

EXPERIENCING READERS THEATER IN A FIRST-GRADE BILINGUAL CLASSROOM

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BY

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Rob Walker, y mis hijos, Ron, Ian, Jan, y Jed, for your patience, amor, and encouragement, and to my parents, Juan y Aida for their unconditional love, understanding, and cheers. And to my brother Osva and sister Aidita. You are all my rock.

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative case study explored the use of Readers Theater through the experiences of emergent bilingual students in a first-grade bilingual classroom. Readers Theater is a strategy that has produced great results in helping the development of literacy in reading fluency, motivation, and comprehension. The research regarding the use of Readers Theater with students in the lower elementary grades enrolled in bilingual education classrooms is very limited. Emergent bilinguals could benefit from using teaching strategies that integrate the practice of all language domains, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, to allow them access to academic content. I collected qualitative data from observations, conferences, and student artifacts from emergent bilingual students who were in my one-way dual language classroom in a North Texas school district. The analysis of the data pointed to the following themes: the students perceived Readers Theater as an engaging and enjoyable experience, engaged in metacognitive activities such as, self-evaluations, helping and evaluating their peers, and being aware of the processes involved, and engaged in complex literacy processes, where they demonstrated understanding of character feelings, retelling and summarizing the story, and using new vocabulary.

Keywords: literacy, biliteracy, emergent bilinguals, translanguaging, Readers Theater

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A report for the years 2010-2020 by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (2023) delineated an increase on the number of emergent bilingual students in K-12 U.S. public schools' enrollment from 4.5 million in 2010 to 5 million as of the year 2020. Those figures show an increase of 600,000 students nationwide. Different states have different concentrations of emergent bilingual students. In the year 2020, Texas had the highest percentage among all states at 20.1% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Emergent bilingual is a term coined by García (2009), which portrays an asset-based view of individuals who are simultaneously acquiring a language while continuing to build their home language to make sense of their world.

English hegemonic policies govern U.S. schools (Nieto, 2021) including Texas. Gramsci defines hegemony as the cultural, moral, and ideological dominance of a group over others (de Orellana, 2015). Linguistic hegemony is, therefore, giving a higher status to a language than to others (Macedo et al., 2003). English hegemony is thus identified since emergent bilingual students are expected to perform at a competitive level in academics demonstrated by successful results in high stakes standardized testing administered in English, after only 2 years of living in the United States. These policies show indifference to the fact that becoming academically competent in another language will require 7 to 10 years (Collier & Thomas, 2009). Due to the unfeasible expectation, many students do not perform well and even drop out of school before completing secondary education (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2023).

In Texas, the number of emergent bilingual students who drop out of school is 3.30 %, which translates to approximately 178,200 students (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2023). The considerable number of emergent bilinguals and the high percentage of students that drop out from this population accentuates this as a critical problem (Sheng et al., 2011). After the 1973 Bilingual Education and Training Act was passed in Texas, bilingual education was mandated in every school with 20 or more emergent bilinguals enrolled in the same grade level (Rodríguez, 2020). Since then, 50 years have passed, and various programs have been developed to address the needs of emergent bilingual students. However, many emergent bilingual students continue to withdraw before graduating from high school (Callahan, 2013; Valenzuela, 1999).

I teach emergent bilingual students in a bilingual classroom in a North Texas suburb. As a bilingual teacher who had similar educational experiences, I want to help decrease the number of students who eventually give up by providing classroom experiences that lead to their academic and lifelong success. In my own experience as an emergent bilingual at a U.S. university, I needed to continue developing my English literacy while simultaneously learning content. I needed to expand my vocabulary, cultural knowledge, and build background knowledge in new contexts to succeed in the classroom and my everyday life. This is also true for my emergent bilingual students.

Background

Understanding Emergent Bilingual Needs

Emergent bilinguals have been part of American history since the very beginnings of the country. An emergent bilingual student in the United States is an individual who “through school and through acquiring English, become bilingual, are able to continue to function in their

home language as well as in English, their new language and that of school” (García et al., 2008, p. 6). Some acquire the English language sequentially, like me, learning their home language first and later English. Others learn their home language and English concurrently.

The language experiences of each emergent bilingual student are unique, and thus, each linguistic repertoire could fall within a wide spectrum of proficiencies (Grosjean, 2010).

While the goal of monolingual students is to become literate, the goal for emergent bilingual students is to become biliterate. Since language is the vehicle through which teachers facilitate literacy learning, knowledgeable teachers of emergent bilingual students understand the need to provide a space for translanguageing. Even though there are various definitions of translanguageing that will be discussed in more detail in the literature review, for the purposes of this study, the definition we will use is García et al.’s (2008): the fluid linguistic practices of emergent bilinguals to make meaning. In their definition, they do not see languages as separate entities. In other words, emergent bilingual students use what they already know in their linguistic repertoire. Their repertoire may be composed of two or more named languages to negotiate meaning. When teachers allow the use of the students’ home language in addition to the target language, the cross-linguistic transfer of ideas and language concepts is facilitated. “Literacy-related skills transfer across languages as learning progresses” (Cummins, 2017, p. 112). Although translanguageing will not be the focus of this study, it needs to be mentioned due to these behaviors being part of the emergent bilingual experience within my classroom.

For this reason, it is necessary to allow translanguageing. Language is part of the culture of a people, and thus, part of their identity. The practice of translanguageing eliminates any linguistic hierarchical order of the past and sends a message of equity and acceptance. A

particular language is not policed for certain subjects, or at certain times of the day but rather the students' complete linguistic repertoire is used fluidly throughout the day (García & Wei, 2014).

In U.S. schools, emergent bilingual students need to expand their linguistic repository, in Spanish and English, and simultaneously learn content in the classroom (Almaguer & Esquiedo, 2013; Goldenberg, 2020) to be successful in school. When taking a closer look at all the skills that emergent bilingual students need to learn in school, reading is highlighted as key to attaining success in academics and ultimately in day-to-day living (V. García, 2017). Learning to read begins in the early years of a child even before they begin school (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Goodman & Goodman, 2013; Lindfors, 1987). Once in school, in prekindergarten and kindergarten, children experience a set schedule, school culture, and academics. They receive explicit formal lessons in literacy. Therefore, all subjects become important opportunities to address emergent bilingual students' needs, but the literacy block becomes salient since reading and writing are sociocultural activities needed to function in every aspect of life.

The complexity of this process requires a knowledgeable and highly qualified teacher that understands the needs of emergent bilinguals (García & Kleifgen, 2010; Lopez & Santibañez, 2018). The bilingual teacher's actions in the classroom then are of extreme importance since the outcome of the experience will affect the students' academics and life outside of school. Thus, bilingual teachers are encouraged to "think of each student's bilingualism holistically and to inquire about how, when, where, and why they have become bilingual, focusing on identifying their bilingual experiences and not solely their performances in English" (García et al., 2017, p. 32). Because student experiences influence their use of language, knowing about these experiences will offer teachers vital information about their students' strengths and weaknesses, and hence a starting point to begin planning for instruction

(García et al., 2017). The bilingual teacher that understands the aforementioned needs will favor instructional methods that can potentially accelerate language acquisition while addressing academic standards concurrently.

At the school I worked, emergent bilingual children begin first-grade reading at different proficiencies in both languages, their reading proficiencies show a range beginning with emergent reader to a text reading level E/8 as measured in the literacy assessment *Evaluación del Desarrollo de la Lectura* (EDL; Ruiz & Cuesta, 2007). Literacy skills such as letter identification and sounds, ways to problem solve new words, and understanding what they are reading, need to be further strengthened regardless of language dominance to provide the critical tools needed to learn to read. Therefore, it would be beneficial to find an instructional strategy that helps in the complex endeavor of teaching reading to emergent bilingual students. Readers Theater (Tiedt, 1976; Woodbury, 1979) seems to be one such instructional strategy.

Readers Theatre

I became interested in using Readers Theater a few years ago while teaching bilingual third grade. At that time, I came across research studies that showed great benefits in reading after its implementation. According to multiple researchers, Readers Theater has proven to be beneficial in helping literacy development. Rasinski's studies show benefits in reading fluency (Rasinski, 2003; Young & Rasinski, 2018). In terms of comprehension, studies show increased student gains (Garrett & O'Connor, 2010; Young et al., 2020). Readers Theater is also beneficial for motivation (Domínguez & Gutierrez, 2015; Killeen, 2014; Vasinda & Mcleod, 2011). Other international researchers have had the same results in studies performed in languages other than English (Ferrada & Outón, 2017; Karabag, 2015; Palomino-Bonifaz, 2018). English as a Foreign Language studies show additional benefits that include gains in

pronunciation and word recognition (Abdelgawad Ali, 2020; Myrset & Drew, 2016; Qannubil et al., 2018). Furthermore, various researchers have also had great success addressing cross-curricular standards with its use (Cross, 2017; Uribe, 2019). I will explain in more detail these studies in the literature review. It seemed to be an instructional method with great potential for emergent bilingual students and I had to try it.

At that time, I had 16 emergent bilingual students and at least seven of them were experiencing learning difficulties that affected their engagement with reading. Therefore, I decided to explore the use of Readers Theater. First, I noticed that from the very beginning all students were engaged. All students wanted to participate, even the ones who had been identified for dyslexia services, who often avoided reading. As we embarked on the read-aloud, mini-lessons, and rehearsals, the students continued being engaged as they conversed among themselves to make meaning and to argue points of disagreement giving reasons for their opinions. I was in awe since the ones that were most engaged were the ones who always struggled with reading. At one point I asked them for a summary of the story and set them in pairs for the task. I then ventured to ask two of my most striving readers to share their summary. One began to open his mouth and suddenly stopped because he forgot what he was going to say. The other one began sharing their summary out of memory since it was very difficult to read out of their own handwriting. Suddenly, the first one remembered and began contributing with details the other one was missing. All the students in my class of emergent bilingual readers, including those who were having difficulty, were fully engaged, understanding, and enjoying reading.

Readers Theater is not a new instructional strategy. Initially, it was used to teach literature in colleges in the 1960s, later in secondary schools, and eventually trickled down to

lower grades (Coger & White, 1982). According to Bacon (1966), as cited in Fernandez (1969), Readers Theater could stimulate students to analyze text at a deeper level “by vocally and physically embodying it” (p. 46). Since emergent bilingual students need to understand language and text to be successful in school and life, it would be worthwhile to explore the possibilities when using Readers Theater with this group. For that reason, the goal of this qualitative case study (Yin, 2018) was to explore the use of Readers Theater through the experiences of emergent bilingual students in a first-grade bilingual classroom.

Problem Statement

We know emergent bilingual students need support in literacy and language learning for their success in school and everyday life. Bilingual teachers must choose the most effective and efficient methods based on research to accomplish this (Goldenberg, 2020). In addition, if teachers could address those needs as soon as possible, students would have plenty of opportunities to practice and become successful at school (García & Wei, 2014). We have evidence that the implementation of Readers Theater from a young age could have great potential due to its strong ties to literacy development and ease of implementation (Moran, 2006; Mraz et al., 2013). However, we do not know how emergent bilingual students’ literacy development is supported by Readers Theater. For that reason, the goal of this qualitative case study (Yin, 2018) was to explore the use of Readers Theater through the experiences of emergent bilingual students in a first-grade bilingual classroom.

In the current body of knowledge, studies available on the exploration of Readers Theater in the lower grades (PreK, K, first) that focus on emergent bilinguals enrolled in bilingual education classrooms are limited. Some of the most recent studies address upper elementary (third to fifth grade), middle school, high school, and college students, and focus on quantitative

methods that do not provide an in-depth analysis regarding the intricate nature of how Readers Theater could support emergent bilingual learning. In addition, most of the studies found are within the context of the monolingual English classroom. However, there are other studies that address English as a Second (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, as well as monolingual studies in Spanish, Malay, and Turkish. Of all the studies found, only one included bilingual students in third to fifth grade where translanguaging was allowed, still, Readers Theater was not used as an instructional strategy to support reading but rather to teach critical thinking with a focus on preservice teacher training. Also, of all the studies found, only one addressed lower elementary grades. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to explore Readers Theater in a bilingual first grade to support literacy learning, and with a focus on the experience of the students.

The continuous academic disparity between English monolinguals and emergent bilingual students makes it a pressing need to aid in the complex undertaking of emergent bilingual students becoming biliterate. This need is underlined even more when we consider the high rates of emergent bilingual students who drop out of school. Since learning to read is a sociocultural activity (Bloome et al., 1991) that is needed for day-to-day living too, bilingual teachers need effective instructional strategies that give the students plenty of opportunities to accelerate their learning. Readers Theater seemed to have great potential for that objective.

Purpose

In this study, I implemented Readers Theater in my first-grade one-way dual language classroom to explore how students respond to its use. The intention was to inform instruction from the perspective of the students, and to see whether the benefits that other researchers have found for monolingual and ESL classrooms will profit emergent bilinguals students in first

grade. The lessons that I presented combined strategies used to teach young children, such as read aloud, shared reading, choral reading, and the use of Readers Theater script (written version of a play or movie) rehearsed multiple times. This kind of teaching facilitates the scaffolding of the teaching of literacy. It is through the practice of all language domains, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, embedded events within Readers Theater, and the use of the students' whole linguistic repertoire, that this was accomplished.

Through teaching these lessons, observing emergent bilingual students' conversations, behaviors, and negotiations of meaning through the rehearsals, and looking at their writing, I gained a deeper understanding of how Readers Theater influenced their meaning making. I paid attention to student experiences to adjust instructional choices. This data may assist bilingual classroom practitioners who are considering adding Readers Theater as an additional strategy that has great potential to accelerate language acquisition and learning.

Research Question

The research question that guided this study was: How do children in a first-grade bilingual classroom experience Readers Theater?

Rationale and Significance

Emergent bilingual students are developing two named languages at once, in this case, Spanish and English, while learning content (García & Wei, 2014). Hence, finding effective and authentic ways to cooperatively practice all language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, is vital to supporting language acquisition, which in turn facilitates content learning (Stewart & Genova, 2020). This requires thoroughly planned lessons. Often, bilingual teachers do not have sufficient time to search and plan for additional instructional strategies not included in the prescribed curriculum (Merritt, 2016). This exploration presents Readers Theater as an

instructional strategy that can be quickly incorporated regardless of curricula and subject matter, requires the minutest resources, and has the potential of improving emergent bilingual students' literacy. Readers Theater scripts are readily available in many schools, some are available online for free, and ultimately, one can be created from any text.

This instructional strategy, in combination with the emergent bilingual students' regular practice of translanguaging to make meaning, has the potential to augment what other researchers have found works for monolingual classrooms.

Key Terms

Literacy- for the purposes of this study, we will think of literacy as the ability to read, write, communicate, and think critically about language, even though the preferred definition by many today is an expanded one that includes the consideration of Discourses (with a capital letter D), languages of power, and knowledge of their pragmatics, whether oral or written (Street, 1995).

Biliteracy- a group of a *continua* of abilities (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and metalanguage) that evolve throughout the lifespan of a person according to context, media, and content, which are complex and interrelated (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000). This definition expresses the dynamic processes of becoming biliterate, the complexity of the task, and its perpetuity.

Emergent bilinguals- are individuals who “through school and through acquiring English, become bilingual, and are able to continue to function in their home language as well as in English” (García et al., 2008, p. 6).

Translanguaging- is the “paradigm on the language use of bilinguals, and the education of bilinguals that consider their language praxis as a holistic repertoire and not as two autonomous language systems” (García & Wei, 2014, p. 2).

Readers Theater- is an oral reading instructional activity in which a text is repeatedly read for an authentic purpose: a performance for an audience. It requires no props, costumes, acting, or memorizing (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). The instructional focus in Readers Theater is on reading or performing a text in an expressive manner that is meaningful and satisfying to an audience.

In this chapter, I shared statistics that show the large amount of emergent bilingual students in US schools. I also stated that emergent bilingual students are the receivers of English hegemonic practices within a school system which disregards their needs, and how instructional strategies that will support these students are necessary to bring about social justice for this large population of students. I also mentioned Readers Theater as an instructional strategy with potential to support emergent bilingual students. I followed with the problem statement where I highlighted the lack of research in the implementation of Readers Theater within the context of emergent bilingual students who are in lower elementary grades. Subsequently, I shared the purpose of this qualitative case study, which was to explore the use of Readers Theater through the experiences of emergent bilingual students in a first-grade bilingual classroom. The chapter concluded with the research question and the rationale and significance of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative case study is to explore the use of Readers Theater through the experiences of emergent bilingual students in a first-grade bilingual classroom. Emergent bilingual students are an ever-increasing school population in U.S. schools, and many struggle and eventually drop out of school due to unrealistic language acquisition goals (Valenzuela, 1999). Giving plenty of opportunities for emergent bilingual students to practice all language domains is vital to their linguistic development and academic success in school and in life (García, 2017).

Readers Theater is an instructional strategy that affords the repeated reading practice that emergent bilinguals need so much. Previous researchers have shown great success with Readers Theater in the areas of reading fluency, comprehension, and engagement, among others. What is lacking in the literature is research that includes Readers Theater in the context of bilingual education of lower elementary children. Readers Theater is an instructional strategy in which translanguaging can be incorporated and which promotes literacy development due to its collaborative nature, it would be worthwhile to explore its implementation.

The first section of this literature review begins with a discussion of the major theory that has guided my theoretical perspective, social constructivism. The subsequent section reviews the literature regarding the major points around my study: the needs of emergent bilingual students and Readers Theater. It concludes with a rationale for using Readers Theater as a vehicle for literacy instruction of emergent bilinguals. The following question will guide the study: How do children in a first-grade bilingual classroom experience Readers Theater?

Theoretical Framework

Constructivism learning theory (Piaget, 1972; Wood et al., 1976) posits that knowledge is constructed actively through experiences, integrating or purging information when compared to what was already known. It assumes that the individual already has “constructed” knowledge through experiences influenced by culture and their surroundings (Piaget, 1972). The focus of the theory is on how the individual develops. Social constructivism theory, which is one category under the umbrella of constructivism, is the theory that guides this study.

Social Constructivism Theory

Lev Vygotsky, an influential Russian scholar (Good, 2011), was a major proponent of the social constructivism theory. He focused on the learning happening when an individual interacts with others. In *Mind in Society*, Vygotsky (1978) asserts that children’s learning begins long before attending school, and that learning, and development are interrelated. He further argues that development happens when what was learned socially with the help of others who are more proficient is internalized, and thus, what the child was learning becomes knowledge that is reflected by being able to do the task independently (Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, he posited that assessments measure an ability that has already been developed, and that we mistakenly equate it with the mental abilities of the child. He suggests that “what children can do with the assistance of others, might be more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). He gave an example of a study of two children who were the same age chronologically and mentally when measured through the actual development level. When the children were asked to do a task with support, one was able to do the task way over his mental age compared to the other.

Vygotsky devised the construct of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to refer to the ideal difficulty of a task to facilitate learning. In other words, the task is at a higher level than what the child can do independently but can successfully achieve with support. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that the ZPD accounts for the processes that are forming and developing and that it allows us to predict the child's immediate future if the same developmental conditions are preserved. He exhorts us to rethink how we perceive imitation under this light. He also states that teaching concrete concepts is to be seen as a steppingstone to teaching abstract concepts. Finally, Vygotsky argues that language begins as a means of communication with others, but that when language is internalized, it becomes a tool for organizing thoughts. The ZPD construct suggests that those social interactions serve as a scaffold. Jerome Bruner (Wood et al., 1976), a psychologist, developed the Scaffolding concept in education as a result of applying Vygotsky's ZPD. Bruner contends that students should be involved in their own learning and that they need support when learning new ideas (Wood et al., 1976).

Through Vygotsky's social constructivist ideas, our lenses of how we are to teach children are renewed. Under this vision, children are seen as knowledgeable when they come to school, and school personnel are to value the previously built knowledge the children bring from experiences lived and not judge their mental ability by what the children cannot do yet. Thus, teaching becomes the facilitating of learning, and not the providing of content (Shabani, 2010). Furthermore, providing opportunities for interaction among everyone in the classroom allows the students to use language for the exchange of ideas and learning, and ultimately thinking.

This paradigm applies to my students who are emergent bilinguals. Although my students come from the same heritage, they all have had different experiences and thus, different learning, that began before attending school. When granted the opportunity to interact, they can help one

another in different areas of knowledge. In addition, allowing them to use their full linguistic repertoire opens the door to holistic thinking.

It has been my experience that when students have opportunities to work together, their confidence, self-esteem, and willingness to participate increase and propel them to take the lead in their learning. I am a witness to the growth students have when allowed to interact with others in learning activities. When students are placed in collaborative or cooperative groups, new ideas or perspectives come up in conversations due to their different funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992), and student-led discussions often reach students who have been unreachable by the teacher.

In relation to this study, social constructivism can be seen in action with Readers Theater in the bilingual classroom since groups of students practice together for a script reading performance. Through Readers Theater, groups of emergent bilingual students can negotiate meaning with each other when trying to understand the script using their whole linguistic repertoire to think. The deep understanding that comes about will allow the students to know how to use their voices to convey the interpreted meaning.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the social constructivism theory. The circles that surround the larger circle in the center, social constructivism, show the essential aspects of learning within this paradigm. The top circle represents language, the medium through which all human beings communicate and eventually become thoughts. The circle on the right side depicts the ZPD which happens when we interact and collaborate with more knowledgeable others. Knowledgeable others do not necessarily refer to the teacher. Since the unique experiences of each person within the interaction are varied, each person may be an expert in a particular area, and thus, a knowledgeable other. The bottom circle represents the scaffolding and differentiation embedded in those interactions. Furthermore, the circle on the left illustrates that when

knowledge that was acquired socially is internalized, the individual has developed further cognitively.

Figure 2.1

Theoretical Framework



Review of the Literature

This qualitative case study explored the use of Readers Theater through the experiences of emergent bilingual students in a first-grade bilingual classroom. Therefore, this literature review presents current research in bilingual education and translanguaging, and findings of the

available literature on Readers Theater. The EBSCO, TWU Library, UNT Library, and Google Scholar databases were used to find recent research articles, books, and dissertations. I also used TWU and UNT Libraries Interlibrary Loan services. I narrowed the search by setting the search for sources dated after 2010 to find the most up-to-date research on the subject. The terms searched included Readers Theater in conjunction with emergent bilinguals, English Language Learners (ELLs), ESL, LEP, dual language, bilinguals, elementary, and/or lower grades. As I read the sources found, I searched in their references sections to find seminal studies by authorities in the subject area.

I reviewed the sources systematically. After collecting the research articles, books, and published dissertations, I created charts with relevant information to the guiding question. Studies that did not fulfill the Creswell and Creswell (2018) quality criteria and/or were unrelated to the research questions were dismissed. These actions led to synthesizing and analyzing the existing literature on the topics of emergent bilinguals and their needs, the practice of translanguaging, and Readers Theater.

Being Bilingual

Some people may believe that being bilingual depends on having high proficiency in more than one language, which is usually difficult to attain. Others may define it as the usage of more than one language regardless of proficiency. When we define it by usage, many more individuals can be considered bilingual. Bilingualism develops as we use different languages for different reasons and contexts. Many become bilingual due to geography, language policy, work-related situations, religion, linguistically heterogeneous family members, wars, education, being hard of hearing, etc. (Grosjean, 2010). Regardless of the reason, the number of emergent bilinguals in the United States continues to grow year after year.

Views of Bilingualism

In the body of research, bilingualism is viewed in one of two ways: the fractional or the holistic view (Grosjean, 1982). In the fractional view, the person's linguistic abilities are seen as developing two distinct languages simultaneously. On the other hand, the holistic view proposes that the individual possesses linguistic skills integrated as a whole, not two separate languages (see Table 2.1). García and Wei (2014) agree with the holistic view and use the word *dynamic* to express the complexity and nonlinear interrelatedness of the linguistic repertoire in action. They further explain that there is a flexibility where the bilingual person pulls what is needed from their repertoire to intermingle with societal practices, but that at times something new is created in the process.

Table 2.1

Views of Bilingualism

Fractional	Holistic
Two monolinguals in one person, developing parallel linguistic competence in both languages simultaneously. Often compared to monolinguals.	Each person integrates in a unique manner knowledge from both languages to create something more than two separate languages.
Both views consider ideal the equivalent fluency in the two languages (A balanced bilingual competence in speaking, thinking, reading, and writing is not easy to achieve).	

Note. Created with information taken from Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism*. Harvard University Press.

Immigrants in the United States who are learning English in addition to the home language or languages, have been assigned various labels throughout the years. Labels such as,

ESL, ELL, and LEP, negate the great resources they bring with them. Another term still in use, bilingual, may not be accurately describing the student if their linguistic repertoire is more extensive than two named languages. In Texas, Sen. Menendez/Rep. Dutton, updated the Texas Education Code SB 2066 effective on September 1, 2021, by changing the term “Limited English Proficient” to "emergent bilingual," to better reflect the strengths and potential of these students (Texas Legislature Online, 2022).

The Need for Biliteracy

When an individual finds themselves in a new country, with new customs and language they do not understand, the situation warrants the use of all they know to make sense of their new world. Since we communicate through language, it becomes pressing to learn the new language for the most basic needs in everyday life, thus, the need to become literate in the new language. However, emergent bilingual students need their home language to make cross linguistic connections as they learn the new language. The goal of an emergent bilingual changes from becoming literate in the target language to becoming biliterate, whether it is to maintain their home language and add the new or continue developing both, home and new (García & Wei, 2014).

In 1979, Goodman defined biliteracy to express the interrelation between reading and writing. That definition is limited to a language arts context. Other definitions have kept the emergent bilingual in mind. For example, Pérez and Torres-Guzmán (1995) defined biliteracy as the decoding and encoding of print and around print, using two languages and cultures to communicate in various contexts. Reyes' (2006) definition is more encompassing, adding to all of the linguistic domains, thinking, culture, and experiences. Grosjean (2010) defined it as those who use two or more languages in everyday life. Kabuto (2011) was more specific and defined

Biliteracy with capital letter B as the complex social and cultural forces that give language meaning and give a person an identity as a speaker of one or more languages. He then defined biliteracy with lower case letter b, as written form and structures of two languages. Escamilla et al. (2014) define it as the ability to read and write in two languages. Hornberger (1989) defined biliteracy in a simplistic form: reading and writing in two languages. Later in her research, Hornberger refined the definition together with Skilton-Sylvester adding social, educational, and linguistic contexts (2000), but also the concept of a *continua of biliteracy* (see Table 2.2). The concept of continua of biliteracy expresses the multiple degrees of linguistic proficiencies in the different languages of an emergent bilingual. For that reason, the definition of biliteracy that will be used in this study is Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester's (2000) since it expresses the dynamic processes of becoming biliterate, the complexity of the task, and its perpetuity. This view reflects the different degrees of proficiencies in my students' linguistic repertoires and since my study is an exploration, it does not narrow the possibilities of student responses to the use of Readers Theater.

Table 2.2

Definitions of Biliteracy

Reference	Definition
Goodman (1979)	term that expresses that reading and writing are interrelated
Hornberger (1989)	all communicative interactions that occur around writing in two or more languages.
Pérez and Torres-Guzmán (1995)	acquisition and learning of the decoding and encoding of and around print using two linguistic and cultural systems in order to convey messages in a variety of contexts (p.

Reference	Definition
	24)
Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000)	set of a <i>continua</i> of abilities that change throughout the lifetime of the individual according to context, medium, and content. Includes complex interrelated dimensions. This definition views literacy as a social practice
Reyes (2006)	encompasses all uses of language to think, speak, read, and write in multiple linguistic systems while considering the various cultural factors and experiences of the bilingual learner
Grosjean (2010)	those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives
Kabuto (2011)	biliteracy (lower case)-written form and structures of two languages
	Biliteracy (capital B)-complex social and cultural forces that give language meaning and give a person an identity as a speaker of one or more languages
Escamilla et al. (2014)	ability to read and write in more than one language

Note. Created with information taken from Reyes, I. (2006). Exploring connections between emergent biliteracy and bilingualism. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 6(3), 267-292.

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The concept of continua of biliteracy is important to understand as to clarify the complexity of the task. To explain, emergent bilinguals have different proficiencies depending on their circumstances. Some emergent bilinguals have been born here in the United States, or arrived as a child and are learning the home language and English simultaneously. Others who immigrate at an older age become sequential emergent bilinguals. Since the increase of the

number of emergent bilingual children has been happening for decades now in Texas, there is a vast variety of linguistic proficiencies. Some families keep their home language alive at different degrees while others struggle to keep it depending on many factors such as the frequency and context of usage (Grosjean, 2010).

For emergent bilingual students to become biliterate, they require a holistic biliteracy framework that addresses all linguistic domains. They also require instruction in oracy, reading, writing, and metalinguistics, “develops and nurtures, enhancing and accelerating language and content knowledge learning” (Escamilla et al., 2021, pg. 364). Thus, this type of instruction calls for the teacher to help students make cross-linguistic connections by reinforcing and extending knowledge of the concepts and linguistic skills without having to teach the lesson in two languages (Escamilla et al., 2021). Because the students’ linguistic repertoire is valued within this framework, and the home language is considered a resource and not a hindrance, it can be used to leverage learning in the target language. Thus, the need for translanguaging.

Translanguaging

The term translanguaging is the translation of the word *trawsieithu*, coined by Cen Williams who created a bilingual instructional strategy where students purposefully oscillated from one language to another, English and Welsh, in receptive and productive tasks (Williams, 2002). Colin Baker translated the term in 2001. Since then, various researchers have defined it in various ways. Some researchers define it as behaviors of emergent bilinguals, and others add to it the aspect of pedagogy. For example, Otheguy et al. (2015) delineate it as the observable and complex language practices of bilinguals/multilinguals. García (2017) define it as the linguistic behaviors of emergent bilinguals and adds that it is also the pedagogical approach that considers the language practices of bilinguals as one linguistic repertoire. She also

indicates that translanguaging can be used to leverage learning of both, content and language too. Similarly, McSwan (2017) believes in the concept of translanguaging as drawing from a linguistic repertoire that is not internally differentiated. Cummins (2021) uses the term translanguaging to describe multilingual individuals' interactions where there is a disregard for conventional boundaries of language. He adds that students pull from their full linguistic repertoires besides the dominant and that teachers can leverage learning in that manner (Cummins, 2021). Below I share Table 2.3 to summarize the definitions of the term.

Table 2.3

Definitions of Translanguaging

Reference	Definitions
Williams (2002)	planned and systematic use of two languages within the same lesson
Otherguy et al. (2015) García & Wei (2014)	observable and complex language practices of bilinguals/multilinguals
	pedagogical approach that considers the language practices of bilinguals as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages that can be used to leverage learning content and language
McSwan (2017)	multilingual perspective on translanguaging
	one linguistic repertoire from where features are chosen
	not internally undifferentiated grammar
Cummins (2021)	description of multilingual individuals' interactions disregarding conventional boundaries of language.

Reference	Definitions
	pedagogical approach where students can pull from their full linguistic repertoires to leverage learning

Note. Created with the definitions taken from the authors cited within the table.

The belief that language is strictly divided inside our brains, has been refuted (García & Wei, 2014). It is now clear that the person who knows more than one language has a linguistic repertoire that includes all they know regardless of language, which they use to make sense of the world around them. The definition that I used in this study is “the observable and complex language practices of bilinguals/multilinguals” that García promotes. The reason for the choice is that Readers Theater will be the focus of the study, and translanguaging will be an expected behavior and regular allowance where the students feel free to communicate however they see fit.

One of Vygotsky’s (Vygotsky & Kozulin, 2011) ideas indicates that language is essential for thought. Thus, if emergent bilingual students are not allowed to use their whole language repertoire, and in some cases the language in which they are most proficient, we are curtailing them from thinking fully. Allowing translanguaging is an act of respect towards others. As we acknowledge the great linguistic and cultural diversity in today’s U.S. schools it is logical to understand why translanguaging should be regular practice in every classroom. The type of class, whether bilingual or not, should not matter. In addition, since language is best learned when interacting with others, Vygotsky’s social constructivism theory supports this practice. His theory legitimizes the use of translanguaging, which is allowed in the researcher/teacher’s classroom as a regular and expected practice. Forbidding the use of a

language is symbolic violence. As teachers, our intentional actions, such as allowing translanguaging in our classrooms, dismantle dominant-based mandates that oftentimes are implicit.

Readers Theater

According to Coger and White (1982), Readers Theatre can be traced back to Greece. However, performances of Readers Theater began in the 1920s and were prominent in the 1940s. Back in 1945, a professional theater group in New York called themselves Readers Theatre, Inc. They produced the read version of the play Oedipus Rex. Their goal was “to give the people of New York an opportunity to witness performances of great dramatic works.” As mentioned in Chapter 1, during the 1960s it was used in colleges in speech classes. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Readers Theatre was under the umbrella of oral interpretations and was recommended for the use of teaching literature in high school (Fernandez, 1969). Later, Readers Theater eventually trickled down to the lower grades (Coger & White, 1982).

Coger and White (1982) define Readers Theater as:

a medium in which two or more oral interpreters employ vivid vocal and physical clues to cause an audience to see and hear characters expressing their attitudes toward an action so vitally that the literature becomes a living experience for the readers and for their audience, causing the audience to experience the literature. (p. 6)

Multiple researchers have had great results in using Readers Theatre to support the development of literacy. Its use has been beneficial specifically in the areas of reading fluency, comprehension, motivation and engagement, confidence, and language acquisition.

Fluency

Currently, the major proponents of Readers Theater for improving fluency are Timothy Rasinski and Chase Young, researchers who have consistently published on the subject since the 2000s. Fluency is the ability to read accurately, quickly, effortlessly, and with appropriate expression and meaning (Rasinski, 2003). In a 2017 article, Rasinski et al. mentioned that teachers often neglect the explicit teaching of fluency. Both have researched the need for explicit fluency instruction and have argued that it is important due to the correlation of fluency and comprehension. They have found, as many other researchers and practitioners, that the use of Readers Theater correlates to student gains in fluency (Garrett & O'Connor, 2010; Hamilton, 2018; Young & Rasinski, 2009). Clementi (2010), Fredericks (2011), and Mraz et al. (2013), have written articles on the great potential Readers Theater has to improve fluency. Readers Theater has been documented study after study as a useful strategy to increase fluency. This has been evidenced with investigations conducted in the United States in monolingual English classrooms, and even in other countries in Spanish, Malay, and Thai monolingual classrooms.

Ferrada Quezada (2021), in Chile, found that the use of Readers Theater promoted significant improvements in prosody for 8- to 10-year-olds that were identified as having reading difficulties. Garzón et al. (2008) had similar results in their study in Mexico with second graders, specifically in precision, accuracy, and automaticity. González (2015) in Spain, had similar results. Mohamedisa et al. (2013), in Malaysia with kindergarteners, Palomino-Bonifaz (2018), in Perú with first and second graders, and Young et al., (2019) had similar results.

There are domestic and international studies confirming the same results and more for English as a Foreign Language and ESL classes. Abdelgawad Ali (2020) found an increase in reading rate in his study; Lekwilai (2021) in Thailand found increased prosody and that it

correlated with comprehension. Mansouri & Darani (2016), in Iran, found improvements in fluency and lexical knowledge. Besides fluency, Myrset and Drew (2016) in Norway found significant gains in pronunciation and word recognition gains. Thienkalaya and Chusanachoti (2020) found significant improvement in oral reading prosody in undergraduates. Tian and Wu (2012) in Taiwan with junior high students and Tsou (2011) found an improved perception of pronunciation and fluency. According to these studies, the use of Readers Theater fostered fluency in the students who participated. Two of the studies mentioned are explained in detail next.

Garrett and O'Connor (2010) studied the implementation of Readers Theater within three rural elementary schools in the southeast of the United States, specifically, on four special education classrooms that served students from K through fifth grade. The four educators varied in experience from 1 to 14 years of experience. One of the teachers implemented Readers Theater in a small group setting within her kindergarten inclusive classroom, particularly for students who were eligible for special education. Seven out of her 15 students were identified as having a learning disability or a developmental delay in reading. The special education teacher was intending to reinforce the individualized education plan recommendations in the areas of print concepts, letter identification, and sight word recognition. The teacher used a big book of a teacher-made script familiar to the students with the script color coded. The students chorally read parts according to gender. As time went by and students improved, the teacher began to assign individual roles. Their weekly schedule went as follows: On day one, the teacher and students read the script together. On the second day to the fourth, the students practiced reading the script independently and integrated movements for their performance for ten minutes each day. On Fridays, they would perform for the rest of the class or for other classes within their

school. The teachers used district benchmarks to gauge student improvements. All students improved in letter recognition, text level, fluency, and comprehension. The students with learning disabilities made positive and consistent progress in the classroom. The average gain was eight reading levels. It is important to mention that the effect of Readers Theater cannot be separated from the English language arts instruction the students received. Readers Theater was implemented throughout the school year. Garrett and O'Connor (2010) found in their research that the use of Readers Theater can help develop additional aspects besides fluency in reading, such as comprehension and overall achievement.

In an article, Young and Rasinski (2009) reported on a classroom action research study on the effects of Readers Theatre to improve fluency and overall reading achievement. One of the authors, Young, implemented Readers Theater as a regular part of his balanced reading curriculum in a Texas second grade classroom of 29 students, of which nine were emergent bilinguals. Young began on Mondays with 20-25 minutes mini lessons to introduce the script, then the students would practice. This followed with reading stations related to the Readers Theater script they were using that week. The rest of the week they would practice five to 10 minutes, and on Fridays they would perform it. This was done within a 90-minute reading block. The children were put in groups of three to six. The fluency rate for his students that year increased by 64.9 words per minute, compared to the previous year's gain of 29.1 words per minute, when Readers Theater was not part of the daily literacy block. This included students with reading difficulties. Along with fluency, their word recognition and prosody improved as well.

Comprehension and Academic Gains

Young et al.'s (2019) quasi-experimental study supports Garret and O'Connor's claims on better comprehension. They studied the implementation of Readers Theater in K-5 special education students for 18 weeks in three different districts in south central United States. Three classrooms were designated as the treatment group and four classrooms were the control groups. The treatment group comprised 38 students of which eight were ELLs, 15 were identified as at risk, and two were students in special education. They chose the participants by taking various statistical methods to match them to have similar characteristics in both the control and the treatment group to get a balanced group. They also implemented a new format to use Readers Theater with the goal of enhancing vocabulary development and reading comprehension. Each Readers Theater session consisted of 15-30 minutes Monday through Friday. On Mondays, the teacher would model reading the script, and discuss his/her performance with the students. The students generated questions, chose scripts, and located unfamiliar words to discuss on Tuesday. Also on Tuesday, the students choral read the scripts, and with the help of the teacher, developed summaries. On Wednesday, the teacher assisted and had the students rehearse in a small group setting, students assign parts, and the teacher conferred with the different groups. The students also drew boxes around interesting words. On Thursday, all groups rehearsed and then retold the script in their own words to a partner of another group. Finally on Fridays, the students taught an audience of classmates, parents, and visitors the previously unknown words, and then, performed the scripts. Afterwards, the students discussed the scripts and how they could improve on them. The time spent on Readers Theater's lessons and practice was 15-30 minutes daily. The results of this study indicate that the students made significant gains in decoding scores and word

knowledge, and greater gains in reading comprehension than when using more traditional methods (Young et al., 2019).

In another study, Griffith and Rasinski (2004) asserted that teachers found that implementing the practice of Readers Theater as a strategy to improve fluency resulted in consistent gains of more than one year in comprehension. The implementation of 10 weeks in a fourth-grade classroom in rural North Carolina had a great impact on her struggling readers too. Four Title I students within her class experienced a 2.5-year increase in silent reading comprehension.

Vasinda and Mcleod (2011) also reported remarkable and measurable gains in comprehension. Within a sample of 100 students of second and third graders, 35 were identified as struggling readers. These students improved their reading levels from being initially in a range of non-readers to first-grade to mid-kinder to second-grade comprehension range. In other words, their individual gains ranged from one semester to three years of growth in only 10 weeks (Vasinda & Mcleod, 2011). Myrset and Drew (2016) also experienced similar results within an ESL class of sixth-grade students in Norway, where they exhibited gains in pronunciation, word recognition, fluency, and vocabulary growth, which helps comprehension, after the intense implementation of Readers Theater with narrative text for only 1 week.

Motivation and Engagement

Clark et al. (2009) conducted a mixed methods study focusing on three fourth grade students for 8 weeks. The purpose was to examine fluency development. However, motivation and engagement became a blatant factor in each case. Each of the students who were chosen had areas of strength and weakness. One student's reading was considered low, a second student's reading was considered average but inconsistent, and the last student was considered an above

average reader, but his accuracy was lower than his expression. The researchers used scripts that were interesting to the students, nevertheless, each character was a different reading level. As the students participated in the repeated readings for practice, their confidence grew and so their motivation and engagement. The first student's confidence was visible when one of his classmates was absent and he offered to read his part in addition to his. His increased confidence and motivation carried over in readings other than Readers Theater. The second student who reported being nervous and embarrassed to read in front of others, became confident enough to coach others in their readings and to also receive his peers' constructive feedback. His confidence and motivation transferred to class participation too. The third student also increased his confidence, motivation, and engagement shown by how he developed leadership skills when helping others.

Myrset and Drew (2016) reported an increase in motivation and confidence in reading aloud in their 1-week case study with sixth graders in EFL classes. The student participants were of mixed reading proficiencies, including some that were identified for dyslexia support services. The researchers reported that students practiced at home and school and were engaged all week. Even though the focus of the study was on pronunciation and comprehension, the students mentioned it was fun and that they could not wait for the performance day. The teachers delineated an increase in confidence and motivation.

Qannubil et al. (2018) also found in their qualitative study that Omani ESL ninth graders' motivation increased with Readers Theater. Killeen (2014) expressed in the *Teacher Librarian* that Readers Theater is an engaging strategy that emphasizes oral language development and offers teachers the unique opportunity to simultaneously address a variety of grade-level standards. Sylla and Müller (2018) also asserted that the Readers Theater could be enhanced by

allowing students to use digital media effects according to what happens in the text. She shared that the students were very engaged and motivated in her study. In Vasinda and Mcleod (2011) with the addition of podcasting, the students were so motivated that they took over the recording. Dominguez and Gutierrez (2015) when talking about Readers Theater stated: “when skills are embedded within rich, meaningful and well-designed literacy practices, youth can engage with and master these skills far more quickly and in more compelling ways than through isolated skill, direct instruction” (p. 140). Young et al. (2019) documented in their study that their students enjoyed the strategy and that it was a valid reason to do repeated readings to help with automaticity and subsequently with comprehension, once they did not have to worry about decoding. The students in Flynn’s (2004) study found the experience authentic due to bringing together arts content and reading while writing curriculum-based scripts in a collaborative medium.

Embedded Strategies That Fulfill Emergent Bilingual Student Needs

Fundamentally embedded within Readers Theater, we find cooperative learning (Gualdron & Castillo, 2018), which facilitates discussion among peers to clarify concepts (Haag, 2018), vocabulary development (Mansouri & Darani, 2016), and the building of background knowledge. We also find the space for practice and application of the script. If the groupings are done heterogeneously, the space opens up for comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982), which is the term used to explain that a person will acquire language when the task is just barely above their comprehension level for the purposes of scaffolding learning. Many of these strategies are used in sheltered instruction (Echevarria et al., 2012), which has proven to benefit emergent bilinguals in the regular classroom setting.

Uribe's (2019) mixed-methods study with second to fifth-graders mentions that differentiation happened organically in her study, where she used curriculum-based Readers Theater. She explains that students can divide the text into smaller chunks within the Readers Theater process. They benefit from hearing modeling from the teacher and peers and have opportunities for repeated reading to gain mastery. They are exposed to various complexities of assignments and yet can work as a team, all of which make it an ideal strategy for multilingual students who also have different proficiencies in their literacy. Tsou (2011) found similar results in his mixed methods study with Taiwanese students learning English, highlighting that differentiation happens naturally. Gualdron and Castillo (2018) also reported that in their study, Readers Theater allowed for scaffolding, as Tsou (2011) did in his.

Furthermore, Kabilan and Kamaruddin (2010) found in their mixed methods investigation in an EFL class of ninth graders that besides the aforementioned findings, critical thinking was also developing. The students understood the characters and were giving attention to detail, which increased their cultural understanding, and problem-solving skills. If we could reproduce these results with lower elementary, it would be most beneficial for emergent bilingual students to set them up for success from the very beginning of their schooling.

Affective

Gualdron and Castillo (2018) in Colombia, conducted a content-based methodology for second language acquisition study using eTheater (their version of curriculum-based Readers Theater). They found that the students' affective filter was lowered and that they had an increase in production and comprehension of second language skills and of intercultural competence. Killeen (2014) seconded that statement since the students in her Readers Theater study had their fears of public speaking decreased. Garrett and O'Connor (2010) reported their students had an

increase in self-esteem, and that the authentic and social nature of the approach enhanced social development, changing student attitudes and beliefs about reading.

Table 2.4

Readers Theater Research

Area	Studies
Fluency	Abdelgawad Ali, 2020; Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Chou, 2013; Ferrada Quezada, 2021; Garrett & O'Connor, 2010; González, 2015; Hamilton, 2018; Kennedy, 2020; Lekwilai, 2021; Mansouri & Darani, 2016; Myrset & Drew, 2016; Nageldinger & Young, 2014; Rasinski, 2003; Thienkalaya & Chusanachoti, 2020; Suggs, 2019; Young et al., 2021
Comprehension and Academic Gains	Griffith and Rasinski, 2004; Greenfader et al., 2017; González, 2015; Gualdron & Castillo, 2018; Kennedy, 2020; Talaigua Tilbe & Julio, 2016; Vasinda & Mcleod, 2011; Young et al., 2020
Motivation and Engagement	Bruckman-Laudenslager, 2019; Dill, 2020; Fraihat, 2019; Greenfader et al., 2017; Haag, 2018; Hautala et al., 2022; Myrset & Drew, 2016; Nageldinger & Young, 2014; Qannubil et al. 2018; Sylla & Müller, 2018; Talaigua Tilbe & Julio, 2016; Vasinda & Mcleod, 2011
Embedded Strategies that Fulfill Emergent Bilingual Student Needs: ESL Strategies	Gualdron & Castillo, 2018; Haag, 2018; Mansouri & Darani, 2016; Uribe, 2019
Embedded Strategies that Fulfill Emergent Bilingual Student Needs: Bilingual/Dual Language	Ruiz, 2014; Greenfader et al., 2017
Affective	Abdelgawad Ali, 2020; Cross, 2017; Garrett & O'Connor, 2010; Gualdron & Castillo, 2018; Killeen, 2014; Lin, 2015; Myrset & Drew, 2016

Note. The table shows a good representation of the research found. However, it is not exhaustive.

As shown, the literature review provides evidence of Readers Theater research with emergent bilinguals in the contexts of monolingual English classrooms, monolingual classrooms of other languages, including Spanish, Malay, and Turkish, and ESL/EFL classrooms. For teachers who may be required to teach in a Spanish bilingual transitional model, where they teach in the home language first and then slowly transfer to English, I believe it is pertinent to mention that the studies in the context of monolingual Spanish found the use of Readers Theater beneficial. In Ferrada Quezada's (2021) study in Chile, she found that students improved their fluency and prosody. Garzón et al. (2008) in Mexico, found that students improved their fluency, comprehension, and motivation, and that the differentiation happened organically. Gonzalez (2015) in Spain and Palomino-Bonifaz (2018) in Peru, noticed student gains in fluency. Talaigua Tilbe and Julio (2016) in Colombia, detected the lowering of errors in inferences, student confidence, and that the analysis and interpretation involved helped them make connections with their surroundings. Besides, the students were able to discern the relevant information in the text. In short, similar results to studies in English and other languages.

Studies in Bilingual Classrooms

Only three studies were found in the context of a bilingual classroom, of which one was an unpublished master's thesis (Lee, 2010), another was a chapter in a book that addressed Readers Theater with the use of translanguaging for grade levels third through fifth (Ruiz, 2014) for the purpose of teaching critical literacy. The last one was a study addressing kindergarten and first grade that investigated engagement and comprehension (Greenfader et al., 2017), although its focus was on supporting teachers with arts-based strategies.

A gap lies in the research of Readers Theater in the intersection of the bilingual classroom context and lower grades than second grade, and this study addresses both, possibly benefitting bilingual teachers of early childhood children to determine if using Readers Theater with emergent bilinguals who are also emergent readers, is a viable strategy to use.

In Table 2.5, I share information about the sources I found which include the type of class and type of research methodology. Of all the sources found, only two studies were in the context of bilingual education, but only one of those was in lower elementary grades.

Table 2.5

Readers Theater Studies and Practitioner Articles

	Monolingual English	Monolingual Spanish, Malay, Turkish	EFL/ESL	Bilingual
Experimental	13	1	5	1
Mixed Methods	4	3	5	0
Qualitative	6	2	5	1
Other	38	4	8	0
Totals	61(19)	10 (4)	23(1)	2 (1)

Note. Reputable studies found, not encompassing. Most studies are from upper elementary and beyond. The numbers on parenthesis () show studies on lower elementary grades.

In Table 2.6, I share the studies and practitioner articles found by elementary grade levels. As it can be seen, there were 27 sources that addressed kindergarten and first grade. Only

Greenfader et al.'s (2017) addressed bilingual education, but the focus was on teacher support when integrating arts-based strategies and not on student experiences.

Table 2.6

Elementary Grades Addressed in Studies and Practitioner Articles

	K-1st	2nd	3rd-5th
Monolingual English	19	15	19
Monolingual Spanish	4	2	5
Monolingual Other	2	0	0
EFL/ESL	1	1	5
Bilingual	1	0	1
Totals	27	18	30

Note. Although not all encompassing, it reflects most of the research since 1967.

Summary

In this chapter, I shared that social constructivism theory and language acquisition theories are the theoretical perspectives that act as foundations for this study. I also shared what it is to be bilingual, the needs of this population within the context of U.S. schools, and the important role translanguaging has in aiding individuals to become free from oppression. Henceforth, I support with findings of investigations and articles based on research, that Readers Theater is an instructional strategy with great potential to fulfill the language and academic needs

of emergent bilingual students. The participants in the various studies were of diverse variety of grades and were in different classroom contexts: monolingual English and other languages (most studies found), English as a Foreign Language, ESL classes, and bilingual (only three studies). Most of the studies were completed within a United States context, yet I have included various that are international. The areas in which the students in the investigations showed improvements were fluency, comprehension, and motivation and engagement. The strategy has been shown to lower the affective filter, minimizing anxiety by providing an environment of embedded scaffolding within heterogeneous groups, when they rehearse together and collaborate in the process. In addition, Readers Theater is deemed as one that is full of approaches that are optimal for emergent bilingual students' linguistic and academic development.

In the next chapter, I will share my methodology, including my positionality, the context of the study, its design, the timeline, data sources, and collection procedures, and close with a summary.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was to explore the use of Readers Theater through the experiences of emergent bilingual students in a first-grade bilingual classroom. Studies available on the use of Readers Theater in the lower grades (PreK, K, first) regarding emergent bilingual students are limited. Emergent bilingual students are one of the largest groups within U.S. schools. Their historically large academic gap and dropout rate due to language hegemonic practices of the educational system, highlight the tremendous need of academic support for this population. For that reason, all efforts toward accelerating and improving the complex process of language acquisition while learning content are paramount. Thus, it is critical for practitioners to employ instructional strategies that afford opportunities to practice all language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This action can lead to growth of student linguistic repositories, and more importantly, understanding within different contexts. The research question that guided this research was, How do children in a first-grade bilingual classroom, experience Readers Theater?

In this chapter, I begin by focusing on the rationale for the research design to illustrate its fit to a study that involves emergent bilingual students within a bilingual classroom, mine. Then, I introduce myself as the participant researcher/teacher by sharing my origin and life experiences, which make me a suitable investigator for this specific project. In addition, I explain my reasons to have pursued this investigation and the biases I may bring. I follow with a description of the research context of my study with the purpose of specificity as to allow other researchers and/or teachers to gage the transferability to similar situations. Then, I explain the research design and rationale for the data collection sources. I continue with a timeline, study

procedures in detail including data sources, and data analysis, and close the chapter with a summary.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Creswell and Creswell (2018) define qualitative research as an inquiry process where specific methodologies are used to explore a social or human problem with the goal of better understanding. This type of research study is conducted in a natural setting, gives a holistic and complex picture of what is being studied, involves the analysis of behaviors, conversations, and words, and participant perspectives in depth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, a qualitative research study seemed appropriate for this study because I, as the researcher/teacher, collected data at the natural site, a bilingual classroom, where Readers Theater was used as part of a comprehensive language arts curriculum. Using qualitative methodology allowed me to scrutinize the experiences of emergent bilingual students.

Rationale for Case Study

A case study is the study of a single case, complex and of particular context, for which the goal is to “understand its activity within important circumstances,” where nuances, chronology within context, and the individual as a whole are emphasized (Stake, 1995, p. xi). It is similar to other forms of qualitative research in the pursuit of meaning and understanding, in that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, that it is an inductive investigation, and that the end product is richly descriptive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using a qualitative case study, allowed the in-depth description of the case using methodological tools that had the potential to augment the sought after understanding. The methodological tools brought to focus the concept studied and the process of how it transpired, considered the environment, background of the students, and their varied proficiencies in language literacy. This

approach fostered a deeper understanding (Saldaña, 2011) within a bilingual classroom natural social setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) from the perspective of the researcher participant (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019) and also from the students.

I used a qualitative case study design based on a social constructivist paradigm. In social constructivism, Vygotsky (1978) theorized that children develop their knowledge from interacting with others and that what they can do with the help of another person is the ZPD. Working in this zone provides opportunities to learn at their individual level conversations with peers that help become scaffolds (Wood et al., 1976). My first-grade bilingual students needed this scaffolding due to the multiple language and literacy proficiency levels present in the classroom. The instructional choice of the use of Readers Theater has collaborative learning opportunities embedded within that permitted interactions with peers for the purpose of literacy learning.

Researcher Positionality

As the researcher, it is important to share who I am since my experiences influence the way I interpret the world. I am a U.S. citizen from Puerto Rico, who after taking classes in English throughout all her schooling prior to college, thought knew the English language proficiently. Once in the United States, as I began attending college, I realized that it was not so. I enrolled in ESL classes that did not address my linguistic needs and thus, I was forced to take over my own learning with the aid of my college textbooks, a Spanish-English dictionary, and people I encountered in everyday situations. I wanted to study musical dance theater but settled for modern dance due to the fear that my lack of language proficiency produced. After graduation, and not having success finding employment in dance, I listened to the advice of friends who shared with me the need for bilingual teachers in Texas.

I moved to Texas and became certified to teach emergent bilingual students and quickly realized the importance of my job and the expertise that comes with having past experiences that are the same or similar to my students. Now after 19 years of teaching emergent bilingual/ESL students in North Carolina and Texas, earning a master's degree in teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, a Graduate Biliteracy Certificate, and continuing to pursue a Ph.D. in Reading with an emphasis in bilingual education, I can say I truly understand the emergent bilingual predicament here in the United States. Since I know through my own experience the needs of emergent bilingual students, and the lack of equity in the school system, I am interested in helping emergent bilingual students in their educational journey to reach their full potential, so they do not have to settle for less than what they are meant to do.

I am cognizant of the tremendous impact of literacy in learning about the world and in being a responsible and contributing global citizen, and thus, I am always in the search for strategies that have the potential to accelerate learning for emergent bilingual students. My possible biases will most likely be related to having an arts background which may incline me towards preferring a similar to theater approach and to equity and social justice since I have experienced racism while living in the United States.

Research Context

The context of this study was a first-grade emergent bilingual education class of students, in a Spanish/English one-way dual language classroom at an independent school district, within the North Dallas Fort-Worth area. At the Title I school where I work, the first-grade team comprises three monolingual, two one-way dual language, and one two-way dual language classrooms. This study was conducted within the language arts block of one of the one-way dual language classrooms, where the students are taught in English for math and special areas, and in

Spanish for all other subjects (language arts, science, and social studies). All the students in the classroom were of Hispanic heritage, some born in the United States, and others born in other countries that later became immigrants. Most were exposed exclusively to the Spanish language at home. A few were exposed to English and Spanish equally or mostly to English. Others were newcomers, making the class a pool of a multiplicity of proficiencies in language and literacy.

Access to the Research Site

I followed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures required by the university and the school district where I work. As part of the process, the district sent notification of the approval of the study to the school principal. As the bilingual teacher of record of one of the one-way dual language classrooms, I had access to potential participants. Conducting research in my own classroom, where I already knew the students' strengths and areas of need, afforded me the opportunity to conduct an in-depth study that shed light on how emergent bilingual students, who are also emergent readers, experienced Readers Theater. The suggested use of Readers Theater and its related activities was already part of a comprehensive language arts curriculum in my classroom in which the entire class participated.

Participant Selection

In this case study, I employed criterion purposeful sampling, where the potential participants fulfilled defined criteria pre-established by the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The participants in this study met the following criteria: be emergent bilinguals, first graders, Spanish speakers, and of various proficiency levels in language and literacy. I studied my one-way dual language first-grade bilingual class where the students ranged from 6 to 7 years old, all Hispanic, and were emergent bilinguals in a *continua* of proficiencies (Hornberger & Cummins, 2003) in Spanish and/or English. All the students in my classroom, whether study

participants or not, were going to participate in Readers Theater lessons and related activities as part of the regular instructional activities within the language arts block. I collected data from all the students since they all returned a signed parental consent form to participate in the study. I, as their teacher, was a participant observer in the study.

Table 3.1 shows basic data from each of the students. In Chapter 4, I share details of their behavior and attitudes during the study to give you a more holistic view of who the students are.

Table 3.1

Summary of Participants' Basic Data

Student	Heritage	Language Dominance	BOY EDL	EOY EDL
Justin	Mexico	English	Emergent	E
José	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	E
Nelson	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	E
Yadira	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	N
Samantha	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	J
Yael	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	J
Janet	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	F
Dana	Mexico	Spanish	C	L
Mireya	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	B

Student	Heritage	Language Dominance	BOY EDL	EOY EDL
Joaquín	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	B
Sandra	Mexico	Spanish	H	M
Mónica	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	J
Javier	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	Emergent
Adela	Mexico	Spanish	F	K
Fabiola	Mexico	English	Emergent	J
David	Mexico	Spanish	Emergent	J

Note. This information was gathered from existent classroom assessment data.

This section includes a rationale for the data sources, the timeline of the study, the instructional choices, data collection and management, and the data analysis. It ends with a conclusion. It is important to note that I used Spanish for all research and instructional activities, however, I encouraged the children to use their whole linguistic repertoire as I always had done previously.

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

Rationale for Data Collection Sources

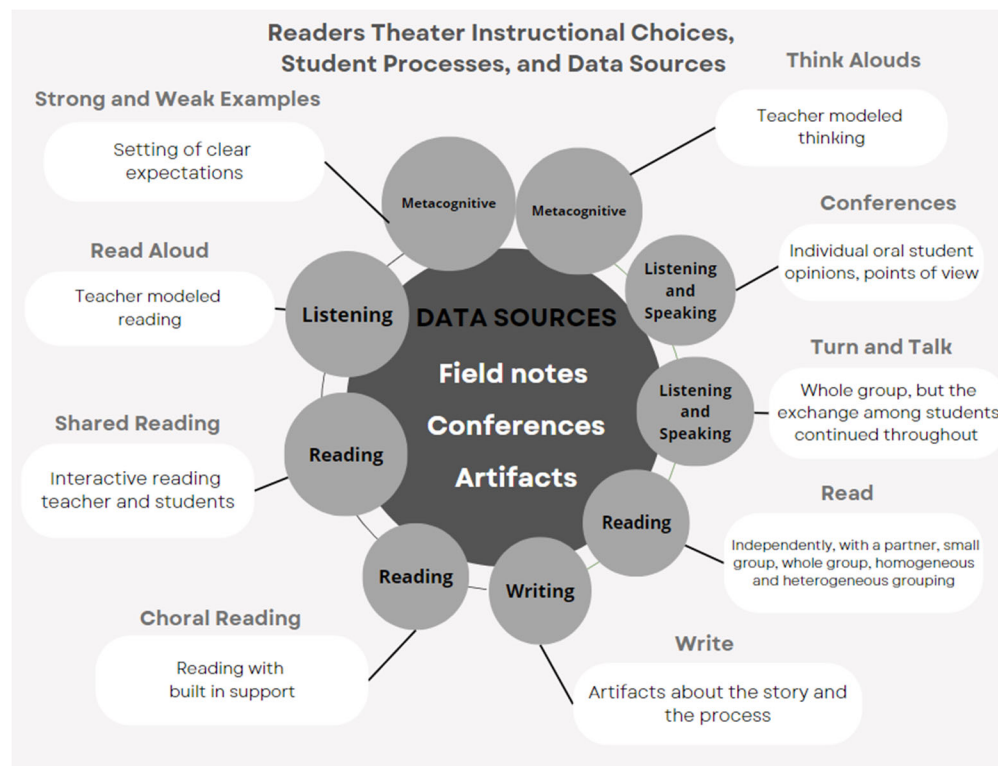
Richards and Morse (2013) state that the goal of qualitative case study research is the deep understanding of a social situation or process by focusing on how it transpires in a case or cases, and that it is defined by the location and focus of the study. To understand at that level, the data sources should provide comprehensive information that can help answer the research

question. That alignment is what is called methodological congruence (Richards & Morse, 2013). This alignment fixated my attention on gathering only relevant data. This process called for a systematic approach due to the complexity of qualitative data (Miles et al., 2020).

In this study, most student participants participated in the processes of speaking, listening, reading, writing, interpreting, making connections, analyzing, interacting, cooperating, negotiating meanings, and using metacognition, while engaged in lessons and activities that were provided as part of this study. First, the instructional choices that supported the student participants' processes were the use of strong and weak examples, shared reading, choral reading, vocabulary discussion, think alouds, and turn and talk. Some of the student participants met with me for one-on-one conferences. In addition, the students were placed in heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings to practice reading the script. They also wrote about the story read and the process of using Readers Theater. Figure 3.1 shows an overview of instructional choices and the processes through which most members of the classroom environment were engaged. All the linguistic processes are connected with a thin line to portray iterative language use being a medium through which the students mediate meaning with the help of the instructional processes set in place. The data collected was drawn from observations, conferences, and artifacts represented by a large dark circle in the middle of the figure.

Figure 3.1

Overview of the Instructional Choices, Student Processes, and Data Sources



Research Timeline

This part of the dissertation explains the timeline for the study, which was executed in three stages.

Stage I Preparation. While waiting for IRB approval, I searched and found an already-made script titled *La Tortuga y la Liebre*, an adaptation of the fable *The Tortoise and the Hare*. I re-typed the text to make the spaces between the words and the space between lines noticeable to minimize the students getting lost in the text. The text was available at three different levels of difficulty. I chose the moderate one. Then I made enough copies for all the students and highlighted different roles on different scripts, *narrador*, *liebre*, and *tortuga* (narrator, hare, and tortoise). This action resulted in a balanced number of scripts per role.

Once the IRB approved the study, I emailed the students' parents explaining the study and the risks involved, and attached the consent form in English and Spanish. A hard copy of the email and aforementioned forms were also sent home with each child in their daily red folders. I asked the parents to return it signed, if they were interested in their child participating. All the students brought the consent forms signed the very next day in their folders.

Stage II Use of Readers Theater in Language Arts. This stage was the active part of the study, which I conducted for 7 days after receiving IRB approval and the consent forms signed. All the process was done during my language arts block and in the Spanish language. I began collecting data in Stage II, and simultaneously began analyzing it. This was an iterative task.

Day 1. On the first day, I explained to the students that we would use a different kind of text called a script and how it differed from others. I continued explaining that I would read a portion of the text aloud in two ways, and they were to tell me which way they thought was best and why. I then used the strategy from Assessment for Learning (Chapuis & Stiggins, 2014), strong and weak examples, to introduce the script. In this strategy, I show the students an example of what is expected and considered quality work and another example of what is considered poor performance, not necessarily in that order. I read a text portion without prosody the first time (weak example) and then with prosody the second time (strong example). They responded that the second time was better because it was not boring. I responded that that was the way we needed to read and that we would practice with this text called a script.

I then read aloud the title of the story, and I asked if anyone knew what a *liebre* (hare) was. Most students responded no. One student, Nelson, shared that he thought it was a rabbit, that he had seen the story in video form, that it was white, and that he ran fast. Then, I did a read-

aloud of the script. We stopped at the same student's request to clarify some terms. I paused to clarify briefly and then continued reading. After I was done reading, we discussed vocabulary words for which clarification was needed but also terms that the students did not know the meaning of when I asked them for an explanation, such as *meta*, *liebre*, *retar*, *desistir*, *frondoso*, *veloz*, and *constante* (finish line, challenge, desist, thick). I gave them time to test drive the script individually and later provided some time to read it with a partner. In general, the students were engaged, and as appropriate for their age, they became distracted at minimal moments. One student, however, chose not to participate.

Day 2. On the second day, we choral read the script, asking the students to repeat again when their repetition got fuzzy. I stopped at certain points for think-alouds and questions. For example, I asked, “We noticed that the tortoise did not give up, so what type of tortoise would that make her?” I asked them to turn to a partner and talk about it and afterward chose a few students to share their thoughts. After we finished reading the script, I allowed the students to choose a character. Then, I asked them to practice their script in heterogeneous small groups (each group had one role per character). I balanced the groups, ensuring each group had heterogeneous reading levels. Mostly, every student was engaged in reading and collaborating with others. One student, however, stopped reading and seemed upset. I understood that behavior as an indication that he found the text difficult and helped him.

When observing student interactions and their reading of the script, I realized that the script format, written to rhyme, was a stumbling block for the students because it was not how people normally speak. Besides, there were too many vocabulary words with which they were not familiar. Thus, I modified the script by eliminating some unknown words and changing some sentences to more natural expressions that better matched the students’ oral language. This way,

it would be easier for the students to predict the upcoming words and control the language structure when reading.

Day 3. I began the class by explaining to the students that I had made some simple changes to the script to make it easier to decode and read. I divided the class into homogeneous groups per character (three groups) so they could rehearse their parts with classmates of various reading levels. I stopped toward the middle of the lesson to remind the readers to follow the reading with their eyes even though they were not the ones orally reading at that time. The students who did not follow the script when others were reading at a particular moment, were José, Mireya, Justin, Joaquín, Javier, and Samantha. It is possible this was due to reading difficulties and the prolonged effort to read. Another explanation could be that the students wanted to be prepared and not be caught off guard to read when their turn came around again. Afterward, we practiced as a group, where each character read in unison. I sometimes stopped to ask, "If this happens to this character, how would they probably feel? How would they act and speak if that is how they feel?" Then, I let them practice some more.

During this whole group practice, most students did well. However, one student seemed to be having difficulty and required additional support. I sat to work one-on-one with him and helped him read. He read two-letter words somewhat better when compared to the two previous days. Longer words were difficult for him to figure out. He seemed to have difficulty figuring out new words and needed my help. The session centered on practicing their parts, and all actively participated.

Day 4. The focus this day was on prosody or expression. As we talked about it, I modeled why I would need to go faster or slower, change my facial gestures that reflect in the voice, and when it could be appropriate to laugh. Then, I provided time to rehearse. All students were

actively participating. The student who was having difficulty was able to participate with my help.

Day 5. I began the session by reviewing what we did the previous day and how the characters would speak according to what was happening in the story. I had asked the previous day, “De qué manera debe hablar la tortuga? De qué manera debe hablar la liebre? De qué manera tiene que hablar el narrador?” (How should the tortoise speak? How should the hare speak? How should the narrator speak?) After the students talked about it amongst themselves and then shared it with the whole group, I asked them about their thoughts regarding how we were learning reading. We followed the turn-and-talk procedure again.

Some of the answers were as follows. Nelson shared, “Bien, están leyendo más.” (Good, they are reading more.). Mónica added, “Estamos leyendo muy bien.” (We are reading very well.). José expressed, “Feliz. Porque estamos haciendo turnos.” (Happy, because we are taking turns.). Janet said, “Feliz porque todos están leyendo.” (Happy, because everyone is reading.) Then I asked Mireya to share her preference. Did she prefer this type of text or another, and why? She was silent for a few seconds and then said, “éste...porque puedo leer un poquito más.” (This one..., because I can read a little more.). Javier did not respond when I asked him for his opinion. He just smiled and said, “No sé” (I don’t know.).

I subsequently asked what they thought about reading with others. José answered that in this type of reading, “No puedes hablar.” (You cannot speak). I interpreted this comment as the inability to talk because you have to pay attention to know when you will be reading. Nelson added, “No hay memorizarte” (You do not memorize.). In other words, memorizing is unnecessary because you can read it. He added, “Te molestan cuando lees otro tipo de texto.” (They bother you when you read another type of text.). These are metacognitive comments on

the process. Adela and Dana countered that they preferred to read “por su cuenta, para no desconcentrarse.” (on your own, so you do not deconcentrate.) When reading a script versus another type of text, which one could help you and why? There was complete silence for a few seconds. Yadira said reading “por su cuenta” (on your own) would be better for her “Poque nadie te molesta” (Cause nobody bothers you; The student did not say the word because correctly.). She expressed that she prefers to read alone. Nelson said it would help him better to read with others “porque le pueden ayudar los otros cuando algo esta muy difcil” (because others can help when something is too difficult). I asked out loud: “Has anyone helped you read a difficult word that, without their help, you would not be able to read it?” Yael said Nelson helped him. Dana said “Yo le ayudé a Janet” (I helped Janet.). Yadira said she helped Dana, and Nelson said he helped Justin.

Then, I provided time to practice. I told them that, at this point, each of them was responsible for following the script and did not need to tell someone when it was their turn to read. I explained that we needed to practice as if we were performing it for Mr. Reyes’s class. All “narradores” (narrators) read together, all “tortugas” (tortoises) read together, and all “liebres” (hares) did too. At times, they would catch each other telling the next group that was supposed to read that it was their turn. Others would say, “¡No, la maestra dijo que no podemos decirles!” (No, the teacher said we could not tell them!). While they were reading, I worked with Joaquín one-on-one and decided to rehearse repeatedly just a chunk of text and not worry about reading the whole script. That decision helped in great measure. He responded better, as shown by his willingness to put effort into reading.

At the end of the session, I asked them how we could do better. I explained that I thought they could not pronounce the words accurately because they were reading too fast. Adela said,

“Algunas personas estaban hablando” (Some people were talking). She was trying to explain the reason they were not being as successful. Then I asked about what were the positive things that were happening. Diana said that “las tortugas hicieron unas palabras bien” (The tortoises did some words good.). Adela shared, “Algunas personas leyeron muy bien.” (Some people read really well.). I asked, did they include the laughs? Dana responded, “No, poco, ...se nos olvidó” (No, a little...we forgot.)

After the rehearsal, I asked my students to write about anything related to what we were doing. I said, “Pueden escribir sobre la historia, cosas que pasaron en la historia. Pueden escribir sobre lo que hemos estado haciendo con Teatro del Lector (Readers Theater), el proceso, lo que hemos estado haciendo aquí en la clase.” (You can write about the story, things that happened in the story. You can write about what we have been doing with Readers Theater, the process, what we have been doing here in class.). The students began writing. Some finished, and others had to leave what they did not finish for the next day. The majority of students included many details in their drawings and also wrote. Some wrote about the story, specifically, retells, summaries, particular scenes, and character feelings. Others wrote about what we were doing in class and made drawings of themselves and their classmates holding the scripts in the front of the room.

Day 6. I provided time for the students to practice, but this time with a different character than what they had been practicing. I thought I could see if they would try to speak with a different intonation according to what the new character probably felt. This day, when rehearsing the script, the students were less interested in following what their peers were reading. They were looking somewhere else, distracted, and then went back to their parts. Some knew if they were next, and others had to take a few seconds to find out they were next. This made it so that not everyone was reading at the same time, even though they were the same character.

I sent the students afterward to their tables to write about how the characters felt and why. Some students just continued writing what they had started the day before. The ones who had finished their work the day before wrote more. Even though some already knew how to work independently, talking to others seemed to help them formulate their ideas.

Students who struggled with the reading became quieter and quieter, almost whispering. These students also struggled with the writing. The students who had difficulty paying attention needed to have the instructions repeated various times so they could continue writing. Joaquín tried to have someone else do the writing for him. I explained he was the one who was going to have to do it. He sat trying to write something. However, he got distracted by a classmate. The students with higher literacy proficiency wrote quickly and with ease. Students with mid-range literacy proficiency worked with relative ease.

In general, they produced better quality responses in writing than when they responded orally to questions. They did not expand orally even after being asked more questions, prompted, or given examples. Writing things down seemed to give their ideas permanence to then think about other things to include without losing their initial thoughts.

Day 7. On the last day, the students rehearsed the script once before Mr. Reyes's students came to our classroom to serve as an audience. Once Mr. Reyes's students came, I explained to them what we were doing and that we were grateful they would be our audience. The performance began with my students reading their part in unison with others who had the same part. The students seemed nervous, as shown by how low their voices were compared to when we rehearsed alone in the classroom. They were focused, and even the one who usually got distracted made efforts to read. After the performance, we asked Mr. Reyes's students to share their feelings about how it went. They acted shy, but some eventually responded, "Good",

without expanding their opinions. Then, after Mr. Reyes's students left, I asked my students to share their thoughts about the performance.

Stage III Data Collection. From the first implementation day, I began gathering student data through field notes from observations. The task of being a teacher participant and a researcher simultaneously proved strenuous. I began doing individual conferences with the students on day four and received minimal feedback orally from the students. Therefore, I asked the students to answer in writing the following questions. What happened in the story? How did the characters feel? What are we doing with Readers Theater? How do you feel about us using Readers Theater in the classroom? The students produced a more expanded answer in writing. In general, they made detailed pictures of events of the story and also about what they were doing in class. The written responses were of more quality than what was produced orally.

Data Sources

I collected data for 7 days. The data gathered was in the form of field notes from observations, conferences, and student writings. I will follow now with the description of how I collected the data.

Observations. I observed the students while I was teaching the lessons, as they practiced with the script independently, and as they interacted with peers in small groups, and in whole group practices. I originally began taking field notes on a chart which Billups (2021) suggests for taking detailed information about individual and group behaviors, non-verbal cues, and conversation topics and threads. The chart included spaces for date, time, number of participants, the setting and use of space/objects, ongoing activities, and researcher reflections. After the first day, I realized that trying to gather the amount of information quickly while teaching, and placing it in the appropriate cells, proved too complex and that the chart needed to be simplified.

I decided to change it. At the top of the new chart, I placed the date and time, and the EDL reading level of the student participant. Under that heading, I made a table with three columns. One column was for Teacher Actions/Context, the second column was for Student Talk and Body Language, and the third column for Interpretation. With a simpler chart, I was able to record field notes daily and went over them immediately after the school day was over to add any missed details. Yin (2018) proposes that a chart aids in identifying and remembering exactly what data is being sought. Since this was an exploratory investigation on student experience, I was not able to predetermine the data I would seek. Therefore, at the beginning, I was gathering all data I could, which felt taxing. However, as the study progressed, I concentrated my efforts on recording students' experience as seen by their conversations during interactions with me or with peers, and their body language (see Appendix A).

Conferences. As part of regular teaching practices, the teacher conferences with students, to check for understanding, clarify misconceptions, informally assess student performance, and provide feedback. I originally intended to confer with all students, however, due to time constraints I was only able to confer with seven students. I met with study participants on day four or five for a one-on-one short conversation to gauge student understandings, perceptions, and attitudes toward literacy through the use of Readers Theater. I used three open ended questions to jumpstart the conversations. I hand wrote field notes of these conversations (see Appendix B).

Artifacts. Initially I intended to collect student writing related to word activities and spontaneous writing. Since the conferences were not productive in terms of depth, I asked the students instead to write to answer an open-ended prompt. This could have been a result of my limited experience as a researcher in interviewing. Even though I had prepared open ended

questions for the conferences to jumpstart a conversation about the story we used or the process of using Readers Theater, I did not get the substantial answers I was expecting considering that this was my classroom, and the students were familiar and comfortable with me. Thus, I asked the participants instead to respond in writing to the following prompt: Write about anything related to the story we have been reading or about the process of how we were learning this week using Readers Theater. I repeated the instructions thrice for the whole group. Then, I repeated the instructions again for Javier and Joaquín, who had to be redirected during writing so they could focus on the task, and for Justin who was capable of the writing and was taking longer to get started. The students wrote in their writing journals and used pencils and crayons. Most filled the page with details of their understanding of the text or with their perceptions of what they experienced during the process. Some did both.

Data Management Strategies/Storage

I gathered data in the form of field notes in handwriting from observations and conferences, and from students' writing. All collected data was stored during the day when not in active use in a locked filing cabinet in my classroom. At the end of my working day, I took the data home to be transferred into password protected google docs and google sheets for organizational purposes. I used pseudonyms for the participants in the study and saved in a separate locked file cabinet the hard copy document that links their names to the pseudonyms. At home, I locked in a file cabinet and locked office the data and computer used when not working actively with them.

Data Analysis/Steps

The moment the data collection began, its analysis began simultaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles et al., 2014). Since this study is exploratory, initially I did not know my

focus, but the data guided me. As I gathered data and analyzed it, I moved back and forth between concrete data and concepts, inductive and deductive thinking, and description and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Due to the inductive nature of this study, the data collection and analysis steps were adapted as it proceeded and relevant categories materialized.

First Cycle Coding

After organizing, sorting, and becoming well acquainted with the data, I examined it as a whole to try to make sense of it as I considered insights picked up through the process as the first step. After rereading and examining the data again against the research question, I used eclectic coding since “it employs a select and compatible combination of two or more first cycle coding methods, purposefully as an initial, exploratory technique when a variety of processes or phenomena are to be discerned from the data” (Saldaña, 2021, p. 223). I used a combination of In Vivo coding which “uses words or short phrases from the participant’s own language in the data record as codes” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 65); and descriptive coding, which is a noun or short phrase that summarizes the data and provides topics helpful for organizing it (Miles et al., 2014). The first cycle resulted in 112 codes. The work was inductive at the beginning as I discovered the students’ recurrent tendencies, but later I used deductive reasoning to determine if there were more items that supported the emerging themes or if additional information needed to be gathered (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In In Vivo coding, the exact words of the students are used. I chose this coding to prioritize student voice. Since each student is unique, most wording will not coincide exactly. For this reason, I assigned descriptive codes to the In Vivo codes and defined them (see Appendix C). Having descriptive codes stemming from the In Vivo codes and descriptive codes

from the rest of the data gave uniformity to the coding I was to use from then on. This first cycle was a way to summarize the fragments of data (Miles et al., 2014).

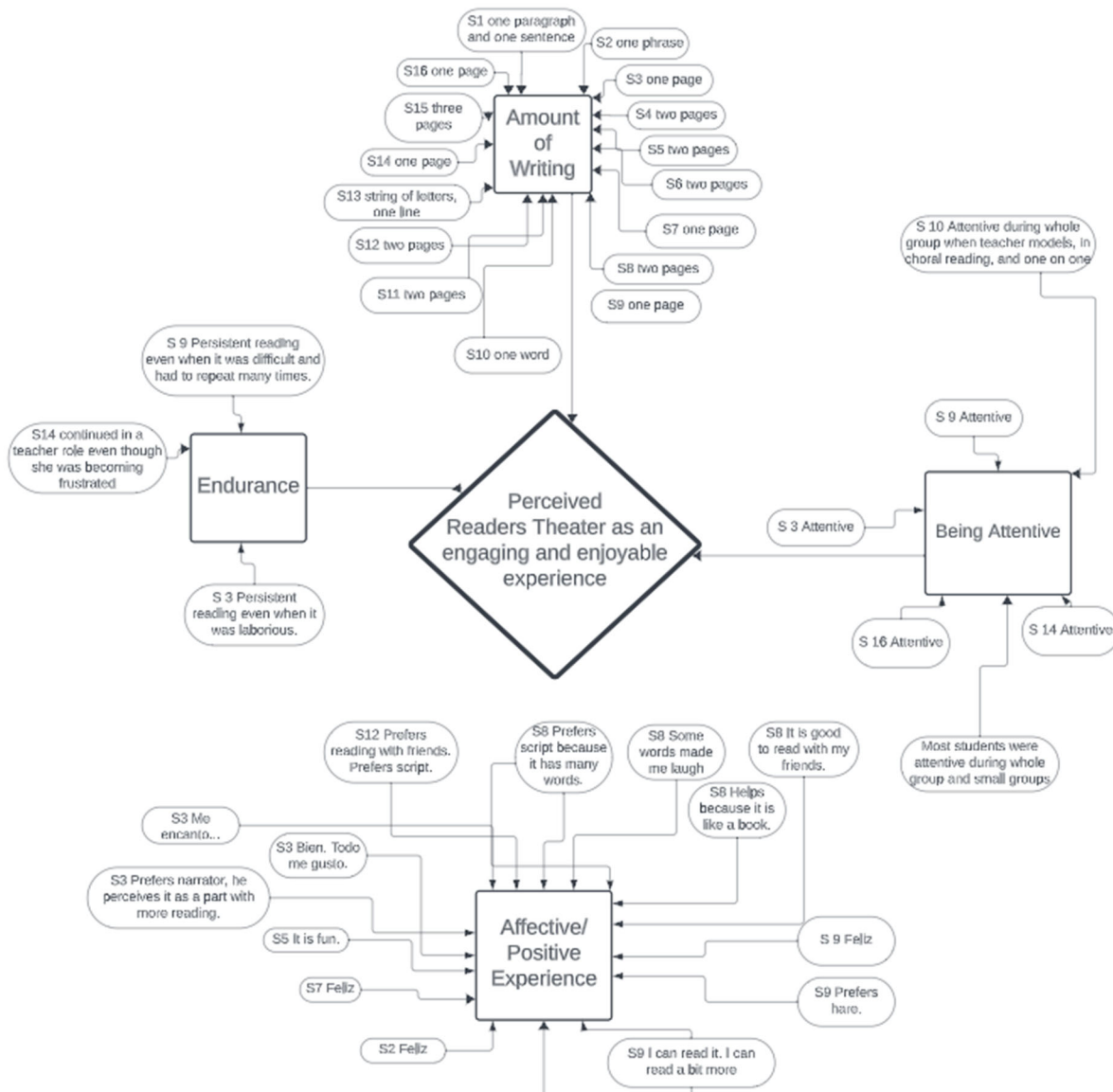
Second Cycle Coding

For the second cycle, I used pattern coding to group similar or related codes that arose from vast amounts of data to create more meaningful units of analysis (Miles et al., 2014). I manually mapped the initial codes inductively in a large paper, to place each code with others that were similar or related. These pattern codes provided a condensation of the data findings for further analysis. I compare the process to a puzzle for which there is no image to guide you, and you must rely on the colors of each piece and their form to connect them into the right place. Similarly, I put down each fragment of data on paper. I place them together with others that were similar or related. As I exhausted the data fragments, I began detecting pattern codes. The pattern codes that I detected were affective/positive experience, self-evaluation, peer evaluation, tracking the reading, understanding character feelings, retelling and summarizing, use of new vocabulary. The outliers were translanguaging, teacher role, request for vocabulary clarification, enduring through difficult text.

Figure 3.2 shows an example with part of the data of how I grouped the different codes inductively in a network. I began categorizing the codes in different spaces on a paper and then connected them to an empty box. Once I detected the pattern code I put it in the box. The arrow lines show that the last item placed in the network was the pattern code (the squares). Also, I assigned a letter number combination initially to identify student participants to preserve anonymity and ease of writing. I later changed those letter number combinations to pseudonyms to make my writing more personal when referring to the students.

I referred frequently to my research question: How do children in a first-grade bilingual classroom experience Readers Theater? It helped further analyze the data holistically. I soon realized that some of the pattern codes could be added, included under other pattern codes, or combined to create the themes that the data suggested. For example, for the first theme, I began putting together the pattern codes being attentive, endurance, amount of writing, and affective/positive experience. With that combination, the data suggested that the theme was Perceived Readers Theater as an Engaging and Enjoyable Experience (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2
First Theme

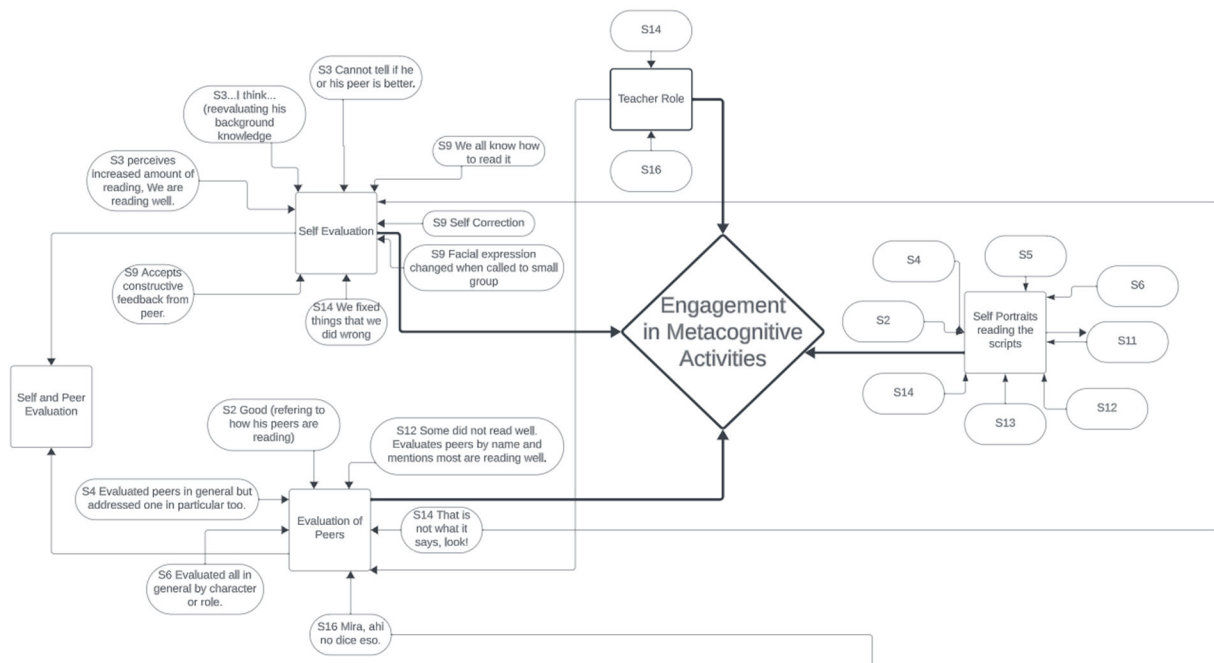


Note. The S# represents the letter number combination initially assigned to identify student participants. The arrows show the inductive relationship of the descriptive codes to the pattern codes. The diamond shape represents the themes.

For the second theme, I initially had the pattern codes Self-Evaluation and Peer Evaluation separate from one another. I decided afterward to group them together because both were evaluations. Furthermore, I placed them close to self-portraits reading the scripts because those show awareness of what was happening in the classroom during the study. I included taking a teacher role even though it did not have as much representation, because evaluations are usually done by the teachers and at least a couple of students were taking that role. I realized that all these pattern codes had in common metacognitive processes. This combination led to the theme, Engagement in Metacognitive Activities (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3

Second Theme

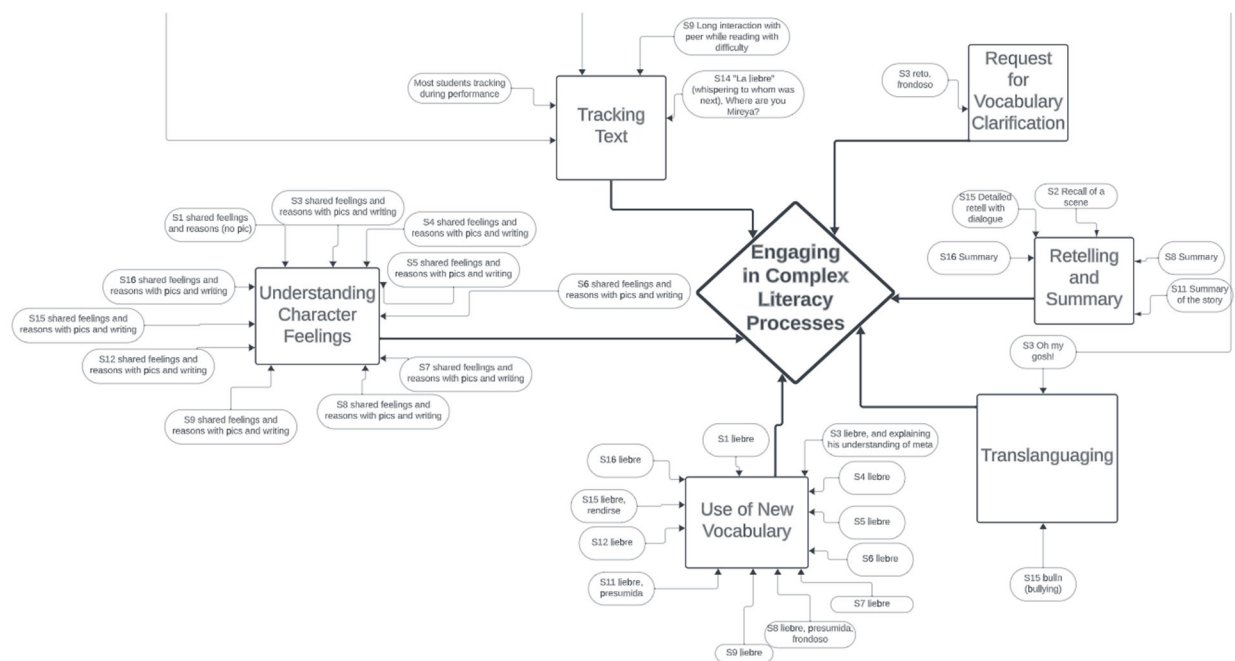


Note. The S# represents the letter number combination initially assigned to identify student participants. The arrows show the inductive relationship of the descriptive codes to the pattern codes.

Finally, I followed the same procedure with the pattern codes understanding character feelings, retelling and summarizing, and use of new vocabulary. I included tracking text, translanguaging, and request for vocabulary clarification, even though these were not prevalent, because they are related to the theme that was suggested by the data, Engaging in Complex Literacy Processes. Figure 3.4 shows these connections.

Figure 3.4

Third Theme



I eliminated the pattern code consistent participation because the codes in the different groupings attested to the active participation of most of the students. Only one student participated intermittently throughout the study. I also eliminated the pattern code limited negative attitudes because most of the negative behaviors and talk came from the same student.

I added non-frequent happenings within each theme because since this is an exploration that was done for only seven days, I thought it could add details of other possible behaviors and conversations due to students' different attitudes and uniqueness, and they are related.

The findings provided evidence that 1) the students perceived Readers Theater as an engaging and enjoyable experience, 2) engaged in metacognitive activities such as, self-evaluations, helping and evaluating their peers, and being aware of the processes involved, and 3) engaged in complex literacy processes, where they demonstrated understanding of character feelings, retelling and summarizing of the story, and using new vocabulary.

Validity and Reliability

Miles et al. (2014) affirm that the findings drawn from data must prove to be valid and reliable. To assure this, I collected and analyzed data from multiple sources to achieve triangulation (Miles et al., 2014). The data was triangulated using the different data sources, but also by checking all the student participants who exhibited the same behaviors. Collecting and analyzing various sources of data provides genuineness, cohesiveness, and credibility (Miles et al., 2014). Also, I focused on the exact wording used by the participants as another way to guaranty validity. For a study to be reliable, it should be replicable when its instruments are used consistently (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used peer review to increase the reliability of this study (Miles et al., 2014), by having my advisor check the data, how I chose to code, and the findings, to see if there were any reliability issues or if any biases were obstructing other perspectives.

Summary

In this chapter I explained the methodology for this qualitative case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) designed to explore the use of Readers Theater through the experiences of emergent bilingual students in a first-grade bilingual classroom. I gathered the data from

conferences, field notes from observations, and student artifacts and analyzed the different sources of data to triangulate, thus supporting the validity of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The analysis took place in an iterative manner simultaneous with the gathering of the data. In the first coding cycle, I used In Vivo codes which I later recoded as descriptive. Once I had all the data coded as descriptive coding, for the second cycle, I further analyzed and grouped similar or related codes to arrive at the pattern codes (Miles et al., 2014). These pattern codes were further compared, analyzed, and condensed into more meaningful themes that became the findings to be reported.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Children who are emergent bilinguals are simultaneously tasked with learning language and content. The fundamental way to acquire these is through literacy. When emergent bilingual students are learning to read, too, it is critical to provide effective instruction with plenty of opportunities to listen, speak, read, and write to strengthen their literacy skills. This qualitative study examined the use of Readers Theater through the experiences of emergent bilingual students in a first-grade classroom. The question guiding this study is: How do children in a first-grade bilingual classroom experience Readers Theater? I used a qualitative case study framework in which the data collected consisted of observations, individual conferences, and related writing. The findings provided evidence that 1) the students perceived Readers Theater as an engaging and enjoyable experience, 2) engaged in metacognitive activities such as, self-evaluations, helping and evaluating their peers, and being aware of the processes involved, and 3) engaging in complex literacy processes, where they demonstrated understanding of character feelings, retelling and summarizing the story, and using new vocabulary.

In this chapter, I present the findings regarding this study and share a narrative to provide context, including a short description of the students. Then, I focus on the themes that were detected during the study.

Narratives

To give context to this study, it is essential to describe the time of the year, which was the last 2 weeks of school during 2022-2023. Usually, at this time of the year, schoolwide activities that are out of the ordinary, such as field day, reward parties for students who perform well regarding behavior and attendance, presentation of certificates, etcetera, change the regular day

schedules. Also, many teachers begin slowly putting away things to facilitate the year's closing and discuss the students advancing to the following grade. All these events signal the end of the school year for the young students, who are also tired and less willing to work by then.

The school has a high population of emergent bilinguals. Out of six classrooms, there are two one-way dual language classrooms and one two-way dual language classroom per grade level. In my one-way dual language classroom, all are first-, second-, or third-generation descendants of Mexican parents, and 13 out of the 16 students showed Spanish language dominance. The classroom was male-dominant, having 10 boys and six girls. Three out of the 16 students knew all letter identification and sounds in Spanish, and a few in English. The other three students were in the process of learning letter identification and sounds. However, since the study was conducted towards the end of first grade, the students had improved at different rates.

I believe it is important to include a brief description of the participants with the intent of having a clearer understanding of who they are. All names used are pseudonyms.

Justin

During the study, this student demonstrated a high interest in the script. He preferred to sit by friends when writing. Because of it, he did not write much, even though he shows in his writing that he is very capable. He wrote his artifacts independently.

José

This student was a reserved student who spoke softly while participating actively. However, he was friendly, and read, wrote, and communicated with peers throughout the study.

Nelson

This student demonstrated throughout the whole study strong curiosity, interest, and engagement. He participated with enthusiasm to share background knowledge, request

clarification for terms he did not understand, and express excitement. He communicated effectively with classmates even though he had difficulty pronouncing various words. When reading, he worked hard to solve difficult words and kept reading without distractions. His writing shows how he erased often to rewrite his thoughts. This shows an effort to do well.

Yadira

This student, a newcomer, was attentive throughout the study. She participated in all activities of the study without difficulty.

Samantha

This student was attentive and participated actively throughout the 5 days she was present during the study. She showed her interest clearly as she interacted with her classmates consistently throughout the lessons and rehearsals, and as she wrote independently.

Yael

This student always showed a big smile while he was attentive and participating actively. He seemed confident in his reading as he interacted with his peers.

Janet

This student was shy and seemed a little insecure when answering. However, when she was interacting with her peers within the small groups, she seemed comfortable, and even seemed to counsel others. When she wrote, she seemed confident.

Dana

This student was very expressive and shared a lot of her thinking about the story and process with her friends and me, the teacher.

Mireya

This student showed perseverance throughout the lessons and practices. She appeared to want to prove to everyone that she was a good reader.

Joaquín

This student benefited from the daily one-on-one help I offered him. He eventually began asking for help on his own and seemed happier towards the end of the study.

Sandra

This student was proficient in her communications with peers and her reading and writing throughout the study.

Mónica

This student, a newcomer, showed a personality that was a little reserved and spoke with a soft voice during the study. However, because she has known her peers and me, the teacher, for a while, she participated without hesitation and showed proficiency in reading and writing. She read louder in the performance.

Javier

This student seemed to enjoy the interactions with peers as shown by his constant smile and efforts to perform the tasks that were asked of the students.

Adela

This student was actively engaged in the activities and showed proficiency in communicating with peers, reading, and writing. She was able to switch characters without any problems.

Fabiola

This student always had a happy and calm disposition. She was always willing to do the work required of her. She wrote the most.

David

This student seemed to be content and willing to do work at his own pace. He seemed to enjoy peer interactions and showed understanding of the story.

Themes

During Readers Theater, the students read and rehearsed repeatedly without complaints. All participated consistently except for one, who participated intermittently. The research question guiding this study was, How do children in a first-grade bilingual classroom experience Readers Theater? The analysis of the data pointed to the following themes: 1) the students perceived Readers Theater as an engaging and enjoyable experience, 2) engaged in metacognitive activities such as, self-evaluations, helping and evaluating their peers, and being aware of the processes involved, and 3) engaging in complex literacy processes, where they demonstrated understanding of character feelings, retelling and summarizing the story, and using new vocabulary.

Perceived Readers Theater as an Engaging and Enjoyable Experience

In general, the students had an engaging and enjoyable positive experience with Readers Theater. They engaged in the activities without complaints during the last 2 weeks of school, which is very difficult at this time of the year. Their words and actions showed this fact. Here are some participant responses to my conference questions, where M stands for “Maestra” (teacher in Spanish).

M: ¿Cómo te ha ido con Teatro de Lectores? (How is it going with Readers Theater?)

“Feliz porque todos están leyendo.” (Happy, because everyone is Reading.) Janet

“Me gusto porque había palabras que me sé. Unas palabras me hizo reír. Me ayuda porque es como un libro, porque se mira como una forma de libro. Me gusta más porque tiene muchas palabras.” (I liked it because there were words that I know. Some words made me laugh. It helps me because it is like a book, because it looks like a type of book.) Dana

M: “¿Hay algo que no te haya gustado?” (Is there something that you did not like?)

“No, todo me gusto.” (No, I liked everything.) Nelson

M: “¿Por qué te gusta más?” (Why do you like it more?)

“Porque me gusta. Lo puedo leer. Es mi favorito porque es diferente porque las otras personas la lean. Lo podemos leer juntos.” (Because I like it. I can read it. Is my favorite because it is different because the other people read it. We can read together.) Mireya

“Feliz.” (Happy.) Mireya, Janet, and José

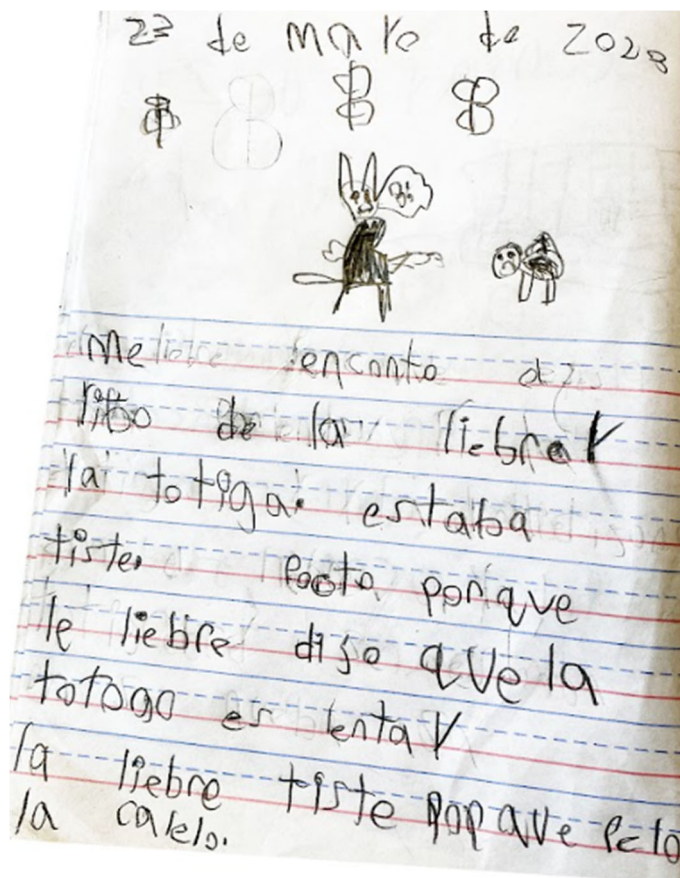
“Me gusta más el libreto porque leo con mis amigos.” (I like the script more because I read with my Friends.) Mónica

Nelson and Samantha expressed their feelings about the experience in their writing.

Nelson began his writing by saying, “Me encantó...” (I loved it...; see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1

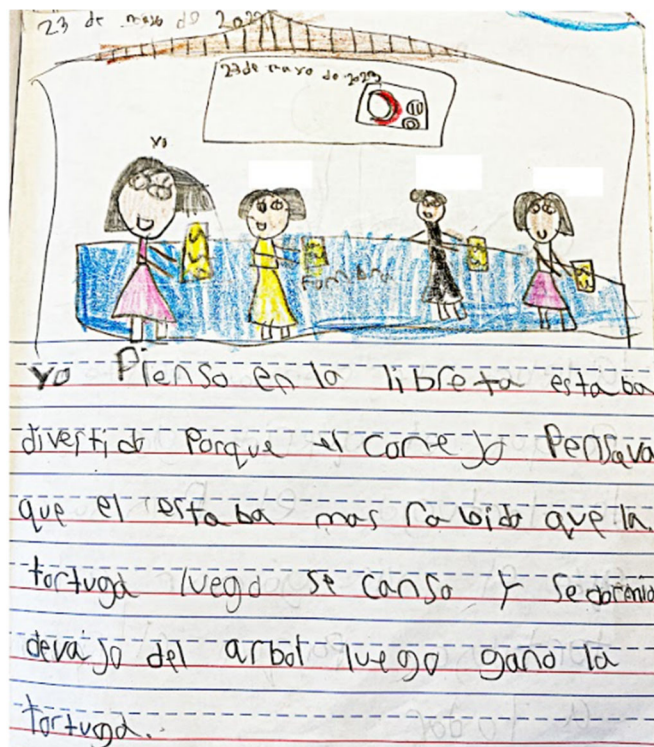
Nelson's Artifact



In Figure 4.2, Samantha wrote, “Yo pienso que en la libreta estaba divertido...”, (I think the script was fun...). She called the script *libreta* because we were referring to the script as *libreto*.

Figure 4.2

Samantha's Artifact 2



Due to the nature of the text that we used, a script, the students had to work together, taking turns to say their parts, for everything to make sense. Collaboration is then embedded in using Readers Theater. Furthermore, the students mentioned their enjoyment of that collaboration as follows.

M: ¿Qué otra cosa quieres compartir sobre tu experiencia con Teatro de Lectores? (What more would you like to share about your experience with Readers Theater?)

“Feliz, estamos tomando turnos de las páginas.” (Happy, we are taking turns.) José

M: ¿Cómo piensas que les ha ido a tus compañeros con Teatro de Lectores? (How do you think your classmates are doing with Readers Theater?)

“Ta bueno leer con mis amigos porque leemos juntos.” (s good to read with my friends

because we read together.) Dana

Even though Dana did not answer my question, she shared that she liked reading with her friends. As they continued to collaborate, I observed the students helping one another.

Engaging in Metacognitive Activities

Self-Evaluation

The students also self-evaluated. Nelson mentioned in his conference that he was reading a larger amount of text when he said, “Puedo tener más a leer.” Mireya also perceived an increase in her effectiveness in reading when she said, “Puedo leer un poquito más” (I can read a little more.). Mónica added, “Estamos leyendo muy bien.” (We are Reading very well.) Yael also said, “Yo puedo leer más de todo.” (I can read more of everything.).

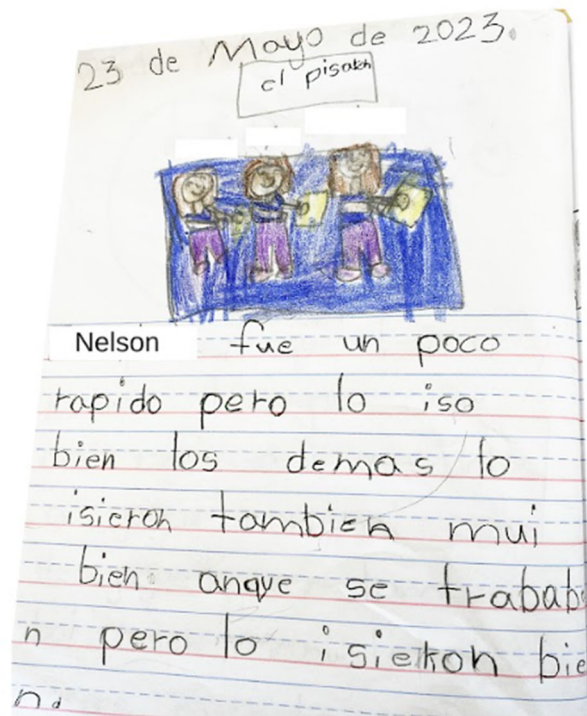
Peer Reading Help and Evaluation

The conversation between Mireya and Adela, which I shared in the Perseverance section, is an example of a student pointing out errors and correcting another. That was not the only instance where it materialized. David also identified an error and helped his classmate. In one observation, I asked the students which kind of reading would help them learn to read better. Yadira answered that reading by yourself. However, Nelson said it helped him to read with others “porque me pueden ayudar cuando algo esta muy dificil” (because they can help him when something is very difficult.” I then asked, Who can help you? He responded Yael could, and Yael reported that Nelson helped him, too. Others also shared who helped them. Dana shared that she helped Janet. Yadira explained that she helped Dana, and Fabiola said she helped Justin.

Peer evaluations were also made. For example, Yadira remarked that Nelson was reading a bit fast (un poco rápido) but did well. She added that the others also did well even though they would get stuck (aunque se trababan; see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3

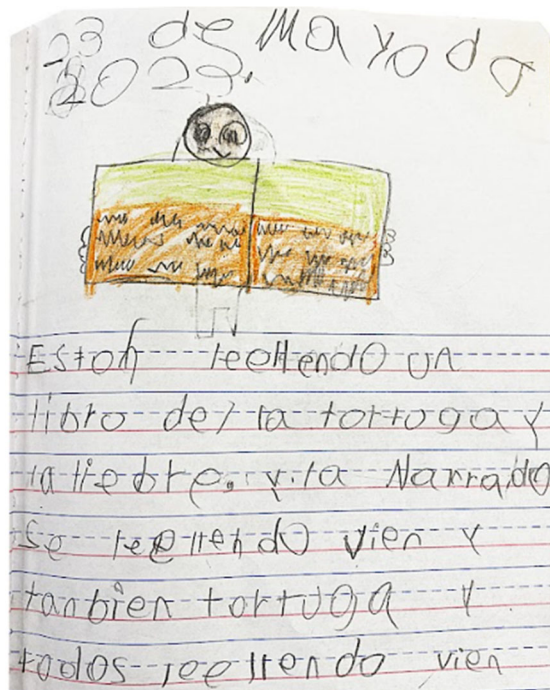
Yadira's Artifact 1



Yael shared in his writing that “los narrado se leeyendo vien, tambien tortuga, y todos leyendo vien” (the narrators were reading well, also the tortoise, and all were reading well). He mentioned who was reading well by grouping them by characters (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4

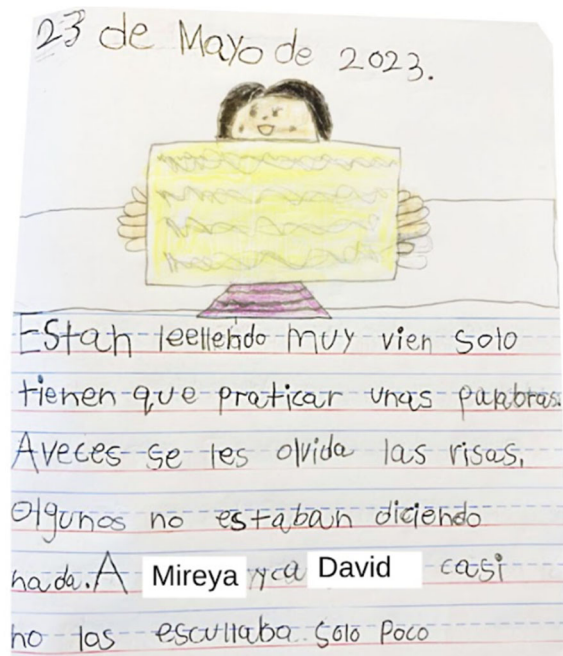
Yael's Artifact 1



Mónica, in her conference, shared that “algunos no leen bien” (Some do not read well.). She also said in her writing that the others were reading well but that they only had to practice certain words. She said some were forgetting “las risas” (the laughs), and some were not saying anything, and that you could barely hear Mireya and David. Here, she is evaluating specific gestures, participation, and volume (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5

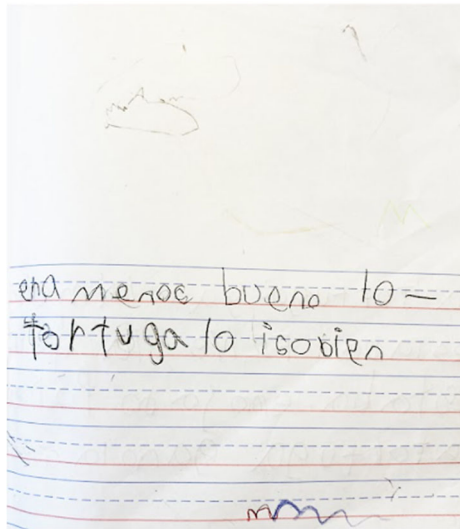
Mónica's Artifact 2



Justin began to draw an illustration but erased it and wrote words assessing the tortoise s' performance. He wrote that it was "menos bueno" (less good [I am not sure if he is self-evaluating or if he is evaluating his peers and forgot to mention them]) and that the tortoise s did well (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6

Justin's Artifact 2



José also mentioned that his peers “leyeron bien” (They read well) in his conference. However, Nelson, in his conference said, “Mi amigo lee una página y otro otra página. No sé quien es el mejor (levantando los hombros)” (My friend read one page and another another page. I do not know who the best is [shrugging his shoulders]). In other words, he was explaining that he does not know who did better. Perhaps it was a way to communicate that both were reading similarly, or maybe he was trying to be polite so as not to offend his friend.

Awareness of the Process

Yael’s writing portrays himself rehearsing the script, and at the beginning of the writing, he explains what he was reading in the classroom, besides evaluating peers. This shows awareness of the task they were involved in, including the physical context (see Figure 4.4).

In Figure 4.7, Adela also illustrates what is happening by including her peers in the picture, all with the scripts in their hands, practicing in the front of the room on the carpet.

Figure 4.7

Adela's Artifact



Javier portrayed himself with a brown script in hand. Although the color was inaccurate, this was the first time that he drew something related to what we were learning in class. He also wrote a string of letters (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8

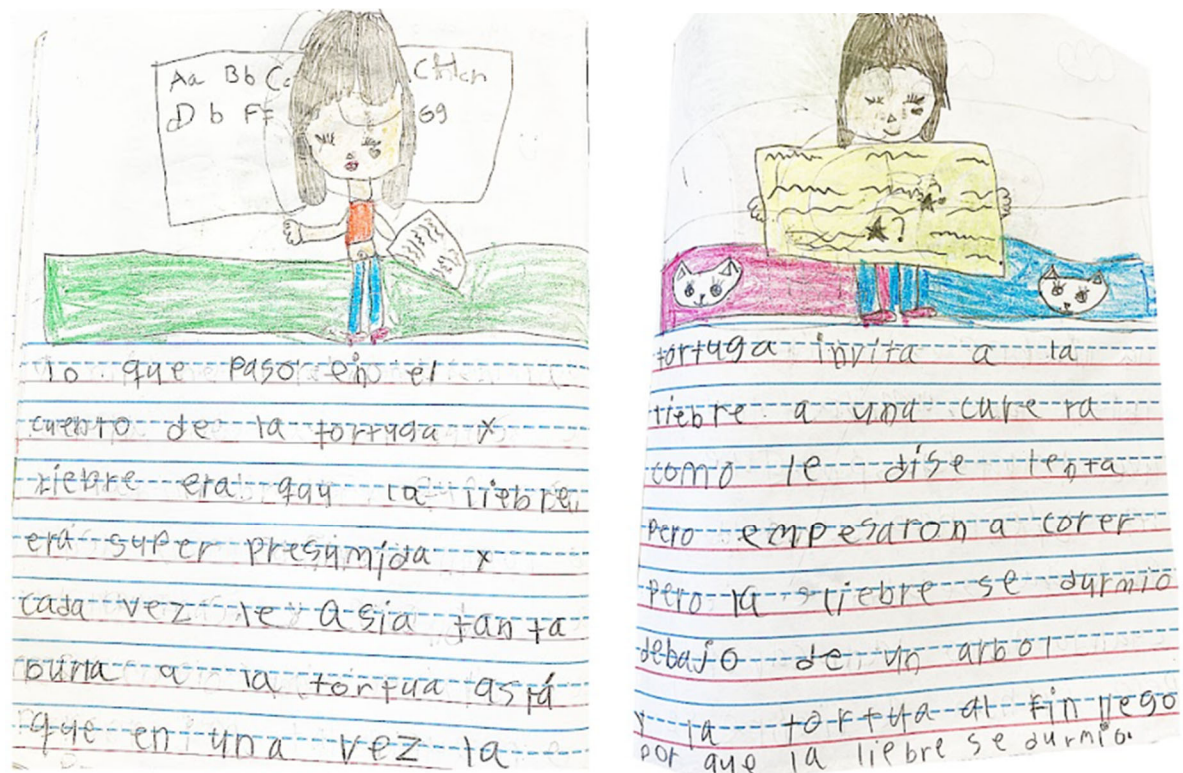
Javier's Artifact



Furthermore, Sandra's picture illustrated her on the carpet in front of the classroom rehearsing the script. On the second page, she added cats to the floor in an effort to make the drawing cute, yet that action was unrelated to the story or to what was happening in the classroom. she might have portrayed herself as reading aloud in front of the classroom (see Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9

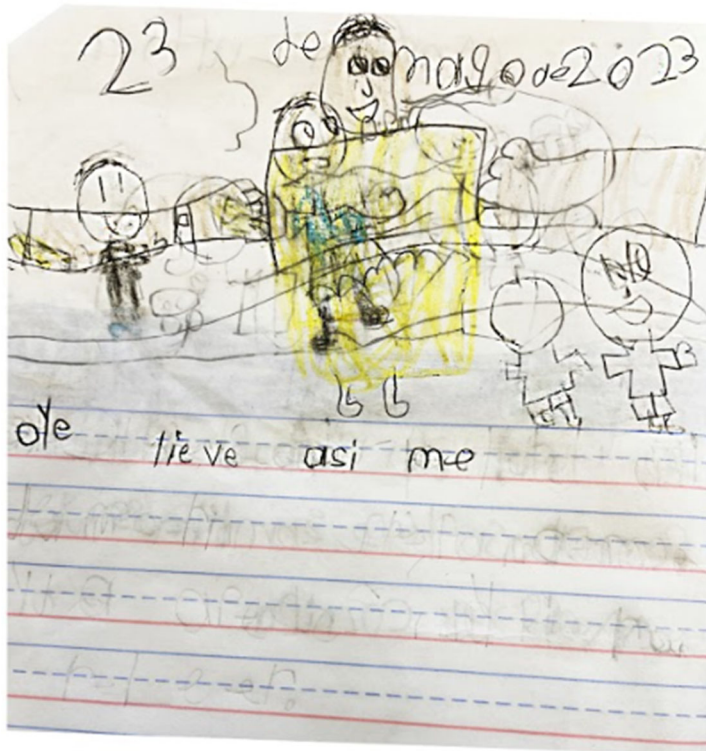
Sandra's Artifact



Jose also drew himself with the script on hand among others (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10

José's Artifact



Samantha, Yadira, and Mónica, did likewise, drawing themselves alone or with other students with the scripts on hand (see Figures 4.2, 4.3, and 4.5).

Engaging in Complex Literacy Practices

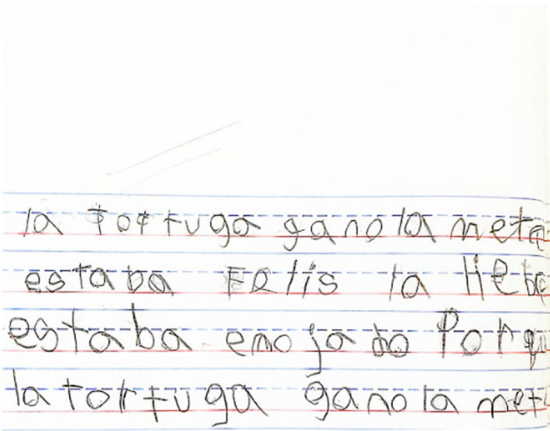
Understanding of Character Feelings

For students in first grade, it is usually difficult to understand character feelings according to what is happening in the story. My students were able to identify how the characters were probably feeling. The following are some writing examples.

Figure 4.11 shows that Justin wrote that the tortoise won (gano) and was happy (felis) and that the hare was angry (enojado) because the tortoise won.

Figure 4.11

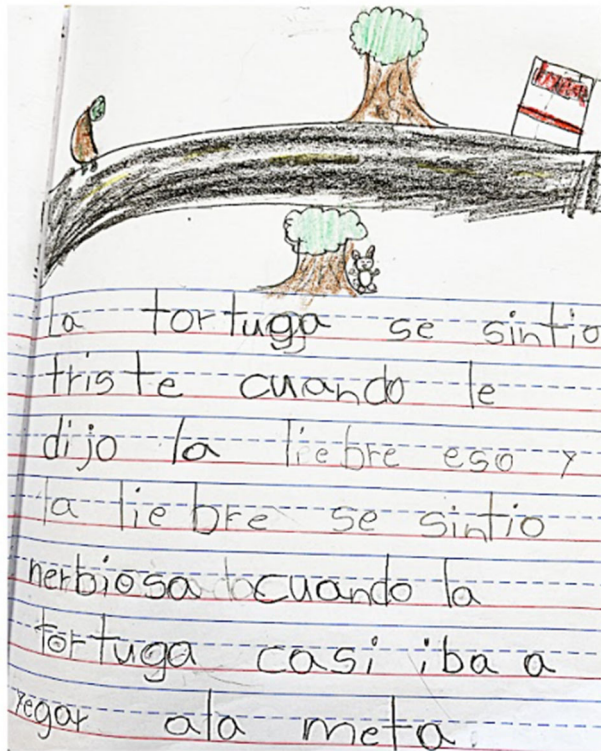
Justin's Artifact 1



Next, Yadira shares that the tortoise felt sad when the hare talked to her and that the hare felt nervous when the tortoise was almost getting to the finish line (see Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12

Yadira's Artifact 2

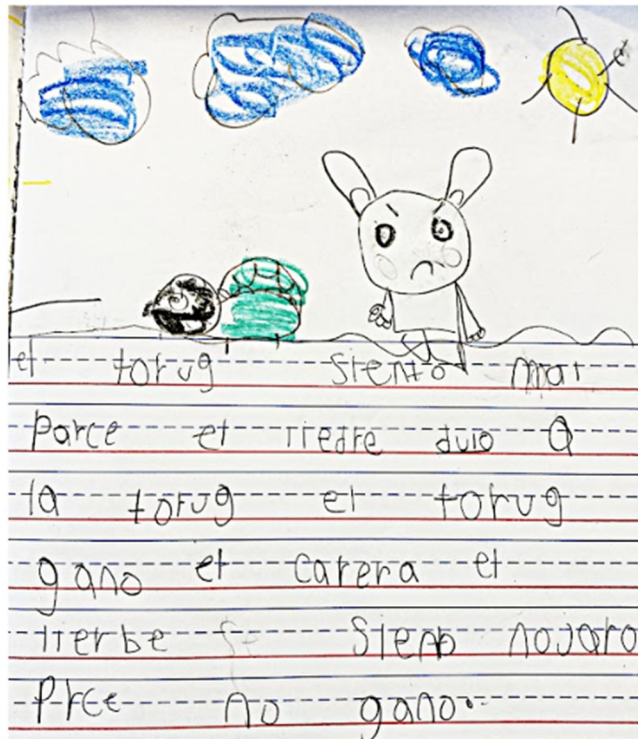


In Figure 4.1, previously mentioned, Nelson also wrote that the tortoise was a “*pocito* (poquito; little)” sad because the hare told her that she was slow and that the hare was sad because he lost the race. The illustration shows the tortoise’s feelings while the hare was talking to her.

Janet did likewise writing that the tortoise felt bad because of what the hare said to her. She added that the tortoise won the race and that the hare was mad because he did not win. The illustration shows the hare’s sad face (see Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13

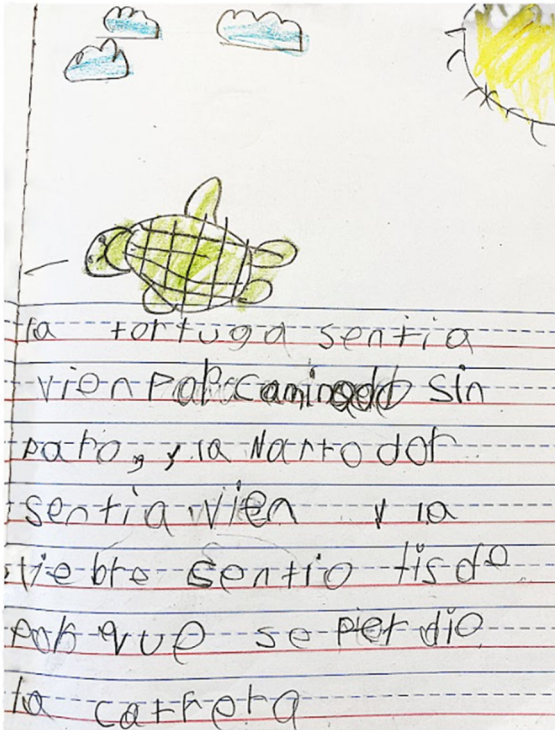
Janet's Artifact



Next, Yael even includes the feelings of the narrator. He shared that the tortoise felt good because she walked non-stop, the narrator felt well, and the hare felt sad because he lost (see Figure 4.14). This was a great opportunity where I explained to him that the narrators in stories are not characters, that they are giving us extra information about the time and place and anything the characters do not make clear.

Figure 4.14

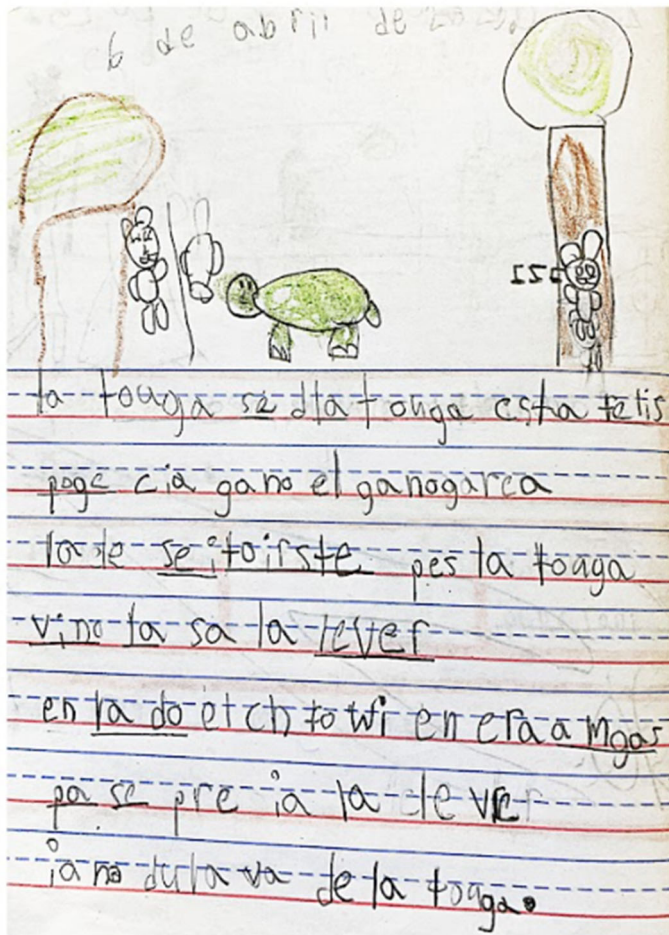
Yael's Artifact 2



Mireya shared that the tortoise was *felis* (happy) because she won the race. As we continue making efforts to read her writing, we lose understanding. Her perseverance throughout the writing process is shown in the length of her writing and in that some of the words can be understood throughout the whole page (see Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15

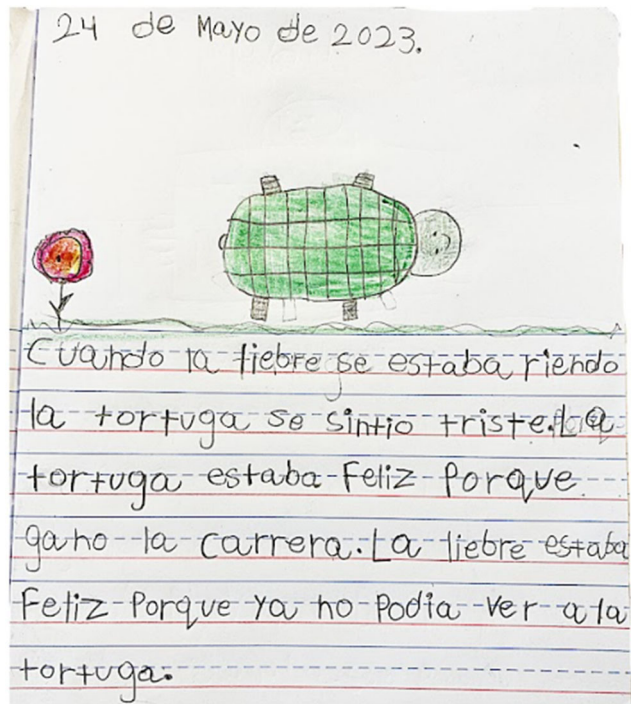
Mireya's Artifact



Mónica included in her writing accurately how the tortoise and the hare were feeling at particular moments in the story. However, she added a sentence that did not follow chronological order at the end. Perhaps this was so because she wanted to fill out the page and thought about additional details she might have missed (see Figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16

Mónica's Artifact 1



Retelling and Summarizing

The students also wrote retells and summaries of the story as shown in the following section. In the Sandra's previously mentioned drawings, Sandra wrote about what happened in the story, a retelling, across two pages. She wrote:

What happened in the story of the tortoise and the hare was that the hare was super presumptuous and each time she would make fun of the tortoise until a time that the tortoise invites the hare to a race since she calls her slow, but they began running but the hare fell asleep under a tree and the tortoise finally arrived because the hare fell asleep.

Sandra's illustrations, however, do not correlate to her writing. The illustrations were self-portraits with the script on hand at the front of the class on the carpet. I wonder if she was trying to portray herself reading aloud in front of the class (see Figure 4.9).

Although José's previously mentioned writing does not provide enough information to call it a retell, we can see an incomplete intent of recreating a scene of the story. At first, he wrote something but later erased it. Maybe he thought he did not understand the instructions when he saw other student's writing at his table. It could also be that he simply decided to change from writing about the story to writing about the process of using Readers Theater. Perhaps in his mind the drawing of the scene he was trying to recreate was more complicated. He took a very long time to draw before deciding (see Figure 4.10).

He finally drew himself with a script on his hands and tried to write a quote from the story where the tortoise is saying, "¡Así que me llamas lenta!" (So you call me slow!). He wrote: Hey hare so me (This phrase cannot be directly translated.). Since the writing does not correlate to the new drawing, I wonder if he had written the words before changing the picture and decided to leave it. Perhaps he is portraying himself reading that part (see Figure 4.10).

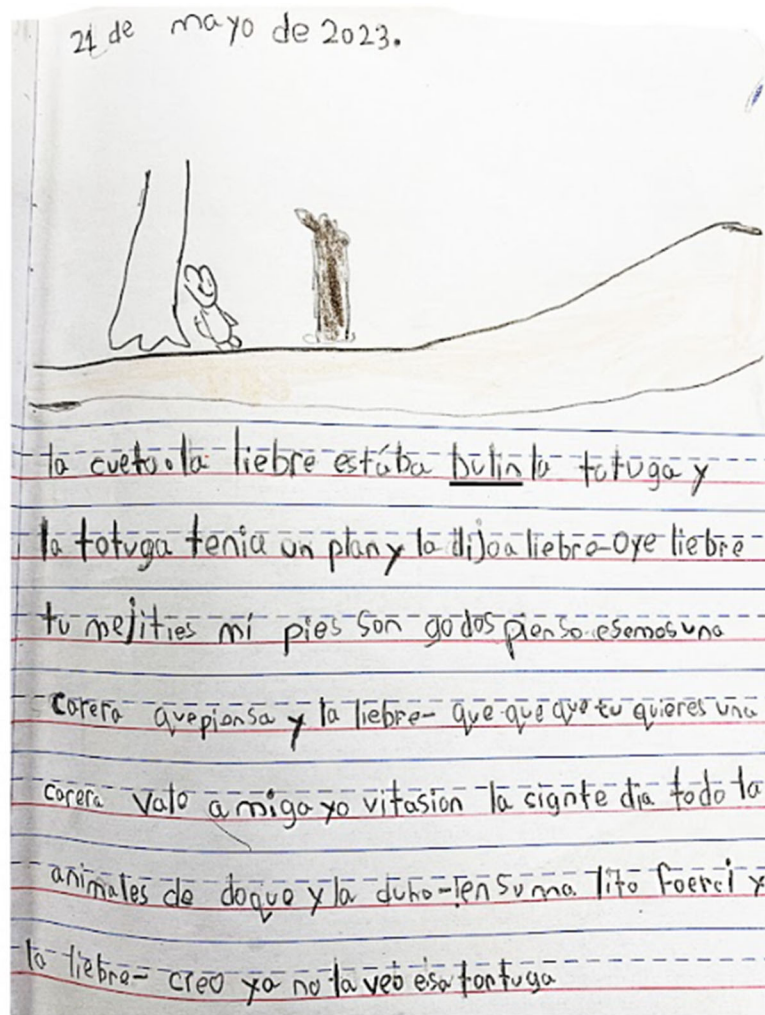
Fabiola also wrote a retell as follows.

The story the hare was bullying the tortoise and the tortoise had a plan and told the hare- hey hare you told me my feet are fat I think we make a race what do you think and the hare-What, what, what you want a race ok friend I invite you the next day all the animals of the forest and the owl -in your marks, get set, go and the hare-I don't think I see that turtle.

Fabiola even writes dialogue marked distinctly by the dashes each time a character talks in her writing (see Figure 4.17).

Figure 4.17

Fabiola's Artifact



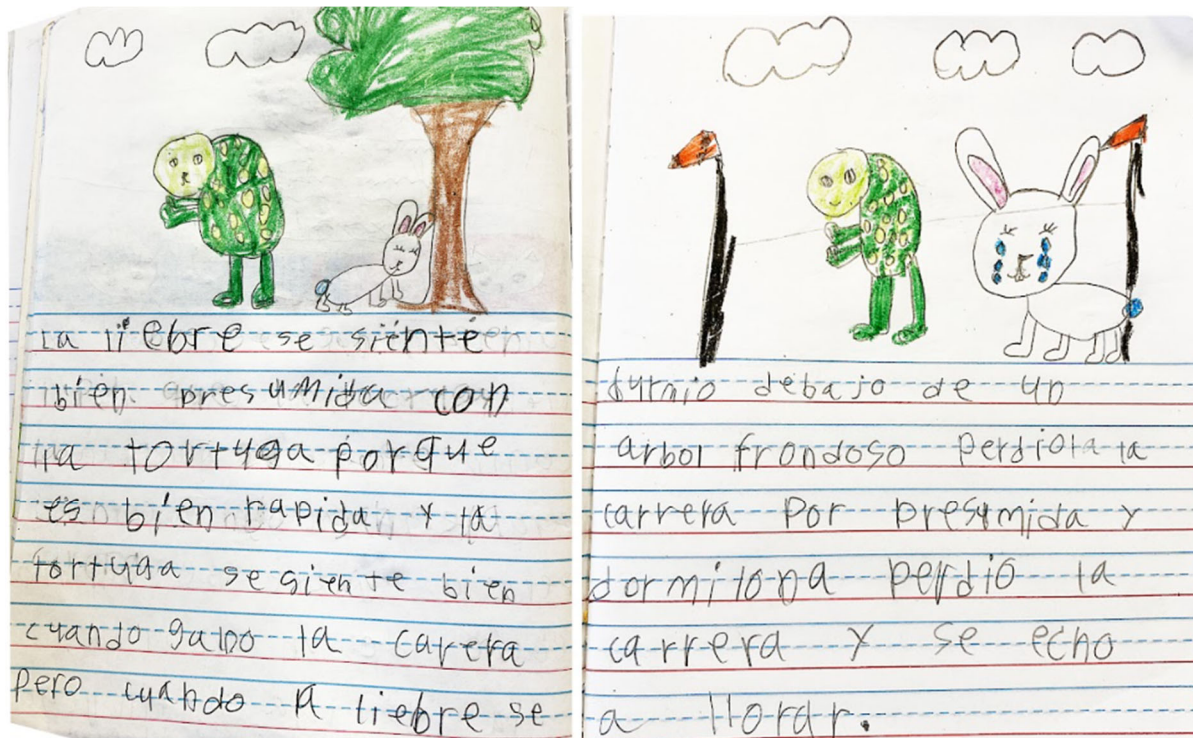
Dana wrote a summary of the story intertwining the character's feelings and using new vocabulary terms such as, hare, presumptuous, thick, sleepy head (liebre, presumida, frondoso [elevated term in Spanish], y dormilona.). She wrote:

The hare feels very presumptuous with the tortoise because it's very fast and the tortoise feels good when she won the race but when the hare fell asleep under a thick tree she lost

the race for being presumptuous and a sleepy head she lost the race and began crying (see Figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18

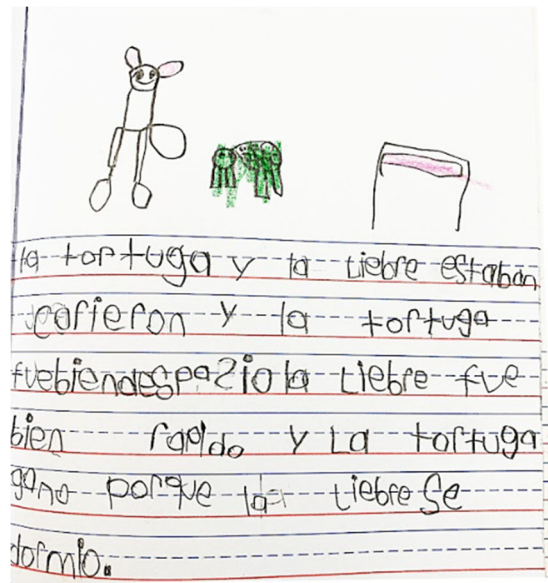
Dana's Artifact



David wrote a summary and his illustrations correlated to the story. He wrote: The tortoise and the hare were running and the tortoise went really slow the hare went very fast and the tortoise won because the hare fell asleep (see Figure 4.19).

Figure 4.19

David's Artifact

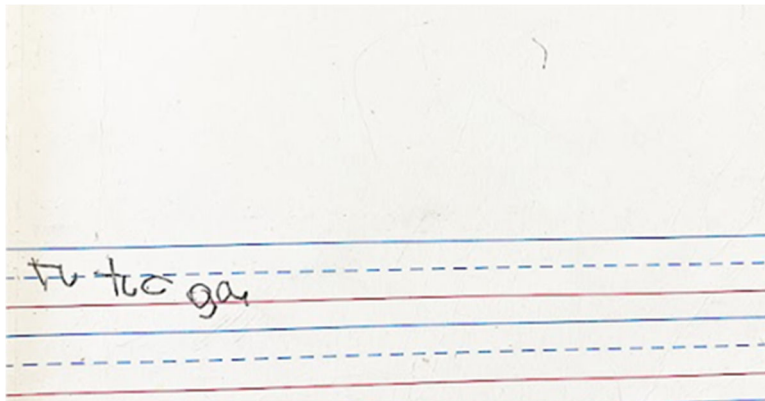


Use of New Vocabulary

All students actively used the new word *liebre* as evidenced in their writing except for Javier and Joaquín, who did not mention the character in their writing at all (see Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.20, respectively).

Figure 4.20

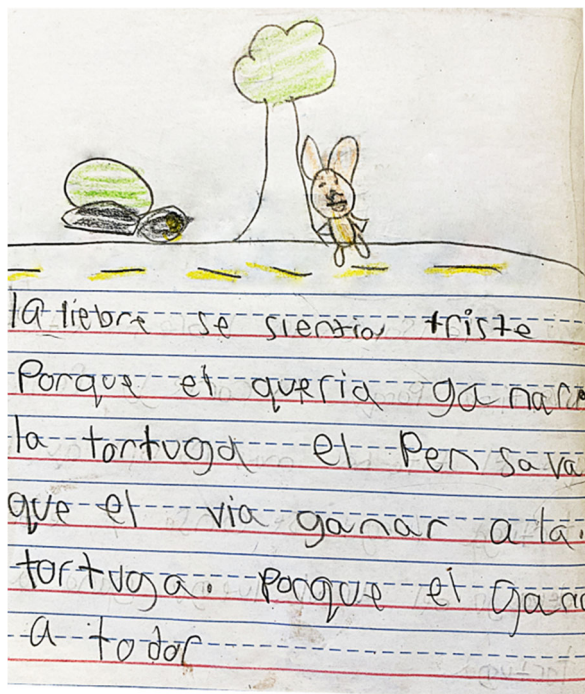
Joaquín's Artifact



Samantha used *liebre* in the following writing sample but in her previous writing, called the *liebre* a *conejo* (rabbit; see Figures 4.2 and 4.21, respectively).

Figure 4.21

Samantha's Artifact 1



Sandra used the word *presumida*, too (see previously mentioned Figure 4.9). Dana used the word *presumida* (pretentious) as a feeling the hare experienced, explaining that it was because she was fast. Dana further writes that the hare lost the race and cried due to falling asleep under a *frondoso* (thick) tree, being *presumida* (presumptuous) and a *dormilona* (sleepy head; see Figure 4.18).

Other Non-Frequently Visible Happenings

In the following section, I share behaviors, conversations, and artifacts that show uniquely in a few students.

Showed Perseverance in Their Work

I noticed some students continued working regardless of their difficulties. I asked David Yadira, and Nelson to continue practicing the script when they promptly told me they were done reading it. They both went back to practice without complaints or distractions. Nelson showed perseverance because his reading fluency is arduous and slow.

At another table, there were four students, Adela, Yadira, Fabiola, and Javier, practicing separate roles. Mireya was trying to decode her part in the script, and Adela was trying to help her while the others practiced their parts silently.

Mireya: ¿Qué qué qué?, ...ton, ...tu...(What, what, what?...yun,...you...)

Adela: Retarme (Challenging me.[telling what it says in the script])

Mireya: Silence for 5 seconds....¿Qué qué qué? Tu...(What, what, what?...you...)

Adela: Tu retarme (You challenge me?)

Mireya: Tu retarme a mí a un...una carrera? (You challenge me to an...a race?) Bien ... amiga (The text read “Bien querida amiga” [Good, dear friend.], but she omitted the Word querida [dear]).

Adela: ¡Querida!

Mireya: A-mi (trying to read amiga)

Adela: ¡¡¡Querida!!!

Mireya: Queria

Adela: Querida

Mireya: Querira

Adela: que

Mireya: que

Adela: ri

Mireya: ri

Adela: da

Mireya: da, querida

Adela: querida...

Silence.

Adela: La liebre... (whispering to Mireya)

Yadira: Vamos ("Come on! [hurrying Mireya])

Adela: Míralo, no a mí. (Look at it, not me.)

Mireya: Ok.

Yadira: A mí tampoco. (Neither at me.)

I interjected to remind the students that they need to continue reading even when the part is not theirs and that if the person reads it wrong, they can tell them what it says. Then, they must allow the person to repeat it because we are helping one another. The conversation continued.

Adela: Ok

Mireya: Di, eh, la, (clears up her throat) la ca-rre- el tu no vi (Very broken efforts to read

the word but it is not making sense.)

Adela: ¿Dónde estás Mireya? (Where are you Mireya?)

Mireya: ¡Aquí! (Here!)

Adela: Entonces sigue leyendo. (Then continue reading.)

Mireya: OK (whispering). To con to lohe ca i... Ya acabé, ahora tú. (Unintelligible efforts...I finished, now you.)

Adela: Otra vez. Tú solo quédate mirando acá. No me mires a mí. (Again. You just keep looking here.)

Mireya: Ok, ...Que que que, tú que tar...(Begins again from Qué, qué, qué?, you what tar...)

Adela: Retarme

Mireya: ¿Retarme a mí a una carrera? (She can finally read the sentence.) Muy di-na...e...e...m...a-mi-ga, amiga. (Then she has difficulty reading the next because she confuses the b and d. She stalls and finally reads amiga.)

Adela: Querida (Dear)

Mireya: Querida (She repeats the Word that her classmate is asking her to repeat.)

Adela: Amiga (Friend)

Mireya: Amiga (She repeats.)

Adela: Acepto (I accept.)

Mireya: Acepto (Repeats)

Adela: La (The)

Mireya: La, Nnn... (The, Nnn...)

Adela: Invitación (Invitation)

Mireya: Invitación (Repeats and pauses for a while.)

Adela: ¡Sigue! (Go on!)

In this interaction, in the beginning, Mireya had a hard time saying the word “tú” (you) but finally said it and got stuck with the word “retarme” (to challenge me). She decided to try again. Then she got “tú” (you) quickly and correctly and stopped. She seemed like she could not read *retarme* (challenging me). After Adela told her the word, she read the whole sentence, self-correcting the word “un” (the word a in male gender form) to *una* (a in female gender form). As Mireya continued decoding, she later omitted the word *querida* (dear). According to my observation and her effort, she seemed to be looking at the wrong word. Finally, she followed along with Adela, who was helping her, even though Adela was losing her patience, as shown by her change in tone of voice. Mireya endures the task well and, in the end, tries again, even at the risk of others at the table judging her skills. It could be that she didn’t want to give up because she wanted to learn and felt comfortable with her peers, or that I was observing the interaction, and she wanted to please me, the teacher.

Translanguaging

I expected students to translanguage intermittently throughout the study, but it was only evident in two instances with two different students. Nelson used translanguaging to express excitement and anticipation as he listened to the story in two parts: where the hare challenged the tortoise to a race and later, when the hare woke up realizing the tortoise might have won. Nelson exclaimed on both occasions, “Oh, my gosh!” Fabiola also showed translanguaging when writing using the word *bulin* (bullying). Everything else she wrote, she did in Spanish. (See Figure 4.17)

Use of Background Knowledge

On the first day, during the introduction of the story, Nelson interjected to ask about the meaning of the word liebre (hare): “La liebre es un conejo. Son blancos. Ya yo vi ese conejo en ...una película. ...y corre rápido pienso.” (The hare is a rabbit. They are white. I already saw that rabbit...in a movie...and runs fast, I think.)

He was attentive in class daily. He asked questions and participated. He interacted with me throughout the lesson as if the class was just for him. I had to ask him to allow others to participate. He drew from his background knowledge. He shared that he watched a movie about the story and what he knows about the hare. However, when he said: “yo pienso” (I think), he expressed a little uncertainty about the hare being able to run fast. This may be because when he said hares were white, I said they are of different colors depending on their environment. Since that information differs from what he knows, he may have questioned his knowledge about the hare’s speed. An alternative explanation could be that he had watched the video a while ago and did not remember it clearly. He also shared the end of the story at one point, “¡No va a ganar! ¡E tortuga va a ganar! ¡La tortuga va a ganar! ¡Yo lo escuché del cuento!” (He will not win! E tortoise will win! The tortoise will win! I heard it from the story!). He was the only one who had background knowledge of the story.

Request for Vocabulary Clarification

Nelson was the only one who requested clarification of the vocabulary. He had background knowledge of the story and had no problems understanding the word “liebre” (hare). Yet, he asked, “¿Reto? ¿Qué es reto? (Challenge? What is challenge?) He also asked, “¿Frondoso? ¿Qué es frondoso?” (Thick? What is thick?; In Spanish this term is a more sophisticated way of saying thick). None of the other students asked for clarification of terms.

Tracking

The students tracked their reading; however, that action is not always visible unless they track it with their finger or a guide. The following excerpts of conversations between students are manifestations of that tracking in visible form that I observed in two students, and then in two others. This does not mean tracking was not happening in more students. It acts as palpable evidence of the action.

David was tracking José's reading when he told him: ¡Mira, ahí no dice eso! This was also shown in the following excerpt of Adela and Mireya's conversation.

Adela: "La liebre" (The hare [Whispering, stating who's next.]) ¿Dónde estás

Mireya? (Where are you Mireya?)

Mireya: ¡Aquí! (Here!)

Adela: Entonces sigue leyendo. (Then continue Reading.)

Mireya: ¡Ok! (whispering)

Mireya: To con to lo he ca i...Ya acabé, ahora tú. (Inintelligible efforts...I finished, now you.)

Adela: Ahí no dice eso. ¡Mira! (That is not what it says there. Look!)

Request for One-on-One Help

The following picture shows what Joaquín wrote with my help. He asked, "¿Me ayudas a escribir tortuga?" (Will you help me write tortuga?) I then began dictating each syllable to him, and he wrote *tutucga* without further help. His writing shows knowledge of some letter sounds and corresponding letters. He showed that knowledge better in writing than in reading.

Summary of the Findings

The presented occurrences depict how first-grade emergent bilingual students experienced Readers Theater: 1) the students perceived Readers Theater as an engaging and enjoyable experience, 2) engaged in metacognitive activities such as, self-evaluations, helping and evaluating their peers, and being aware of the processes involved, and 3) engaging in complex literacy processes, where they demonstrated understanding of character feelings, retelling and summarizing the story, and using new vocabulary.

The vast majority of students in my classroom perceived Readers Theater as an engaging and enjoyable experience. Repeated reading of the same script without complaints in the last 2 weeks of school shows how Readers Theater was engaging for emergent bilingual students. While collaborating, some students pointed out errors and helped others find meaning in the text, and some evaluated their peers. The students became aware of their own literacy skills to a certain extent and of the process. As they continued working, some understood how the characters felt in relation to the events that were transpiring, some retold scenes and summarized the story, and used new vocabulary. Collaboration is embedded in this type of activity.

Certain students demonstrated particular reactions that not everyone shared. Some students showed perseverance while involved in the process of learning literacy through Readers Theater. Even though I expected the students to translanguage, only two students did. Nelson translanguaged to express excitement as he was listening to the story. Fabiola translanguaged in her writing to express an action for which she did not have the vocabulary word in Spanish. Nelson used his background knowledge to make sense of the story and requested clarification of some vocabulary words with which he was not familiar. Mireya and Adela and David and José demonstrated with their conversation that they were tracking the text. Finally,

Joaquín seemed to be an exception to most students regarding engagement and collaboration since he engaged intermittently throughout the lesson with my help and eventually began requesting my help before I initiated the conversation.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This qualitative case study aimed to explore how emergent bilingual students in a first-grade classroom experience Readers Theater. As a bilingual teacher, I always search for ways to accelerate language acquisition while teaching content. Thus, I decided to research this topic, eager to understand what occurs from the students' viewpoints when employing Readers Theater in the bilingual classroom. In the current body of knowledge, studies available on the exploration of Readers Theater in the lower grades (PreK, K, first) that focus on emergent bilinguals enrolled in bilingual education classrooms are scarce. Some of the most recent studies address upper-elementary (third through fifth grade), middle school, high school, and college students, and focus on quantitative methods that do not provide an in-depth analysis regarding the intricate nature of how Readers Theater could support emergent bilingual learning.

The theoretical framework I used to guide my research comprised theories about building knowledge through meaning-making in social interactions and acquiring literacy and language skills. These theories are relevant since they illuminate the complex process in which emergent bilinguals engage daily, learning content while learning another language. The question that guided this study was: How do children in a first-grade bilingual classroom experience Readers Theater? The study relied on observations, conferences, and student artifacts. I observed my 16 emergent bilingual students for 7 days during their language arts block, spending 2 hours daily. I also conferred with some students about their thoughts on the process while using Readers Theater. On the last 3 days of the implementation, I asked the students to write about the story and the process. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the findings suggest that most students' experiences with Readers Theater were engaging and fun, allowing them to enjoy the process and persevere

when the reading became difficult. The students' actions hinted towards activating metacognitive skills. I saw them empowered to help others with reading, self-evaluate, and evaluate their peers. In addition, the use of Readers Theater provided a space to practice the literacy and language skills they are developing, such as understanding of character feelings, retelling, summarizing, use of new vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and the metacognitive domain.

In previous chapters I provided a general background on emergent bilinguals in the United States in the context of schooling and Readers Theater, followed by an analysis of previous research related to these fields. Next, I delineated the methods I used for participant recruitment and data collection and data analysis. In Chapter 3, I presented a daily narrative of what transpired in my classroom during the study which provides context. Then, in Chapter 4, I shared the themes that emerged from the data. I will now summarize the contributions of my study to the field and the implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers.

Contribution to Research

This study contributes to the exiguous literature on Readers Theater, specifically within the intersection of bilingual education and lower elementary. Most researchers have focused their studies of Readers Theater on mainstream classrooms, ESL and EFL, second and above grade levels to high school and college-level students. Of all the literature found since 1967, I only found one study that worked with emergent bilingual students, Ruiz's (2014), who used Readers Theater in a bilingual classroom from third through fifth grades to promote critical literacy. Previous researchers have found Readers Theater to promote fluency (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2015; Young et al., 2021), comprehension (Vasinda & Mcleod, 2011; Young et al., 2020), motivation, and engagement (Bruckman-Laudenslager, 2019; Myrset & Drew, 2016). Researchers also have found that Readers Theater provides an authentic reason for repeated readings (Flynn, 2004;

Young et al., 2019) and that the strategy is embedded with approaches that fulfill emergent bilingual students' needs (Gualdron & Castillo, 2018; Haag, 2018; Uribe, 2019). Others talk about how it influences the affective (Garrett & O'Connor, 2010; Gualdron & Castillo, 2018) in students for the better. This study gives a detailed account of how children in a first-grade bilingual classroom experienced Readers Theater and allows the readers to see perhaps glimpses of what other researchers have claimed in the past in some areas, and not-so much in others, possibly due to the length of implementation, which took place for only 7 days.

Relationship of the Study to Previous Research

In this section I will present this study's findings and connect them in parallel to previous research.

Fluency

Time and time again, researchers have found that Readers Theater helps improve reading fluency (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2015; Young et al., 2021). Since this study was not executed for an extended time, I could not determine any fluency changes. Also, I prioritized student experience, and they did not verbalize anything that could hint toward something similar to fluency. The only comments concerning the quality of reading were "Podemos leer más." (We can read more.) "Estamos leyendo muy bien." (We are reading very well.), "¡Super bien!" (Super Good!), and "Podemos leer un poquito más." (We can read a bit more.) Thus, the students perceived their reading to be in greater quantity.

Comprehension

Researchers have found that Readers Theater enhances reading comprehension (Vasinda & Mcleod, 2011; Young et al., 2020). In this study, the students practiced their reading and writing skills when they identified character feelings, retold some scenes from the script, and

used new vocabulary. The majority of the class consistently used one new vocabulary word (“liebre”) and three other students included other new terms. The students truly needed to understand the text to perform the actions required by the script.

Understanding of Character Feelings. When working with younger students, it is often challenging to help them understand other people’s feelings, much less characters’ feelings. The use of Readers Theater, asking students questions, reminding them to consider the story's events, and allowing them to consult with their peers aided most students in identifying the emotions the characters were probably feeling and using that information to guide the way they used their voices. This mirrors young adult findings regarding comprehension (Young et al., 2019).

Retelling and Summary. Various participants chose to write about the story and were able to retell scenes of the story and summarize the story using pictures and text. This is probably due to the multiple readings of the text. I read aloud the story on the first day of the study, we choral read it the second day, and the students rehearsed it every day after that. The benefits of multiple readings have been highlighted by Young et al. (2019).

Use of New Vocabulary. Most students used the new vocabulary word “liebre” and three of them used additional new terms such as “presumida,” “rendirse,” and “frondoso.” Most students frequently used the word “liebre” when speaking and writing. Only one student used the word “conejo.” I also believe this result is due to the repeated readings and that the word “liebre” was repeated eight times compared to the other words that were only once or twice in the script. Mansouri and Darani (2016) pointed to the benefits of Readers Theater for vocabulary development.

Motivation/Engagement

Researchers have also found that the use of Readers Theater increases student motivation and engagement for reading (Bruckman-Laudenslager, 2019; Myrset & Drew, 2016). The social aspect of this approach was influential in terms of motivation. Various students in this study expressed that they enjoyed Readers Theater because they could read with their peers. They mentioned that one of the advantages of reading with peers was that they could help one another. I also observed them persevere when some words were difficult to understand, and they continued trying with the help of their peers, even when risking being judged by others in their small groups. Such is the example of Mireya, who did not get discouraged even when Adela showed signs of losing her patience. Moreover, they pushed through even when they struggled with fluency, as Nelson and David did when they said, "Terminamos." (We finished.). I directed them to reread. Without hesitation, they went right back to the reading. They were interacting with one another about the script at times.

In addition, researchers have found that Readers Theater provides an authentic reason for repeated readings (Flynn, 2004; Young et al., 2019). My students needed to practice the script because another class was coming to be an audience. The performance was a legitimate reason to practice. Sandra mentioned in her writing that they were practicing to perform for Mr. Reyes' class. Hence, Javier joined the group's reading during the practices, including the performance. Mireya did likewise, and Joaquín did when reading in unison with others. Emergent readers' voices blended with everyone else's when all the children that were representing one character read together.

Embedded Strategies That Address Emergent Bilingual Needs

Some researchers have found that Readers Theater strategy is embedded with approaches that fulfill emergent bilingual students' needs (Gualdron & Castillo, 2018; Haag, 2018; Uribe, 2019). Emergent bilingual students must have numerous opportunities to practice listening, speaking, reading, writing, and metacognitive skills regardless of language, especially at a young age when oral language is key in literacy development. This study using Readers Theater exhibited how the strategy organically provided a propitious space for cooperation where they practiced all domains. This is evidenced by the multiple students who shared whom they helped and who helped them. In this space, I used different types of grouping to the maximum extent to help with scaffolding. I used homogeneous grouping for the students to practice with others assigned the same characters since students were at heterogeneous reading levels. I also used heterogeneous grouping for the students to rehearse the complete script. While all were busy reading and cooperating, I could differentiate further by pulling Joaquín for one-on-one help.

Language Domains. The students had to listen in various circumstances throughout the lessons in this study. They had to listen to me model reading during read-aloud, follow along during shared reading, repeat sentences during choral reading, and listen to their peers when they did not know a word so they could discuss the problem and find a solution. They also had to listen to one another about any problems they encountered in the script, how they needed to fix it, and to my feedback after reading. They had to read the script daily, two or more times with peers and, at times, independently. In addition, they wrote to respond to the text for the last three days of the study. García and Wei (2014) assert that emergent bilingual students need regular practice of all language domains, and as shown, they are practiced during Readers Theater lessons.

Finally, they used metacognitive skills because they were aware of what we were doing during our lessons, as seen in their drawings, where they portrayed themselves and their peers holding the scripts and practicing. They even included the setting, which was the front of the classroom. They also wrote about their rehearsals and the reason they were needed. That awareness is key for metalinguistic thought.

Furthermore, the students gauged their reading skills while collaborating and cooperating with others. They evaluated others by character, in general, and individually by name at times. They were also quick to point out if they could hear someone reading loud enough, if they were accurate, or if they were getting lost. The students could perceive differences in reading amongst themselves. These student self-evaluations were also findings in Vasinda and Mcleod's (2011) study. However, peer evaluations, which is an important finding, was not present in the literature review of previous research studies. Students in my classroom participating in Readers Theater initiated evaluations that included their reading as well as their friend's reading. During student teacher conferences, when asked how they were doing in Readers Theater, some students reported that they were doing well, and that their friends were also doing well. Some students evaluated their performance in comparison to their peers. These evaluations show metacognitive skills usage.

Affective Domain. Some researchers have found that Readers Theater influences the affective domain in students (Garrett & O'Connor, 2010; Gualdron & Castillo, 2018). In this study, most students enjoyed the process, and their confidence increased as they felt they knew enough to judge their reading performances and their peers'. Their affective filter (Krashen, 1982) could have decreased due to not having to memorize, as shared by Nelson, when he said, "no hay que memorizarte." (You do not have to memorize.). Also, the use of homogeneous

grouping according to character could be another reason the affective filter lowered since it is difficult to discern errors and who made them when reading in unison. An example was when Javier, Mireya, and Joaquín, joined the group's reading during the performance even though their reading was not as accurate or fluent. However, at the time of the performance, I could tell the affective filter increased some because the students did not read as loud as they usually did during practice.

Other Non-Frequently Visible Happenings

Translanguaging

I expected translanguaging in my classroom during the study since it is a regularly accepted practice. However, only two students translanguaged, one orally to express excitement and the other one in writing when she used the word "bulin" (bullying). An explanation could be that most students speak Spanish as their first language, and their proficiency in English is in the early stages of developing. Another explanation could be that they are using their whole linguistic repertoire and have become aware that the script is in one language and are trying to stay within it.

Use of Background Knowledge and Request for Vocabulary Clarification

On the first day, only Nelson showed outwardly his use of background knowledge by sharing out loud what he knew about the story and where he saw it. He also requested vocabulary clarification as I was reading aloud the story. Others may have doubts about whether they knew the words, but it was not evident.

Tracking of Text

Only four students were tracking the text in an evident way during an observation. However, we know that for the students to perform a script during Readers Theater they must track their reading so as not to get lost. In general, they did a nice job in the performance.

Request for One-on-One Help

After the first 2 days into the study, a student with reading difficulties took it upon himself to request one-on-one help from me, the teacher.

Implications/Recommendations for Educators

I recommend the use of Readers Theater as part of a comprehensive language arts curriculum for its benefits. Readers Theater has been shown to positively influence the development of fluency, comprehension, motivation, and engagement, as well as the affective domain. It was clear that Readers Theater provided a space for the practice of the students' language domains, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including metacognitive domain. Within the rehearsals, the students used the metacognitive domain, as they were able to self-evaluate and evaluate their peers' reading, thus showing their awareness of the process.

As I collected and analyzed the data for this study, I quickly realized that even though some researchers and practitioners mention that student interest in a text should be considered and not the reading level of the script, I found that this was not so for my first-grade emergent bilinguals. For emergent bilinguals, it is essential to consider at least context and background knowledge. Careful attention should be given when the teacher notices the students are having too much trouble rehearsing. Teachers should identify the problem and find a solution by using students' comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982) to scaffold them to practice reading without becoming frustrated. I recall Joaquín who was showing difficulty reading the text. Even after

simplifying the script, and providing one-on-one support, he continued to have difficulty. I wonder if this was a unique issue or if all students who are at the very early stages of learning to read will also have this difficulty. Perhaps I would have noticed if other students showed similar behaviors at those levels if I had the opportunity to do the study at the beginning of the year when most students were at the EDL emergent reading level.

An additional adjustment I made for the students to facilitate the reading of the script was that I retyped the text to clarify where a word began and ended and made the spaces between rows larger to minimize the possibility of losing track of their reading. Other recommendations would be to begin with familiar stories and introduce unfamiliar stories as they progress in reading level.

We discern that the social aspect is what engages students in complex literacy activities within Readers Theater. However, it is clear in my study that even when the teacher is acting as facilitator, it is important to continue supporting beginning readers with difficulties. Even when Readers Theater, due to its social nature has embedded differentiation and scaffolding potential, some students will need one-on-one help, especially if their self-concept as a reader is weak. If so, they may be shy to engage in reading in front of their peers and their affective filter will increase. For most students, Readers Theater lowered the affective filter in my students because the students were able to practice and practice their script, and they knew with time they would improve their reading. This fact made it a more relaxed experience.

As I reflected back on the study, I realized that I could have used a book version of the fable *The Tortoise and the Hare* on the first day and then present the script on the second day. I would explain that the script had a different text structure but that it was an adaptation of the

book. Also, since the story is a fable, I could have stressed the understanding of the lesson of the story which is an abstract skill and a difficult one for first graders.

Small Group With Emergent Readers

In a mixed-ability classroom, which is often the case, there will be a need to meet with emergent readers who have difficulties in a small group to tend to their individual needs, just like we do while using any other strategy to teach literacy. I recommend the use of short texts or chunking the text to work with small portions of the script at a time to prevent overwhelming the students.

Writing Produced More Information Than Oral Responses

When I began doing conferences with individual students, the amount of oral communication was minimal, even after asking the students to elaborate on their answers. It did not help to ask them again the following day. Talking about the text with their peers helped formulate their thoughts. However, putting their thoughts on paper gave their initial thoughts permanence, thus allowing them to think about another idea and then add it to their previous thought. The writing produced a higher quality response than when they responded to questions in their conferences.

The limited oral responses of my students could be due to my limited experience conducting these sessions. Originally, I had planned to use focus group interviews for young participants, which entailed for the students to answer questions first by drawing pictures before answering orally. However, other colleagues recommended I use conferences in my study and mentioned that I would not need both. I decided then to replace the focus group interviews with the conferences. As I look back, I believe that had I used the focus group interviews, perhaps the

students would have been able to catch ideas on paper through drawing, and later expand on their oral answers.

Limitations and Suggestions for Additional Research

The findings of this study carry implications for researchers in the areas of bilingual education, literacy, and social constructivist strategies. Thus, a similar study should be conducted for longer than seven days, this would provide the students plenty of opportunities to go through the process multiple times. In this manner, the students will understand the process better and could focus on the new script and rehearsals, potentially lowering their affective filter.

There is also a need for research with emergent bilingual students in the youngest grades (PreK, K, first) who are emergent readers from the beginning of the school year, or at least not so late in the school year, also within the context of bilingual education. Finally, it would be advantageous to study content-based Readers Theater and consider it in the context of a bilingual classroom for an extended period to catch more translanguageing instances in the process and see how the process influences academic learning in other areas besides language arts.

Taking into consideration that this study was conducted for 7 days, and with 16 emergent bilingual students, the findings cannot be generalized to all emergent bilinguals. Also, the fact that it was conducted during the last two weeks of the school year makes it worthwhile to research Readers Theater in usual circumstances during the school year. Thus, extending the time of this study is within my future research agenda.

Conclusion

This study shows that the use of Readers Theater is a fun and propitious strategy for emergent bilinguals to engage in complex literacy processes at a deeper level as they collaborate and cooperate with their peers. In addition, it engages students in metacognitive activities that

have the potential of aiding them in their literacy and linguistic development. Although this study was conducted in a bilingual classroom, when considering today's diverse U.S. classrooms, it is not untypical to find emergent bilinguals. Hence, Readers Theater is for all.

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APPENDIX A

PROTOCOLS FOR OBSERVATIONS

Title of Project:				
Date/Time: _____				
Number of participants: _____				
Relates to:	Individual Behaviors	Group Behaviors	Non-verbal Cues	Conversation Topics and Threads
Which Participants				
Setting and use of space/objects				
Types of Ongoing Activities				
Researcher Reflection				
<i>Note: Template from Billups, F. D. (2021). <i>Qualitative data collection tools</i>. SAGE</i>				

Título del Proyecto:				
Fecha/Hora: _____				
Numero de Participantes: _____				
En relación a:	Comportamientos Individuales	Comportamientos en Grupo	Comunicaciones no verbales	Temas e Hilos de Conversación
Cuales Participantes				
Ambiente y uso del espacio/objetos				
Tipos de Actividades Continuas				
Reflexiones del Investigador				
<i>Note: Protocolo de Billups, F. D. (2021). Qualitative data collection tools. SAGE</i>				

NEW Observation Protocol		
Name of Student: Date/Time: Overall Classroom Context: Student EDL Level:		
Teacher Actions / Context	Student Talk / Body Language / Behaviors	Researcher Interpretation
<i>Note: Adapted from Billups, F. D. (2021). <i>Qualitative data collection tools</i>. SAGE</i>		

Protocolo Nuevo de Observación		
Nombre del Estudiante: Fecha/Hora: Contexto General del Aula: Nivel de Lectura EDL:		
Acciones de la Maestra / Contexto	Conversación del Estudiante / Lenguaje Corporal / Comportamientos	Interpretación del Investigador
<i>Note: Adaptado de Billups, F. D. (2021). <i>Qualitative data collection tools</i>. SAGE</i>		

APPENDIX B

CONFERENCE INITIAL QUESTIONS

Individual Student conferences (English):

This week we have been learning to use Readers Theater in language arts. I would like to ask you a few questions to understand how you are learning using Readers Theater.

- What do you think of the way we were learning this week (the researcher will give a detailed reminder of what the class did that day)?
- Can you tell me more?
- What did you like or not like?
- Can you explain why?

Conferencias individuales de estudiantes (Español):

Esta semana hemos estado aprendiendo usando Teatro de Lectores. Me gustaria hacerte unas preguntas para entender como esta aprendiendo con el uso de Teatro de Lectores.

- ¿Qué piensas sobre la manera en que hemos estado aprendiendo esta semana (el investigador le recordará detalladamente lo que se presentó ese día)?
- ¿Puedes decirme más?
- ¿Qué te gustó o no te gustó?
- ¿Puedes explicar por qué?

APPENDIX C

ECLECTIC CODES AND DEFINITIONS

	InVivo Codes	Codes Assigned and Definition	Source
1	“¿Dónde estás Mireya?”	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading.	Field Notes
2	“¿Fronoso? ¿Qué es frondoso?”	Request for Vocabulary Clarification-student asks for the meaning of words	Field Notes
3	“¿Que es reto?”	Request for Vocabulary Clarification-student asks for the meaning of words	Field Notes
4	“¡Cuando gana!” (He shared the meaning of the word meta.)	Collaborative/Cooperative-interacting with others for meaning-making about the text	Field Notes
5	“En, una, no, un. De, lo, que.” (Not fluently).	Reading with support-student can read with teacher support	Field Notes
6	“¡Mira! ¡Ahí no dice eso”!	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading.	Field Notes
7	(Double coding to previous)	Error ID-student identified an error	
8	“Míralo, no a mí.”	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading.	Field Notes
9		Error ID-student identified an error	
10	“¡No va a ganar! ¡E tortuga va a ganar! ¡La tortuga va a ganar! Yo lo escuche...”	Use of Background Knowledge-Pulling knowledge from previous experiences	Field Notes
11	“¡No! ¡Es que no puedo!”	Negative Behavior-refusal to participate, difficult attitude	Field Notes
12	“Oh my gosh!”	Translanguaging-use of all linguistic repertoire	Field Notes
13	(Double coding to previous)	Enjoyment	

14	“Otra vez. Tu sólo quédate mirando acá, no me mires a mí.”	Teacher Role-student takes teacher or tutor role	Field Notes
15	(Double coding to previous)	Collaborative/Cooperative-action occurs with peers while working together	
16	“...pienso”	Use of Background Knowledge-Pulling knowledge from previous experiences	Field Notes
17	“Porque mi boca no puede hablar.”	Blaming-student attributes difficulty to something else.	Field Notes
18	Joaquín: (Silence for around 5 seconds.) “A, a, a...” (trying to read the word)	Reading with support-student can read with teacher support	Field Notes
19	Joaquín: “Ummm, ¡no se!” (raising his voice some)	Frustration-Student shows with words or actions that they may stop or that they cannot do a task.	Field Notes
20	Adela: “La liebre” (whispering to let know another student’ turn came)	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading.	Field Notes
21	Mireya: “¿Qué qué qué?, ...ton, ...tu”	Reading Difficulties-student’s reading is strenuous, not fluent	Field Notes
22	Mireya: “A-mi” (Taken from a long conversation with peer)	Endurance-student continues to make efforts against difficulties or possible peer perceptions	Field Notes
23	Mireya: “Bien ... amiga” (omission of word)	Error Making-student makes an error and is not aware	Field Notes
24	Mireya: “Tu retarme a mí a un...una carrera?”	Self-correction- student was able to self-correct independently.	Field Notes
25	Ya verás que... (Long pause). Mireya, (mira) en la libreta.	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading.	Field Notes
26	¡Si! ¡Es fin! ¡Es fin!	Use of Background Knowledge-Pulling knowledge from previous experiences	Field Notes
27	¡Sigue!	Frustration-Student shows with words or actions that they are losing their patience.	Field Notes
28	¡Yo tambien! (Agreement expressing he also	Use of Context clues-students use hints from the text to	Field Notes

	guessed the meaning of the word)	understand the meaning of unknown words.	
	Observations	Codes Assigned and Definitions	Sources
29	Acceptance of Constructive Feedback	Peer Evaluation-words that express the general assessment of reading of another student.	Field Notes
30	Active Participation	Engagement-Actively participating during all parts of the lessons	Field Notes
31	Active Participation	Engagement-Actively participating during all parts of the lesson	Field Notes
32	Answered Questions	Engagement-Actively participating during all parts of the lesson	Field Notes
33	Attention seeking	Negative Behavior-refusal to participate, difficult attitude, crying	Field Notes
34	Attentive	Attentive-student is quietly looking towards the speaker, passive participation	Field Notes
35	Attentive during discussion	Attentive-student is quietly looking towards the speaker, passive participation	Field Notes
36	Attentive during modeling	Attentive-student is quietly looking towards the speaker, passive participation	Field Notes
37	Awareness	Metacognition-being able to pull the self away mentally to see what is happening in a larger scale than the self so you can take actions	Field Notes
38	Crying	Negative Behavior	Field Notes
39	Participating	Engagement-Actively participating	Field Notes
40	Interjecting to share knowledge	Use of Background Knowledge-Pulling knowledge from previous experiences	Field Notes
41	Student using the word “liebre”	Use of New Vocabulary-student uses vocabulary previously unknown	Field Notes
42	Beyond engagement and sharing his knowledge	Engagement-Actively participating	Field Notes

43		Collaborative/Cooperative-interacting with others for meaning making	Field Notes
44	Uncomfortable	Afraid of Judgment-Afraid of being perceived as a less skilled reader	Field Notes
45	Insulted	Self-Evaluation-student makes a judgment of themselves	Field Notes
46	Sharing background knowledge	Use of Background Knowledge-Pulling knowledge from previous experiences	Field Notes
47	Confirmation of Context Clues usage and meaning making	Confirming Predictions-something the student expected happens or is just as expected	Field Notes
48	Confirms predictions	Confirming Predictions-something the student expected happens or is just as expected	Field Notes
49	Student is cooperative	Collaborative/Cooperative-interacting with others for meaning making	Field Notes
50	Correction of Peer	Peer Evaluation-words that express the general assessment of reading of another student.	Field Notes
51	Disengaged	Lack of Participation-no attentiveness nor activity related to the lessons	Field Notes
52	Distracted	Lack of Participation-no attentiveness nor activity related to the lessons	Field Notes
53	Confirming or discounting new information	Use of Background Knowledge-Pulling knowledge from previous experiences	Field Notes
54	Effort to read	Engagement-Actively participating	Field Notes
55	Endurance	Engagement-Actively participating	Field Notes
56	Engaged	Engagement-Actively participating	Field Notes
57	Engagement	Engagement-Actively participating	Field Notes
58	Error ID	Error ID-student identified an error-student noticed an error in other students' reading or their own.	Field Notes
59	Error Omission	Made Error-student made an incorrect action while reading.	Field Notes
60	After efforts, the student cannot keep	Frustration-Student shows with words or actions that they are losing their	Field Notes

	her voice calm anymore. She is losing patience	patience.	
61	Interactions with peers	Collaborative/Cooperative-interacting with others for meaning making	Field Notes
62	Could not recall reading that was just shared with the student	Short Memory Difficulties-cannot recall something that was recently discussed.	Field Notes
63	Lost track of reading	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading.	Field Notes
64	Monitoring accuracy	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading.	Field Notes
65	Not worried about perception among peers	Peer Evaluation-words that express the general assessment of reading of another student	Field Notes
66	Passive Participation	Attentive-student is looking towards the speaker, passive participation	Field Notes
67	Peer Interaction	Collaborative/Cooperative-interacting with others for meaning making	Field Notes
68	Student telling another who's turn is next	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading	Field Notes
69	Error Making	Made Error-student made an incorrect action while reading	Field Notes
70	Reading and collaborating	Engagement-Actively participating	Field Notes
71	Began to read with teacher	Reading with support-student can read with teacher support	Field Notes
72	Fell asleep	Physically Tired-student shows physical indications of tiredness, such as, leaning against something, sleeping, yawning	Field Notes
73	Reading with difficulty	Reading with support-student can read with teacher support	Field Notes
74	Reading easily, finished quickly	Reading-student is reading the text	Field Notes
75	Reading	Engagement-Actively participating	Field Notes
76	Reading with peers	Collaborative/Cooperative-interacting with others for meaning making	Field Notes
77	Student read with difficulty	Reading Difficulties-student has difficulty reading the text independently	Field Notes

78	Teacher initiated help	Teacher Initiated Reading-teacher offers help to student	Field Notes
79	Teacher role	Teacher Role-student takes teacher or tutor role	Field Notes
80	Tracking	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading	Field Notes
81	Tracking	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading	Field Notes
82	Tracking	Tracking of Text-student keeps up with where they are reading	Field Notes
83	Wiggly	Restless-moving more than average	Field Notes
84	Mireya's face changed	Resentment of Teacher Action-disagrees with action taken by the teacher and shows it physically or with words	Field Notes
85	"Feliz"	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
86	"leyendo mas."	Self-Evaluation-student makes a judgment of their own performance in reading	Conferences
87	"Leyendo muy bien."	Self-Evaluation and Peer Evaluation-student makes a judgment of their own performance in reading or of their peers	Conferences
88	"Me ayuda porque es como un libro"	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
89	"Me gusta más el personaje que estoy haciendo."	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
90	"Me gusta más porque tienes muchas palabras."	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
91	"Me gustaría más un libro gordo. Puedo leer un día y un día y puedo terminar otro día."	Future Plans for Reading-student is sharing future plans for reading	Conferences
92	"Me gusto porque había palabras que me se."	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
93	"Mi amigo lee una página y otro otra. página."	Turn Taking-students are taking turns reading	Conferences

94	“No sé quién es el mejor”	Self-Evaluation and Peer Evaluation-student makes a judgment of their own performance in reading or of their peers	Conferences
95	“No se.”	Limited Response-student did not expand in his/her answer	Conferences
96	“No, todo me gusto.”	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
97	"Bien" (about peers)	Peer Evaluation	Conferences
98	Prefiero el narrador porque puedo leer un poquito más.	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
99	Prefiero leer con mis amigos	Collaborative/Cooperative Affective-positive	Conferences
100	Puedo leer un día y un día y puedo terminarlo algún día.	Commitment for Future Reading	Conferences
101	Puedo leer un poquito más.	Self-Evaluation	Conferences
102	puedo tener más a leer.	Self-Evaluation	Conferences
103	sabemos cómo leerlo.	Self and Peer Evaluation	Conferences
104	Si no lo acabo lo puedo leer en otro día.	Reading Future	Conferences
105	Ta bueno leer con mis amigos porque leemos juntos.	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
106	todos están leyendo.	Engagement	Conferences
107	(Nods in agreement)	Positive Academic influence- perception of positive influence on reading	Conferences
108	(She stayed quiet.)	Hesitation	
109	Limited Oral Response	Unsure-not being sure of what to answer	Conferences
110	“Lo puedo leer.”	Self-Evaluation-student makes a judgment of themselves	Conferences
111	“La liebre porque corre más rápido.”	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
112	Unas palabras me hizo reír.	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences

113	"Estamos tomando turnos."	Turn-taking	Conferences
114	"Feliz"	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
115	"Algunos no leen bien."	Peer Evaluation	Conferences
116	Bien.	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
117	estamos tomando turnos de las páginas.	Turn-taking	Conferences
118	El libreto me gustaría mas	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
119	es diferente	Metacognition-being able to pull the self away mentally to see what is happening on a larger scale than the self so you can take actions	Conferences
120	favorito porque es diferente porque las otras personas la lean. Lo pod	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
121	Feliz	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Conferences
122	Positive Experience	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Artifact
123	Behavior	Incomplete work	Artifact
124	Performance	Understanding Character Feelings	Artifact
125	Performance	Illustration of characters	Artifact
126	Peer Evaluation	Peer Evaluation	Artifact
127	Explanation	Metacognition-being able to pull self away mentally to see what is happening in a larger scale that the self so you can take actions	Artifact
128	Character Feelings	Understanding Character Feelings	Artifacts
129	Character Feelings Pic	Understanding Character Feelings	Artifact
130	Me gusta.	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Artifact
131	Performance	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Artifact

132	Performance	Summarizing-	Artifact
133	Performance	Translanguaging-use of all linguistic repertoire	Artifact
134	Performance	Use of New Vocabulary-student uses vocabulary previously unknown	Artifact
135	Perception	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment	Artifact
136	Perception of amount of reading	Affective-positive feelings, enjoyment, contentment, perception of beneficial	Artifact
137	Performance	Use of Previously Learned skill	Artifact
138	Positive perception of self	Self-Evaluation	Artifact
139	Translanguaging	Translanguaging-use of all linguistic repertoire	Artifact
140	Performance	Character feelings why- student can explain why the character feels that way.	Artifact
141	Performance	Metacognition-being able to pull self away mentally to see what is happening in a larger scale that the self so you can take actions	Artifact
142	Use of new vocabulary	Use of New Vocabulary-student uses vocabulary previously unknown	Artifacts
143	Performance	Peer Evaluation-Yael, Monica,	Artifact
144	Performance	Metacognition-being able to pull self away mentally to see what is happening in a larger scale that the self so you can take actions.	Artifact
145	Performance	Retell-student can recall and share it again	Artifact
146	Performance	Changing Decisions	Artifact
147	Performance	Retell-student can recall and share it again	Artifact
148	Self-Evaluation	Self-Evaluation	Artifact
149	Self-Evaluation as a better reader	Self-Evaluation	Artifact
150	Self Portrait with Script	Metacognition	Artifact