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A Descriptive Case Study of Students' Lived Experiences in a Dyslexia Lab – Before, During, and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

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A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES
IN A DYSLEXIA LAB – BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A Dissertation

by

GLADYS M. SUAREZ

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

May 2023

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May 2023

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ABSTRACT

Suarez, Gladys M., A Descriptive Case Study of Students' Lived Experiences in a Dyslexia Lab – Before, During, and After the COVID-19 Pandemic. Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), May, 2023, 112 pp., 2 tables, 2 figures, references, 58 titles.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the lived experiences of three students who have received Structured Literacy instruction in a Dyslexia Lab while delivered through remote learning or face-to-face. It addresses the following question: In a Dyslexia Lab where teachers have used Structured Literacy in both virtual and face-to-face environments, what are students' experiences? To better understand the experiences, I draw on the conceptual framework of individual student development through theoretical perspectives. The Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory was utilized to conceptualize this case study. This theory helped analyze the data, guide the research, and evaluate the findings. Data for this qualitative case study was collected through semi-structured interviews, naturalistic observations of the participants, and autoethnographic journaling.

DEDICATION

Above all, thank you God for allowing me to accomplish this goal. The completion of my doctoral studies would not have been possible without the unconditional love and support of my family. This dissertation is dedicated to them. To my dear husband, Jesus, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of graduate school and life. I am truly thankful for having you in my life. To my children, Jazlyn, Jaden, and Jacob, who have wholeheartedly inspired, motivated, and supported me by all means to accomplish this degree. Thank you for your love and patience. To Jaylyn, thank you for always watching over me. This dissertation is also dedicated to my dear parents, Jose Angel and Maria Irene, who have always loved me unconditionally and whose examples have taught me to work hard for things that I aspire to achieve.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I have devoted the last five years of my teaching career in a Dyslexia Lab. I transitioned from being an elementary classroom teacher to an elementary dyslexia specialist. During this time, I have tried to find the best way to help my students with dyslexia. These students experience problems learning to read and write; often, when a basic level of reading and spelling ability is not established, there are persisting problems with their reading fluency (Snowling et al., 2020). Through it all, I have realized that the Structured Literacy (SL) program my district has in place works well with students who have this specific learning disability. I have noticed that when students attend the Dyslexia Lab diligently, they are successful in the regular classroom setting. Not only does their progress reflect on their weekly and benchmark tests, but I see progress in word recognition, in written expression, spelling, and in their decoding abilities, particularly when technology is embedded in the lessons.

Although dyslexia services are traditionally provided in a face-to-face setting or pull-out program, during the COVID-19 pandemic, all dyslexia services were transitioned to remote modality beginning March 2020. During the 2020-2021 school year, students continued dyslexia services through remote learning. Only recently, during the 2021-2022 school year, have the services in the Dyslexia Lab gone back to school, face-to-face instruction. Thus, I have found that when students attend the Dyslexia Lab virtually or face-to-face have improved in their

reading and writing abilities. With the integration of technology and a systematic language-based reading and writing program, students with dyslexia feel motivated and demonstrate success in their chronic reading challenges. The lessons provided in the Dyslexia Lab have been conducted using SL. This explicit instruction not only sets the foundational reading skills that are effective to improve their reading, but it allows for success in writing.

When using SL in the Dyslexia Lab while delivered through remote learning or face-to-face, the perfect design to study and learn from the experiences of the students' perspectives would be a case study. A case study provides deep insight about students' experiences with a systematic language-based reading and writing program, that when delivered virtually or face-to-face to students with dyslexia, they have demonstrated success in improving their chronic reading challenges. Additionally, through this process of gaining meaningful and engaging insights from a case study, I gained some understanding of my student's funds of knowledge outside the classroom setting (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Although it is difficult to say what works or does not in qualitative research, this study created a picture of what is happening, and gave a description of the context (Birsh, 2011).

Background of the Problem

Recently, much of the research on reading that is focused on SL has been conducted based on two components. The first one is on the reading of words or decoding, and the second is the understanding of what is being read, or comprehension. For some students with dyslexia, the decoding skills may not be equivalent to their comprehension skills; they are faced with the challenge of not being able to access and build on stronger comprehension of text (LePage Plante, 2020). Across the elements of SL instruction, technology-based tools can make planning easier for the educator and the learning more accessible for the student (Lindeblad et al., 2017).

As per Honeyford and Watt (2018), “learning from our students, about their passions and concerns, and critically engaging the issues that most need our attention will influence the literacy instruction we provide to our digital native students” (p. 262)

Teachers have found that over time “students’ motivation begins to decrease in all academic subjects” (Goodman, 2014, p. 225). Goodman (2014) adds that “the decline in many children’s motivation to read in both the school and home environments reaches a significantly low level in fourth grade” (p. 225). Therefore, dyslexia teachers should foster creativity, enjoyment, and innovation in the SL program they follow. In fact, this contemporary curricular trend was brought on because of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic brought forth not only the use of technology in the Dyslexia Lab, but it is a trend that perhaps should continue, and it is worth studying students’ experiences during this time frame. Dyslexia teachers, now more than ever, continue working as problem-posing educators that regard their students--no longer docile listeners--but now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher (Freire, 1970/1993/2006). In order for us to understand how this curricular trend is of much importance for the learning of students with dyslexia, we must recognize how motivation plays a big role in this process. Goodman (2014) defines motivation as “an intrinsic or extrinsic process that arouses, directs, and maintains behavior and relates to the drive to do something” (p. 210). Motivation is what pushes us to learn new things and encourages us to keep trying repeatedly, even when we fail. Through words and actions, educators have the power to motivate and reach every single student. All it takes is an effective teacher who will use a variety of methods so that all students want to learn. Insights from student experiences with these methods has contributed to teacher effectiveness.

Motivation is an inherently complex topic, and we need to consider choices of reading material, readiness to engage in reading, and competence in reading as it relates to fluency and

comprehension skills (Goodman, 2014). For that reason, “virtual environments, such as computer games and virtual worlds, have provided opportunities for participation in new and varied practices and for joining with others to create, problem-solve and play” (Burnett, 2016, p. 566).

Purpose of the Study

In response to the declining levels of student reading motivation, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to provide insight into the experiences of three students with dyslexia that attend a systematic language-based reading and writing program. According to the International Dyslexia Association (2018), SL prepares students to decode words in an explicit and systematic manner. Therefore, when this instruction is delivered virtually or face-to-face to students with dyslexia, they have demonstrated success in improving their chronic reading challenges. A SL approach at the core is an optimal way to address literacy deficits in students due to the positive impacts of morphological awareness on spelling, decoding, vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension (Collins et al., 2020).

Changes in the use of technology calls for a re-examination of old paradigms of critical thinking and begs the development of new behaviors to execute pathways for understanding our role (Goodman, 2014). Through a critical thinking lens, this curricular trend plays a significant role in transforming the possibilities of emerging research. Learning with the assistance of computers can be a multisensory experience tapping into many different learning styles and for the dyslexic, technology can provide sound through text to speech as well as graphics and animation to enhance written work (Draffan, 2002). I have found the best method of implementing technology in the classroom in order for my students with dyslexia to develop a passion for reading and improve their deficits in phonological awareness. In order to motivate

their learning and critical thinking, as well as improve their reading and writing skills, it is important for “them to be eager to learn of exciting and new ways to use their minds” (Goodman, 2014, p. 3).

Research Question

In this case study, the following question was addressed: In a Dyslexia Lab where teachers have used Structured Literacy in both virtual and face-to-face environments, what are students’ experiences?

Significance

Elementary school teachers are educating students who struggle with inaccurate or slow reading, poor spelling, poor writing, and other language processing difficulties in the regular classroom setting (Washburn et al., 2011). Yet, “findings from studies have indicated that teachers lack essential knowledge needed to teach struggling readers, particularly children with dyslexia” (Washburn et al., 2011, p. 165). Therefore, it is important to understand what type of training, education, and experience teachers who provide instruction to students with dyslexia need.

Understanding the specific learning disability called dyslexia and the experiences of students who attend a Dyslexia Lab that uses a SL program could provide school districts with critical information to support classroom teachers and those students who have dyslexia. I have learned all about the meaning of dyslexia, listened to the parent’s perspective, and analyzed my participants’ experiences in the program. If implemented diligently and accurately, this case study will become a teaching tool not only for myself, but for those dyslexia teachers seeking for real-life situations and an expert’s experience.

Positionality Statement

I am a Hispanic female, forty-six years of age who speaks both English and Spanish. I have been a teacher for almost 20 years, six years of first grade and nine years of fourth grade; this is my fifth year as a dyslexia teacher. I have always had a passion for teaching, particularly reading and writing. My research interests are a direct reflection of my personal career; as a dyslexia teacher, I strive to work side-by-side with the regular classroom teachers, and I provide explicit and systematic instruction for my students. In this manner, students who receive dyslexia therapy are successful in their regular classroom setting. I have unique access to the site and unique perspectives as I have served students in the Dyslexia Lab during both face-to-face and virtual contexts.

This research is important to me, because I want to better understand if the range of experience and strong foundation of knowledge enhanced by scientifically based reading research from which I make judgments of what to teach, how to teach it, and when to teach it, ensures successful outcome when working with students with dyslexia (Birsh, 2011). For me, understanding dyslexia is being able to understand the reading process. Thus, this research is important to my profession because I want to know more about the evidence from the experiences that children with dyslexia have as they benefit from early intervention and that instruction with phonemic awareness can change the way the brain functions during reading (Birsh, 2011).

Definition of Terms

1. **Dyslexia Teacher:** At Luna Independent School District, an educator who works with students who have been diagnosed with dyslexia, are commonly referred to and known in the common parlance as a “dyslexia teacher.” This educator provides students with the

skills and strategies that enable them to further their reading, spelling, and writing abilities.

2. **Dyslexia Lab:** At Luna Independent School District, every campus has a classroom that is setup with tables or desks to accommodate small group setting instruction. It is decorated with posters from Neuhaus Education Center, and it has all the materials needed by the dyslexia teacher to be able to provide therapy.
3. **Dyslexia:** The definition for dyslexia has always been a working definition. In Lyon (2003), he follows the general format of a paper published in *Annals of Dyslexia* in 1995, which elaborated on a working definition proposed in 1994 (Lyon, 1995). I will use the most current definition for the purposes of this paper as used in Lyon (2003):

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (p. 2).

To understand dyslexia better, I would like to provide what Olagboyega in Leseyane et al., 2018, points out:

Spelling difficulties include misrepresentation of the sound, for example, ‘pad’ for ‘pat’; wrong word boundaries, for example, ‘firstones’ for ‘first ones’; wrong syllabification, for example, ‘rember’ for ‘remember’; wrong doubling of letters,

for example, ‘eeg’ for ‘egg’; intrusive vowels, for example, ‘tewenty’ for ‘twenty’; ‘b’, ‘d’ confusion, for example, ‘bady’ for ‘baby’; and letter reversal, for example, ‘lentgh’ for ‘length’ or ‘tow’ for ‘two’ (p. 2).

4. **Structured Literacy:** According to the International Dyslexia Association (2015), students with dyslexia need Structured Literacy (SL) to prepare them to decode words in an explicit, systematic manner. Thus, students should receive dyslexia services as stated in their student service plan. SL instruction is the umbrella term used by the International Dyslexia Association (2015) to unify and encompass evidence-based programs and approaches that are aligned to the knowledge and practice standards that are effective for students identified with dyslexia. According to Moats (2019) as cited in Fallon & Katz (2020):

SL focuses on reading and spelling through the explicit, systematic teaching of language skill areas including (a) phonology (phonological and phonemic awareness), (b) orthography (sound-symbol correspondences, spelling patterns, and conventions of print), (c) syllables (patterns and syllable types), (d) morphology (prefixes, root words, suffixes), (e) syntax (sentence structure), and (f) semantics (the meaning system) (p. 337).

According to the International Dyslexia Association (2015):

Structured Literacy instruction is systematic and cumulative. Systematic means that the organization of material follows the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest and most basic concepts and elements and progress methodically to more difficult concepts and elements. Cumulative means each step must be based on concepts previously learned (p. 2).

5. **Systematic Instruction:** Described in the Reading Academies (Texas Education Agency Learn, 2021), *systematic* components of Science of Teaching Reading instruction

incorporate carefully planned and sequenced instruction where:

- Lessons build on each other, moving from simple concepts to more complex concepts (or high frequency to low frequency).
- Prerequisite skills are considered.
- Complex skills are broken down into smaller steps; and
- Complex instruction is scaffolded and supports (e.g., cues, prompts, and manipulatives) are provided so that students can build independence and mastery of new learning (p. 2E-2.9).

6. **Explicit Instruction:** As per the International Dyslexia Association (2015):

Structured Literacy instruction requires the deliberate teaching of all concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction. It is not assumed that students will naturally deduce these concepts on their own (p. 2).

And explained in the Reading Academies, *explicit* instruction refers to direct, structured instruction, making lessons clear for students. To demonstrate explicit Science of Teaching Reading instruction in the Reading Academies (Texas Education Agency Learn, 2021), teachers will use the following actions:

1. Identify the skills to be learned and communicate clear objectives.
2. Provide clear, precise directions and instructions using academic language.
3. Connect new learning to previous learning.
4. Use the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model for instruction.
5. Provide opportunities for ongoing review and practice.

6. Provide ongoing, purposeful feedback (p. 2E-2.10).

Summary

When using SL in the Dyslexia Lab while delivered through virtual means or face-to-face, the perfect design to study and learn from student experiences would be a case study. This approach is needed and is a great fit for getting to know about the experiences of students with dyslexia. The reason why this case study is the perfect design to use is because I have seen the effectiveness in the delivery of interventions and strategies through a SL program that has been provided in both virtual and fac-to-face type of instruction from the perspective of the students.

I have gotten an in-depth look at the students' experiences when working within a bounded set of time and circumstances; this case study has given me a rich and deep understanding of this phenomenon while I observe, explain and tell how students' experience improved in reading and writing skills when working in a systematic and explicit environment. This is also a unique case study in that out of the 60 students served by this Dyslexia Lab, I was able to recruit more than one fourth or fifth grade student who has received dyslexia instruction in both virtual and face-to-face instruction within the three-year time frame (pre-pandemic face to face-2019-March 2020 school year, pandemic remote 2020-2021 school year, post-pandemic face to face with technology integration 2021-2022 school year).

This chapter introduced the study by discussing the background of the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, the significance of the study, positionality statement, and the definition of terms.

In Chapter II, I review extant research literature related to my proposed study. The review includes literature from expert's and teacher's perspectives on dyslexia programs. Further, I

discuss the limited research findings on students' experiences and how this study is warranted, needed, because it will contribute to the discourse in the field.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

To better understand the emergence of this study, it is critical to analyze the literature on dyslexia. This chapter will provide the benefits and advantages of using SL in the Dyslexia Lab, the learning programs associated with this topic, and the teaching methodologies that can enhance instruction while using technology or when the instruction is provided face-to-face. Additionally, this chapter will review literature that comes from expert's and teacher's perspectives. I will elaborate on the existence of dyslexia, the earliest clues and characteristics of a person with dyslexia, and the misconceptions related to dyslexia. This chapter will also present the significance of preparing educators to teach students with dyslexia, the importance of language and sound components, the importance of having all instructional components in the lessons, and the importance of dyslexia services to the student's self-esteem. This study is warranted, because it spotlights the perspectives and experiences of three students who receive interventions in a Dyslexia Lab that utilizes a SL program via face-to-face or through remote learning. This study will contribute to the discourse in the field.

Context

Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has tremendously impacted education-March 2020. Educators and students transitioned from face-to-face instruction to remote instruction, and educators had to adjust to a fresh style of teaching. As a contemporary curricular trend, technology has changed the way educators participate in literacy, how they understand reading

and writing, how they approach the curriculum, their students, and their own pedagogical practice (Honeyford & Watt, 2018). Yet, the pandemic brought a ray of sunshine to educators who provide support services through technology, particularly those in the dyslexia program. According to Fallon & Katz (2020), students who struggle with spoken and written language, including those with dyslexia, Structured Literacy offers an effective evidence-based instructional approach for improving reading and writing skills (p. 342).

Students with dyslexia struggle with language and literacy. Studies show that students who receive services from a Dyslexia Lab with a curriculum that integrates SL have improved in their reading and writing abilities when institutions offer “a set of enabling arrangements which are put in place to ensure that the dyslexic student can demonstrate their strengths and abilities and show attainment” (Stienen-Durand & George, 2014, p. 421). With the integration of technology and a systematic language-based reading and writing program, students with dyslexia demonstrate success in their chronic reading challenges. The lessons provided in the Dyslexia Lab have been conducted using SL. This explicit and systematic instruction not only sets the foundational reading skills that are effective to improve their reading, but it also allows for success in writing.

Hence, SL is the umbrella term used by the International Dyslexia Association (2015) to unify and encompass evidence-based programs and practice standards that are effective for students that have been identified with this specific learning disability. Students make meaning of text by building on a foundation; as readers, they analyze the smallest units of meaning, to the most comprehensive description of the reading process. Each individual student is different and brings unique cognitive and linguistic strengths and weaknesses to the task, therefore, “teachers who work at prevention, intervention, or remediation require a foundation based on scientific

evidence and need to be informed about the complex nature of instruction in reading and related skills” (Birsh, 2011, p. 2).

When using SL in the Dyslexia Lab while delivered through remote learning or through face-to-face instruction, the perfect design to study the students’ lived experience in these contexts would be a case study. During the pivot of returning back to school after being home schooled due to the coronavirus pandemic, the use of virtual instruction was provided in the regular classroom setting. Students with dyslexia could join the Dyslexia Lab class virtually. This allowed students to remain in their regular classroom setting while working with their dyslexia teacher virtually. Students with dyslexia would attend the virtual Dyslexia Lab daily for forty-five minutes. They worked in a small group setting where they could monitor their own learning while facilitated by their dyslexia teacher. This positive setting engaged students in an effective, systematic, and targeted intervention program (Collins et al., 2020).

Recently, classrooms and learning institutions have transitioned to a “new” normal setting post COVID-19. Students are now attending the Dyslexia Lab face-to-face and are trying to adjust to the many challenges they encounter. Not only are there plastic shields around their desk area, but they must also wear a mask during the dyslexia therapy sessions. This has made the language instruction provided in the Dyslexia Lab to be a more strenuous task. Students struggle to hear and understand the sounds, letters, or sentences the dyslexia teacher says. The same happens to the dyslexia teacher, she has a tough time understanding the responses of the students. At times, the dyslexia teacher cannot decipher the sounds some students are producing, and this makes it difficult for the dyslexia teacher to provide corrective feedback to the students. Now more than ever, the lessons in the Dyslexia Lab must be taught explicitly and in a systematic manner. Especially since students have spent more than a year at home for virtual

instruction. During that time, school systems offered options for online, print materials, both or neither, with teachers holding classes online; many school districts pivoted to some form of remote learning to help students try to meet grade level standards (Bansak & Starr, 2021). Schools also supplied additional resources needed to support distance learning such as access to laptops, tablets, and the internet. Yet, many of the students have fallen behind academically, and there are achievement gaps. A Brown University study projected that students in grades 3 through 8 would start the 2020–21 academic year behind by almost half a year relative to grade-level expectations (Bansak & Starr, 2021).

What is Dyslexia?

According to Shaywitz (2003), “a substantial number of well-intentioned boys and girls—including very bright ones—experience significant difficulty in learning to read, through no fault of their own” (p.3). Shaywitz continues by stating that “this frustrating and persistent problem in learning to read is called dyslexia” (p. 3). Although it is often described as a hidden disability, due to its lack of visible signs, men and women with dyslexia can now point to an image of the brain and say, “Here. Look at this. This is the root cause of my problem” (Shaywitz, 2003, p. 4). Dyslexia can now be diagnosed and treated. In fact, Birsh (2011) mentions that “it is estimated to occur in approximately 5%-17% of the population in the United States” (p. 10). Washburn et al. (2017) says that individuals with dyslexia represent the largest group of individuals with a reading disability. Dyslexia exists across an entire range of intellectual ability and is typically recognized when there are strengths and weaknesses in a person’s reading capabilities.

This neurological concept, “Dyslexia” was introduced by Rudolf Berlin in 1887. He coined the word “dyslexia” to apply to stroke patients who had selectively lost the ability to read,

without loss of basic vision or hearing, and preserving most other cognitive skills, particularly oral (Berlin, 1884). Furthermore, dyslexia is a word once abjured by educational professionals in the United States because of the confusing and often inaccurate notions produced by the term (Gonzalez & Brown, 2019). There is not one specific definition for dyslexia, but strong research supports that dyslexia is neurobiological in nature and rooted in language deficits where individuals show difficulty in phonological processing (Washburn et. al., 2017). In Lyon (2003), he follows the general format of a paper published in *Annals of Dyslexia* in 1995, which elaborated on a working definition proposed in 1994 (Lyon, 1995). The most current definition is used for the purposes of this study as used in Lyon (2003):

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (p. 2).

In recent years, Dyslexia has gained more attention with an increase in state legislation (Gonzalez & Brown, 2019). Between January and March of 2018, 33 new legislative bills concerning dyslexia were introduced across the United States. Further, states with specific dyslexia related legislation have grown substantially over the past five years (2013–2015). Thus, in 2013, 22 states had dyslexia related laws and currently in 2018, 42 states have laws specifically geared towards dyslexia (International Dyslexia Association, 2018). Early laws concerning dyslexia were general and vague; however, recent mandates have improved where

states now have a code that specifically defines dyslexia and supplies guidance in the identification and selection of research-based interventions (International Dyslexia Association, 2018). This surge of dyslexia related mandates illustrates that educators and law makers value the importance of identifying students with this exceptionality and supplying proper evidence-based interventions.

Many teachers do not understand that students with dyslexia have difficulties that are involuntary and that they have a normal desire to learn (International Dyslexia Association, 2005). According to Shaywitz (1996), “Dyslexia is an unexpected difficulty in learning to read. Dyslexia takes away an individual’s ability to read quickly and automatically, and to retrieve spoken words easily, but it does not dampen one’s creativity and ingenuity” (p.13). People who have this disability are smart and hardworking, but they have trouble connecting the letters they see to the sounds those letters make (Brennan, 2019).

The Earliest Clues to Dyslexia

Shaywitz (2003) affirms that “children vulnerable to dyslexia may not begin saying their first words about one year and phrases by eighteen months to two years” (p. 94). There is a similarity in the parent input forms submitted at Sol Elementary. When parents are asked for background information, they also indicate that there is a delay in their child’s spoken language development. Students with dyslexia also tend to mispronounce words by either leaving off beginning sounds (pisgetti for spaghetti) or at times inverting the sounds within a word (aminal for animal) (Shaywitz, 2003). Teachers also notice that students with dyslexia have trouble manipulating sound structure, and as a result are less sensitive to rhyme. Shaywitz (2003) also mentions that “sometimes it is hard to follow the conversation of a dyslexic because the sentences are filled with pronouns or words lacking in specificity” (p. 96).

Diagnosis of Dyslexia

Educators can identify students with phoneme and word-recognition weaknesses early by administering screening tools for phonemic awareness and other prereading skills validated by research (Birsh, 2011). When students lack these foundational skills, the teacher initiates the process of a Response to Intervention (RtI) which is an approach that schools use to help all students, including struggling learners to determine eligibility of further testing through a full and individual initial evaluation or Section 504 dyslexia (Texas Education Agency, 2007-2022).

Currently, 1st grade teachers can identify which students are at risk for dyslexia. The state mandated House Bill 1886 indicates that early identification and intervention for a child with dyslexia and related disorders at the end of kindergarten and first grade school years must be conducted to improve a child's academic success. Early identification of high risk for reading difficulty, coupled with effective interventions, can improve reading and other outcomes for many children (Ozernov-Palchik & Gabrieli, 2018).

Characteristics of a Person with Dyslexia

Dyslexia varies, and the prognosis depends on the severity of the disability, on each individual's specific patterns of strengths and weaknesses, and the appropriateness and intensity of intervention (Birsh, 2011). Yet, some of the common characteristics of a person with dyslexia can be remarkably similar. They might have difficulties speaking, problems organizing written and spoken language, and they will have difficulty learning the letter names and their sound. Most of the time, their decoding abilities are inaccurate, causing their reading to be laborious and lack fluency. Students with dyslexia also struggle with spelling and writing.

According to the Dyslexia Handbook (Texas Education Agency, 2018) that is provided to the dyslexia teachers at Luna Independent School district, students identified as having dyslexia

typically experience primary difficulties in phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness and manipulation, single word reading, reading fluency, and spelling (p. 1). The handbook also mentions that consequences may include difficulties in reading comprehension and/or written expression, and these difficulties in phonological awareness are unexpected for the student's age and educational level and are not primarily the result of their native Spanish language difference factors or their language of instruction. Additionally, there is often a family history of similar difficulties. It is important to note that individuals demonstrate differences in degree of impairment and may not exhibit all the characteristics listed above (p. 1). The following are the primary reading/spelling characteristics of dyslexia as stated in the Dyslexia Handbook (TEA, 2018):

- Difficulty reading words in isolation (stand-alone words)
- Difficulty accurately decoding unfamiliar words
- Difficulty with oral reading (slow, inaccurate, or labored without prosody)
- Difficulty spelling

Misconceptions of Dyslexia. It is important to note the many misconceptions of dyslexia for the purpose of correctly identifying children who have this specific learning disability. Many students that are receiving dyslexia services at times are not in the correct setting. These students might need additional testing to address their academic needs through IDEA (Texas Education Agency, 2018). Washburn et al., (2017) mentions these seven misunderstandings about dyslexia:

- (a) writing letters and words backwards are symptoms of dyslexia,
- (b) reading disabilities are caused by visual perception problems,
- (c) children will outgrow dyslexia,
- (d) more boys than girls have dyslexia,

- (f) dyslexia only affects individuals who speak English,
- (g) people with dyslexia will benefit from colored text overlays or lenses, and
- (h) a person with dyslexia can never learn to read (p.171)

Preparing Educators to Teach Students with Dyslexia

Numerous studies have been conducted on SL and the benefits of its use in the Dyslexia Lab. Initially, the National Reading Panel (NRP) analyzed and created a report making it clear that effective reading instruction must address five specific components that are taught systematically and explicitly: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NICHD, 2000). Evidence shows that when children who have reading difficulties, such as dyslexia, are given systematic, explicit interventions, the region of the brain called the occipito-temporal region is activated (Scholtens et al., 2020). In other words, reading instruction based upon the science of reading creates important and lasting changes in the brain so that skilled reading can take place (Birsh, 2011). SL is the umbrella term used by the International Dyslexia Association (2015) to unify and encompass evidence-based programs and practice standards that are effective for students identified with this specific learning disability. Students make meaning of text by building on a foundation; as readers, they analyze the smallest units of meaning, to the most comprehensive description of the reading process.

The International Dyslexia Association

The International Dyslexia Association (2022) was established in the 1920's with direct roots to Dr. Samuel T. Orton's pioneering studies in the field of reading research and multisensory teaching. Through much research, it is to be considered that the International Dyslexia Association (2022) is the oldest organization dedicated to the study and treatment of

dyslexia. In fact, it is also responsible for supplying complete information and services to address the full scope of dyslexia and related reading and writing challenges.

The International Dyslexia Association, Inc. (IDA, 2022) is a nonprofit organization which provides advocacy, resources, and services to teaching professionals, advocates, and individuals or families impacted by dyslexia and other related learning differences. Its website is filled with extensive information about this specific learning disability, contact information, membership information, conference opportunity details, and it has recently added a COVID-19 relief fund tab.

The website also provides a section labeled “resources”. This is where parents, educators, and advocates of dyslexia can find information about SL and the benefits it provides for students with dyslexia. According to the IDA (2022), successful SL instruction and interventions provide a strong core of highly explicit, systematic teaching of foundational skills such as decoding and spelling. There is also a Structured Literacy Introductory Guide that can be useful for educators. In it, teachers can find lessons and activities that can promote success in reading. Dyslexia teachers use the information provided by the International Dyslexia Association to assist regular classroom teachers. When schools adopt features of Structured Literacy in their general education programs, schools can prevent many learning difficulties that children with learning disabilities face (Foorman et al., 2016). Dyslexia teachers often offer informational data regarding dyslexia to help regular classroom teachers better understand dyslexia and how they can assist their dyslexic students and struggling readers.

Additionally, the International Dyslexia Association website is used widely by dyslexia teachers to educate parents. It is an extremely useful site where dyslexia teachers can gather information needed to provide to parents. For example, the information in the “Dyslexia at a

Glance” tab can be utilized to create a digital presentation to assist during initial meetings. This is when a student qualifies for dyslexia services, and the dyslexia teacher meets with parents to present the evaluation results. During those meetings, the dyslexia teacher also provides the International Dyslexia Association website link to parents so they can have direct access, assistance, and support for their child. The association provides information not only in their native language, but it also includes text-to-speech, translated web pages, picture dictionaries, and screen masking. Thus, it is a user-friendly webpage even to digital immigrants and non-native English speakers.

Background of Structured Literacy. In the year 2000, the International Dyslexia Association (2022) created the Framework for Informed Reading and Language Instruction: Matrix of Multisensory Structured Language Programs. In this matrix, IDA fully supports the work of The Alliance for Accreditation and Certification of Structured Language Education, Inc., the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council, and The Academy of Orton Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. According to the IDA, these organizations were designed to provide instructional materials and training regarding language-based learning problems; they were intended to help school decision-makers, practicing educators, and parents gain access to one or more of the many effective sequential, multisensory, and structured language programs (International Dyslexia Association, 2022).

In 2010, the International Dyslexia Association (2022) published the *Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading*, which details the knowledge base needed for skilled reading instruction for all reading teachers. This is also when the International Dyslexia Association defined and supplied an evidence-based reading program through the *Knowledge and Practice Standards* and gave the approach a name, “Structured Literacy.” This is an explicit,

systematic, and multisensory approach that focuses on giving students the ability to decode the words they encounter when learning to read. Evidence supports that when students are learning to read through a science-based program that is taught systematically and explicitly to all students, it is especially beneficial for those who are dyslexic (Cowan, 2016). Full literacy, intended for all readers, includes basic reading, spelling, written expression, vocabulary development and reading comprehension, all of which is encompassed in the term, “Structured Literacy.” Therefore, SL is a blueprint for effective literacy instruction based on the Knowledge and Practice Standards for teachers of reading developed by the IDA in 2010 and updated in 2018 to better prepare educators meet the instructional needs of students for literacy acquisition (Ray, 2020).

According to Spear-Swerling (2018), SL approaches are often recommended for students with dyslexia and other poor decoders, and they are well supported by research evidence (p. 202). Spear-Swerling (2018) adds that some examples of SL approaches include the Wilson Reading System, Orton-Gillingham, the Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program, and Direct Instruction. These programs may vary in some ways, but they all share several key features. They are all: explicit, systematic, and cumulative, which is the instruction that is applied in a dyslexia lab (see Figure 1). Structured Literacy is especially suited for students with dyslexia because it directly addresses their core weaknesses in phonological skills, decoding, and spelling (Moats, 2017).

Neuhaus Education Center

The Neuhaus Education Center is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to promoting reading success to all learners, specifically to those who struggle in reading. The Neuhaus Education Center (2016) site supplies evidence-based training and support to teachers,

it supplies information and resources to families, and it offers direct literacy services to adult learners. In fact, the curriculum used in the Dyslexia Lab at Luna Independent School District is from the Neuhaus Education Center. The dyslexia department requires Dyslexia Lab teachers to attend training at Valley Speech Language Learning Center, in which lessons come from the Neuhaus Education Center. Dyslexia teachers must complete 10 sessions for year one of Basic Language Skills, and 10 sessions for year two of Basic Language Skills. Online courses are also required for dyslexia teachers in Reading Readiness, Multisensory Grammar, and Written Composition. These trainings are essential for teachers to be able to provide dyslexia therapy and services for students with this specific learning disability.

Hence, as per the Neuhaus Education Center (2016), the goal for reading is for students to show comprehension. Yet, the most difficult problem for students with dyslexia is learning to read (International Dyslexia Association, 2015). Therefore, some popularly employed reading approaches were analyzed. These are the Typical Literacy Practices (TLP) used regularly in schools. For example, Guided Reading, Reader's Workshop, Reading Recovery, and Balanced Literacy, but it was discovered that they are not effective for struggling readers. These approaches are especially ineffective for students with dyslexia because they do not focus on the decoding and spelling skills these struggling students need to succeed in reading (Spear-Swerling, 2018 & Moats, 2017). Instead, students with dyslexia need a program that encompasses bottom-up language processing works from phonemes and morphemes (Moskovsky et al., 2015). Since SL explicitly teaches systematic word identification and decoding strategies, these skills benefit most students and are vital for those with dyslexia (IDA, 2022).

The Neuhaus Education Center website offers versatile evidence-based information not only for educators, but also for school districts, families, and students. For example, anyone can navigate quickly throughout the site to find useful resources, such as videos that show how to properly sound out and model hand gestures for the curriculum used in the dyslexia lab. Additionally, Neuhaus Education Center (2016) provides a continuum of reading instruction classes for educators and programs based on a multi-tiered model of instruction. The instruction in Tier I is described as core instruction, Tier II is targeted to the 15% of students who are struggling with literacy, and Tier III which is a more intensive intervention for the 5% of students with serious reading disabilities. The programs are offered for those who wish to be campus literacy leaders and those who want to be therapists working with individuals with dyslexia and related reading disorders.

Moreover, the Neuhaus Education Center website provides the Online Certification Preparation for Dyslexia Specialists (OCPDS), Specialist Preparation Program (SPP), Level 1 Practitioner, and Specialist Preparation Program (SPP), Level 2 Therapist. The OCPDS is accredited by the International Dyslexia Association as an IDA Accredited Plus Program, and it maintains the high standards of this organization. Based on the Orton-Gillham approach, the curriculum uses multisensory activities to teach phonological awareness, decoding, spelling, writing, and comprehension (NES, 2016). The SPP Neuhaus Tier III program, which includes Level 1 – Practitioner and Level 2 – Therapist, is recognized by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), accredited by the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC); these programs meet requirements for Texas licensure, and the criteria for membership in the Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA) (NES, 2016). Dyslexia

teachers can take the challenging certification state exam to become practitioners when they complete all their required training.

Also, dyslexia teachers can use the Neuhaus Education Center’s website to find the resources they need to use in the Dyslexia Lab. There is a drop-down menu labeled “resources,” and it takes you to another tab labeled “consumables and tools.” This is where educators, such as dyslexia teachers, can find handwriting, mastery checks, a rapid word recognition generator, storytelling pictures, word webs, and copies of the card decks they use in the Dyslexia Lab. The website now also includes recommendations for virtual instruction. Neuhaus Education Center provides all the necessary tools to assist in a Structured Literacy setting.

Texas Reading Academies

Recently, educators in Texas are required to take an online course as an initiative in the 86th legislative session. The Texas Reading Academies (House Bill 3) (Texas Education Agency, 2021) is required by all kindergarten through third-grade teachers and principals. The modules must be started before the 2022-2023 school year. The main goal is to increase teacher knowledge and implementation of evidence-based practices to positively impact student literacy achievement. The Reading Academies (Texas Education Agency, 2021) content embeds areas that are aligned with the instruction that must be provided in the Dyslexia Lab. Some of these areas include:

- Oral language
- Phonological Awareness
- Alphabet Knowledge, print concepts, and handwriting
- Decoding, encoding, and word study
- Reading Fluency

- Reading Comprehension
- Composition
- Tiered reading supports

Currently, dyslexia teachers at Luna Independent School District are working on the Reading Academies course. Teachers and principals began this 12-module course in September 2021 and must complete it by June 2022. The vision of the Texas Reading Academies is to ensure that all educators are highly trained in the science of reading, provide evidence-based literacy instruction, and promote critical thinking, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Texas Education Agency, 2021).

To support the many students served in the classroom, the Reading Academies modules provide a “special populations” icon. This symbol is useful because it adds specific considerations for students who are supported by one or more additional educational programs, including dyslexia. The Reading Academies also introduces Learning Ally as a tool that TEA has provided funding for K-12 public and charter schools to support their struggling readers. With the permission of TEA, Learning Ally Audiobooks are embedded in the course to help deepen educators' understanding of literacy concepts. Learning Ally is the digital app currently used in the Dyslexia Lab at Sol Elementary. Dyslexia students have an account to Learning Ally that can be used in the regular classroom setting, in the Dyslexia Lab, and at home. Learning Ally supplies fair access to audiobooks, a format that students can easily absorb, and serves as a scaffold that allows students to read beyond their reading level (Whittingham et al., 2013).

Best Instructional Practices for Students with Dyslexia

Technology has impacted literacy instruction provided in the Dyslexia Lab, being that it is an integral part of almost every aspect of life today for our 21st century digital natives. While

reading and writing will always be an essential skill, when we combine technology and reading/writing instruction, it allows us to connect our learners to the books they enjoy reading, better evaluate their comprehension, and build essential literacy skills like vocabulary, writing, and fluency. But, when we think about these 21st-century skills in the dyslexia lab, we must ensure that the skills impact the abilities that native digital learners need for effective participation in modern work.

This contemporary curricular trend is crucial for dyslexia teachers, and technology is necessary in this professional practice. Throughout the day, dyslexia teachers at Sol Elementary service about eight groups of elementary students (from 1st – 5th grade). Each group ranges from three to five students at the most. The sessions must include SL instruction; it must be taught in a systematic manner, and the instruction is diagnostic to each individual child. To make sure students are successful in the dyslexia lab, teachers “must begin to address the complex, high-tech media that adolescents have grown up with, becoming a part of their everyday lives” (Goodman, 2014, p. 228). Thus, “much of the different set of literacy practices involves digital media” (Goodman, 2014, p. 228).

Also, assistive technology should be included daily to maximize instruction because it “is designed to provide compensatory strategies, not correction or training to encourage better phonological awareness or visual discrimination or even to teach spelling rules” (Draffan, 2002, p. 24). For example, students can use iPads to record lessons or tutorials to use for future reference. They can use transcribing machines or apps, such as Google Docs which has voice typing as a tool, to complete assignments. This helps them minimize their stress and anxiety; the use of technology apps encourages independence and enhances literacy (Draffman, 2002). This is necessary for students with dyslexia because “using dictionaries is hard work navigating lists

of alphabetical words and finding the correct one when sequencing and spelling are weak, makes the task even more time wasting” (Draffan, 2002, p. 25).

In the same manner, audiobooks are an excellent instrument for students to use day-to-day. Learners are given the choice to select from a variety of books, from any genre they prefer, as it transforms the lives of these struggling readers. One such mobile app used at Sol Elementary is Learning Ally. In fact, it is the digital app that the state of Texas provides for students with dyslexia to use at home, in their regular classroom setting, or in the dyslexia lab. On the Learning Ally website, Barbara Wilson, Co-Founder Wilson Language Training and author of the *Wilson Reading System*, gives testimony on how Learning Ally supplies programming to help motivate students. It includes a dashboard to check student progress, and professional learning modules are offered. Supplying fair access to audiobooks, in a format that students can easily navigate to find books, serves as a scaffold that allows them to read beyond their reading level (Whittingham et al., 2013). Research confirms the importance of read aloud to students, positing that the act of reading aloud to them introduces new vocabulary and concepts, supplies a fluent model, and allows students access to literature they are unable to read independently (Serafini, 2004).

When technology is used in the Dyslexia Lab, technology abandons the traditional teaching methods, and challenges the traditional objectivist views that hold knowledge as reflecting, or even corresponding to the world. The dyslexia teacher is no longer standing in front of the lab giving traditional instruction; instead, she becomes a facilitator, a consultant, and an observer. In such a way, this social constructivism focuses on knowledge construction rather than simple fact reproduction. Learning takes the form of problem solving “under adult guidance

or in collaboration with more capable peers” so that students take full advantage of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978).

Importance in Language and Sound Components

It is crucial for students with dyslexia to receive sound-symbol correspondence instruction. Not only does this enable students to sound out unfamiliar words, to build orthographic patterns, to perceive larger chunks of words, but they will use the context more efficiently. In fact, we can say that “The Matthew Effect” by sociologist Robert K. Merton is being used as I describe this phenomenon (Birsh, 2011); the rich get richer...and the poor get poorer. When students learn phonemic awareness and sound-symbol correspondence, they enjoy reading and they read more. They also improve in their fluency, vocabulary, world knowledge, syntax, text structure, and comprehension (Birsh, 2011). On the other hand, they will become poorer readers when there is no phonemic awareness or sound-symbol correspondence instruction because they do not learn to read, they do not gain fluency, nor enjoy reading.

Thus, SL instruction and technology interventions during instruction in the dyslexia lab provide students with opportunities to practice language skills, so that they can develop in the context of reading and writing. SL instruction also benefits students in increased occasions of simultaneously focusing on the multiple patterns and codes of language. There is student-teacher interaction in all portions of the lesson, making the sessions ideal in supplying a planned scope and sequence to achieve automatic fluent application of language knowledge and reading for meaning (Collins et al., 2020).

Importance of Instructional Components

When students join the Dyslexia Lab via remote learning or through face-to-face instruction, the SL’s elements work together. The lessons are individualized to student’s needs

based on continuous assessment and involve a high level of student-instructor interaction (Collins et al., 2020). Collins et al., (2020) adds that the lessons “center around explicit instruction with immediate feedback and guidance and addresses language concepts in a systematic and cumulative manner” (p. 534). Thus, the instruction in the dyslexia lab is delivered through the components of language: form, content, and use; it is conducted in an explicit, systematic, and cumulative manner (see Figure 1).

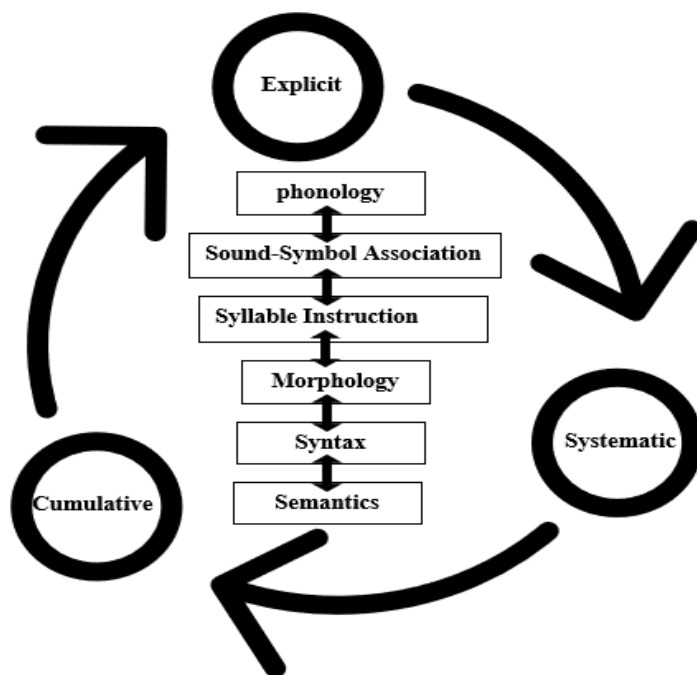


Figure 1 Components of a Structured Literacy Approach

For example, Birsh, (2011) presents how the three major interactive components of language *form* include phonology, morphology, and syntax.

- Phonology (awareness of the sound structures within spoken language and spelling mastery)
- Morphology (the study of word formation)

- Syntax (the system of rules that directs the comprehension and production of sentences; it is sometimes referred to as grammar) (p. 55)

Next, is the *content* of language which is semantics. Here, the instruction focuses on the many different meanings that words can represent in various forms of text. According to Birsh (2011), the study of semantics is concerned with the meanings of words and the relationship between and among words as they are used to represent knowledge of the world (p. 70).

Finally, students who attend the Dyslexia Lab are provided instruction through *use* of language, which is also referred to as pragmatics. According to Birsh (2011), pragmatics involves a set of rules that dictate communicative behavior (p. 75). In the dyslexia lab, classroom discourse patterns and literature level of talking and understanding represent a level of language use that is critical for academic success (Birsh, 2011).

Importance to their Self-Esteem

Tam & Leung (2019) write that “students with learning disabilities reported experiencing emotional disturbance and motivational hardships in classroom learning as they fail to meet grade level expectations” (p. 299). Though, when virtual instruction was happening, students remained in the regular classroom setting, and they were able to join their dyslexia class virtually. This allowed students to remain in the regular classroom setting while working with their dyslexia teacher virtually. Moreover, these students worked in a small group setting where they could monitor their own learning; this positive setting engaged them in an effective, systematic, and targeted intervention program (Collins et al., 2020).

Teachers have found that “over time students’ motivation begins to decrease in all academic subjects” (Goodman, 2014, p. 225). Goodman (2014) adds that “the decline in many children’s motivation to read in both the school and home environments reaches a significantly

low level in fourth grade” (p. 225). Therefore, dyslexia teachers should foster creativity, enjoyment, and innovation while using the SL program they follow. Dyslexia teachers, now more than ever, continue working as problem-posing educators that regard their students as no longer docile listeners but now became critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher (Freire, 1970/1993/2006).

Now that students have returned to attend the Dyslexia Lab for face-to-face instruction, student engagement has improved greatly. The students are eager to work in the Dyslexia Lab where they receive instruction in a small group setting for 45 minutes daily.

Conceptual Framework

The Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory was utilized to conceptualize this study. Bronfenbrenner’s theory is an adequate theory for my work around SL for dyslexia instruction because it is expansive, yet focused; one eye is trained on the complex layers of school, family and community relationships, and the other eye is sharply focused on individual student development (Leonard, 2011). This theory was used to help me analyze my data, guide my research, and evaluate my findings. Description, analysis, and interpretation as seen in Saldaña (2011) are identified by Harry F. Wolcott (1994) as being some functions of style. I want “to present a factual account of fieldwork observations to answer the questions,” (p. 29), What is going on in the dyslexia lab? and How do students experience the dyslexia lab? The layers in Bronfenbrenner’s model of human development was used in the initial mapping of the setting where most social interactions occur, those settings where we interact with people (Hess & Schultz, 2008). Parents are particularly important representatives in the inner circle, which is what Bronfenbrenner’s theory calls the *microsystem*. This is the setting where the child has direct, face-to-face relationships with significant people such as parents, friends, and teachers.

Summary

Chapter II examined the review of literature that comes from the perspectives of experts regarding dyslexia. This information came from the International Dyslexia Association, the Neuhaus Education Center, and from the Texas Reading Academies. To better understand the emergence of this study, it was critical to analyze literature that comes from expert's and teacher's perspectives. I elaborated on the existence of dyslexia, the earliest clues and characteristics of a person with dyslexia, and the misconceptions related to dyslexia. This chapter also presented the significance of preparing educators to teach students with dyslexia, the importance of language and sound components, the importance of having all instructional components in the lessons, and the importance of dyslexia services to the student's self-esteem.

This study is warranted because it spotlights the perspectives and experiences of three students who have received interventions in a Dyslexia Lab that utilizes a SL program via face-to-face and through remote learning. There is a gap in the literature that this case study explores to understand the experiences of students who receive dyslexia interventions through virtual and face-to-face instruction. This case study contributes to the discourse in the field.

Chapter III discusses the rationale for using a case study and the proposed methodology. Chapter III also provides the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research design, the rationale behind the research design, and I explain the procedures that will be conducted in this qualitative case study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In an effort to better understand the association of using SL in both remote and face-to-face environments to improve instructional pedagogy in a Dyslexia Lab, my study focused on three students who have been in the dyslexia program for several years and have received extensive instruction in an explicit and systematic system. These students originally received services in a traditional Dyslexia Lab in face-to-face context, then experienced virtual services during the pandemic-related school closures. The students then returned to school to resume face-to-face instruction with technology enhanced virtual services. This is what makes this case study interesting—the unique circumstances these students experienced. Learning about their experiences while receiving dyslexia services during this particular time is central to the study. This qualitative case study investigated students’ experiences in a Dyslexia Lab and how their dyslexia teacher uses SL to meet her students’ pedagogical goals. This case study also tells how the integration of technology has aided students’ progress in reading, spelling, and writing.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the research problem, the purpose of the study, research design, rationale behind the research design, and explain the procedures of this qualitative case study

Research Problem

Dyslexia teachers have discovered that over time fourth grade students’ motivation to read at school or at home tends to decrease in all academic subjects (Goodman, 2014. When

students with dyslexia receive instruction based on creativity, enjoyment, and innovation through a SL program they have demonstrated success in the regular classroom setting. The COVID-19 pandemic brought forth not only the use of technology in the Dyslexia Lab, but technology integration is a trend that perhaps should continue, and it is worth studying students' experiences. Dyslexia teachers, now more than ever, continue working as problem-posing educators that regard their students--no longer docile listeners--but now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher (Freire, 1970/1993/2006).

In response to the declining levels of student reading motivation, particularly around fourth grade, this qualitative case study provides insights about the experiences of three fourth or fifth grade students with dyslexia that attend a systematic language-based reading and writing Structured Literacy (SL) program. According to the International Dyslexia Association (2018), SL prepares students to decode words in an explicit and systematic manner. Therefore, when this instruction is delivered virtually or face-to-face to students with dyslexia, they have demonstrated success in improving their chronic reading challenges. A SL approach at the core is an optimal way to address literacy deficits, due to the positive impacts of morphological awareness on spelling, decoding, vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension (Collins et al., 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The aim of my research was to explore and provide insight about a systematic language-based reading and writing program, that when delivered virtually or face-to-face to students with dyslexia, they have demonstrated success in improving their chronic reading challenges. Students with dyslexia experience problems learning to read and write; often, when a basic level of reading and spelling ability is not established, there are persistent problems with

reading fluency (Snowling et al., 2020). I have gained meaningful and engaging feedback from this case study, and I have gained some understanding of my students' funds of knowledge outside the classroom setting (Gonzalez et al., 2005). As per Honeyford and Watt (2018), "learning from our students, about their passions and concerns, and critically engaging the issues that most need our attention will influence the literacy instruction we provide to our digital native students" (p. 262).

Research Question

In this case study, the following question was addressed: In a Dyslexia Lab where have received Structured Literacy (SL) instruction in both virtual and face-to-face environments, what are students' experiences?

Research Design

When using SL in the Dyslexia Lab while delivered through virtual means or face-to-face, the perfect design to study and learn from would be a case study. "The case study approach is particularly useful to employ when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of an issue, event, or phenomenon of interest, in its natural real-life context" (Crowe et al., 2011, p. 1). A case study is a great fit for being able to know about the experiences of three students with dyslexia, particularly during the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. These are students who have received SL instruction through a dyslexia lab in both face-to-face and virtual settings. The reason why a case study is the perfect design to use is because I was able to see, from the students' perspective how they experience the effectiveness in the delivery of interventions and strategies through a SL program that has been provided in both virtual and face-to-face type of instruction.

I was able to get an in-depth look at the students' experiences when working within a bounded set of time and circumstances; this case study gave me a rich and deep understanding of this phenomena while I observed, explained how students experience improvement in reading and writing skills when working in a systematic and explicit environment. This is also a unique case study in that out of the 60 students served in this dyslexia lab, I was able to recruit more than one fourth or fifth grade student who have received dyslexia instruction in both virtual and face-to-face instruction in this time frame (the last 3 years).

One way to understand qualitative research is to view it as an analysis used to better understand human action (Benton & Craig, 2011). Yet, we must first be cognizant of and see it through an interpretive lens, where we understand "cultures other than our own and the issues of relativism" (p. 94). Social sciences differ from the natural sciences, and social scientists have developed specific methods to study people and human groups. For an interpretivist, research leans more towards the collection of qualitative data to explore phenomena of human experience. An interpretive orientation to case study work is evident in the narrative fieldwork studies that merged life history with the examination of a case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

In this qualitative study, I used an intrinsic case study to examine students' experiences in a systematic language-based reading and writing program. According to Saldaña (2011):

Qualitative research is an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches to and methods for the study of natural social life. The information or data collected and analyzed is primarily (but not exclusively) nonquantitative in character, consisting of textual materials such as interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and documents, and/or visual materials such as artifacts, photographs, video recordings and Internet sites, that document human experiences about others and/or oneself in social action and reflexive states (p. 4).

My goal was to recruit three students who have been served through face-to-face, remote, and then back to face-to-face in this Dyslexia Lab. These students also have a parent who was willing to participate in data collection.

I conducted a qualitative case study that includes semi-structured interviews, naturalistic observations of the participants, and I used researcher notes to verify the data collected. The interviews and my observations of the participants provided me with a deeper understanding of the experiences of students who have attended the Dyslexia Lab for remote or face-to-face instruction.

Setting

The case study was conducted at a public elementary school in a south Texas city along the U.S./Mexico border. Sol Elementary (pseudonym) is located in a middle-class neighborhood. The parents' educational status is that of high school graduates or college level and Spanish is the community's dominant language. The area serves more than 75% Hispanic population having a middle-class socioeconomic status. This particular school has all these distinct features and as complicated factors, we might not expect for students with dyslexia to be very successful and yet, they are. This made Sol Elementary the perfect setting to conduct this case study. This elementary school is also part of an accredited school district that has achieved a *Met Standard* rating in the 2018 Texas accountability school system and has earned all applicable distinction designations. Thus, because of my position as a dyslexia teacher at Sol Elementary, I have access to this unique setting.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Sol Elementary has an enrollment of 818 students; as of 2019, the enrollment continues to increase since. Sol Elementary ranked better than 75.5% of elementary schools in Texas. It also ranked 16th among

37 ranked elementary schools in the district. There are about 42 highly qualified teachers in this campus. By highly qualified, I look at Darling-Hammond & Youngs (2002), who suggest there is evidence that verbal ability and content knowledge contribute to teacher effectiveness. Teachers at Sol Elementary have had adequate teacher preparation— including student teaching and methods coursework—which contribute to teacher effectiveness and teacher retention.

Sol Elementary first opened in 1999 and is one of the newer buildings in the district. It is in modest condition when compared to other schools in town, like one that was built in 1947. The classrooms are large, and the building is aesthetically pleasing. For many students, this is the only school they have attended.

Currently, two dyslexia teachers assist and provide therapy to approximately 60 students, first to fifth grade. This is a higher prevalence than typical number of students to have in a dyslexia lab, therefore Sol Elementary was a great site from which I was able to recruit participants. The dyslexia lab is located outside in a portable room, that is about 50 feet away from the main building. In fact, the dyslexia lab at Sol Elementary is the perfect setting for this case study as it is well-established. Entry into this field site gave me an opportunity to observe how space, environment, and objects reflect the participants within and around them (Saldaña, 2011).

Participants

As a researcher, I am the primary instrument of data collection and analysis for this endeavor; my emotions, values, attitude, and beliefs determined a large extent of the “what” and the “how” of my research (Saldaña, 2011). From among the 60 students who are served in the dyslexia lab, I used purposeful recruitment for my case study subjects. Criteria for inclusion in the study was that the student is a participant in the dyslexia program who has received SL in

both face-to-face and virtual environments, has participated in the program for at least 2 years during the time spanning before and after the pandemic, is in the 4th or 5th grade (which ensures two years of service in the lab and the maturity to reflect on and talk about their experience, and whose parent agreed to also participate as an interview respondent.

Sampling

Critical case sampling was used in this case study. This is a type of purposive sampling in which a case is chosen for analysis as I relied on experience and insight of the selected participants or chosen individuals that serve as good key informants (Mills & Gay, 2016).

Sample Contexts. According to the International Dyslexia Association (2018), SL prepares students to decode words in an explicit and systematic manner. SL instruction is not only systematic and cumulative, but it involves the delivery of teaching all critical concepts through continuous teacher-student interaction. The insights gained from firsthand experience in the research setting consisted of three participants. These subjects were available for in-depth interviews and observations over a period of 3 months.

Thus, the participants were selected for the time they have been in the dyslexia program; students who have the necessary experience and knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation were purposefully selected (Saldaña, 2011). The students under study made the perfect case study because these students began receiving dyslexia services in a traditional dyslexia lab setting at school--in person. Then, given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, when everything went virtual, students received services via on-line instruction. The students at Sol Elementary are now returning back to receiving face-to-face dyslexia instruction in a

traditional dyslexia lab for the school year 2021-2022. This is definitely a phenomenon worth studying because of the unique set of circumstances.

Furthermore, SL is beneficial when students with dyslexia face reading challenges, such as decoding, spelling, and reading words in isolation. Thus, students with dyslexia confront issues with self-esteem and emotional stress. In fact, Tam & Leung (2019), write that “students with learning disabilities reported experiencing emotional disturbance and motivational hardships in classroom learning as they fail to meet grade level expectations” (p. 299).

The specific focus of the study is the students’ experiences with SL as it is being used in the dyslexia lab setting with both face-to-face and virtual delivery.

Data Collection

After obtaining university IRB approval and selecting my participants, I was ready for data collection; this is also seen as my fieldwork (see Appendix C). I immersed myself into spending considerable time in the setting under study, immersing myself in the actual setting, and collecting as much relevant information as possible and as unobtrusively as possible (Mills & Gay, 2016). According to Mills and Gay (2016), “qualitative researchers collect descriptive—narrative and visual—non-numerical data to gain insights into the phenomenon of interest” (p. 563). Therefore, the data I collected is acceptable since I followed an ethical and feasible manner that contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon; the techniques I used share one aspect: I, the researcher, am the primary data collection instrument (Mills & Gay, 2016). I used at least three different methods to gather a broader spectrum of evidence and perspectives, such as interviews, naturalistic observations, and journaling (Saldaña, 2011).

Data for this qualitative case study was collected through semi-structured interviews, naturalistic observations of the participants, and autoethnographic journaling. Crowe et al. (2011)

stated, “The case study approach allows in-depth, multi-faceted, explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings” (p. 1). I conducted interviews to learn about the experiences of my participants, and I learned more about my participant’s life and educational background through interviewing the parents to further contextualize the students’ experiences. This is particularly relevant, since during the pandemic when schools closed the students received instruction virtually from their family homes. Stake (2009) explained that case studies provide vicarious opportunities that allow the audience to understand and relate to the lived experiences of others. The interviews were conducted at the convenience of the parents and the students via Zoom. They were recorded and reviewed using autogenerated transcription from the Zoom application and then checked for accuracy. A pseudonym name was given to the participants to provide confidentiality.

I used the three-interview series, which allows the interviewer and participant to dive into the experiences and place them into context in a meaningful way (Seidman, 2006). I developed semi-structured interview questions that encouraged the participants to reflect on their experiences in receiving dyslexia interventions through a Dyslexia Lab via remote learning and through face-to-face instruction (Appendix B). Semistructured interviews called for pre-determined, carefully sequenced questions, but did not limit the scope of the interview to solely those questions (Glesne, 2011). Pre-determined questions allowed the conversation to remain focused on the topic of interest, respecting both the scope of the conversation and the time of the participant and researcher. Additionally, if ideas or topics related to the research question arose because of the conversation, a semi-structured interview allowed for follow-up questions for the sake of elaboration and further exploration.

To strengthen the interviews, I used follow-up questions to be able to obtain response clarity, additional information, or to add any other thoughts or comments that may transpire during the interviews. These interviews were conducted over a three-month span, which allowed me to build rapport with the participants, and I was able to explore their experiences in the dyslexia lab. Seidman (2006) explained that the three-interview series as:

“The first interview establishes the context of the participant’s experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them” (p. 17).

I also gathered data from the participants’ parents through one interview (see Appendix A). I asked questions regarding their student’s life and educational background, as well as their perspective regarding dyslexia instruction before, during, and after the pandemic’s school closures. Aside from interviews, I kept my own autoethnographic journal about my experiences during the time frame of the case study.

Data Analysis

The Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory was utilized to conceptualize this study. Bronfenbrenner’s theory is an adequate theory for my work around SL for dyslexia instruction because it is expansive, yet focused; one eye is trained on the complex layers of school, family and community relationships, and the other eye is sharply focused on individual student development (Leonard, 2011). This theory was used to help me analyze my data, guide my research, and evaluate my findings. Description, analysis, and interpretation as seen in Saldaña (2011) are identified by Harry F. Wolcott (1994) as being some functions of style. I want “to present a factual account of fieldwork observations to answer the questions,” (p. 29),

What is going on in the dyslexia lab? and How do students experience the dyslexia lab? The layers in Bronfenbrenner's model of human development was used in the initial mapping of the setting where most social interactions occur, those settings where we interact with people (Hess & Schultz, 2008). Parents are particularly important representatives in the inner circle, which is what Bronfenbrenner's theory calls the *microsystem*. This is the setting where the child has direct, face-to-face relationships with significant people such as parents, friends, and teachers.

The qualitative data analysis includes interview transcripts and naturalistic observation notes, which I examined, reviewed, and analyzed in an iterative process. To analyze the semi-structured interviews, I used the process of open coding. I studied each passage of the interview transcripts to develop categories and was able to label them with the most appropriate codes (Boeije, 2002). In Boeije, 2002, she writes that "in this way it is possible to formulate the core message of the interview with the codes that are attached to it and to understand the interview including any difficulties, highlights and inconsistencies" (p. 395).

Furthermore, I described my thoughts, feelings, reflections and/or views about activities, events, or features of naturalistic observations in an autoethnographic journal. According to Ellis et al., 2011, ethnographers want to concentrate on ways of producing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience (p. 274). I followed a detailed and systematic format to review and reflect on these interactions with the participant and classroom teachers at Sol Elementary. Dual format was used for writing in the autoethnographic journal. I described the location of the event, time, date, and people involved.

The data I gathered presented chronological documentation and included the progress of particular "day in life" of the participants (Saldaña, 2011). In addition, I used literature review on

topics related to this study, such as the use of SL in the dyslexia lab. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and combined with additional themes that emerged from the data.

Research Trustworthiness

Case study research is unique because it leads to a different kind of knowledge when it is compared to other kinds of research (Mills & Gay, 2016). Thus, as per Mills and Gay (2016) this study is not only more concrete, but case study knowledge resonates with the researcher's experiences because it is tangible and illuminative. As a dyslexia teacher, I can confirm this as I observe the success of my students with dyslexia. Students demonstrate progress in decoding, spelling, and reading words in isolation. Stake (2005) states that a "case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied" (as cited in Mills & Gay, 2016, p. 418). Therefore, trustworthiness in this study was detailed and accurately built from my own lived experiences. The information gathered through data collection, analysis, and the presentation of results "present a factual account of fieldwork observations to answer the question," (Saldaña, 2011, p. 29), What is going on in the dyslexia lab? The observational data I gathered presented chronological documentation in order and included progress of particular "day in life" of the participants (p. 29). The interviews provided reflective narrative of the experiences of my participants.

All human endeavors, such as this qualitative research, are bounded by "time." I built trustworthiness by spending a three-month period of fieldwork time producing meticulously detailed fieldnotes. These observations provided the adequate experiences and data to write vividly and convincingly about the setting and its people (Saldaña, 2011). Thus, according to Saldaña (2011), writing descriptively better assures that you are documenting social action,

reaction, and interaction in a trustworthy manner. I was sure to separate “facts” from my personal inferences, so that the data gathered can be credible.

Moreover, I used more than one data collection method in this descriptive case study. These multiple data sources were interviews, naturalistic observations, and field notes. According to Saldaña (2011) this “gathers a broader spectrum of evidence and perspectives to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of an analysis” (p. 31). The use of multiple sources of data or data triangulation increased the robustness of the study to find the extent to which the method is appropriate to answer the research question (Crowe et al., 2011).

Furthermore, I followed guidelines and procedures that are available to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of my own knowledge and was able to construct or develop a vivid and persuasive account for readers (Saldaña, 2011). I read and gathered information from established researchers who have documented observations and analyses of social life. I followed the recommended ways of conducting fieldwork and collecting and analyzing data, and I contemplated on theories that exist for me to consider as frameworks.

Limitations

There are several limitations that should spark further research in this area. First, this case study only covered a period of three months from August 2022 to November 2022. There is no standardized minimum number of clock hours required to assess a study’s sufficiency, but to get more sustained findings of this research, additional time should be considered (Saldaña, 2011).

Furthermore, case study research is sometimes criticized for lacking scientific rigor and providing little basis for generalization; this can include such information as producing findings that may be transferable to other settings (Crowe, et al.,201). With this in mind, I understand that best research practices were followed.

Summary

This chapter described the qualitative research methodology of a case study focused on the experiences of students who have attended a dyslexia lab via remote and face-to-face to receive interventions through a Structured Literacy program. This proposed research investigated the following question: In a dyslexia lab where students have received Structured Literacy (SL) instruction in both virtual and face-to-face environments, what are students' experiences? With the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as a lens, it develops adequate sense of the work around SL for dyslexia instruction because it is expansive, yet focused; one eye is trained on the complex layers of school, family and community relationships, and the other eye is sharply focused on individual student development (Leonard, 2011). This theory helped me analyze my data, it guided my research, and it assisted in the evaluation of my findings.

Students with dyslexia need a Structured Literacy program that provides them with reading and writing strategies allowing them to experience success with their specific learning disability. This study resulted in a deeper understanding of a curriculum to scaffold the learning and intensify the instruction as needed, with extra repetition, and while providing small group instruction, from the students' perspective.

Chapter IV discusses the findings of the case study. Chapter V discusses the conclusions of the research and provides areas for further exploration.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This descriptive case study aimed at exploring the lived experiences of one elementary and two middle school students who have attended a Dyslexia Lab through a systematic language-based reading and writing program. It seeks to analyze the effectiveness in the delivery of interventions and strategies through a Structured Literacy program that has been provided in both remote and face-to-face instruction. This chapter consists of participant profiles, along with the themes developed from the participant interviews. The resulting themes will be connected to the research question the participants provided a response to. Additionally, this chapter will include the resulting themes from parent and student participants as well as journal entries and naturalistic observations conducted as part as my dyslexia teacher role. This chapter will also include an analysis of my naturalistic observation journaling data.

Participants

There were a total of three invitations sent out to three families who met the sampling criteria. All three potential participants' parents responded with a yes. The three participants have attended a dyslexia lab and have received instruction through a Structured Literacy program in both remote and face-to-face environments. The participants have also participated in the dyslexia program for at least two years during the time spanning before and after the pandemic, they are currently in 5th, 6th, or 7th grade (which ensures maturity to reflect on and talk about their experiences), and one parent from each participant agreed to participate as an interview

respondent. Pseudonyms were used for each participant. The participants currently attend either an elementary or middle school at Luna Independent School District. The ages of the participants range from 11-12 years of age. Table 2 shows participant demographic information.

The student participants were invited to three interviews. The first interview focused on their past experiences with the phenomenon of interest and to build rapport with the participant. The second interview focused on the participants experiences with remote learning and face-to-face experiences. The third interview was a member checking interview, where I shared what I have learned from them, so they are able to share any other information they would like to elaborate on. The third interview also served as an opportunity to discuss common themes that arose during the first two interviews. Each of the generated themes includes evidence from each participant, ensuring there is thematic saturation from the three participants in the study.

The participants' parent, one parent only per participant, participated in one interview. It focused on questions regarding their student's life and educational background, as well as their perspectives regarding dyslexia instruction, and on family background. Each of the generated themes gathered from the parent interviews include evidence from each parent, ensuring there is thematic saturation from the three parent participants in the study. Table 1 shows some family background information.

Table 1

Family Background

Parent of:	1 st noticed student struggling	Family History with Dyslexia
Alma	1 st grade	Uncle (Dad's side), Older Sister
Betsy	Pre-Kinder	No History of Dyslexia
Claudia	Kinder	Uncle & Cousin (Mom's side), Uncle (Dad's side)

Note. All names are pseudonyms.

Parent 1 – Alma

Alma's parents first noticed that Alma was struggling in school when she was in first grade. Her father stated:

I think we, we, it started pretty early, I think it was first grade when we noticed it because of her grades. She said she would understand it just had, you know hard reading it or when I guess whenever she started writing as well, she, she would mistake the letters or but yes, we, we noticed pretty early.

Alma's father mentioned that there have been no changes at home when finding out about Alma's learning disability. He says that he has always been strict, and that he holds high standards when it comes to education. He stated:

I've always told them they have to overcome struggles, not only at school, life and everything.

When not in school, Alma spends a lot of her time on her phone. Alma also participates in sports, such as volleyball. In fact, sports are one activity that the family enjoys doing together. Alma's fathers stated:

Sports, we do a lot of outside recreation stuff. Um, we, we go a lot hunting and fishing and at the beach and a lot of sports, um, so, yes, during the weekend is, is more outdoors it's hand on learning how to fish, how to hunt, and you know and have a good time.

Alma currently does not participate in any literacy activities at home.

Parent 2 – Betsy

Betsy's parents first noticed that she was struggling in school when she was in Pre-Kindergarten. Her mother stated:

I would say that would be when she was in pre-K. Um, she was struggling with her alphabet and I've noticed that she was late start um compared to my son who at that level was able to exceed a lot of the memorization of, of the, the letters and so there I asked the teacher to see if she they could um see if they can test her um just verify if she had any type of disability um or if she was just really late and learning her alphabet.

Betsy's mother mentioned that there have been no changes at home when finding out about Betsy's learning disability. In fact, when homework has been reduced, for example, when Betsy needed to work on 12 problems/words but was given the option to work on only 6, her mom has challenged her to try all 12. Betsy's mother stated:

We kind of challenged her a little bit more to try the 12, you know, to do your best, practice, um I think that was probably the only change that we kind of challenged her instead of her just being complacent with well, I have a disability, this all I can do.

When not in school, Betsy spends a lot of her time watching Disney Plus streaming services, playing with her pet hamster, and sometimes she will be on her phone with friends. Betsy is also involved in dance. She is enrolled in six classes of different learning dance styles, so she spends her Mondays and Wednesdays from 5:00-8:00 at the dance studio.

The family likes to spend time together playing board games or playing outside. Betsy's mother stated:

Um, we usually play a lot of board games. We do like a lot of like Pictionary or um, I know we, we have a meme game where there's pictures and you have to put a meme towards that picture, um I think that's mainly what we do. If not, were outside playing basketball or throwing the baseball around.

Betsy does not participate in any literacy activities at home because her Mom works full time and sometimes gets home late.

Parent 3 - Claudia

Claudia's parents first noticed that she was struggling in school when she was in kindergarten. Her mother stated:

I first noticed when she was in kindergarten and um the reason I noticed is because my oldest daughter started reading at the end of what we, we call pre-K. She didn't go to pre-K and um, so I noticed that she wasn't reading and she's an older one. She's a February baby, so I, I let her teacher know and she said, you know, keep an eye on her and everything, but then when the TPRI results came back she was um still developing in a lot of the areas, so that was my first red flag, so, but because kindergarten is so developmental, we said you know what let's wait and see what happens in first grade.

Claudia's mother mentioned that there have been no changes at home when finding out about Claudia's learning disability. Mom has always worked with Claudia at home because she is in education, so she is the one who deals with her schoolwork. Claudia's mom stated that Dad helps with everything else, except school.

When not in school, Claudia spends most of her time training at the softball field or at the dance studio. Claudia also spends a lot of her time on her phone. Her Mom stated:

Well, she is supposed to read 20 minutes a day which right now that she's in middle school, it's becoming a struggle because she just wants to be on her phone, so um, is she doesn't read, she doesn't get her phone.

The family spends most of their time together attending Claudia's softball games. Claudia's mom stated:

We're a softball family, so we, we we're, we're at our daughter's softball games most of the time and sometimes I go with her, sometimes my husband goes with her or both of us go, but that's mainly it, we spend a lot of our free time and weekends at the softball field and we travel with her to different places to play softball.

Claudia is supposed to read 20 minutes a day as a form of literacy activity at home, but Mom stated:

Right now, that she's in middle school, it's becoming a struggle because she just wants to be on her phone, so um if she doesn't read, she doesn't get her phone, so I tell her at least 20 minutes a day because that's what her teacher also tells her from her middle school that she needs to read at least 20 minutes a day

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Name	Grade Level	Age	Years in a Dyslexia Lab	Face-to-face in a Dyslexia Lab	Remote Learning in a Dyslexia Lab
Alma	6 th grade	11 yrs. old	5 yrs.	Yes	Yes
Betsy	5 th grade	11 yrs. old	3 yrs.	Yes	Yes
Claudia	7 th grade	12 yrs. old	4 yrs.	Yes	Yes

Note. All names are pseudonyms.

Alma

Alma is currently in 6th grade at a middle school in Luna Independent School District. Alma qualified and started receiving dyslexia services when she was in the 3rd grade, and she currently receives dyslexia services for 45 minutes/daily. Alma participated in remote learning when she was in 4th grade.

Parents first noticed Alma was struggling in school when she was in first grade. Alma’s struggles in school have mainly been in Reading and Writing.

Betsy

Betsy is currently a 5th grade student at Sol Elementary. Betsy qualified and started receiving dyslexia services when she was in 2nd grade. This school year, a Periodic Re-evaluation (every three years) Meeting was conducted for Betsy. After review of student progress and data, the committee determined that services and/or accommodations required by Betsy can be provided in the regular classroom. Betsy receives all her accommodations through her student service plan, but no longer attends the Dyslexia Lab for 45 minutes/daily. I am still her dyslexia

teacher that monitors her grades, behavior, and academic progress. Betsy participated in remote learning when she was in 3rd grade.

Parents first noticed that Betsy was struggling in school when she was in Pre-Kindergarten. Betsy's struggles in school have been mainly on decoding.

Claudia

Claudia is currently a 7th grader at a middle school in Luna Independent School District. Claudia qualified and started receiving dyslexia services when she was in 2nd grade, and she still receives dyslexia services for 45 minutes daily. Claudia participated in remote learning when she was in 5th grade.

Parents first noticed that Claudia was struggling in school when she was in Kindergarten. Claudia's struggles in school have been mainly on decoding. Claudia's mom stated:

Um, that she couldn't put the, decode the words you know, I would tell she knew her letters, she knew her sound, but she could just not put it together.

Results

Thematic Development – Parent Interviews

Each of the parent participants participated in one interview, which totaled to 3 interviews. Each interview was about thirty minutes long. All three participants opted for their interviews to be conducted via Zoom. All interviews were recorded and transcribed through Zoom. The transcripts were reviewed simultaneously with the recording to ensure that the coded entries were transcribed correctly, and the participant's intended message was captured in the data analysis upon the conclusion of the interview. Each transcript was read through three times to gain a sense of the participants intended message prior to the official coding process. All the transcripts and recordings were stored in a secure, password protected UTRGV server.

After the three parent participants completed the interview, a round of coding occurred. The resulting codes were highlighted, along with the transcribed entry from the participants interview transcript that was coded. These codes were organized by participant. Once all the interviews were coded, a second round of coding was conducted to identify commonalities between participants. These commonalities were based on the first-round codes and the supporting quotes to ensure that there was a connection between codes. All the codes were generated with the phenomenon of dyslexia students struggles in mind.

This categorization led to two central themes. The first theme was “Writing Didn’t Make Sense” and the second theme was “Until they were Diagnosed.”

Writing Didn’t Make Sense

Throughout the parents’ interviews, there was a commonality of writing being a major concern in the participants’ struggles at school. All three student participants either struggled in decoding, connecting letters they know to the sounds they make, or simply mistaking the letters.

For example, Alma’s father mentioned that at home and school, they noticed how much Alma struggled with Reading, but then when she started writing, her struggles became more visible. He continued to state:

When I guess whenever she started writing as well, she, she would mistake the letters.

She struggled a little bit on the, on the reading, but it was more on the writing. You could tell a lot, where she would mix up the, the letters.

Betsy’s mom mentioned that Betsy would mistake the letters, especially the letter “e.” She said that the letter “e” was always a concern, and she mentioned that Betsy would also get her

numbers confused. Mom stated that Betsy knew her letters and numbers by memorization, but that Betsy had a hard time when she had to apply them to her writing. Mom stated:

When it came to dealing with letters and numbers on paper, she just had a lot of confusion on, on how she thought um the letter should be or look like.

Claudia's mom noticed that Claudia had difficulties with fluency. She noticed that Claudia could not read, so she would work with her. Mom noticed that Claudia had good reading comprehension, but she could just not read on her own. Then she mentioned about Claudia's writing:

Then her writing it was like, it didn't make like the letters, like she would try to sound it out, but it's like she would hear it differently so her writing didn't make sense either so that was another thing that I say, you know what maybe she is dyslexic.

Until They Were Diagnosed

Throughout their interviews, all three parent participants reflected on their child's low self-esteem, frustrations, and loss of interest in learning. Though, with early identification and appropriate interventions provided in the Dyslexia Lab, all three parent participants mentioned that the students demonstrated a big change in their attitudes and their development.

Alma's Dad mentioned that it was a positive insight for the whole family when Alma qualified for dyslexia services, but especially for Alma. He claims that Alma would struggle a lot at school, but that it wasn't until she was diagnosed that the family saw a big change in Alma. Alma's Dad stated:

It was, it was a big turnaround on her grades and her attitude, her confidence level went up, so yes, of course once we finally found out what it was, it was a big difference.

At times, Alma's dad thought that it was just Alma being sluggish, and not a disability problem. He mentioned that figuring out what the problem was created a change in Alma's attitude.

Betsy's Mom was a little sad when she first found out that Betsy had qualified for a specific learning disability under the diagnosis of dyslexia. She knew that there were no known close relatives in the family diagnosed with dyslexia, so it was a major concern for her. She had noticed that Betsy struggled with her alphabet, but she just thought that Betsy was just really late in learning her letters. She did notice that Betsy was shy and didn't have much confidence in her own self, but she went on to stating:

I think um just knowing that her self-esteem was a little low and, but with the support of the school, we saw huge transition in that I mean to a point where she was very confident. She was very, um she was very sure about what she was doing, and I think that brought a lot to this assistance that was provided to her.

Claudia's mom would help Claudia with school assignments, especially when it came to reading. One activity that they would engage in was that Mom would read a page and then Claudia would echo read what mom had just read. Mom also stated that Claudia was not motivated to read because it was very laborious for her. It wasn't until Claudia got the help that Mom noticed a change in Claudia's attitude towards reading. It wasn't until Claudia started her therapy in the dyslexia lab that she was motivated to read. Claudia's Mom stated:

I noticed a big change in her attitude when she started getting service and she really enjoyed going to the lab.

Claudia's mom also noticed that Claudia's attitude and confidence changed when she realized that there were other students in her classroom that attended the Dyslexia Lab. Mom also noticed that Claudia would apply the concepts and skills learned in the Dyslexia Lab to her assignments in the regular classroom setting. Claudia's Mom also stated:

So, it's not until she started getting the help at school that you know, she was ok with being dyslexic.

Thematic Development – Participant Interviews

Each of the student participants participated in three interviews, which totaled to nine interviews. Each student participant interview was about fifteen minutes long. All three participants' parents opted for their child's interviews to be conducted via Zoom. All interviews were recorded and transcribed through Zoom. The transcripts were reviewed simultaneously with the recording to ensure that the coded entries were transcribed correctly, and the participant's intended message was captured in the data analysis upon the conclusion of the interview. Each transcript was read through three times to gain a sense of the participants intended message prior to the official coding process. All the transcripts and recordings were stored in a secure, password protected UTRGV server.

After the three participants completed the first interview, a round of coding occurred. The resulting codes were highlighted, along with the transcribed entry from the participants interview transcript that was coded. These codes were organized by participant. Once all the interviews were coded, a second round of coding was conducted to identify commonalities between participants. These commonalities were based on the first-round codes and the supporting quotes to ensure that there was a connection between codes. All the codes were generated with the phenomenon of dyslexia students struggles in mind.

This categorization led to three central themes. The first theme was “I Like Dyslexia [Lab].” The second theme, “Face-to-Face.” The third theme was “Everything Will Be O.K.”

I Like Dyslexia [Lab]

Sometimes a disability becomes a part of one’s identity because it tells who we are and it is what defines us. Yet, when the three student participants were asked to describe, in their own words, what the meaning of dyslexia is or how they felt about having dyslexia, they never identified “dyslexia” as a part of their identity. The student participants answered these questions as if they were describing the “Dyslexia Lab.”

Alma stated:

Um, I like having dyslexia, it helps me a lot, especially with my reading and writing, um I like having dyslexia.

Then, she was asked to describe what it was like when she found out she had dyslexia, Alma stated:

At the beginning I didn’t know what dyslexia was, I was like really young when I got it, I didn’t know what it was. Surprised ‘cause I didn’t know I was gonna have dyslexia.

Alma did not understand the meaning of dyslexia and only connected the disability to the place where she receives help for her reading and writing challenges.

Betsy stated:

Dyslexia is to help people who don’t know how to read or do not know how to spell. Um, I feel happy, I get to learn more stuff than I used to in class.

When she was asked to describe what it was like when she found out she had dyslexia, Betsy stated:

Um, I was shocked that I had dyslexia, but I knew 'cause I couldn't pronounce big words.

Betsy knew that she was struggling in her academics even though she felt shocked when she first heard the label she would receive in school.

Claudia stated:

Um, I like it because it helps me. I get to use a calculator in math, and I really feel like it's, it's a little bit more challenging for me in reading because I struggle mostly with my reading, but I feel like it's great to have it because of the accommodations that you get and the help that I get as well.

When Claudia was asked to describe what it was like when she found out she had dyslexia, she stated:

When I found out I didn't really know what it meant, but when my parents told me more about it I figured out that yes, I might struggle a little more than other kids, I might be slower than other kids in some subjects, but I know that there's like classes that I can take to help, so once I figured all of that out, I kind of felt grateful that I was gonna get the help that I was gonna need and I didn't really mind it because I knew I was also going to get accommodations like a calculator or extra time on my tests like STAAR test and benchmarks.

Claudia did not know the meaning of dyslexia, but her parents explained.

Face-to-Face

This theme addressed the research question, namely, because student participants spoke about remote learning and face-to-face experiences in the dyslexia lab. Participants were questioned on their lived experiences with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Dyslexia Lab. Although Alma liked remote learning because she got to stay home, Alma disliked remote learning the most because the connection would get cut off and this made it difficult for her to pay attention in class. Alma stated that:

It wasn't easy, it wasn't hard because like when we were remote learning like sometimes it would lag cuz the internet and it would be kind of hard.

Betsy mentioned that when she was presented with the Initial Reading Deck cards during her dyslexia lessons while on remote learning, it was hard for her to see the cards as clearly as it was when it comes to face-to-face. Betsy stated:

I think it's better in person.

As for Claudia, she enjoyed learning through the computer even though it was a major change in her life, specifically in her education. Claudia stated:

It was very different from my past years that I've been in the dyslexia lab because it was technology, and it wasn't face-to-face. For me, I would say the thing that kinda like felt different was that if I had a question, I felt weird because I couldn't actually like go talk to her private, everybody was there like and technology and it was a little bit harder on there because well, it's technology and you don't get all of those like all those things that the teacher can do in person, so it was definitely very different than I was used to my past years that I was in person school with my dyslexia lab teacher.

All three student participants were asked that if they were given the option, now, to have their dyslexia services via remote learning or face-to-face, which one would they prefer or select. All three student participants opted for face-to-face. Claudia stated:

I would say face-to-face because I feel like you understand a lot better when you're with the teacher face-to-face and if you have a question and you don't want others to hear, you can go talk to her privately and she can as well just help you privately and you understand a lot easier.

Betsy just answered with: face-to-face, but when asked to elaborate more on her response she stated:

Face-to-face ok, so when you see the cards face-to-face, you can see it more clearly and it will like help you know better like just like dyslexia.

Alma responded with:

I will have it face-to-face.

Alma was asked to elaborate more on this, but she just remained silent.

The two participants who still attend the Dyslexia Lab for 45 minutes/daily were asked, "What did you do in the Dyslexia Lab today or what activities did you participate in?" Claudia went on to tell me of the many activities she participated in her dyslexia class. Claudia stated:

What I learned today was about the Global Positioning System and we're just going over the story and we were as well learning somewhere coding on some words like final stable syllables, /ssion/, /tlur/, and we were coding those in our classroom on our TV and then

we went to near pod. We were as well during the card pyramid from our story Global Positioning System, and we as well read the story for one minute.

Claudia mentioned that going up to the panel T.V. to code words was her favorite activity. She enjoyed interacting with her classmates, and she was able to speak to her teacher throughout the lesson. Claudia enjoys having her dyslexia class face-to-face.

Alma spoke about a day in the dyslexia lab during her checking interview. She currently attends the Dyslexia Lab in a face-to-face setting. She loves to interact with her teacher and always seeks help when she needs it. Alma states that she still has difficulty with pronouncing and reading words, but when this happens, she is grateful to be able to ask her teacher. This is what Alma stated about her day in the dyslexia lab:

On Friday, we read a passage the whole week and then on Friday we took the test for the passage and the teacher was reading the questions to us.

Alma loves being able to have that face-to-face interaction with her dyslexia teacher. She stated that when she sees the teacher face-to-face, she can actually listen.

Everything Will Be O.K.

In the checking interview, each participant was asked to share any information they would like other students to hear. They were to share a few words to students who recently qualified for dyslexia. The participants summarized their own experiences and delivered a message to their outcome of experiences of having dyslexia. For example, Alma stated:

It's not so bad having dyslexia. It's like it can help you sometimes. It's not a bad thing to have.

Alma had stated throughout interview 1 that she likes having dyslexia because it helps you, especially with reading and writing. She mentioned how her dyslexia teacher can help her be successful when she has difficulty with reading or pronouncing words.

Betsy mentioned that it will be shocking to students when they first find out they have dyslexia, but that they will get used to it. This is similar to what she experienced when she first found out she was diagnosed with dyslexia. She stated:

I would tell the student who just found out that they have dyslexia, dyslexia I'll say it's a little shocking, but you'll get used to it, and your grades will go up as soon as you learn the cards, you will learn more big words just like me.

Betsy also mentioned how students can be successful like her. Betsy currently does not attend the dyslexia lab. She receives her accommodations in the classroom setting. This was one of her triumphs this school year. She mentioned that she was shocked that she was not going to attend the dyslexia lab, but she was ok because she knew her grades have gone up. She now participates in reading more books, and she is able to read bigger words on her own.

Claudia immediately stated that students who qualify for dyslexia are not dumb. She is a firm believer that receiving the appropriate help in a dyslexia lab will help you be ok, and she reassured that those students would get better and better every day with practice. Claudia stated:

Um...don't think that you are dumb because you have dyslexia. Just because you have dyslexia doesn't mean that you are dumb, you are very smart and very, very intelligent and at the beginning of dyslexia, you will find it hard, you will feel like, "I don't wanna be here," but you finally understand the reasoning and you will understand why you're there. Cause you're only gonna get better at it every single day because you are practicing every single day.

Claudia also recommended for students not be afraid of asking questions when they do not know a word or if they do not know how to code it. Claudia mentioned that you will learn a lot more when you receive all the help from your dyslexia teacher.

Analysis of Naturalistic Observation Journaling Data

A day in the Dyslexia Lab begins with immediate interaction between the dyslexia teacher and the student as soon as he/she gets picked up from his/her regular classroom setting. The students come into the Dyslexia Lab, they must pick up their working binder, they sign in, and they are encouraged to sit like “Thor,” as an example of proper sitting posture or their Listening Learning Position. The Dyslexia Teacher builds rapport as soon as the 45-minute session begins. The Dyslexia Teacher praises the group of students for being ready, and then the Dyslexia Teachers tells the students that they will begin their lesson as she points to the Basic Language Skills Schedule (see Figure 2).

The lessons in the Dyslexia Lab begin with two activities that are included only on days when a new concept is not introduced. One of these activities is the rapid naming of letters, phonemes, or words. This activity is done for five minutes. Students develop instant letter recognition, it builds the facility of segmenting words into phonemes, and students build rapid word recognition. The other activity done when there is no new concept, is handwriting. This activity is designed to increase students’ fluidity in handwriting of lowercase letters in cursive.

If there is a new concept to learn, all group levels (ranging from 2nd to 5th grade begin the session with what is called the Initial Reading Deck. Students name the letter or concept on the card, they state the keyword picture that goes with the letter or concept, and they say the sound of the letter or concept. For example: “a,” “apple,” “ă.” This section of the lesson allows

students to automate their sound-symbol correspondence. We take about 3-5 minutes to work on this portion of the lesson, and this deck is used daily.

Next, the session progresses into the word part deck. So, this activity takes them to working with morphemes. The suggested time for this portion of the lesson is 3-5 minutes, and this deck is used twice weekly. In the Dyslexia Lab at Sol Elementary we work on this portion of our lessons on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Dyslexia Teacher displays each card, and students respond with the word part name, key word, pronunciation, and meaning. For example: “Vowel Suffix -ing,” “Singing -ing,” “happening now.” Students are asked to generate derivatives with the base word and the suffix, or it can be a prefix plus the base word. This activity allows students to have knowledge of word parts and be able to develop meaning of the derivatives.

Then, the session continues with practice of a Spelling Deck, which takes about 3-5 minutes, and it is used daily. The teacher dictates the sound on a card, and students repeat the sound. Students name the letter(s) that spell that sound as they write. This activity enables students to automate knowledge of sounds and their most frequent orthographic representation. Afterwards, the session goes into the introduction of a new concept. This activity introduces students to new reading concepts, as suggested in the scope and sequence of the Basic Language Skills manual. This activity takes about 10 minutes. It is taught explicitly, it is cumulative, and prescriptive to the students’ needs. Students are encouraged to apply these reading concepts into their regular classroom setting.

The lesson advances into Reading Practice, which takes about 5 minutes. The students are now working with words. These word lists and sentences provide focused practice of not only newly introduced concepts, but also previously introduced reading concepts. After working in the Reading Practice, student spend 1 minute to reading words from their Regular Word Deck.

I use an App on my telephone called Charades to create a deck of words that are decodable. I usually select and add about 4-5 words from the Reading Practices.

Then, the group continues with Scientific Spelling, which might take about 10 minutes. In this portion of the lesson, students work on writing words that go with the new reading concept. They look and listen, they echo and think, they spell the word, and they write the word. They write the word in print and then practice writing it in cursive. At random times, the Basic Language Skills manuals suggest doing phrase and sentence dictation practices or a phonology practice.

Finally, the lesson goes to the extended reading and writing. This activity provides extended practice for developing fluency, comprehension, grammar, and sentence writing skills. This portion of the lesson should be delivered in the last 30 minutes of the lesson. Depending on the student's grade level, the books can be from a one-page reader to reading an expository passage. This portion of the lesson also includes oral language (5 minutes) and read aloud (5 minutes) activities. The oral language has its own manual, *The Colors and Shapes of Language*. This activity builds the foundational skills of comprehension. Students engage in practice that increase oral language and world knowledge and it develops metacognitive strategies. For the read aloud, the teacher reads either a narrative or an expository text that is of interest to the student. The teacher checks for comprehension by asking simple and complex questions. Students engage in a summarization activity through a graphic organizer. For this portion of the lesson, the teacher may also choose to use Learning Ally as a read aloud. The student or the teacher may select a book of their choice to add to the bookshelf. The student will listen to the audiobook in their Learning Ally account as part a read aloud (see Appendix G).

The sessions in the Dyslexia Lab are structured and taught explicitly, so that students do not feel out of place or get lost in the lesson, and to ensure that no time is wasted. The groups are approximately six students to one Dyslexia Teacher ratio, and the students sit at proximity to their Dyslexia Teacher. There is constant repetition and spiraling review of the concepts being learned in the Dyslexia Lab. The lessons in the Dyslexia Lab are prescriptive, cumulative, and systematic. The instruction is delivered using Structured Literacy. According to the International Dyslexia Association (2015), students with dyslexia need Structured Literacy (SL) to prepare them to decode words in an explicit, systematic manner.

The students always feel welcomed in the Dyslexia Lab, they feel successful, and they receive differentiated instruction. This is what we do in the Dyslexia Lab at a daily basis with the 6 to 7 groups we service daily at Sol Elementary. The experience students receive in the Dyslexia Lab enhances their confidence and self-efficacy.

Summary

A description of the participants, how thematic development occurred, and the results of the data analysis were presented in this chapter. There were two themes that were presented—for parent interviews and three themes were presented for student participant interviews. The parent interview themes were: “Writing Didn’t make sense” and “Until they were diagnosed.” The student participants interview themes were: “I like dyslexia [Lab],” “Face-to-Face,” and “Everything Will Be O.K.” All three of these themes for parent interviews and student interviews outlined the lived experiences of the participants and relate to the research question: In a Dyslexia Lab where students have used Structured Literacy in both virtual and face-to-face what are students’ experiences?

For the student participants of this study, the support of school, family, and the community have played a vital role in their day-to-day struggles and challenges with reading and/or writing. The Structured Literacy (SL) program that is in place at Luna Independent School District has been one of their strongest supports. Student’s experiences when they attend the Dyslexia Lab diligently, has allowed them to be successful in the regular classroom setting. Not only does their progress reflect on their weekly and benchmark tests, but there is progress in word recognition, in written expression, spelling, and in their decoding abilities, particularly when technology is embedded in the lessons.

The students’ Dyslexia Teachers have played a significant role in the students’ academic progress and development. Chapter five provides a discussion of the findings of the study, as well as identifies and elaborates on limitations and implications of this study.



Figure 2 Basic Language Skills Schedule

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of this descriptive case study to create a solid response to the research question. Additionally, the results will be linked to the literature to discuss how this research adds to the body of existing literature. The limitations, implications, recommendations for future research, and recommendations for practitioners will also be discussed.

Summary of the Study

Students with dyslexia experience problems learning to read and write; often, when a basic level of reading and spelling ability is not established, there are persisting problems with their reading fluency (Snowling et al., 2020). The Structured Literacy program offered through a Dyslexia Lab at Luna Independent School District offers students a place where they feel motivated and where they can demonstrate success in their chronic reading challenges. When students attend the dyslexia lab diligently, they are successful in the regular classroom setting. Not only does their progress reflect on their weekly and benchmark tests, but there is progress in word recognition, in written expression, spelling, and in their decoding abilities, particularly when technology is embedded in the lessons. Through this practice, the students evolve into a more self-confident child and there is realization in their self-efficacy.

Hence, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to provide an insight into the experiences of three students with dyslexia that attend a systematic language-based reading and

writing program. The following research question guided this study: In a dyslexia lab where teachers have used Structured Literacy in both virtual and face-to-face environments, what are students' experiences?

This descriptive case study sought to analyze the effectiveness in the delivery of interventions and strategies through a Structured Literacy program that has been provided in both remote and face-to-face instruction. Each of the three parent participants of this study underwent one interview. The interviews were transcribed and coded, and all resulting codes were organized to generate themes. The three student participants of this study underwent three interviews. Each interview was transcribed and coded, and all resulting codes were organized to generate themes that address the research question. The findings will be elaborated on in the following section.

In this study, I was also able to reflect on my thoughts and feelings daily while engaging in naturalistic observations in my dyslexia teacher role (see Appendix F). These entries allowed me not only to reflect on my thoughts and feelings, but they allowed me to analyze what my themes would be in the parent and student interviews. I was also able to analyze my naturalistic observations of my journaling data by providing a teacher's perspective of a day in the Dyslexia Lab to juxtapose how the students describe it and to allow the reader to "see" the experience from both views. The analysis provides another data source analysis to triangulate with my parent and student participant data, thus strengthening my findings.

Summary of Findings

The analysis of the data for the parent interviews resulted in two themes that were relevant to the research question of interest. The first theme addressed the parents' academic concerns of their child. Parents mentioned how their child would either struggle in decoding, connecting letters they know to the sounds they make, or simply mistaking the letters. Each parent spoke about how they would compare the student's abilities to that of a sibling. This was one way in which they knew their child was struggling in school.

This first theme was developed through the academic concerns noted by the three parent participants. This is what Claudia's Mom stated about her daughter's writing, "She would try to sound it out, but it's like she would hear it differently, so her writing didn't make sense." Students with dyslexia struggle with reading, but these parent participants noted that the dyslexia concerns were more visible to them when it came to their child's writing. Further analysis revealed that student participants were low in their fluency, they did not want to participate in any reading activities, and they would struggle with their decoding abilities. This developed the first theme: Writing Didn't Make Sense.

Until they were diagnosed became the second theme in the parent participants' interviews. Across the interviews, parents noted that their child was frustrated in school, their self-esteem was low, and that their child was not motivated to read or learn. At one point, Alma's father thought that Alma was just being lazy, but he never imagined that his daughter had a specific learning disability. He mentioned that once they got the diagnosis, the family saw a big change in Alma's grades and in her confidence level. Betsy's mom was unsure of her daughter having "dyslexia" since there is no known family history of such disability. She knew Betsy was

shy and that she did not have much confidence in her own self, but she claimed that it wasn't until Betsy was diagnosed that she saw a change in her daughter's overall attitude.

Furthermore, Claudia's mom noticed a big change in Claudia's attitude when Claudia started services in the Dyslexia Lab. Claudia's mom mentioned that Claudia enjoyed going to the lab, especially when Claudia saw that other children in her classroom were receiving those same services. All parent participants noticed a change in their child once they were diagnosed, so this became the second theme.

The analysis of the data for the student participants resulted in three themes that were relevant to the research question. The very first theme became about when all three student participants disregarded "dyslexia" as part of their identity. They spoke about dyslexia as if speaking of the "Dyslexia Lab." The student participants stated that they were happy to have dyslexia because it helped them with reading and writing. Additionally, the student participants correlated dyslexia to the accommodations provided for them, such as the use of a calculator, list of commonly misspelled words, or the multiplication chart. They specified how this assistance allowed them to be successful in their reading and writing challenges.

Further analysis revealed that the student participants did not understand the true meaning of "dyslexia" until their parents explained it. Student participants spoke about not thoroughly understanding the meaning of dyslexia because they were too young when they got diagnosed with having dyslexia. Claudia mentioned that having dyslexia means that people struggle, but not really because it helps you a lot. By this, she was referring to all the help students get from their dyslexia teacher. For this reason, the first theme became, "I Like Dyslexia [Lab]."

Face-to-face became the second theme in the student interviews. This theme connected well to the research question as students were asked if they would want to have dyslexia services through remote learning or through face-to-face. All participants stated that their preference to receive their dyslexia services was through face-to-face. Some students spoke about privacy, on how they were not able to speak to their dyslexia teacher in private. They had to ask or speak to their teacher dyslexia teacher in front of all the other students. Furthermore, the student participants did not like the fact that the internet would stop working when they were in their virtual dyslexia lab class. Their computer would start lagging, and it made it difficult for them to understand the class.

Additionally, all three student participants stated that they did not learn as much as they needed to learn through the computer. They prefer face-to-face instruction because they can participate in activities such as going up to the panel T.V. to code words, they get to work in small group activities, and they are able to speak to their classroom teacher in private. Further analysis continued and I noticed how Betsy mentioned that when she received instruction through face-to-face, she was able to see the cards more clear. In fact, Betsy mentioned “the cards” in all her three interviews. This is what the dyslexia program at Luna Independent School District focuses on, the integration of the Six Syllable Types in the English Language, to service the students who attend the dyslexia lab. The cards she is speaking about gives our dyslexic students a strategy to decode and encode unfamiliar words. With this, they do not need to rely on guessing or memorization.

The third theme for the student participants was developed when all three participants were given the opportunity to share something with those students who recently qualified for dyslexia. The student participants stated that, “Everything will be o.k.” Student participants used

their own personal experiences and their journey to elaborate on this. For example, Alma had stated throughout her interview 1 that she liked having dyslexia because it helps people, especially when it comes to reading and writing. She mentioned how her dyslexia teacher can help her be successful when she has difficulty with reading or pronouncing words. Then in her checking interview, Alma stated that having dyslexia is not a bad thing, and that it is actually something that helps you. “It’s not a bad thing to have,” she stated.

Betsy wanted to share with other students that everything would be ok, especially because “your grades will go up as soon as you learn the cards,” she exclaimed. She also mentioned that students will learn more big words. “It will be a little bit shocking, but you’ll get used to it,” Betsy stated. Claudia made it a point to tell other students (that are recently qualifying for dyslexia) that they are not dumb. She would like those students to understand that they are very smart, and that they will only get better and better every day because they get to practice in the Dyslexia Lab. She wants students not to be scared when they go to the Dyslexia Lab, and she wants them to ask questions when they need help.

The analysis on my teacher journal reflects data of not only naturalistic observations of my journals, but I provided a teacher’s perspective of a day in the Dyslexia Lab to juxtapose how students describe it and allow the reader to see the experience from both views. The analysis provides another data source analysis to triangulate with my parents and student participant data, thus strengthening my findings. Through the journal entries, I was able to learn more about my students. For example, I was able see that Alma has a close relationship with her father, and that he is in Alma’s innermost layer of trust. The journal entries helped me reflect on the success of my students and allowed me to observe and analyze what goes on in the meetings I conduct with parents.

I was able to reflect on my thoughts and feelings daily while engaging in naturalistic observations in my dyslexia teacher role. These entries allowed me not only to reflect on my thoughts and feelings, but they allowed me to analyze what my themes would be in the parent and student interviews. I was also able to analyze my naturalistic observations of my journaling data by providing a teacher's perspective of a day in the Dyslexia Lab to juxtapose how the students describe it and to allow the reader to "see" the experience from both views. The analysis provides another data source analysis to triangulate with my parent and student participant data, thus strengthening my findings.

Discussion of Findings

Although literature was limited when it came to the lived experiences of elementary and middle school students who attend a Dyslexia Lab while receiving services through a systematic language-based program, there was considerable literature pertaining to the meaning of dyslexia, and to evidence that shows that when children who have reading difficulties, such as dyslexia, are given systematic, explicit interventions, the region of the brain called the occipito-temporal region is activated (Scholtens et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the review of literature provided the perspectives of experts regarding dyslexia. The information came from the International Dyslexia Association, the Neuhaus Education Center, and from the Texas Reading Academies to better understand the emergence of this study. Literature came from expert's and teacher's perspectives to elaborate on the existence of dyslexia, the earliest clues and characteristics of a person with dyslexia, and the misconceptions related to dyslexia. There was literature on the significance of this issue in terms of 21st century educational practice, the importance of language and sound components in a

dyslexia program, the importance of having all instructional components in the lessons, and the importance of dyslexia services to the student's self-esteem.

The Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory provided an adequate lens to observe and make sense of the lived experiences of the participants in this study. This theory also informed the research question which allowed me to obtain and gather information about the lived experiences of students who attended a Dyslexia Lab under unique circumstances. Bronfenbrenner's theory was an adequate theory for my work around SL for dyslexia instruction because it is expansive, yet focused; one eye is trained on the complex layers of school, family and community relationships, and the other eye is sharply focused on individual student development (Leonard, 2011). The layers in Bronfenbrenner's model of human development are present in my findings beginning with the initial mapping of the setting where most social interactions occur, those settings where we interact with people (Hess & Schultz, 2008). Parents are particularly important representatives in the inner circle, which is what Bronfenbrenner's theory calls the *microsystem*. This is the setting where the child has direct, face-to-face relationships with significant people such as parents, friends, and teachers. Therefore, it is important to ensure the establishment of relationships with parents. Thus, I used my conceptual framework to inform how I worked with my analysis, and how I made note of these words that were relating. The conceptual framework informed my way of organizing the data. I noticed that words were related, so I put them together, and then I formed clusters. Next, I placed them into a code; I studied each passage of the interview transcripts to develop categories and was able to label them with the most appropriate codes (Boeije, 2002).

Additionally, during each interview, I made sure to take ample notes of the stories and comments being described and asked from the student and parent participants. I made sure I

repeated myself if I thought the student or parent did not hear me or understand what I was trying to say. I also made sure to ask the student and parent participants to repeat any information that I may have missed. This ensured true and accurate data to the study.

Further, when the COVID-19 pandemic impacted education, and we transitioned from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction, I knew the pandemic had brought forth a new and successful way of teaching students in the Dyslexia Lab. As I began exploring student participants' interviews, I expected my students to prefer learning through virtual instruction. Yet, when my student participants were asked if they were given the option, now, to have their dyslexia services via remote learning or face-to-face, which one would they prefer or select. All three student participants opted for face-to-face. All three of my participants preferred for their support services to be conducted through regular face-to-face instruction.

Moreover, identifying dyslexia is the primary action needed to ensure student success, and early identification ensures that the student will receive the appropriate assistance to their reading difficulties. Through the results in this study, I was able to see that parents were the first ones to notice that their child was struggling. Parents were the first ones to notify the school or classroom teacher about their child's reading challenges. Relationships with parents need to be established since they are the ones to provide initial identification and support. When students with dyslexia are diagnosed and provided with early identification, it is an effective way to closing the achievement gap (IDA, 2022).

In addition, the results in this study indicate that students with a reading disability, specifically those with dyslexia, suffer emotionally and socially. The findings in the parent interviews show that students were frustrated, their self-esteem was low, and the students were not motivated to read. Perhaps students with dyslexia need a structured environment just like the

one offered at Sol Elementary. When students work at this Dyslexia Lab, there are no surprises; students come in every day, and they know what to expect. The Structured Literacy program offered through this Dyslexia Lab at Luna Independent School District offers students a place where they feel motivated and where they can demonstrate success in their chronic reading challenges.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in this study that should spark further research. First, this case study only covered a period of two months from September 2022 to November 2022, which was limited time provided by Luna Independent School District (see Appendix E). There is no standardized minimum number of clock hours required to assess a study's sufficiency, but to get more sustained findings of this kind of research, additional time should be considered (Saldaña, 2011). An extension could probably be provided for any researcher seeking to conduct a similar study at Luna Independent School District because more extensive immersion in the field may have yielded more depth to the case study, particularly with young participants.

Furthermore, another limitation is that case study research is sometimes criticized for lacking scientific rigor and providing little basis for generalization; this can include such information as producing findings that may be transferable to other settings (Crowe, et al.,2011). With this in mind, best research practices were be followed.

Another limitation that arose in this case study is having conducted the student participant interviews via Zoom. Student participant may have shared more information if the mode of interviews would have been conducted face-to-face. Student participants would have probably felt more comfortable, and they would have probably provided more information for

this case study. Further studies would benefit from extended time in the field and more in person, informal opportunities for students to share their experiences.

Moreover, parents were only invited to participate in one interview. The information gathered from them was rich, and they responded with accuracy, intensity, and clarity. Thus, providing at least two other interviews for parents would have strengthened the data. Additionally, another limitation that occurred is that all student participants in this case study were female. It is recommended for future studies to recruit male respondents as well.

When conducting my interviews, I chose to keep the questions as simplistic as possible to allow the student participants to guide themselves through the interviews. This did not allow for an in-depth discussion, and I only received one to two sentence response from the student participants. Furthermore, parents were always in the room when I conducted the interview with the student participants. This might have helped the student participant feel more comfortable, but they were sometimes afraid to say something inappropriate or embarrassing in front of their parents. The student participants held back in describing some of their experiences due to feeling a sense of messing up in front of their parents.

Implications

This study aimed to identify the lived experiences of three students who have attended a Dyslexia Lab through a systematic language-based reading and writing program face-to-face and through remote learning. While all three student participants did not include or see “dyslexia” as part of their identity, once they received the diagnosis, they all mentioned that they received the adequate help. All three student participants demonstrated a positive change in their self-esteem, they improved in reading and/or writing, and they shared information about their experiences when they received instruction via remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings of this study help understand this specific learning disability called dyslexia. Learning about the experiences of students who attend a Dyslexia Lab that uses a SL program provides school districts with critical information to support classroom teachers and those students who have dyslexia. It is important to know all about the meaning of dyslexia, and to analyze the participants' experiences in the program. It is also crucial to listen to the parents' perspectives and involving them—perhaps providing some coaching for literacy practices they can engage in at home. Moreover, this case study will become a teaching tool not only for myself, but for those dyslexia teachers seeking for real-life situations and an expert's experience.

The results of this study regard students' understanding the meaning of dyslexia. Participants did not include “dyslexia” as part of their identity. This has to do in part of them not knowing or understanding the true meaning of dyslexia. Teachers, as well as parents, and dyslexia teachers should work towards providing students with the appropriate information for them to understand the true meaning of the label they receive. Although it may be healthy not to have the label be a part of the students' identity, teachers and parents should be sensitive to a person's first language that respects their identity and to avoid assumptions that the student is defined by their disability label.

It is important to learn about the experiences of the children, rather than thinking we know everything that's going on. For example, I started out thinking that my participants knew and understood the meaning of dyslexia. Yet, they never saw it as part of their identity, and it was primarily because they did not understand the true meaning of dyslexia. I learned through this study that it is important to educate students in the dyslexia program with not only what our

program entails, but to clarify and teach them about the meaning of this specific learning disability called dyslexia.

This study is important as it speaks to the discourse that is out there. Thus, educators need to familiarize themselves with this learning disability, and how they can support those students with it. I learned that students with dyslexia are smart, but they learn a different way. Therefore, these students should be treated with respect and educators need to do their best to help them work through their struggles without making them feel more frustrated.

Recommendations for Further Research

In response to the declining levels of student reading motivation (typical around 4th and 5th grade), this study provided an insight to the experiences of three students with dyslexia that have attend a systematic language-based reading and writing program. According to the International Dyslexia Association (2018), Structured Literacy prepares dyslexic students to decode words in an explicit and systematic manner. Further research should be conducted at other elementary schools in the Lower Valley, districts near Luna Independent School District. It would be important to learn about the approaches they have in place for their Dyslexia Program.

Additionally, it would be worth studying parents' reactions to when their son/daughter first qualify for dyslexia. I have encountered and witnessed parents who get upset at the fact that their child will receive a label for this specific learning disability. At times, these parents do not understand the meaning of dyslexia and they will make comments such as, "My son is not dumb," "It's just one test that they conducted? Why is my daughter dyslexic?" or "I don't want my son losing his classroom instruction to go to the dyslexia lab."

Recommendation for Practitioners

Thus, it is important for schools and teachers to support parents and help them see dyslexia as a manageable learning difference, rather than a judgement of a child's intellectual capacity. Schools should ensure the establishment of relationships with parents early, so early identification is facilitated since parents were the first ones to notice.

Not only should there be a cultivation of relationship with parents for early identification, but support for parents is recommended. Parents should have support that helps them understand dyslexia, they should know ways to help their child understand dyslexia, and they should be provided with at home literacy activities parents that can engage in with their child.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that students and families, particularly those with students who have dyslexia, enjoy participating in extracurricular activities. To foster student confidence, leadership, and real-world experiences, it would be worth for parents and schools to provide or engage students in afterschool extracurricular activity. Students should be given an "All About Me" checklist where they can select their activities of preference. Schools should offer some of those activities at school through an afterschool program. These extracurricular activities are important to their social life, especially when they feel inadequate in the classroom or frustrated. When they are involved socially in extracurricular activities, it also helps them with their self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy.

Additionally, it is recommended for other Dyslexia Labs to provide a Structured Literacy program that is explicit and that is taught in a systematic manner. Through this case study, I was able to explore the insights of a systematic language-based reading and writing program. My results indicate that when students receive this type of instruction, they can demonstrate success in improving their chronic reading challenges. This study resulted in a deeper understanding of a

curriculum to scaffold the learning and intensify the instruction as needed, with extra repetition, and while providing small group instruction, from the students' perspective. Through this practice, the students evolve into a more self-confident child and there is realization in their self-efficacy.

Conclusion

The lived experiences of the participants in this study informed the research question to validate how students' reading challenges improve when students are provided with the adequate instruction. The Structured Literacy approach implemented at Luna School District has allowed students to demonstrate progress in reading, decoding, writing, spelling, and it has enhanced their self-efficacy and confidence. The study resulted in two themes from the parents' data and with three themes from the students' gathered data. These themes correlated to the literature, as well as to the theoretical framework used in this study. Additionally, the experiences and the results of the data analysis provided implications for the school, for the teachers, and for the school district. Recommendations for future research were provided in this study and the limitations to this study were discussed.

As a dyslexia teacher, I felt a need for others to be informed of the lived experiences of students who have dyslexia. This study came about from my desire of wanting educators, school administrators, and students to recognize the challenges, the struggles, and the needs of students who have dyslexia. I wanted people to see that this disability exists as I can confirm their experiences while I observe the success of my students with dyslexia. Although this study was conducted in a program that is very well-established and has shown to be effective with students who have dyslexia, the key to this study is that we allowed the students' voices and the experiences they had in such program to be heard. This is the unique component that we do not

find in the literature that pertains to dyslexia. How children actually experience this phenomenon is significant, and this is what is unique about this study.

Additionally, this study has allowed me to reflect on assumptions I had over students' preferences. Although I thought the remote dyslexia instruction was very effective, my participants all preferred their instruction to be delivered in person/face-to-face. As schools make decisions about what technology and remote instruction to keep/continue and what needs to be in person, it is important to honor the findings from my participants that face-to-face is more effective. These findings can inform school districts decisions for providing dyslexia services.

Moreover, this study informs my own practice. Not only have I gained experiences as a qualitative researcher, but I have a better understanding of the process needed for designing a study. I now understand the importance of gathering the appropriate permissions needed to carry out a study. I know that I will further continue to conduct research, so I can provide additional information for students with dyslexia. This experience has been valuable and beneficial to my career as it has resulted in a deeper understanding of a curriculum that I have implemented to scaffold the learning and intensify the instruction of those students with dyslexia--especially after gathering data from the students' perspective.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT'S PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<i>Student Background information</i>	
Reflective Questions	Follow-up Questions
1. When did you first notice that your son/daughter was struggling in school?	Can you mention some of the student's struggles?
2. Do any family members have a learning disability?	
3. Have there been any important changes within the family during the last three years (For example, changes, moves, births, deaths, serious illnesses, separations, divorce)?	
4. What does the student do when not in school?	
5. What kinds of activities does the family do together?	
6. Tell me about your experiences with having your son/daughter serviced in a dyslexia lab?	

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview 1 – Rapport Building and Background	
Reflective Questions	Follow-up Questions
1. How do you feel about having dyslexia?	In your own words...what is dyslexia?
2. Describe to me what it was like when you found out you had dyslexia.	
3. What are your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to learning?	
4. What helps you cope with learning and studying?	
5. Can you tell me about the challenges you have overcome while coping with dyslexia?	
6. Is there anything else you would like to add?	



Interview 2 – Remote Learning and Face-to-Face Experiences	
Reflective Questions	Follow-up questions
1. Can you describe your experiences with remote learning in the dyslexia lab during the COVID-19 pandemic?	
2. What did you like most about attending the dyslexia lab via remote learning?	Tell me why?
3. What did you dislike about attending the dyslexia lab via remote leaning?	
4. In your perspective, do you feel that you learned adequately in the dyslexia lab during remote learning?	
5. Which strategy helps you the most when you apply it in your regular classroom setting?	
6. If given the option now, would you want to have dyslexia services via remote learning or face-to-face?	Can you elaborate?

Interview 3 – Member Checking	
Reflective Questions	Follow-up Questions
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL EMAIL

Fw: tick@lab - IRB Protocol IRB-22-0176 - A CASE STUDY OF A DYSLEXIA TEACHER UTILIZING STRUCTURED LITERACY (SL) TO ACHIEVE PEDAGOGICAL GOALS has been approved  

To: Gladys Suarez <gladys.suarez01@utrgv.edu>; Karin Lewis <karin.lewis@utrgv.edu>

Subject: tick@lab - IRB Protocol IRB-22-0176 - A CASE STUDY OF A DYSLEXIA TEACHER UTILIZING STRUCTURED LITERACY (SL) TO ACHIEVE PEDAGOGICAL GOALS has been approved

Dear tick@lab user,

The IRB protocol with ref. no. IRB-22-0176 has been approved.

Any changes/amendments to your IRB Protocol must be submitted as a revision and approved by the IRB committee prior to initiation in research activities. A copy of your official approval letter is attached to your protocol study file.

Status change comment:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UTRGV IRB. This project is not subject to expire and therefore does not require a continuation review to be submitted. Please remember to close the project via a project closure request on tick@lab once the project is completed, and submit amendments to obtain approval prior to implementing changes to your protocol. An approval letter will be published at the file level where it will always be accessible to you. This letter will note any requirements for reporting and will provide the details of this approval. To access your letter right-click on the paperclip icon at the file level (next to the file folder icon) and select Edit Attachment from the menu. Simply clicking on the document will download a copy for your records.

Please click [here](#) to open the document.

This message has been automatically generated by the tick@lab system. Please DO NOT REPLY to this message as this mailbox is unmonitored.

For questions, please contact the IRB Coordinator or your system administrator.

To access the tick@lab system, please visit <https://LAR.utrgv.edu/tickatlab/Default.aspx?module=IRB&action=List>.

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

BASIC LANGUAGE SKILLS LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

BASIC LANGUAGE SKILLS BOOK

TIME GROUP MEETS _____

SCHEDULE	TIME	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
*RAPID NAMING	5					
*HANDWRITING	5					
READING DECKS	3-5	1. IRD	1. IRD 2. Word part deck	1. IRD	1. IRD 2. Word part deck	1. IRD
SPELLING DECKS	3-5	Oral	Chalkboard, paper, &/or Carpet squares	Chalkboard, paper, &/or Carpet Squares	Chalkboard, paper, &/or Carpet squares	Chalkboard, paper, &/or Carpet squares
*CONCEPT	10					
READING	5					
SPELLING	10					
EXTENDED READING / WRITING	15-20					
ORAL LANGUAGE	5	Unit:	Unit: ..	Unit:	Unit:	Unit:
READ ALOUD	5					
*On the days a New Concept is introduced, omit Rapid Naming and Handwriting.						
TOTAL HOURS IN TRAINING				HOURS IN TRAINING FOR THE WEEK		

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E

RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER



September 9, 2022

Gladys Suarez
15 Raintree Path
Brownsville, Texas
78520

Re: Application for Research Study

Mrs. Suarez,

Please be advised that your application for a research study titled, "A Case Study of a Dyslexia Teacher Utilizing Structured Literacy to Achieve Pedagogical Goals," has been reviewed and has been approved. The assigned research ID number will be, 2022-09-09.

Your request reflects that the research will be conducted September 19, 2022 through November 30, 2022. Please ensure that all consent forms have been signed and are on file if they should be requested. Principals will have to accept initial consent for their participation in this research study. Additionally, parents will have to accept their and their child's participation in this research.

We are respectfully requesting that you forward your research results and/or a copy of the publication, if any, to our office upon completion of the project.

Should you have any questions or require further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (956)554-2806.

Sincerely,

[Redacted signature block]

APPENDIX F

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLES OF JOURNAL ENTRIES

Date: September 7, 2022
Gladys M. Suarez
2:00 P.M. pm to 2:30 P.M.
ZOOM

Betsy's 3-year Re-Evaluation Zoom Meeting

I started my computer at exactly 2:00 P.M. Betsy's Mom joined the Zoom meeting next, then the assistant principal joined from her office computer, and the classroom teacher joined me in the Dyslexia Lab to participate in it through the computer I was using.

I introduced myself and then the rest of the committee members introduced themselves. I then presented Betsy's Section 504 Student Service Plan and proceeded to going over Betsy's academic progress in the Dyslexia Lab, and I spoke about the progress Betsy has demonstrated in her classroom.

This meeting was a 3-year Re-evaluation Zoom meeting that was conducted for Betsy. The committee decided on updates to Betsy's instructional and STAAR testing accommodations. After the committee reviewed Betsy's progress and data, the committee determined that Betsy does not require the standard dyslexia protocol and that a special education Full Individual and Initial Evaluation (FIIE) is not recommended at this time. The committee decided that Betsy was now what we call "accommodations only." Betsy will no longer attend the Dyslexia Lab for 45 minutes/daily. Instead, she will remain in her classroom (Betsy still receive all her accommodations stipulated in her student service plan in her regular classroom setting). The committee agreed that monitoring will continue on a regular basis.

I could see Betsy's Mom in tears, and she kept thanking me for helping her daughter throughout this journey. She told us that she noticed a big change in Betsy, from when she was first was diagnosed, to now. Betsy's mom told us that she couldn't believe that Betsy was "graduating" from Dyslexia (she called it). "Betsy is ready to venture on her own, and I know she will do great," she stated.

Date: October 13, 2022
Gladys M. Suarez
8:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.
At my desk, at home

Reflecting after Parent Participants Interviews

Today was the interview for my last parent participant. I went back to read and analyze all three parent interviews. I began highlighting and coding the interviews. I noticed that throughout the three parent interviews, parents talked about their child's attitude changing once they received their diagnose and when receiving the help. This brought me to creating the theme "A Change in Attitude," but I also noticed that this attitude changed once the student was diagnosed. This brought me to creating and keeping the theme "Until they were diagnosed."

While reading the transcripts again and again, I realized that all three of the parent participants were the ones who noticed their child was struggling in school. Two of the parents mention in the interview how they were the ones who asked the classroom teacher for the student to get screened or tested for a disability. The other parent stated that the school told them about the struggles their daughter was having at school, but parent stated it was no surprise to them when they told us about it.

Interviewing the parent participants was a great experience for me. I could sense a welcoming approach when they conversated with me.

The last parent I interviewed today shared some of the experiences her brother went through when he was in grade school. She told me that her parents never knew that her brother was dyslexic because her mom did not know what to look for. All she remembers is her mom getting upset at her brother because he did not want to read. Parent also mentioned that her brother only finished high school but did not attend college because school was already too much for him.

Date: November 3, 2022
Gladys M. Suarez
7:00 P.M. to 7:06 P.M.
ZOOM

Alma's Interview #2

Alma joined the Zoom interview meeting with her video on. I could see that she was dressed in her soccer uniform, and that she was at a soccer field. Her Dad was sitting next to her during her participation in the interview. I could see that Alma has a close relationship with her father, and that he is in Alma's innermost layer of trust.

Date: November 17, 2022
Gladys M. Suarez
7:15 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.
At my desk, at home

Reflecting after Betsy's last interview

After transcribing and listening to Betsy's last and checking interview today, I noticed how all throughout her interviews she always mentioned the cards. As a dyslexia teacher, I know that Betsy is talking about the Initial Reading Deck of cards that we use to teach our dyslexic students the six syllable types in the English language.

I know that when our students learn the six syllable types, it gives them a strategy to decode and encode unfamiliar words, so that they do not have to rely on guessing or memorization. Betsy would learn and practice those cards in the dyslexia lab, and I noticed how she would apply what she learns in the dyslexia lab to her work in the regular classroom setting.

I am very proud and happy that it is going well for her. She no longer attends the dyslexia lab, her grades have gone up, and she is reading more.

APPENDIX G

APPENDIX G

DUAL COLUMN OBSERVATION NOTES

Observations-A Day in the Dyslexia Lab	Notes/Interpretation/Reflection
They are encouraged to sit like “Thor,” as an example of proper sitting posture or their Listening Learning Position.	This procedure allows my lessons to flow explicitly and with structure so that no time is wasted. Students do not feel out of place or get lost in the lesson when they are sitting in this on-task position.
If there is a new concept to learn, all group levels (ranging from 2 nd to 5 th grade) begin the session with what is called the Initial Reading Deck.	When my students learn the six syllable types through the Initial Reading Deck, it gives them a strategy to decode and encode unfamiliar words, so that they do not have to rely on guessing or memorization.
I use an App on my telephone called Charades to create a deck of words that are decodable. I usually select and add about 4-5 words from the Reading Practices.	Implementing technology in the Dyslexia Lab allows for my students to develop a passion for reading and improve their deficits in phonological awareness.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gladys M. Suarez attended the former University of Texas – Brownsville (UTB) in Brownsville, Texas where she received her bachelor’s degree (BS) in Early Childhood, Kinesiology, and English (3-Disciplines) with the concentration in elementary education in December 2000. She continued with her education at University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) and received her master’s degree (M.Ed) Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction with emphasis in Reading in Summer 2016. Gladys earned her Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in May 2023. During this time, Gladys has worked as an elementary 1st grade teacher, 4th grade teacher, 7th grade Reading teacher, and as a Dyslexia teacher. Gladys M. Suarez’s personal email is jjgsuarez4@gmail.com.