

**A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs in Supporting Grade Four
English Language Learners' Reading Proficiency**

by

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B.A. Ed. English Education, Adeyemi College of Education, Nigeria, 2004

M.Sc. Curriculum and Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, 2010

A Dissertation submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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Abstract

The rising population of immigrants in Canada has increased the diversity of students enrolled in schools at all levels, and teachers have a critical role in guiding and supporting the language and literacy development of students. This dissertation used a qualitative case study methodology to investigate how the instructional practices of three teachers in public elementary schools in Victoria, British Columbia support grade four English language learners' (ELLs) reading proficiency. The collected data includes interviews, classroom observations, and teachers' journal responses. Findings from the three data collection methods were triangulated and show that the teachers' personal histories influenced the development of their beliefs and, specifically, their beliefs about teaching reading. Their professional knowledge also played a significant role in their instructional practice because their teacher education programs did not sufficiently prepare them for the reality of teaching reading. Generally, a relationship was seen between the teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices in designing a classroom that supports ELLs' language and literacy development. The findings suggest that teachers should provide every opportunity for ELLs to connect with their language and cultural backgrounds to further support their reading proficiency. The teachers also believed that their students should become familiar with reading by exposing them to reading components such as phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension, and using the students' prior knowledge in their language and cultural backgrounds to facilitate their comprehension of text they encounter.

Key words: Reading, Teachers' Belief, Instructional Practice, English Language Learner (ELL)

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	ix
List of Tables	x
Abbreviations	xi
Acknowledgments	xii
Dedication	xiv
Chapter 1: Introduction	16
The Research Context	17
The Researcher’s Cultural Background and Context	21
Research Problem	26
Context of the Study	27
Research Questions	28
Purpose of the Study	28
Significance of the Study	29
Overview of the Chapter	30
Overview of the Dissertation	31
Chapter 2: Literature Review	32
Theoretical Framework	32
Socio-Constructivism Theory	33
Transformative Learning Theory	36
Section I	39
Definitions of Reading	39
Importance of Reading	41
Purpose of Reading	43
Reading for pleasure	43
Functional reading	44
Section II	46

Reading Comprehension	46
Reading Models.....	47
Simple view reading model (SVR).....	47
Reading components.....	49
Phonological awareness.....	49
Why teach the ‘Ph’ words and how do they support students’ reading success?	51
Fluency.....	51
Accuracy.....	52
Rate.....	53
Prosody.....	53
Vocabulary development.....	54
Scarborough’s reading rope model (SRRM).....	55
Active view reading (AVR).....	57
1. <i>Causes of reading difficulties within and beyond word recognition and language comprehension.</i>	61
2. <i>From the SVR model, decoding and comprehension processes were suggested to be separate and do not necessarily influence each other.</i>	61
3. <i>The AVR model considers self-regulation as an important aspect, involving the active participation of the learners in analyzing a text.</i>	61
My Understanding of the Reading Models	63
Combining the simple view of reading (SVR) and Scarborough reading rope models (SRRM).....	63
Active view reading model.....	64
Section III.....	66
Teachers’ Beliefs about Teaching Reading.....	66
Approaches to Teaching Reading Comprehension	68
Teaching Comprehension Skills or Strategies.....	68
Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension	69
Cooperative/collaborative reading strategy.....	70
Self-questioning.....	70
Predicting.....	71
Graphic organizers.....	71
Chapter Conclusion.....	72
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	74
Rationale and Goals for this Qualitative Research Project	74

Qualitative Case Study Approach	75
The Researcher’s Positionality.....	76
Context/Setting.....	77
Participant Recruitment.....	78
Data Collection.....	82
Data Analysis	85
Thematic Analysis (TA).....	85
Interview Analysis Process.....	86
Observation Analysis Process	87
Teachers’ Journal Analysis Process	88
Ethical Considerations	89
Trustworthiness	90
Chapter 4: Teacher Backgrounds and their Contexts of Teaching	92
The Teachers’ Backgrounds.....	92
Jodi’s Profile.....	93
Elaine’s Profile	93
Sunshine’s Profile.....	94
Curriculum Content for Grade 4	96
Context of Teaching.....	98
Jodi’s Classroom Observation.....	99
1. The classroom environment.....	99
2. Resources available in the class.....	100
3. Students’ work.....	100
4. Jodi’s Content of teaching and instructional processes.....	101
Elaine’s Classroom Observation	103
1. The classroom environment.....	103
2. Resources available in the classroom.....	104
3. Students’ work.....	104
4. Elaine’s Content of the teaching and instructional processes.....	105
Sunshine’s Classroom Observation.....	106
1. The classroom environment.....	106
2. The resources available in the class.....	107

3. Students' work.....	107
4. Sunshine's Content of teaching and instructional processes.....	107
Discussion	110
Classroom Environment	110
Instructional Practice	112
Making connections.....	114
Visualization.....	115
Questioning	115
Inference	116
Chapter Summary.....	116
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion.....	118
Findings from the Interviews	119
Theme I: Teacher's Beliefs	120
Participant 1 – Jodi.	121
Participant 2 – Elaine.....	126
Participant 3 – Sunshine.	128
Theme I: Discussion	132
Theme II: Instructional Practice	133
Participant 1 – Jodi.	134
Participants 2 and 3 – Elaine and Sunshine	138
Theme II: Discussion.....	140
Theme III: Classroom Environment.....	143
Theme III: Discussion	145
Analysis of the Teachers' Journal Responses	149
Summary of Elaine's Journal Response	150
1. Memorable things about learning to read.	150
2. Teacher education program.	151
3. Impact of reading and learning.	152
Summary of Jodi's Journal Response.....	153
1. Memorable things about learning to read.	153
2. Teacher education program.	154
3. Impact of reading and learning.	155

Summary of Sunshine’s Journal Response	156
1. Memorable things about learning to read.	156
2. Teacher education program.	157
3. Impact of reading and learning.	158
Summary	158
Chapter 6: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions	160
Section I	160
Section II	164
Summary	164
Limitations of the Study.....	165
Recommendations	166
Recommendations for Practicing Teachers	167
Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs	168
Recommendations for Further Research	168
Conclusion.....	169
References.....	171
Appendix 1: Letter of Invitation	198
Appendix 2: Consent Form.....	199
Appendix 3: Interview Questions	203
Appendix 4: Observation Checklist	205
Appendix 5: Parents’ Awareness Letter	207
Appendix 6: Teachers’ Journal Response.....	208
Appendix 7: Initial Thematic Analysis.....	209
Appendix 8: Final Thematic Analysis	210
Appendix 9: Ethics Approval Certificate.....	211

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing the states and regions.....	22
Figure 2. Scarborough’s reading rope model.....	57
Figure 3. Active view of reading.	60
Figure 4. English Language Learners (ELLs) per ELL teacher.....	80
Figure 5. Jodi’s classroom.	99
Figure 6. An area in Jodi’s classroom dedicated to small group instruction.	100
Figure 7. Student writing samples.	101
Figure 8. Elaine’s classroom.....	104
Figure 9. Sunshine’s classroom.	106
Figure 10. Student sample of work in Sunshine’s classroom.	107
Figure 11. Emerging themes from a book being read.....	109
Figure 12. Sample of a book used in Sunshine’s class that was relevant to the themes.....	109
Figure 13. Visual summary of the classroom observations.	113
Figure 14. Summary of what constitutes a conducive environment.....	147

List of Tables

Table 1. Word Knowledge.....	54
Table 2. Components in the Active View of Reading Model.....	58
Table 3. ELL Students per ELL Teacher in BC.....	79
Table 4. ELLs in Grade 4 by District.....	80
Table 5. Percentage of Top Ten Home Languages found in Public and Independent Schools in BC in 2023/24.....	81
Table 6. Phases of Thematic Analysis.....	85
Table 7. Overview of the Teachers' Backgrounds.....	95
Table 8. Curriculum for Grade 4.....	96
Table 9. Curriculum Details.....	98
Table 10. The Research Questions and Corresponding Data Collection Techniques	120
Table 11. The Teachers' Beliefs, Instructional Practice, and Classroom Environment	147

Abbreviations

BALL	Blog-Assisted Language Learning
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
EFL	English as Foreign Language
ELL	English Language Learner
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCTE	National Council of Teachers of English
NEDS	National Education Data Survey
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
PRC	People's Republic of China
TA	Thematic Analysis
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Curriculum
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to God, my helper, sustainer, provider, and my all in all from the time I was conceived in my mother's womb till date. Also, to my darling late father who passed at the verge of completing this dissertation. So sad you did not see me accomplish this great feat you have always desired I accomplish.

Chapter 1

In recent times, Canada has witnessed an increasing influx of immigrants who speak languages other than English. According to a report of Statistics Canada from the 2021 national census, more than 8.3 million people, or almost one quarter (23.0%) of the Canadian population are landed immigrants. This represents a remarkable increase, compared to the 2016 census report, since 1.3 million new immigrants were included in the report from 2016 to 2021. The report added that immigrants to the country generally prefer to settle in major urban centers like Toronto, ON and Vancouver, BC, which have the first and second largest immigrant settlements in the country, respectively. Consequently, federal and provincial governments have shown a growing concern to initiate policies that will ensure that new immigrants and their families will be able to settle in successfully. One of the major policies focused on the settlement process has been in education and supporting the diversity of learners in the education systems. For instance, the BC government released a policy statement that has been put into practice to bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps of English language learners (ELLs) across different educational levels. Specifically, the provincial government has stated that:

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable all learners to become literate, to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy. (ELL Policy and Guidelines, 2013, p. 3)

To further translate the above policy to instructional practice, teachers play inevitable roles to create classrooms that accommodate emerging diversities and develop initiatives that support learners' different language and cultural backgrounds. In particular, for students to eventually contribute meaningfully to their world, they need to be acquainted with relevant knowledge and skills that teachers can provide them with. This dissertation will therefore investigate the role of teachers' beliefs

and instructional practices to support Grade 4 ELLs acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills to achieve reading proficiency.

I have divided this chapter into seven sections. In the first section, I introduce the broad research context. The second section refers to my cultural background and contexts. In the rest of the sections, I describe the research problem, context of the study, research questions, purpose of the study and the significance of the study. I also present an overview of the chapter, as well as the organization of the dissertation.

The Research Context

With regards to acquiring relevant language and literacy skills to be successful in school settings, Cummins and Early (2011) found that “ELLs take approximately two or three years to gain the necessary interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and five to seven years to gain cognitive academic language proficiency skills (CALP)” (p. 19). With this view, more cognitive processes are typically involved in acquiring academic language (CALP) while BICS, which still involves language and literacy proficiency, is less cognitively and linguistically demanding as CALP. Thus, teacher input and scaffolding is required to support the language and literacy skills for beginning and intermediate ELLs to acquire relevant academic proficiency skills, including reading in their second language (the focus of this present dissertation). Moreover, according to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2006) schools “represent the most powerful and pervasive means of introducing the next generation into a culture of literacy” (p. 2), which requires the inevitable support of teachers.

Undoubtedly, having a solid foundation in language and literacy skills in a student’s first and second languages is pivotal for learning to read. Literacy is elastic and complex and has been variously defined in different cultures and contexts, although its present meaning extends beyond the traditional notion of an ability to read and write the alphabets (Morais, 2018). From a 21st first century perspective, literacy (and “literacies”) “has now come to mean a rapid and continuous process of

change in ways which we read, write, view, listen, compose and communicate information” (Corio et al., 2008, p. 23).

The above perspective on 21st century understandings of literacy has introduced another dimension to how students are conceptualized as active learners, designers of their own experiences with the collaboration and support of their peers and teachers as they engage in a variety of literacy (multiliteracies) practices in different contexts (multimodalities) which may include a variety of semiotic systems like text, colour, shapes, and more (New London Group, 1996). This international cohort of literacy researchers, referred to as the New London group, identified four components essential to literacy. These components are: (1) situated practice, (2) overt instruction, (3) critical framing, and (4) transformed practice. According to the New London Group:

Situated practice involves building on the lifeworld experiences of students that situate meaning making in real world contexts. Overt instruction is used to guide students to use an explicit metalanguage of design. Critical framing encourages students to interpret the social context and purpose of designs of meaning, and transformed practice occurs when students transform existing meanings to design new meanings. (New London Group, 1996, p. 65)

By implication, each of the above components have been found helpful to better inform reading teachers with pedagogical approaches to support their students to move beyond basic decoding skills and what the text says at the surface level to more deeply exploring information, negotiating their social and cultural worlds, and interpreting details in-depth and critically.

Additionally, Zhang et al. (2020) underscored the significance of literacy in fostering inclusivity. The scholars from the New London Group introduced a flexible approach to the concept, providing individuals from diverse nationalities and cultures with various means of making sense of their lives. This enables them to connect with and comprehend the world around them. Essentially, literacy serves as a powerful tool that unites individuals, irrespective of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, with a broader community, empowering them to be well-informed and actively engaged.

In addition, the National Council of Teachers of English (2013) described their position statement on the definition of literacies in the 21st century, noting they are. It states that literacy is:

A collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the 21st century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies are multiple, dynamic and malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities and social trajectories of individuals and groups. (Para 1)

Considering the definitions of 21st literacy highlighted above, these examples show that literacy has extended beyond the traditional notion (the ability to read and write) to include more learner engagement with the use of auditory, visual, and gestural modes of communications. Including the use of technology has expanded the types of texts available to learners in school to include not just traditional print text (hard copy), but also non-print formats or hybrid versions which allow students to be creative, collaborate effectively and actively participate in their learning environment. In a similar vein, BC's Ministry of Education (2015) defined literacy as "the ability to understand, critically analyze and create a variety of forms of communication, including oral, written, visual, digital and multimedia to accomplish one's goals" (Curriculum Redesign, para. 9). By implication, learners who are new immigrants coming to school will likely have been exposed to a form of literacy in their first language. For example, Al Zoubi (2018), Grabe and Stoller (2019), Jones and Christensen (2022), and Saville-Troike and Barto (2017) found that a strong foundation in a student's first language and literacy skills support reading in the second language since the learners come with metalinguistic knowledge and other relevant skills that are transferable to reading in the second language. Nassaji (2014), Verhoeven (2017), and Grabe and Stoller (2020) have also identified some similarities in the cognitive and linguistic components of first language (L1) and second language (L2) reading. Specific

examples include the phonological and orthographic processing skills in L1 Spanish and L2 English (Sun-Alperin & Wang, 2011; Nassaji, 2014). Similarly, phonological processing skills in English and French are helpful in letter-name knowledge and word reading skills (Nassaji, 2014). Various authors in their studies of different bilingual learners (e.g., Chung et al., 2019; Chung et al., 2023; Janssen et al., 2017; Lallier & Carreiras, 2018; Novita et al., 2022) have reported similar findings that show the transferability of phonological or orthographic processing skills in the reading skills of bilingual children. Cummins (2000) also posited that “academic proficiency transfers across language such that students who have developed literacy in the first language will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in the second language” (p. 173). Thus, emerging readers tend to draw on language and literacy skills from both their first and second (or additional) languages as they read to learn and continue learning to read in both their languages, which genuinely supports the goal of contributing meaningfully to the world around them. With the goal to engage in the world meaningfully, in this dissertation I acknowledge that having realistic instructional practices plays a crucial role in supporting students’ transition from learning to read to reading to learn. In other words, through realistic instructional practice, it is believed that students will gain first-hand experience with different types of texts and be guided with the skills and strategies that will truly support their understanding of the texts. Furthermore, related to the role of teachers in facilitating this process of students’ literacy development, Borg (2017), Borg and Alshumaimeri (2019), Kaymakamoglu (2018), and Yang et al., (2020) found that teachers’ beliefs were a predominant factor that can lead to realistic and effective instructional practice in the classroom. With the above discussion in mind, this study therefore investigates the significance of teachers’ beliefs and instructional practices to support Grade 4 ELLs acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills to achieve reading proficiency.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, I discuss a brief history of the culture and context of my own background as it relates to this study. Next, I discuss the research problem, and the context of the

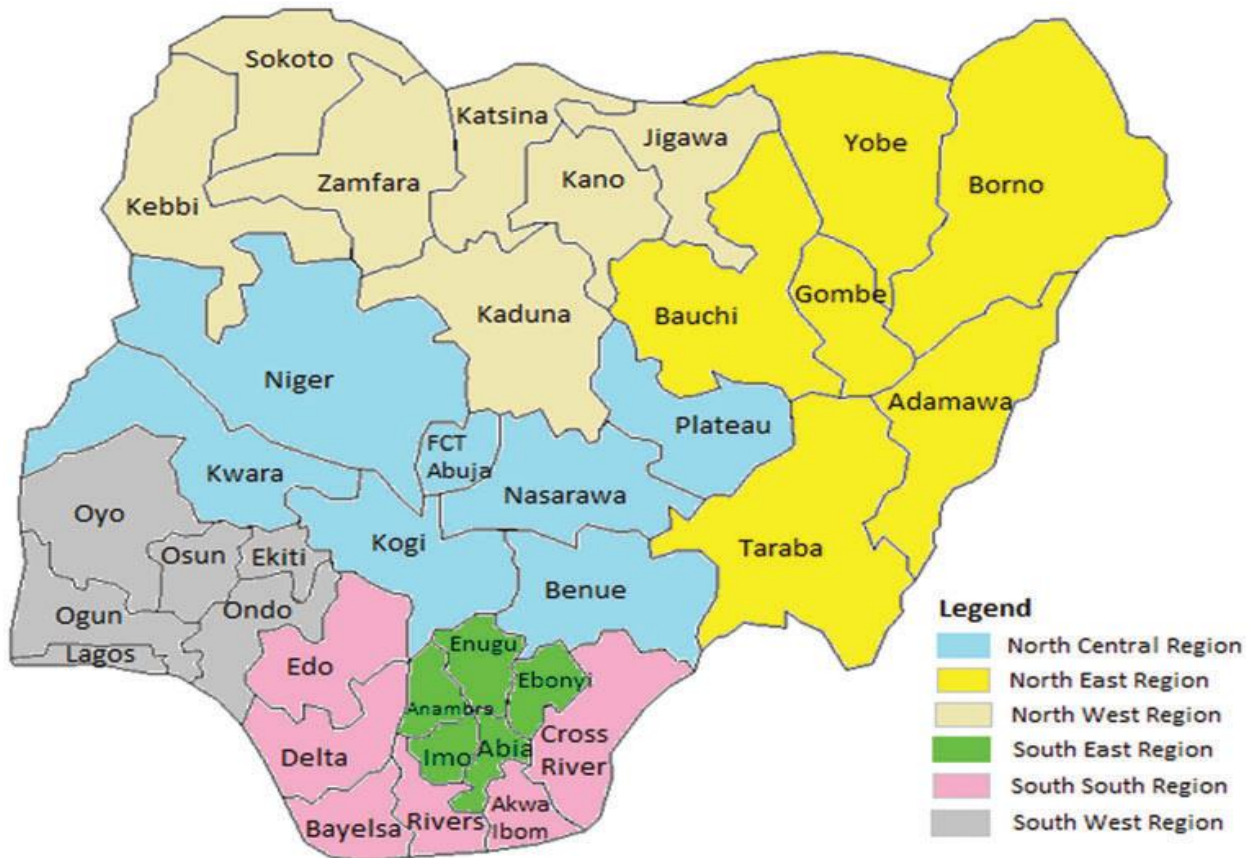
study. I detail the central questions being investigated, the purpose and significance of the study. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a succinct overview.

The Researcher's Cultural Background and Context

As an international student from West Africa, Nigeria, my second language is English, which is also the second official language of the country. English emerged as the second official language in Nigeria from the complex context of languages in the country (Figure 1). It has served as a unifying and reconciliatory language bequeathed to the country after colonization. In Nigeria, people are typically identified by the languages they speak and by the community from which they come. For instance, three major languages (Yòrúbá, Ibo, and Hausa) are widely used, and are spoken in localized regions where various dialects are also present. The multilingual context in Nigeria is estimated to have 400-500 indigenous languages (Adegbite, 2003), in addition to the more commonly spoken languages, including English.

Figure 1

Map of Nigeria showing the States and Regions



Source: Gayawan et al. (2014)¹

Realistically, in the region where I am from (the Yòrùbá speaking group), there are two groups of children: i) those having English as their second language, and ii) those from homes where English is their first language, and where the parents are from different language communities other than Yoruba. In any case, both groups of children need to learn the fundamental skills of academic language since: (1) English is an official language in Nigeria, and (2) it is vital in commerce, politics, media, and education. Students need to have English language skills to be able to operate in their worlds, both inside and outside of the classroom. To this end, the country's National Policy on Education (NPE, revised 1981, 2004, 2013) states that:

¹ I have approval from the authors to use this image.

The medium of instruction in the Primary school shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years in monolingual communities. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject; from the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of the immediate environment and French and Arabic shall be taught as subjects. (p. 8)

Beginning in the 4th year of school, English becomes both a subject and primary medium of instruction, and students are expected to learn English literacy skills to facilitate their comprehension in subject areas across the curriculum in grade 4 and beyond. Although NPE statements are crucial for guiding the design of the curriculum across different levels of education, the NPE statements that emphasize the mandatory use of English as medium of instruction from the 4th grade fail to give specifics on how the implemented curriculum will serve the goals of primary education. In particular, one of the goals is to “inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively” (NPE, 2013, p. 7). Consequently, some years later, the Nigerian federal government proposed another curriculum to specifically serve primary education in the country, namely, the Universal Basic Education Curriculum (UBEC), which aims to address the above goal and deal with the reported low student performances in English. For instance, Adekola (2007), in a study sponsored by the World Bank, which financed the Second Primary Education project, reported the low performance of Nigerian students in English compared to students in other African countries. Similarly, according to the World Bank (2017), the quality of basic education measured in terms of student learning outcomes is low in Nigeria. In another World Bank report, based on international standards, only 66% of public-school students in Nigeria can read with very basic proficiency in English after completing grade 4 (National Education Data Survey, 2015). To address the low proficiency and competence in different English language skills (such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing), the Nigerian federal government subsequently revised the curriculum in 2011 and 2014 from a 6-3-3-4 (i.e., six years of primary education, three years of middle secondary school, three years of senior secondary school, and four years of post

secondary education) system to a 9-3-4 (i.e., nine years of basic primary education, three years of senior secondary education, and four years of post secondary education) system. With the revised 9-3-4 curriculum, the emphasis was placed on English studies for primary grades 1-3 with a refined focus on teaching reading and writing skills. Despite the apparently early exposure to English in grades 1-3, a gap continues to exist in the students' reading and writing literacy performance (UNICEF, 2022).

Importantly, one of the significant factors identified behind this gap was the instructional practices in classrooms. Obiagu (2020) explained that poor pedagogical practice was leading to an uninteresting learning environment for young learners to acquire language proficiency. Similarly, Oribabor (2014) highlighted that teachers were contributing to the students' poor performance by not having the "technical know-how to teach English" (p. 66). That is, the instructional practices were more theory based and not pragmatic enough to explain details of the language components which the students require for their language and literacy development. My personal experience working in a primary school in northern Nigeria supports this viewpoint. Emphasizing instructional practice with engaging, innovative, and interactional ways of learning English, even outside the classroom context, is essential for supporting students. This also contributes to students' reading comprehension within the classroom. After completing my bachelor's degree in English education from a foremost college of education, I served my country in the compulsory National Youth Service Corps program (NYSC) at the Nigerian police academy primary school, Wudil, in Kano State, Nigeria. During my year of service, I organized a literacy and debating competition program at the primary school in the local government area. I conceived the idea for the program because of the challenges I faced trying to help grade 5 students learn English using text structure and context to comprehend a written text. As part of the literacy program, the children had opportunities to share their ideas using their socio-cultural backgrounds in quiz and debate sessions and display their knowledge through cultural songs, drama, dance, and poetry recitations. I also invited some parents to give literacy talks to describe to the students how they encouraged their children to read books, by modelling reading to them, summarizing

their readings, and asking questions about what their children had learned from the reading. Ultimately, students were encouraged to develop confidence that what they were experiencing was a part of life and they should maximize the support that was available to them from home and school. The program was successful, and the primary schools in the local government area were reported to have the highest scores in English at the high school entrance examinations in Kano State that year. Overall, I recognized the fundamental role played by the students' socio-cultural background in the actions to further support their interpreting and analyzing of texts in the classroom.

From the above backdrop of the effects of poor instructional practice and from my experience working with primary school students in Kano, I became concerned about the teachers' instructional practices to support the language and literacy development of upper elementary students, and especially their academic literacy. In my master's research project, I studied the sociocultural perspective of instructional practices in senior secondary English language classrooms in Nigeria. The findings revealed that the gaps in the students' poor performance could be traced to their early years, which pointed to the students' poor foundation in their English language skills. Unfortunately, at the time, I was unable to extend the study to learn more about the underlying issues, and the effects on the students' academic language and literacy skills. After entering a PhD program at the University of Victoria, BC, Canada my goal was to explore the same issues mentioned above, from my vantage and background as a teacher. Realizing that Canadian society is multicultural, and resembling somewhat the multilingual nature of Nigerian society, I recognized that Canadian educators are also concerned with creating a supportive classroom that accounts for the students' different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In a similar vein, I consider this study relevant to pedagogical and curricular implications in the Nigerian educational system, especially elementary education, which serves as a foundational year for the language and literacy development of learners. Various authors (e.g., Freire, 1970; Kim, 2020; Lee et al., 2019) have also indicated the importance of students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds for their learning and academic success. I believe that teachers with backgrounds

in language education can play a fundamental role in student learning, and in particular, my aim is to further understand the roles of teachers in public schools in Canada to support students' cultural diversities in ELL classrooms. Specifically, I wondered: what are the teachers' views about ELLs' literacy in their first language and the relationship of teachers' knowledge to support the language and literacy development of ELLs while they are learning (and learning through) the target language? Furthermore, I asked, what factors from classroom practices support the ELL students' language and literacy development?

Research Problem

Scholars like Ahmed et al. (2022), and Hall et al. (2017) have identified students encountering a slump in their reading goals when they reach grade 4 (an upper elementary grade) as typically there is less emphasis on the learning to read processes. Also, their cognitive processes and sociocultural experiences may be different from the context of what they are exposed to in the type of reading they encounter in the second language; for instance, when engaging with a text that requires them to make inferences or predictions. The aforementioned tasks require deeper level thinking and may require students to recall similar situations using their long-term memory (schemas) which may be different from what they had been previously exposed to in the sociocultural background. Consequently, students may receive low literacy scores in tasks that are associated with reading and reading comprehension. For instance, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2017, 2019), the only nationwide assessment platform in the US reported poor performance in reading by grade 4 readers. The reports showed a lack of significant increase in the students' reading performance from 2017 to 2019. For 2019, the report stated that 64% of all 4th graders performed at a basic or below basic reading level with an increase of just three points in their scores from 2017. The report also stated that the reading performance of students fell by three points from 2019 to 2022 in grade 4; however, it is important to note the likely impact of remote schooling, which prominently

occurred during COVID, on the students' reading performance during this time period. In other words, no significant improvement occurred in the students' reading from 2017-2022.

Similarly, some scholars in Canada have identified a gap in students' reading comprehension at the upper elementary level, which can be traced to the moment students begin to engage in heavier cognitive processing in reading (Farnia & Geva, 2013; Roessingh, 2021). While some research has focused on factors that contribute to low literacy scores, suggesting that best practices are needed to support struggling readers, little research has been conducted on the significance of teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices to support ELL reading proficiency at the upper elementary grade. This dissertation is intended to address this research gap by examining instructional practices related to ELLs in the Greater Victoria area in BC. The study will also examine previous research to explain the importance of teachers' beliefs and instructional practices to support ELL reading proficiency at the upper elementary grade. The overall purpose of the research is to offer both pedagogical and theoretical insights for fellow researchers and schools, and to offer recommendations for practicing teachers and emerging teachers in teacher education programs to truly support the reading proficiency of upper elementary ELLs irrespective of their linguistic or cultural backgrounds.

Context of the Study

Instructional practice that supports the reading proficiency of ELLs is the basis for this research project. The study uses a qualitative case study involving three public school teachers who have experience working with ELL emergent readers. Specifically, the study is focused on three ELL teachers' beliefs about reading and how they support ELLs in grade 4 classrooms in elementary schools in Greater Victoria, BC. I chose grade 4 ELLs for a number of reasons: first, grade 4 is crucial in the development of students' reading processes and proficiency. At this grade level, students are "reading to learn" for diverse content and competencies across the curriculum, which is a major shift from "learning to read" that was focused on in the earlier grades (Pilonieta et al., 2024; Roessingh,

2020). Moreover, this grade marks the point where learners are becoming more independent and better equipped to eventually succeed in academic language and life beyond school. Second, additional challenges exist for ELLs at this grade level as they need to address cognitive processes and social/cultural experiences that may conflict with their prior personal and social experiences and schooling, (Pilonieta et al., 2024; Roessingh, 2020). Beyond the differences in cognitive processes and social/cultural experiences ELLs encounter at this grade level, Buer et al. (2017) and Cummin (2009) also identified other challenges ELLs might encounter, such as coercive classroom relations and marginalization of their linguistic and cultural assets. Hence, a supportive, engaging, and interactive learning environment is necessary for students to achieve their academic goals.

Research Questions

This study investigates teachers' beliefs on supporting grade 4 ELLs' reading proficiency and classroom instructional practices. The specific questions that guided the study are:

1. What are the three selected teachers' beliefs regarding the teaching of reading to grade 4 ELLs?
2. What has influenced the teachers' development of their beliefs regarding the teaching of reading to grade 4 ELLs?
3. What instructional practices do the teachers use to support the reading development and reading proficiency of their ELL students?
4. What resources are available, and how are they used to support ELLs' reading development and proficiency?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate three teachers' beliefs in supporting Grade four ELL students' reading proficiency. Regarding the above mentioned, first, I investigated the teachers' beliefs about their ELLs and teaching reading through semi-structured interviews in order to

gain insight into the teachers' perspectives about their ELLs' language and cultural backgrounds, and whether the language and cultural backgrounds of the students are helpful to support or impede their language and literacy development in a second language. I also examined the teachers' perspectives on which model of reading has been helpful in supporting the reading proficiency of their ELLs. Second, I explored how the teachers' beliefs were formed and the varied factors that have contributed to their personal histories, and professional and practical experiences over the years through one-on-one interviews and the teachers' journal responses. The objective of using the teachers' journal responses was to understand in-depth the emergence of the teachers' beliefs and the factors that inform how they become teachers and what they do as teachers (which were not covered during the interview). Third, I explored and examined the teachers' instructional practices through classroom observations. The focus of the classroom observations was to gain insight into whether there is a difference in what the teachers say they do and what they *actually do* in reading lessons to support their students. An additional focus was also to witness the reality of activities that evolve before, during, and after the lesson, especially how the students are engaged, their involvement, and participation in achieving reading proficiency.

Significance of the Study

Undoubtedly, the growing population of ELLs in Canadian classrooms has become a great concern for both government and educators to support the academic language skills of the learners. For instance, in BC, 76,091 ELLs were enrolled in the 2022-23 school year, which is 6,886 more than the previous year (BC Ministry of Education and Childcare, 2023). To support the students in school, reading proficiency has been identified as one of the key indicators to their future academic success (Friedberg et al., 2017; Gorzycki et al., 2020; Khalilova, 2023; York et al., 2019). Hence, this qualitative case study intends to provide empirical evidence on the beliefs and instructional practices of the three teachers involved to support the reading development and proficiency of grade 4 ELLs. This study is also intended to contribute research-based knowledge to existing Canadian and international

language and literacy educators regarding instructional best practices to support the reading proficiency of ELLs. Furthermore, the research findings are expected to inform teacher certification programs to address instructional gaps in language and literacy education, especially for ELLs, while considering their linguistic or cultural backgrounds. The findings and recommendations from this study are also intended to contribute to the broader language and literacy discourse and research literature, and potentially curriculum and policy development at the provincial, national, and international levels.

Finally, findings from this study are considered to be helpful for the teaching of reading in Nigeria by helping teachers to understand the important goals of literacy learning in the 21st century as it extends beyond the ability to read and write. Instead, this study also addresses other aspects of literacy which includes the use of visual, auditory, and gestural modes of communication. Furthermore, at the educational policy level, this project incorporates realistic goals that students can benefit from beyond the context of the classroom. That is, goals that will stimulate students' interests to read both inside and outside of the classroom, to explore different types of text that will support their language and literacy goals, and, subsequently to function effectively in the dynamic literacy changes of the 21st century. In a similar vein, this study advocates that teachers consider texts that students can easily connect with, rather than texts that are beyond their current levels of comprehension that students may have trouble connecting with either linguistically or socio-culturally.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter has provided a broad introductory context on the concerns of government and educators on the implementation of instructional practices that would support the language and literacy development of ELLs, especially in the area of reading proficiency. This chapter also highlighted the researcher's cultural background and context and described the research problem. The context of the study reflecting a special focus on teachers teaching ELLs and the research questions that guide the

study. The purpose and the significance of the study respectively formed the concluding sections of the chapter.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation began with the initial introduction, presented above, and is followed by five additional chapters. Chapter 2 articulates the theoretical frameworks for the research: social constructivism and transformative learning theory. It is subdivided into four parts aside from the introduction and theoretical framework. The chapter describes the theoretical and empirical research literature that serves as the foundation for this study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology for this study, and Chapter 4 introduces the participants, describes their profiles, and presents details about the classroom observations. Chapter 5 describes the data analysis process in detail and presents the findings. The final chapter (Chapter 6) begins with a triangulation of the three data sources, followed by the summary of the study, the limitations and recommendations for future research in teacher education programs, and curriculum and policy development at provincial, national, and international levels.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on literature related to the fundamental principles pertaining to reading as an essential skill for language and literacy development of ELLs. Distinctive features of reading comprehension are discussed according to the simple view reading (SVR) model, the Scarborough rope model of reading, and the active view reading model. Furthermore, I review literature on teachers' beliefs, their beliefs about teaching reading, and research-based strategies that are based on the active view reading model. The purpose of the literature review is to unveil rich backgrounds and pertinent issues of this present study in order to answer the specific research questions.

The chapter is organized into three sections in addition to the introduction and theoretical frameworks. The first section provides succinct definitions of reading, its importance, purpose (pleasure and functional), and the goal of reading, which is reading comprehension. The second section introduces and explores the reading models: the simple view model, which entails the five reading components; the Scarborough rope reading model; and the active view reading model. The third section concludes the chapter and describes teachers' beliefs, their beliefs about teaching reading, and research-based strategies based on the active reading model.

Theoretical Framework

This study is greatly influenced by the works of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) on socio-constructivism and Jack Mezirow's (1923-2014) work on transformative learning theory. These two theories provide fundamental perspectives on the inevitable roles of teachers in supporting the reading proficiency of their grade 4 ELLs. Specifically, from the socio-constructivism point of view, this study recognizes the important role of knowledgeable persons (such as teachers and peers) to create a learning environment that fosters dialogue and collaboration, and to negotiate meaning for the learners

to (co)construct their own knowledge from the context of what they are reading. Similarly, this study acknowledges the important roles of self-reflection and critical thinking used in transformative learning theory. Through self-reflection and critical thinking, teachers can recognize, reassess, and modify structures of assumption that influence their beliefs, attitudes, and actions in supporting their ELLs. These two theories are explored in detail in the following sections.

Socio-Constructivism Theory

Socio-constructivism theory was propounded by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), a Russian psychologist whose theoretical perspective emerged from his contemporary, Jean Piaget (1896-1980). Although the two psychologists shared a similar construct for constructivism, they differed in their worldviews of knowledge construction. Piaget (1923) believed that individuals constructed understanding and knowledge on their own, triggering their journey of personal learning, with a focus on cognitive processes. Vygotsky (1978) agreed with the perspective of an individual being an active creator of their own knowledge, but he was critical of the absence of social and cultural influences. From Vygotsky's view, learning and the social/cultural context in which it happened was affected by collaboration. By implication, co-construction of knowledge and ideas was necessary for individuals to communicate and share their experiences to engage in the reality of the new world of learning. Vygotsky's perspective marked the beginning of a social cultural theory that has greatly influenced various fields including psychology, applied linguistics, and especially education in the 1900s, and it is still relevant and influential today.

Moreover, in socio-constructivism, Vygotsky accounted for the valuable place of language and culture as symbolic tools through which individuals experience, engage, and understand the reality of their worlds. The theory further emphasized the importance of social learning, where the learner is presented with an opportunity to collaborate, participate in conversation, and interact with others in constructing their own meaning. In other words, it presents a world view whereby knowledge is co-constructed as a product of engaging with others. This perspective of a collaborative learning style

(Mohammed & Kinyo, 2020; Saleem et al., 2021) is examined further in this chapter, as ELLs come to the classroom with experiences they have previously acquired in their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, both in and out of school settings. In the process of collaboration and sharing information, students are able to make connections through their life experiences to enrich their learning experiences, understand, and interpret (through self-reflection) the significance of the new knowledge they acquire.

Socio-constructivism offers insight about the valuable guidance of the teacher as a knowledgeable person to facilitate and scaffold relevant examples learners may need to achieve their learning goals; for instance, in situations where learners are coming from language and cultural backgrounds that are different from the target language they are learning. Within this context, teacher can try to understand what learners have understood or not understood and provide scaffolded guidance for them to be involved in the co-constructed learning process. The internalization of learning at this stage occurs in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which describes how learners develop higher mental functions with guided support. Vygotsky (1986) characterized higher mental functions in reading and writing as requiring voluntary self-regulation, conscious realization, and signs of mediation. The ZPD is described “as being the distance between a child’s actual developmental level as determined through independent problem solving and potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

To better understand the principles of the ZPD and how it relates to this study, three interrelated assumptions are considered, namely: 1) a difference exists between what the student can accomplish now (before, during, and after a reading lesson) and what can be accomplished in future learning; 2) what can be achieved alone is typically different from what can be achieved with the help of a more knowledgeable adult or peer; and 3) a deliberate negotiation of ideas from the more knowledgeable person can take place during interactions. Overall, the way in which the adult (or more knowledgeable

person; i.e., a teacher in this context) helps the learner take control of the process is integral to the underlying principles of socio-constructivism theory.

Another relevant aspect of socio-constructivism theory is that “all parts of a learner are interconnected” (Saleem et al., 2021, p. 408). In other words, apart from the linguistic and cultural experiences that learners have previously acquired, their attitudes, emotions, values, and behaviors are vital components of their learning. These components can influence their interest and motivation in their participation and engagement in reading. It can also provide them a lens to judge critically (make their own meaning) as they engage in real life situations, one of the goals in achieving the fundamental literacy skill of reading proficiency. Similarly, teachers can use these intrinsic features to design instructional practice to give students a wide range of options and motivations for reaching their language and literacy goals. To better understand a pragmatic application of socio-constructivism in a classroom situation, Ardiansyah and Ujihanti (2018) investigated reading comprehension achievement, vocabulary mastery, and social values with third-semester ELL students in computer engineering, English, and business administration development at Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya, Indonesia, during the academic years 2016-2017. The study involved 148 students distributed into experimental and control groups based on their previous class average scores for reading comprehension and vocabulary tests. The two groups were further exposed to pretest and post-test treatments. The experimental group was exposed to reciprocal teaching, and the control group to the Know-Want-Learn (K-W-L) strategy. Both classes were exposed to teaching using the constructivist approach to reading comprehension, which is learner centered. The study shows that the K-W-L strategy allows the students to activate their knowledge of what they know about the topic and lets them come up with relevant knowledge they have acquired from the reading process. Reciprocal teaching, similar to Vygotsky’s (1978) idea, provides instructional practices where the students are supported by the teacher, who is a knowledgeable person and provides guidance and modeling to the students. The study showed that irrespective of the students’ subject areas involved in this study, the social constructivist approach

evidenced through reciprocal teaching provided a platform that improved the reading comprehension achievement of the students. The authors concluded that:

social constructivist-based reading comprehension teaching designs such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing are worth applying even for students of English as a foreign language with any level of proficiency to improve reading comprehension achievement and vocabulary mastery and to grow social values. (Ardiansyah & Ujihanti, 2018, p. 463)

For teachers to further support the goals of language and literacy development of their ELLs, Mezirow's transformative learning theory (discussed below) offers an informative lens to illustrate how learning happens and how teachers can create a classroom where students can thrive.

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory originated in a paper published in 1978 by Jack Mezirow (1923-2014) of the Teachers College, Columbia University. In the paper, he reported the results of a study on women returning to postsecondary study or returning to work after an extended period away. The study is believed to have been inspired by Mezirow's wife, Edee, and her enrolment to complete her undergraduate education as a middle-aged adult, which was indeed a transformative experience (at that time) as revealed in the report where Mezirow coined the term "perspective transformation" to describe the remarkable experiences of some of the women in the study (Aubrey, 2019). After the study's publication in 1978, Mezirow continued to develop evolving concepts for understanding adult learning with a special focus on significant changes learners undergo that are beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Mezirow's work was clearly influenced by a constellation of theories from different disciplinary perspectives such as Paulo Freire's theorizing of conscientization or critical consciousness of the world, John Dewey's progressive education, Herbert Blumer, an interpretive sociologist's idea on how people interpret reality based on previously internalized sociocultural symbols, Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, and Roger Gould, a psychiatrist's belief

that adults develop psychologically through experiences from childhood. Thus, Mezirow's theory on adult learning refers to a range of previously established theories that described some of the critical and fundamental changes that occur in adult learning which enable learners to make informed decisions that affect or even disrupt their previously set of beliefs, values, feelings, and self-concepts. What follows unveils more vital elements of this theory that align with this present study (Levine, 2014)

Transformative learning theory is set on the assumption that "we are meaning-making beings" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). That is, adult learning is a process of using prior experiences to construe new or revise prior interpretations from past experiences, using the new knowledge as a guide to action (Mezirow, 1996). This shows Mezirow's concept of "frames of reference" that are sub-divided into: "habits of mind" and "point of view." Habit of mind, according to Mezirow refers to ingrained patterns of thinking, feelings, and acting. Habits of mind have great influence on an individual's point of view and are not easily changed. Point of view, on the other hand, is more easily changed when compared to habits of mind. It is a feeling, belief, attitude or judgment that is derived from a broader habit of mind (Mezirow, 1997). For Mezirow (1997), habit of mind is not easily manipulated like point of view, which is malleable to changes through continued learning. This is similar to Vygotsky's (1978) view that as learners are continually exposed to guided learning processes, they can negotiate meaning based on what they already know (like some habits of mind); however, learners can critically analyze new information presented to them after careful consideration, which could bring about a change in their thinking about a concept. These points are also profound in this present study about understanding how teachers' beliefs are formed based on how they can make sense of their world through personal histories (including childhood experiences about how they learned to read, their culture, their socio-economic backgrounds, and other ideas they have gathered from their association with the world around them), and their professional and practical knowledge, especially as it helps them consider what knowledge is relevant or not applicable for them in guiding their actions. Transformative learning theory also helps in understanding the point of views of learners (as well as teachers) which can change

when they are exposed to relevant strategies that support their linguistic and cultural knowledge (what they already know). More specifically, Jacobs and Haberlin (2022), in their study, investigated 12 teacher candidates who were involved in a short-term international teaching program in Costa Rica. The study used course assignments, focus groups, and interviews as data sources. The study aimed to describe the implications of the teacher candidates' teaching experiences with another culture from the lens of transformative learning theory. The study concluded that through the teachers' involvement with another culture, their prior perceptions and practices as emerging culturally responsive educators changed as they were able to gain more insight into another culture outside their own, build a better construct on the relationship between culture and classroom learning environment, and become more empathetic towards their English language learners who are coming from a different cultural background which is different from theirs as native speakers of English.

In addition, Mezirow's theory recognizes two types of learning: communicative and instrumental learning, influenced by Habermas's (1982) theory on communicative learning. According to Mezirow (1991), communicative learning refers to "how individuals communicate concerning values, ideas, feelings, moral decisions, and such concepts as freedom, justice, love, labour, autonomy, commitment and democracy" (p. 8). Instrumental learning, on the other hand, focuses on "assessing truth claim(s) that something is as it is purported to be" (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59). The latter, instrumental learning describes self-reflection and critical thinking, which are applicable to both teachers and learners. With regards to instrumental learning, teachers (adults) can question the assumptions, biases, ideas, and/or beliefs they already hold about ELLs and the teaching of reading. In essence, critiquing what they had previously known can help teachers learn more about how to support their students and what resources would be helpful to their learning. Similarly, students would have the opportunity to share personal views drawing from their culture or linguistic backgrounds and make constructive meaning on what they are learning from the text. Vygotsky (1978) shared similar views with Mezirow on the importance of having a learning community where students can express their

understanding and be further supported (within the ZPD). Also, according to Vygotsky (1978), teachers would be better able to organize the classroom, and students would have opportunities to collaborate and share their knowledge with their peers. The teachers could also suggest literature for students to read and use different learning strategies to support the students' language and literacy development.

Undoubtedly, the ideas of Vygotsky and Mezirow are pertinent to this study as they help answer the research questions and provide a better understanding of how teachers' beliefs can influence their support of grade 4 ELLs. The frameworks provide theoretical backing to support the importance of reading teaching/learning for ELLs. The following sections of this chapter are focused on defining reading with reference to foundational and more current literature and the various components that make reading stand out as an essential literacy skill.

Section I

Definitions of Reading

Several scholars have offered definitions of reading, implying that no single or straightforward definition exists. According to Grabe (2009), reading is a "combination of text input, appropriate cognitive processes, and the information that we already know" (p. 74). Considering this definition and paying attention to cognitive processes, reading requires the reader to think and recall what they are already familiar with in order to interpret a text successfully. For instance, a reader would need to connect with letters and words in a printed text, identify discrete sounds with letters to form words, build meaning from the text for automaticity (fluency), and ultimately, to make meaning from the text. Also, thinking involves cognitive processes, and research from neuroscience has established that different parts of the brain support the reading process (Birch & Fulop, 2020; Fisher et al., 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Iser, 2022; Snowling et al., 2022); for instance, the brain's visual cortex is responsible for visual stimuli, including written and printed representations of letters and words. Thus, the reading

process involves the eye and the brain since it takes visual stimuli to receive the written and printed representation of letters and words, which is further processed in the brain to interpret the text and build comprehension. Although this study is not focused on the brain or reading association, the brain and its cognitive processes are recognized as having a fundamental role in literacy acquisition (and learning in general).

Additionally, Koda (2005) has described reading as “the extraction and integration of information on the readers’ part while combining newly acquired information with what is already known” (p. 4). For a reader to derive meaning from a text, prior knowledge must be built upon, including (for all ELL students) knowledge of the language and content that the reader has in their first language. In a first language context, successful readers already know how to string words together for a purpose. When a reader engages in reading, it becomes an active process to connect, predict, and analyze the text’s content with what is already known.

Goodman (1988) defined reading from the standpoint that readers use different strategies to create meaning from the text. Among the different strategies is prediction, which, according to Goodman is important because “the brain is always anticipating and predicting as it seeks order and significance in sensory inputs” (p. 16). A reader is thus implied to require cognitive-linguistic knowledge to translate written symbols to meaning. Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) and other scholars like Gough and Tunmer (1986) share a similar view that reading involves cognitive-linguistic processes which includes two components: decoding and comprehension (the preceding descriptions of the nature of reading introduce the simple view of reading which will be further discussed later in this chapter). Hence, decoding involves having experience of parsing aspects of reading that translate written symbols into meaning, and comprehension involves the overall understanding process whereby meaning is assigned to the written text. Pretorius and Ribbens added that a novice reader begins to read by mastering the decoding skills because it may be difficult to attain comprehension without an effective mastery of the decoding skills. Cekiso (2017), Lervåg et al. (2018), and Oakhill et al. (1998)

argued against the points raised by Pretorius and Ribbens, claiming that attaining mastery in decoding does not by itself indicate skill in comprehension. Like Goodman's (1988) earlier notion, different strategies can be used by a reader to accomplish comprehension of a written text.

Considering the above definitions, and perspectives from the socio-constructivist and transformative learning theories, teachers need to be familiar with the learners' purpose and goals of reading. Some of the goals for both beginning and intermediate readers include building necessary skills to read accurately, fluently, and with understanding. The acquired skills of the students could then guide the teachers' actions toward organizing a classroom to bring about meaningful change(s) in their thinking and the way in which they view the world. The latter part of the preceding points, viewed through a transformative lens, reflects on the importance of the teachers' changing points of view as a result of being familiar with the learners' purpose and reading goals, ultimately helping learners achieve their language and literacy goals.

Importance of Reading

Generally, a child is believed to be born with cognitive capacities for learning language. This explains why a child would naturally interact with others using verbal and non-verbal cues in their social environment. Because the child wants to communicate and socialize, they adopt the ways language(s) are being used in their social environments. Although, in some instances, there are children who may not be able to adopt language usage as others do - that is, children with developmental language disorders - such children are still endowed with the cognitive capacity to learn language or other forms of communication in their special ways (Bishop, 2017). A child's early exposure to listening and speaking abilities serves as a foundation for the awareness of a complex language system. This complex language system subsequently presents the child with a foundation to support learning sounds, words, phrases, and sentences, which are required to engage and participate effectively in the world around them, and later in the future (Birch & Fulop, 2022).

The above paragraph is important for this study since it indicates that the skill of reading is encapsulated in complex language systems and is not “naturally” acquired like listening and speaking skills. By referring to “complex language systems,” this means reading requires high level abilities which a reader may have been earlier exposed to in speaking and listening skills but also includes other skills, including: “phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, as well as visual orthographic processes, working memory, attention, motor movements, and higher-level comprehension and cognition” (Norton & Wolf, 2012, p. 429). Therefore, “learning to read” and “reading to learn” both require deliberate instruction (Andrews, 2015; Grabe & Stoller, 2022; Perfetti & Stafura, 2014; Seidenberg, 2017).

Furthermore, one of the elements that distinguishes learning to read and reading to learn in a second language for ELLs, compared to native language speakers, is that their early language exposure occurs in different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Although some scholars like Chung et al. (2019), Holdway and Hitchcock (2018), and Wei and Garcia (2022) believe that positive forms of “transfer” can occur from ELLs’ first language to their second/ additional language, the target language can also have different orthographies and sound systems that ELLs need to become familiar with; sometimes these differences can be profound across language families. In essence, reading for ELLs is different compared to reading in one’s first language because they read to familiarize themselves, for example with the graphemes and sound system in English compared to their first language. Consequently, instructional practices to support ELL reading should be coordinated with examples that students could easily connect with, and additional strategies should be used to facilitate their meaning-making process.

Another important aspect of reading for ELLs is that it provides a tool for accessing a wide range of information, especially in the 21st century where literacy acquisition now includes multiliteracies and multimodalities (New London Group, 1996), which extend beyond the abilities to just read and write print text. ELLs, through reading, can decode and interpret a text and meaningfully

engage in activities in the real world like reading road signs, manuals, newspapers, websites and so forth. In the next section, the purpose of reading is presented as a powerful tool for ELLs.

Purpose of Reading

This study acknowledges that the purpose(s) of reading is inexhaustible (Castle et al., 2018; Grabe & Stoller, 2022) and it helps to understand better why individual(s) engage in the reading they do (van den Broek & Kendou, 2017). For instance, the purpose of reading a manual on microwave operation may be different from the purpose of opening the pages of a newspaper with information about politics, education, and entertainment, but overall, the purpose of engaging in reading in the above situations would be to gain more knowledge about a specific topic or topics. With an intended purpose in mind, a reader would likely decide on which approach(es) to use to help achieve their reading goals. One approach might be to quickly scan for needed information, while another approach could be to skim for accurate details, or engage in extensive or intensive reading. Given that reading can serve different purposes, this study will expand specifically on two purposes: reading for pleasure and functional reading that have been identified to help support the reading proficiency of ELLs.

Reading for pleasure.

The term “reading for pleasure” is used interchangeably with “reading for enjoyment” or “developing a love for reading” (Cremin, 2023). Such reading can involve any kind of text-based materials including novels, magazines, poetry, comics, or non-fiction either in the form of hard-copies or electronic copies. Reading for pleasure can occur anywhere: at a coffee shop, on the bus, at home, at a beach, or at a bus or train station. Historically, it is commonly conducted privately or in solitary places; however, recent research has shown that reading can also be social in its orientation. That is, readers can choose to interact with friends or family member to share and discuss characters, plots, and other ideas from the text. (Cremin et al., 2014; Merga & Mat Roni, 2018; Sellers, 2019).

According to Cremin (2019) “reading for pleasure is more closely associated with intrinsic motivation; it is reading that children do for themselves at their pace, with whom they choose and in their own way” (p. 2). This view aligns with the theoretical frameworks for this study. Through a socio-constructivism lens, reading can be done from a student’s personal interest to engage with their social world by reading texts about animals, plants, cultures, and ways of being. Similarly, through the lens of transformative learning, reading can serve as a foundation for self-reflection to reassess what a student knew before and the new knowledge which they are exposed to in a text. Reading also presents students with experiences that may invoke a wide range of feelings such as joy, anger, and prejudice.

In addition, reading for pleasure promotes the motivation and curiosity to explore different types of texts (McGeown et al., 2015, 2020). For example, out of curiosity, an ELL student might choose a text based on a cartoon character or comic series, or want to understand more about the weather of a country, a sport, animals, or festivals that are celebrated across cultures. By implication, teachers can use the student’s motivation and curiosity to select different books for class readings or suggest books that would encourage the students to read more on their own. For ELLs, besides reading for pleasure, functional reading must also be considered.

Functional reading.

Functional reading is said to have emerged from the concept of “functional literacy” since reading is considered a vital skill in the broader aims in literacy (Guthrie, 1987). Moreover, from the lens of functional literacy, reading and writing allow individuals to develop a potential for social awareness and critical reflection, which contributes to the socio-economic development of society (Surwanti & Hikmah, 2019; UNESCO, 2015) Similarly, Akello et al. (2017) describe functional literacy as “the ability of an individual to improve on his or her quality of life, make informed decisions and continue learning in all the activities for which literacy skills are required” (p. 80). Indeed, reading as a functional literacy skill is required for everyone who desires to make an impact on

their world, including children as they become educated and ELLs as they participate meaningfully in their new environments.

Importantly, what is “functional” for each student depends on the changes that occur as a child grows. For instance, the kind of language a child uses at an early stage is different from their operational language as they mature to school age. Similarly, for a six-year-old working with letters, their functional purpose could be to learn the next skill of reading (Shvartsman & Shaul, 2023). On the other hand, for an older child in upper elementary school, working with letters may no longer serve a functional purpose in learning to read. Likewise, the functional purpose of reading would vary for ELLs in grade 4 who may be learning to read and reading to learn. Alexandrova et al. (2018) described the significance of engaging in functional reading to mean deciding on the information that matters that will serve the individual in a dynamic world. The authors added that when comparing children in elementary grades and middle school grades, different functional reading goals are in play. The children in the middle school grades engage actively in reading to grasp meaning by drawing from their own personal experiences and through meaningful conversations with their peers since communicative activities are more prevalent at this stage. This pattern aligns with Vygotsky’s knowledge of language where high-order thinking and application of cognitive skills are inevitable as a student arrives at meaning with support from the teacher or in collaboration with peers, which helps the student solve real-world problems. Similarly, Mezirow’s theory on communicative and instrumental learning shows how ELLs tackle problems in their world even as they express varying emotional responses while reading different texts and participating in conversations with their peers to negotiate meaning.

Putting together the two purposes, while pleasure reading can be a foundation for readers to make connections with themselves (through self-reflection), their world (being familiar with different contexts and people), and the text (textual elements such as the plot, characters, setting and language) (Cremin et al., 2022), functional reading opens up a dimension for deeper applications of cognitive and

linguistic knowledge, which must be mastered to interpret and analyse a text and engage in the dynamic world of the 21st century. In addition, functional reading requires intentional efforts from teachers to help ELLs achieve their reading goals, while reading for pleasure can encourage students to read, not just in the class, but also outside the classroom. Importantly, to achieve both purposes of reading, good comprehension is crucial, for the reader to enjoy what they are reading (pleasure) and to engage with and learn from a text with external support (functional). In the next section, the topic and importance of reading comprehension is discussed.

Section II

Reading Comprehension

Comprehension has been indicated as the ultimate goal of reading (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020; NRP, 2000) though it requires cognitive processing of information from a text (Kendeou et al., 2020). More specifically, reading comprehension has been defined as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Snow, 2002, p. 11). Thus, reading clearly involves three interrelated elements: the reader, text, and the activities. Kendeou et al. (2020) add that for a reader to comprehend a text, some abilities have to be at play such as “attention, memory, inferencing, motivation, and interest” (p. 2), which significantly affect the ways by which readers would approach the text and the kind of activities they would engage before, during, and after reading. This describes a cognitive perspective of how readers on their own could extract meaning from a text based on the information presented in the text (Paul & Vehabovic, 2018). Snow’s (2002) definition also incorporated a socio-constructivism dimension to explain the role of a reader’s engagement in connecting and using background knowledge from their culture and language (including additional languages) to interpret the text. In addition, Davis et al. (2015) posited that “much of what we do with texts is influenced by culturally reinforced practices for engaging with oral and written language and cultural models of what counts as appropriate textual use” (p. 336).

Elston et al. (2022) described comprehension as a skill “that involves decoding the written word, building fluency, making connections to the text based on background knowledge and being able to reason with the text” (p. 2). This definition may pose a problem for some ELL students, however, such as the ELLs in grade 4 elementary schools in BC, who may not yet be familiar with strategies of decoding, or have proficient fluency in English. Therefore, for teachers to support such readers, who are coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the students need to become familiar with the reading models that can serve as the foundation for learning to read and reading to learn, as explained in the next section.

Reading Models

This study considers three models of reading that showcase the different reading components that ELLs need to be familiar with and that teachers need to understand to support the reading proficiency of their students. The three models are the simple view model, Scarborough’s rope model, and the active view model.

Simple view reading model (SVR).

Gough and Tunmer (1986), among other proponents of this model, put forth a simple, hypothetical construct of considering reading comprehension which has been highly influential to reading research. Its premise is based on two separate but equally important components: decoding and language comprehension. In other words, the reader’s ability to decode words accurately, and comprehend structure of the text is pivotal in the process of reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). This suggests a sequential process to reading whereby the reader first decodes the words and then comprehension follows where the decoded words are interpreted in isolation outside the social/cultural world or the surrounding text. Reading words accurately and fluently is not a natural process of language learning since it requires the reader to use their visual, auditory, and cognitive skills (Nation, 2019). To comprehend, on the other hand, the context of the text requires the reader to already have a

language background to which they can connect. For instance, if a text says: *the baker baked a large cake in a small pan*, a proficient reader is expected to read each word in the text accurately and know what the words mean both separately and in context with the surrounding text. More specifically, through orthographic mapping, the reader is able to see four letters that make up the word “cake.” Also, through its visual representation, the reader links the visual representation of the letter with its corresponding sound (its phoneme) and blend these together to form the word (lexical component), which also relies on the student’s word knowledge/vocabulary to produce the word.

This view is represented in the following:

D x LC = RC	
Decoding and Language Comprehension = Reading Comprehension	
The formula for the simple view of reading is represented as a multiplication equation, and if one component is absent or insufficient, it is represented by a zero. Therefore, if either decoding or language comprehension is zero, then reading comprehension is absent or insufficient. Making up a positive value would not make up for the absence of another. Both components (decoding and language comprehension) are required and must be adequate for sufficient reading comprehension. For example:	
D x 0 = 0	0 x LC = 0

Source: Jones & Christensen (2022)

Similarly, in attempting to comprehend the language structure being used, the reader is expected to know what *a baker* and *a cake* means. In addition, from a background knowledge of the concepts of size, the reader would be expected to understand “large” and “small.” This explanation could still pose a problem for ELLs, however, unless the specific reading components of SVR are fully understood.

Reading components.

For teachers to optimally support their ELLs' academic language skills, especially in reading, they must consider the components of reading that make it a unique and important literacy skill among other areas of language teaching and learning (Moats, 2020; Pardede, 2008; Spear-Swerling, 2019). Moreover, according to the SVR model, for a reader to successfully decode and achieve language comprehension they must have prior knowledge to bring to the process and the reading components must be in place. In the following section, these reading components are examined, with regards to the features of other models (that are discussed later). The three components, in order, are: phonological awareness, fluency, and vocabulary development.

Phonological awareness.

The process of reading comprehension under phonological awareness includes phonemic awareness and phonics. "Phonological awareness is the understanding of different ways that oral language can be divided into smaller components and manipulated" (Chard & Dickson, 1999, p. 262). Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness are often confused to mean the same thing, but though they have much in common in their oral and auditory features, they differ in terms of how phonological awareness manipulates the units of sound, and other units of sound (Abdullah, 2024). Phonemic awareness, in contrast, is simply the understanding and the manipulation of the smallest unit of sound in a language, a phoneme.

Phonological awareness can also break down spoken languages, by separating sentences into words and words into syllables. For example, the word "pencil" can be split into /pen/ and /cil/, and "simple" can be separated into /sim/ and /ple/. Moreover, words can be broken up into onset and rime; for example, "broom"- /br/ (onset) and /oom/ (rime), and "stick"- /st/ and /ick/, etc. For individual phonemes, "pen" can be separated into /p/, /e/, and /n/, and "hamper" can be broken into /h/, /a/, /m/, /p/, /e/, and /r/, and so forth.

Alternatively, phonemic awareness is defined as “the ability to identify the phonemes (smallest identifiable units of sound) of spoken language, and how they can be separated, blended (put back together), and manipulated (added, deleted, and substituted)” (Vaughn & Lian-Thompson, 2004, p. 8). For example, the word “bed” can be broken into /b/, /e/, and /d/, and the initial sound /b/ can be substituted with /p/, and the final sound /d/ can be substituted with /t/ to form the word pet, /p/, /e/, and /t/. Kilpatrick (2015) also defined phonemic awareness as the awareness and ability to manipulate individual phonemes in spoken words. From the above, students need to be familiar with the sounds of spoken words. Interestingly, standard American English has 44 phonemes, which differs from the 26 letters of the alphabet, so it is not enough for students to just be familiar with graphemes alone (written language put together through a visual alphabet), but they must also be able to disambiguate the complexity of reading, especially in how some words are produced. Cunningham (1999) adds that children who enter school with stronger phonemic awareness (achieved from family literacy practices, like being read to as infants and young children) have a high likelihood of learning to read successfully. Children who lack phonemic awareness have a great deal of difficulty learning to read. Simply put, “children without phonemic awareness need to develop it” (p. 69).

To return to the relationship between phonemes and graphemes, mentioned earlier, which refers to the application of phonetic skills, phonics is the relationship between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes) and the letter patterns and sequences that represent speech sounds (Foorman et al., 1998; Moats, 2000). Having knowledge of the sounds in spoken English that match with individual letters has been shown to help students understand and use the alphabetic principle, spell words accurately and rapidly, and gain a working memory for applying rules and generalizations for matching sounds and letters. Nevertheless, in some instances, the patterns are irregular, which can confuse students who rely only on the corresponding pattern rule (Foorman et al., 1998; Vaughn & Lian-Thompson, 2004).

Why teach the “Ph” words² and how do they support students’ reading success?

Undoubtedly, some ELLs coming to the classroom may have been exposed to phonological processing through previous exposure in their first language. For example, some sounds or phonemes have corresponding letters or letter sequences as in Greek and Russian languages. In addition, in situations with:

logographic writing systems, such as Chinese, each written character represents a meaning unit or morpheme, but in syllabic writing systems, such as kana in Japanese and Sequoyah’s Cherokee syllabify, each written symbol represents a syllable (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000, p. 241).

Thus, a crucial need exists to bridge the gap for ELLs who have not been exposed to English through explicit instruction to familiarize them with the words, and their meanings and pronunciations (Chard & Dickson, 1999; Moats, 2010; Kilpatrick, 2015; Vaughn & Liam-Thompson, 2004).

Additionally, beyond exposure to letter-sound correspondences, having knowledge in other language elements such as morphemes, syntax, semantics and pragmatics are helpful for students to understand more about the internal structures of language and language functions and to explore the skills for manipulation of those language features, including substitution, deletion, and addition. Segmentation and blending can also be explored to improve their spelling, word recognition, and comprehension.

Fluency.

Reading fluency has gained considerable attention after the report of the National Reading Panel (2000) that mentioned fluency as one of the important components for reading comprehension (Hudson et al., 2009; Pikulski & Chard, 2005). Consequently, because of the renewed interest in the topic, a new controversy has arisen over its precise definition. Numerous definitions have emerged that present multifaceted construct. Some of the definitions suggest that fluency is “the ability to read text quietly, accurately and with proper expression” (NICHD, 2000, p. 3-5). Pikulski and Chard (2005)

² Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, and Phonics

reacting to definitions like the one from NICHD, where emphasis is placed on the oral aspect of fluency, may explain why the notion of fluency has received less attention. Because of the comparison between how readers perceive both silent and oral reading, some readers may not spend as much time devoted to silent reading, compared to oral reading (especially in the early grades). In contrast, the *Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing* defines fluency as “freedom from word identification problems that might hinder comprehension” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 85). Although this view is not considered as the primary definition of fluency, it presents another important view of reading fluency that includes the notion of comprehension. Pikulski and Chard (2005) add that the inclusion of comprehension in the definition of reading has led to another debate among scholars on whether a correlation exists between fluency and comprehension. To possibly resolve the debate, Stecker et al. (1998) reviewed fluency research and submitted that “fluency showed a reciprocal relationship with comprehension with each fostering the other” (p. 306). Similarly, Samuels (2006) defined fluency as “decoding and comprehension at the same time” (p. 39), and suggested that rate, accuracy, and prosody are indicators of fluency. Amid the cloud of finding a simple definition of oral fluency, the National Reading Panel ultimately defined reading fluency as “reading with speed, accuracy, and proper expression” (NICHD, 2000, p. 31). Another study also added that prosody was an essential component of reading fluency (Daane et al., 2005). In light of the above definitions, most of the definitions include rate, accuracy, and decoding, which are briefly explained below.

Accuracy.

For students to comprehend what they read, they need to be able to read and understand most of the words easily (Piper, 2010). Jiang (2016) referred to accuracy as the number of words read correctly. The definition implies that for readers to decode words accurately, they must be familiar with: a) the sounds represented by the letters or letter combinations; b) blended phonemes; c) letter patterns within words; and d) the use of both letter-sound and meaning cues to determine the pronunciation and

meaning of the word used in the text (Tallman, 2023). Accuracy also requires that students do not put too much effort into figuring out the words, but instead, they should be able to easily read the words in a text. By not dwelling long on words, and being able to decode the words, the text should be more easily understood.

Rate.

Jiang (2016) simply defined rate as the words read per minute (wrpm). The author added that a reader may be able to read quickly, but that is not necessarily equivalent to comprehension. Similarly, Piper (2010) added that for students to read fluently, they should be able to read at an efficient speed. The author further explained that the rate needs to be combined with accuracy, expression, and comprehension to produce fluent reading. In other words, automaticity is required at this point for a reader to identify the words effortlessly and read quickly. Like accuracy, word recognition and identification are necessary to successfully read at the right speed. Samuels (1997) described the process that readers undergo to shift to word recognition as involving: a) the non-accurate stage where readers have difficulties recognizing words, b) the accuracy stage where words are recognized but attention is required, and c) the automatic stage where words are recognized without attention. Thus, based on the automaticity principle of Samuels, word recognition plays a significant role for comprehension to take place and it is not just the speed or rate at which students read.

Prosody.

This important component of fluency helps the reader to read smoothly and with the appropriate phrasing and expression. Breznitz (2006) referred to prosody as “intonation, sound and silence during oral flow and speech fluency” (p. 50). Similarly, Kuhn and Stahl (2003) argued that “prosody comprises a series of features including pitch or intonation, stress or loudness and duration or timing” (p. 5). This phase of fluency can be especially challenging because prosodic features are not graphically represented in the text, and readers therefore need to use meaning from the text (i.e.,

emotion) as required to read, pause for periods and commas, and emphasize important words (Dowhower, 1991; Jiang, 2016). In other words, reading with prosodic features makes the reading sound like spoken language (Piper, 2010).

From the descriptions of the essential components of fluency, teachers clearly need to support the reading proficiency of their ELLs in the fluency phase and pay attention to how the students decode the words, produce words effortlessly, keep up at a speed without dwelling for long on a word, and use appropriate phrasing techniques to express the words from the text.

Vocabulary development.

According to Nation (2001), the components of vocabulary development in the broader reading process are divided into three groups:

knowing the form of a word (its spelling, sound, and word parts); knowing the meaning of a word (linking its form and meaning, knowing concepts for the word and what it can refer to, and knowing other words of related meaning [to which] it can be associated...; and knowing how a word is used (grammar of the word, including part of speech and the sentence patterns it fits into, collocates of the words and whether the word is formal or informal (register), polite, or rude used mainly by children, and so on- or has no restrictions in its use). (p. 583-584)

The author adds another step by describing what is involved in knowing a word (see Table 1):

Table 1

Word Knowledge

Form	Receptive (R) or Productive (P) Knowledge	Interpretation
Spoken	R	What does the word sound like?
	P	How is the word pronounced?
Written	R	What does the word look like?
	P	How is the word written and spelled?
Word Parts	R	What parts are recognizable in the word?

	P	What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
Meaning		
Form and Meaning	R	What meaning does this word form signal?
	P	What word form can be used to express the meaning?
Concept and Referents	R	What is included in the concept?
	P	What items can the concept refer to?
Associations	R	What other words does this make us think of?
	P	What other words could we use instead of this?
Use		
Grammatical Functions	R	In what pattern does the word occur?
	P	In what patterns must we use them?
Collocations	R	What words or types of words occur with this one?
	P	What words or types of words must we use with this one?
Constraints on use	R	Where, when and how often would we expect to meet this word? (register, frequency, etc.)
	P	Where, when, and how often can we use this word?

Source: Nation (2001, p. 27)

Nation (2001) sometimes refers to receptive knowledge as “passive knowledge,” which is required to deal with words in listening and reading. “Productive knowledge” is sometimes referred to as “active knowledge,” which includes words used in speaking and writing. Ellis and Beaton (1993) further note that more learning is required in productive knowledge than in receptive knowledge. Thus, students are simultaneously exposed to basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), which is required for everyday, more casual communication. Moreover, considerable exposure to the manipulation of language in educational settings is facilitated by acquiring, cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1992), including formal academic registers and genres.

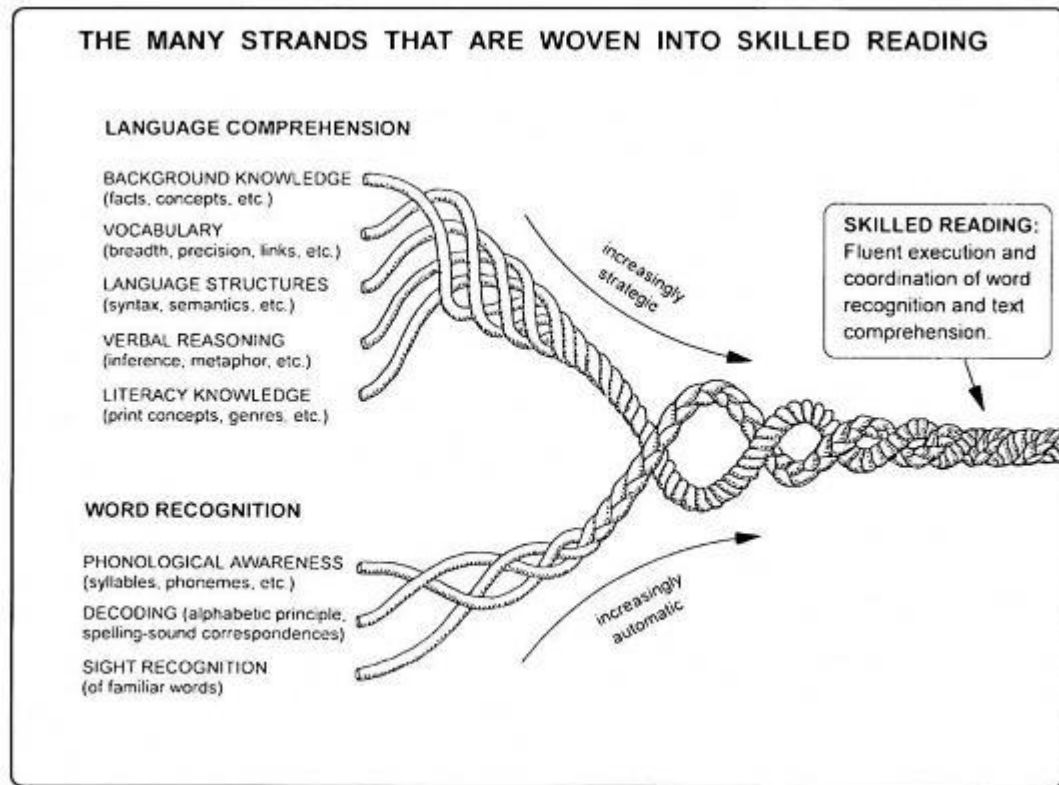
Scarborough’s reading rope model (SRRM).

This model emerged from the work of Hollis Scarborough (2001) on the “science of reading” (SoR), which added an expanded dimension to Gough and Tunmer’s (1986) simple view of reading.

The model uses strands of rope metaphorically to explain the important and multiple skills (i.e., strands of a rope) required for teaching and learning reading. The rope model also sums up the components of decoding and language comprehension and shows many sub-skills and knowledge that would help readers develop both strategic and accurate processing skills to achieve a goal of comprehension, either in listening or reading. The rope consists of lower and upper strands, with language comprehension and word recognition, respectively. The language comprehension strand, in turn, is composed of background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge, which are vital parts for supporting a reader's comprehension of words. Word recognition, the other strand, shows that phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition of familiar words through instruction, repetition, and practice can increase the accurate and fluent interpretation of words in a text. This model addresses many questions for teachers on how to begin implementing the components either sequentially or hierarchically. It may also pose a problem for students since much time is required to be devoted to the learning of decoding skills. Figure 1 is an infographic image of the model's components.

Figure 2

Scarborough's reading rope model



Source: Scarborough (2001) with permission from the publishers

Active view reading (AVR).

While still acknowledging the important views from SVR, where decoding and language comprehension brings about comprehension, the active view of reading proposed by Duke and Cartwright (2021) maintained that the reading process requires more cognitive skills and metacognitive strategies, as shown in Table 2 below which are helpful to comprehend a text and are different from the SVR and SRRM discussed above.

Table 2

Components in the Active View of Reading Model from Duke and Cartwright (2021)

Component	Definition based on Duke and Cartwright (2021)
Self-regulation Executive function	Self-regulatory neurocognitive processes used in complex, goal-directed tasks, includes three core skills of cognitive flexibility, working memory, and inhibitory control
Motivation	Students' interest in reading, perceived sense of the value of reading, mind-sets around reading success and difficulty, and active participation in reading (i.e., interaction with text)
Strategy	Goal-directed approaches to modify how a student decodes text, understands words, and constructs meaning.
Word recognition	The understanding that sounds are represented by letters in written language.
Alphabetic principle	Knowledge of specific phoneme-grapheme relationships.
Phonics; Phonological (including phonemic-) awareness	Conscious attention to the sounds in spoken language, including words, syllables, onsets, rimes, and individual phonemes (phonemic awareness)
Decoding skill	Associating graphemes with phonemes to produce a word
Sight recognition	Identifying (i.e., reading) a word automatically or at sight
Bridging processes Print concepts	Understanding of how print works (e.g., reading goes from left to right and top to bottom in English)
Fluency	Reading with accuracy, automaticity, and prosody
Morphology	Awareness and knowledge of morphemes (smallest meaningful units in language)
Vocabulary	Understanding the meanings of words and phrases
Graphophonological- semantic cognitive flexibility	The ability to simultaneously consider and switch between the letter-sound and meaning features of printed words
Language comprehension	A body of information acquired over time through experiences and daily activities within one's cultural group(s).

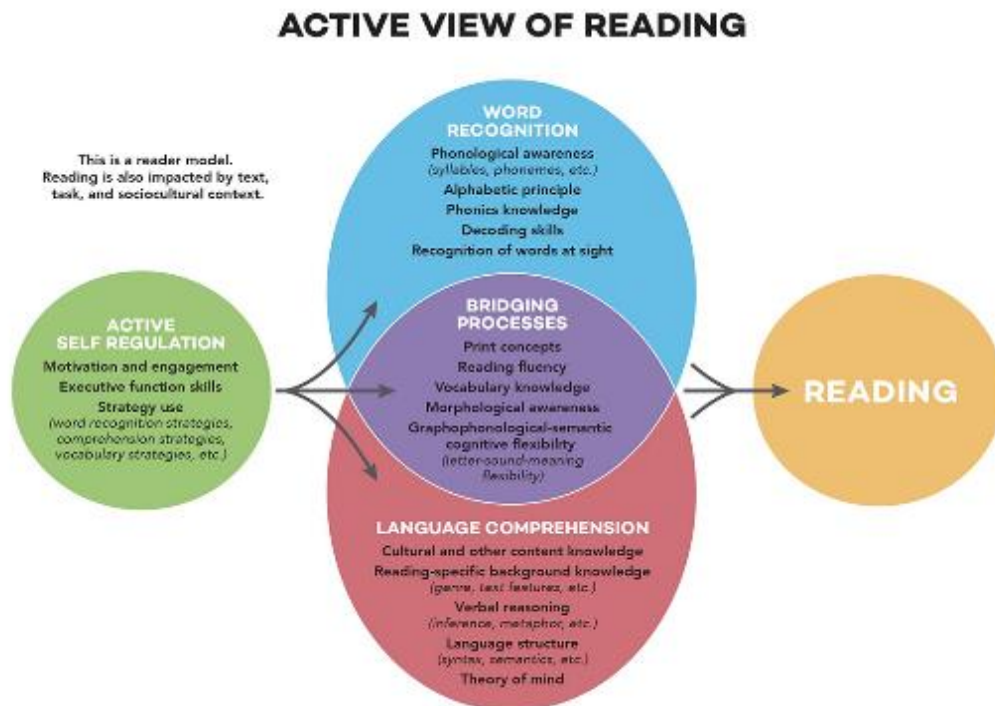
Cultural and other content knowledge	The organization of language to convey meaning (e.g., syntax)
Language structure Text structure.	Understanding common genres of written text, the organization of texts, and written text features
Theory of mind	Understand and taking into account one's own and others' mental states, including the mental states of characters, to understand, reason about, and make inferences from text
Verbal reasoning (inferencing)	Reasoning about aspects of text meaning and what is printed in the text

Source: Burns et al. (2023)

Specifically, the AVR model covers four main areas: word recognition, active self-regulation, bridging processes, and language comprehension. Each area has malleable sub-categories that are involved in the process of comprehension. Figure 2 below presents a diagrammatic representation of the components of reading in the AVR model.

Figure 3

Active View of Reading



Source: Duke and Cartwright (2021) with permission from the publishers

To underscore the main points of the SVR, the AVR highlighted three key issues that have posed problems for readers, namely:

1. Points to the causes of reading difficulties within and beyond word recognition,
2. Reflects a considerable overlap of word recognition and language comprehension and shows the important processes that bridge the skills and/or operate in the overlap, and
3. Represents the important role in reading played by active self-regulation (Duke & Cartwright, 2021, p. 526).

These points are especially pertinent to this present study in understanding teachers' beliefs and instructional practices that could be used to support the reading proficiency of their ELLs. Although the AVR model has not yet undergone hypothetical testing like the SVR, it has been heuristically

successful for diagnostic assessments and reading interventions, which makes it relevant to this study. The three key issues highlighted by Duke and Cartwright (2021) are examined below in more detail.

1. Causes of reading difficulties within and beyond word recognition and language comprehension.

In addressing this point, AVR recognizes the importance of a reader's background knowledge, which emerges from participation in their environments, building long-term memories that can serve as a veritable tool in analyzing a text beyond just knowing the words, and having knowledge of a concept (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). This further confirms that ELLs do not approach an English medium text as empty vessels but bring with them background knowledge to help them connect with the context of what they are reading and to participate in conversations with their peers.

2. From the SVR model, decoding and comprehension processes were suggested to be separate and do not necessarily influence each other.

Researchers using AVR show that these two processes overlap in what they regard as a bridging process (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). The bridging process allows reading teachers to spend less time just teaching word recognition and language comprehension, but instead, they can teach across them. That is, through explicit teaching strategies of fluency, vocabulary knowledge, morphological awareness, and graphological-semantic cognitive skills, some flexibility is permitted to strengthen the skills of learners when approaching word recognition and language comprehension in a text.

3. The AVR model considers self-regulation as an important aspect, involving the active participation of the learners in analyzing a text.

Readers are not just passive receptors of knowledge since their cognitive abilities are actively engaged to make meaning from the text. They are able to activate their previous knowledge to be independent thinkers and to work effectively with others in arriving at a meaning. Moreover, by

actively engaging their cognitive abilities, they are can use their prior knowledge, apply the principles of reading to what they are reading, and ultimately achieve comprehension.

Through active self-regulation, learners can control their thoughts and be armed with continuing learning skills for their daily lives. Butler and Cartier's point on self regulation (2017) agree with the AVR's view positing that "an individual can take and feel in control over their learning and success if they deliberately and reflectively self-regulate their engagement in activities" (p. 3). Thus, for learners to participate and be involved in whatever type of text they are reading, a driving force is needed to stimulate their interest. According to the AVR, the driving force (deliberate attempt) that triggers active self-regulation comes from the students' motivation and engagement that would lead to active participation and interaction with the text (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Kelly, 2023). According to Kelly (2023), "self-regulation is a process... [that] develops day after day as students experience new learning situations that have a level of complexity they want or need to engage with" (p. 15). Students in the context of learning to read and reading to learn are thus motivated to explore the type of texts that would interest them and contain information that would help them engage with others (their peers). In the same light, the motivations of students are fostered through explicit strategies and the willingness to continue to participate in problem-solving and achieve their reading goals.

Undoubtedly, my study aligns with the strengths of the AVR model as it provides an opportunity for students to learn the skills of reading by connecting with context in their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Students have flexibility in navigating their learning processes of acquiring reading skills without getting frustrated or spending too much time attempting to decode words and achieve comprehension, and students can realize their potential to monitor their own progress in reading, which can further motivate their interest in exploring different genres of text. In the next section, I describe in more details my understanding of the models discussed above.

My Understanding of the Reading Models

The strengths of each model can be used to illustrate how teachers' instructional practices can support their ELLs. I address the models in two ways: i) a combination of the simple view of reading (SVR) and the Scarborough reading rope model (SRRM) as the science of reading, and ii) as the active view of reading (AVR).

Combining the simple view of reading (SVR) and Scarborough reading rope models (SRRM).

I have combined SVR and SRR models at this point because they portray similar reading components that differ somewhat from the AVR. Although SVR served to present foundational knowledge in decoding and language comprehension that cut across the three models discussed above, the SRRM extends these points to showcase sub-categories of skills that, if well combined, can lead to proficient decoding and language comprehension for students learning to read and reading to learn. More specifically, by understanding decoding in the SVR and SRR models, the importance of listening and speaking skills are also revealed, that extend beyond just reading. Students become familiar with the sound system that forms the graphemes/ letters they read in print. By recognizing phonemes, and how they are different from letters, students can more easily navigate communication and the use of language (i.e., what sounds right and what is out of place in different contexts).

In addition, decoding and language comprehension can reveal the essence of early language exposure in children. As a child decodes the language used by people in their immediate environments by listening to how words are produced, a functional purpose for the child emerges at that point to engage with the world through imitating how language is used, by making requests, asking questions, describing, and so forth. As children grow, they begin to understand the different ways to use language, to serve different purposes and would understand the complexity of language through exposure to books. In other words, a child's early exposure to language through listening and speaking (irrespective

of whether it is a first or second language) is believed to serve as the grounds to further transit from the simple use of language to the complex use, which occurs in reading (Lervåg et al, 2018; Moats, 2020).

Furthermore, from the component skills in the SRRM, consistent practice and exposure to helpful relevant resources are required to support students whose language backgrounds are other than English. Because the model's components are sequential in order, and the students need to be familiar with the standard rules to be successful in decoding, word recognition, and language comprehension (e.g., phonetic rules that identifies the phoneme as the smallest unit of sound and morphological rules which includes inflectional and derivational morphology³). For English language learners, the sequential order presented in the SVR and SRRM models indicates that mastering these concepts requires time and practice. Therefore, a deliberate commitment to providing students with engaging literacy instructional activities (Cummins, 2022) is crucial for helping them achieve their academic language proficiency goals. In other words, exposing students to rich literacy instructional experiences can significantly contribute to attaining these goals. Although the SVRM has many strong points, the AVR model should also be considered as helpful.

Active view reading model.

In contrast to SVR and the SRRM, the active view reading model uses a markedly different approach for students to analyze and interpret a text. Although the SVR and SRRM do not explicitly articulate that students' background knowledge with sounds and morphosyntax in their first language can lead to a positive transfer to the second language, and decoding of words, the AVR model emphasizes the important role of students' linguistic and cultural background knowledge for decoding and language comprehension. The AVR model recognizes that students do not come empty into a

³ Inflectional Morphology addresses grammatical markers that give additional meaning to a word - e.g. by adding *-ed* - to a verb like, *work* still retains it as a verb but in the past tense- *worked* (Cao, 2022). Derivational Morphology addresses the processes of forming new words that changes the part of speech (lexical category) of the word - e.g., by adding *-ish* to a noun *fool*, changes it to an adjective, *foolish* (Cao, 2022).

learning situation and their prior experiences contribute to how they will approach a text. Teachers should thus build upon their students' prior experiences when they come into the classroom to help them connect with information in a text. Teachers can also use the backdrop of the students' prior experiences to suggest relevant text(s) for their students to read.

In addition, this model suggests that teaching reading does not have to be focused solely on how to decode words. Situational context could also contribute to supporting students' language comprehension. In other words, teachers can teach reading using strategies that would include teaching the two skills, decoding words and language comprehension, to students in a single lesson.

From this model, collaboration between students is more easily facilitated because of the opportunity for students to explore their linguistic and cultural backgrounds to share their understanding of a text. In this way, students are better equipped to become active thinkers, which helps them to independently decide what they want to read and what information is important to suite their purpose of reading.

In closing, the models presented above have implications for both students and teachers to achieve an interactive reading process. With regards to teachers' beliefs, the models could serve as a trigger for reflection, whereby the teacher can (re)examine what they know about the reading components, and then plan and organize a classroom to support the students' understanding of the skills to learn to read and read to learn. Undoubtedly, the AVR model aligns more closely with this study due to its theoretical backing that acknowledges the important role of the knowledgeable persons (teacher, peers) to support student reading. The AVR model can facilitate instructional practices that will encourage students to be actively involved in their reading. The model also presents teachers with a framework to assess their actions based on what they know about the reading components, and for teaching reading so that students can use their linguistic and cultural backgrounds in their readings. The perspectives of SVR, and the SRRM and AVR models are relevant to this study of teachers' beliefs about teaching reading and approaches to teaching reading, and are explored in detail since they

would likely have a significant impact on the support for ELLs before, during, and after a reading lesson.

Section III

Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Reading

Research that explores the dimensions of what teachers do in the classroom has emerged with a variety of descriptive terms, including: personal histories, personal knowledge, practical knowledge, mental images, views, conceptions, perspectives, and beliefs (Shah & Campus, 2021). In the teacher education literature, the most commonly used terms are “beliefs and conceptions” (Bryan, 2012; Shah & Campus, 2021). For the purpose of this study, “beliefs” is used as the construct that captures the important points. Moreover, “beliefs” indicates a “psychologically held understanding, premises or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (Richardson, 1996, p. 103). Similarly, Havey et al. (2003) defined beliefs as “one’s convictions, philosophy, tenets, or opinions about teaching and learning” (p. 367). These definitions further clarify some of Vygotsky’s (1978) points about the importance of social interaction that inform how a learner can critically make meaning from their experiences from engaging in the world. In other words, through a learner’s exposure to their environment and the activities that take place therein from childhood, they optimally become critical thinkers who can make subjective decisions that form their beliefs and influence what they do. In a similar vein, Mezirow’s (2000) idea on frames of reference is obvious here as beliefs that are formed from the *habits of mind* and *point of view* emerge as a result of previous experiences in the world. Moreover, in line with the self-reflection an adult (a teacher in this case) may use to decide what is relevant, or not, to guide their action.

Considering beliefs, and especially how they might affect teachers’ pedagogical practices, this study acknowledges that a single definition cannot fully describe the concept (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Shah & Campus, 2021). A myriad of different influences will affect the decisions of teachers,

such as their knowledge, experience, cognition, philosophical standpoints, and social cultural histories (Borg, 2001, 2019; Fives et al., 2019; Ferguson & Lunn, 2021; Ferguson & Breten, 2022; Zheng, 2015).

Since teachers' beliefs have been identified to have a strong influence on what would become a success or failure in teaching and on the students' learning achievements (Euanorasetr & Suwanarak, 2023; Fang, 1996), teachers' perspectives need to be examined in terms of the teaching of subject matter, especially the fundamental skills of literacy. Furthermore, while considering the importance of readers acquiring relevant skills for reading comprehension, the place of policies and curriculum goals are inevitable; however they may not be in agreement with the teachers' beliefs. Consequently, teachers may end up organizing instructional practice based on their belief on what they consider important (Mante-Estacio & Tupas, 2022). Similarly, considering that an aspiring teacher who has enrolled in a teacher education program may already have set beliefs on what reading should look like, based on their personal history, the way in which principles and strategies learned in the program differ from their new, practical, and professional knowledge needs to be critically analyzed. To explore in detail the relationship between teachers' beliefs and how they teach reading, this study considers insights from Smith et al.'s (2023) study on elementary teachers' perspectives on teaching reading comprehension. The study collected data from 284 Australian elementary teachers through a web-based survey about their beliefs and practices in teaching reading comprehension. The survey was analyzed using cumulative scores from Likert-scale items that focused on the participants' perspectives on "child-centred" or "content-centered" elements in their reading instruction. Results from the study showed contradictions in the instructional strategies some teachers considered to be more valuable, which turned out to be less effective than some other practices that were not explored in their instructional practices. Another issue from the study was whether the teacher should focus on teaching skills or strategies. The last point was on using resources, and which resources would be relevant in the teachers' instructional practice. The study concluded that teachers need to explore a different range of

pragmatic classroom practices that align with contemporary evidence and support students' reading comprehension in the elementary grades. Some of these perspectives (beliefs) are explored in the following sections.

Approaches to Teaching Reading Comprehension

Unlike secondary school teachers who teach specific subjects across various classes, in most cases, elementary teachers are responsible for teaching different subjects in a single class. For example, in Canada, an elementary teacher is typically responsible for teaching science, social studies, language arts, and mathematics in a single class. Some teachers are more empathetic and intentional in organizing their classroom to focus on supporting students to achieve their educational goals, rather than dwelling heavily on curriculum principles to support the students (Morgan, 2022; Smith et al., 2023). With regards to teaching reading comprehension, an evidence-based principle indicates the progression for how students analyze a text from the “bottom-up,” beginning from word-level identification, and meanings, to sentence and text comprehension, referred to as the bottom-up approach (Smith et al., 2023). Another explicit instructional approach is interactive approach, facilitated by teachers to simplify assigned tasks in comprehending a text (Rosenshine, 2012; Smith et al., 2023). To adhere to the different principles involved in the content-based approach (following the value placed on acquisition of skills and knowledge specified in a curriculum) and working with student preferences (student-centered), teachers are faced with a dilemma about how to most effectively teach reading.

Teaching Comprehension Skills or Strategies

Another aspect of teachers' beliefs and teaching reading is whether to focus on exposing students to comprehension skills or to use comprehension strategies since each has a vital role to help students understand a text (Centre for Education, Statistics and Evaluation, 2020; Petscher et al., 2020; Shanahan, 2018; 2020; Smith et al., 2023). *Comprehension skills* are recognized as a requirement for

readers to answer questions on a typical reading comprehension exercise (Smith et al., 2023). The abilities include being able to find the main idea, making inferences, recognizing literal information from a text, and making predictions or drawing conclusions. To practice comprehension skills, students can be matched with leveled books they can read independently. Thus, some care must be taken to ensure that a text is appropriate for students to enable them to explore some of the above-mentioned skills in comprehending a text. On the other hand, practising *comprehension strategies* involves students using the knowledge they have been taught that guides their actions toward interpreting a text (i.e., summarizing, visualizing, self-questioning, and re-reading) (Smith et al., 2023). The teacher's decision on whether to focus on teaching comprehension skills or strategies has profound implications for time allocations and organization of the classroom to support students in meeting their educational goals (Such, 2021).

Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension

Substantial literature has dealt with the effectiveness of explicit strategies to improve student comprehension (Afflerbach et al., 2020; Mckeown et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2023; Such, 2021). While it would be difficult to explore all of the literature in detail on the strategies, Duke et al. (2021), for instance, provide some examples such as reciprocal teaching, collaborative strategic reading, transactional strategies and concept-oriented reading instruction. Palincsar et al. (2020) also referred to a report by the National Reading Panel (NRP) that provided valuable evidence about teaching reading comprehension, using “question asking, monitoring, summarizing, story mapping, the use of graphic organizers, and cooperative grouping” (p. 19). Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) and Hall et al. (2017) also described some strategies like activating and using background knowledge, generating and asking questions, making inferences, predicting, summarizing, visualizing, and comprehension monitoring. While acknowledging the impacts of the above reading strategies from (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Hall et al., 2017; Palincsar et al., 2020), this study also considers some of the earlier mentioned

strategies from the active view reading model (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). In particular, strategies that show comprehension can be achieved beyond the simple view of reading, and that students can negotiate meaning through cooperative/collaborative reading strategy, self-questioning, predicting, and graphic organizers. The above mentioned four strategies are further discussed in detail in the next section.

Cooperative/collaborative reading strategy.

This reading strategy is centered on students coming together to work in groups to support one another (Nguyen et al., 2021). Through collaboration and cooperative reading, students can ideally apply critical thinking skills to explore and negotiate meaning with their peers. Students also can activate their background knowledge to boost their self-esteem and foster positive attitudes towards reading. Students are motivated to explore different strategies as they learn from their peers. Undoubtedly, students' communicative abilities are helpful to meaningfully collaborate with others and have a cooperative learning experience. Some potential activities in cooperative learning include role play, jig saw activities, pair-sharing, and storytelling.

Self-questioning.

Joseph et al. (2019) describe self-questioning as a strategy that teachers can use to teach students to be actively involved in monitoring their own understanding of a text by asking questions before, during, and after reading. The authors add that teachers can help students to apply this strategy to different types of text to generate vital points as they ask themselves the “wh” questions (who, what, when, where, and why). Bharuthram (2017) described self-questioning as a cognitive strategy that encourages students to “focus their attention on key ideas” (p. 87), which is helpful in monitoring their understanding of what they read. It is also a strategy teachers can use to teach vocabulary, as the students ask questions to know what vocabulary would help them to understand the text better. The strategy could also be used to form glossaries of words that the students can use in understanding the

context of a text. Through self-questioning, “prompts” can serve as helpful guides for students to visualize, activate, and connect what they already know to engage in interpreting the text (Crabtree et al., 2010).

Predicting.

Predicting is a valuable comprehension strategy closely related to inferring because it allows students to use cues such as titles, headings, pictures, and diagrams that are provided in a text to anticipate the outcome of a story (Bailey, 2015). To differentiate between prediction and inference, Elleman and Oslund (2019) described prediction as having proven answers that come to pass at the end of the story, while inference mean the probability of answers (may or may not) come at the end of a story. Pitogo (2021) viewed predicting as giving students opportunities to combine information from the text and through activation of their prior knowledge be able to foresee what will happen next in a story. The author added that as a story progresses, student predictions become more accurate as they are able to identify cues and combine their background knowledge with what has already happened in the story. Using this strategy for students who are from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds requires the guidance of a teacher using modelled examples. Overall, the strategy can foster students’ optimum attention towards what they are reading to engage the text meaningfully, using pictures, words, intonation of a character’s voice, a character’s actions, and other cues in the text to understand the text better.

Graphic organizers.

Youman (2016) maintains that graphic organizers provide a logical framework whereby students can activate their prior knowledge to make connections between what they are reading and what they already know. Thus, students are implied to not only use information from the letters-words-sentences contained in the text to arrive at meaning making but they can also logically synthesize and differentiate between ideas to comprehend the text. In addition, Shanahan (2021) posits that graphic

organizers are helpful tools for students to categorize information and show how important concepts inter-connect. Teachers are recommended to not always present to their students an already made organizer, but instead, allow students to explore through their cognitive thinking capabilities what matters or does not matter in their reading.

The above definitions show the strengths that graphic organizers can offer teachers to support their students' reading comprehension skills. Among the strengths are the establishment of a purpose for reading (Praveen & Rajan, 2013). Graphic organizers amplify the purpose of reading when students are able to break down essential information, facts, opinions, comparisons, and contradictions to help them better understand the text.

Another strength is the potential to construct meaning of difficult words and sentences using different methods like pictures or diagrams to scaffold relatable examples to understand words that they are unable to decipher. In addition, teachers can choose from different types of graphic organizers. The context can also be better understood when students can associate with their prior knowledge.

The above strategies are available to teachers for use in their instructional practice to support their students' reading comprehension skills. This study also explores empirical studies that evaluate the effectiveness of the socio-constructivism theory in terms of teaching students reading.

Chapter Conclusion

As the population of ELLs continues to grow in Canada and in British Columbia, many expectations are placed on teachers and schools. As indicated in the preceding literature review, teachers play inevitable roles in actualizing the goal of supporting the students' language and literacy development and in addressing their other academic needs. While some ELLs are presumed to have been exposed to some language knowledge in their first language, teachers should still consider it important to review the reading components with their students, which may fill the gap for students who are still learning to read and help them connect to the text they are reading in English. Moreover,

as some studies have pointed out, teachers' beliefs can significantly affect their successful teaching practice to best and support their students' achievements, including reading. A crucial need therefore exists for teachers to understand reading models that would ensure students are not passive or unmotivated in their reading, but are actively engaged, supported and equipped with the requisite skills and strategies to be successful.

This chapter has presented the meaning, importance, and purpose of reading. It also examined the meaning of reading comprehension, reading models, and their components. Other aspects were explored, including teachers' beliefs, teachers' beliefs about teaching reading specifically, and strategies for teaching reading and the implications for reading instruction. The chapter discussed the guiding theoretical framework and presented some examples of empirical studies that have explored both socio-constructivism and transformative learning theories. The following chapter describes the methodology used for the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the goals and rationale for choosing qualitative research for this case study of teachers' beliefs in supporting grade 4 ELLs' reading proficiency. The chapter also discusses the position of the researcher in the data collection process, the research site, and participant recruitment (participant profiles will be discussed in detail in the following chapter). The final section of the chapter includes the discussion of data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness.

Rationale and Goals for this Qualitative Research Project

Qualitative research has been described as “a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman, 2008, p. 366). This definition refers to the use of words, which involves descriptive detailing of the context, the participants involved, their stories and lived experiences, and other activities of interest. Some of the rich and thick description presented through words typically includes participant quotations, documents, and deep descriptions of the participants, that may be difficult to express using only numbers. Qualitative research also attempts to explore and understand the meanings that some individuals or groups of people attribute to social or human problems (Creswell, 2013). Thus, qualitative research is often used to address human problem(s) that occur in people's natural environments. To investigate teachers' beliefs and how they support their ELLs, this study therefore uses a qualitative research approach to explore teachers in their natural environments (i.e., the classroom). The aim was to gain insight into the teachers' beliefs from their own perspectives to contribute to the broader field in this area, with the goal of exploring and supporting ELL readers and their teachers. In other words, it aims to assist researchers in understanding, describing, and discovering meaning in human behavior and the underlying causes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Especially in an abstract construct like “teachers’ beliefs,” qualitative research provides a platform to talk directly with teachers, visit their schools, and hear their perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative research also allows for a process of inductive data analysis, which uses categories, patterns, and themes. Thus, in this study, I used categories and themes that surfaced during the data analysis to simplify and delve more deeply into the issues raised during the interviews, classroom observation, and teachers’ journal responses. A qualitative research approach was also chosen because it provided multiple means of obtaining information from the participants, such as by interviews, documents, and observations to triangulate data collection. Thus, the researcher did not have to rely on just one source of data to understand more about the phenomenon under study.

Qualitative Case Study Approach

A qualitative case study is an intensive study that typically investigates a small group with a multitude of variables (Jacobsen, 2002). One of the identified limitations of case study is generalizability because of the typical selection of small number population (Tsang, 2014). However, following the classifications of Gomm et al. (2000) and Sharp (1998), there are two main types of generalization that can be used in case study research: theoretical and empirical generalization. Empirical generalization is focused on certain characteristics peculiar to the case or sample under study. Theoretical generalization on the other hand, also known as “analytical generalization” (Yin, 2009) requires researchers to develop explanations for the relationship between variables to be observed and other variables that may surface in the study (Tsang, 2013). A case study can also be described as an inquiry approach:

in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. (Creswell, 2014, p. 43)

Similarly, a case study may use multiple bounded systems (multiple cases) (Hancock et al., 2021; Yin, 2018) to explain the variables derived from interviews, observations, and teachers' journal responses (for example). A multiple bounded system (multiple cases) is valuable to the study presented in this dissertation to explain the evidence and ensure the study's robustness. In this way, the multiple sources of information from the participants will converge to bring about understanding and add "strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554). More specifically, this study uses multiple sources of information from semi-structured interviews, audio recordings of the interviews, observation checklist on the instructional practices of each participant in the classroom during their teaching, pictures taken during the observations, and follow-up interviews with each participant to secure additional information on the emerging issues. Each participant provided different types of text (hardcopy and electronic versions, instructional materials, lesson plans, teachers' journals, and other relevant artifacts) in regard to their beliefs and in response to the open-ended and closed-ended questions they were asked. Specifically, with regards to the use of case study in this dissertation, qualitative case study "remains a very powerful methodology for language researchers and for theory development in applied linguistics and language education" (Duff & Anderson, 2015, p. 117). In sum, this study used a qualitative multiple case study approach to ensure that the complexity and richness of the phenomenon under investigation were captured as well as the different dimensions and perspectives of the participants.

The Researcher's Positionality

The researcher holds a Bachelor of Education in English Education and a Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction in English as a Second Language. The researcher's experience working with ELL readers is linked with working as an English teacher in Nigeria, which has been explained in Chapter 1 in the section detailing the researcher's background, culture, and context. No participant had

a previous or direct relationship with the researcher that could represent a conflict of interest, such as a contract or any relationship that may have imparted bias in the research study. The researcher has been trained on the skills necessary to carry out the study. More specifically, as part of the requirements from the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria, the researcher participated in a tutorial on the important skills required for qualitative research with training components that included skills on interview principles, active listening, and asking relevant questions during the interview process. This study also obtained all the necessary ethical approvals from the Research Ethics Board to conduct this research.

Context/Setting

The study was conducted in schools in Greater Victoria, British Columbia (BC), because they provide the mix of demographic components of students with cultural and linguistic diversity that the study aimed to explore. For the teachers, irrespective of the specific school district, the same policy standards and curriculum for ELLs applied to serve the diversity of students in grade 4.

Greater Victoria on Vancouver Island, British Columbia has three school districts, with locations that serve as local public primary and secondary schools. The three school districts are school district 61, 62, and 63. School District 61 has its location in Greater Victoria and covers the municipalities of Victoria, Oak Bay, Esquimalt, View Royal, and Saanich. It includes more than 50 schools, with some of these being the earliest schools in western Canada. School District 62 (Sooke) is located in the western municipalities of Greater Victoria with more than 25 public schools. This school district serves the municipalities of Port Renfrew, Sooke, Colwood, Highlands, Langford, and Metchosin. School District 63 spreads to the northern parts of Victoria and the Saanich peninsula. The school districts here include Saanich Central, North Saanich, and Sidney.

Because the focus of this study is on the Greater Victoria school districts, more background information will be provided on the school system and school board, including a summary of their

services, in order to provide greater context and background of the study's setting and its participant. Each district has their own school board with nine experienced board members designated with different roles to provide the necessary support, and an equitable and accessible educational system to build a solid foundation for students to support their learning. The Greater Victoria district has different departments and services to serve the educational purpose of students in the classroom. Specifically, the district has a superintendent, facilities, facility rentals, and information technology departments. Financial, educational, human, and purchasing services are also important components. Various programs are offered, including the English language learner program. In the ELL program, ELL teachers are assigned to provide extra instructional support to the students as they are integrated into the regular classroom from kindergarten to grade 8. With the extra support, the ELL teachers support the students by engaging with them in small groups or by working with them in the classroom (<https://www.sd61.bc.ca/programs/english-language-learner/>).

Participant Recruitment

The sample for this study includes three classroom teachers who teach grade 4 ELLs in Greater Victoria public school districts. The participants were selected using homogenous sampling based on their similar identifiable characteristics. The identifiable characteristics include having five or more years of teaching experience, teaching grade 4 during the study period, and teaching ELLs while using the BC grade 4 provincial curriculum. One of the rationales for requiring five years of teaching experience is that the teachers are assumed to have formed their beliefs during these years from working with ELLs and other students. The teachers also participate in professional development training to support ELLs. Similarly, a number of authors (e.g., Bacon, 2020; Gandara et al., 2005; Garcia Nevarez et al., 2005; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Mantero & Mcvicker, 2006; Podolsky et al., 2019; Shin & Krashen, 1996) have described the importance of teaching experience and teacher training for teachers to build their confidence and develop positive attitudes for supporting their ELLs.

Specifically, in BC, the Ministry of Education has a five-year funding policy to support ELLs with additional resources/support (BC Ministry of Education, 2018, 2022). One of the additional supports rendered during the funding period is teaching service that is assumed to be time allocated for the teachers to become familiar with their students, develop their beliefs, and acquire experience to support their ELL students’ language and literacy development.

Table 3 below presents the total number of full-time ELL teachers per student for 2017/18-2022/23. A notable increase in the number of students occurred with an equivalent increase in the workload for teachers. However, the year 2020/21 saw a slight decrease in the ELL student population due to the disruptive effects of COVID-19, which correspondingly impacted the number of ELL teachers. In the post-COVID era, starting from 2021/22, the surge in student numbers indicates a high demand for ELL teachers, who are facing challenges in keeping up with the increasing number of ELLs in the province. Figure 4 that follows the table is further representation of the table.

Table 3

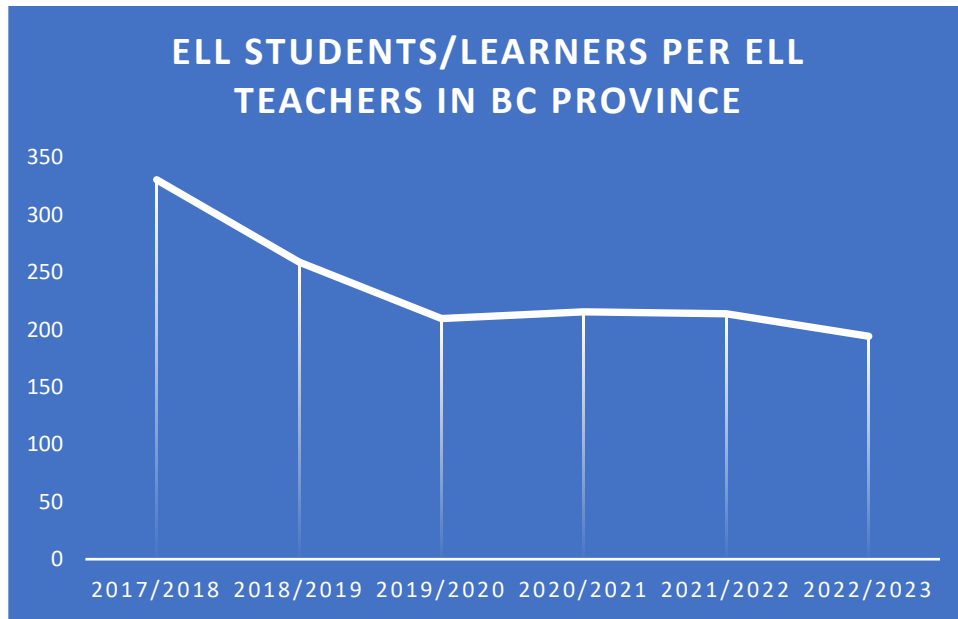
ELL Students per ELL Teacher in BC

School Year	ELL Teachers	ELL Students	ELL Students per ELL Teachers
2017/18	194	64,118	331
2018/19	256	66,258	259
2019/20	329	68,974	210
2020/21	319	68,743	215
2021/22	322	68,853	214
2022/23	390	75,725	194

Source: The BC Ministry of Education (2024)

Figure 4

ELL Students per ELL Teacher in BC



Source: The BC Ministry of Education (2024)

Table 4 shows an annual head count of students in grade 4 in Greater Victoria, Sooke, and Saanich, which illustrates the increased population of ELLs in grade 4 from 2017 to 2024.

Table 4

ELLs in Grade 4 by District

School Year	Greater Victoria	Saanich	Sooke
2017/18	213	37	72
2018/19	213	60	64
2019/20	247	74	83
2020/21	219	58	61
2021/22	223	80	82
2022/23	246	89	126
2023/24	300	75	146

Source: The BC Ministry of Education (2024)

Tables 5 below shows the top ten home languages recorded in 2023/24 in BC and the linguistic and cultural diversity of the population of ELLs in the school districts.

Table 5

Percentage of Top Ten Home Languages found in Public and Independent Schools in BC in 2023/24

Language	2023/24 (%)
English	77.3
Punjabi	6.0
Mandarin	4.4
Cantonese	2.4
Spanish	2.1
Persian	1.8
Korean	1.7
Tagalog	1.6
Chinese (other)	1.4
Arabic	1.3

Source: The BC Ministry of Education (2024)

To select the participants, purposive and convenience sampling were used because of the advantages they present in qualitative research. Rahi (2017) describes convenience sampling as a process of data collection that has a research population that is easily accessible to the researcher. Similarly, Etikan et al. (2016) explains convenience sampling as “accidental samples because elements may be selected on the sample simply as they just happen to be situated, spatially or administratively, near to where the researcher is conducting the data collection” (p. 2). Purposive sampling, in a similar vein, is described as “judgement sampling” because it involves the deliberate selection of participants due to the qualities they possess (Etikan et al., 2016). The authors add that:

it involves identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest. In addition to knowledge and experience, and note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. (p. 2)

In short, through purposive and convenience sampling, it was easier to “discover, understand and gain insight into the sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Specifically, the process of purposive sampling used in this study emerged at the point of selecting participants based on their characteristics of teaching grade 4 ELLs in public elementary schools in British Columbia. Participants were recruited based on their experiences having worked with ELLs in the past and having one (or more) ELL students in their classroom at the time this study would be conducted, and their willingness to participate in the interview, be observed in their classrooms, and submit the teachers’ journal response. Likewise, convenience sampling surfaced at the point of recruiting the teachers based on the proximity of the school locations within the Greater Victoria school districts. During the recruitment process, the researcher contacted all the teachers of grade 4 ELLs in the targeted three school districts via email using the publicly available information provided through the schools’ websites. Prior to contacting the teachers, ethics approval was granted by the University and the district superintendents of each school district. In situations where a teacher’s email was not provided on the website, I contacted the school principal or administrator via email to learn how I might best contact the staff (see the letter of invitation in Appendix 1).

After receiving emails from the teachers who volunteered to participate in the study, I sent them a consent form to further detail the research processes (Appendix 2). Subsequently, five teachers initially showed an interest, and three teachers were able to fully participate in the interviews, gave permission for a classroom observation, and submitted teacher response journals. The other two potential participants left the study, as the consent form allowed any participant to withdraw from the study at any time they wished.

Data Collection

The study used a semi-structured interview method (see the interview protocol in Appendix 3) to elicit information from the participants. According to Tarherdoost (2022), using interviews in

qualitative research helps to “obtain in-depth information about the participants’ experiences” (p. 40). Hence, this study used interviews as a way of knowing “what are the teachers’ beliefs?” and other details about their beliefs that may have influenced how they supported their ELLs’ reading proficiency. Fieldnotes were also used to capture my thoughts during and after each interview. The interviews were conducted via zoom and recorded. Three separate interview sessions were conducted with each participant with each session running approximately 45 minutes. Interview questions were sent to the participants ahead of the scheduled interview for them to be familiar with the questions and to raise any issues that might need further clarification.

The first set of interviews was used to build rapport and demonstrate confidentiality for the participants, and they answered demographic questions about the number of years they had been teaching, the number of ELLs in the class, and so forth. The first meeting also gave me opportunity to explain the objectives of the study verbally and clarify any other issues in the consent form. Each interview session allowed the participants to give verbal and written consent.

The second interview was more intensive because the participants explained in detail about their beliefs, and how their beliefs emerged from their childhood experiences, or from their professional practice. A variety of factors and the relationship between their beliefs and instructional practice were examined in terms of supporting the language and literacy development of their ELLs.

The third session was a follow-up to previous questions and served to clarify some issues that had been indicated in the fieldnotes collected during the previous interviews. It also addressed any additional ideas that came from the previous sessions.

Prior to conducting the classroom observations, the transcribed interviews were sent to the participants for their review. The participants were asked to add anything that they thought had been missed or mis-phrased during the interview. Following the participants’ endorsement, any necessary edits were made to the transcriptions.

Three classroom observations took place during the Fall 2022-Spring 2023 session (see the observation checklist in the Appendix 4). Each observation lasted 45 min. My role in the observation was non-participatory. Prior to the observation, a parent's awareness letter (Appendix 5) was mailed to the parents of the participating students. The letter informed the parents of the teacher's participation in the research study, as required by the ethics' protocol that guided this study, and that no action was needed to be taken by the parents. In the first observation, the observation checklist served as a guide about what to look for, and notes were taken in the columns that served as observational data to help capture the teacher's activities. The observations also considered the lesson plans, the texts used by the teacher for the lesson, interactional activities between the students and teachers, and taking photos of any artifacts or instructional materials used to support the teacher's instructional practice. The second observation took place after two weeks to corroborate and compare activities from the first lessons. This gap also allowed me to note issues I observed during the first observation that needed clarification in the second observation. The third observation took place after another two weeks, for the same reasons as the second observation. It offered an opportunity to clarify issues arising from the first and second observations, and to offer a more complete (and complex) look into the teachers' practices regarding ELL reading instruction.

Lastly, the three teachers responded to journal prompts. The journal responses enabled the teachers to reflect on their emerging beliefs from personal experience, and from their experiences during their own practicums as teacher candidate, during their teacher education courses, or subsequent professional learning opportunities they had over the years (see Appendix 6 for the prompts used for the teachers' journal responses). To minimize any potential errors, fieldnotes were kept regularly throughout the study. The notes served as reminders and to help organize and clarify the ideas that were derived from the data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedures discussed in this section address all the three types of data collected: interviews, classroom observations, and teachers' journal responses.

Thematic Analysis (TA)

Thematic Analysis (TA) was a helpful analytical tool for the interview data and classroom observations because of the flexible positions and processes it presents to the researcher. That is, it allowed me to decide on the themes and the number of themes to use for the analysis anchored in the data and informed by the guiding theories and general aims of the study. TA is a recognized analytical approach in qualitative research used to identify, analyse, and report patterns and themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study considered TA appropriate for the interview and observation analyses for the following reasons: first, the process of identifying themes through a thematic analysis is useful in the description of a phenomenon and its relation to social issues (Braun & Clarke, 2021), which is similar to describing an abstract phenomenon such as teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices in supporting their ELL students. Second, TA allows the researcher to ensure data from the interviews were analysed in a manner that respected and expressed subjectivity in the participants' account of their beliefs. Third, TA helped the researcher to acknowledge and embrace the reflection of her interpretation as a researcher. Braun and Clarke (2006) outline six phases of thematic analysis that are summarized in Table 6 as used in this study.

Table 6

Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase		Description of process
1.	Familiarising self with the data	Transcribing data; reading and re-reading the data and noting ideas.
2.	Generating initial codes	Coding for interesting, recurring or otherwise salient features of the data systematically across the data set.

3.	Searching for patterns and themes	Reviewing codes and beginning to collate these into potential themes across the data set
4.	Reviewing themes	Checking whether the data supports the themes (i.e., at the level of the coded extracts and across the data set); generating an initial map of themes
5.	Defining and naming themes	Refining the thematic map in relation to specific themes and how these link to tell a story; generating clear definition and names of themes
6.	Writing the analysis	Selecting vivid extracts to illustrate themes; analysing these in relation to the research questions

Source: Rajmangal (2017, p. 45)

When using Thematic Analysis, Braun and Clarke (2012, 2014, 2021) discuss methods that cut across different epistemological positions and that are not premised on any pre-existing theoretical framework. Examples of the positions are essentialist and constructionist epistemologies, experiential and critical orientation, inductive and deductive, and semantic and latent coding. Byrne (2022) explains that the above-mentioned are:

not just for the researcher to identify where their analysis is situated on each of these continua, but why the analysis is situated as it is and why this conceptualisation is appropriate to answering the research question(s). (p. 5)

This study utilized aspects of both semantic and latent coding. Semantic coding presents the researcher with explicit and surface meanings of data. In other words, the investigation of data does not extend beyond what the participant has said or written. In contrast, latent codes explore and deeper meanings to identify hidden or underlying ideas in an interpretative way. In the case of latent coding, the researcher's active role is required to interpret the codes and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Interview analysis process.

This study adopts the six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyze interviews and classroom observations. Although an initial part of the classroom

observations is reported in Chapter 4, this is also extended to Chapter 5 to provide further clarification indicated during the interviews about the teachers' and students' classroom activities and available resources in their classroom. After data collection was finished, all interview data were transcribed manually by the researcher. As Braun and Clarke (2006) note, this phase involves reading the data several times to ensure the voices of the participants and their non-verbal actions, such as pauses, laughter, and mannerisms in speech, are accurately captured in the transcript. Also, redundant words were removed when transcribing the data after listening to the recording multiple times. The phase two stage of the analysis involves taking note of salient codes. This way, the salient codes become noticeable across the data and present differences and similarities in patterns, such as repetition, metaphor, pauses, and functional aspects of language. In other words, the identified linguistic and paralinguistic elements can be beneficial in understanding the participants' perspectives, as excerpts from the data are further analyzed into categories to create the initial themes for phase 3 (see Appendix 7 for an initial thematic mapping of the data). Moving to phase 4, I devoted time to review the accuracy of the identified themes, as some overlappings were still noticeable. After stepping away from the data for a few days, I returned to review the themes again and collapsed the overlapping ones. In order to ascertain credibility in the analysis of the participants' narratives, there was constant review of the transcript and initial codes. Following this, I designed a final thematic map to reflect the specific themes and their subcategories that eventually informed the themes used for the findings from the interviews and the classroom observations (see Appendix 8).

Observation analysis process.

Like the interview analytical process, the classroom observations used themes that were derived from the observation checklist and fieldnotes to provide a systematic way of understanding and interpreting the participants' actions and ideas. Since the observations involved three participants, the themes were arrived at following a careful observation of patterns in the codes similar to the stages of

TA detailed above. The themes also helped to address the research questions since there was flexibility in interpreting the observed data by sorting them into broad themes.

In addition to the interviews and observations, to ensure triangulation of data collection methods, the researcher: (1) gathered various materials from the focal participants such as the students' writing samples to see how the teacher's instructional practice helped the students in their meaning making of the texts; (2) took photos of the classroom setting to see how it facilitated the interactional activities among the students and the teacher; and (3) took photos of the texts used by the teachers. I also used fieldnotes as supplementary data to gain insight into other features that were prevalent during the interviews and observations (Duff, 2008; Pham, 2022; Richard, 2003). Examples of fieldnotes used for each teacher, photos of the classroom environment, and some of the texts used by the teachers are included in Chapter 4.

Teachers' journal analysis process.

Conventional content thematic analysis provides a comprehensive approach to delve into the details of the teachers' journal response. Conventional content analysis emerged from Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) description of the types of content thematic analysis approach. Other types of content thematic analysis identified by the authors in their study are directed content analysis and summative content analysis. Of the three types described by the authors, this study adopts the conventional content analysis approach since it allowed the researcher to look closely at the data and derive its code. In other words, pre-defined categories were not used for the data analysis (similar to the thematic analysis of the interviews and observational data), instead, the codes and categories were created from the analyzed data (Humble & Mozelius, 2022; Kondracki et al., 2002). The advantage of this method for the study is that the codes and categories are generated from the journals without imposing any preconceived perspectives. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) suggest a five-step process: 1) read the data carefully and intentionally to derive an authentic understanding; 2) create codes by noting

salient and important ideas and concepts; 3) label the codes using important key ideas based on the information given in the data; 4) sort out the categories into subcategories and clusters based on identified relationships between the codes; and 5) develop clear definitions that capture the codes and categories by drawing examples from the data. These steps were used in this study to analyze the teachers' journal responses (see Chapter 5).

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the guidelines from the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board. The ethics certificate approval was issued in August 2022 (see Appendix 5), two months before the data collection began. The documents in the approval included: the letter of consent, participant invitation letter, awareness letter to parents of students who were involved in the study, letter to the principal, observation checklist, and interview protocols. The approval from the University of Victoria Ethics Board was the first step before obtaining additional approvals that were required prior to the data collection. Following this, I requested approval from the superintendents of the three schools district and from the school principals for permission to carry out the research on the school premises. After receiving approvals from the school superintendents and principals, I then collated the list of grade 4 English language teachers in the three districts, as required by the approval guidelines. With the aforementioned information, I sent emails introducing myself as a PhD student conducting research in fulfilment of my PhD program and gave a brief overview of the study, its purpose, and the importance of the research and the data collection process. I sent follow-up emails to the list of teachers before receiving their responses. After I received acceptance from the teachers, I sent the consent form for their further approval (and signatures). I emphasized the right of all participants to withdraw at any point from the study and assured them that their names and schools were given utmost confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms.

Trustworthiness

Various authors have used different terms to describe validity in qualitative research, such as trustworthiness or authenticity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Four generally agreed upon criteria must be present in a well-designed and implemented qualitative study: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Farn, 2017; Gunawan, 2015). For credibility, this study used credible measures (interviews, observations, and journal response) that were validated through member-checking. In the member-checking stage, a summary of the findings was taken back to the participants for them to confirm whether or not the findings accurately reflected their experiences.

Credibility was also validated by method triangulation, which is an important strategy used in qualitative research. In this study, the gathered data was triangulated from the interviews, observations, and journal responses. Site triangulation was also used, which involved the different schools in Greater Victoria involved in this study to reduce the potential effects of geographical location of a single school.

Credibility in a graduate level research study is further supported by a supervisor's check to examine the data. Because my former supervisor (who was supervisor at the time of data collection) is familiar with qualitative research and the content of the study, his validation of the measures used in the study played an important role. My current supervisor and committee are likewise familiar with qualitative research approaches and continued to support this process.

Dependability, which means how well the study can be repeated in the future, uses the same measures and context, although the same results may not necessarily be obtained. To further increase the dependability of the study, I used a well-documented theoretical framework and evidence-based literature to support the study and its conclusions. In this way, the measures used to investigate the teachers' beliefs and their instructional practice to support their ELLs can be used over time.

Transferability points to the possibility of transferring this study to another context and setting.

Although the study is focused on teachers, the classroom setting is centered around students whose

linguistic and cultural backgrounds are different from the Canadian context. Therefore, the findings could also be used to inform other contexts with students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Confirmability, in contrast, ensures that the findings are focused on the participants' beliefs, practices, and experiences rather than on the researcher's bias or personal reflections. This was done by sharing the interview transcripts with the participants to confirm if it truly reflected their expressions, and the conclusions of the study were shared with my supervisor to review any gaps and ensure the salient points of the study have been addressed. In sum, the above criteria of trustworthiness are helpful for this study, because it helped the study to be precise, and made the data analysis processes more consistent for the intended readers and for future studies.

In conclusion, this chapter has described the rationale and goals of choosing qualitative research. I also presented an overview of the position of the researcher in the data collection, context/setting, participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter concluded with the ethical considerations and trustworthiness in qualitative research. The following chapter will discuss the participants' profiles and context of their instructional practice observed during the data collection.

Chapter 4: Teacher Backgrounds and their Contexts of Teaching

To have a holistic understanding of the teachers' beliefs and the context of their instructional practice, this chapter describes the three teachers' backgrounds, and their journeys to become teachers, the curriculum content for grade 4, and the context of the lessons taught during the observation sessions. The chapter also discusses the teachers' context of teaching and provides a visual summary of the components involved in the classroom observations of each teacher. All names given in the following sections are pseudonyms, which is essential for confidentiality. As stated in the ethical guidelines, the names of participants and schools must be protected and untraceable.

The Teachers' Backgrounds

Jodi's profile

Jodi is a female teacher from one of the elementary schools in District 61. She has a bachelor's degree and a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree. Her bachelor's degree specialized in music education for elementary school from Excellent University (pseudonym, along with the rest). She has 22 years of teaching experience, including teaching ELLs. Besides her educational background, she has attended workshops and conferences within and outside the school district, which have supported the interactional instructional practices she uses in her classroom. At the time of data collection, she had ELL students from Ethiopia, North-Eastern Africa. The student immigrated to Canada with his parents as refugees. The ELL student was described as having been away from school for a year in his home country before his family immigrated to Canada so had experienced a disruption of his formal education. Prior to this, she had ELL students from Zimbabwe, Mexico, and other countries.

In addition to her educational and professional background, her journey to become a teacher stemmed from experiences in her early years. She comes from a family of teachers, where her mother was an English teacher, and her great aunt was a teacher. She described herself as an avid reader as a child and saw her mother do the same. As a child, she loved to read books to children whom she

babysat, and to her younger brother and her friends. Sometimes, she performed drama from the books she read with her friends and younger brother.

Regarding her educational background in music and her journey to become a teacher, she recalled how one of her supervisors during her practicum encouraged her to become a music teacher “beyond borders.” That is, her supervisor suggested that she could use music to support her students in other subjects besides just music. By weaving together her personal, practical, and professional backgrounds, Jodi continues to support her students, especially the ELLs, to become independent and proficient readers.

Elaine’s profile

Elaine is a female teacher from an elementary school in District 61. She is originally from Vietnam, but unlike Jodi, English is Elaine's second language. Before becoming a classroom teacher, she worked as an educational assistant with special needs students in elementary schools and with ELL students. Like Jodi, she has a Master's degree in Educational Leadership with a concentration on Technology, and a bachelor's of science degree also from ⁴Excellent University. In addition to her educational training, she has also attended workshops within and outside the school district that have provided her with knowledge and skills to work effectively with ELLs. As an English language learner in her early years, she is passionate about best practices that support ELLs and struggling readers who are native English speakers. She also appreciates the work of Adrienne Gear, an elementary teacher in Vancouver, BC, who is passionate about teaching, learning, and best practices, particularly in supporting students' reading and writing, and who is a well-known public speaker, author, and podcaster. Over the years, she has had ELL students from the Philippines, some African countries, East India, and Saudi Arabia.

⁴ Names of institution have been changed to protect anonymity of all participants.

Elaine narrated how much she avoided becoming a teacher even though her father was a teacher. She realized, however, that she was interested in the school setting and wanted to support struggling students as she also had struggled to learn English as a second language. Although she started as an educational assistant, she later realized she could do more to support student learning, especially in a second language.

Sunshine's profile

Sunshine is also a female teacher from one of the schools in District 63, with ten years of teaching experience. Sunshine is originally from the United States and had an exciting background in marketing and sales before becoming a teacher. She worked as an administrative assistant in the municipality world and in business. She has an Associate Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from Chelsea College in Massachusetts, US, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Child and Youth Care from Excellent University, and another Bachelor of Education degree from Hill Side University, BC. Like the other teachers, she has a Master of Education in Play-Based Learning and Curriculum from West Coast University, BC. When she arrived in Canada, she worked in infant care at the Ministry of Health. Subsequently, she was an after-school care manager. Working at the ABC⁵ school for infant care in the Victoria School District, she met some teen moms who inspired her to further her education. She then enrolled in an undergraduate program at Excellent University in Child and Youth Care.

Interestingly, her journey to become a teacher began with some unpleasant experiences that her own children encountered. She has two children, brought up by the same parents, in the same house, with the same values, who both went through the same school system, but in two different school districts, one on the BC mainland and one on Vancouver Island. The oldest child completed her schooling but only found two teachers she did not respond well to, whereas, the other child only found two or three teachers that she did respond well to. The child who only related to two-

⁵ Name of the school for infant care

three teachers raised some key questions for her: “How is this so?” and “Why is it that way?” Sunshine wanted to know how she might be able to help her children. She recalled how her family background and her husband’s family greatly influenced her career as it is today.

Over the years, Sunshine has worked with ELL students from China, the Philippines, and India, and she currently has an ELL student in her class whose parents are from Sudan. The ELL student has two older siblings, who have already graduated and are now working, and a younger sibling. Her ELL student has been with her for two years, since Sunshine began teaching her in grade 3. When the student first came to Sunshine’s class, she was almost always silent, observing the world around her but not engaging as the other students were doing. Still, the young ELL fit in with a circle of girls like the others. In grade 4, the ELL began again as a timid student, but then, after the class learned about the civil rights movement, and the ELL student played the role of Ruby Bridges in readers theater, she started to speak more and has now become an active member of the class, contributing to the class discussions and the group schoolwork.

Table 7

Overview of the Teachers’ Backgrounds

Participant	Years of teaching experience	Educational qualifications	Additional training/support for students	Number of ELLs	Personal background
Jodi	22	Bachelor in Music; Master’s degree	Workshop, Conferences within and outside school district	1	Mom-English Teacher, Great Aunt
Elaine	20	Bachelor in Science Education; Master in Educational Leadership in Technology	Workshop, Conferences within and outside school district and Adrienne Gear Book	1	Dad-teacher
Sunshine	10	Bachelor in Early	Workshop, Conferences	1	Husband-teacher,

		Childhood; Bachelor of Arts Degree in Child and Youth Care; Bachelor of Education; Master of Education in Play Based Learning and Curriculum	within and outside school district and Adrienne Gear Book		Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and Mom
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Curriculum Content for Grade 4

In this section, the grade 4 curriculum used by the three teachers is described, including three main sections: big ideas, curriculum competencies, and the content. By showing the grade 4 curriculum, the goals of the lessons and how the resources available can support the before, during, and after the lessons can be better understood.

Table 8

Curriculum for Grade 4

Criteria	Contents
Big Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language & text can be a source of creativity. - Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world. - Using language in creative and playful ways helps us understand how language works. - Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens.
Curricular Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using oral, written, visual, and digital texts, students are expected individually and collaboratively to be able to comprehend and connect (reading, listening and viewing) - Access and integrate information and ideas from a variety of sources and from prior knowledge to build understanding. - Use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during and after reading, listening or viewing to deepen the understanding of the text. - Consider different purposes, audiences and perspectives in exploring texts.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply a variety of thinking skills to gain meaning from the texts. - Identify how differences in context, perspectives and voices influence meaning in texts. - Recognize the role of language in personal, social and cultural identity. - Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to the text and deepen the understanding of self, community, and the world. - Respond to text in personal and creative ways. - Recognize how literacy elements, techniques, and devices enhance meaning in texts. - Show an increasing understanding of the role of organization in meaning. - Demonstrate awareness of the oral tradition in first people’s cultures and the purpose of first peoples texts. - Identify how story in first people’s culture connects people to land.
Content	<p>Students are expected to know the following.</p> <p>Story/Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forms, functions and genres of text - Text features - Literary elements - Literacy devices - Evidence <p>Strategies and Procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading strategies - Oral language strategies - Metacognitive strategies - Writing Processes <p>Language features, structures and conventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Features of oral language - Paragraph structure - Sentence structure and grammar - Conventions

Source : www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca/Englishlanguagearts/Grade4 (2016)

Table 8 summarizes the curriculum that guided the teachers’ activities in supporting the students. Generally, the curriculum is related to what Jackson (1992) defines as “all experiences which the learner encounters under the direction of the school” (p. 45). Similarly, Kelly (1993, 1999) defined curriculum as all the learning planned and guided by the school, carried on in groups or individuals inside or outside the school. Both of these definitions illustrate that for teachers to work effectively and efficiently, a curriculum is required to achieve the educational goals.

Table 9

Curriculum Details

Criteria	Curriculum Details
Big ideas (understand)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The big ideas are comprised of generalizations and principles and the key concepts are important to an area of learning. They reflect the “understand” component of the know-do-understand model of learning. - The big ideas represent what students will understand at the completion of the curriculum for their grade. They are intended to endure beyond a single grade and contribute to future understanding.
Content (know)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The content learning standards, the “know” of the know-do-understand model of learning, detail the essential topics and knowledge at each grade level.
Curricular competencies (do)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The curricular competencies are the skills, strategies, and process that students develop over time. They reflect the “do” in the know-do-understand model of learning. While curricular competencies are more subject-specific, they are connected to the core competencies.

Source: www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca

Context of Teaching

To gain insight related to my research questions, in addition to interviews, I carried out instructional observation sessions that revealed more details about the teachers’ beliefs and their instructional practices. Below highlights both the main themes and sub- themes from the observation checklist and fieldnotes from the observations. The sub themes are first presented which include: classroom environment, resources available in the class, students' work, content of teaching, and instructional processes, with specific focus on the main themes: classroom environment and instructional practice under discussion. Three observations were carried out for each participant, comprising a total of nine observations. The descriptions and analysis below emerged from two of the observations, because the third observation focused on clarifying issues that came from the first two observations. In the third observation, I also asked the teachers about points noted in the fieldnotes.

Jodi's Classroom Observation

1. The classroom environment.

The classroom had 19 chairs and desks, arranged individually so that the students had space between one another. This kind of arrangement allows the students to work independently, while the teacher can reach out to the students without interfering with the other students' activities. The students could easily move around to collaborate with other groups of students.

On the walls, reminders were posted with important information that the students could refer to (Figures 5 and 6). Some of the posters were in different colors, and the teacher explained that the colors helped the students identify the kind of information that was presented.

Figure 5

Jodi's classroom.



Figure 6

An area in Jodi's classroom dedicated to small group instruction.



2. Resources available in the class.

Books were arranged in different bins and alphabetically labelled with different colors, which again, the teacher said was to make it easy for the students to identify the level of books that were in the bins. Besides the print books, digital books on Epic were also available to the students through a Chrome book laptop labelled with each student's name. The teacher said that she chose the Epic reading platform instead of other digital books, because it was affordable for the school, and it helped her to categorize the students according to their reading level, for the variety of book genres.

Writing materials were also available to the students, and they readily accessed the materials without distracting others. The teacher's arrangement of the classroom was conducive to the students' work pattern. The classroom also had a projector that the teacher used to display relevant and necessary materials from time to time before, during, and after the lessons.

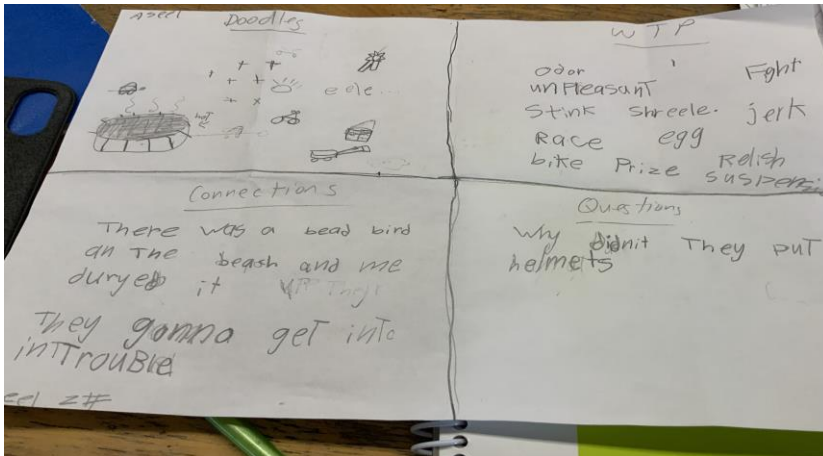
3. Students' work.

I observed the students working in response to a given task. Student samples showed how they built connections, developed relevant questions, and identified words that they also checked for

meaning. Drawings (visual images) were used to connect important information or themes to what they were reading about (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Student writing sample



4. Jodi's content of teaching and instructional processes.

The teacher began with a topic on word works, clearly stating the objectives on a whiteboard and verbally clarifying them to the students. The students were then given a sheet of paper containing words with matching pictures. The teacher encouraged the students to make notes about any familiar word(s) from the sheet of paper. A few minutes were devoted to this task while the teacher moved around to ensure the students were doing what they were supposed to do and supported any students who were struggling to identify familiar words. Afterwards, the teacher wrote words from the sheet onto the board that were connected to a previous class reading. The teacher modeled the pronunciation of the words on the board and the students chanted the words after her. A short time was devoted to this activity. After dealing with the familiar words, she moved to the unfamiliar words, first asking the students to say what they could about the matching pictures. Some students described the pictures and their understanding of the picture based on their prior experience. The teacher explained the pictures further and, at the same time, broke up unfamiliar words into morphemes/phonemes and modeled their

pronunciation. The objective of the lesson was not just for the students to be able to pronounce the words, but to use the words that would enhance their writing, improve their vocabulary and word knowledge, develop authentic conversations, and understand the conventions about correctly using the word for different purposes (some of these features resemble the curriculum competencies highlighted in Table 9, which is also similar to equipping the students with the skills that could support their reading process). The students worked in groups of 3-4 to further discuss the unfamiliar words that the teacher had explained and used in sentences. One of the groups came up with a puzzle to fill in the gap, while another group role-played where they practiced using the words in context and wrote them in sentences. The teacher moved around to ensure that the students could complete the task. For the ELLs, she asked them to join her at the table where she facilitated small group discussion. While at the table, she had one-on-one interactions with the students for them to pronounce the words individually. She used more scaffolded examples with the pictures on the sheet. Following the teacher's support, the students came up with simple sentences in their scrapbooks.

For the second observation, the lesson was focused on reading. The teacher began the lesson by using a projector to display a book's cover, which contained the author's name and the book's title. The teacher allowed the students 5-10 minutes to predict the storyline using the picture on the cover and the book title. Afterwards, the teacher read the first paragraph aloud, pausing to ask the students questions about what she had just read, and then continued with the rest of the story. While reading, she wrote some words on the whiteboard, that some students did not know their meaning and could not pronounce. She also spent some time breaking up the words so that the students could learn the pronunciation, and she guided them on their context and meaning. Following the read-aloud activity, the teacher used the projector again for students to see a graphic map that summarized the story. The map showed the setting, plot, theme, central characters at the beginning and end of the story, and words that described the characters in the story. The teacher discussed the map with the students, as an example, and then asked them to break up into smaller groups. The students worked in groups of 3-4,

and the teacher displayed another book as she read aloud so that the students could collaborate and discuss the book. The students worked in completely different groups from the ones they had been in in the previous lesson. The teacher gave each group different books to work with and answered questions about the setting, plot, theme, and characters at the story's beginning and end. Again, she worked directly with the ELL students at the set table, as she had done in the previous lesson. She facilitated and used scaffolded examples for the students, and they used some of the ideas suggested by the teacher and earlier suggestions from the whole class to guide their conversations as they collaborated in solving the assigned tasks on the map.

After working in groups, the students worked individually, choosing books from the bins that the teacher had chosen so they could read interesting books at their reading level. Most of the students decided to work with digital texts instead of print text. While it may be difficult to tell why most of the students opted for digital text, it could be inferred that these kids have grown up in digital worlds and digital literacies are more familiar to them. At this phase, the teacher asked the students to create their own map while the teacher's map was still being displayed on the projector. In my fieldnotes, I indicated why the teacher might want the students to create their map. In a later conversation, the teacher said that it is essential for the students to think deeply beyond just decoding words to make connections between what they read and their personal experiences through the characters' actions. To achieve this goal, besides creating their own maps, the students wrote about anything that might help them better understand the text. Figure 7 shows some examples of the students' ideas.

Elaine's Classroom Observation.

1. The classroom environment.

Elaine's classroom had a layout that was different from Jodi's. The students had big tables, and their chairs were arranged to face each other (Figure 8). The tables were wide and long enough to accommodate three students at a table. Although this kind of arrangement allowed the students to sit

together and collaborate without moving around, it limited their ability to interact with other groups of students. Like in Jodi's class, a table and chairs were also set aside for additional input as required by the students. The class had pictures of the students' previous works of paintings and drawings. It also had reminders on the whiteboard, though no posters were present. Shelves of books were also in the classroom with the books arranged alphabetically.

Figure 8

Elaine's classroom.



2. Resources available in the classroom.

Like in Jodi's class, a projector was available in the classroom, and the teacher made great use of both the board and the projector (see Figure 8). The board was primarily used to reinforce the points that were displayed; for example, write more complex sentences and note the difficult words. Print and digital texts were also available to the students. Like in Jodi's class, the students were assigned to use an alphabet that was at the same level as the books they were reading.

3. Students' work.

The students made presentations using drama. They were divided into groups of four, six, or eight, with each group being assigned a reading, from which they developed the characters. The

students worked together, supporting one another, and sharing their ideas until they reached a consensus. The teacher stated that the objective of the activity was for the students to work as a team to achieve a common goal. In the process, they could practice their oral language skills and fluency to build confidence.

4. Elaine's content of the teaching and instructional processes.

The first classroom observation was on “word works”, focusing on prefixes and how the students could identify and split up words containing prefixes. Although Elaine did not explicitly state the objective at the onset of the lesson, as Jodi had in her first lesson, the instructional activities were geared towards this goal (splitting the words to their core morphemes like the goals of SVR). At first, the teacher explained how the students could identify words that contained prefixes in the text. One of the tips the teacher gave the students was to break up the words and separate the prefix from the root word. Afterwards, the teacher read aloud excerpt that contained prefixes that were displayed on the projector. After reading, she asked the students to write in their notebook 4-5 words that they identified as containing prefixes. Two students volunteered to share the words they came up with their peers. The teacher then explained more about prefixes using words the students would likely encounter daily, such as (re)create, (un)happy, (un)acceptable, (dis)cover, and (re)play. The students spent some time practicing and creatively playing around with words with prefixes in groups of 3-4. The ELLs could work confidently and independently from the teacher’s input, while collaborating with their peers in the class. They demonstrated their ability to apply the lesson independently and effectively collaborated with their peers.

The second lesson was different as it required the students to participate in drama/role play activities. The teacher explained that the lesson’s objective was not just to learn new words but to also use language communicatively in a social context. Five groups had different stories to act out. The teacher asked the students to develop the characters themselves, encouraging their creativity and active

participation. As she moved around each group with an educational assistant to ensure that everything would go well with the assigned task, the students were fully engaged in the rehearsal, and gave a successful presentation. The ELLs in this class were not given additional support by the teacher as was the case in Jodi's class, but instead, they received tremendous support from their peers in the form of teamwork, which was a testament to their active involvement and cooperation.

Sunshine's Classroom Observation.

1. The classroom environment.

Sunshine's classroom environment had a similar layout as Elaine's class, where students shared a table. One notable difference, however, was that the students were not facing each other in a sitting arrangement; instead, they sat independently while sharing the table (Figure 9). Three to four students were at a table. The teacher had little access to move between the table and chairs but could move around the class as required.

Figure 9

Sunshine's classroom



Reminder posters were on the wall for the students, and the teacher used some of the points to reinforce instructions when necessary and as required by the students.

2. The resources available in the class.

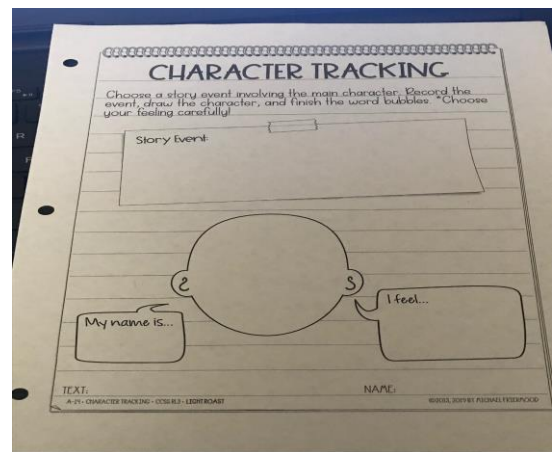
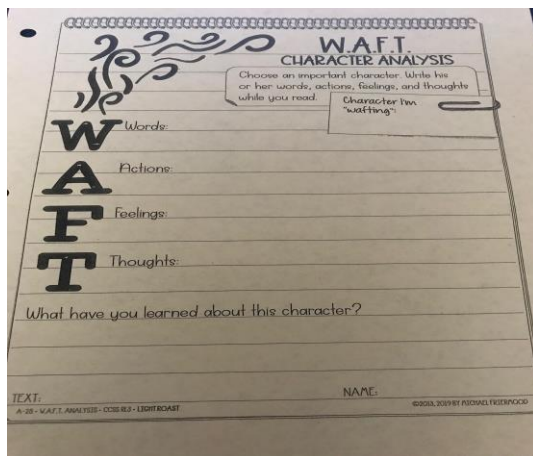
Writing materials were placed on each table. Books were also arranged on shelves with colorful labels. The books were separated into fiction and non-fiction categories. The class had a projector for the teacher to display helpful and relevant materials for teaching.

3. Students' work.

During the observations, the students were working on a class project that required them to write about themselves. To work on the assigned task, the teacher handed the students a “character scrapbook sheet” (Figure 10) to guide them about the expectations for the task. The project was premised on a book that the students had read, where the characters talked about themselves.

Figure 10

Student samples of work in Sunshine's classroom.



4. Sunshine's content of teaching and instructional processes.

The first lesson was devoted to the students' independent reading, which helped them learn words to describe themselves. Sunshine began the lesson by displaying a book's cover, which showed the main character. The teacher facilitated the students' conversation by asking them to describe what they saw on the cover, where the main character held a ball while lying on a bed. Some students described what they saw and made intelligent guesses about the mood/look of the character. The

teacher used the picture to ask questions about a probable scenario that would have given them the kind of mood/look the character displayed on the book cover. The question was relatable and generated participation from the students, including the ELLs. Specifically, one of the ELLs who began the discussion recalled past experiences that were similar to what was displayed on the projector, and adopted some words from the previous conversation about the book cover. Afterwards, the teacher read the book to the students and occasionally paused to show them pictures from the book. She also used the pauses to allow the students to infer and predict actions that would likely happen next in the storyline. After the reading, the teacher handed the students a sheet of paper for them to work independently and describe themselves.

The second lesson was a follow-up lesson. In the second observation, the teacher began the class by showing a small container that contained different spices. She moved around the class, allowing the students to perceive the aroma from the container and report what they could perceive. The students, in turn, contributed to the activity by coming up with different aromas they perceived (i.e., almond, vanilla, raspberry, etc.). Following the activity, the teacher introduced a book that they would read about feelings. The teacher began reading aloud to the students, pausing occasionally for the students to predict and express their ideas about some of the characters' conversations and actions. She also showed the students pictures from the book as she read to them. After reading the text, she asked the students to talk in groups to decide what they would do differently if they encountered some of the things that the characters went through. After the group discussion, the students returned to a whole class conversation about what they had shared in each group. The teacher then handed out a sheet with emerging themes from the book (Figure 11). She asked the students to work again in groups, that were different from the previous group, using notes about what they had read earlier, and that were relatable to their prior experiences. The students spent some time together developing words that they shared later in the class discussion. Next, the students were allowed to choose books from the sorted bins, especially those that described feelings, like the book the teacher read aloud earlier. No digital

books were used in this exercise. The teacher then handed out a graphic map to the students to guide their reading (Figure 11). The students worked independently to solve the map using their ideas from earlier activities in the lesson. The ELLs worked independently without asking the teacher for help while completing the assigned task.

Figure 11

Emerging themes from a book being read

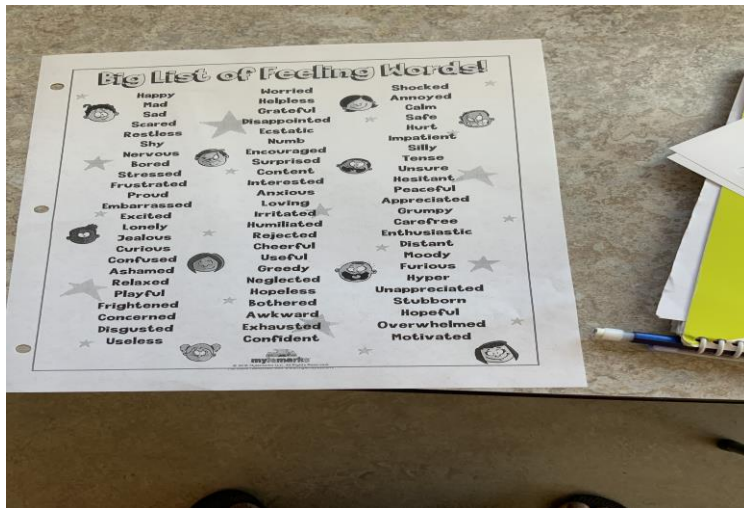
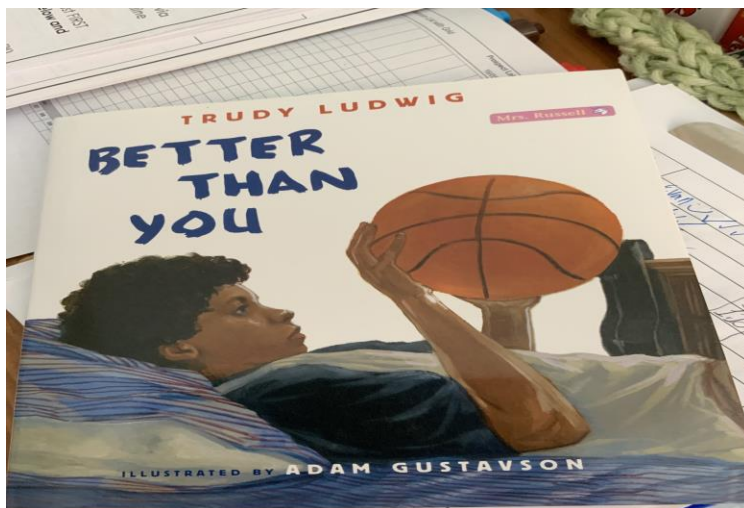


Figure 12

Sample of a book used in Sunshine's class that was relevant to the themes



Discussion

This section of the chapter delves into some findings from the classroom observations, guided by main themes similar to the interview analysis in the next chapter. This discussion is also instrumental to addressing the research questions: What instructional practices do teachers use to bolster the reading development and reading proficiency of their ELL students? What resources are at their disposal, and how are they used to enhance the ELLs' reading development and proficiency?

Classroom Environment

The classroom environment has been described to include the space where students are supported, as a physical setting, where instructional activities occur, or resources that support instructional practices are found (Fritia et al., 2023; Lah, 2020). In addition, the classroom environment contributes to creating either a positive or negative outcome of the learning process for students irrespective of their subject areas, grades, or age (Fritia et al., 2023; Lah, 2020; Pajarillo-Aquino, 2019; Rusticus et al., 2023). Undoubtedly, the teachers in this study considered the importance of the classroom environment in their instructional processes as contributing to a space where they can demonstrate their beliefs about teaching reading, create a climate that fosters learning for the students, and display resources that would be helpful in supporting the varying backgrounds of students in the classroom. Although each teacher has a different classroom layout, their respective layouts help them achieve their goal of organizing instructional practices to support their students. For instance, Jodi's classroom has desks and chairs individually arranged (Figure 5) to allow the students to work independently and move around easily to collaborate with other students when they work in groups. On the other hand, Elaine and Sunshine's classrooms have different layouts for the desks and chairs (Figures 8 and 9) where students share the desks. Although this arrangement encourages easy collaboration among the students, it does not allow easy access to collaborate with other groups of students. Unlike Elaine and Sunshine's classrooms, Jodi's classroom has an area with a table and

chairs dedicated to small group instruction, which renders further support to her ELLs and struggling students (Figure 6).

Moreover, each class has resources that support the teacher's and students' activities toward achieving the goals of the curriculum. Adger et al. (2018) and Barzan et al. (2021) note the vital roles of supplementary resources in the classroom to promote students' motivation and participation in the instructional processes. Supplementary resources available in the classroom are books (digital and print), instructional posters to guide some of the students' activities, projectors, etc. Supplementary resources in each classroom were similar because all of the teachers have projectors and whiteboards, which are used for visual displays of books and graphic maps. The whiteboards are also used by teachers to make notes to be emphasized to the students.

The three teachers are passionate about ensuring their students read books appropriate for their levels and use them to build connections with their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. More specifically, Jodi and Elaine's students used digital and print books and had access to Chrome notebooks. The students can read digital books from Epic, a website that contains different text genres for students and allows parents and teachers to sort out books for students at the appropriate reading level. Although Sunshine did not include digital texts in her class during the observation, she used realia (natural objects) to support her instructional process.

Writing materials such as pencils, highlighters, and colored pencils are placed on the students' table in Sunshine's class, whereas in Jodi's and Elaine's class, the students can only access writing materials in a designated section. The location of the writing materials can influence the instructional process of the teachers to some extent. For instance, in Sunshine's class, because the writing materials are easily accessible to the students, they do not distract their peers and generally begin their assigned tasks on time. Nevertheless, in Elaine's and Jodi's classes, some students obtain writing materials during the lesson, and their movements posed some distractions for the other students, and it also delayed them from beginning their work on time.

Instructional Practice

This part of the analysis concerns the lesson objectives and pragmatic language used by teachers to achieve a meaningful goal at the end of each lesson, and the activities that the students engage in with their teacher. Also, it offers a brief analysis on Adrienne Gear's principles on teaching reading which were adapted into some of Elaine and Sunshine's instructional practices.

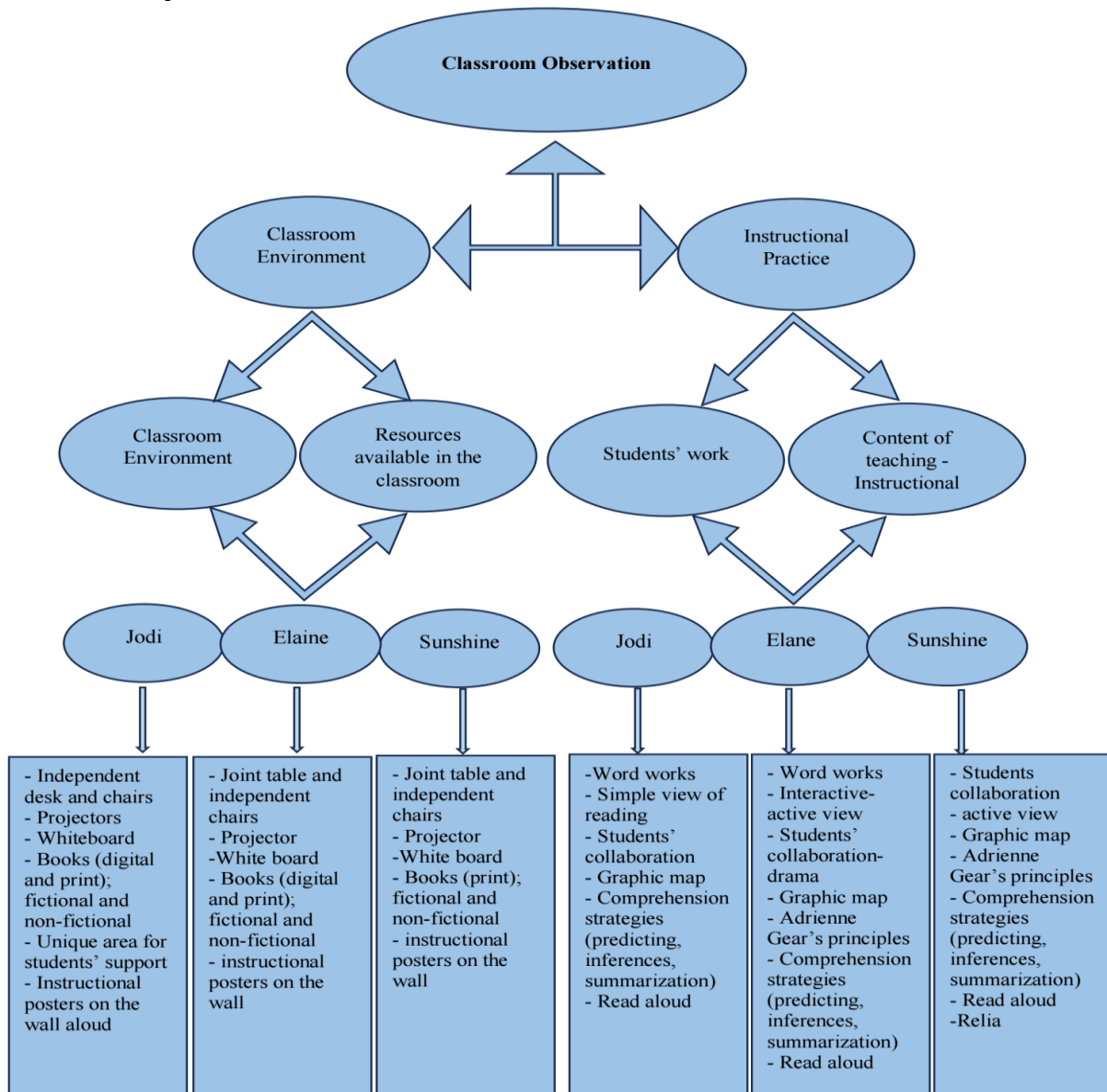
With regards to the lesson objectives, Jodi explicitly stated the objectives of her first lesson and not the second, but I inferred the objectives in her second lesson by way of the assigned task that required the students to create a map to show they understood what they had read. Jodi's stated objective for the first lesson was: "for the students to be able to use the vocabularies to enhance their writing, improve their vocabulary and word knowledge, develop authentic conversation and be familiar with words that are appropriate to achieve different purposes." This resembled some of the content and big ideas of the curriculum that is shown in Figure 6. For instance, the curriculum mentions the goal to "access and integrate information and ideas from a variety of sources and from prior knowledge to build understanding, [and] use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during and after reading." (BC Curriculum, 2016). Jodi used interactive strategies such as those described by Afflerbach et al. (2020), Mckeown (2009), Smith et al., (2022), and Such (2021) as explicit strategies to support and improve students' comprehension. Similarly, Elaine, in the first lesson, did not explicitly state the objective, but in the second lesson, she explained the goal of using drama was a way for students to understand how to use language communicatively and instrumentally in real life situations.

In contrast, Sunshine did not state the objectives for any of her lessons, though she used a student-centered instructional practice like the curriculum's big ideas and core competencies. Regarding language function, the teachers used realistic verbs that captured what the students were expected to do after each lesson, which was similar to the curriculum's expectations. For instance, language function requires the students to be able to build, connect, develop, interact, among other things.

With regards to the students' activities, the three teachers engaged, promoted, and facilitated student participation, using explicit strategies like those described by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) and Hall et al., (2017). The strategies included making inferences, predicting, summarizing, visualizing, and comprehension monitoring, and also involved graphic organizers (see samples of graphic organizers in Figures 7 and 10). Figure 13 presents a visual summary of the classroom observations and details of the discussion.

Figure 13

Visual summary of the classroom observations



In addition, Elaine and Sunshine's emphasis on Adrienne Gear's principles in their instructional practices, particularly the principles of making connections, visualization, questioning, and drawing inferences, are of significant importance, therefore, it becomes essential to analyze these components in line with the theoretical views of reading earlier reviewed in Chapter 2- Simple View of Reading (SVR), Scarborough reading rope model (SRRM), and the Active view of reading (AVR). The subsequent section is therefore focused on reviewing the principles mentioned above by Elaine and Sunshine.

Making connections

As earlier reviewed in Chapter 2, reading in a second language requires a complex level of processing for ELLs to activate their background knowledge, some of which involves their ability to decode words accurately and comprehend the structure of a text (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Similarly, Gear's principles agree with the importance of students having linguistic background knowledge, which will make it easier for them to connect with what they are reading in a text and what they already know. In other words, from the SVR and SRRM points of view, the student's brain is activated to connect with linguistic knowledge, which helps them to recognize letters/alphabet, understand concepts, and build associations with language structures.

Additionally, from the AVR point of view, the students engage in deeper reasoning by connecting and building processes from their previous language experiences and reflectively adapting experiences from their cultural backgrounds in analyzing the text. This way, the students bring themselves into what they read and connect some of the ideas, events, feelings, and characters with their real-life situations.

From the AVR perspective, teachers are crucial in guiding students to visualize beyond mere word recognition. They are responsible for helping students create mental images from their own

experiences, movies, TV shows, and other sources of information. This approach allows students to immerse themselves in what they read, fostering a meaningful connection with the text and making the teachers feel committed to their student's learning.

Visualization

Through visualization, students are not just connecting with the text through their eyes or with the language structure of the text; they are also engaging with the text through their minds by creating a mental image of what they read. For instance, from the SVR viewpoint, visualization helps the students gain a better insight into vocabulary knowledge as they can visualize the words where, when, and how they are written and spelled. In other words, the frequency of the use of words and the registers used by an author is a helpful way for students to visualize the context and purpose of a text.

AVR, on the other hand, helps students visualize beyond vocabulary knowledge and word recognition, taking a mental picture from their previous experiences, facts, and information they already know. Again, it is how students have brought themselves into what they read as they meaningfully connect and engage with the text.

Questioning

Questioning, a principle in Gear's recommendation for teaching reading, especially to ELLs, is a tool that fosters a supportive learning environment. It provides teachers and students with opportunities to delve into a deeper understanding of a text. Specifically, from the SVR view, questioning helps students recognize the use of words, understand the organization of the text, draw inferences, and establish relationships between words across the text. Similarly, through questioning, AVR recognizes and celebrates students' voices and the unique knowledge they bring into analyzing a text. That is, through questioning, the teacher asks the students questions that can help them critically and creatively participate in analyzing a text by drawing from their previous experiences.

Relatedly, Vygotsky (1978) agrees with the principle of questioning in instructional practices that encourage students' interaction and dialogue among themselves and with a knowledgeable person. This helps students see beyond what they are reading in print and relate their real-life experiences.

Inference

Hall et al. (2020) describe inference as a process in which "readers integrate information within or across texts to create new understanding" (p.259). The above meaning places importance on inferences to unravel hidden meanings and untold information from a text. The three models of reading understudied earlier apparently affirm the significant role of inference in reading comprehension as it presents students with the opportunity to activate their metacognitive abilities by going beyond the linguistic elements to look out for clues or prompts that can help them make reasonable adjustments to what they read and come up with meaningful conclusions in analyzing a text.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the participants' profiles, the curriculum content for grade 4, and the classroom observations for each participant. Findings from the classroom observations were presented using the sub-categories that began with the first theme (i.e., classroom environment) which showed the impact of the classroom layout on how the teachers supported their students. Furthermore, the resources in the class provided a clear understanding of how the teacher used additional materials to support the students. Although the students' work was not a focus of this research, their activities help to clarify how the strength of the teachers' instructional processes build the students' confidence, especially ELLs and other struggling students, in becoming independent and able to solve their assigned tasks. The teaching content and instructional practices, on the other hand, showed the interactions between the teachers and the students, and the interactions among the students in supporting themselves. The chapter also discussed the classroom observations under two broad headings: classroom environment and instructional practices and provided a visual summary of the

classroom observations. A succinct analysis of Adrienne Gear's principles is also presented in line with the reading models reviewed in Chapter 2. The observations are further analyzed in more detail in the next chapter, alongside the teachers' interviews that focused on how their beliefs influenced their instructional practices and supported the ELLs' reading proficiency.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

To review, the aim of this study was to investigate teachers' beliefs in supporting the reading proficiency of grade 4 English language learners (ELLs) guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs of the three selected teachers with regards to teaching of reading to grade 4 ELLs?
2. What influenced the teachers' development of their beliefs regarding the teaching of reading to grade 4 ELLs?
3. What instructional practices do the teachers use to support the reading development and reading proficiency of their ELL students?
4. What resources are available, and how are they used to support ELLs' reading development and proficiency?

To achieve the research goal and address the research questions, I chose a case study design method to provide a detailed analysis of the teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. According to Hancock et al. (2021) and Yin (2018), the case study design is invaluable for its use of multiple data sources to explain findings from a case(s). In this study, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and the teachers' journal responses were used to gather data from the participants. To analyze the data, a thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used for the interviews and classroom observations, and a conventional content analysis was used for the teachers' journals. While the reasons for choosing different data analyses were explained in Chapter 3, the justifications are re-emphasized in this chapter. The TA further describes the nature of the teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices with flexible coding that were derived from the data. The research questions were also used to guide the main themes from the data. For the conventional content analysis, the codes were also derived from the data during the data analysis. Overall, this chapter is focused on the

findings and a discussion of the semi-structured interviews and the journal responses of the three participants.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I present the participants' interviews and discuss their insights, and further analysis of the classroom observations where they overlap with the interviews. This extends the discussion presented in Chapter 4. The discussion in this chapter also links the research questions to the literature. In the second part, I discuss the teachers' journal responses with reference to the relevant literature.

Findings from the Interviews

Undoubtedly, the interviews serve as the main data source for this study, and provide details about the teachers' beliefs, what influenced their beliefs, their instructional practices, and resources available in the classroom. Naz et al. (2022) claim that semi-structured interviews provide opportunities "to explore the opinions and ideas of the interviewees, as well as probe deeper into their answers for additional information and clarification, especially when dealing with complex or sensitive subject matter" (p. 45). In line with the authors, semi-structured interview helped the study presented in this dissertation delve into the abstract nature of teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices, and interview ultimately cuts across the research questions (see table 10).

Table 10

The Research Questions and Corresponding Data Collection Techniques

Research Questions	Data Source
1. What are the three selected teachers' beliefs regarding the teaching of reading to grade 4 ELLs?	Interviews Teacher Journal Responses
2. What influenced the teachers' development of their beliefs regarding the teaching of reading to grade 4 ELLs?	Interviews Teacher Journal Responses
3. What instructional practices do the teachers use to support the reading development and reading proficiency of their ELL students?	Interviews Classroom observations
4. What resources are available, and how are they used to support ELLs' reading development and proficiency?	Interviews Classroom observations

To develop the themes from the interviews, six stages of thematic analysis were considered (following Braun & Clarke, 2006), which include: (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report (p. 87). Instead of repeating the thematic analysis procedures presented in Chapter 3, a thematic map is used that show the four themes and subcategories derived from the analytical process and subsequently used to describe the findings; a process guided by the study's research questions- see Appendix 7 for the initial thematic analysis and Appendix 8 for the final thematic analysis and the three themes (Teachers' Beliefs, Instructional Practices, and Classroom Environment) that were used to discuss the findings from the interviews. All the coding was done manually using MS-Word while reading the interview transcripts and collating specific, relevant excerpts. Each case (i.e., each "participant") is presented below, which is then followed by a general discussion of the findings.

Theme I: Teacher's Beliefs

The participants' different perspectives influenced their interpretations and definitions of teaching, their beliefs about teaching reading and their ELLs, and the development of their beliefs.

Regarding the development of their beliefs, the teachers' interests and passion for teaching emerged from their backgrounds, such as their homes and nuclear or extended families (and their own previous teachers and experiences at school), involving routines around books and reading. Some of their perspectives also appeared to stem from their backgrounds and professional and practical experiences, which contributed to their classroom practices. The views of the participants are examined in the following sections.

Participant 1 – Jodi

Regarding the development of her beliefs, Jodi recalled observing her mother read, which in turn influenced her own passion for reading. Her mother was a model for her reading, guiding her actions towards reading to her brother, friends, and the children she babysat. In her words:

My mum was an avid reader. My mum was an English teacher. I didn't have a choice. We all read. I loved reading, loved books and I... as a child... was a babysitter. ...And I loved reading books to the kids that I babysat. I had a younger brother. I read to him and I loved taking stories and making them dramatic friends. My friends and I would take storybooks and we'd act them out. We'd come up with plays. (Interview 1)

In addition, Jodi described how an encounter with one of her supervisors during a practicum changed her thinking from merely wanting to be a music teacher to considering using music to teach other subjects across the curriculum. In particular, it created in her a passion to use her knowledge of music to teach English to support the students in her classroom. She recalled:

So, I remember during my first practicum, my supervisor asked, "Are you sure you want to teach just music?" And I was like... Yeah, I really want to be... I want to do music. He said, "Oh, that's a shame. I think you should really teach everything." (Interview 1)

She added:

So, it was a compliment and it kind of stuck with me. And I've loved music. I taught music for 19 years, but I was always also in a classroom. And then we moved here. I had my opportunity to get into the classroom full-time, and I obviously use a ton of music in my classroom. It's... it's really an amazing way to build community... build care connections and also teach English.

(Interview 1)

She also described her memories of some fun activities, like drama, which she engaged in when she read to her brother, friends, and children who she babysat, that helped her instructional practice.

I loved reading... loved books and I... as a child... was a babysitter. And I loved reading books to the kids that I babysat. I had a younger brother. I read to him and I loved taking stories and making them dramatic friends. My friends and I would take storybooks and we'd act them out. We'd come up with plays. So, I was always very much immersed in reading and literature. And then I think even in music... it's... it's a heavily... emm... you know... the music itself is heavily based in... in words and rhyme... playing with words... turning words into music. So, I was constantly involved in that kind of thing. So, I would say that... that would... that played a really large part in even just becoming a teacher. It's almost like... Do you just... you... you love reading so much, you become a teacher. Like, what comes with... you know... reading... passing that knowledge on... how are you going to teach it? Well, you got to teach them to read. How are they gonna get their knowledge? What are they going to have to read? So, as if you're going to be a teacher, you kind of have to love to read. (Interview 2)

Additionally, concerning her belief about teaching, Jodi believed that “teaching is not a vocation but a calling.” By implication, it takes passion to be a model or front-runner to impact lives. This also means beyond the set goals of a curriculum and objectives of a lesson, there is a desire to walk the students through their struggles and provide guidance and counsel to help them succeed, which is uncommon in every vocation except being a teacher. She added “I always caution this. Oh, it’s your vocation. It was your calling. Oh, but you love it so much. Yes, I do love it. And aren't you

lucky that I love it? That doesn't mean I should do it for free.” She explained that her job was under pressure from all sides by individuals and stakeholders, which she felt was less common in the medical or legal professions. From another standpoint, she considered teaching as a complex and important job. She explained that because it involves not just educating the future citizens, but it also includes *“teachers disseminating their own biases and feelings about justice and diversity versus inclusivity and the pressure of responsibility.”* Ultimately, she believed that teachers play a significant role in transforming student lives, and they try their best to support their students, which requires them to have great tenacity and patience. She also expressed how much she enjoyed being a teacher and that she was continuing to explore best practices to support the diversity of students in her classroom, irrespective of the expectations of the curriculum, or of other individuals and stakeholders.

With respect to her beliefs about teaching reading, Jodi mentioned the importance of not assuming that all ELL students could read, even though they were in grade 4. She said:

I still have students that are still working on learning to read. And when they get to the age of grade four, there's a whole peer culture around reading that if they are appearing to read lower level books that are easier for them to read, then they are not... umm... a real reader like their peers. And so, I am constantly running up against the challenge of getting them to feel like they're real readers, but they still have to learn how to read, so they have to have books that they get that they can read that are decodable at their level, but save them socially a little bit. ...allow them to appear like they're their real readers if they're able to read these higher level books, which is a it's a tough balance. (Interview 1)

In addition, she considered her students to be too young to have enough experience in their cultural and language backgrounds. She reported:

...and so we... I focus a lot on our read aloud so that I am then reading and then our discussions are able to forward their thinking about reading comprehension, ...about making connections so important to be able to build on your prior knowledge. And what I've come to

see is... Without those classroom discussions, students are really struggling with making those connections. They need really explicit guidance in how to make those connections and to build on their prior knowledge. And then what surprises me more and more is how little background knowledge I'm finding some students have in order to make those connections, ...their life experiences. I mean, they're young, absolutely. I'm not criticizing them for that, but they don't have a broad range of experiences. So even all the more reason to expose them to new material, stories, books, ...get them thinking in different ways. (Interview 1)

In another conversation she mentioned: “... and so it can be hard for my new English learners to even share their own background.” (Interview 1)

She painstakingly preferred to teach the students reading with a bottom-up phonics-based approach, exposing them to the skills and knowledge for breaking up and blending letters and sounds. “Yeah... Yeah, I would say predominantly bottom-up for them because they're having to gain those skills in order to read those words and have those sounds” (Interview 2). In a follow-up conversation, she added:

So, because I teach grades three, four I would say those cognitive or bottom-up elements are usually fairly in place by the time they get to grade four. So, analyzing a text, and having to decode, I don't know if that's along the same lines as bottom-up, but linguistic elements to me means decoding words, having to have phonetic knowledge, having to have that foundational understanding of English. (Interview 2)

As mentioned above, she believes that by encouraging the students to explore different genres of text, they can easily build connections with what they read and with the little prior experience they have. Similarly, considering her statement above, she considers that the students' background knowledge can help them build connections and become better readers. Jodi felt empathetic towards her ELLs because she believed they had a lot to deal with, being placed in the mainstream classroom with peers who were already familiar with the letters and sounds of English.

So, right now I'm looking at a student thinking... how much of this is your cognitive overload of a new language and not being able to communicate versus how much of this is your personality, your culture, nurture and your nature, how much you know? And I can tell they're pretty exhausted. (Interview 2)

She was also aware of situations where students had limited access to engage in literacy practices at home, likely because of their parent's socio-economic or educational backgrounds. She explained:

...depending on how available the family is and how comfortable they feel with sharing... And sometimes, you can reach out, but they're very under-resourced themselves. So, I don't know, actually if any of the ELL students I've worked with have stories in their own language, for example. (Interview 2)

She suggested that the students should have opportunities to connect with and draw examples from their prior experiences when they were comfortable to do so. She described the above by narrating the story of one of her friends:

I'll never forget the story my friend told me. She's from South America, from Chile, and she was in high school in Canada, like maybe grade eight or nine. And her social studies teacher was talking about conflict in South America. And he looked at her and went, "Well, you're from Chile. You know all about conflict in Chile. Can you tell the class your experience?" She wanted to die... She told me it was actually very traumatic for her because she had experienced some significant conflict. She didn't want to talk about that in front of all of these brand-new peers. She doesn't want to be the different kid. And what did we come back to again? (Interview 2)

The idea of having students draw from their experiences and sharing them is important for reading development, because it sometimes provide a platform for the students to demonstrate their understanding of a reading context by way of building connections. However, the experience she

shared above about her friend contradicts what is generally believed to be helpful for students to connect with their cultural backgrounds into their reading process. She appreciated a classroom community that celebrated diversity in terms of cultural and language backgrounds, and classrooms that infused creativity in activities that brought about meaningful outcomes for the students' learning experiences.

Participant 2 – Elaine

Elaine, a second language learner from Vietnam had a father who was a teacher. Although she did not mention observing her father read, nor did he read to her, she learned the importance of acquiring relevant skills and knowledge in a second language where English was her father's focus, and her teachers offered more support.

In a similar vein, Elaine recalled how her experience working as an educational assistant with students who were learning a second language led her to want to do more to support students by becoming a teacher. She explained:

I went to school... did something that brought me into the school setting, and I was brought into school as a educational assistant from my first degree. And so, I work with special needs students and ELL students and a whole diversity of students. And I was thinking that I could probably contribute. And after having done three years of supporting students... not teaching... but in a supportive educational assistant role, I felt like I could be more help in a teaching role.

(Interview 1)

All of these experiences were part of her definition of teaching as “*sharing knowledge.*” Moreover, she said that by sharing knowledge, she could provide the needed support to help her students get better in their reading. She explained, “*Well, my belief is sharing knowledge with my students about strategies that will help them be better readers*” (Interview 1).

Concerning her belief about teaching, Elaine's belief about teaching differed from Jodi's and Sunshine's as she defined teaching as "*sharing knowledge.*" Although it might sound generic, Elaine's view stemmed from her reflections as a second language learner. She struggled when learning a second language (English) that used knowledge that was different from her prior language knowledge. She clarified her definition by saying that ELLs are exposed to new knowledge and skills that were not part of their backgrounds, but that are particular to the new language they are learning:

One of the things about English Language Learners is they have different cultural backgrounds. So, they may not... you know... they may not understand a cultural piece of what's happening in the book... you know... so, being able to tell them that these are things that happen... emmm... In Canada or in our culture, it helps them to understand the text better. So, that was one of the things I struggled with because of it. And I'm just pulling things from my head, being able to understand... you know... birthday parties, for example. So, if you read a text about birthday parties, you don't have a clue that it's a birthday party. You bring gifts and then you have a cake. In my culture, we don't do that. (Interview 1)

She mentioned her appreciation of the principles of Adrienne Gear with regards to the sharing of knowledge among proficient readers for a given text, and added some of the focal points from Adrienne Gear's principles: "...*make connections, ask questions, draw inferences, determine importance, analyze, synthesize and monitor comprehension*" (Interview 1).

She also considered exposing her students to different genres of texts to help them make connections with their new knowledge and whatever resources they might need. While considering the decoding strategies used in the bottom-up approach, she expressed passion for the interactive approach to teach reading to students.

Yeah. So, talking about the top-down. So, the top-down is now using the prior knowledge. That's for me. I can tell... me, that's me... like you and that's me right there using a deeper context beyond the linguistic elements... altogether. (Interview 1)

She added in a follow-up conversation, “*Yeah. So, I like... I'm feeling interactive. Like, I think I have to be a little bit of everything. I think if the kids spend too much time... emm... just working on words, where's the enjoyment of text?*” (Interview 1). In the interactive approach, the interpretations of a text involve the merging of bottom-up and top-down approaches. Like Jodi, Elaine also had great empathy for her students who were from different language and cultural backgrounds, and who might not have had enough context to easily connect with new knowledge and skills. Hence, she related to the importance of sharing knowledge. She also added in a follow-up conversation how reflecting on her personal experience, when she struggled as an English learner, it helped her understand the students better and serve as backdrop for her to know how to better support them:

Well, I'm sensitive to it because of my own personal experience, when I sit down with an ELL student and they're struggling with something, I ask myself, why are they struggling? Is it the context of the story or is it the words like what is causing them to struggle? Right. Do they not understand what happens in a birthday party or like things like that? So, yes, of course, my... my own personal experience and what is affected because I feel that I have more of an understanding for the ELL learner and why they may struggle. (Interview 1)

Participant 3 – Sunshine

Sunshine also came from a home that was associated with teaching. She recalled some members of her nuclear and extended family who worked as teachers and had influenced her decision to enter the teaching profession. For instance, Sunshine described how she was inspired to become a teacher:

... when I met my husband and moved to Canada, I was only allowed to be in school for two more years. That was all my father would pay. And so, I took a degree that would... I'd be out at UVic and that was the Child and Youth Care degree ...and I didn't even know what it was, but I was so in love that... I was like... okay, I'll take that one. And working in that field with

children at risk, I realized that a lot of the trouble that they had had been in fourth grade. So, I thought... you know... I do want my teaching degree. I'd had my Early Childhood and I did infant care at the Ministry of Health, and I did infant care with the teen moms at the school in Victoria. And it was... I loved the babies... I love the babies. And... but it was the moms, the teen moms that were really fascinating. So, they kind of inspired me to go back and figure out what's happening in grade four and five that's being missed... but what could I do to help? So, that really inspired me. I also have grandparents and aunts and uncles and a mom who were also in the teaching field. (Interview 1)

She added:

And my husband... isn't all of his family... were either administrators in Victoria, EAs, or are teachers right now... and he's an administrator as well. So, it's been in my blood. It's nurtured and I think I just find... I think... I just find being around children, really... it's joyful. I like the challenge of it sometimes. (Interview 2)

Sunshine also mentioned that her varied experiences working in different professional organizations, especially working with children, inspired her to truly express empathy and give her students every opportunity to connect and be transformed. These aspects contributed to her definition of teaching as involving caring and nurturing:

...does a child need somebody to talk to because they're feeling lonely? Do they just need a hug or is today the day this child needs me to be tough love? Right. This is your behavior... is unacceptable. And I care about you, and I care about your learning. And this is not okay. So... that's part of the teaching for me. (Interview 1)

Relating to her belief about teaching, Sunshine pointed out that she “*is not just a classroom teacher but a school teacher*” (Interview 1). She clarified the above statement by narrating how her previous experience working with children in a day care centre, combined with her own children’s unpleasant experiences in school, has made her to be more empathetic towards her students, especially

the ELLs, and has motivated her to be more supportive of their language and literacy development, as well as social emotional well-being. Undoubtedly, she felt that the curriculum is a guide and should not be ignored, but she also recognized that it needed to be meaningful for the students' lived realities:

You know... I... I think I teach because I care about the children. I don't care about the curriculum. I care about the children. And I know that sounds very... you know... something that people say, but it's the children themselves... you know... we can... I understand that we have to teach children about Canada's history and that we have to do all of that. But for me, when my children walk in, in the morning and I stand at the door, I... it's about seeing their faces. And... you know... who are they today? What are they feeling? What's part of their story today? And who do they need me to be for them for that six hours that they're away from their parents? What do they need and what are they going to need? Not just the arithmetic and the writing, but what is the confidence? What are the social, emotional parts? (Interview 1)

Sunshine appreciated how her students connected to the messages that went beyond the page, in keeping with Adrienne Gear's principles to support her students' reading proficiency (Gear, 2018).

Sunshine said, "...the students are able to connect and be transformed in their knowing" (Interview 1).

Sunshine also considered the "top-down approach" to be important in her instructional practice, as described in Chapter 4 regarding the context of teaching (Afflerbach et al., 2020; Such, 2021). Some of the activities of a top-down approach demonstrated by Sunshine in her class are similar to ideas described under the active view model of reading where students were able to make connection from their prior social and cultural experiences, use active self-regulation to describe themselves, and collaborate and communicate their ideas among themselves (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Sunshine felt empathetic towards her students and tried to foster a classroom community that built the students' confidence and helped them overcome their fears:

You know... Do I need to find someone that... you know... drops off their food for the family over the holidays? Does this... does a child need somebody to talk to because they're feeling

lonely? Do they just need a hug or is today the day this child needs me to be tough love?

Right... This is your behavior... is unacceptable. And I care about you, and I care about your learning.... and this is not okay. So, who that's... That's the part of the teaching for me. So... you know... having that courage to come in every day and see them and hear them and be able to be with them... (Interview 1)

The three teachers expressed their beliefs about creating a classroom environment that made the students comfortable for deciding and selecting the book(s) to read and to make meaningful connections. For example, Elaine specifically described how some of her students would prefer to read both informational texts and graphic novels. In her words:

Thinking of preference... there are some kids. I have a student right now that is... you know... when you throw... when you... he lives... he thrives on information text... very specific content-based, sort of like geography... things like that. He loves... If you throw... Oh, I don't know, a graphic novel at him... he's like... you're not seeing that same because he's not interested in it. So the interest depends on the kid. (Interview 1)

She added:

Right now, especially with... you know... there's a huge interest in graphic novels because it's... it's presented in high interest, highly engaging, and accessible language. So, those are things that... you know... we talk about are struggling learners... are ELL learners. If we want to hook them, it's high interest, engaging texts that have a developmentally appropriate language... emm... that draws their interest as well. (Interview 2)

This view also emphasized the importance of interest, giving voice to students, and motivating them to read. The teachers also indicated their reasons for why their students should be exposed to different genres and formats of text (i.e., fiction vs non-fiction, or hard-copy vs e-books).

Theme I: Discussion

Jodi's definition of teaching agrees with Mezirow's (1997) explanation of *frames of reference through critical reflection*. Through critical reflection, she could accept what was important to her in her teaching career. She could withstand the rigors of the profession despite the pressure she faced in achieving the goals of the curriculum. She continues to learn more about the best practices to support her students.

Her beliefs about the students' lack of experience for their reading process also agree with Vygotsky's (1978) views on supporting students in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). That is, being a good model and providing realistic examples, the students may be able to recall prior experiences that are connected to the topic being discussed.

Like Vygotsky's (1978) idea of social learning, Jodi agrees that social learning should be reinforced in ways that will allow the students' work together to negotiate meaning. Although one of the students she had in the past did not appreciate the buddy system, it is noted as an approach that could foster social learning. This also seems to be related to the active view of reading that considers the motivation for active participation in reading, to help students analyze a text beyond just word recognition and language comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

Elaine's beliefs, which stem from her personal history helped her transform her perspective on learning a new language. Like Mezirow (1997, 2000), this means having a point of view that is flexible to change after engaging with another worldview that is different from one's view. In other words, her perspective of learning a new language to adapt to a new environment was transformed to the realization that learning a new language could serve other functional purposes.

Elaine's agreement with the principles of Gear (2018) is also connected to Vygotsky's (1978) point on the importance of the environment. Thus, using Gear's strategies for her class, Elaine could foster an interest and motivate her students to use their background knowledge of their language and

culture in the classroom. This also resembles the active view of reading (Duke & Cartwright, 2021), where language comprehension is a bridging process that involves the students' prior knowledge for the reading context.

Sunshine's definition of teaching also shows the importance of critical reflection, which does not simply see the curriculum as a guide to achieving lesson goals or objectives. Instead, her belief stems from her own children's experiences (where one of her children had strong support and a working relationship with their teachers and the other child experienced the opposite situation), which allowed her to promote the involvement of her students' experiences in reading and consider their full physical, social, and mental well-being. In turn, this helped her to support their individual language and literacy development.

Sunshine described an instructional practice that used some principles from Gear (2018) that created an environment for student collaboration and mutual support. Like Vygotsky's idea, a knowledgeable person can support the learning process. In addition, Sunshine's beliefs are in line with Cremin and Hendry's (2022) description of exposing students to different genres of text to achieve the purpose of reading (as discussed in Chapter 2), specifically for their functional and pleasure purposes. Thus, students can use self-reflection to make connections to the world around them for a deeper understanding of a text. In other words, Sunshine believes that by exposing her students to different genres, they will be able to decide what is relevant for their reading development.

Theme II: Instructional practice

While Elaine and Sunshine expressed similar views regarding their instructional practices by adopting some of Adrienne Gear's principles into their instructional practice, Jodi present a different view about her instructional practices. Premise on the above, Elaine and Shine's views are combined in the following discussion, while Jodi's has been presented separately for additional focus.

Participant 1 – Jodi

Jodi also assumed that some of her students were still learning to read, making it impossible to ignore the process of learning letters and their sounds and simply have them be familiar with the reading components (see Chapter 2 for details about the reading components). Jodi’s point here further reinstates the ideas of the SVR model as a way to help students become familiar with the phonetic and alphabetic principles involved in reading. However, this may pose difficulty for students who have entirely different language backgrounds, not close to English.

So, analyzing a text, and having to decode... I don't know if that's along the same lines as bottom-up, but linguistic elements to me means decoding words, having to have phonetic knowledge, having to have that foundational understanding of English. (Interview 2)

She then added:

However, for an ELL student, how do they bring their background knowledge to a story that they can't connect to or have no experience with? So, when it comes to ELL students, if they're coming to me with not a lot of bottom-up cognitive skills in reading English, I have to start there. I know their goal is to learn English, so they need to have phonemic awareness. They have to learn their vowel and consonant sounds... (Interview 2)

Jodi considered some of her students to be young, without much experience from their cultural or language backgrounds. Thus, Jodi was passionate about the bottom-up approach for helping students learn to read, and to help them gradually progress to using skills to decode words for comprehension. Jodi’s belief about using a bottom-up approach is aligned with Grabe and Stoller (2020), who discussed the importance of “cognitive processes that take a reader from visual recognition of words to some overall understanding of what a text is about” (p. 29).

Although the participants could not easily explain the sequence of their instructional practice before, during, and after reading, their instructional procedures allowed students to understand the goal, lesson objectives, and the expected activities. The teachers, in turn, reported structuring their

lessons with step-by-step activities that included the students and their teaching processes. Jodi specifically mentioned the importance of supporting her students by exposing them to vocabulary knowledge. She maintained that it was not enough to assume that the students were able to read even in their first language. Usually, she began her week and reading lesson by exposing the students to “word works” (a vocabulary development strategy) that helps the students learn the fundamentals of the reading components. One of the objectives of word works, which are commonly used in her lessons, is to help students build connections and gain familiarity with some of the words they encounter in their reading. Specifically, she explained:

It's 1) a word work time, and a word work, practicing time, and 2) then a cognitive kind of read aloud, sharing time, accompanied by reading with kids time. If I can really break it down to before, during, and after, I can tell you the pieces of my 3) whole literacy program include decoding skills. ...Which is really prominent in my spelling program. And I mean, I meet students where they're at, so I, 4) do formative assessments. And they follow a spelling scope in sequence, and they're grouped into groups. And 5) then we learn the sounds that they need to learn. And that's helping with their reading because they learn how to break words apart into blends and sounds and all of those pieces. And 6) then I do a read aloud and we talk about different comprehension skills and we talk about our stories. We make connections and we talk about what good readers do. Right now, we're working on not guessing the word, but looking at the middle and ending sounds as well, not just the first sound. So again, tying in some of those cognitive level thinking, but making lots of connections and understanding inferencing and stories. So, higher level thinking, making connections. We talked the other day about person-to-person connections, text-to-text, texts-to-movies, that kind of thing. 7) And then when students are reading, I'm going around listening to them read, asking them comprehension questions and helping them build those connections and checking that they are not only accurately decoding, but also understanding what they're reading. (Interview 2)

Jodi also uses other strategies like jokes, music, and tongue twisters, to simplify vocabulary into decodable and readable words for the students:

It's because... and it's very intentional. And whether we're talking about ELLs or students that have grown up speaking English their entire lives. My biggest finding I've found is that students don't actually have, at this age, a lot of background knowledge. They don't have a lot of vocabulary. And so, in order to increase their engagement in reading, they have to be given these things. And the only way to give that to them isn't through reading, easy readers, or decodable texts that do not carry a lot of meaning. It's by teachers reading rich books...

(Interview 1)

She explained further:

So, I've been doing a little presentation... just started with tongue twisters and... tongue twisters and jokes are fantastic ways... Oh, my gosh. Well, they love trying to say the tongue twisters fast. But tongue twisters bring an element of fun to learning your sounds and your short vowel sounds and your digraphs such as /sh/... like in she sells seas shells by the sea shore. And then another kiddo found a great one to practice... the /ch/ sound: Chester Cheetah chews a chunk of cheap cheddar cheese. It's a fun way to practice sounds, spelling, and reading fluently. Tongue twisters and jokes are also a great way to learn homophones and puns. (Interview 1)

She strongly believes in using high-level books and different genres of text. For her, high-level books are those that contain vocabulary that may be a little above the students' current vocabulary levels. The teacher's support here is similar to Vygotsky's idea of the ZPD where guided scaffolding with vocabulary slightly beyond the students' current level is helpful to support the development of their language and literacy skills. In her words, "...that is one of the ways to push them to the level the curriculum expects them to operate" (Interview 1). Sometimes, she also uses the read-aloud method.

According to Jodi, “By engaging with different genres of text ... the students [can] think critically” (Interview 1).

Jodi also shared her experience working with ELLs when she realized that the students did not support the buddy system. According to Jodi, the buddy system is when students “*find a partner and they share an interest, and read together*” (Interview 2). In any case, Jodi’s students did not want to be seen as different.

According to Jodi:

...and that's that really tricky part of teaching. When you've got kids who are so aware of their peers and of their social standing and of their academic standing. They just want to fit in and they don't want to do any work that's different. They don't want anybody to sit next to them and help them because that means that they're not as good. So, I tried but it did not last long. I remember my one Spanish speaker. He came up to me, and said, Ms. Jodi, I don't want to read with anyone else again. And I was like, Why? And he's like, Because I can read. They don't think I can. So regardless of setting it up as positively as I can and I mean... students love to be helpers. They're super kind. My ELL learners... that one particularly... had this fear that they perceived him then as not a very good reader. He's a great reader, but he did need some help at the beginning. And same with my current students as well. I paired him up as well. And he did not like that at all...

(Interview 3)

She added, “...After all, they are different enough because they came from a different language and cultural background” (Interview 2). Sometimes, Jodi also used picture books whenever it was applicable.

Participants 2 and 3 – Elaine and Sunshine

Elaine described how Gear's principles worked for her:

But her instructional practices. I just... I just love the way... emm... her pedagogy that comes out from... from that. So, I mean, I am very much belief in reading as being... you know... emm... and again, I go back to comprehension piece I have... what is... what is comprehension? ...what is it? what does a comprehending student do? They're able to like... they're able to visualize. I always tell my students a good reader should be able to see a good movie in their head. They're not looking at the word when they're reading. They're not seeing words. You're seeing them in their head. What else do good readers do? They make really good connections because, by making good connections, we relate to the book at a deeper level ...and that readers are able to ask really deep thinking questions that extend their thinking beyond the text... and that forces them to pull from their prior knowledge ...from their background, from their experiences... and good readers infer. So, Adrienne Gear does all of this, and that's what made it... So, to me, my emerging belief about reading is that it's this particular way that she approaches it allows sort of... like a holistic view of understanding and comprehension of text. (Interview 2)

In addition to using Gear's principles, she also reported using an interactive approach that combines both the bottom-up and the top-down approach. In her words:

Yeah. So, I like... I'm feeling interactive. Like, I think I have to be a little bit of everything... Now, you've just said something... I'm not too sure about... which has the science of reading. This is the new thing that's coming up in our district that I'm not really sure about... because what I'm understanding it to be in terms of a program is very much repetitive. They have a very standardized way of approaching instruction. I'm not sure about myself, so I was thinking...

more of... Yeah... So, the interactive combining... the using the background knowledge, prior knowledge and... (Interview 2)

As mentioned earlier, Elaine and Sunshine appreciate the principles of Adrienne Gear for supporting ELLs and other struggling students. These teachers also agree that a student's prior knowledge is important to make the student comfortable in class. Elaine, however, also believes that different prior knowledge may pose a problem for students who may interpret a text differently. That is, different contexts may mean something different to each student because of their unique cultural and language backgrounds. These situations align with what Xue (2019) described in schema theory as the top-down approach for readers to connect existing ideas with new ideas to interpret a text. Similarly, Etmer and Newby (2013) considered the top-down approach to use interpretation and analysis of text that is beyond what the readers read since it is easier for the students to interpret using their different cultural and language backgrounds. Elaine indicated that reading comprehension for ELLs is different for students who speak English as their native language. She explained:

So, for ESL students, they struggle with this because I've had students who come from other countries where comprehension means, can you read the text? ...answer very basic questions like, for example, if there's a passage that said the dog is brown and he has long ears and blue eyes and four legs... and comprehension, they can ask questions, they can answer questions... like... how many legs did the dog have? The dog has four legs. But when I asked ELL students not just ELL students, but generally to think about... I mean that... that that type of understanding is very surface level. It's not really comprehension. It's just recall. It's also a part of comprehension. Can I... when I read something and I tell you everything I've read, recall, retelling... that's part of comprehension as well. And I find that typically, ELL students can do this very easily because it's right there. But when I'm asking them to think more about the text, it's a challenge. (Interview 2)

Elaine also indicated the need for bottom-up and top-down approaches in teaching reading. In addition, Sunshine mentioned that she used a lot of picture books and she encouraged students to not only use pictures to decode the text, but use visuals to reinforce the reading context. She said:

I love picture books for my students' and I use them a lot, too. However, I always have a set objective which I make clear to the students that beyond what they see in the pictures, what they are able to see in their reading is more important. (Interview 2)

Elaine cited an example of a student's religious and cultural background being used to build classroom community. She mentioned that the student was Muslim, who was celebrating the Eid (*Eid-al-Fitr*, the feast of breaking the fast, which marks the end of Ramadan, a month of long fast for Muslims). From the student's religious and cultural background, other students were learning about other cultures and religions. Elaine explained that the event was also helpful for reading comprehension:

So, this particular student... he chose to read about Eid because this is what his family does. So, it helped him because he already had the background information, how it happens... why it happens... what happens at Eid. So, because he had that prior experience and that cultural part of his life, he was able to understand text better because it applied to him. It was something he had done before. (Interview 2)

Theme II: Discussion

Elaine's and Sunshine's decision to adopt Gear's (2018) principles in their instructional practice is additional proof of what many scholars (i.e., Adams, 2017; Hughes et al., 2017; Irkinovich & Izatullaevna, 2022; Killen & O'Toole, 2023) claim is the explicit need for instructional practice to support students' learning, especially to support ELLs' reading proficiency. For example, explicit instructional practices involve the teacher modeling what students can do with a clear explanation and providing opportunities for students to work individually, in a group, or cooperatively. Additionally, students receive affirmative and corrective feedback, such as pointing out specific textual evidence or

guiding them to consider alternative interpretations, that can be applied to build the necessary skills and strategies to analyze a text effectively. According to schema theory, the ability of a reader to analyze linguistic and cultural features through long-term memory and prior experience goes a long way to comprehending a text. In other words, the strategies in Gear's principles, such as "*make connections, ask questions, draw inferences, determine importance, analyze, synthesize and monitor comprehension*" require students to have a deeper knowledge and use critical thinking processes to interpret a text beyond the views of the author, from a bottom-up standpoint.

Gear's principles are supported in the literature, because of their strengths that are similar to the active view of reading. Students can learn different skills to quickly connect their linguistic and cultural backgrounds to reading without being bogged down by spending a lot of time on word recognition. Furthermore, students can be actively involved in their reading Cremin and Hendry (2022) and be motivated to be flexible in collaborating with their peers and teachers (Vygotsky, 1978). The students' peers and teachers are also likely more knowledgeable to help them negotiate meanings, especially in the context of learning.

Gear's principles hold a significant place in the instructional practices of Elaine and Sunshine, and they are well supported in the literature because of their strengths and alignment with the active view of reading. These principles stem from Gear's extensive teaching experiences gained over the years from teaching English language and reading in various regions, including Tokyo and other parts of Asia. Essentially, Gear's principles are a culmination of her personal, professional, and practical experiences as an ELL teacher passionate about making a difference in her students' reading comprehension. Additionally, she draws inspiration from John Keating's "Dead Poets Society," which motivated her to seize every opportunity to support her students as a transformative experience (Gear, 2023).

In contrast, Jodi's instructional approach differs. She believes that the simple view of reading is a suitable starting point for students who may be unfamiliar with reading or the process of learning letters and their sounds.

It may be difficult to entirely ignore the importance of the simple view of reading as all of the other models (Scarborough and the active view) refer to it as a vital component in the reading process. In any case, reading involves more than just reading comprehension, and the active view of reading presents a deeper level of the thinking process for students as they decode the linguistic features of a text.

The importance of supplementary resources cannot be overemphasized, and the teachers used them to bolster their instructional activities. Some participants in their interviews referred to using resources in their instructional practice, which was also noticed during the classroom observation. It allowed the students to learn in their own way, playfully and creatively. Another noticeable strength it presents is that the students have a more realistic encounter with what they are learning. This way, their schema is activated to recall (or be put in a position to recall) anything similar they have already known. Delgado et al. (2018) add that exposing students to different resources could stimulate their interest as they learn from reading. Likewise, the students' critical thinking/self-reflection could help them change their perceptions of the world around them.

For example, Elaine's instructional practices can be traced back to her personal and practical beliefs and her experience when she struggled to learn a second language. She had also worked with students who were second language learners who struggled like herself. All of her experiences impacted the way she viewed the ELLs and provided support for them. Similarly, Sunshine's practice stemmed from her personal and practical beliefs when she connected her students' prior experiences to the diversity of children she encountered in her previous job. Sunshine planned and created a friendly learning environment for students to easily make connections to their prior experiences. Jodi, on the other hand, associated her professional beliefs and instructional practices with negative feedback she

received from students after introducing a buddy system. In fact, Jodi's students, who did not want a buddy system, is in contradiction to Vygotsky's (1978) idea of social learning and the positive effects of student collaboration.

Theme III: Classroom environment

The three teachers valued an environment conducive to supporting the students and their instructional activities. While the physical setup of their classrooms differed, they all highlighted similar characteristics that aided their instructional practices. One of these characteristics involved the teachers serving as role models to guide their students. They demonstrated initiative in friendly, supportive, and respectful ways, setting examples for the students to follow. For instance, all three teachers modeled reading to their students and provided scaffolded examples to encourage independent work as well as friendly and respectful group interactions.

Additionally, the teachers employed motivational teaching practices by offering prompts and questions to encourage the students' participation in the learning process. They also introduced books of interest to the students, allowing them to choose the type and format of text they wanted to read, be it fictional, non-fictional, print, or e-books. Moreover, the teachers present materials that students can relate to in their real-world experiences. For instance, Sunshine incorporates scented materials to establish a connection with the students' lives. As a result of these motivational teachings, the students are able to genuinely relate to their learning experiences.

By cultivating a supportive learning environment, the teachers foster the students' autonomy. This allows the students to make critical and creative decisions about their learning, ultimately enhancing their confidence and ability to read independently.

In terms of leadership, the teachers adopt democratic roles, allowing students to participate meaningfully on an individual and group level. For example, in Elaine's class, she established constructive guidelines for a drama activity, ensuring that every student had the opportunity to

contribute, and no one was left out. This approach contrasts with autocratic teaching styles, as the teachers do not force specific books or texts on the students and do not center the learning process around themselves as the sole authority. Figure 14 below summarizes what constitutes a conducive learning environment for the three teachers. As a part of this theme has already been discussed in Chapter 4, this section further presents a brief and additional insights gathered during the interview, by merging the teachers' views followed by a discussion.

The three teachers reported having similar resources for supporting their ELLs. Some resources like computers, projectors, student computers (chrome books), and human resources (an ELL educational assistant) were readily provided by the school. Other resources that allowed engagement with various literacies were also available (i.e., pictures, artifacts, music, videos, and other relevant materials). Jodi and Elaine had books that were labelled alphabetically to depict different reading levels for the students. Moreover, a digital platform (Epic) was used for choosing different genres of text and levels of books so that the students could choose an e-book or a hard-copy version.

Besides material resources, the three teachers indicated the valuable contributions made by the ELL assistant. Jodi, Elaine, and Sunshine specifically mentioned that the ELL assistant sometimes scheduled meetings with students outside of class as a follow-up to the lessons. According to the teachers, the outside meetings covered topics that were taught during the regular reading class, with an extra focus on reading and writing. Jodi gave an example:

...I've had an EA that spoke Tagalog before, for example, that really helped some of my students feel really comfortable. But then it's like... okay, but you can't always talk to them in Tagalog. You can't go and translate everything I say. They have to figure it out, right... and I often have an EA who's available to help. (Interview 2)

In a follow-up conversation, she added: *"I would say we do have some English language support from our ELL teacher who comes in and either supports in the classroom or takes them out to work on a variety of things"* (Interview 3).

Elaine shared a similar experience: *“One of the major resources we use is we have an amazing ELL teacher who takes them and works with them and does the same kind of programing targeted to them”* (Interview 2). Sunshine further noted:

We have a phenomenal ELL teacher in our district, Lorreta [not her real name], and our group... the kids love her and she has always modeled because she likes to work in the classrooms not to take the kids out all the time. And so, I learned from her, after school, talking to her about the kids going to sites and websites... books that she has taught me. (Interview 2)

The teachers also mentioned attempts to involve the parents and/or family members of the ELLs to share useful and relevant information to further support the students. In any case, such attempts were not fruitful, and the teachers were generally left with their own resources or those provided by the school. Jodi explained:

...depending on how available the family is and how comfortable they feel with sharing... And sometimes you can reach out, but they're very under-resourced themselves. So, I don't know... Actually, if any of the ELL students I've worked with have stories in their own language, for example. (Interview 2)

Theme III: Discussion

Fives and Buehl (2012) argued that teachers' beliefs regarding the selection of instructional materials emerge from their own specific beliefs about themselves, the context in which they work, the content of what they teach, their students, and their teaching approaches. This idea was also apparent from the three teachers' selection of materials, which they tailored to support their students' achieving proficiency in reading. Hsiang et al. (2023) also suggested that the effectiveness of teachers is limited when textbooks do not match what the students need to learn. The three participating teachers selected texts for their students that were at a level that would not be too difficult (or too easy) for them to read and comprehend.

Supplementary resources or instructional aids are pivotal and contribute significantly to successful instructional practice. For instance, the facilities that are available in the class include: the human resources (teaching assistants) and the different kinds of books (both digital and print) to support their students. Barzan et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of using concrete resources and objects to facilitate conversation and collaboration among students and their teachers.

According to the views of socio-constructivism, a student's home is the bedrock of their growth. The home is a child's first contact with the natural world, especially when they are beginning to imitate and explore different languages (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Estremera, 2024; Mullen, 2017). The teachers' different attempts to connect with the students' homes to support them, was highly commendable as it can bridge the gap between home and school and help students realize that their homes have many rich contexts for learning. Unfortunately, the inability of a teacher to connect successfully with an ELL's family calls for further input from schools to find ways to connect with families and provide additional support for their children; a task which can be challenged by linguistic differences between students' home language(s) and languages of instruction at schools, especially for more recent immigrants.

From the findings and the interviews, the teachers' beliefs contributed immensely to their actions or inactions for supporting the ELLs' language and literacy development. Table 11 summarizes the participants' early literacy at home and at school, and their beliefs about teaching, teaching reading, types of instructional practice, available resources, and selection of available resources.

Figure 14

Summary of what constitutes a conducive learning environment

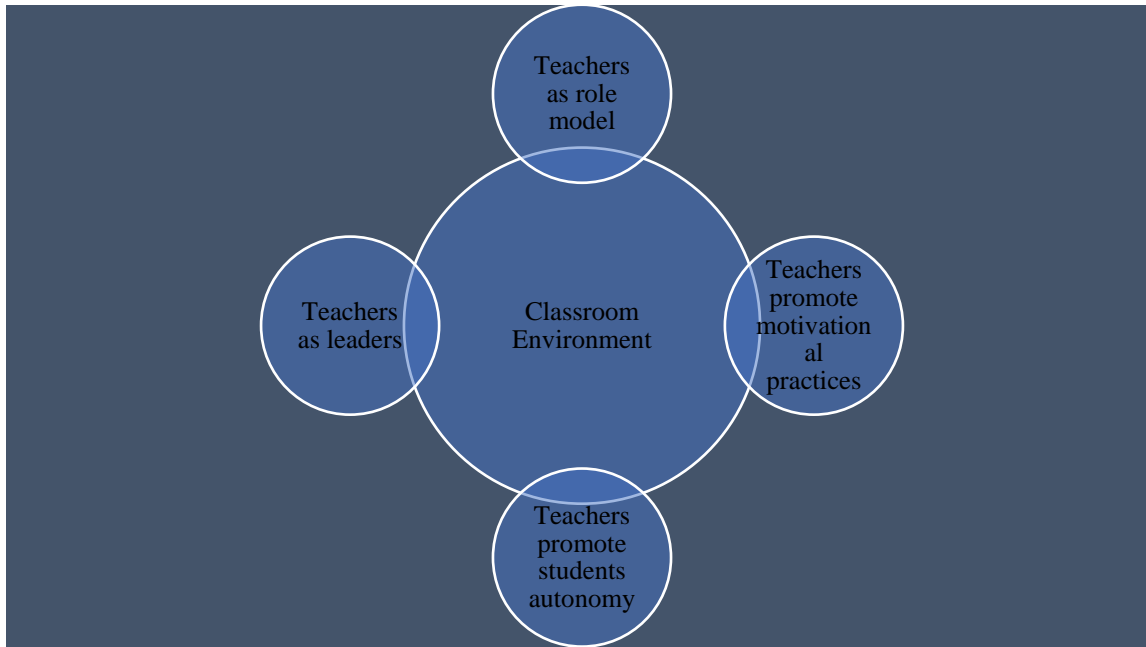


Table 11

The Teachers' Beliefs, Instructional Practice, and Classroom Environment

Participants	Early Literacies	Beliefs about Teaching	Beliefs about Teaching Reading	Types of Instructional Practice	Classroom Environment
Jodi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mother was an avid reader and an English teacher -Books were available at home -Read to younger brother, friends, and children she babysat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teaching is a calling, not a vocation -Some of the students are still learning to read -The students have limited experience about the cultural and language backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The students should be motivated to read different genres of text -Empathize with the students because they have a lot to deal with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Used a lot of the bottom- up approach that involves starting with the alphabet, knowing letters before words, sounding out and visualizing them on paper -Using high-level books that are not too 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Used both hardcopies and e-books -Used relevant and exciting music, pictures, videos, and artifacts -ELL assistant

	-Acted drama with sibling and friends	-Knowledge is power; the students should be given a chance to think critically -Make students comfortable -Important to have text at their reading level -Students have problems with vocabulary knowledge		easy or too difficult	
Elaine	-Sharing knowledge -Father was a teacher -Struggled to learn a second language	-Students are at different stages of development, therefore should be given time to progress -Important for students to have a text that is at their reading level -Different prior knowledge could pose a problem -Reading comprehension of ELLs is different from mainstream students	-Was passionate about supporting the students' reading because she struggled to learn a second language -Encouraged the students to use their prior knowledge -Used principles from Adrienne Gear -Used a lot of the interactive approach -There is still a place for the bottom-up approach	-Used cultural and religious backgrounds of a student to expose the other students to the real meaning of diversity	-Used both hardcopies and e-books -Used relevant and exciting music, pictures, videos, and artifacts -ELL assistant
Sunshine	-Always inspired by children	-Considered herself not just a classroom	-Students should be able to decode	-Used principles	-Used both hardcopies and e-books

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Having family members who were teachers inspired her decision to be a teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher, but a school teacher -Students' ability to connect and be transformed -Allowing students to share their views, overcome their fears, and build confidence -Not restricted by the curriculum; instead, her focus is on the students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> messages beyond the pages -Appreciated a lot of the top-down approach -Appreciated building a classroom community -Supporting students' connection from their prior knowledge and what they read -Explored different genre of text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> from Adrienne Gear -Appreciated read-alouds and demonstration -Appreciated picture books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Used relevant and exciting music, pictures, videos, and artifacts -ELL assistant
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Analysis of the Teachers' Journal Responses

Three question prompts (see Appendix 4) were used to guide the participants' journal responses in terms of their reflective thinking, which required each participant to write approximately 250 words or more. The journal responses were sent to my email address that had been included in the consent letter that was given at the beginning of the data collection.

After receiving the responses from the teachers, they were subjected to a conventional content thematic analysis, as described in Chapter 3. The conventional content thematic analysis was used at this stage of the analysis because no preconceived codes or categories had been established. The codes and categories were formed from a careful examination of the journal responses. This study also followed the steps suggested by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) and Kebede et al. (2021) to delve into the

detailed content of the journal responses to arrive at the themes that were eventually used for the analysis. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), Step 1 follows a careful and intentional reading of each participant's journal to derive understanding. Step 2 follows a creation of codes enacted from important ideas and concepts that surface in the journals. Step 3 involves labelling the codes based on the information provided in the journals. Step 4 involves sorting the codes and categories into sub-categories wherever they surfaced. Step 5 accounts for the themes that were captured from the codes, categories, and sub-categories to summarize important components of the journal responses.

Three major themes were established from the journal responses: 1) Memorable things about learning to read; 2) The teacher education program, with subcategories (memorable courses, helpful reading materials, and contributive learned theory); and 3) The impact of reading and learning, with subcategories (past experience as a child, preservice training experience, and current position as a teacher). The subsequent analysis began with important points from Elaine, Jodi, and Sunshine.

Summary of Elaine's Journal Response

1. Memorable things about learning to read

Elaine recounted learning to read as an older child after she arrived in Canada from a bottom-up standpoint, where she was unfamiliar with some of the words in English and had to go through the instructional process of learning to decode the linguistic elements, which she did not find interesting. She also described how she underwent some cultural shock when she came to Canada as a refugee and likened the experience to what some ELLs seem to go through when they are exposed to new and unfamiliar settings, including those in school. Although Elaine did not mention examples of culture shock that she experienced in her journal, during the interview, she referred to how birthdays are celebrated and situations where a family is used to living in a cluster. Elaine said:

My own life experiences as an ELL learner and as a refugee to a new country, experiencing the cultural shock, have helped me to support these students. I'm sensitive to the students because of my own personal experiences.

In addition, Elaine did not refer to people or materials that made learning to read memorable. Nevertheless, her belief, that continues to shift over time, was that students should be allowed to read continuously. She had different approaches to implement the idea, including: sustained silent reading (SSR), uninterrupted sustained silent reading (USSR), and drop everything and read (DEAR). In her words:

Back in the early days of my practice, I would give students 20-30 mins to read everyday There were all sorts of names for this D.E.A.R. (drop everything and read), SSR (sustained silent reading), USSR (uninterrupted sustained silent reading) ...It's time spent connecting with capable readers to encourage them to branch out and try new genres and time for them to show me how they are critically thinking about what they read. My programming for literacy will continue to change and morph. ...I am sure as new pedagogy comes out. But I have a feeling that no matter what changes, I will still hold to the belief that in order for students to improve their reading skills they simply need to do one thing and do it often... READ.

Elaine explained that her experience of coming from a different linguistic and cultural background helped her to learn to read, and better understand how to support her ELLs. That is, her background helped her create a learning environment and instructional activities that would support the ELLs to build relevant connections in their reading. This is also aligned with Vygotsky's description of the zone of proximal development where she was able to provide support for her students by scaffolding related examples with which they can easily connect.

2. Teacher education program

Again, no specific mention was made about Elaine's teacher education experience, but it may be inferred that she attempted to do things differently from what she was familiar with.

I follow an educator. Her name is Adrienne Geer, and she encompasses what comprehension is. So, part of my reading instruction is I know that comprehension involves all of these little pieces.

For instance, many of her experiences were similar to the background of the ELLs, including socio-economic background and cultural differences. She tried to create a nurturing environment where the students are celebrated and respected despite their cultural and language differences. She also attempted to introduce a range of different genres of books to improve the students' love for reading, and by being a role model she could help them appreciate a love for reading.

3. Impact of reading and learning

Elaine narrated how the impact of book reading with parental involvement helped students manage their emotions. For example, she was certain that a student was affected by focusing on reading that had a positive impact. The student's parents confirmed that the teacher from the student's previous class was not successful to help him manage his emotions that adversely affected his love for reading books. According to Elaine:

I have a student in my class who struggles to manage his emotions. We talk often about what to do and what choices and strategies he can use when he's frustrated. As we reflected on different strategies, I suggested perhaps reading a book to take his mind off the frustration. He is one of those students whose face is always buried in a book. I called his home one day to talk to his parents about his frustration and some strategies that we brainstormed together that would help him, including reading. His mom said something that was very surprising to me. She said two years ago he was not reading at grade level and had no interest in books of any kind. Part

of this resistance or reluctance towards reading had to do with the work that it took to learn the strategies to become a better reader, something that his teacher from the previous year worked very hard on with him. This gave me pause to think about my role as an educator and the role that I play in instilling the love of reading in children. I reflect often about what it takes and what I need to do to instill this love of reading in children from the modeling that I do to the resources that I provide and the teaching and instruction that I give. While it is expensive, I always make sure that I provide a wide range of reading materials for students in my classroom. I make sure to regularly monitor what they read, and I model the different genres of books through read a-louds as well as anchor books that I choose in my teaching. There is so much more that I know I could be doing, and I am constantly looking for ways to improve my practice and to encourage this love of reading.

Again, this view demonstrates a connection between Vygotsky's zone of proximal development where a deliberate negotiation of ideas takes place from the teacher (a more knowledgeable person) to support the student through reading, especially to help manage his emotions.

Summary of Jodi's Journal Response

1. Memorable things about learning to read

Jodi enthusiastically recalled learning to read in her home environment as a child that nurtured and appreciated reading. She described her house being filled with reading materials, music, and peace. She also recounted her mother modelling reading to her that served as a good foundation for reading success and for her readiness for school. Consequently, she discussed the skills and knowledge of reading that her mother had helped her with, and how being exposed to early literacy gave her an advantage over her peers. She could write her name and read many poems. In addition, she referred to some books that her mother would read to her that she still finds relevant and helpful for her own children. Although she could not recall the age at which she began reading, many of the activities that

she learned from her mother helped her greatly and set a foundation for her knowledge of phonics, which she still finds relevant in her teaching of reading to her students.

According to Jodi:

Learning to read was a very enjoyable experience for me. I grew up in a house filled with language, expression, music and peace. My mom read to me every night. Her voice was filled with expression as we lay close in bed or on a couch. It still echoes through me as a teacher and parent, where I find myself sounding exactly like her, especially as I chose to read many of the same books to my children as she read to me as a child. "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendack, "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" by Eric Carl, and anything by Dr. Seuss are just a few of my favorites that I've passed down to my children, along with her lyrical and expressive voice.

2. Teacher education program

Sadly, Jodi mentioned that her teacher education had not prepared her to teach reading. In fact, she could not recall anything about the course she had enrolled in. She felt strongly about the issue, and said that other preservice teachers agreed that their teacher education programs did not provide much foundation for teaching reading. Nevertheless, she was thankful for her instinct and for her early exposure to books and reading. During her practicum, she recalled using a lot of songs and poems, and enriching her class with language. She conducted many read-alouds and the students followed along with her when she read poetry:

During my practicum, I used a lot of songs and poems and tried to enrich the classroom with language: oral (songs, lots of read a-louds) and printed text (poems on chart paper that we would all follow along to). I remember reading with students and helping them to sound out words. ...sounding out being the only strategy I had to help them. (Interview 2)

Jodi noted that she taught Grades 2/3, and she was interested to see that they were learning to read and become conscious of phonemic awareness, phonics, how to break words into syllables, and use prefixes and suffixes that were also prevalent in her class. She tagged this approach as the “*science of reading*.” Jodi also recounted that in her practicum the students came from similar backgrounds:

I also taught in a fairly homogenous school, where most of the children came from similar backgrounds. I definitely never heard the word “differentiation” either. Any students that needed extra help, were pulled out of the classroom for learning support, not the classroom teacher. (Interview 2)

Jodi mentioned that if a student needed extra help, it was not the classroom teacher’s responsibility. Instead, they would be pulled out and given the necessary support by another support teacher.

3. Impact of reading and learning

Jodi’s emergent readers had interests that went beyond their reading abilities, and decodable picture books seemed to be too easy for them. The books did not truly capture their attention. She believed greatly in the science of reading, and the sequential teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension (components of reading). In her words:

I am a big proponent of the science of reading (the explicit and sequential teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension) and have been incorporating it into my teaching. This has been transformative for my understanding of teaching reading and I have seen my students make some excellent progress. (Excerpt from Jodi’s journal response)

She also referred to the impact of reading at home as being non-negotiable for her students. From her experience, she said that most of her struggling readers were those who did not read at home. She suggested that families could get support from mental health services and connect to communities to be less distracted by phones:

I wonder sometimes, if we were to support our families, communities, each other, with mental health services, get connected as communities, not be so stressed out, and GET OFF our phones, if we would see an improvement in our students' reading. (Excerpt from Jodi's journal response)

Jodi's belief about using the bottom-up approach is pertinent to some of the fundamental components of reading. That is, exposure to the components of reading helps bridge the gap especially for students whose language and cultural backgrounds are different from English. Providing building blocks to support the academic language skills of the students is also a key as they are gradually exposed to the skills of decoding print, phonemic awareness, phonics, alphabetic code, and word analysis strategies. Contrary to Jodi's view about the bottom-up approach, the process of acquiring the fundamental skills of decoding words can be difficult for students who are unfamiliar with the phonological and alphabetic principles of decoding words in English (Burns et al., 2023; Duke & Cartwright, 2021). The merging of Jodi's prior experiences from learning to read and impact of reading and learning support is considered by social constructivism to be a way for the environment contexts to help the learner either refute, accept, or adjust to what is newly introduced. Jodi, as a learner and child, accepted how she learned to read as a skill that works, and she continues to apply it in her present day reading instructional practice.

Summary of Sunshine's Journal Response

1. Memorable things about learning to read

Sunshine was not specific about how she learned to read but mentioned that “*she adopts and find ways to thrive academically.*” She used this point to explain how she came to believe that learning can be exciting and as a teacher, she was responsible for helping her students see it as a lifelong process. She explained:

...and I tell my students in grade four, five and three, four when I teach that, that a book... when you read a book, it should change you. It should either confirm something that you believe firmly even more, or it should make you question something, or it should make you... hey... Now, I think this about these situations, you know... (Interview 2)

2. Teacher education program

Sunshine's training in the field of education did not begin until she arrived in Canada and after her marriage to a teacher even though she recalled she had family members who were teachers and school administrators.

I have never not been a part of a school and I'm married to a principal... I also have grandparents and aunts and uncles and a mom who were also in the teaching field... And I think the thing that I love the most about whether it's inspiring me the most about teaching, is that in all of those areas, I just found people to be fascinating. And I also found that there were a lot of kids that I was very connected to. People always talked about how hard school was for them. And I think, you know, it had always been in my dreams to be a teacher. But when I met my husband and moved to Canada, I was only allowed to be in school for two more years. That was all my father would pay. And so, I took a degree that would I be out at UVic and that was the Child and Youth Care degree, and I didn't even know what it was, but I was so in love that I was like, okay, I'll take that one. (Interview 1)

She added that support from the ELL teacher helped her to further support her ELL students:

What additional training have I had? So honestly, none other than being a classroom teacher and growing up in the U.S. Right. And having the cultural exposure. So, when am I living in Gaithersburg, Maryland, Boston, Massachusetts, and San Francisco. Yeah. And having a very diverse history and, you know, exposed to that... but not... I have no formal training other than doing my own research. And we have a phenomenal ELL teacher in our district, Lorretta.

...and our group, the kids love her and she has always modeled because she likes to work in the classrooms... not to take the kids out all the time. And so, I learned from her, after school, talking to her about the kids going to sites and websites, books that she has taught me. And then I also have I have myself training for learning assistants... so integrated support teacher. So, I have that type of training that, you know, blanketed for any child that is struggling with their learning. So, I have that background as well. (Interview 1)

Asides from the exposures she narrated above about her professional and personal histories, Sunshine added the impact of other people in what informs what she is doing today as a teacher.

3. Impact of reading and learning

Sunshine's learning and literacy development is the focus here. Sunshine mentioned the positive impact of encountering Dr Krause, who helped her appreciate the "*essence of knowledge as life itself and not just a gift*" (Excerpt from Sunshine's journal response). She described how her encounter with Dr Krause helped her find ways to support her students by a) helping the students note the importance of perseverance when they faced a learning challenge; and b) having the students demonstrate genuine interest and passion for what they did, ultimately for growth and development. Sunshine recalled how she has learned to support her students by:

building meaningful and respectful relationships with my students, I actively listen to them, observe them, and collaborate with them from their current standpoint rather than imposing rigid expectations dictated by predefined outcome levels. I involve them in the planning process, seeking their input on our learning objectives, reflecting on progress, and collectively charting the path forward. (Interview 2)

She also described that she learned from Dr Krause how her belief had shifted from "*merely being a reader of books to a teacher of explicit reading strategies.*" She mentioned having learned to create a

classroom community where students explored stories through listening to others read and by sharing interpretations.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored themes from the interviews and from the teachers' journal responses that helped to address the research questions. As shown in Table 10, analysis of the interviews were informed by the research questions and three themes were derived to address the research questions. Further explanations were provided to the overlapping themes from the classroom observations regarding the instructional practices and available resources in the classroom. Similarly, analysis from the journal response offers more clarification on the teachers' beliefs and the development of their beliefs. Ultimately, this chapter revealed critical issues from the three data sources (semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and teachers' journal response) that will be further discussed in the next chapter. Overall, this chapter presented the findings from the data that was gathered in the interviews and journal responses.

Chapter 6: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents a synthesis of the three data sources, while the second section presents the summary, study limitations, recommendations, and conclusions. More specifically, the first section serves as a follow-up from the previous Chapters 4 and 5 to synthesize the three data sources (semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and journal responses) used to answer the research questions and gain more insight into the main goal of this study, which is to investigate teachers' beliefs in supporting the reading proficiency of grade 4 English language learners. Going beyond the findings and discussion from Chapters 4 and 5, the combined data sources reveal some critical issues such as the different views of the teachers with regards to their beliefs about teaching reading, the development of the teachers' views, which can be traced to their personal and practical knowledge, the contributions from Adrienne Gear's principles, and the assumption that the students were too young to understand their language and cultural backgrounds.

Section I

First, the teachers involved in this study had different beliefs about teaching. Ferguson and Bråten (2022), Ferguson and Lunn (2021), Fives et al., (2019), and Shah and Kumar (2021) describe the significant impact that personal histories, knowledge, and philosophical standpoints have in the decisions teachers make in their instructional practices. Similarly, Mezirow (2000) gives a realistic view of how an adult's prior experience can influence their eventual actions or attitudes towards things around them as they use critical thinking and self-reflection. By considering how the teachers learned to read themselves, they can deconstruct their point of view and make informed decisions about the essential or relevant elements they need to support their ELLs. Specifically, Elaine and Sunshine shared similar learning theories, that stem from Adrienne Gear's strategies for good readers to comprehend a text. In addition, the teachers had different approaches to their instructional practices. Elaine articulated the interactive approach she used to support her students, while Sunshine favored the

top-down approach. Jodi unequivocally used the SVR model. These distinctively different instructional approaches, that were mentioned in the interviews and displayed in the teaching contexts and the classroom observations and journal responses, showed that the teachers' unique personal histories and beliefs informed their instructional practice.

Another interesting aspect of the teachers' beliefs about teaching reading can be seen in Vygotsky's (1978) view of the importance of language and culture. That is, through the teachers' prior experience from their early years or professional and personal lives, they have had opportunities to interact and engage with the world around them to construct their own meaning. In the same vein, Saleem et al. (2021) and Mohammed and Kinvo (2020) considered the effects of engaging with the world to learn new things and further adjust their decisions for their instructional practices. This view is in contrast to what some authors claim to be the teachers' beliefs that sometimes differ from their instructional practice (Farrell & Lim, 2005; Kuzborska, 2011).

Second, the development of the teachers' beliefs, stemming mostly from their personal and practical knowledge is further proof of the need for a conducive home environment that supports a child's language and literacy. From the view of socio-constructivism, a knowledgeable person plays an invaluable role in providing guidance and support for teaching and learning. Considering the findings of this study, and while acknowledging the guidance of teachers and peers as knowledgeable person(s), it becomes clear that parents, guardians, and caregivers can also act as knowledgeable person(s). Birch and Fulop (2020) and Breiner et al. (2016) describe the roles of parents as being highly contributive to the all-round development of children in their emotional, physical, social, language, and literacy development, and in their mental wellness. For instance, the role played by Jodi's mother in modeling how to read, led to Jodi's support for her younger sibling where she read to him and read to other children she babysat. Jodi's mother and Jodi can be knowledgeable in this context since they provided support and guidance to others for language and literacy learning.

In addition, Wirth et al. (2022) describe the significance of intentional activities in a home literacy environment, as when giving opportunities to children to use language and modelling reading to influence the child's linguistic development. In other words, providing a child with the right activity implies that teachers, during their own development of their beliefs, can be influenced in how they perceive the process of reading, as being either easy or hard, which then influences how they support their students.

From another point of view, among the factors that influence teachers' instructional practice is the contribution of knowledge from additional resources, in keeping with Gear's (2018) principles. Although Elaine and Sunshine did not refer to their teacher education experience, which may have been lacking (as Jodi mentioned), their exposure to additional resources appeared to guide them in their classroom practices. Their experiences working with different ELLs over the years also helped them to understand what would work and what might not work. Their prior experiences also helped them recognize what other strategies could be used to help their students achieve their learning goals. For instance, Gear's (2018) principles resemble the idea of using explicit strategies to support the ELLs. Birch and Fulop (2020), Boushey and Moser (2023), Castle et al., (2018), and Elleman and Oslund (2019) agree that explicit reading instruction can effectively equip students with relevant skills and strategies to deeply analyze a text beyond a simple surface level interpretation. By implication, the teachers' exposure to relevant resources provide a good way to support students even when the teacher's education program might be limited.

Furthermore, as shown in the grade 4 curriculum (see Table 6), teachers can choose from different strategies to guide and support their implementation of the curriculum. While the curriculum can serve as a helpful guide for teachers regarding what students are expected to know or do, the teachers' experience over the years tends to dominate which approaches they might use. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017), Podolsky et al. (2019), and Retna (2019) discuss the importance of a teacher's

experience in helping them understand what to do and the kind of supports they might choose for their students.

Finally, Jodi and Elaine believed that their ELLs were too young to be familiar with their language and cultural backgrounds, which would limit their opportunities to connect with their first language or with other experiences that could help them understand their new learning texts. This study disagrees with the teachers' view that the students are too young to be familiar with their language and cultural backgrounds. Many of these students, despite their age, come from environments where their primary language is their home language, a tool they use to understand the world around them. While they may not have fully developed the skills of reading or writing in their language, it would be a significant oversight to assume they are too young to be familiar with their own language(s) and cultural backgrounds. In a similar vein, a socio-constructivism perspective offers a contrasting viewpoint to the traditional beliefs of the teacher as children are active constructors of their own knowledge, drawing on their early exposure to language and culture from their backgrounds. In other words, students - even younger ones - have knowledge about their language and cultural backgrounds on which to draw (both explicitly and implicitly), to support learning a new language, including reading in that new language. Further, based on a student's prior acquisition of language, teachers may be able to use particularly suitable strategies in teaching. Thus, instead of assuming that students have little knowledge about their language and cultural backgrounds, many authors (e.g., Adger et al., 2018; Ahmed, 2017; Campano, 2019) suggest that teachers should explore the use of realistic instructional practices that allow the students to draw from and connect with their backgrounds.

Following a review of the above issues that emerged in the synthesis of the three data sources, it becomes clear that the teachers' beliefs, emerging from their personal histories, the use of additional resources, and how they support their students all contribute to the way they organize their classrooms and provide support for their ELLs.

Additionally, working on this dissertation has further underscored the significance of teachers' beliefs, as these beliefs are deeply intertwined with their personal, professional, and practical experiences. This dissertation finds that the integration of these experiences plays a critical role on how teachers organize their classrooms, design their instructional practices, and support their students' language and literacy development. It is particularly essential for teachers to take into account their students' backgrounds, especially those related to language and literacy acquisition. By doing so, regardless of the teacher's own background, they can intentionally shape their instructional practices through the design of engaging activities that resonate with students. This approach encourages students to make meaningful connections, visualize concepts, and pose relevant questions to enhance their reading comprehension. Additionally, intentional strategies implemented by teachers can create a classroom environment that fosters collaboration and encourages meaningful contributions, enabling students to analyze texts more effectively, extending beyond what the authors present. The second section will present a more comprehensive summary of the entire dissertation, as well as the study's limitations, recommendations, and conclusion.

Section II

Summary

Through interviews with the participants, classroom observations, and teachers' journal response, this study conducted a case study on three teachers' beliefs in supporting Grade 4 English language learners reading proficiency. The findings from the interviews revealed three central themes about the teachers' beliefs, and development of the teachers' beliefs, instructional practices of the teachers and the classroom environment which includes available resources to support the teachers' and students' instructional activities. Findings from the first theme indicated that teachers' beliefs are influenced by their own life histories and understanding of teaching and their roles to truly support students to achieve the goal of reading proficiency.

Considering the teachers' biographies created a foundation for the ways they plan their instructional practice. Additionally, some of the teachers' beliefs could not be traced explicitly; however, based on the data from the interviews and journals, the development of their beliefs appears to be associated with how they learned to read themselves, their home literacies and literacy practices, the struggles they underwent in their own reading trajectories, and ideas and experiences from their previous jobs and schooling. The second theme indicated that the type of instructional practice adopted has strong implications for how the students show interest in reading and are able to apply the relevant skills and knowledge to comprehend the text. Finally, from the third theme, the classroom environments show the available resources and how selection of the resources play significant role to further bolster the teachers' efforts in supporting the students' reading development.

Findings from the observations resonated with a lot of the perspectives the teachers shared during the interview, and this contradicts what some scholars believe that there is "a strong sense of convergence" (Farrell & Lim, 2005, p. 9) between what the teachers say they do and actually do in their class. Also, findings from the observations showed that the teachers' belief impacted their instructional practice by contributing to the way they view, relate, and support the students.

Regarding the teachers' journal response, the themes aligned with the previously identified themes from the interview and classroom observation. Triangulating these three data sources, it was demonstrated that the teachers' beliefs play a valuable and formative role in the ways they perceive their ELLs and provide support for them, which ultimately addresses the research questions for this study.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations to the study has to do with the amount of time spent during the observation. I spent a maximum of two hours in each classroom on three different days to observe teachers' instructional practice, which might not be reflective of their typical classroom practice. I

spent two hours in the classroom because I did not want to inconvenience the teachers/students with my presence, and the schools and teachers have their planned agendas for each day, which involves the students' participation, therefore affecting their availability to be only for the instructional time I spent for the classroom observation. Another limitation of the study is the sample size included in this dissertation from the two school districts, even though the study set out to include teachers from the three school districts in Greater Victoria elementary schools. However, the teacher who volunteered from the third school district disengaged from the study without explanation. As this is allowed and stated in the consent form, any participant may choose to leave the study without any explanation to the researcher. The results from observations, interviews, and the teachers journal responses may also not be reflective of practices in other classrooms or school, and, as a result, no claims of generalizability have been made in this dissertation. An additional limitation of this study was that the participants were all female and of similar backgrounds, even though one was a former ELL student and immigrant herself (but had their education in Canada). A more diverse group (e.g., gender, age group, etc.) may have offered more varying perspectives. Next, based on the review of literature and the study's findings, I present recommendations for practicing teachers and emerging teachers in teacher education programs.

Recommendations

This study investigated the beliefs and the instructional practices of three ELL teachers to support their grade four ELLs reading proficiency. The evolving understanding of the teachers' beliefs was examined through an exploration of the development of their beliefs, beliefs about teaching reading, type of instructional practice, and the resources they use in supporting the students. Based on the findings, it appears early exposure to literacy at home and influences from work act as filters for the ways these teachers planned their instructional practice and understood about the teaching and learning of reading. It is also clear that the teachers largely perceived their teacher education program as mostly

theoretical and did not sufficiently prepare them for the reality of teaching reading. Consequently, the research findings resulted in some preliminary recommendations in three areas: for practicing teachers, teacher education programs, and further research, explored below.

Recommendations for practicing teachers

Teachers are encouraged to design instructional practice that allows ELLs to explore their cultural and language backgrounds. Although findings from the study showed that the teachers assumed that their students have limited explicit knowledge about their language and cultural backgrounds, other studies have shown that students who come to the classroom with some prior knowledge from their language backgrounds find it easier to learn to read in English (e.g., August & Shanahan, 2006; Rolstad et al., 2005). By allowing student to share or use their prior linguistic and cultural knowledge and designing activities to facilitate this could be an important way to help them easily make connections and understand what they are reading (Birch & Fulop, 2020). It could also easily open up areas of support, where the students find challenging and would require further support. This way, it can help teachers change their beliefs about ELLs not having knowledge about their language and cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, for teachers to be able to support their students, it is important to have an understanding about the process of acquiring a new language. This way they will understand that language learning is a gradual process and requires using appropriate scaffolding instruction to help the students overcome any challenge they may encounter in achieving their reading goals. For Vygotsky (1978), this means targeting instruction at each students' zone of proximal development. Vygotsky further explains the zone of proximal development as the point when a child can accomplish with support (e.g., scaffolding) compared to what he or she can accomplish independently. In other words, being familiar with the process of acquiring a new language will be helpful for the teacher to consider

what the students can do on their own and the point they need to progress beyond reading a leveled book.

Recommendations for teacher education programs

Jodi perceived that the teacher education programs did not prepare her to be an effective and confident teacher of reading. Similarly, Elaine and Sunshine sought help by reading books to successfully teach reading beyond their teacher education program. This is vital, considering the above findings show that teacher education programs should play a significant role in preparing pre-service teachers for the reality of practice they will be involved in during their teaching careers. This way, the teachers would not have to primarily rely on their own knowledge (i.e., personal experiences) which may carry some biases and erroneous (but deeply entrenched) perspectives. Although different institutions and countries offer wide range of courses in their teacher education program, it is important to offer a realistic pedagogical course that offer pre-service teachers the opportunity to be optimally prepared to support the learning needs of the students in the area of reading and to provide support as required to the diversity of students in their class.

Recommendations for further research

The study of teachers' beliefs and the instructional support given to ELLs in grade four and other students across grades is rich with possibilities. Although some recommendations have been given above, further research is needed to develop more understanding of the instructional practice of teachers and their beliefs. Based on this study and the survey of research included in this dissertation, there are three main areas recommended for further research: (1) findings indicate that the teachers rely considerably on their own personal knowledge and previous experience working with students; however, further research could include additional information about the teachers' beliefs which are based on their personal and previous knowledge, and how students' prior knowledge in their language and cultural backgrounds impact their reading proficiency; (2) additional research could also consider

the contributions of teacher education training and the teachers' beliefs in specifically supporting the reading proficiency of their ELL students; and (3) this study is focused primarily on teachers' beliefs and their instructional practice; however, additional research could include the students' learning outcomes as a product of the association of the teachers' beliefs and instructional practices.

Conclusion

This study has explored the beliefs of three ELL teachers and their instructional practice in supporting grade four ELLs reading proficiency using interviews, classroom observations, and teachers' journal responses. As recounted by the teachers, many of their beliefs emerged from how they learned to read themselves, how they were supported as students, and what they have seen "work" after teaching diverse range of students over the years. The socio-constructivism espoused by Vygotsky and the transformative learning theory by Mezirow served as the theoretical framework for this study and they offered multiple connections to understanding the participants' stories and experiences. The theoretical frameworks guided the understanding on how teachers play significant and inevitable roles to support ELLs in achieving their learning goals, and the development of their language and literacy in English language.

Findings of the study also showed that the teachers appreciate and respect the diversity the students brought to the classroom because it creates opportunities for other students to be exposed to other cultures and language backgrounds besides their own. Also, the teachers had opportunity to connect some of their personal histories and professional experience to support the diversity of students by using instructional practices that can help them become better readers and be able to more deeply comprehend what they read.

The study also suggests that teachers should give opportunities to confirm if their students come to class with knowledge of their own language(s) and cultural backgrounds, rather than assume they are too young to know about their own backgrounds. This study supports the idea that teacher

education programs do not sufficiently prepare teachers with the “know how” to teach reading and support the diversity of ELLs in their class. In addition, whether or not teachers can speak a different language, being familiar with some of the students’ language and cultural backgrounds could provide a way to further guide an effective instructional practice. As school districts continue to provide workshops and conferences for teachers, it is recommended that teachers continue to learn more innovative ways to support their diverse students, outside or in addition to their personal and professional knowledge.

With reference to ELL enrollments in 2021-2022 school year, there were 69,475 ELL students enrolled in the province in K-12 public schools, which is 214 more than the previous year (<https://news.gov.bc.ca/27404>). Likewise, as other provinces in Canada continue to experience growth in the number of ELLs admitted to their schools, it is imperative for teachers to be prepared to support the diversity of this population as it has great implications for the future of education and the workforce in BC and other provinces across Canada. As conversation about ELLs’ reading proficiency continues to evolve, findings from this study are part of the ever changing conversation; therefore, more research is needed to examine teachers’ beliefs and instructional practice for other grade levels to ensure the language and literacy goals of students are met. It is also important that preservice training includes practical strategies to support the diversity of students in the Greater Victoria elementary schools and across schools in Canada.

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Appendix 1: Letter of Invitation



Letter of Invitation

Dear

My name is Oyebisi Ajibola Fawole, I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Victoria working on a Ph. D in Curriculum and Instruction. I am conducting a research study entitled: “A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs in Supporting Grade Four English Language Learners' Reading Proficiency.” The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the beliefs and lived experiences of teachers who are teaching Grade four ELLs in the Greater Victoria School district. Also, other factors associated with the teachers’ beliefs and practices in supporting the language and literacy development of the students and the resources available to support the students will be explored. Your feedback should provide valuable insights into teachers’ beliefs on teaching reading to Grade four English language learners and how the beliefs developed.

Participation in this study involves:

1. Three interviews of 45 minutes each. These may be on zoom or face-to-face in a location of your choosing. Each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will have the opportunity to check each of the interview transcripts to ensure that your thoughts and intentions are correctly represented.
2. Three classroom observations. These observations will occur on a date and time of your choosing. During the observations I will be taking field notes, and occasional photos to help understand the learning context. Although students may appear in the photos their faces or identifying features will not be included in the photos. As well, I may be asking to see materials from lessons such as lesson plans.
3. A reflective journal consisting of at least three entries (approximately 250 words each) that may be word processed or hand-written in response to prompts that will emerge from our research interviews/conversations.

It is my hope that your participation in this study – a total of approximately 7 hours during November 2022 to March 2023 - will serve as meaningful professional learning and a time of reflection on the opportunities and challenges of teaching reading to diverse students in contemporary classrooms. For your participation I am pleased to also be able to offer you a book on teaching and a \$25 gift card.

Please respond to me via email at [XXX](#) if you are interested in participating in the study. If you have questions concerning the research study, my supervisor will also be available to answer any questions regarding this study. Our contact information is:

Researcher Oyebisi Fawole

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,
Oyebisi Fawole

Appendix 2: Consent Form



**University
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Participant Consent Form

A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs in Supporting Grade Four English Language Learners' Reading Proficiency

You are invited to participate in a study entitled A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs in Supporting Grade Four English Language Learners' Reading Proficiency that is being conducted by Oyebisi Ajibola Fawole.

Oyebisi Ajibola Fawole is a Graduate student in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria, and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at [xxx](#).

As a Graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction. The research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. xxx You may contact my supervisor at [xxx](#).

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' beliefs in supporting the reading proficiency of ELLs in Grade four, describe the teachers' beliefs, and the development of their beliefs. In addition, to explore the instructional practice teachers use to support the language and literacy development of the ELLs, relationship between the teachers' beliefs and their instructional practice in the classroom. The factors associated with the teachers' beliefs and their practices in supporting the language and literacy development of the students and the resources available to support the students.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it analyzes national discourses about instructional practices to support Grade four English language learners (ELLs) reading proficiency. The researcher believes this research will help contribute to empirical gaps, elaborate on theoretical views and pedagogical practice, and make suggestions for policy standard on English language learners, especially as it concerns the district, school, and teachers working with the ELLs, with the goal of supporting the language and literacy development of the ELL students. This study is particularly committed to sharing its findings with the British Columbia Education Department. It is hoped that this study will not just be an extraction of truths but will offer information to better support the reading proficiency of ELLs in Grade four.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are recognized as a teacher who supports the reading proficiency of Grade four English language learners (ELLs), have at least an ELL student in your class, have at least five years of teaching experience, especially working

with ELLs, interested in the research and available to participate in three interviews and three lesson observations.

What is involved

Participation in the study involves:

1. Three interviews of 45 minutes each. These may be on zoom or face-to-face in a location of your choosing. Each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will have the opportunity to check each of the interview transcripts to ensure that your thoughts and intentions are correctly represented.
2. Three classroom observations. These observations will occur on a date and time of your choosing. During the observations I will be taking field notes, and occasional photos to help understand the learning context. Although students may appear in the photos their faces or identifying features will not be included in the photos. As well, I may be asking to see materials from lessons such as lesson plans.
3. A reflective journal consisting of at least three entries (approximately 250 words each) that may be word processed or hand-written in response to prompts that will emerge from our research interviews/conversations.

It is my hope that your participation in this study – a total of approximately 7 hours during November 2022 to March 2023 - will serve as meaningful professional learning and a time of reflection on the opportunities and challenges of teaching reading to diverse students in contemporary classrooms. For your participation I am pleased to also be able to offer you a book on teaching and a \$25 gift card.

[photos will be taken of the classroom with your permission – SEE PERMISSION FOR VISUAL DATA BELOW].

Inconvenience

The time this research is conducted is considered an inconvenience because participants may share personal information in their response journal and the time that will be dedicated to participating in the study may constitute inconvenience.

Risks

There are no feasible risks beyond those that occur in daily life and the need to devote some time for the study.

Benefits

Possible participants' benefits include the opportunity to express lived-experience and beliefs used in supporting the reading proficiency of Grade four ELLs. This may enable the participant (you) to realize the evolution of your beliefs and how it has impacted your instructional practices. Other Language and literacy educators may gain information through your participation to gain insight that may be used to enhance their knowledge and practice about process and techniques to support English language learners (ELLs) especially those in Grade four. This study will also contribute to the growing language and literacy literature for Grade four ELLs and begins filling the gap in the literature concerning supporting their reading proficiency.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. **If you do withdraw from the study your anonymized data will be used unless you have requested in writing to have it removed from the database**; please email [xxx](#) to indicate that you are withdrawing from the research, and (please select one that is appropriate):

1. your consent for the researchers to use the anonymized collected data in this study
2. your request to remove the anonymized collected data from the research.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, your real name and identity, as well as third parties' names that may surfaced in the response journal will not be used in this study or in the future ones unless you indicate otherwise.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality, the name of your school and the confidentiality of the data will be protected as anonymous or with pseudonym names and anything that will identify you as a participant and the people whose names are mentioned in the response journal will be removed. Also, the confidentiality of the data will be protected by keeping all the research data and interview information obtained, audio and video recordings in the university of Victoria personal home file storage because it is well encrypted and has better back up security system in place for the confidentiality of research work of this nature. Any hard copies of data (including any handwritten notes or USB keys) will be kept in a locked cabinet at the private residence of the researcher.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: through thesis/ dissertation which will be made available via Uvic space, published article, and presentation at scholarly meetings.

Disposal of Data

The data will be stored on the University of Victoria encrypted computer and external backup hard drive, both of which are password protected and not accessible to others. Digital transcripts of the audio and video recordings will be stored for five years after the final report is published. Digital data, including audio, video transcripts and all notes stored on the researcher's computer and backup drive, will be deleted. The researcher will shred physical hard copies of the transcripts.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include, Dr. xxx, the principal investigator and Oyebisi Ajibola Fawole. They may be contacted at [xxx](#) or [xxx](#) or by phone at xxx In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria ((250) 472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

1. a. What spurred your interest to be a teacher?

b. Finish this sentence for me,

Teaching is _____

Considering this meaning, what is your belief about being a reading teacher and teaching reading?

c. How would you describe the emergence of your belief about teaching reading?

d. How do you think the belief(s) you describe as influenced your instructional practice?

e. Is there any relationship between your belief (s) and instructional practice?

2. How would you describe your belief regarding cognitive and socio

constructivist models of reading. In other words, would you describe the bottom-up

(using the linguistic elements to analyze a text), top-down (using a deeper context

beyond the linguistic elements, prior knowledge, experience, text structure, etc.),

interactive (combining the use of background knowledge (prior knowledge) and the text

(linguistic and content) (Possible follow-up after the observation)

b. Are the above models, cognitive and socio constructivist prominent in your instructional practice? If yes, can you describe how it plays out in the class? Otherwise, how will you describe the things you do before, during and after reading? (Possible follow-up after the observation)

3 (a). If I were an ELL student in your class, how would I be supported to achieve reading comprehension (follow up question). How would you (as the teacher) know I have achieved the level of comprehension?

b. What are your beliefs about the students' characteristics such as: (i.) their oral language,

ii.) first language,

iii.) cultural backgrounds, etc.

c. What are the students' capacity to read in a second language?

d. What support is put in place to support the above-mentioned and

other identified characteristics of the students in the ELL classroom?

e. What support is put in place to support the students influenced by the above-mentioned characteristics and others when reading in a second language?

4 (a) How would you define reading comprehension?

b. How would you define/describe reading comprehension in your ELL students?

c. How do you know that students are comprehending what they are reading?

d. How do you know they aren't?

e. What do you think is contributing to the students' reading comprehension?

f. What do you do (concrete steps do you take) to support the ELL students in reading comprehension?

5. (a) Tell a story or describe a time you allowed student(s) to use their sociocultural backgrounds to comprehend a text (possible follow-up).

b. How was the approach helpful to the student(s)?

6. What are the resources available to support the students' reading comprehension considering their unique characteristics?

Appendix 4: Observation Checklist

Observation Collection Sheet

The items below are guide to facilitate the observation process of the teachers' instructional practices, noting the things/resources available in the classroom to support the teachers' activities and the students' interaction.

Observation of the Teacher's Instructional Practice

Item	Description	Clearly	Barely	None	Notes
1. The teacher facilitates the students' attempt to comprehend the text when they use context clues from the text.	When a student uses context clues from the text, the teacher responds positively by responding back to the student or asks the student for further clarification. The teacher does not show negativity when the student uses the context clues.				
2. The teacher facilitates the students' attempt to use word identification to comprehend the text.	When a student uses word identification from the text, the teacher responds positively by responding back to the student or				

	supports the student's attempt. The teacher does not show negativity when the student uses word identification				
3. The teacher uses pictures or real objects to explain content from the text.	When learning new or unfamiliar content, the teacher may use a picture or a real object to explain to the students about the content, to help the student understand the text.				
4. The teacher reinforces the students' attempts when they use the sentence structure and prediction strategies to analyze the text.	The teacher uses back and forth conversations with the student (s) when they use sentence structure and prediction.				

Appendix 5: Parents' Awareness Letter



**University
of Victoria**

Awareness Letter

Dear Parent,

My name is Oyebisi Fawole; I am a doctoral student at the University of Victoria. As part of the requirements to complete my doctorate, I am conducting research for my doctoral thesis entitled "*A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs in Supporting Grade Four English Language Learners' Reading Proficiency.*" This study is conducted under the supervision of Dr. xxx of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. The main objective of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of Teachers' beliefs related to their instructional practice in supporting Grade four English Language Learners (ELLs).

I am writing to let you know your child's teacher will be involved in the above study, which involves three observation sessions. The observation process includes the teacher's instructional activities that entail how the teacher coordinates the reading processes before, during and after reading, the interaction between and among students and teachers (engaging, collaborative and cooperative), and teachers' responses that highlight personal beliefs and the teachers' instructional activities as it may be demonstrated through the use of text and other instructional materials. Each observation session will take approximately 45 minutes. Additionally, digital photos will be taken by the researcher during the observations for purposes of contextualizing the classroom learning environment. Students will not be identifiable, and their faces will not appear in the photos. Kindly note that the digital photos will be used strictly for analysis purposes, the confidentiality of the participants (teacher) and the school will be given utmost priority, and pseudonyms will be used to protect the participant's identity. You are not required to take action because your child is not directly involved.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at xxx or by cell phone at (xxx) xxx-xxx. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Oyebisi Fawole

University of Victoria

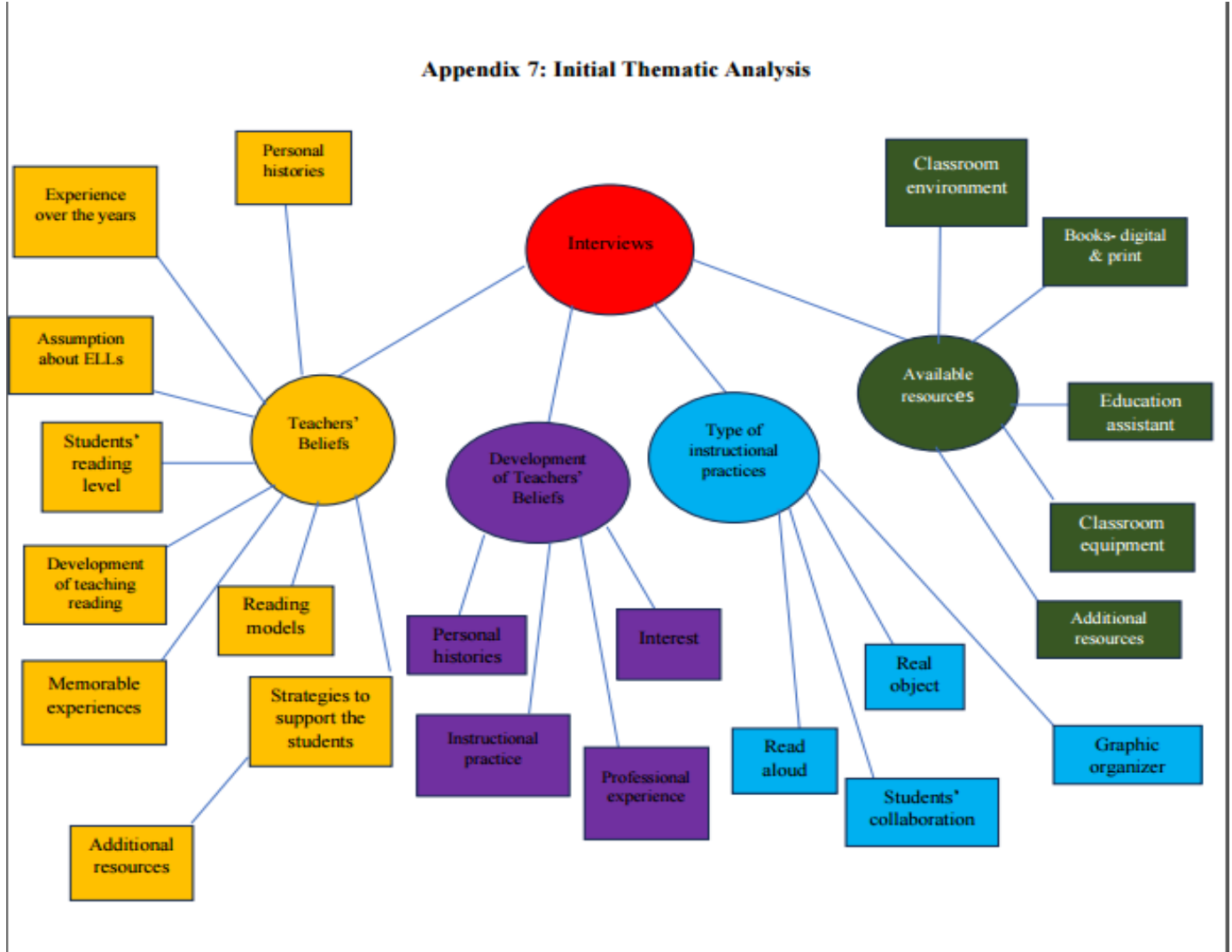
Appendix 6: Teachers' Journal Response

PROMPT QUESTIONS

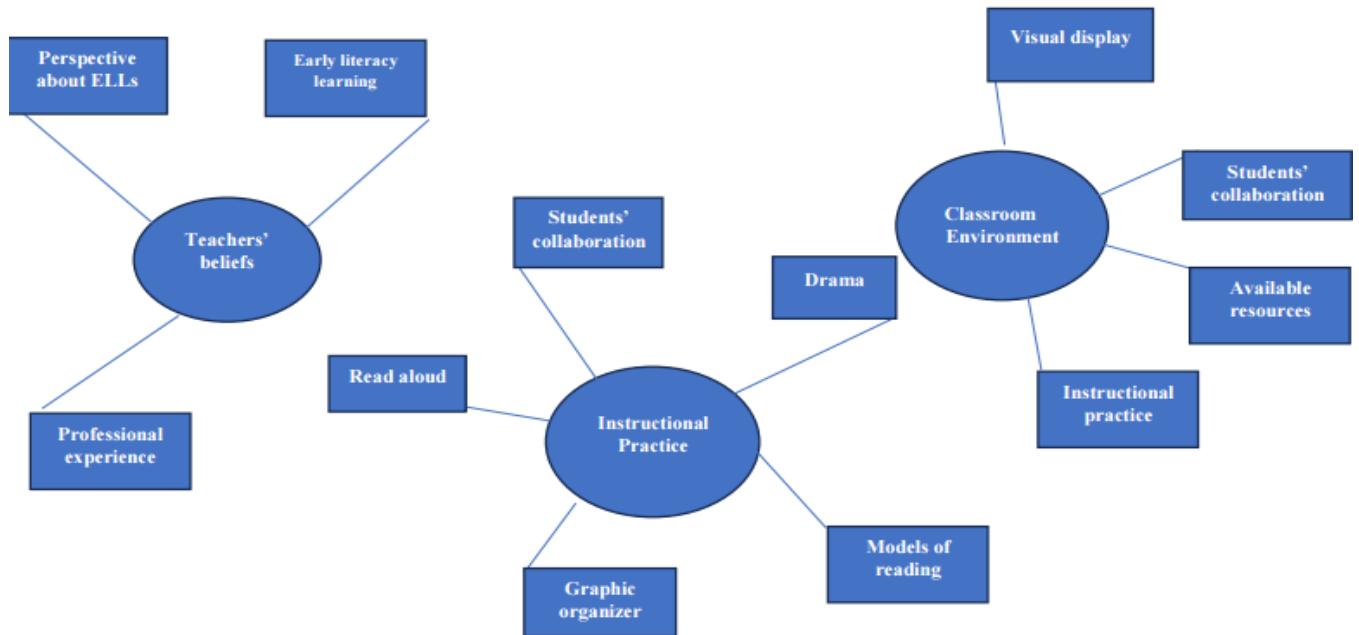
Teachers will be requested to make 3 reflective entries of approximately 250 words (or more) each during the study. These can be done digitally, emailed or handwritten. The prompts below could be used as guide towards writing the journals:

1. Keep a daily journal about interesting, admirable or add things you recall about learning to read. You may include people and ideas that occur to you about this experience, the resources, your favourite book, friends, teacher or anything else that made the experience memorable.
2. What are some courses you enrolled in during your teacher education program that is instrumental to your instructional practice? Keep a journal in which you respond to ideas and information you come across in these courses. Try to connect a learned theory that has contributed positively to your instructional practice. Also, try integrating some reading materials with ideas, concerns or experiences you have had outside the courses.
3. Reflect on the role of reading and learning in people's lives by considering your past experiences as a child, preservice teacher and your current position as a teacher. Also, write in your journal entry about learning and literacy.

Appendix 7: Initial Thematic Analysis



Appendix 8: Final Thematic Analysis



Appendix 9: Ethics Approval Certificate



**University
of Victoria**

Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board
 Michael Williams Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada
 T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

Certificate of Approval - Annual Renewal

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Tim Anderson (Supervisor)	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER: 22-0186 Expedited review - delegated
PRINCIPAL APPLICANT: Oyebisi Fawole PhD student	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 26-Aug-2022
UVIC DEPARTMENT: Curriculum and Instruction EDCI	APPROVED ON: 14-Aug-2024 APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 25-Aug-2025
PROJECT TITLE: A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs in Supporting Grade Four English Language Learners' Reading Proficiency	
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: None	
DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None	
DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL: tcps2_core_certificate.pdf - 23-Mar-2022 Updated interview question guide.pdf - 24-Mar-2022 Follow- up email script.docx - 06-Jun-2022 Email script for First interview.docx - 06-Jun-2022 Prompts for Teacher's Response Journal.docx - 29-Jun-2022 Email sample for Administrative Personnel.pdf - 30-Jun-2022 Observation Collection sheet.docx - 15-Jul-2022 Reviewed Superintendent letter.pdf - 16-Aug-2022 Principals' editted letter.pdf - 16-Aug-2022 Editted potential participants' letter- invitation letter.pdf - 16-Aug-2022 Editted consent form.pdf - 16-Aug-2022 Revised Parents' awareness letter.pdf - 22-Aug-2022	
Conditions of approval	
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.	
Amendments To make changes to the approved research procedure in your study, please submit "Amendments" or "Annual renewal with amendments" form. You must receive research ethics approval before proceeding with your amended protocol.	
Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.	
Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.	
Certification	
This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria's policies for research involving human participants.	

Dr. Sandra Gibbons
Chair, Human Research Ethics Board

Dr. Cindy Holder
Vice-chair, Human Research Ethics Board

Certificate Issued On: 14-Aug-2024