A third grade bilingual teacher's knowledge and practices for developing reading comprehension

Miriam Guerra

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd

Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons, Curriculum and Instruction Commons, and the Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons

Recommended Citation

https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd/26

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Legacy Institution Collections at ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UTB/UTPA Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.
A THIRD GRADE BILINGUAL TEACHER’S KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES 
FOR DEVELOPING READING COMPREHENSION

BY

MIRIAM E. GUERRA

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF THE 
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE 
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF 
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION 
IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

APPROVED BY

__________________________
AUDRA SKUKAUSKAITE, PH.D., CHAIR

__________________________
BOBBETTE MORGAN, ED.D., CO-CHAIR

__________________________
PAULA PARSON, PH.D

__________________________
GRACIELA ROSENBERG, ED.D.

__________________________
CHARLES LACKEY, PH.D., DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT BROWNSVILLE
A Third Grade Bilingual Teacher’s Knowledge and Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension

by

Miriam E. Guerra

Dissertation

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education of the University of Texas at Brownsville

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction

The University of Texas at Brownsville

May, 2012
Copyright

By

Miriam E. Guerra

2012
The Dissertation Committee for
The University of Texas at Brownsville

Certifies That This Is the Approved Version of the Following Dissertation:

A THIRD GRADE BILINGUAL TEACHER’S KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES
FOR DEVELOPING READING COMPREHENSION

Committee:

AUDRA SKUKAUSKAITE, PH.D., CHAIR

BOBBETTE MORGAN, ED.D., CO-CHAIR

PAULA PARSON, PH.D.

GRACIELA ROSENBERG, ED.D.

GRADUATE OFFICE REPRESENTATIVE

CHARLES LACKEY, PH.D., DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT BROWNSVILLE
DEDICATION

To my parents, Roberto D. and Miriam T. Macias
for instilling the importance of high education.

and

To my children, Christie-Ann, Charlie, and Bobby,
may you also be motivated and encouraged to reach your dreams.
Acknowledgements

I thank God for his grace and mercy to see me through this journey. 

*For the will of God will never lead you where his grace will not sustain you.*

I would never have been able to finish my dissertation without the guidance of my committee members and support from my family and husband.

My dissertation committee was instrumental to the completion of this project. I would like to thank them for their support and dedication. Your encouragement kept me pushing forward. Your support to see me complete my dissertation was invaluable. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisors, Dr. Audra Skukauskaite, and Dr. Bobbette Morgan for their excellent guidance and patience to see me through this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Paula Parson and Dr. Graciela Rosenberg for their encouragement and support.

Through this learning experience, many family members gave me invaluable support and encouragement. They were my source of strength. Thank you for being there when I needed your help. During my course of study, my loved ones had to endure many things. I could not have completed my work without their help. To my husband Carlos who refused to go to bed so that I would not stop writing, my children Christie-Ann, Charlie, and Bobby, who endured countless fast food meals so that I would not have to cease my work to attend to them. You helped me to persevere and to believe in myself. You were my blessing from God. To my extended families, the Macias’ and Guerra’s for their understanding of all the missed family gathering because an assignment was pending. Their love and support is greatly appreciated. Thank you all, for the special ways you were there for me.
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher knowledge and practices for teaching reading comprehension to English language learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students in a third grade bilingual class. This study uses a conceptual framework of pedagogical content knowledge to investigate how kinds of content knowledge and pedagogical practices interact to create the teacher’s special way of knowing how to teach comprehension to her students.

This study uses a case study methodology to investigate what the teacher knows and how her knowledge is enacted in her teaching practices. This case study provided an in-depth perspective of teacher knowledge. Through the analyses of the interviews, video observations, and artifact data, I discovered that teacher knowledge is developed, refined, and adapted from teacher beliefs, experiences in using teaching practices for meeting diverse student needs, professional training, and personal practical knowledge. School administrators, reading specialists, and teachers of reading will find the results useful for developing ways to evaluate teacher knowledge and practices for developing professional growth opportunities for reading teachers. This study expands the existing literature on teaching reading comprehension in elementary grades.
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>What Does the Teacher Know?</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2</td>
<td>Finding What Teacher Knows About Teaching Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge of Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.4</td>
<td>What Does the Teacher Know About Teaching ELLs and SESs</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.5</td>
<td>Categories of Knowledge</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6</td>
<td>Repertoire of Teacher Knowledge</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.7</td>
<td>Knowledge of Teaching Practices</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.8</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge Sources</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.9</td>
<td>Knowledge for Teaching Comprehension, Teaching Practices, and Teaching Students</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.10</td>
<td>Comprehension Activities for Each Day</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.11</td>
<td>Teacher Discourse with Yamilex on Summarization</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.12</td>
<td>Teacher Discourse with Noah and Carlos</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.13</td>
<td>Teacher Discourse with Hope</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.14</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge of Teaching Summarization</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.15</td>
<td>Teacher Practices for Teaching Summarization</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.16</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge of Students’ Abilities</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.17</td>
<td>Pre-Reading the Weekly Reader</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ........................................................................................................................................ iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................................ iv

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................ v

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................................ vi

TABLE OF CONTENTS .................................................................................................................... vii

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY ........................................................................... 10

Statement of the Problem ................................................................................................................ 12

Research Question .......................................................................................................................... 15

Background of the Study .................................................................................................................. 16

Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................................... 18

Research Design ............................................................................................................................. 19

Summary .......................................................................................................................................... 20

Definition of Terms ......................................................................................................................... 20

CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF LITERATURE ................................................................................. 23

Teacher Knowledge ......................................................................................................................... 23

Teacher Knowledge and Believes ................................................................................................. 29

Learning to Teach Reading ............................................................................................................ 33

Knowledge of Reading .................................................................................................................... 35

Knowledge of Reading .................................................................................................................... 35

Content Knowledge ....................................................................................................................... 37

Pedagogical Content Knowledge .................................................................................................. 37

Curriculum Knowledge .................................................................................................................. 38

Defining Reading Comprehension ................................................................................................. 38
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Students</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistically Diverse English Language Learners</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economically Disadvantaged Students</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Site</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Selection</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video and Audio Records and Transcripts</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV – ANALYSIS OF DATA</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Maxine’s Story</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory Analysis of the First Interview</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Observations and Interviews</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Teaching Practices</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Historically, education reform has focused on improving schools by improving teacher quality. The issue of highly qualified teachers has taken precedence in improving schools and academic achievement for all students. For the last decade, teachers have been challenged to perform according to educational reforms and policy mandates. Initiatives like the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) focus on identifying highly qualified teachers by their knowledge of subject matter content. The NCLB sets the standards for what highly qualified teachers should know and be able to do to teach core subjects areas. In order to provide instruction for all students, including those who are disadvantaged and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, teachers must be highly skilled in their content knowledge and teaching capacity (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Grant, 2008; Munby & Martin, 2001; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008).

Additionally, the Obama administration has established Race To The Top (RTTT) as another educational reform initiative focused on improving student achievement with highly qualified teachers. As a result, legislation maintains NCLB’s focus on teacher knowledge of subject matter while and also adding RTTT initiatives for placing highly qualified teachers in low performing schools (Hiebert & Morris, 2012). Teachers are confronted with the need to refine their own skills and become more knowledgeable in all subject areas, especially in teaching reading comprehension (Block, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2002a; Fitzharris, Jones, & Crawford, 2008). Wiseman (2012) argues that the teaching profession will continually be challenged to consider
curriculum and instruction from which to consider what teacher knowledge develops quality teaching.

The American Federation of Teachers (1999) makes the case that teachers’ primary academic accountability is to teach all students to read proficiently by third grade. The AFT explains that up to the third grade students are learning to read but after the third grade, students read to learn. Students who read poorly learn slowly and as a result, high school students’ academic failures are often preceded by academic failures in middle school. In the same way, academic failure in the upper elementary years is commonly preceded by failure to learn to read at grade level by the third grade.

The body of research on teacher effectiveness has indicated that teachers are the single most critical factor in determining student achievement levels (Bond & Dykstra, 1997; Knapp, 1995; Shanklin, 1990; The Education Trust, 2004) and that highly effective teachers share similar characteristics (Block, et al., 2002a). Despite the arguments to provide high quality teachers for teaching literacy to all students, there has not been enough empirical research to understand whether teacher knowledge of literacy development is connected to teacher instructional practices (Parris & Block, 2007; Putnam & Borko, 2000).
Statement of the Problem

Teachers are expected to teach every child in their classrooms regardless of students’ background experiences, language/s, cultural beliefs and behaviors. Teachers are challenged with knowing how to address student differences in their classrooms (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008). With the increase of the English language learner (ELL) population in schools across the nation, educators are forced to focus their attention on ways to address the academic literacy and language proficiency these students need to comprehend what they read and learn in school (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2008; National Council of Teachers of English, 2006). Ultimately, teachers must teach students to understand academic language and read with comprehension so that students can become successful in school and in preparing for higher education and future jobs (Scarcella, 2003).

As education policies center on highly-qualified teachers and student accountability, Mohan, Lundeberg, and Reffitt (2008) argue that it is critical that teacher educators not only evaluate teachers on the academic performance of their students but also on teachers’ knowledge. What teachers know about teaching reading and what teaching practices they use greatly influences student achievement. One of the key elements for understanding high quality teaching is knowing the specialized knowledge of literacy that teachers practice in their classrooms (Piasta, Connor, Fishman, & Federick, 2009). Research on teachers’ knowledge of early and adolescent literacy and its impact on teaching practices and student learning continues to be a point of interest (Parris & Block, 2007; Piasta, et al., 2009).
However, the impact of teacher knowledge on student literacy achievement has been difficult to determine because most studies focus mainly on student assessment results rather than on the role of the teacher knowledge and practices that produced the growth in reading development (Piasta, et al., 2009). Efforts to study the specialized knowledge used to teach reading comprehension have primarily focused on confirming that knowledge of teaching reading comprehension is different from knowledge of reading skill alone (Ball, Hoover, & Phelps, 2008; Phelps & Schilling, 2004). While scholars emphasize the need for more in-depth study of teacher knowledge to uncover the specialized knowledge teachers use to teach students reading comprehension, Pressley (2006) presents a different perspective of what research reveals about teachers’ teaching practice for reading comprehension.

Pressley’s (2006) research provides evidence of minimal change with regard to the explicit instruction of reading comprehension. Pressley studied teachers’ instructional practices and found that little instruction in teaching students to comprehend occurred in the classrooms. Although students were observed reading, Pressley discovered that students were not “self-regulated comprehenders” (p. 334). Additionally, the research has been limited to observations of reading comprehension instruction in the upper elementary grades because of the belief that students should first master decoding and word identification in the early primary grades before being taught comprehension strategies in later elementary years (Duffy, 2002; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block, Morrow, Tracey et al., 2001). In contrast to this perception, researchers have uncovered that young children can be taught critical
skill of comprehension before they have mastered decoding and word identification (Block & Pressley, 2007).

A recent shift has erupted regarding when comprehension instruction should occur. Block and Pressley (2007) recommend that early explicit comprehension instruction begin in kindergarten, teaching students how to predict, form mental images, make connections, and summarize. Researchers argue that in order to provide appropriate comprehension instruction throughout students' educational careers, teachers need to be aware of their own knowledge of reading comprehension and ways of teaching reading to the students (Block & Pressley, 2007; Pressley, 2006; Ruetzel, 2007). However, researchers also discovered that often teachers are not aware of their need to improve or change their knowledge because they have not been appraised to measure their knowledge against what is the knowledge required for providing effective instruction (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). Any knowledge used to facilitate the practice of teaching contributes to teacher knowledge (Shaw, Barry, & Mahlios, 2008). However, so far the research field has few studies that examine whether and how elementary teachers understand and know how to teach reading comprehension.
Research Question

The purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between teacher knowledge for learning reading comprehension and the way she teaches students to read for comprehension. In this case study I seek to examine ways of making teacher knowledge visible and to build a foundation for how to study teacher pedagogical content knowledge. The main question for my study is: How does a third grade bilingual teacher’s knowledge and teaching practices reflect her understanding of how socio-economically disadvantaged students and English language learners develop reading comprehension? In examining the knowledge and instructional practices of the teacher, this study will also address the following sub-questions: What does the third grade teacher know about teaching reading comprehension? and, how is the teacher’s knowledge of reading comprehension enacted in her teaching practices?
Background of the Study

The Title I elementary school in which this study took place began a new initiative for the 2009-2010 school year to implement a new instructional approach for building academic vocabulary to improve comprehension in all content areas. At the beginning of the school year, teachers received a brief one hour training on the expectations for incorporating specific instructional approaches for teaching academic terms in all subject areas. However, teachers were expected to develop more than just academic vocabulary. The aim of the campus initiative was to improve students’ academic literacy and comprehension skills across the content subjects. All students on the campus were also enrolled in the Accelerated Reader program that assessed student reading level. Teachers were asked to monitor their students’ progress as they read leveled readers, and took a comprehension test online.

In conjunction with the campus initiative, the district’s initiative was to empower teachers with a system of supports. Teachers were assisted in monitoring student assessment reports through the Data Management for Assessment and Curriculum (DMAC), a program that disaggregates student data according to their mastery of learning objectives as measured by the state standards for reading, math, writing and science. Students’ academic content skills in need of instructional interventions for improvement were identified through DMAC. During the campus response to intervention (RTI) committee meetings, teachers identified students’ need for improvement in the areas of reading and math. The most prevalent concern from teachers during the RTI meetings was that students lacked comprehension.
These initiatives presented a unique opportunity to study the knowledge processes and instructional practices a third grade bilingual teacher would use to develop her students’ reading comprehension. The participant in this study was selected because of her background and experience in working with linguistically diverse English learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students in and out of the school district and the state. The teacher, Ms. Maxine (a pseudonym), was a bilingual teacher of a third grade heterogeneous group of students whose English language proficiency ranged from beginning English speakers to native English speakers. All students identified as English language learners (ELLs) participated in a bilingual transitional program that focused on helping students speak, read, and write in English. The teacher’s students were classified as low socio-economic status. These students had limited outside resources that could help them acquire the academic proficiencies of school. Ms. Maxine was assigned to teach all subjects in English and was accountable for getting students to master the state mandated assessments in the areas of reading and math.

The third grade is the beginning grade for administering state assessments for state mandated school accountability. I chose to study a third grade teacher because the teacher faced a real academic challenge for the 2009-2010 school year. The bilingual third grade teacher had to prepare her students to meet the passing requirements on the first administration of the reading test. Before, students had three opportunities to take the state test to meet the state testing standards. Although the state assessment results will no longer be used to determine students’ promotion to the
fourth grade, the results would continue to be used for school and district state ratings and accountability purposes.

Theoretical Framework

To provide students with instruction that builds comprehension, teachers need several kinds of knowledge about learning (Shulman, 1992). The theoretical underpinning for this study is Shulman’s (1986, 1987, 1992) conceptual framework of pedagogical content knowledge. In his framework of teacher knowledge Shulman (1992) explains that teachers need to understand subject matter to the depth at which they can see how ideas connect and then be able to relate these understandings to students.

Shulman (1992) explains that in order to provide students with instruction that builds comprehension, teachers need two kinds of knowledge about learning. First, teachers need to understand the content or subject matter with regard to how students best learn the specific concepts. Content knowledge covers what Bruner (1977, as cited in Shulman, 1992) refers to as “structure of knowledge” consisting of the theories, principles and concepts of a discipline.

Secondly, teachers must also have knowledge of the curricular development in teaching processes that incorporate the most useful resources for students to learn the concepts. To be effective, teachers must simultaneously teach with their pedagogical knowledge and subject matter knowledge incorporating their understanding of their students’ abilities and needs for learning. Shulman (1986, 1987) uses the term
pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) to identify the different categories of knowledge for teaching. Pedagogical content knowledge is the knowledge that goes beyond subject matter knowledge to the knowledge for teaching that includes the interpretations and applications the teacher uses to make the subject matter comprehensible to students (Shulman, 1986).

Research Design

A case study methodology was used to gain an insight into the teacher’s perspectives about what knowledge is needed and how to teach her understanding of how comprehension is learned. In this study I sought to examine the relationship between teacher knowledge of reading comprehension and the way she teaches different students in her classroom to comprehend what they read. This case study examined ways of how to make teacher knowledge visible and to build a foundation for how to study teacher pedagogical content knowledge. I collected data through teacher interviews, classroom observations, and video and audio recordings of classroom activity. I used multiple sources of data to understand the teachers’ knowledge of how diverse ELLs and socio-economically disadvantaged students understand language and text in content areas. This study investigates the connection between teacher knowledge and teaching students to comprehend what they read.
Summary

In this chapter, I presented an overview of the research problem by stating the need for understanding teacher knowledge so that teachers can help students develop reading comprehension. By identifying what the teacher understands about how comprehension is developed and learned, this case study seeks to make visible ways in which teacher knowledge shapes instructional practices for learning reading comprehension. In the next chapter, I present a review of the literature related to teacher knowledge and teaching practices for reading comprehension. The review includes ways that teacher knowledge has been researched and includes an overview of what research indicated that teachers need to know about the characteristics and needs of diverse English language learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students. In chapter three, I provide an explanation of the methodology used for this qualitative case study. I review the selection of the research design, forms of data collection, and strategies for analyzing the data. Chapter four presents analyses of the data focusing on uncovering answers to the research questions. Finally, in chapter five, I present the core findings and outline implications of the study.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms provide core conceptual bases for the study:

Reading comprehension is the taking from and building meaning through interaction with written language as brought about by three elements: the reader (capacities, abilities, knowledge, and experiences that a person brings to the act of
reading), the text (any printed text), and the activity (purpose, processes, and consequences associated with the act of reading) (Snow, 2002).

Socio-economically disadvantaged students (SEDs) are students from low-income households who come to school with a range of knowledge gained from cultural experiences and practices in the home. The low-income households often lack resources for books, literacy activities, and developing student knowledge that is valued in the schools (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Kozol, 2005). Consequently, the experiences students bring from home impact how students learn literacy (Nixon & Comber, 2006) and pose challenges for reading teachers who need to help students make connections with texts as students learn reading comprehension.

Linguistically diverse English Language Learners (ELLs) are students who use varied cognitive and linguistic processes and variations from more than one language, usually Spanish and English (Windsor & Kohnert, 2004) to attain English language proficiency, relate background knowledge to the text, and use literacy abilities in the first language to gain reading comprehension (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

Teacher practical knowledge is the unique and personal knowledge of teachers (Fenstermacher, 1994). It is the reflective knowledge produced from teaching experiences within the context of the classroom (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2001).
Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is “that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding” (Shulman, 1986, p. 8).

Content knowledge is the knowledge that a teacher knows about the subject matter (Shulman, 1986).
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In chapter two, I present a review of literature on ways of conceptualizing and studying teacher knowledge, as well as research on knowledge for teaching reading comprehension, and knowledge for teaching diverse students. This review is presented in four sections. The first is an overview of the literature on teacher knowledge base. In this section, I present research for the purpose of establishing an understanding of how teacher knowledge is constructed. In the second section, I present a review of literature on teacher knowledge and beliefs in relation to how teachers know what they know. In the third section, I present literature that offers an overview of how teachers learn to teach reading and how they develop their understanding for practice. In the last section, I review the literature on what the teacher needs to know to teach diverse students. The review of literature presented in this chapter is not meant to be comprehensive. My purpose was to provide a review of literature that supports the need to study teacher knowledge and practice for teaching reading comprehension from the teacher’s perspectives and enacted practices.

Teacher Knowledge

Over the last three decades researchers have suggested that the knowledge teachers use is different than the knowledge produced by educational researchers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Grant, 2008; Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). While scholars are concerned about providing more research to establish a knowledge
base for what teachers need to know, teachers seldom rely on research-based knowledge to update their instruction (Grimmet & MacKinnon, 1992; Huberman, 1985; Richardson & Placier, 2001) and research has had little influence in improving teaching practices and classroom learning (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; National Educational Research Policies and Priorities Board, 1999; Sleeter, 2001a).

Hiebert and colleagues (2002) investigated how practitioner knowledge was developed through practice and found that the knowledge for teaching is generated from “active participation and reflection” of teachers’ own teaching practices in response to specific problems in teaching (p. 4). Hiebert and colleagues reported that in order for teachers to gain more practical use from research on teacher knowledge, research must include teachers’ hypotheses and explanations of their experiences and observations as related to classroom practices and student learning. They proposed that teacher knowledge can be studied by testing and developing theories about the way certain lessons were exemplar or less productive to student learning. Through collaborative analysis of daily lessons, teachers can share and make their knowledge visible for other teachers to build and improve their knowledge base.

The knowledge of teachers continues to be a topic of interest for scholars and policy makers. Identifying and knowing the special ways that teachers know their subject matter so that they can teach it to students is important for improving instruction (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Lampert, 2001; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Munby & Martin, 2001). In this section I review studies that contribute to building an understanding of how teacher knowledge has been defined and studied in order to present an overview of a teacher knowledge base.
Grossman and Richert (1988) and Tamir (1991) looked at teacher knowledge as subject matter knowledge that develops from the practice of teaching and meeting the demands for students to learn it. Edwards and Ogden (1998) and Tang (2003) studied teacher knowledge as knowledge of curriculum subject matter and identified what teachers needed to know and how they needed to teach so that students learn the required curriculum. These studies looked at teacher content knowledge as a way to examine how teachers know the content and how they enact that knowledge in teaching practices.

Grossman and colleague (1988) defined teacher knowledge as "a body of professional knowledge that encompasses both knowledge of general pedagogical principles and skills and knowledge of the subject matter to be taught" (p 54). Grossman and Richert found that teachers needed knowledge of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) because their primary concern was understanding how to teach particular subject matter. After interviewing six student teachers, Grossman and Richert (1988) concluded that understanding subject matter was not sufficient in relation to helping students. In another study, Grossman and Richert (1988) found that teachers’ knowledge needed to involve evaluating subject matter content from the perspective of student understanding and learning. These scholars concluded that the kind of teacher knowledge student teachers needed to understand subject matter knowledge was related to understanding how students learned the subject matter, as supported by Shulman’s (1986) concept of pedagogical content knowledge as the kind of knowledge teachers must possess.
Tamir (1991) expanded the concept of teacher knowledge to professional and personal knowledge with the term “teacher education pedagogical knowledge” (p.267). Tamir’s description of knowledge provided a way for teacher educators to demonstrate pedagogical knowledge in concrete experiences. Tamir’s view of personal knowledge related to Connelly & Clandinin’s (1988) personal practical knowledge … “is not found only ’in the mind’, it is ‘in the body’, and it is seen and found ‘in our practices’” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25)

More research contributed to the growth in understanding of teacher knowledge when Clandinin, Connelly and He (2005) investigated how teacher personal practical knowledge was constructed within the context of their classroom and how it influenced their work. Connelly and colleagues argued that in order to understand how teachers’ knowledge informed their practices, they had to first understand how teachers used their knowledge in the classroom setting. These scholars found that teachers do not use subject matter knowledge but rather create subject matter knowledge from the teacher’s past experiences, present state of thinking and future intentions.

Teacher knowledge was also studied through a different perspective of teacher knowledge. Edwards and Ogden (1998) studied teacher knowledge as subject matter knowledge for teaching. They conducted a case study of 15 teacher mentors and student teachers teaching the United Kingdom national curriculum which consisted of ten subject areas. Edwards and Ogden’s study also connected to Shulman’s (1986) concept of pedagogical content knowledge in that it focused on identifying what teachers had to do to meet students’ needs. Edwards and Ogden studied how teachers
used a curriculum that required that they meet students needs by having to ask students about the subject matter they had to learn. Edwards and Ogden recognized that teacher subject matter knowledge was created from the understanding of how students learn the curriculum.

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) studied how teachers’ changes in practice lead to changes in teacher knowledge and beliefs. Using Shulman's (1986) concepts of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge, Clarke and Hollingsworth created a model for relating teacher actions to teacher knowledge. The model linked teacher action to teacher knowledge in relation to the changes that teachers make to their practices that also influence changes in the teachers’ knowledge and beliefs. For example, while one teacher may interpret increased student talk as higher noise level, another teacher may interpret the student talk as an increase in student engagement. While this social behavior can be interpreted in different ways, it was the teacher's interpretation that influenced her knowledge and beliefs about how students use discourse. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) argue that teacher knowledge growth is constructed by a variety of knowledge types such as content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in which teachers change in response to the experiences from professional development programs and classroom interactions with students.

Furthermore, in investigating how teacher knowledge developed from student teachers’ field experiences, Tang (2003) used a practice-oriented view for studying teacher knowledge and argued that teachers’ knowledge construction was a more complex development than general knowledge. Through a qualitative case study of
seven teachers’ professional learning in a two-year teacher education program in Hong Kong, Tang examined how practices of teaching, relating learning to diverse students, and learning from supervisors influenced teacher knowledge. Tang’s (2003) analyses revealed that teacher knowledge was constructed within the context of teaching experiences. Tang suggested that teacher preparation programs needed to provide challenges and support during student teachers’ field experiences to promote professional growth. Tang’s (2003) perspective in studying pre-service teachers involved studying how teachers overcame challenges presented within their field experiences. Tang found that pre-service teachers developed more knowledge about teaching when they were challenged with problems in their field experiences. Tang’s (2003) study supports Connelly and Clandinin’s (1988) view of teacher’s personal practical knowledge.

This brief overview provides an understanding of how the study of teacher knowledge has progressively been conceptualized within Shulman’s (1986, 1987) framework for teacher knowledge as personal, practical, and pedagogical content knowledge. In this first section, my focus was in providing a review of literature that defined teacher knowledge for establishing a teacher knowledge base. The scholarly research examined teacher knowledge as enacted in the practice of teaching. The existing research supports the understanding that teacher knowledge is broad and complex. Researchers I reviewed in this section also stated that there is a need for more research on studies of how teachers’ acquire their knowledge, how it is reflected in their teaching, and what knowledge can be shared with other teachers to improve teacher knowledge and teaching practices. This supports the need for case studies that
investigate what and how teachers know that influence their understanding and teaching practices.

Teacher Knowledge and Beliefs

Knowing how to teach not only depends on the knowledge related to the teaching profession, but also on teachers’ beliefs. Researchers believe that teachers have diverse beliefs about different sources of knowledge (Schommer-Aikins, 2002). Teacher beliefs are representative of values and views of world, self, and the context of teaching experiences in and outside the classroom (Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). Teacher beliefs include opinions of pedagogical understandings of what works and what doesn’t in teaching, how subject matter is approached, assumptions about students’ knowledge, school, community and self as capable teaching professionals (Woolfolk Hoy, et al., 2006). Beliefs about the source of knowledge are significant to the kind of learning results and the type of instructional practices teachers will incorporate into their teaching (Buehl & Fives, 2009; Ravindran, Green, & Debacher, 2005). For instance, according to Ravindran and colleagues, teacher beliefs about school authoritative figures are a source of knowledge that can be linked to a decrease in motivation and performance in lower levels of instruction in teacher practices.

Buehl and Five (2009) studied 53 preservice and 57 practicing teachers’ open-ended responses based on their beliefs of the source and stability of teaching knowledge. Buehl and Five found that teachers viewed the course of study required for earning the teaching credentials as the knowledge needed for teaching. Teachers were not cognizant of their need for specialized knowledge. Teachers’ sources of
knowledge were shaped by the authoritative figures in their work place as well as from the individual’s motivation and experiential incidents (Buehl and Five, 2009). Teachers’ beliefs became a source of teacher knowledge that directed teaching practices and student learning.

Research indicates that teachers’ beliefs cannot be disentangled from teachers’ decisions for using teaching practices (Pajares, 1992). Monteiro and Bueno (2008) studied the thirty year life histories of two teachers and uncovered that teachers accumulate several types of knowledge during their educational life and throughout their professional work. According to Monteiro and Bueno (2008) teachers used knowledge that was most attuned with their individuality, educational preparation, professional understanding and educational principles. The two teachers in Monteiro and Bueno’s study learned to adapt to each educational situation by implementing certain habitual practices and developing practices that met the demands and particularities of their school. The types of knowledge acquired throughout the different time periods were continually reconsidered and questioned. The teachers began to identify with certain methodologies, and chose certain teaching practices as models. In daily classroom routines, they could reflect on their conceptions about school success and failures to analyze the factors that contributed to their students’ academic growth. Monterio and Bueno (2008) concluded that teaching knowledge is gained from accumulated life experiences as teaching practices and beliefs become more refined.

Teacher knowledge is influenced by teachers’ beliefs about their professional selves as teachers as well as their own personal identities of themselves as individuals.
Gomez (2009) studied twelve kindergarten to 12th grade teachers’ beliefs about themselves as literate individuals and how their reading practices influenced the teaching practices in their classrooms. Teachers used their own belief for learning to read to guide how they provided instruction. Gomez found the teachers’ own literate practices influenced their beliefs about how to provide students opportunities for reading. An earlier study by Drake, Spillane, and Hufferd-Ackles (2001) similarly revealed that “what and how teachers learn is also shaped by and situated in the teachers’ identities, both as teachers and as learners” (p.2). The previous studies provide evidence that teacher beliefs influence teacher practices in the classroom.

The Theriot and Tice (2009) study provides a perspective of how teacher knowledge, beliefs and practices can influence the decisions teachers make to support their own understanding or lack of understanding. Through a collective case study approach, Theriot and Tice (2009) found that even when teachers believed in a certain instructional approach, it did not guarantee that the teacher could implement the approach. Similarly, even when a teacher could articulate what he/she should do and why, the teacher was still unable to use the approach successfully because he/she did not know how to solve problems in relation to the theoretical and philosophical framework of the approach. Theriot & Tice (2009) argued that simply presenting ideas and instructional practices to teachers does not result in sufficient learning about teaching. Theriot and Tice found that teachers needed professional guidance to learn how to implement instructional practices so teachers can acquire a deeper understanding of the theoretical framework for the new instructional approach and therefore can make better decisions implementing the instruction.
During their life’s work, teachers carry a set of beliefs that add and expand their content and pedagogical skills and influence their instructional decisions and teaching practices (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Scholars emphasize the need for more research to continue to investigate the inextricable relationships between teachers’ beliefs and their teaching practices (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2008; Levin & Wadmany, 2006; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002; Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008; Woolfolk Hoy, et al., 2006).

Identifying teachers’ underlying instructional beliefs can provide understanding of teacher thinking that guides curricular and pedagogical decisions of teaching practices (Levin & Wadmany, 2006). Teachers’ epistemological perspectives are also shaped by teacher beliefs that impact classroom management and teaching practices (Gill, Ashton, & Algina, 2004; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). Teacher beliefs also influence the curricular choices and behaviors teachers will use in teaching (Bruning, Schraw, Norby, & Ronning, 2004) and are related to the pedagogical knowledge used to make decisions in the classroom (Wilcox-Herzog, 2002).

Cochran-Smith (2005) recommends that the research agenda for the American Educational Research Association (AERA) focus on studies on how teacher quality and demographic variables impact student learning. Cochran-Smith suggests the need for more research of how educational programs for teachers impact preparation, apart from the beliefs teachers bring when they enter preparation programs. She states the need for research that investigates what preservice teachers learn in educational programs, how they use what they learn in the workplace, and how well their students
learn. Cochran-Smith (2005) argues that “we need to know how these relationships vary within differing schools and accountability contexts and conditions” (p. 302). In the previous section, I presented an overview of studies that show how teacher knowledge and beliefs are linked. Knowledge and beliefs are acquired and refined from childhood through the entire personal and professional work experience. Curricular demands and challenges of meeting all students’ needs influence teacher beliefs and teaching practices. This implies that although beliefs influence knowledge, how teachers teach is not necessarily what they know or believe about the content or the pedagogy for learning and teaching. In the following section, I explore how teachers acquire knowledge for teaching reading and what they learn from professional institutions that prepare them for the teaching field.

Learning to Teach Reading

Teacher knowledge and instructional expertise in teaching reading have been identified as having a direct correlation to students’ reading achievement (Lyon & Weiser, 2009). However, research has indicated that teachers often do not possess the necessary knowledge for teaching reading to teach beginning and struggling readers (Bos, Mather, Dickenson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Moats, 2004; Moats & Foorman, 2003).

During the past two centuries, public schools in the U.S. have adopted often contradictory methods for teaching reading. Hall and Harding (2003) argue that to teach literacy requires recognizing its complexity because success in teaching literacy is dependent on teachers’ skill in combining knowledge, skills and understanding of
literacy to address the needs of individual learners. Ways for teaching reading have been influenced by learning theories based on behaviorist, cognitive, and constructivist epistemological frameworks (Hall and Harding, 2003; Rex, Steadman & Graciano, 2006). However, Clough and Kaufmann (1999) state that “complexities inherent in learning and teaching make [it] unlikely that one learning theory will fit all circumstances” (p. 528).

However, Fang (1996) and Yoo (2005) argue that unless university teacher educational preparation programs provide sufficient instruction that change preservice teachers’ preconceptions they will teach reading the way they were taught to read. The most popular models used to teach reading to preservice teachers in university preparation programs include: bottom-up, bottom-down, and interactive (Barnyak, 2010). The bottom-up model focuses on comprehension. Readers are not focused on the print but rather on the meaning in the text. The bottom-up model includes teaching of skills to help students decode words and build word recognition. In this model teachers teach reading through sequenced skills. All students learn the same skills and move along sequentially to learn how to read.

The top-down model is related to the whole language perspective for teaching reading. It focuses on working on the semantic cues to make meaning from text. Students learn skills through authentic experiences that provide opportunities for constructing their own knowledge and understanding. The top-down model offers a more student-centered approach than the bottom-up method that requires a teacher directed skills approach.
The third approach used in university based teacher preparation programs, is the interactionist model. This reading model combines the bottom-up and top-down approaches to create a more balanced approach to teaching reading. Researchers agree that the best reading instruction incorporates multiple instructional approaches (Pressley, 2002, 2006; Pressley, et al., 2001; Ruetzel, 2007). A teacher preparation program that provides preservice teachers with training in how to teach concepts such as phonics, phonemic awareness, oral language, word identification, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, assessment, and the management of literacy instruction will offer better preparation for preservice teachers (Fielding-Barnsley & Purdie, 2005).

**Knowledge of Reading**

The content knowledge of reading has not been a focal point of research inquiry because reading is not considered a discipline like that of math or science (Phelps & Schilling, 2004). At present, there is no group of scholars who have identified what is to be known about reading (Phelps & Schilling, 2004). Teachers need to know and understand the content of reading in distinct ways from how they learned them in teacher preparation courses (Phelps & Schilling, 2004). However, little attention has been given to the pedagogical content knowledge of what teachers of reading need to know to teach reading effectively (Ball, et al., 2008; Phelps & Schilling, 2004). In fact, what counts as “content” in reading has not been clearly defined (Phelps & Schilling, 2004).

Studies on content knowledge of reading have been hindered by the
complexity of what would constitute content knowledge in reading. Few studies have probed into the teacher content knowledge utilized in the everyday practice of teaching reading (Ball, et al., 2008; Daniels & Zemelman, 2004). Content knowledge is the knowledge for knowing how, as in the detailed ways that teachers need to know a subject like reading to teach it (Shulman, 1986, 1987). This includes multiple ways of knowing language, text, and reading process, and how to use this knowledge in teaching practices.

Shulman’s (1986, 1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge provides a conceptual framework for understanding what teachers need to know and do in order to teach a particular subject matter. Pedagogical content knowledge consists of “the most useful ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others … and also includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult” (Shulman, 1986, p.7). Pedagogical content knowledge is the specialized ways teachers need to know a subject to teach it so that the students can be guided through the learning process that scaffolds learning to meet the individual needs of each student. It encompasses what a reading teacher knows about the reading process, language, and text, and in what ways she teaches to help students learn to read and comprehend the reading texts. Shulman (1986) suggests that to better understand the content knowledge that is developed by teachers it is best to divide this knowledge into three categories: (1) content knowledge; (2) pedagogical content knowledge, and (3) curricular knowledge.
Content Knowledge

Shulman (1986) refers to content knowledge as the amount and organization of knowledge in the teacher's mind. Shulman reports that content knowledge goes beyond the facts and concepts of a domain and requires understanding the structure of the subject matter. Different subject matter areas have differing ways of explaining the content structure of knowledge (Green & Allan, 2006). To correctly identify the structures of content knowledge, it requires what Schwab (1964) defined as the substantive and syntactic structures. The substantive structures are the different ways in which the concepts and principles are organized into facts. The syntactic structure provides the rules for determining validity or invalidity in the domain. Shulman (1986) claims that teacher content knowledge involves the ability to define the truths of a domain as well as knowledge to explain why those truths are valid, why they must be known, and how they relate to others.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge is knowledge of not only the subject matter but also of the dimensions of subject matter knowledge necessary for teaching (Shulman, 1986). Shulman makes the case that pedagogical content knowledge also involves the understanding of what makes learning specific topics simple or complicated. It also includes knowledge of the conceptions or misconceptions students will hold about those topics.
Curricular Knowledge

Shulman (1986) defines curricular knowledge as knowledge of a full range of programs and instructional materials for teaching the particulars of a subject or topic at different levels and the knowledge of the characteristics that warrant the use of a particular program or curriculum for teaching that subject or topic. For teachers, this would require knowing the instructional materials, strategies and programs for teaching, remediation, or evaluation of adequate student learning.

The conceptual foundation of what teachers need to know to teach reading involves knowledge of the content of reading as to what needs to be taught and learned about reading. The structure of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) extends the content knowledge of reading to knowledge of specialized ways that teachers need to know reading to teach it (Ball, et al., 2008). Pedagogical content knowledge provides a framework for differentiating general content knowledge of reading from the specialized knowledge that is the teacher’s unique way of knowing and teaching (Ball, et al., 2008; Hill & Ball, 2008).

Defining Reading Comprehension

To determine literacy comprehension, it is necessary to define reading in its main role. Reading can be defined in multiple ways, from the ability to read and write alphabetic print, to more extended perspectives of literacy such as any form of oral communicative practice (Moje & Overby, 2008). Mayer (2004) defines reading comprehension as the “process of making sense out of a text passage…building a
meaningful mental representation of the text (p.723). Mayer explains that the process happens when the reader (a) selects relevant information from a text passage, (b) organizes the incoming material into a coherent mental representation, and (c) integrates the incoming material with existing knowledge. In order to obtain reading comprehension the reader needs to know how to use four cognitive processes as well: 1) prior knowledge to activate and assimilate to existing knowledge, 2) prose structure to select and organize material into a coherent structure, 3) making inferences to add to or integrate and organize the material, and 4) metacognitive knowledge for monitoring cognitive processing as in whether the text makes sense.

Reading comprehension is dependent on what the reader already knows about the themes and topics described in a text (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). The reader’s comprehension increases as the reader reads the words and interprets them within the context of the phrases, sentences and across paragraphs to construct meaning. The progression in comprehending is very much dependent on the reader’s knowledge of the critical vocabulary and grammatical structures that are contained in the sentences and the reader’s skill with the genre and the way the text is structured (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

Students demonstrate their reading comprehension when they use word decoding strategies, language knowledge, background knowledge of the particular topic, knowledge of genres, and text structures. Students will predict and create visual images, summarize, infer and distinguish important information, and analyze text for story elements (Burke, Fiene, Young, & Meyer, 2008). Studies have demonstrated that when students in primary grades receive comprehension instruction, performance on
measures of literal, inferential, and metacognitive skills increase (Block, et al., 2002a; Mayer, 2004) Additionally, students’ vocabulary, problem-solving, cooperative learning skills, and self-esteem improve (Block & Pressley, 2002b; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). 

Research on reading instruction focuses on the relationship between teaching reading comprehension and the success of students to read for comprehension (Kamil, 2004; Paris, et al., 1991; Pearson & Fielding, 1991). Therefore understanding the meaning of reading comprehension is critical from the stand point of knowing what comprehension encompasses in order to teach it effectively. Comprehension is a process whereby the reader interacts with the text to construct meaning. Teachers need to know how reading is defined as part of their content knowledge of reading.

Teaching Reading Comprehension

In this section, I present a review of research that supports how teaching reading comprehension involves more that general knowledge of the subject matter. To teach reading teachers need to have the specialized knowledge for knowing how and what to teach to their students. In Topping and Ferguson’s (2005) study, teachers achieved a skilled balance of instructional practices along with motivating and building student processes through interaction and demonstration during shared and guided reading. Topping and Ferguson explained that because teachers can teach students how to construct meaning from text in multiple situated activities, they are in fact demonstrating how they enact their subject knowledge and pedagogical literacy
knowledge into their teaching practices.

Teaching reading also requires practical knowledge for knowing how students will learn reading comprehension that is often not included in the curriculum (Duffy, 2002; Grossman, Compton, Igra, Ronfeldt, Shahan, & Williamson, 2009). Flynn (2007) observed three teachers during nine literacy lessons and discovered that the teachers used intuitive practices of literacy during reading instruction therefore student success was more of a result of the teachers’ intuitive behaviors for knowing how students developed comprehension than a result of the school curriculum and materials used. Flynn concluded that teachers with a deeper understanding of how children develop as readers and writers relied less on prescribed curriculum and more on intuitive teaching practices.

Teaching reading requires that the teachers use personal practical knowledge (Connelly, et al., 1997) to relate their understanding to students through modeling or demonstrating comprehension. Hall and Harding’s (2003) meta-analysis concluded that proficient literacy teaching was more related to teacher knowledge of subject matter and self-confidence in strategic comprehension than to scripted instruction. Teaching reading requires that the teacher have the pedagogical understanding of instructional approaches (Munby & Martin, 2001). Dobler (2009) studied eighteen elementary and middle school teachers as they discovered their own use of comprehension strategies and then how those teachers applied their personal practical knowledge to teaching their students how to use comprehension strategies. Dobler concluded that teacher reflective practices and understanding of their own personal comprehension strategy use provided students with more effective comprehension
instructions.

Students need to know how to retrieve prior knowledge to make connections that help them understand new information. This process requires that teachers model their own thought process to students as in “think alouds.” Teachers need to have an understanding of their own reading processes in order to understand how to teach students to comprehend what they read (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Phelps (2004) states, “only reading teachers need to see a text from the perspective of a beginning reader to identify difficulties the text might present for students” (p. 7). This specialized knowledge requires more than simple skill. It necessitates the teacher to have explicit understanding of the content and knowledge of students’ conceptions that can hinder comprehension.

To teach reading teachers need to know how to provide instruction of the learning concepts in a way that facilitates and guides students to comprehend and learn the subject matter. Pardo’s (2004) article on what every teacher needs to know about comprehension synthesizes the research on comprehension and connects it to teacher practice. Pardo (2004) states that, “once teachers understand what is involved in comprehending and how the factors of reader, text, and context interact to create meaning, they can more easily teach their students to be effective comprehenders” (p. 272). Wray et al. (2002) also reported that proficient literacy teachers could more easily link instruction of word and sentence-level activities to meaningful text-based experiences so that their students could understand the purpose for reading and writing across genres.

Reading comprehension is dependent on what the reader already knows about
the themes and topics described in a text (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). The progression in comprehending is very much dependent on the reader’s knowledge of the critical vocabulary and grammatical structures that are contained in the sentences and the reader’s skill with the genre and the way the text is structured (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). In this section of the literature review, I presented an overview of how teacher knowledge is enacted in the practices needed for teaching reading comprehension. The review represents different ways of conceptualizing and studying teacher knowledge needed to teach comprehension. In the following section I present characteristics of English language learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students and what teachers need to know about these students to teach reading comprehension.

Knowledge of Students

Reading comprehension is dependent on students’ background knowledge of the content, understanding of the vocabulary, grammatical structures, and interpretation of the text (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Researchers have argued that educators need to understand what students bring to school in order to build on their experiences and knowledge rather than only focusing on what the students cannot do (Delpit, 2006; Heath, 1983; E. Moje & Overby, 2008; Valdes, 1996; Gonzalez, et al., 2005).

Sleeter (2001) suggests that research is not addressing the questions about how effective teachers know and acquire their knowledge for teaching diverse students. Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001) state that the educational field needs to
look at small-scale studies as a multisite research program to find more generalizable variables that contribute to how teachers know and acquire effective practices for working with diverse learners.

Cummins (2007) argues that policy makers have ignored research that students’ engagement with reading is related to reading achievement. Cummins explains that the pedagogical approaches for teaching reading to socioeconomically disadvantaged students are not supportive of what is known about how reading is developed and learned. In *Pedagogies for the Poor* Cummins (2007) argues that socioeconomically disadvantaged students may be receiving reading instruction with fewer opportunities for extended reading or encouragement for inquiry-based learning due to the misinterpretation of systematic phonics instruction recommended by the National Reading Panel. The NRP (National Reading Panel, 2000) reported that according to scientifically-based research, instruction of systematic phonics after the first grade did not promote spelling or reading comprehension for normally achieving or socioeconomically disadvantaged students. The NRP recommended that “systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program” (p.2-136). Supporting the NRP’s report, Ehir, Nunes, Stahl, and Willows (2001) study found that phonics instruction provided to students in grades 2nd through 6th was not effective in supporting spelling or reading comprehension. However, policy makers have ignored the findings and made it more problematic to provide socioeconomically disadvantaged students with differentiated education (Cummins, 2007). Guthrie (2004) argues that there is extensive evidence that literacy engagement develops reading comprehension as opposed to systematic
A case in point of differentiated education is the study by Pease-Alvarez’ (2006) study that describes the experiences of preservice teachers’ field assignments in California. Preservice teachers placed in classrooms and districts serving a high number of European American students observed that students had access to less scripted curricula and teachers used instructional practices based on student needs and interests. On the other hand, preservice teachers, assigned to classrooms and districts serving predominately socioeconomically disadvantaged and bilingual students, observed that teachers had to follow the state adopted curriculum. Additionally, the students in these classrooms performed unsatisfactorily on the state tests. Preservice teachers assigned to schools with high enrollment count of ELLs and SED students observed more whole group instruction and limited opportunities to differentiate instruction. Consequently, preservice teachers assigned to schools with ELLs and SEDs experienced a contradiction with the pedagogical practices they had learned in their university preparation program.

A review of the research on teacher preparation for teaching diverse students (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2003; Grant & Secada, 1990; Haberman, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2001a, 2001b; Weiner, 1993, 2000; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996) presents consistent conclusions that changes in teacher education for preparing teachers to teach diverse learners are necessary. However, Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries (2003) argue that little has been done to change teacher education preparation programs for the past 25 years. These scholars state two critical reasons for the lack of research. The first is that diversity has been marginalized and the second is an
underfunding of research on issues about student diversity.

*Linguistically Diverse English Language Learners*

English language learners are second language learners with varying degrees of learning needs who are in the process of developing their proficiency in academic English while at the same time studying core content areas like math, science, and social studies through English (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). In reality, ELLs must do twice the learning than native English speakers in order to succeed in U.S. schools (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). However, education for ELLs in U.S. schools focuses on acquisition of English language skills rather than the acquisition of content knowledge (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008).

English language proficiency is measured by evaluating comprehension, use of vocabulary and language patterns, oral interaction and writing, phonology, grammatical structure, and meaning of the language. Yet, ELLs’ success is contingent upon attaining academic proficiency or knowledge of subject matter (Garcia, Kleifgen, and Falchi, 2008). Moreover, to assure equitable and meaningful educational opportunities for ELLs, it is essential that educators differentiate between basic English language proficiency and the comprehension in academic literacy required for learning core content areas in school (Garcia, et al, 2008). ELLs must comprehend the English language and comprehend the content they need to learn in school subjects.
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students

Socioeconomically disadvantaged learners develop literacy through socially constructed practices in their daily living. They bring to school different knowledge resources and backgrounds that impact how they access the mainstream curriculum (Nixon & Comber, 2006). Socially constructed literacy is developed over time from a repertoire of practices learned from parents, peers, and teachers. This type of literacy knowledge is dependent upon what teachers acknowledge as valid performances and potential forms of literacies from students.

Winfield (1986) and Knapp (1995) argue that if teachers’ teaching practices are influenced by their attitudes and beliefs, it is possible to teach teachers to become more effective in working with disadvantaged students by educating them of the rationale for using effective teaching practices with these students. One way that teacher practice for teaching disadvantaged students can be influenced is to explore the teaching practices that help other students. Constructivist researchers (Knapp, Shields, & Turnbull, 1992; Means, Chelemer, & Knapp, 1991) have found that the same constructivist teaching methods used for gifted students that stress teaching for comprehension, self-motivation, independent and self-directed learning, and varied opportunities for students to engage with peers during learning activities (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993) are most effective for economically disadvantaged students.

Lopez (2007) argues that teacher capacity is essential in providing students
with effective learning opportunities. Teachers need to provide students with a classroom environment that affords students with the learning experiences necessary to use and build their own learning. Lopez states that students bring unique attributes that warrant different learning needs but too often teachers cannot recognize or understand what resources are more appropriate for each student.

Although researchers have identified what teacher capacities are most necessary for teaching economically disadvantaged students, teachers are challenged with problems associated with the poverty, family structures, and gaps in education due to family mobility. Teachers must be capable of understanding student needs and providing a supportive and positive classroom where students and teacher share a supportive relationship for learning (Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990). Lopez (2007) argues that teacher capacity for teaching diverse students requires a technological fit between the teacher’s capabilities and student learning. Lopez explains that the technological fit is the unique ways the teacher will use and find the most appropriate resources to support student learning.

In this section I presented an overview of some of the issues in teaching diverse English language learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students. In addition, I provided some research on effective instructional practices to use in teaching reading comprehension to these students.
Summary

The review of literature presented an overview of how teacher knowledge has been researched and understood. The chapter offered an explanation of the domains of teacher knowledge and discussed the teaching of reading comprehension. The practice of teaching reading comprehension was related to the teacher knowledge required for effective teaching. In addition, the review offered a description of the pedagogical content knowledge teachers must possess in order to teach reading comprehension, and to teach diverse English learners and economically disadvantaged students with varying backgrounds.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I describe the methodology used to conduct this case study and present the research design, participant and site selection, my role as the researcher, data collection, and data analysis. The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationships between teacher knowledge of reading comprehension and pedagogical knowledge of how to teach so that the diverse students learn. This case study sought to examine ways of making teacher knowledge visible.

I used a case study methodology to investigate the research question, “How does a third grade bilingual teacher’s knowledge and practices reflect her understanding of how linguistically diverse English language learners and socioeconomically disadvantaged students learn comprehension?” Yin (2006) states that a case study enables the researcher to investigate why or how something occurs and to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation. The case study methodology is best suited for describing and explaining research that addresses descriptive or explanatory questions in order to bring out a firsthand understanding of people or events (Yin, 2006).

Research Design

To develop the design for my study, I used case study methodology as suggested by Yin (2006). A qualitative case study enables the researcher to explain people’s understandings about particular bounded phenomena and to examine a case in depth within a real world context (Yin, 2006). I decided to conduct a single-case
study because it forces the researcher to focus close attention on the case. In this case study I sought to understand teacher knowledge and practices from the teacher's point of view. This focus on the teacher required direct observation, interviews, and data collection from the classroom setting.

In presenting case study methodology, Yin (2006) also states that a case study should attempt to build or extend theoretical perspectives. Therefore, in designing this case study, I decided to use theory development based on Shulman’s (1986, 1987) conceptual framework of pedagogical content knowledge. I also developed a data collection process and organized my data analysis strategies (Yin, 2006) to cohere with the theoretical framework.

To understand how the teacher’s teaching principles are reflected in her teaching, I observed the interactional processes and practices between teacher and individual students, the teacher and whole class, and followed the observation with a post-observation teacher interview in order to obtain her perspective of what occurred during the observation. Qualitative research in education is focused on understanding behavior from the participant’s frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this study, I sought to make known the teacher’s knowledge and understandings that guided her teaching practices and to identify what counted as instructional practices for teaching reading comprehension from the teacher’s point of view.
Research Site

Yin (2006), states that the researcher may already know the site and case to be studied because of the special access for collecting data about that case. I was the assistant principal at the school during the year the data were collected and therefore was familiar with the overall performance and needs of the school. This study took place in an elementary school located in a small town in South Texas. The elementary school had an approximate enrollment of 500 students in grades pre-kindergarten to fifth. Ninety-four percent of the students were identified as economically disadvantaged and received free or reduced lunch. Twenty-two percent of the students were identified as limited English proficient (LEP). These students were identified by a home language survey as speaking a language other than English in the home and scoring below fluent English speaker on the state approved language assessment. Students identified as LEP were placed in an early-exit transitional bilingual program. Although the remaining seventy-eight percent of the students at the elementary school were identified as native English speakers, most of them were identified as economically disadvantaged (SED). These SED students were also in need of developing their academic language proficiency.

Each school year the school’s initiatives focus on meeting the state standards for academic literacy and content knowledge in reading, writing, math, and science. Through daily instruction, the teachers are charged with providing essential learning opportunities that developed students’ academic content knowledge and comprehension. Teachers’ knowledge of how students learn and develop
comprehension is essential in meeting students’ academic needs for growth and academic success as measured by the state and district assessment.

For the third graders at this school, developing reading comprehension was particularly critical because the academic year 2009-2010, during which this study took place, was the first time these students would take a state assessment, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). How these students performed on the reading and math TAKS had a direct impact on whether the school met the state’s accountability standards for adequate academic progress. Third graders were expected to show proficiency in literacy skills such as identifying the main idea, predicting, summarizing, inferencing, and distinguishing literary elements of a story.

The campus TAKS results for the 2009 were at ninety-one percent for third grade reading. For 2010, the third grade reading score was ninety-three. The fourth graders (third graders in 2009) scored a ninety percent in reading in the 2010 academic year. Although the TAKS scores indicated that most students passed the TAKS reading test, the campus progress monitoring assessments indicated that students were in need of instructional interventions because they lacked basic reading skills such as decoding, fluency and comprehension. The number of first, second, and third grade students referred to the campus Response To Intervention (TRI) committee increased as the school year progressed. The same students continued to be in need of assistance from one grade to the next without showing significant improvement.

Students referred to RTI usually lacked comprehension. Students in these grade levels lacked basic reading skills for decoding, fluency, and comprehension as measured on the Texas Primary Inventory assessment. Students who scored poorly
were given more remediated instruction focusing on phonemic awareness and fluency rather than on comprehension. Improving these students’ comprehension was critical to ensuring that these students did not fall further behind.

**Participant Selection**

I selected Ms. Maxine from the fourteen bilingual teachers at the school. I used purposeful sampling and selected the teacher based on her willingness to participate and her professional experience in the education field. Ms. Maxine’s experience and teaching background were more extensive than of all the other bilingual teachers on the campus. Ms. Maxine had twenty-seven years of teaching experience in and out of the state of Texas. She had worked with English language learners (ELLs), whose first language was not Spanish, a difference from the school’s other bilingual teachers who had only taught Spanish-speaking ELLs. Ms. Maxine also had experience in teaching kindergarten to fifth grade. Her professional background afforded her knowledge of how students learn early literacy skills and develop their reading. She stated that her favorite subjects were teaching reading, social studies, and science.

The students in the teacher’s classroom included nine ELL students at different levels of English proficiency. The levels ranged from beginning English speaker to intermediate, advanced, and advanced high English speakers as measured by the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (TELPAS). All twenty-one students in the class were identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED). Although the students were not the focus of this study, students were observed to identify how the
teacher’s instruction reflected her understanding of how ELL students and SEDs developed and learned comprehension.

To assure consent for participation in the study about the teacher, the students in Ms. Maxine’s class were given assent forms, parent consent forms, and FERPA forms. Students and parents were informed that the study and the audio/video recordings used during the study were primarily focused on collecting information about the teacher’s instruction and understanding of how students were learning during their instructional time. Of the twenty-one students in the class, only one student's parent did not consent to the audio and video taping during this study. Therefore videotaping was set up so one camera pointed at the teacher and showed only the backs of students with the exception of the one student. A second camera focused (narrow angle) only on the interactions of the teacher with groups of consenting students.

Data Collection

Yin (2006), states that a good case study has multiple sources of evidence. For this study I used interviews, direct observations, and physical artifacts of the materials used in the classroom. Yin argues that the focus in collecting case study data is to triangulate lines of evidence. The strongest convergence comes from two or more sources pointing to the same facts and evidence.

I was the sole person responsible for collecting and analyzing data. Data included field notes of classroom observations, video and audio recordings, as well as
informal and formal interviews with the participant. The data were collected during instructional periods in the teacher participant’s classroom. Data were also collected outside the classroom during interviews. The teacher was interviewed as emerging questions and themes developed throughout the research period, February to May 2010 (Nespor, 2006).

Data collection consisted of a collaborative approach with the teacher. The teacher provided copies of all artifacts and instructional materials used for each lesson. Video cameras and audio recorders were situated in the classroom to record the teacher’s instruction and students’ interactions with the teacher. The videotaping was set up so one camera focused on the teacher and showed the backs of students (wide angle) and a second camera was focused (narrow angle) to include only the interactions of the teacher with groups of consenting students. Special care was taken to ensure the camera was not directed at one student whose parent had not consented to participation in the study.

Observations

A data source for this study included observations that allowed me to learn about the teacher’s practices in the classroom. The purpose of conducting observations was to learn about knowledge the teacher might not have mentioned during the interviews. The observations provided insights of the teacher’s work in developing students’ literacy. I looked specifically at how the teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge related to the teaching practices needed for English language learners and socioeconomically disadvantaged students to develop literacy comprehension.
Moreover, observational data provided me with an overview of the classroom interactions that could corroborate with the data gathered through interviews. The observations consisted of detailed descriptions of the teacher’s practices, interactions with the students, and actions that were part of the observable human experience (Patton, 2002). During observations, my goal was to keep field notes of daily routines and instructional activities in the classrooms so that they could be examined systematically (Evertson & Green, 1986).

**Video and Audio Records and Transcripts**

Videotaped observations were conducted to study classroom interactions of the teacher with her students. According to Delamont (2008), in observations the researcher’s job is to find out what the participant does, why she does it, and how she does it. A researcher must continually ask questions and examine everything as a significant and potential finding for uncovering a better understanding of what is being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Through video observations I was able to review what occurred in the classroom to investigate how the teacher and the students interacted when learning comprehension.

Video cameras and audio recorders were situated in the classroom to record the teacher’s instruction and students’ interactions with the teacher. The videotaping was set up so one camera focused on the teacher and showed the backs of students (wide angle) and a second camera was focused (narrow angle) to include only the interactions of the teacher with groups of consenting students. Special care was taken to ensure the camera was not directed at one student whose parent had not consented
to participation in the study. Audio recordings were used to record the teacher and whole class instruction and her work with small groups.

*Interviews*

In order to study the teacher’s perspectives on knowledge and teaching practices, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations (Spradley, 1980) were conducted as primary data collection sources for identifying patterns and principles of teaching (Zaharlick & Green, 1991). By engaging in interviews, the teacher was given opportunities to reflect on her learning and teaching experiences. The teacher was interviewed as emerging questions and categories developed throughout the five day observation period. I interviewed the teacher before observing the classroom and after observation to build on the previous interview, to seek elaboration and to have her expand on previously mentioned information. I hoped to gain the participant teacher’s trust and confidence so that sharing her perspective was an opportunity to learn what the teacher understood about her own teaching. After analyzing what was observed in the classroom, I asked the teacher to discuss her understandings as reflected in her teaching and to provide any additional information or materials that were relevant to the study. By using a backwards mapping investigative design (Dixon & Green, 2005), I examined what understandings the teacher revealed about the ways her knowledge influenced her teaching of reading comprehension to the students. In addition, through the interviews I continued to obtain more in-depth information about the teacher’s perspective and how she constructed meaning from her teaching practices and her students’ learning.
experiences (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). I also used an informal conversational interview (Patton, 2002) approach to collect understanding from the teacher’s perspectives.

Data Analysis

Yin (2006) suggests that if the motive for a case study is to address the research question then techniques for analyzing the data should be developed through those questions first. To begin my analysis I first looked for ways to answer sub-questions to my research question: What does a third grade teacher know about reading? What does the teacher know about teaching diverse English language learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students? How does the teacher understand and know ways to help her students comprehend what they read?

In analyzing the teacher’s interviews and observations I aimed to uncover what the teacher knew in relation to her teaching practices and what may have not been visible to the teacher or to me as an observer about interrelationships of teacher knowledge and practices. As a first layer of analysis, I transcribed all video and audio recordings in order to establish familiarity with them (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999) and gain initial insights about ways teacher knowledge is reflected in her practice of teaching reading comprehension. I then used the transcripts of the videos to identify classroom activities in which the teacher explicitly taught reading comprehension. After identifying the classroom practices, I juxtaposed video record data with the interview data to look for connections between teacher practices and her pedagogical
content knowledge for those practices. This use of transcripts from video and audio records enabled me to maintain the focus on identifying the pedagogical content knowledge that drove the teacher’s teaching practices and determined what counted as (Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003) teaching comprehension from the teacher’s point of view. Throughout my data analysis, I asked the teacher to review the videotapes to verify that I correctly identified the teacher’s own interpretation of what occurred.

Merriam (2009) suggests that qualitative data should be analyzed simultaneously with data collection. My data analyses included two primary phases. In the first, I used the first interview with the teacher to explore what knowledge, sources of knowledge, and teaching practices the teacher revealed as her resources for teaching reading comprehension. In the second phase, I relied more on the video observation data and juxtaposed those data with analyses of the first and follow up interviews as well as with classroom artifacts. In this second phase my goal was to identify how the knowledge of reading comprehension and of the students was enacted in the teacher’s practice. Analyses of the teacher’s discourse with students during the observations enabled me to examine how the teacher’s knowledge reflected her understanding of how her students understood and learned comprehension.

During the first phase, I read and reread the transcript of the first interview and the accompanying fieldnotes while making notes to myself about reflections, tentative categories, ideas, and things derived from this first set of data. I started by asking broad questions and coding the interview for evidence. I began by coding the transcript to answer: What does the teacher know? Then I coded the transcript a second time to answer: What does the teacher know about teaching reading
comprehension? A third round of coding was done to answer the question: What does the teacher know about teaching ELLs and SEDs? Next, I created lists to identify and categorize the type of knowledge and sources for that knowledge (e.g., childhood experiences, student experiences, professional experiences, personal experiences).

After coding for teacher knowledge, I repeated the process but this time I coded the transcript for teacher knowledge of practices, teacher knowledge of practices for teaching reading comprehension, and teacher knowledge of teaching practices for teaching ELLs, and SEDs. I created a second list to identify and categorize teaching practices. (Merriam, 2009) states that the construction of categories is a highly inductive process for the researcher at the beginning but it becomes a more deductive process as the categories from the data become more recurring. Once I had derived a tentative scheme of categories, I sorted the evidence for these categories. I continued to use this process of coding and categorizing so that I could identify what the teacher knew and how she used her understanding in her practices. In categorizing the teacher knowledge and practices, I could identify how the teacher knew about what teaching practices she used to teach comprehension. (e.g., learned practices from professional training, from observation and practice, from personal background knowledge).

For the second phase of my study, I relied on field notes of classroom observations and video recordings of the teacher’s instruction and interaction with students during instruction. I viewed the video records to construct event maps that were coded with time frames to further analysis. From the event maps, field notes, and video records I identified the most frequented comprehension activities the teacher
used in her daily instruction: summarization, word study, and pre-reading activities. Video records were reviewed for the time frames of the selected comprehension activities and transcribed further analysis. The teacher was interviewed to share her perspective and understanding of what occurred during those recorded time frames. Follow up interviews were used to gain the teacher’s perspective and clarify the researcher’s interpretations. Using the theoretical concept of pedagogical content knowledge, I focused on indentifying how the teacher’s content and pedagogical knowledge were enacted in her teaching practice.

Summary

By examining the relationship between teacher knowledge of reading comprehension and the teaching practices employed by the teacher, this case study sought to examine ways of making teacher knowledge visible and to build a foundation for how to study teacher pedagogical content knowledge. This study has the potential to provide an understanding of what instructional challenges and possible professional development is needed to assist the teacher in teaching reading comprehension. The case study methodology allowed me to gain an understanding of the relationship between the teacher’s stated knowledge, beliefs and her actual teaching practices. I sought to uncover how a bilingual teacher’s understanding of reading comprehension was reflected in her teaching practices.

In chapter four, I present the analyses of the data to provide evidence for teacher knowledge of reading comprehension and ways she uses her knowledge in her
practice to meet the needs of her ELL and SED students. The findings of this study have the potential to contribute to the larger knowledge base about what teachers identify as knowledge and how that knowledge influences teaching practices. The overall findings and implications will be discussed in chapter five.
CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSES

The purpose of this chapter is to present the analyses for answering my research question: How does a third grade bilingual teacher’s knowledge and teaching practices reflect her understanding of how students learn comprehension? The research study employed a case study methodology (Yin, 2006) to study how Ms. Maxine’s knowledge and understanding of reading comprehension was enacted in her teaching practices. This case study aimed at identifying the teacher knowledge that was enacted in the instructional practices based on the teacher’s own understanding of how reading comprehension is learned. This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I present the teacher as she described herself in the interviews. Second, I present an exploratory analysis of the teacher interview for uncovering teacher knowledge. In the third section, I focus on explaining the triangulation of observation, interviews and artifacts for evidence of how the teacher’s knowledge is enacted in teaching practices.

Ms. Maxine’s Story

In this section I present Ms. Maxine’s representation of herself throughout the interviews. This narrative was constructed using data from formal and informal interviews with the teacher. The teacher reviewed and confirmed this representation. To distinguish my analytic lens from the self-representation of the teacher, in this section I use italics for the teacher’s first person presentation of herself.

Ms. Maxine grew up in a bilingual household that used English and Spanish to
communicate with her parents and older siblings. She describes how her home environment supported and facilitated her learning of literacy.

I was very fortunate as a child to have parents that promoted literacy in my home. My parents had limited educational opportunities having only reached a sixth grade education, but they were very much aware of the importance of acquiring knowledge to be successful. We were not affluent and our sources of entertainment were our school literature, family culture and history, imagination and creativity. I remember my aunt telling us stories, poems and riddles or Spanish “adivinansas” as we lay in the backyard looking at the night sky. My mother would retell our family tree and the trials and triumphs of our ancestors. Listening to and singing along with my father and uncle as they played their guitars was a weekly occurrence. Both English and Spanish were spoken and read in my home.

Ms. Maxine’s family had a major influence on how she developed literacy. They provided opportunities for her to interact with literacy in multiple ways. The use of storytelling, singing, and role playing developed her love for reading. The experiences she shared with her family built her knowledge background for understanding literacy. She describes how she learned to read.

Being the youngest, I was also the pupil to my siblings “teacher” role play. I would listen to them read stories from their school literature books. I would act out designated parts in their stories. I would listen to my mother and siblings discuss the stories and the subsequent answers to the given questions. Our love for reading prompted my parents to be the first in our neighborhood
to purchase World Book Encyclopedias. We used these for general reading and discussion as well as for research. “Oh, the places we would go!” is a phrase that best describes our home. We could visit any city or country through our books. This information added to our imagination and fed our creative/dramatic play. Who knew we were learning comprehension? This rich foundation and interaction with others made it possible for me to comprehend what I read or heard rather easily. The skill was refined through reading strategies learned in school.

Ms. Maxine’s experiences in learning literacy were associated with the idea that reading had a purpose and was important; it was a way to see the world by creating mental images from the text. Reading was a source of entertainment and a road map to education. Ms. Maxine shared that she chose to become a teacher because of her experience as a student tutor at the age of fifteen.

Ms. Maxine was afforded the opportunity to work as a student tutor in a second grade class. Later, as a certified teacher she gained experiences from the schools in which she worked. Through those personal and professional experiences she acquired a practical knowledge for teaching reading.

As a Student Tutor: I worked with this really nice second grade teacher. I loved reading with her. She did reading in a way that I just enjoyed. She had her groups [the teacher] and I said I really like learning like that. When the teacher became ill and didn’t return to school, I took over. Although the substitute teacher was there, for two hours each day, I did the group rotations and I did the lesson plans and I assigned the homework. Since then I thought, I
want to do this because I was helping students and they were learning. It was all because of that one teacher, how she did it. (How the teacher taught students.)

As a beginning Teacher: I started teaching in first grade. It was just a very hard, hard year but, we got through it. We learned. It was a learning experience and all I had learned really helped me to apply it in my classroom. After teaching first grade for 4 years, I taught 2nd grade because I moved to California. From California we moved to Wisconsin where I taught K, 2nd and then reading pull out for ESL 3rd, 4th, and 5th. While, I was there, I learned how to use guided reading by Fountas and Pinnell. They [the persons doing the training] would come to our school. They would videotape us and they would tell us this is what you are doing, this is what you need to do. I really learned a lot. I could focus on the children individually and we did the guided level reading books. I did that with K and then with 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade.

Ms. Maxine is an avid reader. She collects children’s literature and she enjoys reading to her students as a way of creating interest in students and nurturing a love for reading. Ms. Maxine explains her philosophy for how comprehension is learned.

I believe reading for comprehension begins with language, literacy, life experiences and interaction in the home. If the children have not had this interaction it becomes difficult for them to learn the concept in the classroom. As a teacher, I have to provide background information and use particular
strategies to draw out their knowledge.

Ms. Maxine has knowledge of her students’ literacy practices and maintains a balance for teaching reading skills and comprehension through experiences with the literature. Understanding her students provides knowledge for planning and presenting instruction that meets students’ needs and abilities. Ms. Maxine explains what she knows about her students’ literacy competencies.

Out of the 20 students in my class only four of them read for entertainment. The rest of them read only to comply with school assignments. Yet, some of them still haven’t mastered the basic mechanics of reading, or developed the appropriate fluency rate to assist them in understanding what they read. In order to develop their comprehension skills the reading selections must be of interest or personal value, engaging, contain illustrations and most of all they need to share verbally and in written form how they feel about the story and retell what it was about.

Ms. Maxine’s teaching practices involve engaging students in discussions and interacting with text. Her instructional practices consist of activities for engaging students in using literacy practices. She guides her students through discussions about the topics and concepts they are going to read. Throughout the lessons, Ms. Maxine would provide probing questions to keep students engaged in seeking information from the text they are reading. After completing the reading, Ms. Maxine provides students with opportunities to express their questions, ideas, feelings, and understanding of what they read. She has students write summaries, research to find more information about the topic, and write journal entries of ideas and feelings about
what they read, and write their predictions and questions they want answered. Students are allowed to work in groups and are given time to present their work to the class.

Ms. Maxine explained how she likes to teach her students reading comprehension.

*To teach my students, I first provide background information, take them through the steps of visualizing the text and then address the colorful language used to enhance the text. Guiding questions to help them use their knowledge about what was read is also used. Allowing time for discussion with the teacher or peers is essential. Then illustrating, dramatizing and writing about the selection is the final step to building comprehension skills.*

This narrative from Ms. Maxine helped me to get an insider’s perspective of her knowledge and beliefs about how comprehension is learned. It also provided a perspective of what Ms. Maxine knew about teaching reading to meet the abilities and needs of her students. This narrative provided the background for identifying how Ms. Maxine’s personal and professional experiences for learning to read influence her practical knowledge for teaching reading comprehension to her students. Ms. Maxine’s teaching practices revolved around a purpose she identified for reading: *I want my students to understand.*

**Exploratory Analysis of the First Interview**

After the initial interview with Ms. Maxine, I reviewed both the audio and video recordings to make sure that they were clear and audible. Next, I began to
transcribe the teacher’s conversation during our interview. I replayed the recording many times to review and revise my transcription until it was completed. Then I read the script to separate the content into thought units of what the teacher said. A whole thought unit was a unified idea that focused on the intention and meaning of the statement that the teacher expressed. For example the thought unit: 

*It was interesting because I spoke English and everyone understood me but I also understood their Spanish* conveyed a unified message that expressed how the teacher had interaction with two languages (English and Spanish). As I separated each thought unit, I numbered them consecutively as they had occurred. I labeled them with the timing on the audio recorder to facilitate returning to review each segment for further analyses or for follow up interviews.

My purpose for conducting an exploratory analysis of the interview was to help me establish familiarity with what Ms. Maxine knew and how I could identify her knowledge and practices for teaching reading comprehension and her knowledge and understanding of her students’ abilities and needs for acquiring comprehension. I began with a focus on answering part of my first sub-question: What does the teacher know about teaching reading comprehension to ELLs and SEDs? First, I searched for, *What did the teacher know?* I began by underlining all the nouns and verbs that identified a way of knowing. Next, I constructed a list that singled out what the teacher knows from all the other information on the transcript. Table 4.1 represents what the teacher said in the interview that signaled her knowledge of teaching reading comprehension. In creating this table, I focused on identifying what counted as teacher knowledge.
Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Does the Teacher Know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning reading time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting a career path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting students to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using vocabulary in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting rid of preconceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing students for what they need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being prepared to adapt or change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being the task master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep students thinking and predicting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As represented in Table 4.1, teacher knowledge consisted of actions such as: planning reading time, teaching vocabulary, using vocabulary in context, providing natural experiences, observing for needs, and adapting to change. These actions identified the teacher’s personal, professional and practical ways of knowing and teaching.

During a second reading, I focused on answering the rest of the sub-question to identify knowledge about reading comprehension. In the initial interview Ms. Maxine described how she taught comprehension:

> So, I give a little bit about that background, I give them a little bit about my personal background so they’ll know. And then we just do the vocabulary, of course. Because they have not very much of that. And we start more into the reading and we treat it more like a reading lesson than a science lesson because there is so much word usage in there. And we just use the same skills.
Ms. Maxine, provides her understanding and knowledge for teaching reading comprehension as a practice she has to share with students. She states, *I have to give them a bit about my personal background, so they’ll know.* Her belief is that students *don’t have very much* background for knowing what is required for comprehending. Therefore, she shares her own background experiences and refers to students’ home and community to help them build connections and comprehension of texts.

To identify Ms. Maxine’s knowledge of reading comprehension, I reviewed the transcript for actions that represented Ms. Maxine's knowledge more specific to reading and reading comprehension. From the whole transcript, I selected the relevant thought units and then underlined the specific nouns and verbs that represented the teacher’s knowledge. Table 4.2 represents how I selected the words *students to understand what they're going to learn* and *give them a little preview* as ways to teach comprehension.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Time on the audio record</th>
<th>Underlining for practices of teaching reading comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>11:02</td>
<td><em>Well, I like the students to understand what they're going to learn. So, I kinda give them a little preview of what the next chapter is going to be about.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>11:40</td>
<td><em>So, I give a little bit about that background, I give them a little bit about my personal background so they’ll know.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>11:48</td>
<td><em>And then we just do the vocabulary, of course. Because they just don’t have very much of that.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thought unit 40, is the teacher’s response to the interview question: Tell me how you teach? I underlined *students to understand what they’re going to learn* and *give them a little preview* to identify the teacher’s knowledge to build students’ prior knowledge for comprehension. In thought unit 43, I underlined *I give them a little bit about my personal background so they’ll know* to identify that the teacher related her own knowledge as information for students. In thought unit 44, I underlined *do the vocabulary* to identify what the teacher did as a teaching practice to help students acquire understanding of new words.

Using the underlined statements, I next constructed a list of the nouns and actions signaling teacher knowledge of reading comprehension. In constructing this list I focused more specifically on the teacher’s knowledge of reading comprehension. I focused on identifying what counted as reading comprehension knowledge. The list consisted of phrases such as: *planning reading time, teaching vocabulary, using vocabulary in context, guiding reading, selecting leveled books.* These items identified the teacher’s knowledge about teaching reading comprehension. Table 4.3 is a representation of what I identified as knowledge for reading comprehension.

A third reading of the transcript focused on answering the rest of the sub-question: What does the teacher know about teaching English language learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students? I searched for teacher knowledge about students. I followed the same process I had followed to find teacher knowledge and teacher knowledge of comprehension to identify the teacher’s knowledge of diverse students.
To focus more specifically on what I could identify as teacher knowledge of ELL and SED students I underlined relevant thought units. The items identified in the thought units represented in table 4.4 provide a brief representation of what I focused on to identify teacher knowledge for working with diverse students. I looked for ways the teacher talked about her own background in teaching English learners and about the characteristics of students with whom she had worked throughout her experience. I also searched for specific practices the teacher may have used with her diverse students. However, in my search to identify the teacher’s knowledge about teaching ELLs and SED students, I could not find any mention of specific techniques, strategies or methods for instruction of these students. Although, I could not identify specific practices the teacher mentioned for knowing how to teach ELLs and SEDs it is reasonable to assume that since the teacher states, “I have always worked with low socioeconomic status students regardless of where I have been. It’s always been the poorest area and the most neediest students” that all or most of her teaching experience has been with students who fall under these descriptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Knowledge of Reading Comprehension</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asking about the characters</td>
<td>Explaining to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring reading to life</td>
<td>Providing opportunities to share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing vocabulary</td>
<td>Practicing words in sentences, poems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying word meaning</td>
<td>Predicting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposing students to different genres</td>
<td>Previewing questions as a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking students about the story</td>
<td>Applying prior knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving immediate feedback</td>
<td>Previewing the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having students explain</td>
<td>Providing books that students can read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping students by ability</td>
<td>Providing natural experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for evidence of learning</td>
<td>Following a guided reading program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing a desire to read</td>
<td>Reading to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing personal knowledge</td>
<td>Providing shared reading practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3
knowledge and practices are in fact knowledge for teaching ELLs and SEDs.

Table 4.4

**What Does the Teacher Know?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Thought Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>7:03</td>
<td><em>I am bilingual and ESL certified. It helped me get a job in Wisconsin because even though I didn’t know the language, they had the Hmong population there...the ESL techniques was what they were looking for.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>7:25</td>
<td><em>I have always worked with low socioeconomic status students regardless of where I have been. It’s always been the poorest area and the most neediest students...but you[I] learn so much.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>7:38</td>
<td><em>You [I] learn how to adapt...if this doesn’t work, let’s try this. This I tried over there at the other school and you [I] incorporate all those things.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>7:51</td>
<td><em>It was interesting, learning a new culture...the families were wonderful, very humble, very giving.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In thought unit 32, I identified that the teacher has knowledge of ELL student because she is bilingual and ESL certified. In thought unit 34, I identified that the teacher’s experience has been in working with socio-economically disadvantaged students as her knowledge of teaching SED students. In thought unit 35, I underlined “I learned to adapt” identifying that the teacher’s knowledge has been a learning process and not an exact practice for knowing how to teach ELLs and SEDs. In thought unit 36, I identified, “learning a new culture” as a way the teacher’s knowledge was developed.

After identifying teacher knowledge, teacher knowledge of reading comprehension, and teacher knowledge of students, I looked for connections between teacher knowledge and teaching practices to identify the pedagogical content.
knowledge the teacher possessed. Using my research question as my focus, How does a teacher’s knowledge and practices reflect her understanding? I sought to identify how the teacher knew. I reviewed all the thought units I had used in previous analyses and assigned an action to each thought unit or group of units to identify what categorical knowledge the teacher possessed. Table 4.5 is a representation of this process.

Table 4.5

*Categories of Knowledge*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Thought Unit</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>11:02</td>
<td><em>Well, I like the students to understand what they’re going to learn. So, I kinda give them a little preview of what the next chapter is going to be about.</em></td>
<td>Previewing lesson</td>
<td>Pre-reading skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>11:40</td>
<td><em>So, I give a little bit about that background, I give them a little bit about my personal background so they’ll know.</em></td>
<td>Sharing personal background knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>11:48</td>
<td><em>And then we just do the vocabulary, of course. Because they just don’t have very much of that.</em></td>
<td>Reviewing vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In thought unit 40, I identified students to understand and give them a little preview as an action the teacher practiced. In thought unit 43, I underlined, give them a little bit about my personal background to identify the action represented in the teacher’s knowledge. In thought unit 44, I identified do the vocabulary as the act of knowing. In Table 4.4 the thought units 40 and 43 were categorized as *Preview lesson.*
These thought units represented ways of building students’ comprehension before reading. Therefore, these statements were categorized as knowledge of pre-reading activities as a way for teaching reading comprehension.

As I constructed a focused representation, I made a list of the categories identified for teacher knowledge. The categories included: building vocabulary, modeling think aloud, building background, observing and reflecting, identifying student needs, teaching reading, teaching practices, knowing students, and learning from experiences. In identifying the categories, I gained an understanding of what teacher knowledge informed the teaching practices enacted in the classroom. For example, in table 4.4 thought unit 40, the teacher indicates her knowledge about previewing the lesson, in thought unit 43, she knows about sharing background knowledge, and in thought unit 44, the teacher knows about reviewing vocabulary. These thought units represent what the teacher knows. When I pose the question, how does the teacher know, the category pre-reading skills identifies that the teacher knows about previewing the lesson, sharing background knowledge and about reviewing vocabulary.

To examine further how the teacher’s knowledge developed, during the fourth reading of the transcript, I focused on identifying how the teacher’s knowledge was acquired. I discovered that the teacher had gained understanding and knowledge throughout her personal and professional experiences. Table 4.6 is a representation of what knowledge the teacher acquired during different stages of her life.

Ms. Maxine’s experiences as a child laid the foundation for her beliefs and knowledge for literacy. As a student tutor, Ms. Maxine gained knowledge from
observation and practice. As a professional, Ms. Maxine participated in professional training and worked in different schools. These experiences provided her the opportunities to gain knowledge from others in the teaching field. Through her professional experiences in different states, schools, and with students at different grade levels, she also learned about different student populations (e.g., Hmong students in Wisconsin). Her personal learning experiences marked her as an individual constantly seeking knowledge from others through talking, observing colleagues, attending professional development, seeking out resources, and reading books.

Table 4.6

Repertoire of Teacher Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childhood Knowledge</th>
<th>Student Knowledge</th>
<th>Professional Knowledge</th>
<th>Personal Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing up bilingual</td>
<td>Observed a teacher</td>
<td>Teaching with guidance</td>
<td>Talk with other teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story telling</td>
<td>Observed students</td>
<td>Following a program</td>
<td>Observed other teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to others read</td>
<td>Student tutor</td>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>Resource Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to learn to read</td>
<td>classroom management</td>
<td>ESL Certification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretend to play school</td>
<td>Teach diverse students</td>
<td>Bilingual Certification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first column represents what I underlined as segments from the teacher’s personal experiences as a child. The teacher described her early childhood years as supportive in facilitating her literacy development and language acquisition. The next column represents what I underlined as segments from the teacher’s personal experiences as a fifteen year old student tutor. As a student tutor the teacher had observed and practiced working with students in small groups to meet their needs,
previewing a lesson with students, teaching content and skills, acting out parts, reading to students, and discussing the story. The third column, I represent the knowledge gained from the teacher’s professional experience for knowing how to meet individual needs through guided reading and leveled books. This analysis indicated that teacher knowledge developed not only in formal professional training, but also through personal experiences, informal conversations, and reflection (Skukauskaite, 2009).

Through the analyses of how the teacher acquired her knowledge, I discovered that Ms. Maxine was a lifelong learner and used varied experiences to develop the repertoire of her knowledge for teaching.

Identifying Teacher Practices

A second level in analyzing the interview was to answer a part of the second sub-question: What are teacher practices for teaching comprehension? I began with a focus on what are teacher practices. I followed the same process of identifying thought units by underlining actions that identified a teaching practice. A representation of how I identified the practices is presented in table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Knowledge of Teaching Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always be open to different things</th>
<th>Have students explain</th>
<th>Predict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apply prior knowledge</td>
<td>Internalize and use it for the rest of their lives</td>
<td>Preview questions as a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask about the characters</td>
<td>Know it well enough and use it real-world every day</td>
<td>Preview the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions</td>
<td>Know your students and their abilities</td>
<td>Provide books that students can read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask students about the story</td>
<td>Look for evidence of learning</td>
<td>Provide natural experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be positive</td>
<td>Look for information on</td>
<td>Read to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be prepared</td>
<td>Repertoire of different</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe “I can do it”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7 represents all the practices identified as an action the teacher used or knew about. I recognized that the teacher’s knowledge and knowledge of practices were interrelated. For example: the category Pre-Reading Skills can be conceived as teacher knowledge but it can also be construed as a teaching practice. I realized that teacher knowledge encompassed the knowledge of knowing how to teach as in knowledge of teaching practices.

During this process I realized that just like the teacher knowledge was a compilation of a lifetime of experiences, the teaching practices were also acquired during different life stages. I listed them on a separate page and divided them into sections representing the teacher’s life time. By making a separate list I could focus on identifying how the teacher acquired her knowledge of teaching practices. I found that the teacher’s knowledge constructed into practices came from early childhood or student experiences, personal experience, and professional experience. I created a representation of what I had identified as her teaching practices and separated the
practices by stages in the teacher’s life where she had acquired those skills. I created Table 4.8 to identify how the teacher knew about practices according to the different life stages.

Table 4.8

*Teacher Knowledge Sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Group rotations</td>
<td>Small group</td>
<td>Ways of saying/doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking/interacting</td>
<td>Group activities</td>
<td>Leveled books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build background</td>
<td>Lesson Plans</td>
<td>ESL techniques</td>
<td>Eng/Span teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Ability grouping</td>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>Opportunities to share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualizing</td>
<td>Acting out parts</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Know students’ ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference books</td>
<td>Giving feedback</td>
<td>Predicting</td>
<td>Share personal experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read leveled books</td>
<td>Preview the lesson</td>
<td>Teach content areas</td>
<td>Interact with text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read to students</td>
<td>Talk about characters</td>
<td>like a reading lesson</td>
<td>Use other resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leveled books</td>
<td>Teach voc/word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>usage in context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The representation in table 4.8 gave me a better perspective of how the teacher had acquired the knowledge of teaching practices and what beliefs and teaching practices she used for teaching reading comprehension. To analyze the rest of the sub-question: What are teacher practices for teaching ELLs and SEDs reading comprehension? To understand what she knew about working with these diverse students, I reviewed the transcript once again to select the thought units directly relating to teacher practices of working with ELL and SED students. I constructed table 4.9 to make visible how the
thought units included both the teacher's knowledge of teaching practices and the teacher's knowledge for teaching ELL and SED students.

The representation of knowledge of practices and knowledge of students in table 4.9 demonstrates the teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge for how to teach reading comprehension. Column one: Teacher knowledge, represents what the teacher knows about reading comprehension. Column two: Knowledge of teaching practices represents teacher knowledge of teaching comprehension. Column three: Knowledge for teaching ELLs and SEDs represents the special knowledge for teaching ELLs and SEDs comprehension that meets their needs and abilities. The representation in table 4.9 gave me a better perspective of how the teacher had acquired the knowledge of teaching practices and what beliefs and teaching practices she used for teaching reading comprehension. This representation in table 4.9 helped to make connections of how teacher’s knowledge of reading comprehension gave understanding to knowledge of teaching practices and how practices were adapted to meet students’ needs. For example: In column one, I identified following an instructional method as a way of knowing about how to teaching reading comprehension. In column two, I connect knowledge of reading to the practice of implementing a guided reading approach. In column three, I connected the knowledge of reading comprehension to teaching guided reading to a technique of way for supporting ELLs and SEDs needs to learn comprehension.
### Table 4.9

*Teacher Knowledge for Teaching Comprehension, Teaching Practices, and Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge for teaching reading comprehension</th>
<th>Knowledge of teaching practices</th>
<th>Knowledge for teaching ELLs/SED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>If I follow the (2nd grade teacher’s)</em> instructional methods for teaching reading, students will learn.*</td>
<td>follow guided reading program</td>
<td>techniques for second language learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Experiencing how I helped students to learn to read produced a desire to teach and become a teacher.</em></td>
<td>shared reading</td>
<td>use student’s primary language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I meet students’ needs with small groups, leveled books and adapt learning to their level.</em></td>
<td>opportunities for students to share</td>
<td>know student’s abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Preview with students what they will be learning next so that they are ready to learn.</em></td>
<td>share personal experiences with students</td>
<td>observe students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Story telling and listening to stories is a way to learn how to visualize and comprehend.</em></td>
<td>focus on individual needs</td>
<td>learn about the student’s culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Share reading, talk and interact with others to visualize and build vocabulary.</em></td>
<td>read at students’ reading level</td>
<td>read to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>All students want to learn and if they don’t learn there is something hindering their ability to learn.</em></td>
<td>build background knowledge</td>
<td>develop students’ ability to visualize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Type of resources and book can make a difference in how students learn reading comprehension.</em></td>
<td>preview lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>If you have books you have everything.</em></td>
<td>Teacher knowledge of available resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nurture the desire and attitude to read by being positive.</em></td>
<td>books as sources of teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Through this exploratory analysis, I identified Ms. Maxine’s knowledge of reading comprehension, knowledge of teaching practices and knowledge of students. I uncovered how she acquired her knowledge for reading comprehension and knowledge of teaching practices. In my exploratory analysis of the initial interview transcript, I made several revisions to my method of identifying and categorizing thought units. It was difficult to distinguish the teacher’s knowledge from teaching practices. As I searched for the knowledge of practices I posed the question of how the teacher knew about teaching reading comprehension and how that knowledge was enacted into classroom practices. Then, a second search for how the teacher knew about teaching reading identified the knowledge of practices learned through the teacher’s life experiences. As I read through the transcript to identify the practices, I found that it was difficult to separate the teacher’s knowledge from the teacher’s practices. This became even more evident as I tried to identify what the teacher knew about reading comprehension and the teacher’s practices for teaching reading comprehension.

Orton (1993, 1996) identified two problems when researching teacher knowledge base. The first, is the “tacit problem” from which teacher knowledge appears to be more of a skill or knowledge for what to do in the classroom. Orton suggests that relating this skill to something that the teacher knows is rather impossible and can best be done by describing how successful some teachers are at
getting students to learn. The second problem is the “situated problem” from which
teacher knowledge is dependent on instances of time, place, and context, and lacks the
general character of knowledge in the subjects. Understanding the connectivity of
teacher knowledge and knowledge practice helped me to keep the focus on identifying
how Ms. Maxine knew rather than only focusing what she knew about teaching
comprehension and teaching students.

By maintaining focus on my research question: How does a teacher’s
knowledge and practices reflect her understanding of how ELLs and SED students
learn reading comprehension? I was able to uncover not only what but also how Ms.
Maxine knew about reading comprehension, working with students, and teaching the
subject matter. I identified that the teacher had a repertoire of experiences and beliefs
that influenced her knowledge and practice. During the interview I found that teacher
knowledge and knowledge of practice are related and that they influence what the
teacher enacts into her teaching.

Researchers argue that the educational research field has not provided enough
evidence of what knowledge and perspectives teachers possess, what they learn in
teacher education courses, and what they practice in the teaching field that result in
positive academic growth for ELLs (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Hollins &
differentiated instruction, leveled readers, and small group instruction. In this analysis
I uncovered that throughout her life, Ms. Maxine had different experiences that
defined her understanding for teaching reading comprehension and influenced her
teaching practices.
Analysis of Observations and Interviews

For the second part of my analysis on teacher knowledge and practice, I focused on observations and interviews with the teacher to gain her perspective of what knowledge and practices are reflected in her teaching. In this part of the analysis, I present findings on how teacher’s knowledge and practices were enacted in the instruction of reading comprehension. Utilizing the theoretical framework for this study, I used pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) as a lens to answer my research question: How does a bilingual teacher’s knowledge and practice reflect her understanding of how ELLs and SEDs learn reading comprehension.

Three basic questions guided my inquiry of Ms. Maxine’s understanding and reason for implementing the specific comprehension activities across subject areas on a daily basis. In posing these three questions I aimed at keeping focus on the pedagogical content knowledge that guided Ms. Maxine’s instructional practices of teaching summarization, pre-reading, and making connections through word-study skills. These three questions focused on what was teacher’s knowledge of content, knowledge of practice and knowledge of students.

- What do you know and understand about teaching this skill?

- What do you know about your students’ needs and abilities for learning this skill?

- How did you acquire knowledge about the instructional practice, resource, or curricular program that you used to teach this skill?
I chose to analyze summarization, pre-reading, and word-study instruction because they occurred most frequently throughout the five days I observed Ms. Maxine’s class instruction. In table 4.10 I provide a representation of the frequency in which summarization, pre-reading, and word study instruction were taught across the subject areas during the five days I observed Ms. Maxine’s class instruction. The comprehension activities are italicized in the table.

Table 4.10

*Comprehension Activities for Each Day*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word study</td>
<td>Word study</td>
<td>Word study</td>
<td>Word study</td>
<td>Word study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Pre-reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-reading</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Pre-reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Programs</td>
<td>Special Programs</td>
<td>Special Programs</td>
<td>Special Programs</td>
<td>Special Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predict</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Retelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social St. Pre-Reading</td>
<td>Social St. Pre-Reading</td>
<td>Social St. Pre-Reading</td>
<td>Social St.</td>
<td>Social St. Pre-Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word study</td>
<td>Word study</td>
<td>Word study</td>
<td>Word study</td>
<td>Word study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-reading</td>
<td>Pre-reading</td>
<td>Pre-reading</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Pre-reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predict</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Retelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each column represents a day of observation. Under each day the rows below represent the subjects taught and the instructional strategies used. For example: On day one, the teacher used word study during the language period. On the next row for day one, the teacher used pre-reading activities during the reading period. The row
underneath reading represents the special programs’ period. During this period, the teacher used an activity for predicting. On the following row below, for the social studies period, the teacher used pre-reading activities. No comprehension strategies were identified during the Math period. Finally, the information on the last row of the column represent what activities occurred during that day and the total of times they were used during the day. The number to the right signifies how many times the teacher used that activity during the day. For instance, on day one, word study was taught one time (during the language arts), pre-reading was taught twice (during reading and social studies) and predicting was taught once (during special programs).

Over the course of the five instructional days, Ms. Maxine provided instruction on pre-reading strategies seven times and summarizing six times. See Appendix for a complete event map of the activities taught throughout the five days. The following will present a review of what occurred during Ms. Maxine’s instructional practices for teaching reading comprehension through summarization, pre-reading activities and making connections through word study. First, I present Ms. Maxine’s lesson on summarization.

Ms. Maxine’s Lesson on Summarizing

This selection on comprehension instruction offered a representation of what the teacher knows about how to teach summarization so that students develop logical thinking and reasoning for comprehending what they read. The teacher also demonstrated her knowledge of the teaching practice and approach for guiding students’ thinking and understanding from unrealistic to the logical through the use of
guided questions during her discourse with each individual student. The lesson segment was selected from the first day’s class video observation identified as representative of a summarization activity used by Ms. Maxine to provide students with comprehension instruction.

The students had read the story, *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco on the day before I did my first observation. Ms. Maxine shared a summary of the story with me:

*This story is about an immigrant family that came to America for a better life. They worked hard and were not very affluent. They used old unusable clothing or cloth items to create quilts. Shirts and dresses that once had been worn, old tablecloths, handkerchiefs, scarfs were items used to create the quilt. The quilt was used for play time to make tents or capes, for babies, and as a huppa at a wedding. The quilt was passed on from generation to generation. When the author, Patricia had her own children she wrapped them in the quilt to take them home. She told her children the stories behind each piece of cloth and that is how she kept the family’s memories alive.*

I observed Ms. Maxine ask students one by one to stand by their chair and read their summary of the *The Keeping Quilt* aloud. Some of the students had not completed their summary and others that did finish the assignment had trouble identifying key parts as represented in the following discourse with teacher and student in table 4.11, table 4.12, and table 4.13. Each table represents the interaction and discourse between Ms. Maxine and a student about the summary. Ms. Maxine uses a summary guide she calls: *someone, wanted, but, so then* as a format to help
students identify the main character as *someone*; the goal as in *wanted*; the problem as in *but*, the solution as in *so*, and the outcome as in *then*. Table 4.11 represents the student’s and teacher’s discourse to identify the problem and solution, or the *wanted* and *but* summary points of the story.

Yamilex is asked to read her summary first. In line 1, Yamilex reads but her summary does not make sense. In line 2, Ms. Maxine does not address the details of the summary. Ms. Maxine acknowledges that Yamilex has correctly identified the main character and states *So, Anna is the main character*, and then poses the question, *so what is the problem?* In line 3, Yamilex responds, Anna wanted to come back home to be with her family. In line 4, Ms. Maxine once again asks, *so what’s the problem?* keeping Yamilex’ attention focused on indentifying the problem that is preventing the family from coming together. In line 5, Yamilex’s response, Ana’s dress was getting too short, was not the correct answer. In line 6, Ms. Maxine, redirects Yamilex to rethink her response by reviewing what Yamilex does know, *Okay, her goal is to have her family together, right?* Yamilex nods, yes. Ms. Maxine asks again, *so what does it matter if her dress is too short? How can this be preventing her from getting to her goal? I’m just wondering.* Ms. Maxine’s use of the statement: I’m just wondering, is indicative of how she models her thinking aloud so students can hear her thought process.
Table 4.11

Teacher Discourse with Yamilex on Summarization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yamilex</td>
<td>Ana is the main character. Ana wanted to go back home already and have all her family back home and together, so it was Ana’s dress was getting smaller and she was getting bigger in her goal and in the solution…so someday she would take the quilt with her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td>So, Ana is the main character. And what was the goal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yamilex</td>
<td>Ana wanted to go already and have all of her family back home and together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td>But what was that the problem?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5    | Yamilex | Ana’s dress was getting too small  

*Okay, her goal is to have her family together, right? So what does it matter if her dress is too short? How can that be preventing her from getting to her goal? I’m just wondering.*

| 7    | Ms. Maxine | How can that be preventing her from getting to her goal of getting the family together? So my dress is too small, is that going to prevent my aunts, uncles, and cousins from coming to the party? |
| 8    | Yamilex | No.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 9    | Ms. Maxine | Okay, so it doesn’t make sense, dear. How does her dress being too small preventing her family from getting together? Someone wanted, but, so then…the problem has to be solved, the problem has to be something that is preventing them from reaching their goal. Sit down please, let’s have someone from over here (signaling for another student to read his summary). |

Ms. Maxine waits as Yamilex ponders and then adds, *How can that be preventing her from getting to her goal of getting the family together?... So, my dress is too small, is that going to prevent my aunts, uncles and cousins from coming to the party?* In line 7, Ms. Maxine’s words *so my dress is too small* she places herself into
making a real-world connection to the story plot. This elicits a response of no from Yamilex in line 8. It is not clear if Yamilex understood because Ms. Maxine uses herself as wearing a short dress that is too short or if Yamilex guessed, no. Ms. Maxine acknowledges Yamilex’s response and in line 9 adds, *Okay, so it doesn’t make sense, dear. How does her dress being too small preventing her family from getting together?* Yamilex cannot answer and Ms. Maxine repeats, *Someone wanted, but, so then...the problem has to be solved, the problem has to be something that is preventing them from reaching their goal...Let’s have someone from over here read,* signaling for another student to share his story. In repeating the summary guide, Ms. Maxine was giving Yamilex, redirection to rethink using the summary guide.

In the discourse between Yamilex and Ms. Maxine, the teacher reviewed the summary guide questions, restated the questions, and placed herself as a person with a dress that is too short as a way of guiding Yamilex’ thinking more logically about what was the goal and problem of the story. Ms. Maxine redirects Yamilex’s thinking to use the summary guide questions but does not give her the correct answer. I observed that Ms. Maxine maintained a constant focus on identifying the goal and problem in the story by asking Yamilex to think about her responses as in a logical reason for the problem. I also noted that Ms. Maxine did not give Yamilex the answer but instead kept guiding her thinking by posing the question, *so what is the problem?* During Yamilex’ and teacher’s interaction, the rest of the students do not participate but simply listen and observe.

The next student-teacher interaction is represented in table 4.12. In this discourse, Ms. Maxine used a different approach for guiding the student’s thinking as
shown in line 18 of Table 4.12 between Ms. Maxine and Noah and in line 21 between Carlos and Ms. Maxine. In this discourse, Ms. Maxine made a connection to real-world experiences of storms that could prevent families from coming together and of funerals as a way of bring families together. Ms. Maxine demonstrated her knowledge for relating real life experiences with students as a way for them to make connections and build comprehend.

Table 4.12

*Teacher Discourse With Noah and Carlos*

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>Great grandma Ana wanted to be with her family together again, so her problem was cutting animal shapes from… but Ana’s great grandma died on Ana’s 20th birthday and then the quilt was…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td><em>Okay so what is your goal?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>The problem was cutting animal shapes from material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td><em>No, no, no, what was the goal, what did she want?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>She wanted to be with her family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td><em>Okay, she wanted to be with her family but what stopped from being with her family? That’s the problem. Was there a storm that prevented the family from being together?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>Her dress is too small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td><em>And how can that prevent people from getting together?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>The grandmother died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td><em>That’s what prevented the family from getting together? Isn’t that what brings families together? When someone dies everyone comes from out of town, so how can that prevent you from getting together?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noah stood and read his summary. In line 13, Noah’s summary lacked coherence and correctness. In line 14, Ms. Maxine focuses on having Noah respond orally to the question, *Okay, so what is your goal?* In line 15, Noah incorrectly identifies the problem as having to do with cutting animal shapes from materials. In line 16, Ms. Maxine draws Noah’s attention to rethink, *what was the goal, what did*
she want? In line 17, Noah was able to respond correctly, she wanted to be with her family. In line 18, Ms. Maxine reaffirms Noah’s response and adds *Okay…* but what stopped her from being with her family? That’s the problem? Was there a storm that prevented them from getting together? Ms. Maxine’s continues to bring the focus to what is the problem in the story. She presents the idea of a storm as a reason that could prevent families from coming together, but in line 19 Noah responds, her dress was too small, demonstrating he is not able to make the connection to the story problem.

In line 20, Ms. Maxine poses the question again, how can that prevent the family from getting together? In line 21, Carlos, the student sitting next to Noah, responds, the grandmother died. Once again, the teacher connects real-world experience to guide Carlos and Noah’s thinking. Ms. Maxine explains in line 22, Isn’t that what brings family together, when someone dies everyone comes from out of town. It is not known if students have experienced a family gathering for the purpose of coming together because of a funeral, but it is possible that some students have some background knowledge and can connect their understanding to what is taking place the story, *The Keeping Quilt*. Ms. Maxine’s mention of the funeral and family gatherings provides a way for students who have experienced this kind of family reunion to connect with the story.

A third way of guiding students understanding was observed after the last student, Hope had read her summary. Ms. Maxine retaught the summary guide as a process for Hope and the rest of the students to follow. Table 4.13 represents the discourse between Hope and Ms. Maxine. Hope has identified the goal as wanting to make a quilt but she has not identified the problem correctly.
Table 4.13  
*Teacher Discourse with Hope*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Ana was…the goal is they want to make a quilt…the problem is Ana’s dress is getting small for the party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td>So what was the solution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>I didn’t finish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td>Okay, so let’s go back and redo this. Their goal is to make a quilt. How is Ana’s dress being too small going to stop them from making a quilt? Didn’t it help them because they used the dress as part of it to make the quilt? So how can that be a problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>That’s not a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td>That’s not a problem, not to them making a quilt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In line 23, Hope’s summary was correct in identifying the goal, they want to make a quilt but she identifies the problem as, the dress is too small. In line 24, Ms. Maxine questions Hope to refocus her thinking, by stating, *so what’s the solution?* Hope had not finished her summary and could not answer the question. In line 26, Ms. Maxine has Hope review what she has written so far and states, *Okay, so let’s go back and redo this. Their goal is to make a quilt. How is Ana’s dress being too small going to stop them from making a quilt? Didn’t it help them because they used the dress as part of it to make the quilt? So how can that be a problem?* Ms. Maxine’s guiding questions in line 26 demonstrated how Ms. Maxine does not give Hope (or the other students) the answer but instead continued to model her thinking and posing of the summary guide questions to help student to correct their own misconceptions. In line, 27, Hope recognizes her misconception by stating, that’s not the problem. Ms. Maxine, in line 28, reaffirms Hope’s understanding, *That’s not the problem.*
During the lesson Ms. Maxine refrained from telling students what was the problem or the solution as a way to build their own logic and thinking for understanding how to identify the problem and solution in the story plot. Her practice of letting students think about their responses and then explaining the logic for why their responses can or cannot be accepted demonstrated her knowledge of students’ need for guidance on how to develop logical thinking and understanding. Questioning and working with individual student’s summaries and responses, Ms. Maxine’s demonstrates knowledge of her students’ abilities and needs for one-on-one instruction.

Ms. Maxine’s practice for teaching summarization was to address student’s individual misconceptions and to guide students reasoning and thinking about what they incorrectly identified as the problem and solution in the story. Ms. Maxine’s teaching practices involved consistent and repetitive use of: someone wanted, but, so then… summarization format as a way to establish familiarity and practice for using the summary guide. To get the teacher’s perspective and correct my own interpretation of what occurred during the observation, I had an informal interview with Ms. Maxine. I had her view the section on the video recording and then explain her point of view.

Post-Observation Interview

After the observation, Ms. Maxine shared her perspective and knowledge for teaching students comprehension through summarization. Ms. Maxine explained her understanding for knowing how to teach summarization, her knowledge of teaching
practices and her knowledge of her students’ abilities and needs for developing their comprehension through summarizing. Using the first guiding question: What do you know about teaching summarization for comprehension? I listened to Ms. Maxine explain what she knew about teaching summarization. Table 4.14 represents Ms. Maxine’s knowledge of the summarization as a skill to learn comprehension.

Table 4.14

*Teacher Knowledge of Teaching Summarization*

1. *It [summarization] is in every reading series and it is a skill that is tested on State Tests like TAKS.*

2. *Students have great difficulty recognizing and/or creating a sequential summary and in order to be successful they need to understand and manipulate the written language in its different formats and genres.*

3. *These simple activities of analyzing, inferring and summarizing are foundational to acquiring comprehension.*

4. *It is then up to me to create those connections and try to show them how to think about what they read.*

5. *Teaching summarizing is difficult and must be done daily and/or weekly with each story they read.*

Line 1, represents Ms. Maxine’s awareness of the need for students to develop the skill of summarization because it is *in every reading series and it is a skill that is tested.* Ms. Maxine has knowledge and understanding that student must be able to read to learn, and summarization is a tool of organizing what they understand and learn. In
line 3, Ms. Maxine reveals her curricular knowledge of what skills students must learn as *foundational to acquiring comprehension*. In lines 4 and 5, Ms. Maxine identifies her responsibility by saying it is *up to me to create those connections* as her pedagogical understanding for knowing what *must be done daily* to teach her students so that they learn and apply the comprehension skill.

In responding to the question of what she knows about teaching summarization, Ms. Maxine revealed her curricular knowledge of knowing that summarization is a fundamental skill for acquiring comprehension and her understanding that summarization must be taught daily in a way that builds thinking and reasoning skills for developing comprehension. Ms. Maxine’s knowledge was reflected in her practice when she took the time to address each student individually to guide and clarify misconceptions in their thinking during the summarization lesson. Ms. Maxine demonstrated her knowledge for knowing how to teach the skill of summarization and for knowing how to teach it so that students could learn it by modeling her own thinking to students.

For the second question: What do you know about teaching practices for summarization? Ms. Maxine’s explanation is represented in table 4.15.
Table 4.15

*Teacher Practices of Teaching Summarization*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Teaching summarizing is difficult and must be done daily and/or weekly with every story they read.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>It begins with discussion of the story and a simple verbal summary.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>The next step is to use a summary guide that asks for: Someone wanted, but, so, then... the key words are used when writing a summary.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Once the students answer the questions they were able to string them together to create a simple summary.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In line 1, Ms. Maxine’s perspective was that *summarizing is difficult*, reveals that she has understanding that summarization need to be taught consistently and constantly so that student develop their thinking and way of comprehending. In line 2, Ms. Maxine demonstrated her knowledge that a *simple verbal summary* was a teaching practice for developing students’ thinking and ability to summarize. She stated that students needed to practice this skill orally first. Line 3, Ms. Maxine knows that the *use of a summary guide* will help students to practice summarizing in a consistent and familiar way to build summarization competency. And in line 4, Ms. Maxine demonstrates knowledge for supporting students learning until they can *create a simple summary* to be independently successful. Ms. Maxine’s knowledge of teaching summarization was reflected in her teaching practice and demonstration for following the summary guide and consistent questions to guide students’ thinking. Ms. Maxine’s knowledge of
summarization and knowledge for teaching the skill to her students was evident from the lesson observation.

In order to address her knowledge of how ELLs and SED students learn comprehension, the third question was posed. What does the teacher know about her students’ abilities and needs for learning summarization? Ms. Maxine’s response is represented in Table 4.16. For the third question: What does the teacher know about teaching summarization for teaching summarization for comprehension? Ms. Maxine explained her knowledge and understanding of her students’ needs and ways of learning. Table 4.16 represents her response.

Table 4.16

Teacher Knowledge of Students’ Abilities

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Many students in the class have not been brought up in a rich literature environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Just the mere idea of discussing a story, poem, or riddle is not being practiced in their homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>These simple activities are the foundation of analyzing, inferring and summarizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It is then up to us to create those connections and try to show them how to think about what they read.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In line 1 and 2, Ms. Maxine reveals her belief that students have not been brought up in a rich literature environment and that conversations or discussion is not being practiced. It is not certain, that she knows every student’s home environment. It
is reasonable to believe that because these students are identified as economically disadvantaged that they have limited learning resources and therefore unable to have access to rich literacy environment. Her personal background for how she learned literacy is reflected in her belief of why she thinks her students are lacking. Her perceptions are not certain for every student. In line 3 and 4, Ms. Maxine identifies with her responsibility as teacher and educator she must make sure she teaches these skills to her students so they can be academically successful in comprehending as they read to learn the core subjects of school. Ms. Maxine perception that her students have limited opportunities influences her instructional practices. She makes clear that it is then up to us[me] to create those connections and try to show them how to think about what they read. Ms. Maxine identifies her knowledge and practice for teaching as a responsibility to transfer her knowledge and understanding to her students.

Findings: Summarization

I identified that Ms. Maxine had different kinds of knowledge that guided her teaching practice. Ms. Maxine described summarization as difficult to learn and is part of the comprehension instruction that requires daily and/or weekly practice that needs to be done after every story. Ms. Maxine has knowledge of this practice and understanding that as students learn to answer the summary questions they will also develop their logic and reasoning through daily practice.

Ms. Maxine had knowledge of making the concept of summarization simple for student to learn, remember and apply. Ms. Maxine had knowledge and
understanding of teaching practice as in the use of the summary guide stating, *when students learn to answer the questions they will be able to summarize.* Ms. Maxine had knowledge of practice that *when students put the words together they will know how to summarize.* The teacher’s knowledge for using the practice was demonstrated by continuously asking students the same pattern questions so that students had to reason and think logically. Ms. Maxine does not tell students the problem or the solution but instead allows them to think and explain their answers before she explained how their answers could not be considered logical. Through the discussion and explanation, Ms. Maxine’s demonstrates her understanding of how students must develop thinking and logic for comprehending. Ms. Maxine’s demonstration for teaching summarization as a practice for developing students’ comprehension was the first of three practices analyzed. The description that follows presents Ms. Maxine’s practice using pre-reading activities and for making connections through word study.

*A Description of Ms. Maxine’s Teaching Practices*

During the five day observational period I observed Ms. Maxine’s teaching practices, I discovered that in addition to summarization, she used two other key practices for teaching reading comprehension across subjects throughout her daily lessons. Each time students were given materials to read, they were asked to follow a process. Ms. Maxine called this “pre-reading,” a way to identify text features before they began to read. The other teaching practice that I observed throughout the
observations was the teacher’s practice for taking time to make connections through word study.

These “pre-reading” and “word study” strategies were teaching practices and not lessons, like summarization, which I analyzed in the previous section. They were embedded practices that made visible how the teacher used knowledge of these practices to build students’ comprehension. Focusing on my research question and theoretical perspective I identified that these instructional practices reflected Ms. Maxine’s knowledge and practice for teaching reading comprehension. The following is a description that explains how Ms. Maxine’s use of teaching pre-reading activities and making connections through word study reflect Ms. Maxine’s pedagogical content knowledge for teaching comprehension.

Ms. Maxine’s Pre-Reading Activities

Preparing students to read for comprehension requires attention to the practices of establishing strategies students can apply to support their comprehension of reading (National Council of Teachers of English, 2006). The NCTE recommends that teachers support reading comprehension through pre-reading activities that elicit discussion, teach vocabulary, and preview texts with students. Ms. Maxine explained that the purpose for teaching pre-reading strategies was to give her students a process for identifying, interpreting and using all the given information in a reading selection. Ms. Maxine’s practice of using pre-reading activities revealed her knowledge for teaching and recognizing the needs of the students. Giving her students opportunities
to identify, think about and preview what they needed to read, she provided them with the support to develop their comprehension.

Ms. Maxine used the Weekly Reader News as a resource for reading and learning about current events occurring throughout the world. On the first, second, and fifth day of observation, Ms. Maxine used the same teaching practice of pre-reading with students before reading the Weekly Reader News selections. On the fourth day of observation, Ms. Maxine used the pre-reading activity with a reading selection of a fictional letter selected from practice materials used for preparing students for the TAKS test.

Ms. Maxine’s teaching practice of teaching comprehension through pre-reading activities revealed what the teacher knows about how to teach students to identify the different information features available in the text selections. The teacher also demonstrated her knowledge of the teaching practice and the approach for guiding students’ thinking and understanding of how these pre-reading activities are part of reading because the help to construct meaning. Students were taught that pre-reading is necessary for comprehending how the selection is written and what information is to be gained from reading.

One of the ways Ms. Maxine demonstrated pre-reading activities occurred before students began to read the Weekly Reader News featuring the Winter Olympics. Ms. Maxine begins by asking, Has anyone seen the Winter Olympics on TV? This elicited teacher and student dialogues for sharing what they had seen and knew about the subject. Ms. Maxine introduces the reading selection by stating: I think this week’s Weekly Reader would be appropriate. We are one week behind but I
thought this would be appropriate because... (pauses) why? Noah says, “The Olympics!” Victor adds, “The Olympics are on TV.” The teacher responds, *Not only that, it’s happening right now, as we speak, right now as we sit in our classroom, there are Olympic events happening in...* (pauses) and students yell, “Canada!” This interaction with the teacher and students about the Olympics begins the pre-reading activity by first building background knowledge of the reading.

The teacher invited student responses to share what they had seen on television. Given the fact that the Olympics were televised on both English and Spanish channels increased the probability that students had some prior knowledge of the events because television was a type of resource to which most, if not all, students could possibly have access. Ms. Maxine explains her knowledge for using the practice of pre-reading.

*Students are bombarded with images on TV and technological media. These images attract their attention and when they are faced with words on paper and limited images they lose interest in reading. The images in the Weekly Reader are colorful and interesting. The short selections arouse the students’ interest, making it easier to teach them the reading strategies they need. It also lends itself to identifying key information needed to practice test taking skills such as captions, charts, and context clues.*

Ms. Maxine reveals her understanding and knowledge of how she must find ways to connect interest with reading materials to engage students in reading. Ms. Maxine demonstrates that she has found a reading text that students can enjoy and she can use understanding to teach strategies by maintaining student interest. This reveals Ms.
Maxine’s knowledge of pedagogy for knowing how students will learn best. The practice of teaching pre-reading activities with the Weekly Reader also reveals Ms. Maxine’s content knowledge that reading news selections requires the students to read the content differently. By having students pre-read for text features found in the news articles, Ms. Maxine teaches students to differentiate the author’s purpose and how to read for critical information.

Ms. Maxine’s practice of focusing students’ attention to text structures before reading is linked to her knowing that students need to know how to do this and that teaching students to identify all informational resources will aid in learning how they must read during assessments. The use of this practice reveals the teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge of knowing what students need to know and how they need to learn about it. Ms. Maxine’s practice for teaching pre-reading activities represents her understanding that her students not only need to learn to use informational sources for academic purposes but also that students need to be motivated and their interests aroused so that they can read with a purpose.

The Weekly Reader News issue on the Olympics provided an opportune way of creating interest and connecting to students’ background knowledge of what they had seen thus far about the Olympics. Still, prior to reading the Weekly Reader, the teacher engaged students in a routine of coding features on their paper as a way of practicing pre-reading activities. Table 4.17 represents this activity.
Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td><em>What do you notice about the title?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td><em>What can I mark off right away?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Caption!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td><em>Yes, and there is also a huge what?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>A photo!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ms. Maxine</td>
<td><em>Yes, a photo, not a picture, also a title, and a subtitle.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>One Student</td>
<td>And a map!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In line 1 Ms. Maxine elicits student prior knowledge of pre-reading activities focusing on titles. In line 2 Ms. Maxine asks students to recall and name what needs to be “marked off” as a way of identifying important features of the selection. Lines 3 through 7 represent a process of recalling knowledge that is shared by both teacher and students. Although students are preparing to read a new selection, they have been taught how to get information to make the new information familiar to their practices.

The following description provides an example of how the pre-reading activity was enacted during the observation. During this activity the teacher uses the projector to show students how to code their paper: *Here, boys and girls this title: Weekly Reader News is the title of the magazine not the story.* Ms. Maxine points. *This is the title of the story inside: Jump Into The Games!* There are more titles, the teacher explains, *This is a sub-title: The Winter Olympics kick off in Canada* and on the left
upper corner: It says inside, this is the title of an article in the inside: Fish Fun. The
pre-reading activity continues as Ms. Maxine writes the words: caption, sub-title,
photo (not picture), map, and then draws a box around the bolded words that signal the
vocabulary words to be learned. Ms. Maxine states, the words are already bolded, so
we just have to box them and then sandwich them, as she demonstrates to students how
to underline the sentence with the word and the following sentence to identify context
clues, and then, We write P.I.E. (an acronym for author’s purpose to inform or
entertain).

Ms. Maxine’s practice for using the pre-reading activity provided an
instructional routine for establishing a way of making the unfamiliar news article
familiar with features the students recognize through coding. Therefore, students know
how they will read this selection. Ms. Maxine’s practice for using the pre-reading
activity afforded the students a way of knowing what information was available for
interpreting and understanding the reading selection. This teaching practice
demonstrated Ms. Maxine’s content and pedagogical knowledge for knowing what
students must learn to build their comprehension, how students need to make sense of
the information to be learned and how they will learn it through the use of the pre-
reading practice.

When I asked Ms. Maxine how she had acquired knowledge for pre-reading
practices, she responded:

Part of the guided reading method is to identify items embedded in the reading
selections that contain information. When students identify the title, the author,
label photographs, tables, charts, captions, number the paragraphs, and box
Ms. Maxine’s knowledge of the use of the pre-reading activity as comprehension instruction was enacted in the way she introduced the lesson and in the way she connected to students’ experience of watching the Olympics on TV. Ms. Maxine demonstrated her curricular knowledge for knowing the informational resources and teaching process for guiding students’ attention to all the features in the selection. As in her stating, *By recognizing and labeling titles, captions, photos, tables the students have become aware of another source of information to them.* Ms. Maxine’s knowledge and practice of teaching her students the pre-reading activities provided learning for how to note information. This demonstrates how Ms. Maxine is also teaching students to monitor their own comprehension through the practice of taking notice of all informational text. Secondly, Ms. Maxine’s teaching practice established a purpose for reading and created a way of knowing what can be learned from the selection.

These teaching practices provided evidence of how Ms. Maxine enacted her knowledge into teaching pre-reading activities. Her practices demonstrated knowledge of what informational sources need to be made accessible through the teaching of coding informational features, summarizing paragraphs, and making sense of words through context clues and inference. Ms. Maxine’s pedagogical content knowledge was revealed in the teaching practices she delivered to students. She demonstrated her curricular knowledge of how to use guided reading activities learned as professional development provided evidence that her knowledge and practice were connected.
Ms. Maxine’s Practice for Making Connections through Word Study

The word study that Ms. Maxine provided during the five day observational period consisted of spelling and grammar worksheet students did for practice each day. These were not isolated lessons but rather embedded practices of reviewing and making connections through word study that support students’ reading comprehension. The pre-reading activities also occurred as embedded practices during reading practices in social studies and the reading period. These activities were part of the lesson not the lesson in its’ self. Students were continually prompted to using these activities to foreground their understanding and support comprehension. The skill of teaching summarization for comprehension was also observed as embedded practice such as summarizing at the paragraph level for social studies to a full lesson during the reading period. Similarly, Ms. Maxine’s teaching practices also involved the frequent application of making connections through word study. Every day began with a language lesson for spelling, grammar, or with a reading comprehension worksheet. Ms. Maxine habitually used her special way of knowing how to connect word study to comprehension. Ms. Maxine extended comprehension instruction into studying words for the purpose of understanding differences in a ‘sound spelling’ from a standard spelling of the word. This is an exception from my working definition of reading comprehension instruction due to the fact that the teacher uses this practice to develop students understanding of single words (Ness, 2011). However, I propose that the teacher is in fact using a type of comprehension instruction that provides students with the fundamental understanding of why we read and spell words differently. “A child
cannot understand what he cannot decode but what he decodes is meaningless unless he can understand it” (American Federation of Teachers, 1999, p. 18). This statement from AFT establishes the foundation for why I propose that this practice of word study can be considered a type of comprehension instruction as well. Single words can have one meaning, reading those words in contexts can give those words a different meaning. When students read words in context they use a different type of comprehension skill and if those words are not read correctly, comprehension is compromised. Through this teaching practice Ms. Maxine provided students with ways for understanding what they read, as well as how to read (a word), and as a way of getting the correct understanding; therefore, getting the correct meaning for comprehension purposes. Ms. Maxine demonstrates her knowledge that ELLs and SED students lack vocabulary and word meaning. Therefore, Ms. Maxine’s practice to take time to explain how word meanings change, how words are read, and how to use them correctly exemplifies her understanding to build students work knowledge for improving comprehension. One way she revealed her knowledge of this practice occurred during a spelling lesson. Ms. Maxine transferred her way of understanding and comprehending to help students develop the skill of making connections to how words are used, as a way of knowing what they mean in the context they are used. The following presents a description of how Ms. Maxine made connections through word study. Ms. Maxine describes this practice as

*making connections through the study of words is an extremely useful strategy or skill that all students need in order to acquire deeper comprehension. I
Ms. Maxine’s use of content knowledge informs her of how this skill can be used and why it needs to be part of her teaching practice. Ms. Maxine’s pedagogical content knowledge is represented in the words I know referring to the understanding and knowledge she has developed about what students need to know and how they need to learn it through practice.

Ms. Maxine revealed her knowledge for how to teach so students understand by “thinking like a third grader” to find words that may be problematic for third grade students. Ms. Maxine revealed her understanding of how students’ misconceptions can interfere with comprehension. By addressing the ways to differentiate the spelling of the words from sound spellings’ Ms. Maxine helped her students to make connections when they use, read and write those words. Her teaching practice extended beyond the single word level to the study of words in context to construct meaning. Ms. Maxine guides students through the study of words in their spelling assignment. She explains to students: If I [Ms. Maxine] were in third grade at your age, the word thought would have been a difficult word. Then she engages students in looking at the word to make connections to its spelling but also to what students know about the words. Ms. Maxine asks, Why is thought a difficult word? Some students respond, cause ‘ght’?

Ms. Maxine responds: Do you hear it? Noah says, “No, only the /t/.” Then Ms. Maxine demonstrates by writing the word on the projector and says; So, I would normally write it t-h-o-t…Right? Isn’t that the sounds you here? Ms. Maxine was making the familiar unfamiliar by taking students back to how they read and spelled
those word sounds before learning them correctly and then asking them to think about how they learned and know it now. As Ms. Maxine has students think about the ‘sound spelling’ verses the Standard English spelling, students are also using prior knowledge and reasoning as to why the sound spellings and standard spellings are different. Noah responds suggests that he made a connection from prior knowledge that /gh/ is silent in /ght/. This practice gives students a connection to how words are read and how they are spelled. It sounds like /thot/ but spelled t-h-o-u-g-h-t. The teacher selects a second word to differentiate the sound spelling from the standard spelling and students become more ready to interject their experience and make the connection for how they know differences in sound and word spelling to what they know to do when they read and when they write them.

The description that follows provides an overview of how Ms. Maxine’s use of making connections with word study occurred. Ms. Maxine informed students, *Another word that would probably be hard for me if I were your age and in the third grade would be the word people. Why, because I don’t hear the /o/ in people.* She demonstrates by writing p-e-p-o-l for students to see the word on the projector. *That’s not how it’s spelled,* Ms. Maxine explains. Noah and other students interject, “That’s how it is sounds.” Ms. Maxine asks, *Do you know how I would pronounce this word?* Noah and some other students interject, “pee-o-p-l”. Hope yells, “Ms. that’s how I remember it!” Students made a connection to saying, “pee-o-pl” for the way they recall first reading it or learning to spell it. Hope identifies with the sound spelling and makes a connection to how she learned to distinguish how to read it and how to spell it. The practice used by Ms. Maxine demonstrates both content and pedagogical
knowledge for teaching students how words are read and spelled and how we learn to differentiate the sound from the standard spelling.

Ms. Maxine continued the instructional practice with a third word. Ms. Maxine says:

*It’s very easy but many students have difficulty with the word does. I think I know why, the /e/ is silent. Yes, the e is silent and most students think it is spelled d-o-z. Don’t you pronounce it /doz/ and doesn’t it kinda twirl in your tongue and vibrates a little bit. That’s the sound of the /z/ not the sound of the /s/. So it confuses many children. Many children think about how it feels and what letters make that sound in their mouths.*

Ms. Maxine’s knowledge for explaining the sounds with the feeling of the tongue demonstrates an understanding of the pedagogical content knowledge needed to understand how students can comprehend.

At the foundational level of comprehension is the teacher understanding that students need to make connections with the way words are read and how they are spelled so that comprehension is not compromised even at the word level. Ms. Maxine demonstrated knowledge for having students learn that words are read and spelled differently so that they grasp the concept of the standard letter spelling and sound spellings. Making connections to how words were used in context and linking understanding of sound and spelling differences demonstrated how Ms. Maxine enacted her pedagogical content knowledge of how students learn to make connections with words.
Findings: Pre-reading and Word Study Practices

Ms. Maxine’s knowledge of practices reflected her knowledge of teaching reading comprehension, how reading comprehension needs to be explained and taught so that knowledge is acquired, and how students need to understand the content to make meaning from what they read. Through her use of pre-reading activities and making connections through word study, she demonstrates her content knowledge of knowing the subject matter of reading as in how it is learned. This is identified in the way she incorporates these activities in daily practices across subjects so that she provides her students with reading support that develops comprehension.

Ms. Maxine’s knowledge of how reading comprehension needs to be explained and practiced is demonstrated in her use of making connections through word study across subjects and reading selections Ms. Maxine demonstrated her knowledge of practices that develop students’ comprehension skills in the routine practices that helped students make reading a familiar process by using the same pre-reading activities and establishing ways students can monitor their own comprehension. Ms. Maxine’s knowledge for teaching students was identified in the way she placed herself in the instruction, If I were in third grade and I were your age, I would have difficulty with this word. Ms. Maxine’s knowledge of teaching pre-reading activities and making connections through word study demonstrated the special understanding she has developed about how to teach and how to transfer her knowledge so her students acquire this knowledge also. Ms. Maxine’s fidelity to being consistent in
demonstrating and practicing these activities with her students demonstrates her knowledge and beliefs of why she continues to use these practices.

Conclusion

The finding from this case study identified that the teacher’s knowledge and practices are reflective of her understanding for how students learn comprehension. The analyses identified that the teacher pedagogical content knowledge provided the understanding for the teacher’s knowledge and practices. The teacher’s knowledge of students was influenced by the teacher’s own childhood beliefs and experiences, as well as work experiences in working with different student group populations. Ms. Maxine demonstrated her understanding of how students needed to understand through the teacher’s instructional practices and choice of instructional materials for teaching and supporting comprehension. Ms. Maxine’s use of her pedagogical content knowledge was demonstrated in the practical ways she enacted the teaching of reading comprehension. In chapter five I provide the overview of the findings and the implications of my study.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONTRIBUTIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher knowledge and practices for teaching reading comprehension to socio-economically disadvantaged students and English language learners in a third-grade bilingual class. In this chapter, I present the findings of my case study and the significance of my study. I discuss the contributions of my study for understanding teacher knowledge and practice of reading comprehension and offer implications for teacher education and professional development. To conclude I offer a brief explanation of how I will use what I learned from my study in my own practice.

In chapter one I posed the need for knowing what teachers know and how they enact their understanding into teaching practices that help students learn comprehension. Understanding what teachers know and how that knowledge is reflected in practice is needed in order to ensure that teachers are highly qualified and prepared to meet the needs of diverse students in the classroom (Fitzharris et al., 2008). Teachers are charged with teaching all students to understand content areas, academic language and to read with comprehension for academic success (Scarcella, 2003).

My study contributes to the literature on teacher knowledge base (Hiebert, et al., 2002), teacher content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge by identifying how teacher knowledge and understanding can be identified in teaching practice (Fitzharris et al., 2008). While the research field can provide substantial evidence of effective teaching practices, few studies have been conducted to
understand whether teachers’ knowledge of how to read for comprehension is transferred in the way they teach students to learn through teaching practices.

Teacher knowledge is more concrete and contextual than how the research field has presented its findings. Instead, my study supports the research that identifies teacher knowledge as highly personal (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991; Hiebert, et al., 2002). In my study I observed and interviewed the teacher to get an in-depth perspective of her understanding for practicing comprehension instruction. I found the teacher used all sources of knowledge that were available to her. The teacher used her own personal beliefs, professional training, life and work experiences as sources of knowledge for knowing how reading comprehension is learned. The teacher enacted her way of knowing acquired from professional development and personal experiences into the instructional practices she used to teach students comprehension. The teacher’s knowledge of English language learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students was rooted in her own background and professional experiences in working with different ELL and SED student populations.

The current study addresses the gap between research-based knowledge and teacher knowledge and how that teacher knowledge for reading instruction is utilized for the purpose of teaching reading comprehension to third graders. Hiebert and Colleagues (2002) argued that teachers do not use research to improve their knowledge and instead develop their own theoretical understandings. My study provides evidence of how teacher knowledge is the teacher’s special way of understanding content and teaching methods so that her information is transferred to her students.
Contributions

I identify three central understandings from my study. First, learning and teaching subject matter must be connected to who the students are and how they learn the subject matter. The teacher needs to know how to deliver instruction that is meaningful and relevant to students’ needs, experiences and understanding so that it supports their learning of comprehension. The teacher’s practice of teaching reading comprehension to English language learners and socio-economically disadvantaged students is based on the various knowledge sources but changes according to differences in the students’ background, experience and present needs.

Secondly, the teacher must be able to place herself or himself in the students’ frame of reference so that the teacher can understand from the students’ perspective how they need to know the content so they can understand the concept being presented. Taking the students’ perspective as to why something is easy or difficult provides the teacher with the knowledge for developing her teaching practice. The teacher must be able to adapt knowledge from professional training to meet the needs of her students. The teacher must be able to match student needs with her own belief system about literacy as did the teacher in this study. The teacher’s own experience for learning to read was highly supported in the home. Understanding the importance of her background and seeing that her students did not have the same rich literacy experiences, the teacher provided supportive opportunities for students to experience literacy in the classroom.

Another understanding from my study was that teacher knowledge and
practices require teacher-centered research approaches that enable teachers to recognize within themselves their own learning practices and views that may be invisible to them. Teachers need to reflect on their own perceptions so they can transfer their understanding to their students by making connections to how comprehension is acquired. By examining closely one teacher’s knowledge and teaching practices this study has provided insight into how the teacher understands the reading content for teaching comprehension and the pedagogical skills that influence her teaching practice for how students learn and develop comprehension. The teacher’s awareness was grounded in the belief, *I need to help my students understand.* By focusing on her students’ needs the teacher provided supportive strategies that helped students to develop their thinking for constructing comprehension. The teacher’s use of pre-reading and summarizing helped the students to familiarize themselves with ways of making what they read understandable. Understanding teacher knowledge, practices, and beliefs from the teacher’s perspective in the classroom context provided me as the researcher an understanding of how a teacher adapts her pedagogical content knowledge to meet the needs of her students. Research that examines teacher knowledge from their perspectives and involves teachers in participating in research can bridge the current gap between teacher and research knowledge base and its use.
Knowing how to teach not only depends on the knowledge related to the teaching profession, but also the knowledge and beliefs acquired throughout childhood and the entire professional work experience. In my study I discovered that the teacher had acquired knowledge of content and pedagogical learning through actual lived experiences. Her understandings and beliefs directed her practices. This supports Buehl & Five’s (2009) findings that beliefs of teaching knowledge should include both personal knowledge and knowledge gained from the experiences from within the realm of the educational field. Teacher beliefs and understanding become a resource that directs teaching practices and student learning.

The teacher in my study developed her knowledge and understanding for teaching reading comprehension from a teacher mentor and a professional development training in which she learned practices she had been using for over 10 years. This finding is substantiated by Monteiro & Bueno (2008), who found that teachers used information that was most attuned with their individuality, educational preparation, professional understanding and educational principles. Understanding how teachers develop their knowledge and how teacher professional and personal experiences shape teacher practices in the classroom, can enhance knowledge about and the various factors that impact the complexity of teacher work. Such understanding could help build the research base on teacher quality, effectiveness and how teacher practices impact student learning.
Fitzharris and colleagues (2008) concluded that although teachers receive the same staff development they will not possess the same ability to implement the new knowledge in their own classrooms. They will possess different levels of literacy knowledge and that new knowledge is more predisposed by the educational level, the extent of educational experiences and professional responsibilities for accountability than by actual job experience. Teachers needed to know how to implement instructional practices and they may need professional guidance to do so. Also teachers needed to have a deeper understanding of the theoretical framework of the new instructional approach so that they could make better decisions when instructional dilemmas arose, and that by simply presenting ideas for teachers to use did not provide them with sufficient learning about teaching (Monteiro & Bueno, 2008; Pajares, 1992; Theriot & Tice, 2009). Studies on what teachers know and how their knowledge relates to their teaching experience and student outcomes indicate that teachers’ level of knowledge is not necessarily equivalent to their own understanding of how to use the teaching practices to support student learning (Bos, Dickenson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001; Buehl & Fives, 2009).

The finding from my study supports this research. In my study the teacher had varied experiences and her knowledge was gained from the professional development and teaching experiences she encountered. The teacher related her knowledge to experiences she had while teaching in California and Wisconsin. She shared that she has taught kindergarten through the fifth grade within a variety of settings ranging
from managing her own classroom to running pull-out programs. Those teaching opportunities for the teacher created her specialized knowledge for knowing and teaching reading comprehension to the diverse students in her classroom. My study provided insight into how the various professional experiences came together to shape the teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge. While the various sources of knowledge may not have been visible to the teacher before the beginning of this study, during the interviews with the researcher the teacher made visible how her practice was shaped by varied professional development opportunities and work with different students across the United States.

*Teacher Knowledge for Teaching Comprehension*

Research has shown that elementary students are more successful when given specific types of instruction during different stages in their literacy development (Parris & Block, 2007). In my case study, I discovered that the teacher had developed a specialized knowledge for understanding how students with limited language proficiency and inadequate resources could learn to read. She had practiced a guided approach for teaching her ELL and SED students how to comprehend and connect to texts they read. The skills Ms. Maxine had acquired from professional development and classroom experiences were refined in practice. By focusing on helping students to understand what they read, the teacher adapted her knowledge and practices for teaching comprehension to the needs of her students. Recently, researchers have become increasingly interested in the role of teachers’ knowledge of early and
adolescent literacy and its impact on teaching practices and student learning (Parris & Block, 2007). In order to understand what constitutes effective academic reading instruction for elementary students, it is necessary to understand teacher knowledge and beliefs as they are developed and embedded into teaching practices.

**Teacher Practices for Teaching Reading Comprehension to ELLs and SEDs**

The imperative for educating diverse learners is to provide the reading instruction needed for them to acquire understanding of academic language and literacy for content knowledge and academic achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001) requires that all student groups, including English language learners, must meet state proficiency standards in the academic areas of reading and math by the year 2014. The lack of comprehension and proficient literate practices affects student ability to understand and analyze the academic texts that students need for academic success. Poor comprehension skills restrict student competency for self expression and written communication and delay the acquisition of academic content in all subject areas. The teacher in my study worked on developing students’ academic literacy by practicing a specific guided reading approach that supported and developed students’ learning. In using this guided approach on a daily basis, the teacher scaffolded student’ learning and provided instruction that enabled students to build on their prior knowledge and develop further skills.

By using a case study methodology, I provided an in-depth perspective of how
a teacher’s way of knowing and understanding was enacted in her teaching practices during instruction. As a whole, the reports from interviews, observations and artifacts provide a rich research base for developing understandings of teacher knowledge and practice for teaching reading comprehension. My case study methodology made visible the teacher’s perspective, her beliefs, and knowledge for teaching reading comprehension. In conducting a case study I could focus on what constituted teacher knowledge and how knowledge was enacted into the teaching practices for teaching reading comprehension. Understanding how the teacher knows her skill and how that knowledge impacts her practices, provides information for teacher preparation programs. This information for educating prospective teachers also informs educators of the professional development community about the needs to provide explicit training of skills, such as guided reading, teachers need to help their students achieve academic success.

Implications

Having had an opportunity to study in-depth the teacher’s knowledge and perspectives of how to teach reading comprehension, I would like to encourage administrators and curriculum specialists to visit the classroom for observational purposes and then follow up with the teacher for a post observation conversation. By taking the time to converse with teachers for the purpose of affording them the opportunity to explain what they know and how they know about the practices they demonstrated in the classroom, can provide a richer evaluation of the knowledge the
teacher possesses. By allowing them to relate what they know about the students they teach and the adjustments they make to allow for the differences in their students, teachers can provide important insights into how the delivery of instruction impacts students and which of the practices they implement are effective.

**Teachers**

In my study, Ms. Maxine engaged in self reflection to make visible how her background, beliefs, and knowledge impacted her teaching. Like Ms. Maxine, teachers need to become more reflective of their own knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and practice so that they can seek out professional development that can enhance their strengths and improve weaknesses. Teachers could conduct observations in each others’ classrooms and have discussions about what they learned. Also, teachers can benefit from collectively creating a pool of resources they already have (knowledge, skills, and personal experiences) to provide instruction for their content area subjects to their students’ specific needs. Teachers can ask for administrators and researchers to have conversations with them in order develop understandings about teacher knowledge and practice. Furthermore, like Ms. Maxine, if teachers focus on the needs of their students, they can learn about their students and develop strategies that promote student learning. Teachers need to use teaching practices that address students’ learning abilities and disabilities from the students’ point of view in order to help students learn reading comprehension in ways that are understandable to them.
School Administrators

In order to promote teacher learning, that focuses on student success, school administrators need to provide opportunities for teacher reflection and collaboration with other teaching professionals. While I was not the supervising administrator for Ms. Maxine, my experience in this study indicates that by engaging in conversations with teachers, administrators can build deeper understandings for why teachers do what they do and can discuss knowledge and practices that would be most beneficial for students’ learning. Understanding teacher strengths and needs could enable school administrators to provide professional development opportunities based on actual needs of the teachers that can promote positive school reform. In this way, administrators could provide ongoing support that nurtures a growing professional community for building teacher and student capacity.

Reading Specialists and Curriculum Developers

In my study, I observed how Ms. Maxine used consistent strategies that helped students to establish a familiarity for reading. Ms. Maxine used practices she had learned from professional training that had provided her with ongoing guidance to support effective implementation. Ms. Maxine’s effectiveness in teaching her students was influenced by the attention and guidance she received while learning those teaching practices. Reading specialist can provide the guidance and ongoing support that will develop this type of knowledge and practice with teachers. To be effective in implementing new knowledge and training, teachers need to learn effective practices through guided practice for effective implementation. Reading specialists can assist
teachers by providing guidance to support the implementation of new training and by taking a more in-depth approach to identify what staff development teachers are most in need of. In this way, teachers and reading specialists can identify what teaching practices are worth emulating for the purpose of improvement of instruction and student success.

Further research

I propose that further research focus on studying teachers’ perspectives for knowing their skills through cross-case studies of multiple teachers, teacher narratives, ethnographies or life histories of a single teacher or group of teachers over time to uncover how teachers develop the specialized knowledge that is enacted in their teaching practices. Teacher knowledge needs to be made visible so that other teachers can improve their own knowledge too. The studies should examine how teacher knowledge develops in the context of practice and how such knowledge is shaped by various personal and professional factors. Researchers need a consistent approach to study teacher knowledge in order to enable various researchers to build a cumulative explanation about how teacher knowledge and practices impact the learning of reading comprehension. Once researchers build a common base on how to study teacher knowledge, various studies could delve in depth into particular skills or strategies the teachers use to teach particular aspects of literacy and reading comprehension.
Conclusion

After conducting this case study, I continue to practice observation and post-observation conversations with teachers to get a better perspective of what the teachers know and why they use certain practices to instruct students. This practice is twofold because it helps to establish a relationship of trust between teacher and administrator and it also affords the teacher the opportunity to reflect on her understandings of teaching and how it may need to be professionally supported. In this way the teacher plays a more active role in her own professional development and can guide the professional development opportunities afforded to other teachers also. When teachers are treated as professionals, they take more ownership in their practice and invest deeper into the success of their students and schools (Greaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001; Lieberman, 2009; Lieberman & Lynne, 2004). Understanding teacher knowledge and practice is essential for me as an administrator. I am also the instructional leader. I am responsible for providing the necessary support, guidance and professional development to ensure teachers continue to develop their own knowledge and practice so that students receive high quality instruction.
REFERENCES


130


CRF (2001). The Children's Reading Foundation, Schools: Why reading is job #1 (pp. 1-8): Children's Reading Foundation.


Hall, K., & Harding, A. (2003). A systematic review of effective literacy teaching 4 to 14 age range of mainstream schooling, *Research Evidence in Education*


Lapadat, J. C., & Lindsay, A. C. (1999). Transcription in Research and Practice: From Standardization of Technique to Interpretive Positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(1), 64-86.


M. Pressley (Eds.), *Fies/ Practices in Literacy Instruction* New York: The Guilford Press.


Sikula, T. Buttery & E. Guyton (Eds.), Handbook of Research on Teacher education (Vol 2, pp. 525-546). New York Macmillan.
## APPENDIX

**Activity Map**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Context worksheet</td>
<td>Comprehension worksheet</td>
<td>Comprehension worksheet</td>
<td>Comprehension worksheet</td>
<td>Comprehension worksheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synonyms Calories in snacks</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Rural Communities</td>
<td>Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45</td>
<td>Pre-reading/Read A Wish for Wings: Predict</td>
<td>Reread/review A Wish for Wings: Predict</td>
<td>Read/review A Wish for Wings: Predict</td>
<td>Computer Lab</td>
<td>Pre-reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Keeping Quilt</td>
<td>Write/Summarize The Keeping Quilt</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
<td>Listens to story:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story questions</td>
<td>Summarize / Write</td>
<td>A New Coat for Anna</td>
<td></td>
<td>Home Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Predict/Read/ Discuss Frog and Toad Are Friends</td>
<td>Reread/summarize I Love You Forever</td>
<td>Read/predict/ I Love You Forever</td>
<td>Research on Cat facts/presentations</td>
<td>Predict/Retell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15</td>
<td>Pre-reading/read Weekly Reader: Go Fish!</td>
<td>Pre-read/read Jump into the Games</td>
<td>Pre-read/read Those Lincoln Boys!</td>
<td>Science Lab: Units of measurement</td>
<td>Pre-reading/read Weekly Reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bully Book</td>
<td>/Olympic Medal Moments</td>
<td>Summarize and word study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Multiplication of two-digit numbers</td>
<td>Adding fractions</td>
<td>Weight measurement</td>
<td>Greater and Less Than</td>
<td>Capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Word Problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

