clues provided from the story to stay focused. This process of predicting is meant to continue throughout the passage to keep a purpose for reading as well as assist in student engagement (Charmello, 1993; Almasi, 2003).

Smith (1986) says that, "Prediction means asking questions-and comprehension means getting these questions answered" (p.62). As students stop periodically to make predictions and reflect, they ask themselves questions to check their understanding. In order for meaningful questions to be developed, students have to be engaged in the text, which, in turn, assists in comprehension (Williamson, Dunn, Hinshaw, & Nelson, 2008). The more elaborate the questions, the deeper the comprehension of the text (Oster, 2001; Mills, 2009).

Stopping to think about what just happened can be a highly effective way of developing the skills necessary to be a "good" reader. As stated above, as students read they rely on prior knowledge and their predictions to make sense of unfamiliar text. Researchers Correia and Bleicher (2008) suggest that, "Reflection helps students make stronger connections between theoretical

perspectives and practice. We view reflection as a skill that can assist students in making sense of their [learning experience]" (p. 41). There are three types of connections that students can make: 1) text-to-self connection; 2) text-to-text connection; 3) text-to-world connection. Correia and Bleicher (2008) view reflection journals as one avenue through which students can begin to make sense of their [reading]" (Correia & Bleicher, 2008).

Why Thinking-Aloud?

As Davey (1983) suggests, there are five weaknesses prominent among most struggling readers. The common areas that struggling readers fail to utilize while reading are: a) forming a hypothesis or predicting, b) creating mental images, c) activating prior knowledge, d) monitoring comprehension, and e) clarifying confusion. Modeling each of these strategies can help students build an awareness of what it is they are supposed to be doing as they read. To help develop these skills, teachers can implement a think-aloud strategy which can encompass all five of these areas (Davey, 1983).

Thinking-aloud may help students to practice the strategies that Davey identifies as potentially problematic areas for struggling readers. By implementing this process, students begin to make sense of their reading, moving past the simple task of decoding into a highly engaging and structured way of comprehending (Wilhelm, 2001). As students read, the think-aloud process requires them to stop periodically to reflect on their reading and bring their

thoughts to light. It is at this time students may utilize many of the strategies that have been discussed to develop reading comprehension (Baumann, Jones, & Seifert, 1993; Ghaith & Obeid, 2004). Thinking-aloud is a means of teaching students how to read for meaning. After this process has been taught, students may take charge of their own learning as they begin to understand more of what is being read. Hence, thinking-aloud also supports students in their path of becoming independent readers (Wilhelm, 2001).

The implementation of this process can come in many different ways and can be integrated into any existing classroom structure. It is also very easy to incorporate into any book or passage. The most effective way to ensure students grasp the concept of thinking-aloud is to model the process. First, the teacher may explain the concept of thinking aloud to the class, why it is important, and when it is essential to use. Then the teacher can choose a passage that would likely be interesting to the students and read it aloud to the class, while modeling the think-aloud process. While reading, it is important to verbally explain the thinking process by making predictions, asking questions, and clarifying any misconceptions. Many researchers insist that this strategy be modeled numerous times to demonstrate to the students what “good” readers do. Students are then given the opportunity to practice with guidance from the teacher. After the process is learned, students are able to utilize this strategy on their own with the

teacher as merely a facilitator (Baumann, Jones, & Seifert-Kessell, 1993; Davey, 1983; Lipson, 2007; Walker, 2005; Wilhelm, 2001).

In a study of three sixth grade classrooms located within two schools, one serving an upper middle class neighborhood and the other, a lower socioeconomic suburb of the same city, Barbe-Clevett, Hanley, and Sullivan (2002) found an increase in motivation and reading comprehension with the implementation of thinking-aloud. Even though the methods employed by the teachers in each classroom were slightly different, each teacher explicitly modeled the think-aloud process and provided opportunities for the students to apply the strategy to both fiction and non-fictional texts over a period of sixteen weeks. Students reflected on their readings in a variety of ways, including simple codes like a question mark when something is confusing. Students also responded to the text with reading response journals and reflection connection graphic organizers. Each reflection method was taught in seclusion over the first ten weeks of the study. Once the students had been guided through the process by the researchers and worked cooperatively with peers, students were then asked to practice independently. Over a five-week period of time, students practiced this strategy using a variety of texts. The researchers analyzed student responses in their weekly anecdotal records. To assess the growth of the students, fiction and nonfiction posttests and a self-assessment were administered to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. All three classrooms showed an increase in reading comprehension,

and notably, students demonstrated improvement in their ability to recall facts in sequential order and to identify the main idea of the passage (Barbe-Clevett, Hanley, & Sullivan, 2002).

Aside from the perceived benefits that thinking-aloud provides for students, it also has many positive implications for teachers. Thinking-aloud can also be used as an assessment piece for teachers as well. The think-aloud process helps teachers understand when a student's comprehension has fallen off course. It is evident when a student is lacking in prior knowledge, misunderstood information given in the text, or just having difficulty with the text itself (Oster, 2001; Schoenback, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999; Wilhelm, 2001). It shows "...what students do and don't do as they read," allowing for teacher interventions that can target specific problems that arise (Wilhelm, 2001, p. 27).

As an instructional strategy, thinking-aloud challenges students at their respective individual levels, which enables them to develop understanding from the tools they already have, pulling from their prior knowledge base. They anticipate what events may occur next in the passage or text and are able to ask themselves questions to guide in their understanding. When something is unclear, it is then time to ask for help or employ clarification strategies to answer their own questions by re-reading the text or reading on to see if their confusion clears up. It is important to have students write down their thoughts and questions as they implement this strategy so that the class as whole can explore the meaning of

the text. As students become more comfortable with thinking-aloud, new opportunities for discussion and collaboration among students in the class are made available. At the end of instruction, it is the goal of thinking-aloud to provide a means of inquiry for students to follow, allowing them to actively read independently (Baker & Brown, 1980; Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, & Joshi, 2007; McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007; Oster, 2001; Yang, 2006).

Thinking-aloud is a combination of strategies that allow students to articulate their thoughts as they read a passage (North Central Regional Research Educational Laboratory, 2002). As Mills (2009) says, “Teachers need to rediscover the transforming potential of talk for developing students’ reading comprehension” (p. 327-8). These strategies (previewing, predicting, questioning, making connections, and clarifying) that are modeled through the think-aloud process have been known to be engaging and effective ways of allowing students to process texts in a way that relates to the knowledge they bring to the classroom (Mills, 2009). Thinking-aloud teaches students how to approach a text, stay engaged while reading and identify when misunderstandings arise. These are all traits of what proficient readers do, which helps in improving reading comprehension (Bauman, Jones, & Seifert-Kessell, 1993; Davey, 1983; Ghaith & Obeid, 2004; Hurst, Wilson, Camp, & Cramer, 2002; Lipson, 2007; McKeown, 2007; Mills, 2009).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study took place in an eighth grade learning support classroom. At the time of the study there were eight students enrolled in my classroom all of whom participated in the study. Every student has been diagnosed with a reading disability in addition to other learning disabilities and health issues. Five out of the eight students were classified as English Language Learners and are learning English as a second language. This indicates that they are learning the English language as a second language. All but one speaks English fluently.

The school is located in a small urban community with approximately six hundred students, 67% of Hispanic origin, 16% White and 15% Black. The reading class chosen for the study ran for two consecutive periods, ninety minutes total, in which we implemented the Read180 program. This intervention program employed three stations; a small teacher lead group, an independent reading station, and a computer station utilizing Read180 software. I was required to continue working through the Read180 classroom structure, therefore the small teacher-led group and the independent reading groups were utilized for the teaching of a novel.

Data Gathering Methods

Over the course of the study, different forms of data were collected to ensure my conclusions were accurate and meaningful. These forms of data provided a variety of work samples to review and guide my instruction to meet

the needs of my students. Some of these included surveys, observations or field notes, journals, and student work samples. From this, I was able to provide the best means of instruction and identify areas that were troublesome.

Surveys/Questionnaires

The first method used was student surveys. Prior to beginning the study, the students were given a multiple choice Reading Strategy Survey (Appendix A). It involved five different questions with four responses to choose from. The students were able to identify which type of reader best described them. From this, I was able to determine that most students used no strategies at all. They would often skip over parts they found to be difficult or just continue reading without clarification. This assured me that I was about to implement something that would benefit the students and provide them with that experience I so wanted to create.

Throughout the study, I would survey the class informally in small group discussions to inquire about their thoughts and opinions. This helped identify students who were having difficulty with the think-aloud process. It also gave the students the opportunity to voice any suggestions that could guide my instruction. While working in these small groups, I had the opportunity to clarify any student misconceptions. In addition to these information surveys, two formal surveys were given at the end of the study. One was an opened-ended questionnaire (Appendix B) and the second a “Checklist to Rate Your Reading

Strategy Use”, by Scholastic Reaching Resources (Appendix C). The checklist listed strategies that the students could utilize before reading, during reading, and after reading, most of which included think-aloud strategies that we reviewed throughout the study. I felt it was important to use both the checklist and an opened-ended response because the checklist really narrowed down specific strategies that the students would not be able to articulate, whereas the open-ended questions allowed my students to respond to what their individual thoughts and feelings were about the study. This I found to be much more useful in confirming my ideas about what the class was thinking.

Field Notes

The second method of collecting data was field notes. I utilized a double-entry journal or a reflective memo for my study. These included my detailed observations on the left and my reflections and insights into the lesson on the right. By doing this, I was able to focus my attention on one task at a time. From this data, I gained valuable information into some patterns and reading behaviors that began to emerge. In the beginning of the study, I found some students were very frustrated and confused and relied solely on me to guide their thinking. This was something that I expected, but hoped to direct them into independence over the course of the study. These field notes were my lifeline to my students’ progress, thoughts and frustrations. From this, I was able to guide my teaching

and their learning towards my goals of creating independent and thoughtful readers.

Journals

There were two types of journals that were taught and utilized throughout the study. One, a double-entry journal (Appendix D) that was used as a way to record their predictions, questions, and connections as they read. This journal was a very useful way of getting into the minds of my students. It provided insight into which students needed redirection and/or more instruction on certain think-aloud strategies. In the beginning of the study, I would give the students guidelines as to what I expected them to write, for example they must have one prediction, one question and one connection. As the study progressed, this was unnecessary because they would utilize all three think-aloud strategies taught without direction. Some felt more comfortable making connection, while others utilized all strategies effectively. Regardless, they were thinking-aloud and that was my goal.

The second type of journal was a literature response journal. I would give the class a choice between a few thought-provoking questions designed to incorporate at least one of the think-aloud skills that we had been working on: predicting, questioning or making connections. They used their knowledge from the text to develop a well thought out answer. From these data I would not only see how their comprehension was progressing, but also I was able to determine

which strategies each student felt more comfortable with and what background knowledge each was coming to the table with.

Student Work Samples

Considering that two types of journals were used, those products and performance samples were also used to assess how the students were using the strategies introduced. I collected samples of student artifacts as they pertained to reading comprehension and the thinking-aloud processes. Specifically, I collected the double-entry journals and the journal responses. From these, I was able to ensure students were utilizing thinking-aloud process appropriately. I was also looking for what types of connections were being made and whether their predictions and questions were aligned with the text. I also assessed their comprehension at the beginning and at the end of the study through the Scholastic Reading Inventory. From all of these data, I was hopeful that I would see improvements in student comprehension and increase in frequency of students making these notes as they read. This, along with the other forms of data collected, would be pertinent in telling me whether thinking-aloud has in fact been successful in improving student reading comprehension.

Trustworthiness Statement

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of the think-aloud process in the hopes of providing the best instruction to improve reading comprehension and develop engaged independent readers. The intervention

implemented in the study was not intended to prove that any one strategy was more effective than another, but only to analyze the effectiveness of the think-aloud process with my students when they read the same work of fiction being read by their 8th grade peers. Prior to the implementation of the study, I obtained permission to conduct this study from my college, administrator (Appendix E) and the parents of the students who served as study participants (Appendix F). The participant consent form explained what thinking-aloud is, as well as the purpose for implementing this process. The letter also explained to the parents their right to withdraw their child at any point without penalty. To establish true confidentiality, I used pseudonyms in the place of my students' real names so their identities would remain anonymous.

In ensuring my findings were objective and trustworthy, I followed the advice of Hendricks (2009). According to Hendricks, there are many strategies that can be utilized throughout the study to limit biases and accuracy within the data. I implemented the following guidelines within my study:

“Utilizing peer debriefing, engaging in persistent and prolonged observations, be sure to record data accurately, use member checks, provide thick description of the setting and study, employ techniques in negative case analysis, make clear any researcher bias, make available an

audit trail, present result to key audiences, engage in continuous, and ongoing reflective planning” (p. 114-116).

In addition to these, another means of drawing accurate conclusions is the use of triangulation. Hendricks defines this as “a process in which multiple forms of data are collected and analyzed” (p. 80). Essentially, I checked findings with all other forms of data collection methods to determine if the findings were consistent.

RESEARCHER'S STORY

As the first day of school approached, the unavoidable butterflies in the stomach had set in. What classes would I be teaching? What would my students be like? From what I heard, they weren't very cooperative last year. This made me very apprehensive of how they would respond to my classroom and my study. When I received my class list, I was pleasantly surprised to see only eight students listed. I knew it was a small group. I wasn't sure how to feel about the low number of students in the class that I would be implementing my study. I was somewhat excited because low numbers meant I would really be able to spend a great deal of time working with students on a more individual basis. However, I was nervous that I wouldn't have enough data or student input to really determine whether this study is effective. I tried to put the apprehension aside and focus on the preparing for my students to come. I got out my procedures, rules and expectations for the classroom and began planning for the year to come.

For the first few weeks of school, the students became unequivocally aware of what their jobs were. I have learned over the course of the past eight years of teaching learning support that little learning takes place in a classroom where the rules and procedures are not followed. We got our routines down and our classroom management up and running. The eight charming students seemed ready and eager to learn. I was excited to begin.

Introduction

It was time to introduce my study. The class was running smoothly and our first novel of the year was soon approaching. This novel would be the basis of my study. But, before we began reading I wanted to teach the various strategies associated with thinking-aloud. I handed out a KWL chart, which stands for “what we know,” “what we want to know” and “what we learned,” from this graphic organizer, I hoped to assess their knowledge about thinking-aloud. I asked the class, “Who has ever heard of thinking-aloud or what some teachers call, talking to the text?” Most of their hands shot up in the air, I thought, “This might be easier than I imagined.” I asked the class to write down anything they knew or had heard about the topic of thinking-aloud. As I walked around the room to monitor their progress, I noticed that not one student had anything on his or her paper. Was I mistaken or didn’t they say they knew what I was talking about? Well, one hand shot up, “I got one!” Amanda yelled out, “Make a Prediction.” So I began to discuss what Amanda had just said, “As you read, you make predictions. What else do you do as you read?” I continued. Still, no one had a clue. I continued to try to scaffold the discussion and develop any reading strategies they might be familiar, with no avail. It was unequivocally evident that this lesson was going nowhere fast. So, to close out the lesson, I lead a discussion about my study and the various strategies that they would be learning over the course of the next few months. They seemed eager to learn something

that could help them become better readers, so I was quickly reassured that we would get on the right track.

In light of this non-informative pre-assessment, I decided that I was going to approach thinking-aloud slightly differently. I thought about asking what they knew about each strategy individually (previewing the text, predicting, making connections, questioning, and clarifying). It was really important to me to find out what they knew prior to implementing the study. First, so we didn't waste time reviewing concepts that were already part of their knowledge base. Also, I wanted to know which areas of the think-aloud process needed to be taught the most. In order to find this out, I wrote each of the above reading strategies on a large piece of paper and hung them around the room. The students were to walk around the room and write down their ideas, definitions or anything they had heard about each topic. I read each of them aloud to the class and explained what they were supposed to do. Then, I handed out different colored markers to each student; I could see the excitement on their faces. I thought, "Here we go." They were absolutely silent, some walking with friends, but not saying a word. They continued to walk from sheet to sheet until their ideas ran dry. I was pleasantly surprised with the results. Table 4.1 details the students' prior knowledge of the first tree categories.

<i>Previewing the text</i>	<i>Predicting</i>	<i>Questioning</i>
<p>Anthony – checking out the pictures</p> <p>Nicole – Reading the story from the back</p> <p>Beth – Viewing the cover and reading the title</p> <p>Tammy – read the title and think what will happen</p> <p>Kathy – reading the back of the book</p>	<p>Amanda – Brainstorming</p> <p>Anthony – Look at pictures to predict</p> <p>Beth – Asking yourself what is going to happen</p> <p>Tammy – Talking to your about what you read</p> <p>Pat – Thinking about what you think will happen before it does</p>	<p>Michael – What is the setting, theme, plot characters</p> <p>Pat – ask questions about the story for you know whats going on in the book</p> <p>Kathy – asking yourself now what your read falls into place</p> <p>Tammy – at the end of the chapter or questions</p> <p>Beth – how it happen? or making a guess</p>

Table 4.1 – Student’s prior knowledge

In reviewing the student’s prior knowledge (Table 4.1), it was evident that all of the students who commented on previewing were spot on in their description. This looked like something I could assume they knew and not waste time reviewing. As far as predicting was concerned, it looked like they had an idea of what predicting was but some of the comments were a little off. This is an area that we were going to need to review as a class. Students’ ideas on questioning were to be expected. Most assumed that questioning referred to comprehension questions a teacher would ask a student to answer after reading an

assignment. This is another area that I would have to briefly review. Table 4.2 shows the students' prior knowledge of the remaining two strategies.

<i>Making Connections</i>	<i>Clarifying</i>
<p>Kathy – Read reading the book and passage</p> <p>Anthony – Under line important parts</p> <p>Michael – Margin Notes</p> <p>Amanda – Context Clues</p> <p>Beth – Reread what you read</p> <p>Tammy – Making webs or diagrams</p>	<p>Anthony – Make sure you know it is about and reread</p> <p>Pat – Make sure you know hat the story or whatever it is is about.</p> <p>Kathy – Reread and make sure you understand what it's telling you</p> <p>Nicole – Making sure and go back to the book and read</p> <p>Amanda – go back in story to udnersand</p>

Table 4.2 – Student's prior knowledge continued

As Table 4.2 outlines, making connections is another strategy that we would have to spend some time reviewing. No one really had an idea of what to make of connections. However, clarifying seemed to be something that everyone had a clear picture of. Because previewing and clarifying were pretty well known, we would informally discuss these throughout the study, but not in detail. Armed with the knowledge of what they knew about each strategy, I thought it was really important for my students to be explicitly instructed on the strategies that were unclear.

First, I began to focus on predicting. I thought this would be the easiest to address based on the pre-assessment, mainly because they seemed to have a grasp of what predicting was about. So, to introduce it, we watched a National Geographic video on how cats always land on their feet. Prior to watching the video I turned off the sound. The students' job was to predict what they thought was going on as the video progressed. I ran the video for a few moments, then stopped, repeated the direction and gave them time to write down their predictions. We continued with this process until the video was over. As I monitored their progress, it was evident that some were just writing down things they had just seen, rather than actual predictions. For example, Anthony wrote down, "Litters of kittens.", "A cat going to be treated by a fet [vet]," both of which were the last scenes shown prior to my stopping the video. Surprisingly, all but one student did the same thing. Predicting ended up to be something that we really needed to spend more time on. It seemed as though they had a really hard time anticipating what could be ahead of them in a story line. This was something that concerned me as we progressed into the actual reading.

The next day, the students came in as enthusiastic as the last, but were slightly disappointed when I informed them we were going to read instead of watching a video clip. As the students approached my small group table, they were to make a prediction based on what we read in a whole group setting. It was easier to monitor progress in small groups to clarify mistakes individually. We

went around the group to share. Still, some of the students were stating facts and information that had already been stated or was in the picture. For example, Anthony wrote, “A kid had snakes up to his ankles,” which was a picture at the top of the page and was not supported by anything in the text. I thought this would be a simple task. At the end of the session, we discussed what an actual prediction is and the difference between what their responses were. I modeled some of my predictions for them, and they seemed to understand the difference between an incorrect prediction and a correct one.

We practiced predicting with a few more lessons, but it was now time to begin reading the novel. Because predicting had taken such a long time to master, I would have to instruct each of the other strategies as we read the novel. It was a very high interest novel called *Okay for Now* by Gary D. Schmidt, so I was really excited to start. I began by handing out the books, and by the faces around the room I could tell they didn’t seem to share in my excitement. They flipped through the pages, all 360 of them, with groans and asked, “We have to read all of this?” I assured the class that not only would they be reading all of it, but they will enjoy it and understand it. They seemed up for the challenge.

Because predicting had taken longer than anticipated, I decided to save time by discussing questioning and making connections together. I handed everyone a double-entry journal (Appendix D). I explained the format of the graphic organizer. On one side there was a column that read “Idea from Text”

and on the other “Reaction/Connection”. I told them how we would be putting our predictions, questions and connections on the right side, and what idea from the text lead us to that idea on the left. I began modeling it for them while introducing questioning and connections. I began reading the first chapter to the class. I stopped abruptly and began to model the think-aloud process of questioning and making connections.

Mrs. D’Angelo: When you ask questions while reading, you are thinking about things you want to know. For example, I know that Doug lost a hat that was given to him by Joe Pepitone. I wonder if he will find the person that has it.

As I modeled the think-aloud process, I also wrote it on the board (Table 4.3). I began reading again from the book and quickly stopped to model making connections:

Mrs. D’Angelo: Making a connection is when you relate to something in the book. It could be to something similar that has happened to you or it makes you remember something else that has happened in a book or the world.

Ideas from the text	Reaction/Connections
- Doug was given a hat by Joe Pepitone and his brother stole it.	-Will he get his hat back? He seems to really like it. (question)
- Doug tried to talk to his father about the hat.	- I remember when my dad wouldn’t listen to me. (connection)

Table 4.3 – Introduction to questioning and making connections

I continued reading a little bit more and then wanted to address the classes' ideas of some questions and connections. We had a short discussion and they really understood. "This is easy", I heard someone say. So, I told them they were going to be responsible for thinking-aloud as they read and using the three strategies, predicting, questioning, and making connections. The double-entry journal was where they were going to put all of their ideas as they read. They had everything they needed to get started.

First Synopsis

In the book, *Okay for Now* by Gary D. Schmidt, Doug was young boy who faces many challenges each and every day. His mom was very loving, but his dad was a raging alcoholic who beats Doug on a regular basis. Doug's dad shows no affection for anyone, even his mom who was constantly abused by him. The story of Doug begins on his journey to a new town, with new friends. His hard personality and angry soul goes through an enormity of changes throughout the novel. The novel begins with this harsh reality for Doug, as his dad came home from work and informs the family he had gotten fired. They were moving, so pack up NOW! On the way out the door to a new life, one of Doug's friends gave him a really special gift, a signed jacket from Joe Pepitone. Even in the middle of summer, Doug, a die-heart Yankees fan, never took off that Jacket.

Doug got to his new town of Marysville, NY and to the house he would call home or "The Dump." His mom told him to go explore while she cleaned the

house. On his explorations he met a girl named Lil Spicer. She was very hesitant in even talking to Doug because of his really bad attitude, and viewed him as a “thug.” This reputation followed him throughout many aspects of his life. Coincidentally, Lil led him right to the library, a place he had never stepped foot in. He went in to check it out. He continued to go there on a regular basis, but was really unsure why. He never opened a book, just wondered looking at one specific case. This case contained the work of John James Audubon, which we will learn about in a little while.

One day, while waiting for the library to open, Lil showed up. She gave him a Coke and offered him a job delivering groceries for her dad’s deli. He quickly agreed. He was responsible for delivering ice cream and other groceries to people in the neighborhood. The first few days were pretty rough, mainly because he wasn’t very familiar with the neighborhood, but he managed and met many interesting people along the way. He doesn’t know it yet, but some of these characters will play a large part in his transformation throughout the novel.

My Student Responses

Already, many of my students could easily relate to moving to a new place, not knowing anyone, and to the family dynamics that make up Doug’s family. Here are some of their responses on their double entry journals:

Michael wrote, *“When I was leaving from Puerto Rico to Pennsylvania he gave me a Jersey from my cousins baseball team.”*

Amanda wrote, *“I made a connection because I explore Pitsburg when I was visit my sister.”*

Beth wrote, *“This reminds me of when I moved to Allentown and I got a job as a babysitter it was weird. I know how it feels to get a job all of a sudden.”*

Pat made a really good prediction and thought that, *“Doug will save up his money and go to the Yankee’s Stadium and talk to Joe Pepitone.”*

I thought this was really insightful. She had to think past the obvious and anticipate a very future event.

Pat also connected to the idea of being at a library, *“I also remember wateing at the library and it was closed. I was their because I needed to get a summer reading book.”*

Kathy questions, *“Why she is being nice to Doug and she doesn’t even know him?”* Kathy also is reminded of when she, *“...met my friend at the school.”*

Everyone really got off to a good start. I was impressed with the differences in their responses. A few students stated the obvious and really didn’t expand on the ideas from the text. For example Anthony said, *“They are friends she got him a Coke,”* which is neither a prediction nor a connection. He seems to be having the most trouble grasping these concepts. I realized I would have to continue working on the idea of anticipating what the characters were going to do, as well as thinking about how this related to the student’s world. To do this in a

more structured format, I gave the students a question to think about, or what I call a literature response. This scaffolding activity was to guide their thought process to making connections and/or predictions. The following figures (Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2) are two examples of the first literature response activity. There were two different questions, one that guided the students to predict and the other to make a connection.

Journal #1 – Choose one of the following questions:

-What is going on in Doug's family? How would you describe Doug's family relationships? Predict what might happen in Doug's family.

-Have you ever moved or changed schools? Compare and contrast your experience with what Doug is going through.

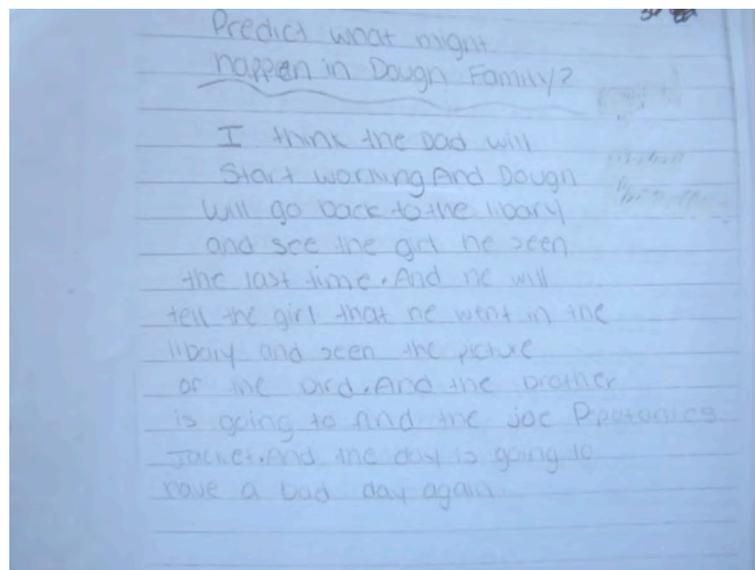


Figure 4.1 – Pat's literature response

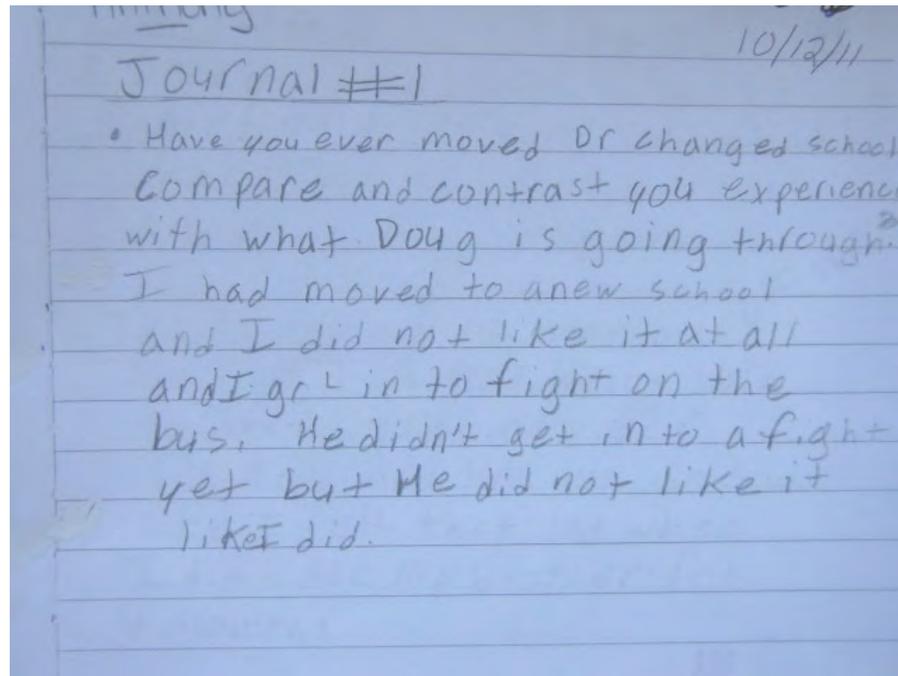


Figure 4.2 – Anthony's literature response

Second Synopsis

During one of Doug's first visits to the library, he came across a very large case on the top floor of the library. It was a drawing of a bird. It was the work of a famous artist by the name of John James Audubon. He was so moved by this painting. He came to visit it every moment he could. At first, he would just stare at it, and then he began tracing it with his fingers. The movement of the bird in the drawing mesmerized him. One of the librarians noticed Doug's interest and reached out to him. He offered to teach Doug how to draw. After much hesitation, Doug agreed to work with Mr. Powell. He learned the techniques and basics of drawing and practiced using this particular collection. This was the

beginning of a new and inspirational relationship. It seemed as though Doug's life was beginning to look up...for now.

In other aspects of his life, Doug was really proving to Mr. Spicer, his boss, that he could handle the job and the people on his delivery route. The people of this small town were beginning to look past their first impressions of him being a "thug" and starting to trust him. One of the women Doug delivers to, Mrs. Windermere, who was a playwright, would let him come in for ice cream on hot days. Relationships were building with each of his customers and Doug was beginning to feel for the first time in his life that people trusted him. This is when his perspectives on life began to alter...for now.

My Student Responses

As we wrote down our thoughts for this section Michael says, "Hey Miss, you know what my prediction is?"

I replied, "What is it?"

"I think she [Mrs. Windermere} will be with Joe Pepitone at the end," Michael shared.

I don't know how he would have put that together; there were no clues to indicate that in the story. Instead of thinking negatively, I needed to remind myself that he was thinking about the characters and anticipating future roles they may have. Even though the prediction could use some work, I was happy that he

was excited and willing to share his ideas with the class. So, I encouraged his ideas and continued to praise him for the effort.

At the end of class, another one of my students had a very insightful response to this section. Anthony explained to the class, “It’s *Okay for Now*, but something is going to happen. The title is, “Okay for Now”. It’s ok because he is talking to his dad and brother right now, but something is going to happen and it won’t be “Okay.” What a connection to make, especially for him. This was something I hadn’t thought about, but he really noticed that when things seem to be working out for Doug, something bad always happens to. Anthony was able to connect this pattern of events to the title. I was really excited that he could put all of that together without any direction; I was speechless.

Third Synopsis

It was now time for Doug to start school. The people of Marysville always looked at him differently and it was no different on the first day of school. All of the ninth graders had to report to the auditorium for orientation. The principal was reviewing rules and expectations. He asked for volunteers to read the rules and Doug was asked to read. However, Doug had other plans. He made a huge scene in front of the entire ninth grade class. Everyone burst out laughing and Doug stormed out. During the next few weeks of school, Doug continued to act out, which gave his teachers and classmates the impression he was no more than a class clown and “thug”. He began getting into fights with anyone who

looked at him the wrong way and found himself visiting the principal's office quite frequently. One day during one of his detentions, his science teacher asked Doug to work on his periodic table. While reviewing some of the symbols, his teacher began to notice something; Doug was unable to give the names of the element. "And that was how Mr. Ferris figured out what no teacher had figured out before. Terrific." (Schmidt, 2011, p. 126). This could explain why Doug has been acting out in most of his classes and doesn't know what is going on.

My Student Responses

The class was completing their double-entry journal independently. It was really unfortunate that none of the students caught on to the fact that he couldn't read. I waited to bring it up to see if anyone would make a note of it in his or her double-entry journals. As I read through the classes' journals, these were some of the notes that demonstrated how the students were utilizing the think-aloud process with some success.

Michael: *"My prediction is that Lil might be in the same school as Doug and also the kids might bully him."*

Beth: *"When the first day of school the teacher expland [explained] you can go the bathroom only once in the period."*

Pat: *"I think that Doug will start to like drawling and keep doing and when he starts school he will draw even more." "I don't think Doug will like school at all because of all of the rules they have."*

I was starting to notice how Pat's journals were really sticking out amongst the rest of the class. She was expressing an abundance of ideas for one section and has told me on numerous occasions how she really likes working with the double-entry journals (Figure 4.3). She has always been one of my higher readers, and I think that this is really beginning to get her to the next level.

Idea from Text	Reaction/Connection
<p>Mrs. Merriam called Mr. Powell to go help with the kids. And ended all of the fun Dough was having learning how to draw.</p> <p>They had rules in his school like lunch time and combination rules. And how many times your allowed to go to the bathroom. And dress codes.</p>	<p>Connection - when Dough was learning how to draw by Mr. Powell and Mrs. Merriam ruined all the fun that were having that happened to one time when I was out side and my mom told me to come in.</p> <p>Question - How will Dough draw the old without Mr. Powell?</p>
<p>Dough also seems not interested in school the way he described it. And how he told his mom he wanted to leave but she decided they should stay.</p>	<p>Inference - Mrs. Merriam doesn't like Dough so that's why she called Mr. Powell.</p> <p>Reaction - Dough will draw by himself and be good at it.</p>
<p>Dough was acting silly in class and the prinssiore said he had to cut his hair and tuck his shirt in.</p>	<p>Question - How will Dough's drawing get better or worse or will he give up and stop drawing. Or will he keep doing and start to show his mom and dad his painting or maybe even if he might show it to.</p>
<p>Dough waited in front of the Auditorium for his mom to come since he didn't want to go back to class maybe because he was embarrassed.</p>	<p>Reaction - I think that Dough will start to like drawing and keep doing and when he starts school he will draw even more.</p> <p>Prediction I don't think Dough will like this school at all because of all the rules they all have.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">www.ReadWriteThink.org All rights reserved. ReadWriteThink.org materials may be reproduced for educational purposes.</p>	

Figure 4.3 – Pat's double-entry journal

I reviewed all of their responses and was so surprised that none of my students commented on his inability to read. I was really hoping this would develop a good class discussion on their difficulties with reading. We went back and reviewed that section to clarify the section, and still no one connected.

However, I did think it was pretty funny that the class was more concerned with a rule about the use of the bathroom rather than this important discovery.

The big picture

Considering our journals have been progressing and improving and we are finally making accurate predictions, questions and connections, I thought it was a good time to assess whether they would still be able to articulate what they were doing when making predictions, asking questions, and making connections. I asked the class, “What have we been doing over the past month of school in regards to this study? What strategies have we been using and why?” I went around the room and the six students that were present that day. Their responses are recorded in Table 4.4.

- Michael – Making Connections
- Beth – Read again if it doesn’t make sense
- Pat – Predict – use clues
- Amanda – Summarize after each paragraph
- Tammy – Think what is going to happen next
- Anthony – Talk to the text

Table 4.4 – Student responses

After we brainstormed some ideas, we discussed how these things relate to what it is we are trying to do, become better readers. The students felt like it was helping them understand what they were reading and clarifying some of things they would get confused on, especially when they were able to talk it over with a classmate. Overall, the class expressed how they are enjoying reading this book. I felt this was truly beneficial to the students. We get frustrated from time to time having to go over things multiple times, however it was good to make the connection of what we are doing in class to how it benefits their reading progress. This discussion really reminded me of the importance of taking the time to keep reviewing concepts and their importance in my classroom. After reminding them of why we are doing this, I felt such a motivation of spirits within the classroom. I often forget the internal drive that my students do have to learn and this was a pivotal reminder of that.

Working Together

It has been a wonderful experience to watch my students as they read and engaged in a novel while using the strategies that have been taught to them through this study. I began thinking about how we could engage the student in more classroom discussions. I wanted them to be able to discuss their ideas with their classmates and delve deeper into the novel without the constant guidance of the teacher. I decided to have the class work in small groups. They would still

utilize the double-entry journal at this point, but discuss their ideas as a group. I thought this would also help the lower readers develop critical thinking skills.

I began the class by instructing the students to each read independently a specific section of the book. As I noticed my faster readers getting towards the end, I went over to review what ideas or conclusions they had come to. At that time, I asked those students to move with a partner to finish reading and share ideas with one another. They were able to choose which classmate they wanted to work with. I waited a little while longer before heading over to each group. That day we only had six students in the class, which made it very easy to go around and hear what was going on from group to group. I began asking some to explain the sections that lead to the connections they were making. It worked out perfectly! Some of their understanding was incorrect and this gave me the opportunity to clarify the misunderstandings. I heard Anthony saying, “Well, I think he turning into the one with the big beak.” Anthony was using symbolism again to describe the birds in the drawings to Doug’s character. They read on a little and Michael reminded Anthony, “Remember last time he drew on the floor and hid it from his brother? It is probably done, I think he will give it to Mr. Powell.” The students are truly showing me some authentic engagement and cooperative grouping. I was impressed with how on-task the entire class was. This continued for the remainder of the section and when they were finished I pulled the class together for a closing discussion. I asked the class if they enjoyed

talking about their ideas with one another rather than writing it all down. I also asked if they thought it helped understand what they were reading better.

Unanimously the class said, “Yes!”

Moving past journals

I began to get the feeling that the double-entry journals were beginning to become a bit monotonous and I wanted to move them past the typical worksheet. I thought of sticky notes, the next best thing to actually taking margin notes within the text. Each student was given some post-it notes to document their thoughts while thinking-aloud. Instead of writing their ideas on the journal, they were to stick a post-it note in the book where that idea originated. We read a section together as a class. I stopped to have the students respond and walked around to make sure we understood the concept. At first, they looked a bit confused and some even annoyed. I kept repeating the directions and had to tell them that they must use all of their post-it notes. I continued to read the remaining chapter to the class, stopping periodically so the students were able to concentrate and continue to think-aloud. I was pleasantly surprised when a few students began to call out:

Beth yelled out, *“I made a connection. Hey Kathy, did you connect when he kissed her?”* The students began laughing thinking it was cute. There must be some story behind that one.

Pat asked, “Mrs. D’Angelo do have another sticky note? I have a question that I want to ask?” Exactly what I wanted to see!

Kathy commented, “ Miss, I think I have more connections than everything else. Ok, now I’m done, well wait can I write down a question that I actually think for the next chapter? I put four stars next to it because I really want to find out if this happens!”.

We continued to do this throughout the chapter. At the end, the students were to go back to categorize their thoughts on a large piece of paper according to their predictions, questions, or connections. First, I wanted them to reflect on their thinking process by reviewing their responses, and secondly I wanted to be able to review their work without collecting all of the books. Figures 4.4 – 4.8 reference some of the students’ think-aloud responses.

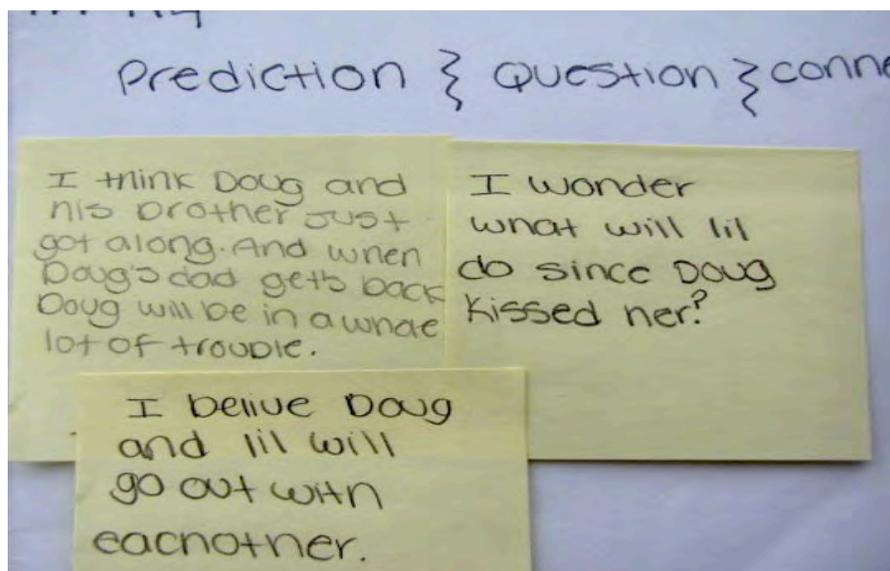


Figure 4.4 – Pat’s post-it notes

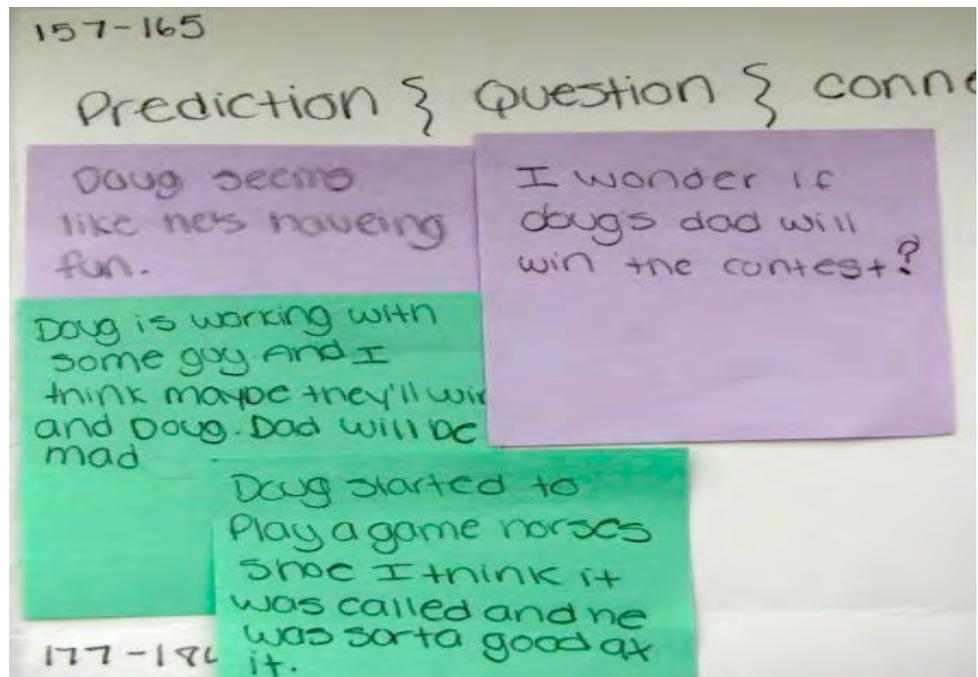


Figure 4.5 – Pat's post-it notes

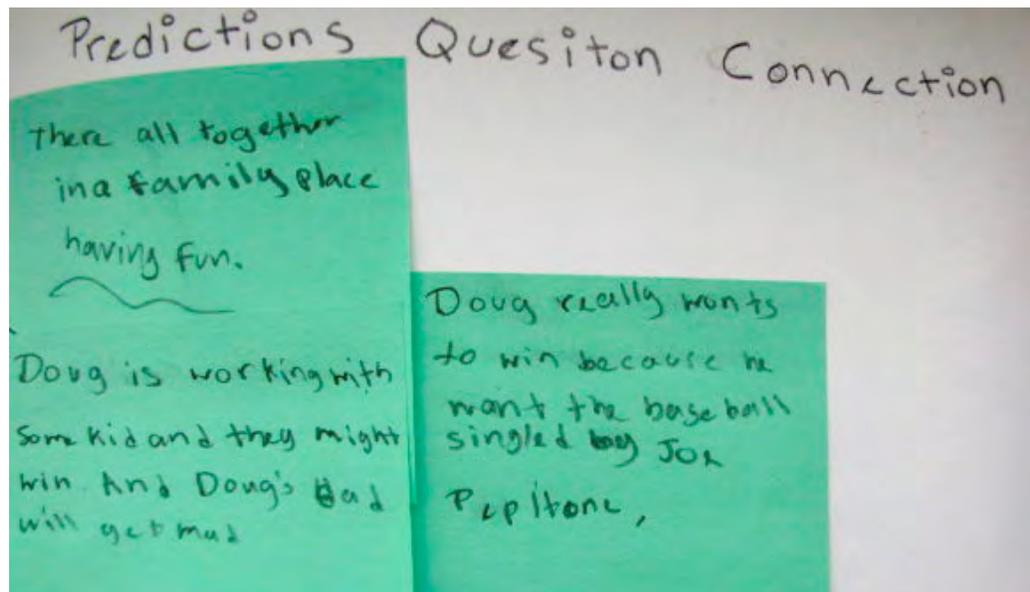


Figure 4.6 – Beth's post-it notes

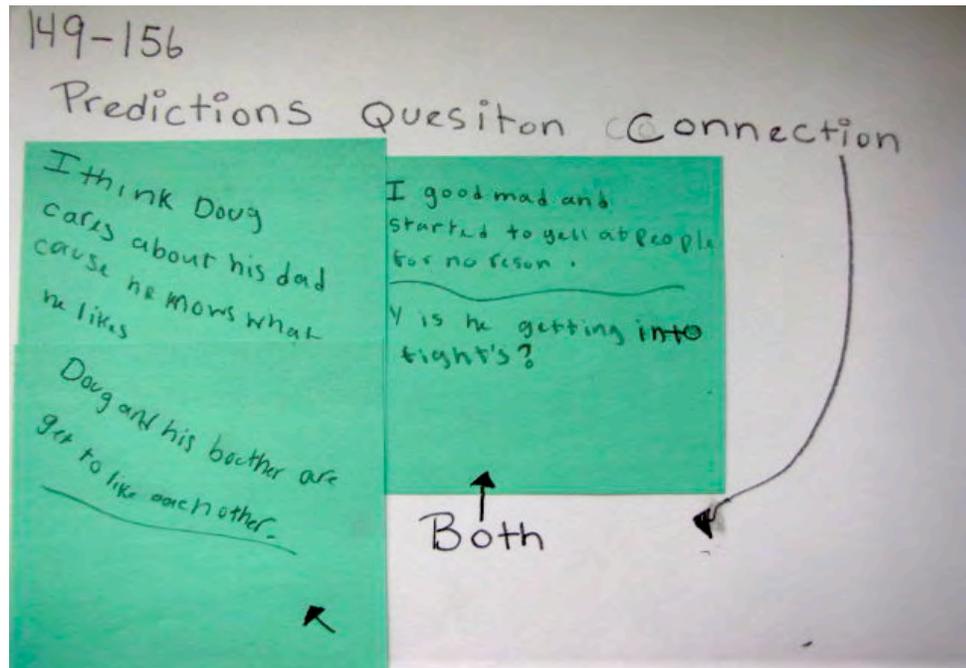


Figure 4.7 – Beth's post-it notes

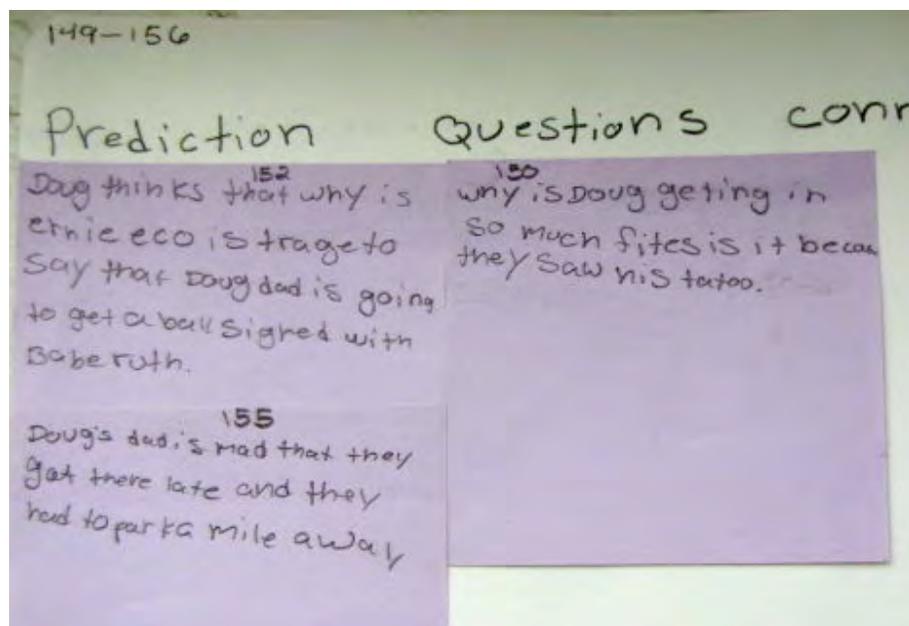


Figure 4.8 – Tammy's post-it notes

From this activity (Figures 4.4 – 4.8), it was clear that the students were utilizing the strategies that we had been working on throughout the study. They were able to identify which strategy they were using. As we continued to read the rest of the book, the students continued to utilize thinking-aloud, but I gave them a choice on how they wanted to document their ideas. All but two always chose the double-entry journal, which I thought was interesting. I was sure they would want to use the sticky notes, but no one did.

End of Study

I began a discussion with the class about thinking-aloud, providing a closing discussion to the study. I asked the students what they thought about the process they had been practicing.

Beth raised her hand and said, *“Asking questions, I didn’t do that at first, but now I do.”*

People were hesitant to answer so I asked, “What helped the most or what didn’t”

Anthony answered, *“Talking about it did.”* This really coincides with his opinion about the double-entry journal, it taught me that he learns better interpersonally rather than intrapersonally.

Michael agreed, *“It’s better when you talk and listen to what other people have to say. Not writing it down.”*

Kathy continued, *“The groups helped a lot.”*

Amanda came up with an interesting question that was slightly off-topic, “*What’s the point of reading?*” I continued to explain to her the multitude of things we read everyday, but was not satisfied. It seemed as though she was not in a good mood that day.

In my field log that day, I wrote: *Overall it was a good discussion on their thoughts about-thinking aloud. One unexpected surprise was the whole concept of grouping that came out of this study. All of the students really enjoyed working in groups while reading. They thought combining all of their knowledge was useful in developing a deeper understanding of the text. This was not one of my goals at the beginning of the study, but I was pleasantly surprised with the positive feedback from the class.*

After the discussion, I asked the class to fill out two surveys in regards to thinking aloud and what things they do as they read independently. The first one was the “Think-aloud survey” which was a series of open-ended questions vaguely asking what they thought of thinking-aloud. Some of their responses are shown in Figure 4.9.

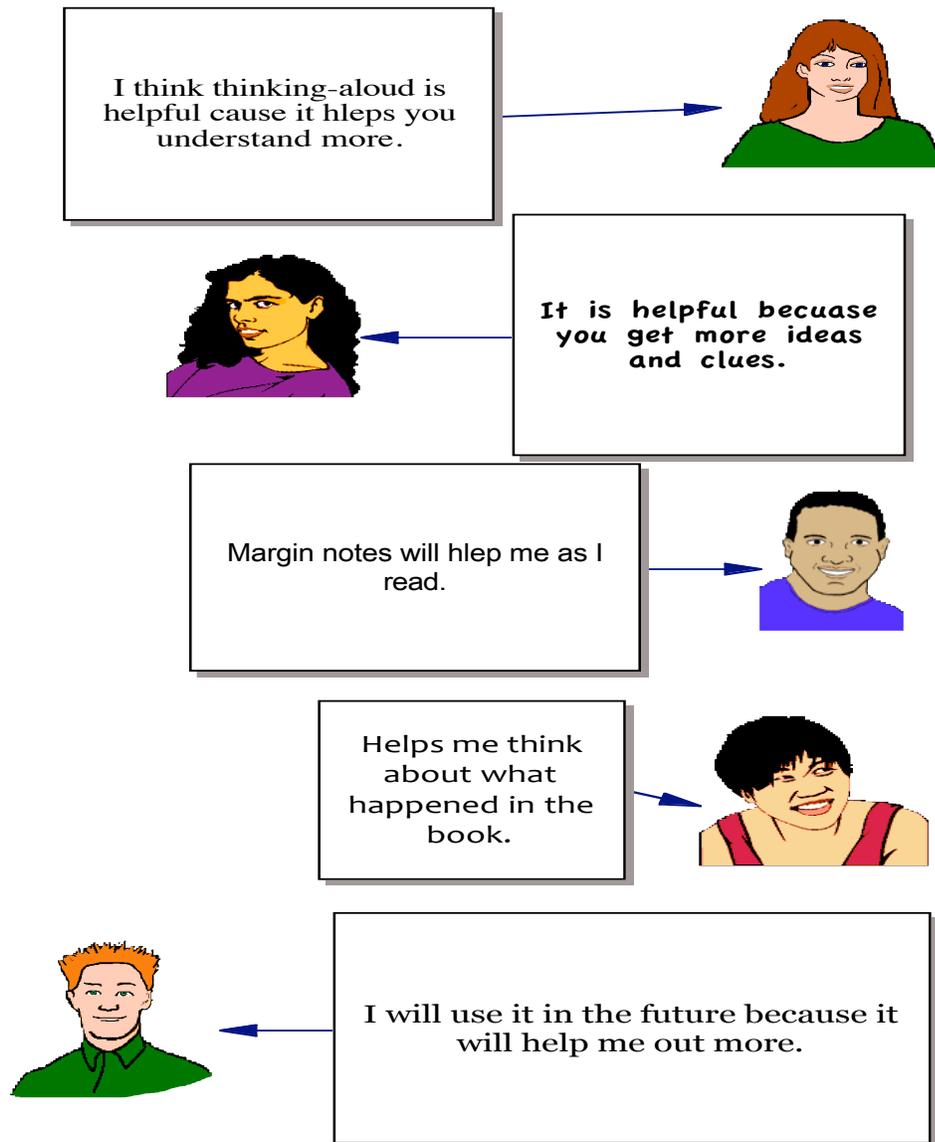


Figure 4.9 – Think-aloud survey comments

Conclusion

This whole process has taught me so much about my students and their needs. I began this journey focused on how I was going to get my students' scores in reading comprehension up. Watching the enthusiasm in their work and discussions with their peers and myself, I quickly realized that the engagement and overall experience my students had with a text, was much more important than any test score. They were coming in begging to read for an entire two periods and sneaking off to read when I told them it had to wait till tomorrow. On top of what my students had gotten out of the study, they have shown me the importance of communicating what it is we are doing in class and why it is important. I have also been able to see that group work doesn't have to be so scary. Authentic and meaningful work can be accomplished when students are given the opportunity to work together. The think-aloud process provided the students with guidelines of discussion for their groups. They were enthusiastic about discussing their ideas with their peers. I felt the process of thinking-aloud really took a lot of the teaching out of my hands and delegated that responsibility back to the students, where it should be.

DATA ANALYSIS

Throughout the study, various forms of data were collected as previously described. I applied multiple means of analyzing data to interpret the data as a whole. According to Ely, et al. (1997):

...interpretation means drawing meanings from the analyzed data and attempting to see these in some larger context. Interpretations arise when patterns, themes, and issues are discerned in the data and when the findings are seen in relation to one another and against larger theoretical perspectives (p. 160).

In order to gain meaning from my data, I began to read through the data that had been collected. As Ely, et. al. suggest, while reading and rereading all of the data, it is important to make margin notes detailing the meaning of that particular piece of data. This is called coding. This was kept in my field log, which was a collection of my thoughts and feelings, observations, student work, surveys and journals that occurred during the study.

Observation Analysis

While conducting the study, I carried around a clipboard where I detailed anything that happened during the lesson that I wanted to remember. This was the easiest way to keep track of the events and jot down ideas throughout the day. It was also something that the students were used to seeing me do prior to the study. This was important to me as to not disturb the routine the students have

been accustomed to. I didn't want them wondering what I was doing, when they were supposed to be doing their work. As soon as I got a chance I would type up a reflective memo adding my thoughts and feeling about the events of the day. This would also give me a great opportunity to determine if there were any changes that needed to occur in my study, which would guide my instruction in the best direction for the students. Periodically, I would go back and reread my memos to see what additional insights I could gain.

Student Work/Journal Analysis

As students completed their double-entry journals or prediction activities, I would collect them and place them sequentially in my field log. About every week or so, I would look back to the students' work to code them, looking for any progress within their work or misunderstandings that we needed to address. Through this process of reading and coding, I was able to understand what my students' needs were. That information was then used to guide my study and instruction to best address those needs. For example, I noticed they weren't getting the concept of predicting, so I spent more time teaching and practicing with them. This allowed time for them to acquire the knowledge to move forward. I continued with this process throughout the entire study.

At the end of the study, I wanted to look through their work in a different way to provide me with a different perspective on the same data. I looked at each student's work sequentially to see individual progress. This provided me with a

better understanding of how each student progressed throughout the study. As I did that, I assigned more codes in order to determine how much progress they had made in thinking more metacognitively.

Methodological Memo

Halfway through the study, I also wrote a methodological memo detailing forms of data collection I had already done as well as analyzing what still needed to be addressed. This was very helpful in determining what aspects of my study were on the right track and which needed my attention. I was able to learn what progress my students and I had been making throughout the study. It also created time for me to take a step out of the classroom and look at my study in a different way. Through this process, I was able to identify some forms of data that needed to be addressed to ensure a balance in the information being collected.

Comprehension Checks

As a way of analyzing each students overall comprehension, the students took the Scholastic Reading Inventory. This is a computerized reading assessment that gives each student a reading level. From this information, I was able to see any growth over the entire duration of the study. This was implemented at the beginning of the study and at the end of the study as a means of collecting some formal data on their comprehension skills.

Coding Analysis

In reading through my field log, I identified some initial codes throughout the study. Towards the end of my study, was when I really had opportunity to review my field log in detail. I reviewed my initial codes and added additional information. From my codes, I was able to categorize them into bins looking for commonalities within the data (Figure 5.1). The purpose of these bins was to organize the data based on common themes. I did this through a graphic organizer. By looking at the information visually I was able to develop theme statements, which explained the relationships between the codes. I was able to use these theme statements to draw conclusions about my study. On the following page is the graphic organizer that was used in the development of my themes.

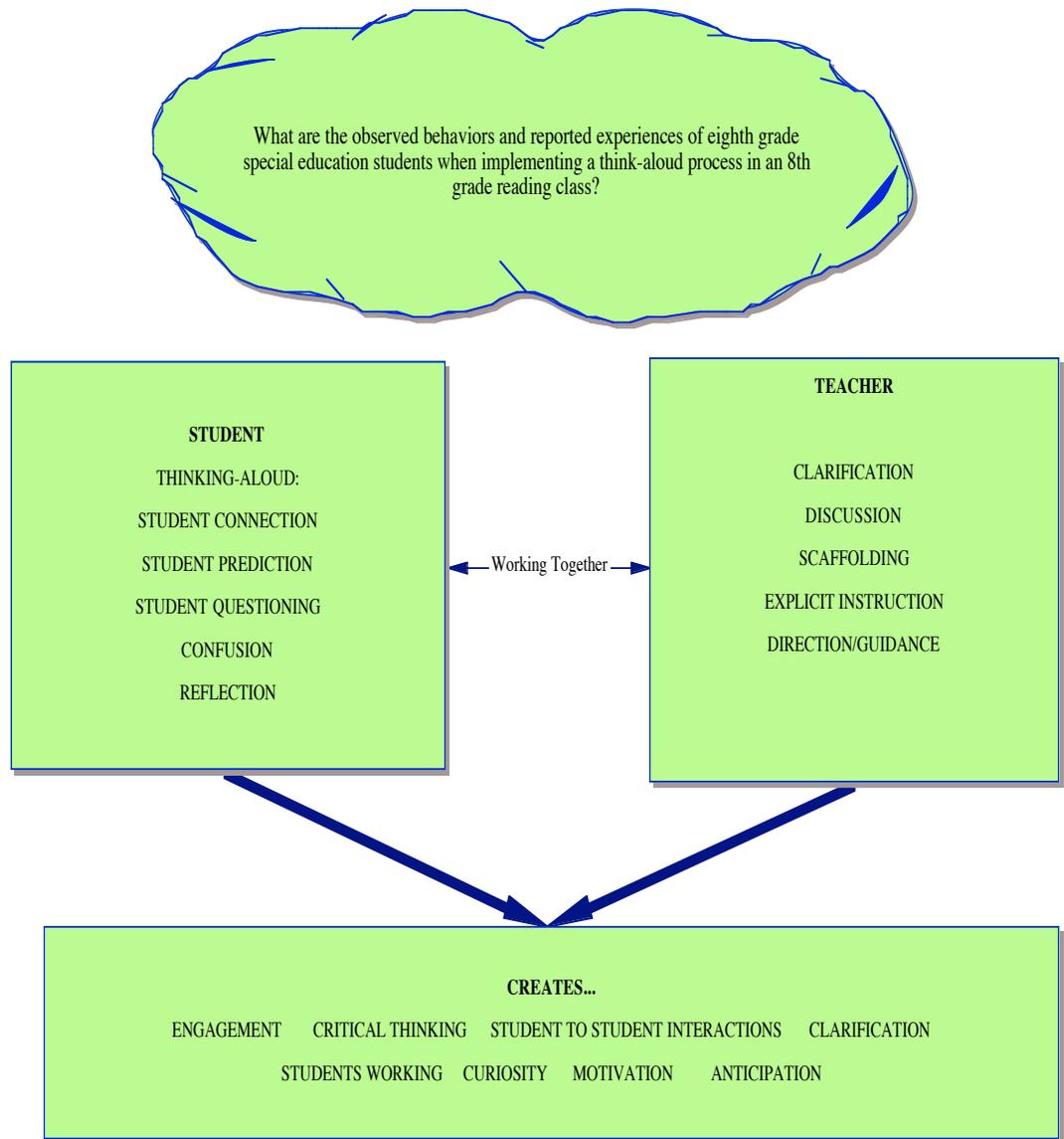


Figure 5.1 – Coding Bins

FINDINGS

The purpose of my study was to see how the thinking-aloud process would impact the students' in reading class. My focus within the thinking-aloud process was to introduce three specific strategies to assist in student engagement and comprehension: predicting, questioning, and making connections. My initial goal was to improve overall reading comprehension while creating independent readers. However, I was quickly able to see that my main focus shifted to improving student engagement with the text. The students were becoming more interested in reading and invested in the novel's story. I came to the understanding that this experience was just as important as being able to answer comprehension questions correctly. In fact, this practical knowledge of how to engage in the thinking process is something that can be utilized within any educational context. I was asking the class to embark on a new way of thinking about reading, which for some was quite challenging. In analyzing the data, themes had emerged that supported my newfound goal.

Explicit instruction and guided practice in the various strategies within the think-aloud process develops initial understanding and engagement.

Although my students had been introduced to comprehension reading strategies in the past, very few utilized them while reading. Through my initial survey, the students indicated that when approaching the text they had no plan and just hoped to finish the work. I was also surprised to find out that they would skip

over the parts they didn't understand, which lead to more confusion instead of understanding. Four out of eight students indicated that they ask themselves questions about the information, but upon further inquiry they were referring to answering questions about the text, for example, responding to a comprehension worksheet.

Students were then asked why they might go back and reread. Five out of the eight indicated that it would be beneficial to reread when clarifying the main idea. A final question asked which of the four strategies do they use as they read, and surprisingly most, six out of eight, said they make predictions about what they are reading. Because the class had some basic knowledge about making predictions, I thought this would be a great start. So, even though they said that they make predictions, I still felt it was important to explicitly model how to effectively think-aloud while reading. I did this with each of the think-aloud strategies I focused on. I also explained the importance of doing this during reading. I would then practice as a whole class, asking for student input. When I felt the class was ready, I then asked them to independently utilize the strategy while I checked for understanding.

As we went through this process with each strategy, the students had a much better understanding of what they were supposed to do. They finally understood what each strategy meant and how it would be utilized in their reading. After some practice, the students really took to thinking-aloud and made

use of it while reading. I began to see more and more students gradually become increasingly engaged in the text. This was what I was hoping to see.

The use of student reflection and journaling develops interesting class discussions, which lead to engagement in the text and motivation to read further.

At first, it was very difficult to get my students on board with the different teaching approach I was introducing to the class. They were unfamiliar with most of the strategies and weren't taking an interest in learning them. After that challenge was met, I then introduced a novel, which was also very new to them. They took one look at the book and looked as if they hated me for making them read all 360 pages of it. They never thought they would be able to get through it. It took some time to get them interested in the story itself, which impacted their ability to reflect on their readings. Documenting their think-aloud process as a requirement for their daily assignment was helpful in identifying events in the story that could be used to spark more of an interest. Soon after, all but two students began to show authentic interest in their thinking-aloud journals. My one student, Pat, would tell me every time I handed out a double-entry journal how much she really liked using them.

By the end of the study, I had two out of the eight who didn't like the journals, but when asked why, it was merely because they had to write down information. I found that these students really struggled when it came to utilizing

the think-aloud process effectively. That all changed for Anthony when I began to allow students to work in small groups. He loved it when we worked in groups and would ask to do so everyday. I learned a lot from this experience about the individuality of my students and that for some it was necessary to be able to have meaningful discussions with peers rather than always having a worksheet that would be collected for a grade.

The think-aloud process and the strategies that are incorporated within thinking-aloud, such as predicting, questioning, and making connections, are essential in developing positive student interactions and engagement with the text and with their peers.

Thinking-aloud is a metacognitive process that engages students in the thinking process. The goal of this study was to observe how the thinking-aloud process would benefit the students in their reading class. As the students continued to make predictions, ask questions, and make connections with the text, they began to become more and more involved in the novel. It was very evident through the conversations and their thinking-aloud comments that they were truly invested in Doug's story and how he was going to come out in the end. Most of my students were able to connect on a personal level to the challenges the main character, Doug, encountered in the novel. I believe this had a huge impact on the positive engagement they developed as the study progressed. When listening to the story as a class, I would hear the laughter permeate the classroom when

something funny happened. This minor detail was a major accomplishment for my students. The class would walk into class begging to read for the entire ninety minutes of class instead of trying to get out of it. All of this led me to the conclusion that the students were really engaged in their readings.

In addition to the overall engagement with the text, I noticed increased positive interactions amongst my students. My initial goal for this study was focused on the interactions that my students made independently with the text. However, as the study progressed I noticed that not only was it getting monotonous, some students were not benefiting from that experience. This was mainly due to their very low writing abilities; they were unable to articulate in writing what it was they were thinking. In order to address this issue and provide students with a more meaningful experience, I initiated group work. Students utilized the same strategies and the same double-entry journals, but they now had to discuss their ideas with one another. I was quite surprised at what I was witnessing. The whole class was engaged in active discussions with each other. I heard students beginning their sentences with, “My prediction is...” and “Remember when [this happened]...I think Doug will...”. Usually, I would be around the room like a drill sergeant trying to keep everyone on task, but I was able to sit back and listen to delightful conversations about literature.

Implementing thinking-aloud does not show a significant initial impact on a student's intrinsic motivation to read independently; however thinking-aloud did show an impact on student motivation to continue reading.

As stated above, thinking-aloud did show an increase in students' motivation toward reading the novel, *Okay for Now*, as well as motivation toward peer engagement. However, students did not show any eagerness to read independently. They were more apt to want to work in groups or as a whole class when reading the novel. I believe this to be because of their low reading abilities and the higher level of the book. I think they were apprehensive about their abilities to read something they were interested in, and not being able to understand it.

NEXT STEPS

As I look back on this experience, I see so many positive outcomes that have emerged through this inquiry. The class as a whole has given me a renewed appreciation for group work and student discussion. They utilized the think-aloud strategy in an effective way and were able to transition that into valuable discussions. Because this study has shown such potential in students working together, I plan on finding new ways to continue this theme throughout the remainder of the year.

The students made a very easy transition from writing their double-entry journals independently, to working in groups. The ideas in their journals offered a great tool for scaffolding their discussions. As they collaborated with their group members, I could hear them speaking in complete sentences, as well as making connections to previous events in the story. I found that appropriate scaffolding was necessary for the students to effectively work together.

As a continuation of this success, I plan on finding more ways to incorporate student-centered group work. In order for the groups to be successful, I would need to develop more ways of scaffolding the discussions of the group. First, I feel it is important to model what cooperative grouping looks and sounds like. It is easy to say, “discuss with your group”, but do they have the communication skills to do that effectively? A way of providing support for their communication needs is to provide them with a list of sentence starters that would

assist them in finding ways to begin the conversation and articulate their thoughts in complete sentences. Hopefully, by seeing and hearing this modeled behavior, the students will begin to do it automatically. Another way of adding structure to the group is by holding the students accountable for their involvement. By assigning jobs to each student within the group, it would force their participation as well as leave little down time.

Another important aspect of group work is the overall structure of the groups. The students have many jobs, but it also the teacher's responsibility to monitor their progress and be actively involved in the activity. Much planning goes into the implementation of groups within a classroom. Some factors that need to be taken into consideration are the grouping of the students. Will they be choosing their own members or will the groups be assigned to them? I feel that there are appropriate times for both, but in the beginning I plan on assigning the groups myself. By doing this it would give me a chance to who works well together and who doesn't, keeping negative behaviors to a minimum. Another aspect that needs to be taken into account is time management; when given too much time students begin to get off-task and lose focus. From my experience, the position of the teacher in the room and is another somewhat minor factor that plays an important part in student engagement. It is essential for teachers to be monitoring the students by walking around and asking questions of the groups,

ensuring the task was well defined and being implemented. This is also good time to correct any misconceptions and guide students in effective group work.

Participation

While analyzing the data from this study, I became more and more interested in who was doing the talking when it came to their group work and class discussions. In having such a small group, it was very easy to identify which students were not engaged in the lesson, but I didn't pay too much attention to which students were sharing their ideas and who was sitting idly by.

Next year, I would like to find ways of holding students accountable for their participation in class, but also encouraging everyone to share their ideas. If I want my students to participate, I plan on beginning the year by emphasizing participation and the role it plays in my classroom. Participation is just like homework and class work, it is expected to get done. To reinforce this concept, I also plan on providing interesting activities that promote discussion. There are many activities outlined in the Read180 program, which correspond to the Read180 lessons that I am required to cover in the beginning of the year. This will also provide a foundation for participation that can be built upon as the year progresses.

To track participation, I could keep a running record of who and how often each student participates. However, my attention would solely be on their participation, making it difficult to monitor student progress. On the other hand,

if I have the students keep track of their own participation through the use of a self-evaluation organizer or a rubric, this would allow me to focus on what the students are saying. This would also keep the group work more students-centered, forcing each student to be acutely aware of his or her level of participation. Another way of integrating a participation check while keeping the class student-centered would be to have peer evaluations. While in groups, this could be one of the jobs that are assigned to a member of the group. Although students from year to year are very different, I am hopeful that these strategies will be as useful in years to come.

Collaboration

This has been such a learning experience. Over the years, I have slowly drifted away from the important task of reflecting and analyzing what goes on in my classroom. My students have brought that inquiry back into my routine. I would like to share my experience with other teachers who are struggling with the same problems I am. I am lucky to have a very close group of colleagues who are constantly sharing ideas and lessons. The faculty room is buzzing with conversations and this would be the perfect place to share what I have learned. When I meet with other teachers during planning time, I could show my fellow teachers what I have been doing in my classroom and how it helped my students. I also thought of bringing it up to my principal. There are times we are able to meet with our individual content areas during a faculty meeting to discuss

pertinent information. This would be a convenient time to collaborate with everyone who teaches Reading at my school. Finally, there are many optional training sessions that are available to all staff. If given permission to do so, I could instruct a session discussing the benefits of thinking-aloud and the strategies that were effective in my classroom. Teachers all have their own success stories and it is important for us to work together.

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APPENDIX A

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

READING SURVEY

DIRECTIONS: CHOOSE AS MANY OF THE CHOICES THAT YOU THINK FIT YOU WHEN YOU READ.

1. WHEN YOU COME ACROSS A WORD YOU DON'T KNOW, I
 - A. USE WORDS AROUND IT TO FIGURE IT OUT.
 - B. USE A DICTIONARY OR ASK A TEACHER.
 - C. IGNORE OR SKIP OVER THE WORD.
 - D. SOUND IT OUT.

2. WHEN YOU READ, WHAT DO YOU DO TO REMEMBER IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE STORY?
 - A. SKIP PARTS YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
 - B. ASK YOURSELF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INFORMATION.
 - C. REALIZE YOU NEED TO REMEMBER IT AND TAKE A NOTE.
 - D. RELATE IT TO SOMETHING YOU ALREADY KNOW.

3. BEFORE YOU READ, WHAT KIND OF PLAN DO YOU MAKE TO HELP YOU READ BETTER?
 - A. NO PLAN, JUST START READING AND HOPE TO FINISH THE WORK.
 - B. THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW ABOUT THE SUBJECT.
 - C. THINK ABOUT WHY YOU ARE READING.
 - D. TRY TO READ IT AS FAST AS POSSIBLE.

4. WHY WOULD YOU GO BACK AND READ AN ENTIRE PASSAGE OVER AGAIN?
 - A. YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT.
 - B. TO CLARIFY A MAIN IDEA OR SUPPORTING DETAIL.
 - C. IT SEEMED IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER.
 - D. TO UNDERLINE OR SUMMARIZE SO YOU CAN STUDY.

5. AS YOU READ A BOOK, STORY OR TEXTBOOK, WHICH OF THESE DO YOU DO?
 - A. ADJUST YOUR PACE BASED ON HOW HARD IT IS TO READ.
 - B. JUST READ IT.
 - C. SKIP PARTS YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
 - D. MAKE PREDICATIONS ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE READING.

APPENDIX C

Name _____ Date _____

Checklist to Rate Your Reading Strategy Use

Directions: Read each item carefully and check the ones you do before, during, and after reading. Then set one or two goals on the back of this form by using items from the checklist.

BEFORE READING

- I think about the cover, title, and what I know about the topic.
- I skim, look at, and think about illustrations, photos, graphs, and charts.
- I read headings and captions.
- I read the back cover and/or the print on the inside of the jacket.
- I use the three-finger method to find a book that's just right for me.
- I ask questions.
- I make predictions.

DURING READING

- I make mental pictures.
- I identify confusing parts and reread them.
- I use pictures, graphs, and charts to understand confusing parts.
- I identify unfamiliar words and use context clues to figure out their meanings.
- I stop and retell to see what I recall. If necessary, I reread.
- I predict and adjust or confirm as I read on.
- I raise questions and read on to discover answers.
- I jot down a tough word and the page it's on and ask for help.

AFTER READING

- I think about the characters, settings, events, or new information.
- I discuss with a partner or group.
- I can write open-ended discussion questions.
- I can make connections.
- I can make inferences.
- I can figure out a character's personality.
- I reread parts I enjoy.
- I skim to find details.
- I reread to find support for questions.
- I can find themes in stories and novels.
- I can find details in informational texts and discover main ideas.
- I can write my reactions or positions and support them with text details.

APPENDIX D

Double-Entry Journal readwritethink

Idea from Text	Reaction/Connection

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APPENDIX E

August 29, 2011

I am presently working towards getting my Master's Degree in curriculum and instruction at Moravian College. As a part of my program, Moravian requires that I conduct an action research study that encourages us to reflect on our own teaching practices in order to provide my students with the most effective teaching practices. I also will be spending time reading current research on teaching and learning. The Moravian College program provides a strategic approach in broadening my instructional strategies so I can provide the best learning environment for my students.

I am in the process of conducting a systematic study on my own teaching. The focus of my research this semester is the use of thinking aloud in my reading classroom. I will be implementing a thinking aloud procedure for students to use as another reading strategy to employ as they read independently. I will be focusing on the concepts of previewing texts, making predictions, asking questions and then clarifying their comprehension as the means of talking to text. My goal is to understand how applying this strategy of thinking aloud will improve my student's reading comprehension.

I will be gathering information to support my study through observations, student surveys, and work samples. I will only use information collected from those students who have permission to participate in the study. All of the names of the students will be kept confidential, as well as the names of the teachers, other staff, and the school's name. No names will be included on any work samples or reports of my study. If a child is withdrawn, I will not use any information pertaining to him/her in my study. However, every student is to participate in the work that is being done in the classroom.

If you have any questions or concerns about my in-class project, please feel free to contact me or my faculty sponsor, _____. He can be reached at _____ . Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Hayley D'Angelo

I attest that I am the principal of the teacher conducting this research study, that I have read and understand the consent form and received a copy. Hayley D'Angelo has my permission to conduct this study.

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F

August 31, 2011

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am presently working towards getting my Master's Degree in curriculum and instruction at Moravian College. As part of my program, Moravian requires that I conduct a teacher action research study in my own classroom to provide the most effective teaching for my students. Therefore, from September 1, 2011 to December 2, 2010, I will be conducting a study where I will explore reading instruction using a different strategy of thinking aloud.

The purpose of this study is to give my student the tools to be more engaged in their reading, while improving their comprehension. Student will be asked to think aloud. A reading strategy that asks students to stop periodically to make predictions, ask questions, make connections, and clarify what they have read. My goal is to understand how applying these strategies will improve their independent reading comprehension.

Everyone in my class will receive the same instruction and assignments as a part of the regular reading curriculum. I am asking for your permission to use data such as writing samples, surveys, and other work gathered pertaining to your child's involvement. Participation is voluntary and all students' names will be kept confidential, as well as the name of the school and district. All research data will be destroyed at the end of the study. Please also understand that students may withdraw from this study without penalty at any time.

The principal has approved this study and if you have any questions regarding my research, please feel free to contact me at _____.

My faculty sponsor at _____ is _____. He can be reached at _____ at _____ or by email at _____. I am asking that you return this permission form at your earliest convenience. I thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Hayley D'Angelo

I am the child's legal guardian and I have received a copy, read and understand the consent form.

_____ I am willing to have my child participate in Mrs. D'Angelo's study.

_____ I am **NOT** willing to have my child participate in Mrs. D'Angelo's study.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Child's Name: _____