

ABSTRACT

OUTLAW, JANET KIM. Rural Elementary Teachers' Perceptions and Enactments of Dialogic ELA Comprehension Instruction Amidst Pandemic-Induced Remote Learning. (Under the direction of Dr. Jill F. Grifenhagen).

This qualitative grounded theory study explored rural elementary teachers' perceptions and enactments of dialogic English Language Arts (ELA) comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning. Nine rural elementary teachers participated in two rounds of semi-structured interviews and shared digital artifacts of their virtual ELA comprehension instruction. Findings demonstrated how teachers described their dialogic comprehension instruction as an equity of learning ownership in traditional, in-person contexts and as supporting diverse knowledges across traditional and remote contexts. They contextualized multiple sources of knowledge within the local funds of knowledge of their rural school communities. Although teachers faced many barriers in remote learning, they enacted an ongoing process of refining and reflecting upon dialogic comprehension instruction for remote learning. Building upon these findings, substantive theory was constructed to explain teachers' iterative process of perceiving and enacting dialogic ELA comprehension instruction. Teachers perceived a relational stance toward a plurality of comprehension paradigms, knowledges, and voices. They enacted these comprehension ideologies through responding to the particularities of their local places, virtual spaces, and pandemic times. Implications to sustain diverse knowledges, local communities, and student voices in early comprehension pedagogy are discussed.

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Rural Elementary Teachers' Perceptions and Enactments of Dialogic ELA Comprehension
Instruction Amidst Pandemic-Induced Remote Learning

by
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DEDICATION

To the best dad in the world, Robert Boone, who raised me as a single father and supported me to be the first person in the family to earn a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and now a doctoral degree.

BIOGRAPHY

Janet Kim Outlaw is from Jamesville, North Carolina. She was raised by her single father, Robert Boone. She has always loved creative expressions of language through reading, writing, and talking about books. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in English Language, Writing, and Rhetoric at North Carolina State University, where she graduated from the English Honors Program and University Honors Program. She wanted to connect her passion for language arts with her desire to support children with exceptionalities. She earned her Master of Arts in Teaching Special Education from North Carolina State University. Janet has taught special education in elementary and high school settings. Supporting individual students in their educational journeys has brought her the greatest joy. Her teaching experiences inspired her to pursue research that advances equity in literacy education for diverse learners. Janet earned her Doctor of Philosophy in Teacher Education and Learning Sciences with a concentration in Literacy and English Language Arts as her third degree from North Carolina State University. During her doctoral studies, Janet assisted in teaching early literacy methods courses and educational psychology courses. She also served on the leadership team for Wolfpack WORKS, an early literacy professional development initiative for novice teachers in North Carolina.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Fostering young students' comprehension is essential for supporting their current and future learning. During the elementary years, students are not only mastering literacy decoding skills, such as phonemic awareness and phonics, but they are also beginning their lifelong development of more complex literacy skills, specifically language comprehension. Elementary children are learning early literacy skills to continue to grow as strong readers, as well as gaining new areas of knowledge through reading and understanding ideas from multiple texts. In other words, young elementary students are both learning how to read texts and interacting with texts to build multiple bodies of knowledge.

Young students' successful text comprehension facilitates opportunities to expand their academic knowledge across content areas (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Shanahan et al., 2010). Simultaneously, having strong background knowledge in a subject area better supports readers' understanding of a text (Duke et al., 2011). Supporting this reciprocal interaction between comprehension and knowledge is essential to advancing students' learning throughout their academic careers (Duke et al., 2011; Hattan & Lupo, 2020). Beginning in the elementary grades and extending through postsecondary education, students' academic learning is often measured through assessments, which require demonstration of both content mastery and successful reading comprehension. Beyond primary and secondary education experiences, students will also continue to rely on language comprehension and multiple forms of knowledge to engage in critical thought, lifelong learning, and perspective taking throughout their professional and

personal lives. Research illuminating instructional approaches to cultivate young learners' comprehension in the elementary grades is a critical area for further exploration.

A notable instructional approach to comprehension instruction, dialogic teaching, leverages student dialogue to co-construct new forms of knowledge (Alexander, 2020; Kim & Wilkinson, 2019). Dialogic teaching provides students with ample opportunities to participate in collaborative text-based discussions. While discussing texts, students explore multiple perspectives beyond right or wrong dichotomous thinking, to support argumentation literacy and critical thinking (Garas-York & Almasi, 2017). A dialogic approach to comprehension instruction upholds children as agentic learners, who bring multiple experiences and sources of knowledge to contribute to shared learning experiences. While dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction have already been established among secondary-grade students (Pearson et al., 2020), less scholarship has focused on dialogic comprehension instruction with young elementary students. In fact, children's early comprehension development has often been sidelined to focus on decoding skills in the elementary grades, especially with primary-aged students (Stahl, 2016). As such, further research is needed to understand how elementary teachers may apply dialogic teaching practices to support young students' comprehension learning.

It is also important to gain deeper insight into elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction within diverse school settings. Languages are representative of different cultures and their various ways of interpreting and understanding the world around them (Bakhtin, 1981). Likewise, language comprehension is composed of readers' diverse sources of knowledge and iterative interpretations of a text's meaning (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Kintsch, 1998; van den Broek et al., 1999). Dialogic teaching seeks and extends these

multiplicities of student experiences, knowledge, and voices to collaboratively build deeper and multilayered understandings (Alexander, 2020). Comprehension, language, and dialogue do not occur in a vacuum but are contextualized across sociocultural spaces (Mills, 2016). Research attending to dialogic comprehension pedagogy in rural elementary schools is pertinent to highlighting instructional approaches that build upon rural children's lived experiences and local communities (Eppley et al., 2011). Research examining dialogic comprehension instruction within rural schools is essential to understanding how elementary teachers sustain diverse forms of language and knowledge within students' local communities.

Research examining rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction has been complicated by the COVID-19 global pandemic and subsequent physical school closures. At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, districts were required to rapidly adapt to remote learning. In contrast to colleges and universities with pre-existing online learning platforms, elementary schools had to quickly create new methods for online learning and teaching. As the pandemic-induced physical school closures persisted into the 2020-2021 school year, there were still many uncertainties surrounding remote language and literacy instruction for young learners. This study sought to understand how rural elementary teachers perceived and enacted dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction within the context of pandemic-induced remote learning.

Statement of the Problem

Contemporary comprehension scholarship has advocated for research to broaden the understanding of reading comprehension beyond the notion of a singular product of decoding and language comprehension (Cervetti et al., 2020; Hoffman, 2017; Israel, 2017). Specifically, more research is needed to support a new stance towards comprehension, where comprehension

is not an end goal, but a means towards further argumentation, explanation, or innovation (Anderson, 2018; Pearson et al., 2020). Rather than solely focusing on comprehension as an assessment score to demonstrate readers' accurate interpretation of a text, comprehension should also be understood within a broader network of literacy skills, language, and knowledge (Cervetti et al., 2020; Pearson et al., 2020). Scholars have emphasized the important, reciprocal relationship between comprehension and knowledge (Duke et al., 2011; Pearson et al., 2020). However, scarce research has explored how to leverage diverse forms of knowledge in elementary comprehension instruction (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Milner, 2020; Pearson et al., 2020).

Beyond positioning comprehension in a reciprocal relationship with knowledge, research is needed to broaden the types of knowledge that can be leveraged in deepening student reading comprehension (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Milner, 2020; Pearson et al., 2020). Specifically, minimal comprehension research has examined how to extend students' cultural funds of knowledge in comprehension instruction (McIntyre, 2010; Moll et al., 1999; Moll, 1999; Pearson et al., 2020). Reading comprehension is not only influenced by several cognitive literacy skills (McKenna & Stahl, 2015; Scarborough, 2002), but also by diverse sociocultural identities (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Hattan & Lupo, 2020; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). While research on culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogy have prioritized cultural knowledge (Gay, 2002; Paris, 2012), cultural knowledge has rarely been investigated in contexts of comprehension instruction (McIntyre, 2010; Pearson et al., 2020). Further research is needed to examine how teachers may build upon children's diverse cultural funds of knowledge in comprehension pedagogy.

English Language Arts (ELA) content is a particularly rich area for studying diverse sources of knowledge in elementary comprehension, as children are learning to analyze, evaluate, and respond to texts that portray the many complexities of humanity. Although students spend a great deal of time interacting with texts in the elementary ELA block, research considering the dynamic between content knowledge and comprehension has primarily been concentrated in other content areas (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2019; Cervetti et al., 2012; Kucan & Palinscar, 2013; Swanson et al., 2019). However, ELA texts address content knowledge pertaining to intrapersonal human experience, such as significant themes of conflict, empathy, friendship, and love (Pearson et al., 2020). Given the diverse perspectives of humanity encompassed in ELA texts, additional research is necessary to understand how elementary teachers may leverage diverse content and cultural knowledge in ELA comprehension instruction.

As dialogic teaching is both a stance towards teaching and a particular approach to language instruction (Alexander, 2020; Kim & Wilkinson, 2019), it is a well-suited instructional approach to integrating diverse ways of knowing in comprehension pedagogy. Dialogic teaching draws upon a dialogue of diverse experiences, perspectives, and ways of knowing to support deeper learning (Alexander, 2020; Kim & Wilkinson, 2019). As opposed to monologic approaches in which the teacher is to transmit knowledge to students, dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction create a shared space, where the teacher and students can collectively engage with texts and generate new knowledge (Freire & Macedo, 1995; Garas-York & Almasi, 2017; Mercer, 2019). Following Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism, dialogic teaching embraces a plurality of knowledge and voice in dialogue to promote deeper and more multifaceted understandings, rather than listening to a singular perspective or voice alone.

Additionally, Pearson and scholars' (2020) synthesis on effective comprehension pedagogy revealed that dialogic text-based discussions of challenging texts resulted in the most successful outcomes for students' immediate comprehension outcomes, as well as long-term outcomes in applying their understanding towards new explanations and creations. While several studies have observed elementary teachers' discourse moves and facilitation of dialogic instruction (Chen et al., 2017; Muhonen et al., 2016; Wilkinson et al., 2019), minimal research has examined elementary teachers' perceptions of their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction, particularly among underserved rural school communities.

There is a concerning dearth of research investigating how elementary teachers incorporate diverse funds of knowledge in comprehension instruction with underserved school populations (Pearson et al., 2020). Rural schools have been marginalized by narrow interpretations of literacy instruction and assessment, leading to deficit-based research approaches to remedy rural literacy to achieve metrocentric standards (Eppley & Corbett, 2011; Green & Corbett, 2013). Literacy research has historically essentialized rural literacy in terms of what it lacks in comparison to metropolitan schools (Donehower et al., 2012). In response, a field of place-sensitive literacy scholarship has emerged to challenge singular conceptions of literacy, which overlook the multiplicity of cultures, histories, and identities in diverse rural communities (Corbett & Donehower, 2017; Green & Corbett, 2013). Corbett and Donehower (2017) maintained that both rurality and literacy can only be understood relationally, across a range of contexts in space and time. Research focusing on literacy in rural schools should understand language and literacy from a dialogic stance, where a multiplicity of culture, knowledge, and experience inextricably shape expectations of and engagement with language and literacy. While emerging studies have documented instructional methods to leverage rural

adolescents' locally situated funds of knowledge (Pyles, 2016), minimal research has highlighted such instructional approaches with elementary-aged children (Eppley et al., 2011). Research is critically needed to better understand how elementary teachers may capitalize upon rural children's diverse experiences, perspectives, and ways of knowing through dialogic ELA comprehension instruction.

Focusing on elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction in rural schools is also necessary to address current issues of inequity. Rural schools face challenges with limited funding, which also leads to challenges in teacher recruitment and retention (Azano & Stewart, 2015; Reagan et al., 2019). Glaring funding disparities even exist within states serving largely rural school districts. For instance, North Carolina is a majority rural state with 87 of its 115 school districts being in rural counties, but rural districts receive less funding for local teacher salary supplements, local investments in public schools, and spending per student in comparison to the minority of urban and suburban districts (Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2019). Such discrepancies in funding and resources between rural and metropolitan districts have become even more apparent amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. In North Carolina, 95% of families without reliable access to broadband Internet are in rural areas (Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2019). Inequity in access to virtual learning is particularly troubling during new norms of remote learning in public schools. Developing deeper insights into rural elementary teachers' remote dialogic comprehension instruction can provide more informed efforts to target funding and resource inequities between rural and metropolitan schools. Therefore, scholarship is urgently needed to examine how rural elementary teachers apply dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction during pandemic-induced remote learning.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to generate theoretical insights into how rural elementary teachers perceived and enacted dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction during pandemic-induced remote learning. Grounded theory approaches to qualitative research design are well-suited to construct emerging substantive theories into processes or actions with minimal existing theoretical explanations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to construct substantive theory of the process of rural elementary teachers adopting dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction amidst remote learning, emergent theory was grounded in the perspectives of participating rural elementary teachers using the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Substantive theories are grounded in particular contexts and populations (Glaser & Strauss, 2017), and the substantive theory generated from this study was specific to rural elementary teachers in the context of pandemic-induced remote learning. I also applied a constructivist lens to grounded theory, by contextualizing emerging theoretical findings within teachers' diverse experiences, teaching contexts, and local communities (Charmaz, 2020). I sought the diverse perspectives of nine rural elementary teachers, through in-depth interviews and digital artifacts to create rich, thick descriptions of their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through engaging in researcher reflexivity and listening to the multiplicity of rural elementary teachers' voices, the objective of this study was to collectively construct emerging theory with rural elementary teachers on the following research questions:

1. How do rural elementary teachers describe their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction?

2. In what ways, if at all, do rural elementary teachers incorporate rural students' funds of knowledge into their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction?
3. How has pandemic-induced school closures impacted rural elementary teachers' enactment of dialogic practices in ELA comprehension instruction?

Significance of the Study

This study applied Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism to develop a more nuanced understanding of the interactions between language comprehension instruction and local knowledge in rural communities amidst pandemic-induced remote learning. Cognitive theories and sociocultural paradigms were positioned in a theoretical dialogue, to understand comprehension as an individually and socially constructed process (Catts & Kamhi, 2017; Davis et al., 2015; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). By investigating how rural elementary teachers perceived and enacted dialogic ELA comprehension instruction during remote learning, this study addressed significant gaps in the fields of comprehension pedagogy, dialogic teaching, and rural literacy research. The grounded theory design offered novel theoretical explanations of rural elementary teachers' perceptions and enactments of dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Theoretical findings from this study can inform future research and professional development, to support rural elementary teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction during challenging pandemic times.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter, I describe the dialogically organized theoretical framework guiding this study. I integrate theories of dialogism, sociocultural literacies, and comprehension models in a conceptual dialogue with one another. Next, I position this study within the existing literature on knowledge-building approaches to comprehension instruction, particularly through dialogic teaching to leverage diverse forms of knowledge and voices in collective discourse. I situate the timely need for this study as addressing gaps in research concerning dialogic comprehension instruction, elementary teachers, and novel contexts of remote learning. Then, I contextualize this study's examination of rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction within the existing research on rural literacy education.

Theoretical Framework

Dialogic Theoretical Lenses for the Multidimensionality of Comprehension

This study is informed by multiple theories to account for the fluid and multidimensional nature of comprehension (Catts & Kamhi, 2017; Davis et al., 2015). I first briefly frame the overarching framework from Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism to understand the multiple theoretical perspectives informing this study and the interpretation of comprehension as an integration of sociocultural contexts, cognitive processes, and academic and local funds of knowledge. I describe both the sociocultural and cognitive theoretical influences on this study. I conclude the theoretical framework with the position that comprehension is informed by multiple theoretical paradigms and has reciprocal relationships with diverse sources of knowledge.

Through a dialogically informed theoretical lens, this study explored how rural elementary teachers perceived and enacted dialogic teaching approaches to ELA comprehension instruction, during contexts of pandemic-induced remote learning.

Dialogism

Bakhtin (1981) described dialogism as the experience of switching between multiple perspectives and voices to construct meaning. Through heteroglossia, an individual interacts with these multiple interpretations and voices to develop a new understanding.

“Languages of heteroglossia, like mirrors that face each other, each reflecting in its own way a piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp for a world behind their mutually reflecting aspects that is broader, more multi-leveled, containing more and varied horizons than would be available to a single language or a single mirror” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 414-415).

Bakhtin viewed languages as representing diverse voices and perspectives. As languages or voices respond to one another in discourse, it brings discontinuity. However, discrepancies across divergent voices are not to be reconciled, as deeper forms of knowledge are gained through tensions and questions among multiple divergent voices.

Within comprehension research and instructional practice, sociocultural and cognitive frameworks have often been juxtaposed with one another. However, new theoretical insights may be gained through collectively exploring comprehension instruction from contrasting viewpoints. Also, drawing upon a multitude of theoretical perspectives to comprehension is integral to supporting a dialogic approach to instruction, to incorporate multiple sources of student knowledge in actively co-constructing new learning (Alexander, 2020; Mercer, 2019). This study engaged sociocultural theories and cognitive theories of comprehension in dialogue,

to better understand how a plurality of knowledge informs early language comprehension pedagogy.

In addition to participating in a theoretical dialogue between sociocultural and cognitive paradigms, this study amplified the diverse sources of knowledge of rural elementary teachers' experiences in enacting dialogic ELA comprehension instruction amidst remote learning. Rurality and literacy were both viewed in a plural and relational stance to situate comprehension instruction with a polyphony of rural communities and funds of knowledge (Corbett & Donehower, 2017; Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Moll, 1992; Moll, 2019). By engaging the diverse experiences of elementary teachers across particular rural contexts in a theoretical exploration, findings provided richer perspectives into the range of possibilities for enacting dialogic comprehension instruction during remote learning. Therefore, this study is guided by a dialogic theoretical perspective of language comprehension and knowledge (Bakhtin, 1981), to deeply explore dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction contextualized across rural spaces and worldwide pandemic times.

Sociocultural Perspectives

In contrast to traditional cognitive development theories that attribute individual changes in behavior as solely driven by psychological functions, Vygotsky (1978) explained that psychological functions are not static but are socially situated and mediated by children's interactions with cultural tools, such as language. Language plays a dynamic role in children's thinking. Children apply language as a cultural artifact to both mediate interactions in their social environment and form their individual psychological processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of language and child development informs the current study, in order to

understand that all comprehension instruction, learning development, and forms of knowledge are socially mediated.

Sociocultural theory in the field of literacy views literacies in the plural form as the multiplicity of ways that members of diverse communities engage in literacy practices (Mills, 2016). Sociocultural literacies are related to Vygotsky's (1978) view of language, where language and literacy learning cannot be separated from one's social and physical environments. From a sociocultural perspective of learning, our cultures, communities, and literacies are the frameworks that guide our experiences and understandings (Mills, 2016). Sociocultural literacy theory pushes against singular definitions of cognitive literacy. Mills (2016) posed the critique that "the view that literacy as a set of cognitive skills is an ideology that ignores racial, cultural, and other forms of social difference" (p. 17). Cognitive literacy paradigms uphold singular views of literate standards, which seek to maintain literacy practices and values of the dominant culture (Milner, 2020; Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2018). In contrast, sociocultural literacy perspectives seek to broaden the theoretical understanding of literacies to include the language and literacy practices of diverse communities.

Heath's (1983) prominent ethnography of sociocultural literacies showcased how the dominant cultural standards of literacy marginalized the diverse ways that children engaged in language practices in their homes and communities. Singular notions of literacy continue to trivialize students' diverse sociocultural literacy practices today. Singularly defined perspectives of literacy emphasize student outcomes on standardized assessments, leading to test-centric literacy instruction (Davis & Vehabovic, 2018). Also, monocultural perspectives in narrowly defined notions of literacy position children from minoritized backgrounds as inferior, holding deficits, and different from the dominant culture's standards of language and literacy in

education (Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2018). Singular notions of literacy position students' difficulties in learning as "deficits" to be remediated and brought up to singular literate standards, with no consideration to the deficits in an education system, which continually perpetuate inequities in students' literacy learning (Milner, 2020; Dudley-Marling, 2004).

While a sociocultural perspective to literacy does not denounce the idea of students experiencing difficulties in language or literacy, it is more so concerned with what students can do and how they do engage in literacy practices (McIntyre, 2010). Sociocultural approaches to literacy instruction build upon students' funds of knowledge to provide culturally responsive instruction (Gay, 2002; McIntyre, 2010; Moll, 1992; Moll, 2019; Paris, 2012). Sociocultural literacy scholars do not limit literacy to the scope of standardized assessments, and they contend that learning difficulties or disability labels can only be understood in relation to the institutions which define them. When students perform below narrowly defined literate expectations, sociocultural literacy scholars question the institution that has created so much literacy failure, rather than assuming deficiency within the learner (Milner, 2020; Dudley-Marling, 2004). Instead of attributing challenges in learning to failures in students' individual psychological processes, sociocultural approaches to research assess the learning environment to determine how to best support readers' diverse strengths and needs.

Cognitive Perspectives

Comprehension is recursive and unstable (Catts & Kamhi, 2017), as it is shaped by both individual and sociocultural factors. This study recognized comprehension, and comprehension instruction in particular, as being informed by both sociocultural and cognitive theories. From a cognitive view, most models of reading position comprehension as the product of constrained decoding and unconstrained language skills (Paris, 2005). In Gough and Tunmer's (1986) simple

view of reading, they argued that reading is the product of decoding and language comprehension, where both skills are necessary for successful reading comprehension. Scarborough (2002) presented interwoven strands of word reading and language comprehension processes as the interrelated components of skilled text comprehension. Also, McKenna and Stahl's (2015) cognitive model posited there are three primary pathways to successful reading comprehension: automatic word recognition, oral language comprehension, and strategic knowledge. Similar to other reading models, the first pathway encompassed constrained decoding skills which lead to automatic recognition and the second pathway included knowledge of vocabulary, text structure, and general knowledge to facilitate language comprehension. Their third pathway involved the metacognitive processes of reading, such as understanding general purposes for reading, specific purposes for reading, and knowledge of different reading strategies. While cognitive literacy scholars argue that comprehension is the successful product of constrained decoding skills and unconstrained language skills, several comprehension-focused models provide further elaboration on readers' comprehension as active, recursive processes.

Comprehension Models

Kintsch's (1998) construction-integration model described the textbase and the situation model as two essential processes for language comprehension. The construction process begins with understanding information presented to create a literal interpretation of the author's ideas, or the textbase. As students compare their understanding of the author's ideas with their own knowledge from prior experiences and texts, they are engaging in the integration process to build a mental representation of the text, or a situation model. In this way, students are positioned as active agents in constructing new knowledge from developing a situation model of the author's

ideas, from both content within the text and their own existing knowledge. Readers' construction of a situation model of the text is a highly active and mostly invisible process.

Building upon the construction-integration model, van den Broek and colleagues' (1999) landscape model explained the cyclical processes of readers activating their understanding of the text and prior knowledge to create text coherence. Readers participate in iterative cycles of activations where current cycles of active interaction with the text and previous cycles of memory representations of the text fluctuate throughout the entire reading process to build a mental representation of the author's ideas. The current active interaction with the text represents peaks and the working memory representations of previously formed text interactions symbolize valleys in the fluctuating landscape of the reader's situation model. Through these fluctuating processes of active text interaction and memory representations of previous text interactions, the reader is developing text coherence. One type of coherence involves referential coherence, where the student can identify the entity being referred to by the author to support clear understanding of textual sequencing. The second form of coherence is causal coherence, where a concept in the text is seen as having been sufficiently explained by the author. Text coherence is not a standard metric for comprehension but instead is determined by the reader and the reader's purposes for reading a particular text. Forms of text coherence occur at the local level within smaller chunks of the text, as well as the global level in the text's entirety. The landscape model showcased how readers engage in active, dynamic interactions with a text to form a situation model of the author's ideas in a text.

Reader-Text-Activity-Sociocultural Context Interactions

In addition to understanding students' comprehension from a cognitive standpoint of actively constructing a situation model of a text, comprehension is also conceptualized as a

dynamic interaction between a multitude of student, text, activity, and sociocultural contexts (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). As previously described, students' background knowledge and personal experiences significantly impact student-text interactions or active comprehension processes. Students' knowledge can come from their own lived experiences, information learned from previously read texts, as well as diverse cultural funds of knowledge (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Moll, 2019). Due to the personal dynamic between readers and texts, comprehension is more than an assigned reading level but is an interaction of processes specific to diverse students and forms of knowledge.

Also, students' interactions with texts can vary by the particular reading stance a reader brings to a text. In addition to reading a text to construct meaning, readers read texts for a variety of goals. Rosenblatt (1969) declared that responses to a text result from transactions between the reader and the text, resulting in a continuum of reader responses for a variety of reading purposes (Rosenblatt, 1969). A readers' response is dependent on the reader, the text, and the readers' purpose for reading. A readers' cultural identity can also mediate one's interaction with a text (Brooks & Browne, 2012). Student responses to texts can be influenced by a variety of cultural positions they adopt while reading, including cultural identity related to their peers, ethnic group, community, family, and homeplace (Brooks & Browne, 2012).

Moreover, a reader-text interaction is mediated by the particular text (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Differences in text can range from text structure, reading level, decoding demands, complexity of vocabulary, to interest appeal to students. Even texts identified on the same instructional reading level will have a variety of textual factors that influence reader-text interactions. Also, the activity in reader-text-activity-sociocultural context interaction refers to the purposes for reading or the instructional context (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). In

school settings, the purposes for reading are often determined by the teacher or educator. Students' choice or lack of choice can influence their engagement and interaction with a particular text. The instructional activity also includes the focus of comprehension instruction, which usually falls under the larger categories of strategy-based teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1984) or text-based discussions to build knowledge (Kucan & Palinscar, 2013). Text-based discussions are inherently sociocultural forms of instruction, where student learning is shaped by the relationship between dialogue and thought (Bakhtin, 1981; Lightner & Wilkinson, 2017). A students' interaction with a text varies across the types of texts being read and instructional activities surrounding texts.

Finally, reader-text interactions are always influenced by the larger sociocultural context (Mills, 2016), as students' forms of knowledge are representative of diverse communities, cultures, and lived experiences (Hattan & Lupo, 2020). All texts are written by an author from a particular cultural vantage point, and instructional activities are encompassed by the expectations of the larger school and education community. Comprehension processes are contextually specific to the reader, text, activity, and sociocultural environment (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). It is evident that comprehension is far more nuanced than a singular comprehension outcome score, as comprehension is a "complicated constellation of skills and knowledge" (Cervetti et al., 2020, p. 161). Hence, comprehension is a multidimensional, unstable construct that varies by the multiplicity of reader-text-activity-sociocultural context interactions (Catts & Kamhi, 2017; Cervetti et al., 2020; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

Understanding Reader-Text-Interactions from a Dialogic Framework

Reader-text interactions are unstable and are not solely limited to cognitive or sociocultural theories. Davis and colleagues (2015) contended that reader-text interactions can be

explained by cognitive perspectives on one level to understand how an individual constructs meaning through interacting with a text, while other aspects of reader-text interactions are better conceptualized through sociocultural theories. For example, they outlined six recursive actions which readers partake in cognitively, socially, and critically while reading. Certain reader processes are understood from cognitive paradigms, including maximizing coherence, intertextual integration, selectively noticing, and strategy orchestration. When cognitively constructing a situation model of a text, readers must apply their knowledge and strategies to selectively focus on key aspects in the text that promote their coherence of a text or across multiple texts. Other reader actions are informed by sociocultural theories, including the practice of analyzing, critiquing, and evaluating ideologies within the author's message. Readers also engage in sociocultural identification and resistance by assuming or defying the identities that the author presupposes on the readers.

Furthermore, Davis and colleagues (2015) highlighted six categories of reader-text interactions that can serve as resources or tethers to influence moment-to-moment improvisation in comprehension. Texts, readers, authorial presence, immediate context, disciplinary context, and the sociocultural context can act as resources or tethers to either promote or inhibit opportunities for fluid, in-the-moment reader-text interactions. Also, intrapersonal and interpersonal changes may potentially result from reader-text interactions. Readers may change their conceptual understanding of a topic, gain enhanced reading motivation, affirm their cultural identity, or communities may engage in collaborative activism after engaging with texts. From a dialogical perspective of multiple theoretical paradigms, comprehension is seen as non-neutral. As students actively engage in text comprehension, they are continuously facilitated and hindered by unstable cognitive and sociocultural forces.

Comprehension as a Theoretically Dialogic Engagement with Diverse Knowledges

In summary, this study views comprehension as a theoretical interaction of sociocultural and cognitive perspectives. From sociocultural theory, students' comprehension is socially constructed and mediated through social interaction, instructional contexts, and diverse funds of knowledge (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; McIntyre, 2010; Mills, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). From cognitive theory, comprehension is an active process of integrating one's prior knowledge of the content within a text along with one's active interpretation of the author's current message to construct a situation model of a text (Kintsch, 1998; van den Broek et al., 1999). By situating comprehension within a dialogue of multiple theoretical paradigms, this study aimed to develop a deeper understanding of rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction.

Review of Relevant Research

In following a theoretically dialogic view of reader-text interactions, this study defines comprehension as being shaped by multiple paradigmatic influences. Accordingly, comprehension cannot be taught through a confined set of skills but must be responsive to diverse students and specific texts, activities, and contexts (Catts & Kamhi, 2017). I situate the present study within the existing research on comprehension instruction, and I frame the dialogic instructional focus of this study from a knowledge-building approach to comprehension instruction. I then review the literature on dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction. I conclude the literature review by advocating the need to explore dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction in rural schools, particularly during critical periods of pandemic-induced remote learning.

Strategy-Based vs. Knowledge-Building Comprehension Instruction

The two general orientations to comprehension instruction include either strategy-based instruction or knowledge-building instruction through text-based discussion (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2019; Davidson, 2019). The former approach emphasizes a skill-based approach and has historically received greater attention in comprehension research and practice (Davidson, 2019). I provide a brief overview of strategy-based comprehension instruction. I then elaborate on the research on knowledge-building comprehension instruction, to situate this study's instructional focus on a dialogic, knowledge-building approach to comprehension pedagogy.

Strategy-Based Comprehension Instruction

Strategy-based instruction received great attention from both scholars and local school districts through the National Reading Panel's (2000) report, which emphasized directly teaching research-based comprehension strategies to support students' reading comprehension, such as self-monitoring and summarizing. Research syntheses of strategy-based instruction point to the need to teach multiple strategies in a combined fashion, rather than teaching a series of strategies in isolation (Block & Duffy, 2008). One of the most well-known multiple strategy instructional formats is Reciprocal Teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). In Reciprocal Teaching, an adult guides students to interact with texts in more sophisticated ways through instructional activities in summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Strategy-based discussion involves directly teaching comprehension strategies, explicitly modeling strategies, scaffolding students' practice with comprehension strategies through guided practice, and supporting them in independently applying strategies while reading (Block & Duffy, 2008).

However, comprehension strategy-based instruction has been critiqued for failing to devote time and resources toward building students' knowledge (Davidson, 2019). McKeown

and scholars' (2009) discovered that fifth-grade classrooms implementing a knowledge-building approach to comprehension instruction resulted in higher student narrative retelling scores, greater amounts of talk about text, and longer student response lengths in discussions than those with strategy-based approaches. From cognitive and sociocultural perspectives, a student's prior academic knowledge and cultural funds of knowledge are both instrumental to facilitating their reader-text interactions (Kintsch, 1998; Hattan & Lupo, 2020; McIntyre, 2010). Simultaneously, students can gain new knowledge from engaging in reader-text interactions, leading to a reciprocal relationship between knowledge and comprehension (Duke et al., 2011).

In their synthesis of the recent research on comprehension, Pearson and colleagues (2020) highlighted the reciprocal role of knowledge shaping reading comprehension and reading comprehension in turn advancing knowledge. Not only does prior knowledge support inference making to build more complete situation models of texts, but clear comprehension of a text facilitates future learning activities from strengthened subject knowledge. Pearson and scholars' report also discussed several types of knowledge which play a role in reading comprehension, including declarative, procedural, conditional, disciplinary, and epistemic. Declarative knowledge, in particular, has a reciprocal dynamic with comprehension, as one's knowledge of a subject both enables and is enabled by comprehension. Procedural knowledge facilitates readers' strategies for self-monitoring and actively constructing meaning from a text. Conditional knowledge informs students' reading purposes and stances to adopt respective strategies to meet one's comprehension goals. Students' content-area knowledge, or disciplinary knowledge, is also requisite to text comprehension. For example, a student reading and thinking like a literature scholar would attend to discipline-specific areas, such as figurative language, symbolism, and plot development. Students' epistemic knowledge related to the nature of knowledge also plays a

key role in students' ability to evaluate and critique arguments presented in a text. Additionally, students' diverse funds of knowledge and lived experiences support text comprehension, yet these forms of knowledge have been under-examined in comprehension research (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Pearson et al., 2020). Hence, this study intended to explore rural elementary teachers' ELA comprehension instruction from a dialogic knowledge-building perspective, including how teachers may draw upon rural youth's local funds of knowledge to support comprehension and further knowledge development.

Knowledge-Building Comprehension Instruction

Duke and colleagues' (2011) first principle in teaching reading comprehension is to build students' disciplinary and world knowledge. As described earlier, students actively incorporate their prior knowledge from previous texts, personal experiences, or cultural funds of knowledge to glean meaning from a text (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Kintsch, 1998; Moll et al., 1992; Moll, 2019). The knowledge-building approach to comprehension instruction contends that the purpose for reading, in addition to reading for pleasure, is to build new understandings about a topic (Davidson, 2019). While a knowledge-building approach can include instruction on comprehension strategies, a knowledge-building approach does require greater instructional focus to be given in supporting students' active engagement with text content (Kucan & Palinscar, 2013).

A knowledge-building approach to comprehension instruction includes ample opportunities for students to read a wide volume and range of texts (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2019; Duke et al., 2011). There is broad consensus that reading to and with young children is one of the best avenues to strengthen their comprehension (Pinkerton, 2018; Stahl, 2016; Swanson et al., 2011). One of the primary ways that elementary students access texts is through read alouds.

Specifically, interactive read alouds position the teacher and students in an active stance to engage in conversations about the text and reading experience (Pinkerton, 2018). The structure traditionally involves the teacher selecting the text and planning for intentional stopping points to engage students in discussion before reading, embedding teaching points and text talk during the read aloud, and discussing, evaluating, or responding to the text after reading (Pinkerton, 2018). In addition to interactive read alouds, students participate in shared reading as they read an enlarged or individually accessible text aloud with the teacher. Shared reading, particularly among primary-grade children, supports learners as they are rereading text to build fluency and learn foundational text features (Scharer, 2018). Among upper elementary students, shared reading of a text excerpt provides an opportunity to focus on more advanced text features, like foreshadowing or character development, as well as scaffolding students to engage in close reading and think deeply about messages embedded in texts (Scharer, 2018). Transitioning from teacher-led interactive read alouds and collective shared readings, small group reading instruction supports students to become independent readers through differentiated instruction in both decoding and comprehension (Woodruff, 2018). For instance, a well-known form of small group reading, guided reading, targets not only students' accurate reading of texts, but also their understanding of the text's structure and meanings through strategic actions of thinking within, about, and beyond the text (Fountas and Pinnell, 2017). Elementary literacy instruction includes several key opportunities for students to access texts, develop necessary decoding skills for reading comprehension, as well as build young students' comprehension through deeper analyses and inferences from texts.

In addition to having ample reading opportunities, text-based discussion is an integral component of a knowledge-building approach to comprehension instruction. Scholars have

consistently recommended that students participate in text-based discussions to facilitate their reading comprehension (Duke et al., 2011; Garas-York & Almasi, 2017; Kucan & Palinscar, 2013; Shanahan et al., 2010). Within text-based discussions, teachers pose reflective, open-ended questions to promote students' higher-order thinking to elaborate on the meaning of the text (Shanahan et al., 2010). Thoughtful text-based discussions allow children to make authentic text connections to their personal lives, other texts, and diverse worldviews (Allington, 2012). Strong text-based discussions position students as literate beings to participate in problem-solving discussions (Allington, 2012). Text-based discussions are not limited to answering basic factual comprehension questions, but guide students to grapple with the larger ideas and themes presented in text.

Murphy and scholars' (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of the effects of text-based discussion on first-grade to college-aged students' high-level comprehension outcomes, or critical reflections of texts. The authors found that students' high-level comprehension scores varied by different instructional approaches to dialogue. High-level comprehension involved more than just acquiring knowledge of a topic, as it involved analyzing and evaluating messages surrounding a topic. Findings revealed that critical-analytic stances to text-based discussion, in comparison to efferent stances emphasizing information retrieval, facilitated greater student gains in high-level text comprehension. Clearly, developing students' deeper comprehension and knowledge through high-level textual understanding is integral to supporting young students as knowledgeable readers, evaluators, and investigators of texts.

Existing research on text-based discussions has been conducted with systematic approaches to discussion or with specific teacher discourse moves. Several studies have examined systematic approaches to promoting text-based discussions, such as Quality Talk

(Wilkinson et al., 2010) and Questioning the Author (Beck & McKeown, 2006). Outside of discussion frameworks that have previously been established and sequenced, research has examined teachers' specific discourse moves in text discussions. For example, Dwyer and scholars (2016) examined the relationships between the effectiveness of teachers' everyday use of discourse moves and students' reading comprehension and vocabulary outcomes. They found that teachers' use of several discourse moves, such as revoicing, facilitating sharing of ideas, and prompting students to make text-to-self connections, were associated with second- and third-graders' gains in comprehension and vocabulary. While there are promising implications for previously researched explicit and systematic discussion frameworks, there is no singular method to leading text-based discussions. Within text-based discussions, teachers may draw upon a repertoire of discourse approaches to share or release dialogue control with students in various instructional activities and contexts (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Research is needed to understand teachers' instructional practices for discourse and knowledge production across different instructional contexts, especially within new modes of remote ELA instruction.

Knowledge-Building Comprehension Instruction in ELA

Given the increased focus on reading and understanding informational texts in the Common Core standards (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010), a great deal of research on knowledge-building comprehension instruction has focused on informational texts to support students' comprehension across content areas (DeFrance & Fahrenbruck, 2016; Kucan & Palinscar, 2013; Swanson et al., 2019). Cross-disciplinary instruction in literacy and other content areas has been shown to facilitate students' disciplinary knowledge (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Cervetti et al., 2012; Fazio & Gallagher, 2019). However, minimal research has been conducted on text-based discussions using literature in elementary ELA classrooms to advance comprehension and

knowledge (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2019). Although the popular focus on comprehension and knowledge has revolved around non-ELA content areas like science and social studies, Pearson and colleagues (2020) called for research to explore children's comprehension and knowledge development through ELA instruction. ELA literature portrays valuable social knowledge about human experience, such as family, grief, kindness, and cultural diversity. Investigations of comprehension and ELA knowledge are especially relevant as today's students experience living through a pandemic. Given the importance of attending to students' social and emotional needs during this time of global crisis, notable themes of humanity, including family, kindness, and belonging, are as significant as ever. Future research is urgently needed to address the paucity of scholarship examining comprehension and knowledge within ELA instruction, particularly during the ongoing pandemic. Therefore, this study examined rural elementary teachers' remote ELA comprehension instruction, specifically from a dialogic instructional lens to uphold student agency in comprehension and knowledge development.

Dialogic Teaching

A Dialogic Stance to Language, Knowledge, and Learning

Dialogic teaching is both an ideological stance towards teaching and a particular approach to language instruction, drawing upon the power of dialogue to advance students' learning (Alexander, 2020; Kim & Wilkinson, 2019). Alexander (2020) posited that "dialogic teaching is both talk and more than talk, for it enacts a dialogic stance on knowledge, learning, social relations and education itself" (p. 1). Embracing a dialogic stance towards teaching maintains that education itself is a dialogue among people, arguments, values, cultures, and diverse forms of knowledge (Alexander, 2020). From Bakhtin's ontological perspective, a dialogue is composed of not just the voices of different people, but the voices represent a range

of thoughts from multiple cultures and paradigms across time (Bakhtin, 1981). In this way, dialogic teaching is a stance toward education that centers dialogue across various ways of knowing. Additionally, dialogic teaching is an approach to language pedagogy that supports students' deeper engagement and higher thinking processes through purposeful dialogue.

Dialogic approaches to class discussion counter predominant forms of recitation and initiate-response-evaluate in teacher-student discourse (Nystrand et al., 2003; Reznitskaya, 2012).

Dialogic teaching is centered around discourse to support students in deeper forms of learning and knowing. This study focused on teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction, to understand how teachers and students engaged in collaborative discourse to analyze and construct diverse forms of knowledge.

Dialogic approaches to classroom talk in comprehension instruction, rather than monologic, are well-suited to fostering students' deeper engagement with texts through collective knowledge construction (Garas-York & Almasi, 2017; Mercer, 2019; Reznitskaya, 2012). Monologic approaches to text discussions reflect traditional forms of initiate-response-evaluate classroom discourse, or recitation, which stifle students' higher levels of comprehension through the predominance of known-answer questions (Nystrand et al., 2003; Reznitskaya, 2012). Instead, dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction focus on questions that are divergent, where students engage in thoughtful inquiry about a range of perspectives and possibilities beyond a single correct answer (Burbules, 1993). Through collaboratively analyzing and understanding multiple perspectives in texts, dialogic teaching aligns with sociocultural views of literacy as a socially situated practice (Mills, 2016). Dialogic teaching also relates to Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism to position diverse perspectives in dialogue with one another, leading to more multifaceted understandings than a singular perspective alone. As such,

dialogic teaching embodies dialogic and sociocultural paradigms in pedagogy, to collectively construct higher levels of comprehension and understanding.

Whereas monologic dialogue presupposes that the teacher is the sole provider of knowledge, dialogic discourse espouses that truth and knowledge are co-constructed between teachers and students (Bakhtin, 1981; Mercer, 2019; Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013). In dialogic teaching, knowledge is not to be transmitted from the teacher to students, but students and teachers both engage in inquiry to collectively generate new knowledge (Freire & Macedo, 1995; Mercer, 2019; Shor & Freire, 1987). Dialogic teaching disrupts deficit-based approaches to teaching which view students as lacking knowledge and skills. Students are recognized as knowledgeable agents in the collaborative learning process, possessing knowledge from their personal experiences and cultural communities (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Moll et al., 1992; Moll, 2019). In dialogic discussions, the teacher opens up shared spaces for students to express their emerging ideas and promote individual and collective thinking (Mercer, 2019; Walsh et al., 2020). Dialogic forms of text comprehension instruction allow students to share their emerging reader-text interactions, learn from peers' reader-text interactions, and develop a deeper collective understanding from texts.

From analyses of classroom discourse in the primary grades, Alexander (2017) explained the instructional principles that constitute a dialogic approach to language teaching, including collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful instruction. Dialogic teaching is collective in nature, as teachers and students collaborate in learning activities together to share and build new ideas. Language interactions in dialogic teaching are reciprocal, where teachers and students listen to each other and consider divergent viewpoints. Children are supported to express their ideas freely without being embarrassed or scolded for supplying an "incorrect"

answer. Dialogic teaching is cumulative, as the multiplicity of perspectives are built upon one another to establish clear and logical lines of inquiry. Also, dialogic approaches to instruction are purposeful in facilitating dialogue towards a particular learning objective. Recently, Alexander (2020) expounded on his original five principles of dialogic teaching to add the deliberative principle. In dialogic discussions, teachers and students collaboratively evaluate diverse arguments to resolve a range of divergent perspectives. Altogether, dialogic teaching maintains a collective, reciprocal, and supportive classroom culture for language instruction, characterized by cumulative, deliberative, and purposeful dialogue.

Dialogic Teaching and Argumentation

In addition to promoting a plurality of knowledge through collective dialogue, dialogic teaching supports students' ability to engage in argumentation to demonstrate and evaluate the validity of diverse perspectives. The Common Core Standards have emphasized the importance of developing students' argumentation literacy to effectively analyze and judge a variety of information sources in a twenty-first century society (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Through centering instruction on agentive discussion and dialogue, dialogic teaching positions students in roles traditionally reserved for the teacher to critically reflect upon and respond to multiple perspectives (Reznitskaya & Wilkinson, 2015a).

In their professional development initiative for dialogic inquiry with elementary teachers, Reznitskaya and Wilkinson (2017) facilitated teachers' dialogic approach to teaching students' argumentation literacy. The authors stated that inquiry dialogue begins with a contestable question that is relevant to both student interests and messages within the text. Their professional development centered on four criteria to support and assess elementary students' argumentation.

The first criterion reflects the plurality of voices in dialogic teaching through promoting a diversity of perspectives for students and teachers to collectively explore. Also, discussions of diverse perspectives should be voiced with clear language and structured arguments. The third criterion addresses the acceptability of reasons and evidence by instructing students to use sources of evidence which are well-examined and accurate. The fourth and final criterion involves the logic behind argumentation to establish logical validity in the way teachers and students connect diverse positions with accurate reasons and evidence. Additionally, teachers may apply a range of “talk moves” to scaffold students’ participation in the inquiry process and maintain the four criteria standards. For example, if all students have agreed among themselves to support the same argument perspective, the teacher may implement a talk move through presenting an opposing idea and asking how students would then respond to this divergent point of view. Dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction are apt to develop young students’ argumentation skills in critically interpreting and responding to an array of claims and perspectives. Outside of Reznitskaya and Wilkinson’s line of work, the existing research on argumentation skills has been largely concentrated within science content (Lee, 2017; Rapanta et al., 2013; Rojas-Drummond, 2019), with minimal scholarship exploring argumentation in ELA instruction. The emphasis on science education is understandable, as science deals with argumentation through testing hypotheses with scientific evidence and detailed procedures. However, it will also be pertinent for future research to uncover how dialogic approaches to teaching ELA comprehension may facilitate children’s literacy argumentation.

Dialogic Teaching in the Elementary Classroom

While dialogic teaching has been proven to support adolescent students’ comprehension through discussing conceptually challenging texts with the goal of applying their new knowledge

for further activity (Pearson et al., 2020), more research is needed to examine dialogic teaching in elementary ELA comprehension instruction. Previous observations of dialogic teaching in elementary classrooms have focused on the teacher's role in facilitating dialogic discussions. For instance, Chen and scholars' (2017) examined dialogic discussions in elementary science classrooms. Their findings illustrated that teachers adopted multiple roles of teacher questioning, to support students' in taking ownership of and developing argumentative ideas in dialogic discussions. Teachers' roles of questioning consisted of varying combinations of the ownership of ideas or activities among teachers and students. In the role of the dispenser, the teacher is the sole owner of ideas and the discussion, limiting the cognitive depth of student responses. Other roles allowed for more active engagement and advanced participation from children, where teachers and students would collaboratively exchange ideas throughout the discussion. These roles included that of a moderator to compare and integrate ideas, a participant to exchange ideas with students, or a coach to challenge and elicit further depth from student ideas. These findings demonstrated how elementary teachers continuously released and shared power with students in dialogic discourse (Wilkinson et al., 2019).

Additionally, Muhonen and scholars (2016) found that primary grade teachers scaffolded children's participation in dialogic inquiry in both teacher-initiated and child-initiated dialogues. In teacher-initiated dialogues, forms of teacher scaffolding included suggesting there could be more than one answer, using authentic open-ended questions, and posing student questions for the whole class to discuss. Teachers also scaffolded students' engagement in collectively building ideas during child-initiated dialogues, through asking follow-up questions, linking children's ideas to other forms of world knowledge, and accepting responses without evaluating them. In the elementary grades, teachers may apply an array of talk moves to develop and extend

students' thinking through dialogic approaches to language instruction. As such, dialogic teaching scholars have contended that dialogic teaching is not a prescribed set of discourse moves, but rather teachers apply a repertoire of discourse moves to capitalize on the power of language to collectively build new understandings (Alexander, 2020; Kim & Wilkinson, 2019; Pappas et al., 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2019).

Additionally, Reznitskaya (2012) developed the *Dialogic Inquiry Tool* from observations of elementary teachers' discourse practices. They outlined several instructional indicators found within a dialogic approach to literature discussions. The six indicators of teacher and student talk focus on observations of authority, questions, feedback, meta-level reflection, explanation, and collaboration. First, the authority in a dialogic discussion is shared for both the teacher and students to be able to manage turns, ask questions, and change the course of the discussion. This is in contrast to a monologic discussion, where the teacher has sole authority over the discussion content, procedures, and questioning. Questions in a more dialogic discussion are primarily open and contestable to develop students' argumentation, reasoning, and higher-order thinking, instead of discussions focused solely on recall of basic facts from the text. Teacher feedback from a dialogically framed discussion extends students' thinking to further their inquiry or understanding. Dialogic discussion includes meta-level reflectiveness where the teacher guides students to reflect upon and connect individual student ideas with peer ideas. Dialogic discussions are not only evidenced by the characteristics of the teachers' discourse, but also of the types of talk the students are practicing. Students' talk in dialogic literature discussions involves a great deal of explanation, where students' thoughts or perspectives are supported through evidence and reasoning to elaborate their claims to others. Student talk is also collaborative. Students co-construct new ideas with their classmates, as opposed to monologic

discussions where student talk is brief and unrelated to peer responses. Dialogic teaching in elementary classrooms involves an equity of voice between students and teachers to co-construct new knowledge from texts.

The equity of voice and the multiplicity of perspectives in dialogic approaches to instruction supports children's agency as knowledge producers. Alexander (2020) described the distinctive value of dialogic teaching, "the sum of dialogue's parts yields a classroom culture, a pattern of relationships and a pedagogical and epistemic stance that together foreground and explicitly signal the empowerment of the student as speaker, thinker, reasoner, learner and evaluator" (p. 119). In this way, dialogic teaching is more than helping students to understand the main idea in a text. By engaging a plurality of knowledge in dialogue, dialogic teaching responds to and extends students' thinking in order to understand, evaluate, and argue multiple perspectives across texts. Teaching and learning are enacted in a reciprocal dialogue, where teachers respond to students' understanding to collectively generate new forms of knowledge. Accordingly, dialogic approaches to language instruction are well-aligned with the call for a new paradigm of comprehension research. Comprehension scholars have maintained that comprehension can no longer be viewed as the end goal of language instruction, but an enabling skill for a further action to occur, such as telling a story, forming an argument, or creating something new (Anderson, 2018; Pearson et al., 2020). Likewise, the purpose of dialogic teaching is not to promote students' accurate comprehension of a text, but to engage students in discussions of diverse arguments to collectively explore multiple ways of interpreting and understanding ideas within texts. Further research on dialogic teaching in elementary classrooms is vital to supporting students as active agents in constructing new meanings from text comprehension.

Understanding Elementary Comprehension, Dialogue, & Knowledge Amidst Remote Learning

To the best of my knowledge, no prior research has explored dialogic ELA comprehension instruction with young learners in remote settings, especially within new contexts of pandemic-induced remote learning. The research on dialogic teaching in digital literacy settings is limited but emerging. Dialogic teaching has traditionally been examined in face-to-face classroom settings to focus on talk moves among students and teachers. However, diverse identities, perspectives, and values enter into a globalized discourse in digital contexts (Wegerif, 2019). Transitions from hard copy text to digital media and the Internet have widened the concept of space and time in dialogic discussions. It is unclear how and under what circumstances different digital literacy tools and diverse voices found on the Internet may complicate, hinder, or strengthen dialogic teaching in the elementary grades. Emerging research studies have investigated the affordances of digital technologies in shaping dialogic discussions with secondary students (Major & Warwick, 2019; Rasmussen et al., 2019), but there is a lack of research conducted with younger children. In one of the few studies examining elementary-aged students' use of digital technology to facilitate text-based argumentation, Kiili and colleagues (2020) explored how elementary children synthesized information from multiple online sources to justify their stance on a controversial health issue. They found that students supported their arguments with evidence from the online sources and primarily used credible sources in their writing. While the intended objective was for students to synthesize information across the different online sources in forming their argument, students largely paraphrased or copied information from the online texts. Their findings suggested the possibilities of digital technologies to facilitate students' comprehension, argumentation, and knowledge development, but that additional insight into how to effectively guide students' interactions with technology is

still needed. Additional research is not only necessary to understand how digital technology may impact readers' comprehension and knowledge, but also to understand how young students may interact with technology to engage in dialogic discussions.

Although digital technology has traditionally been assumed as a supplemental instructional resource to elevate traditional in-person classroom instruction, the global COVID-19 pandemic has caused schools to abruptly end in-person learning and switch to virtual learning environments. Digital technologies are not simply an additional resource to advance student learning, but digital technologies have become the entire platform and setting for elementary classrooms. It is imperative for research to examine how elementary teachers may enact dialogic approaches to virtual comprehension instruction during the unprecedented times of pandemic-induced remote learning. Emergent research on pandemic-induced remote learning has focused on students' anticipated literacy loss. Kuhfield and colleagues (2020) projected that students in third- through eighth-grade will have entered the 2020-2021 school year with only 63 to 68% of their learning gains in reading, relative to a traditional year. Due to the physical school closures of the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers have projected that students will have experienced significant learning loss in literacy and language comprehension. The possibilities of student learning loss in reading are concerning. It is imperative that research gain a stronger understanding of how the transition to remote learning has impacted comprehension instruction, especially among young elementary students in the formative stages of language and literacy development. By developing a conceptual understanding of how the new remote learning context has influenced teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction, researchers and school leaders will be better informed to support elementary comprehension, dialogue, and knowledge development in remote learning.

Dialogic Comprehension Instruction for Rural Schools

Not only is it essential to gain deeper insight into dialogic comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning, but it is also requisite to contextualize instruction across diverse local contexts. Pearson and scholars (2020) called for future comprehension research to leverage students' diverse funds of knowledge, particularly within underrepresented populations. In comparison to urban schools, rural school communities have been grossly neglected in literacy research (Azano, 2015). This study contextualized dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction among the historically marginalized voices of rural elementary teachers.

Sociocultural Contexts of Rural Schools

Research on a dialogic approach to comprehension instruction must take into account the larger sociocultural context (Pearson et al., 2020; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). This study recognized the significant needs of many rural school communities, while resisting deficit orientations to language and literacy education in rural contexts. There have been several studies documenting the early language and literacy needs in rural schools (Roberts & Green, 2013). Namely, several rural schools serve a large population of students living in poverty. Rural children living in poverty have also been found to live in poverty longer and experience more pronounced cases of poverty than children in urban areas (Vernon-Feagans & Cox, 2013). Rural schools also have a history of low early literacy achievement (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2018). A history of low literacy performance may foster more punitive consequences for difficulties in early literacy learning in rural school districts. For example, children in rural school districts in North Carolina are less likely to meet grade-level early literacy proficiency standards and more likely to be retained in kindergarten and first-grade than

students in non-rural counties (Hall & McCombs-Thornton, 2018). Also, rural schools experience structural inequities inhibiting the stable recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, including lower teacher salaries, deficit perceptions of rural communities, scarce school funding, lack of special education services, and lack of college graduates from the local community (Azano & Stewart, 2015; Monk, 2007; Reagan et al., 2019). Several structural barriers exist in rural school communities, creating inequitable literacy education opportunities for children in underserved rural schools.

Additionally, the current COVID-19 pandemic has created further barriers to young children's language and literacy learning. Several national news reports have pointed out the lack of reliable broadband Internet access in remote, rural communities (Diallo, 2020; Jung, 2020; Opalka et al., 2020). Families without a reliable Internet connection at home have not been able to access synchronous or asynchronous instruction from local schools. It is difficult to conceptualize how to provide ELA comprehension instruction remotely, and this challenge is compounded further by inequities in Internet access among rural communities. The rapid transition to remote learning at the end of the 2019-2020 school year provided little time for school districts to prepare for effective remote instruction. Some schools were only able to send home paper packets for individual student practice, or some were able to provide Internet hotspot access in school building parking lots, requiring families to have transportation access to drive children to the school parking lots (Opalka et al., 2020). The beginning of the 2020-2021 school year brought new dilemmas between choosing in-person or virtual learning during the COVID-19 virus pandemic for many families, and this decision was particularly troubling for rural families without reliable home Internet who may feel no alternative but to send their children to in-person schooling (Blackburn, 2020). Given the critical barriers in access to virtual learning for

rural families, it is essential to examine the possibilities of dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction among rural elementary schools.

Particularities of Literacy and Knowledge in Rural Communities

Not only has literacy research in rural schools been overlooked in comparison to urban schools (Azano, 2015), but literacy in rural schools has also often been subject to “urban bias,” where rural literacies have been seen as deficits and sources of unproductivity to be remedied to reach metrocentric standards (Corbett & Donehower, 2017; Eppley & Corbett, 2011). Common approaches to “fixing” rural literacy mirror a standardized approach to literacy education which does not respect rurality as particular places of diverse communities and cultures. Exclusively focusing on gaps in standardized assessments between rural and metropolitan schools upholds systemic inequities through deflecting issues of power embedded in curriculum, culture, and socioeconomics (Corbett, 2017). As opposed to viewing literacy in rural schools from a deficit lens of “illiteracy,” it is critical to understand the particularities of diverse rural contexts to provide locally responsive support (Green & Corbett, 2013; Roberts & Green, 2013).

Rurality encompasses diverse cultures, histories, and literacy practices. It is necessary to disrupt homogenizing discourse on rurality, in order to understand the local affordances and needs across diverse rural schools (Roberts & Green, 2013). For instance, Iruka and colleagues (2019) found that multiple ecological factors influenced children’s pre-kindergarten experiences in rural Nebraska, including challenges with high rates of poverty and limited pre-kindergarten offerings, as well as facilitating factors of community pride and local support for early childhood education. Hall and McCombs-Thornton (2018) illustrated how rural school districts in North Carolina engaged in collaborative initiatives to support local children’s early literacy development needs. For example, Bertie County participated in the Transformation Zone, where

they conducted community needs and assets planning to support early childhood education. School leaders, health leaders, faith-based leaders, businesses, and community members collectively planned to support children's early literacy development through building local sources of support for family literacy and behavioral health. It is imperative for research to understand language and literacy education in rural schools from a socially situated perspective, in order to understand the particular assets and needs across diverse rural spaces.

When adopting a dialogic stance to comprehension instruction, rural students' diverse lived experiences can be leveraged in exploring multiple perspectives to co-construct knowledge. Capitalizing upon rural students' diverse local funds of knowledge to promote a plurality of voices is similar to drawing upon a plurality of cultures to advance student learning. Gay (2002) defined culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). In order to disrupt monocultural and monolingual education standards, Paris (2012) argued for culturally sustaining pedagogy to foster plurality in language, literacy, and culture. Rather than viewing students' diverse cultural backgrounds as deficits, culturally responsive pedagogy positions educators to view students' cultural wealth as funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; Moll, 2019). Similarly, children's diverse lived experiences in rural communities should be valued and incorporated into ELA instruction, as place profoundly shapes learning experiences (Gruenewald, 2003). Place-conscious pedagogies have been examined with older students' representations of themselves and their rural communities (Pyles, 2016), but research focusing on the funds of knowledge with young children in rural schools is minimal (Eppley et al, 2011). In Eppley and colleagues' (2011) study of a pen pal exchange between preservice teachers and rural second-graders, findings revealed that preservice teachers were reluctant to learn about and

draw upon rural students' lived experiences and knowledge in relation to rural themes in texts, thereby limiting discourse surrounding rural themes. Future research should explore how elementary teachers engage children's diverse funds of knowledge in dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction among rural schools. Examining dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction among rural elementary teachers during remote learning will be especially interesting, as the traditional boundaries between school and home learning have been blurred.

Rural communities have been depreciated by both a lack of research on rural literacy (Azano, 2015), as well as research that has misportrayed rural literacy (Donehower, Hogg, & Schell, 2012). During pandemic-induced remote learning norms, attending to the multiplicity of children's cultures, lived experiences, and ways of knowing in rural communities is vital in striving for dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction. Focusing on the context of rural schools is urgently needed, both given the historical marginalization of rural schools in literacy research and the current equity issues in digital access within rural areas. This study listened to the voices of rural elementary teachers, in order to gain deeper insights into their perceptions and enactments of dialogic ELA comprehension instruction amidst remote learning. To the best of my knowledge, research studies intersecting the fields of dialogic ELA comprehension instruction, elementary teachers, rurality, and remote learning are nonexistent. Therefore, this grounded theory study intended to develop emergent theoretical explanations of rural elementary teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction during pandemic-induced remote learning.

Chapter Summary

Applying a dialogic theoretical framework of comprehension (Bakhtin, 1981; Davis et al., 2015; Kintsch, 1998; Mills, 2016; van den Broek, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978), the current study is situated within a knowledge-building approach to comprehension instruction through dialogic approaches to language pedagogy. Dialogic teaching draws upon the multiplicity of knowledge and voices in purposeful dialogue to extend students' higher-order thinking and co-construct new ideas (Alexander, 2020; Kim & Wilkinson, 2019). While scholars have pointed to the positive impacts of dialogic teaching on students' deeper forms of comprehension and knowledge development (Murphy et al., 2009; Pearson et al., 2020), there is a dearth of research examining dialogic comprehension instruction in ELA, elementary classrooms, rural schools, and remote learning. This study attended to these gaps in the research literature, by developing emergent theoretical understandings of rural elementary teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension amidst pandemic-induced remote learning.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter, I detail this study's grounded theory approach to qualitative research (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). I outline the purpose of this study, which was to develop a theoretical understanding of how rural elementary teachers perceived and enacted dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning. Then, I provide rich, thick descriptions of the rural elementary teacher participants in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I discuss the multiple sources of qualitative data collected in this study, including virtual interviews and digital artifacts of teachers' remote ELA comprehension instruction. I detail my data analysis process, which followed constant comparative analysis (Kolb, 2012). I explain my efforts to address validity and qualitative crystallization through multiple stakeholders' perspectives (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Finally, I share my researcher positionality, in practicing researcher reflexivity (Charmaz, 2020).

Study Description

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to generate theoretical understandings of how rural elementary teachers perceived and enacted dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). This study intended to develop theoretical insights into dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction, which were grounded in data collected from virtual interviews and digital artifacts. I conducted virtual interviews with nine rural elementary teachers to gain a deeper perspective into their perceptions and enactments of dialogic ELA comprehension pedagogy during pandemic-induced remote

learning. Each teacher participated in two virtual interviews and shared digital artifacts related to their remote ELA comprehension instruction. By developing theoretical explanations of rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction, findings can offer timely insights into how remote learning has impacted dialogic comprehension pedagogy in rural schools. This grounded theory study aimed to explore the following research questions:

1. How do rural elementary teachers describe their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction?
2. In what ways, if at all, do rural elementary teachers incorporate rural students' funds of knowledge into their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction?
3. How has pandemic-induced school closures impacted rural elementary teachers' enactment of dialogic practices in ELA comprehension instruction?

Grounded Theory Methodology

Glaser and Strauss (2017) defined grounded theory as a qualitative research design that is intended to move beyond descriptions of social processes to generate new substantive theories. Grounded theorists build theoretical explanations of a process, by grounding emerging theory from perspectives of the research participants (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Grounded theory is distinctly focused on a process or action that takes place over time. Researchers often select a grounded theory approach to qualitative research when there is no existing theory to describe the process or action (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to construct substantive theory of a minimally researched process or action, grounded theory methodologists seek the perspectives of participants who are experiencing that process. Substantive theory is a mid-level theory which falls between minor working hypotheses and formal grand theories (Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

Substantive theories are developed from data specific to particular contexts or populations, and they can be used to help create new formal theories or revise existing theories to better reflect particular contexts. The grounded theory researcher examines the perspectives and worldviews of several participants who have experienced that process to collectively construct substantive theoretical insights of the process or action. There is a scarcity of research exploring dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension among rural elementary teachers. Accordingly, this study sought the perspectives of nine rural elementary teachers engaged in remote literacy instruction, in order to generate emergent theoretical explanations of dialogic ELA comprehension amidst pandemic-induced remote learning.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory design within the field of sociology. They were displeased with predominant lines of thought in connecting theory with empirical research. Specifically, the scholars argued against applying existing theory to social processes when the existing theories did not adequately reflect the contexts or processes of interest. In contrast to predominant a priori methods of applying existing theory to data analysis, Glaser and Strauss argued for a grounded theory research methodology to ground emergent theories within data collected from the field. By grounding theory within the data, researchers are better able to illuminate the actions, social processes, and human interactions encompassed in theories. In grounded theory studies, the researcher's purpose is to generate new theories grounded in data collected from the field, rather than collecting data to verify existing theories (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Verification approaches to relating theory to research findings involve testing hypotheses or searching for negative cases to disprove existing theories. While grounded theorists may verify theories through citing reasonable evidence in the data, verification should not supersede the priority to generate new theoretical explanations. When generating new theory, the

researchers' main objective is systematic theory generation with data collected from participants in the research field (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Instead of attempting to verify an existing theory within teachers' dialogic approaches to remote comprehension instruction, this study focused on generating new theoretical findings with the voices of participating rural elementary teachers.

There are two major orientations to grounded theory research. Corbin and Strauss' (2008) line of grounded theory scholarship reflects pragmatic and interactionist philosophies to qualitative research. This approach to grounded theory research maintains that knowledge is accumulated collectively through symbols or actions within multiple, layered systems of interaction. A systematic coding procedure is applied to uncover deeper theoretical meanings behind the actions, interactions, and social processes within data. The constant comparative method of analysis systematically examines data through comparisons, leading to substantive theory generation (Kolb, 2012). Glaser and Strauss (2017) explained the four stages of the constant comparative method as comparing incidents to each category, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting theory, and writing the theory. Constant comparative method includes three levels of coding (Kolb, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The first step in coding is open coding, where the researcher openly codes the data for salient concepts. The next step in coding is axial coding, where the concepts are aggregated to form categories that explain the action or process under examination. The final step is selective coding, where the researcher systematically identifies how concepts and categories relate to each other in overarching central categories. Through connecting and weaving categories together, theory can emerge from the data. During data analyses, the researcher also maintains written memos of ideas or reflections that emerge during the research process (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The final stage of the constant

comparative method is synthesizing the emergent theory or set of theories in writing for a particular audience.

The second prominent paradigm of grounded theory research is from a constructivist, postmodern perspective. Charmaz (2014) contended that the focus of grounded theory should emphasize diverse communities and multiple realities to co-construct theory with research participants and social contexts. Rather than developing theory strictly from a singular coding procedure, Charmaz asserted that theories should be heavily grounded in the beliefs, experiences, ideologies, and interactions between researchers and participants throughout all phases of the study. Engaging in reflexivity is also a key component of a constructivist grounded theory. Charmaz (2020) detailed how constructivist grounded theory scholars cannot hide their personal assumptions, biases, and worldviews from the research process. Constructivist grounded theorists attend to reflexivity and excavate hidden beliefs and perceptions throughout the research study. This enables scholars to position their research decisions in relation to diverse participants, communities, and public spheres of discourse. Furthermore, a constructivist grounded theory methodology allows researchers to focus on socially situated cultural dynamics, relationships, and hierarchies of power within the social process being studied. As such, constructivist grounded theory applies a contextual focus in analyses to position findings in terms of the surrounding cultural, historical, and social settings (Charmaz, 2020). Constructivist grounded theory is not necessarily limited to generating new substantive theory, as researchers may intend to construct theoretical explanations for further purposes of critiquing or changing social processes (Charmaz, 2020).

In the present study, I applied grounded theory methodology to generate substantive theory of dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction with rural elementary teachers

(Glaser & Strauss, 2017). I followed the systematic coding procedures of constant comparative analysis in a traditional approach to grounded theory research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Developing theoretical understandings of rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction is needed to glean the limitations and possibilities of dialogic teaching in remote settings. Such substantive theory is vital to understanding how remote comprehension instruction can leverage student dialogue and funds of knowledge in collective knowledge construction. Simultaneously, I situated emerging theoretical insights within the diverse cultures, local communities, and remote learning contexts of the participating rural elementary teachers (Charmaz, 2020). I sought and extended the beliefs, experiences, and views of participating rural elementary teachers, to investigate a polyphony of voices on dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction in rural contexts. Also, I consciously attended to reflexivity as the researcher to be transparent about my positionality. I recognize that my positionality not only informs the present findings, but also influences the theoretical framework, research questions, and every decision throughout the research process. In this grounded theory study, I aimed to collectively construct emerging theory on dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction with the diverse experiences and perspectives of nine rural elementary teachers.

Participants

Nine rural elementary teachers participated in virtual interviews and digital artifact data collection to address the research questions regarding teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction. Table 3.1 includes the teachers' participant names (pseudonyms), gender, race or ethnicity, grade level, years of teaching experience, and degree of rurality of their school district. The teachers were all female, reflecting the majority female teaching profession, especially in

elementary schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a). The teachers were racially diverse. Teachers reported their racial or ethnic identity in an open-ended question, so I refer to the exact racial and ethnic identifying terms used by the teachers. Two teachers identified as Black, one identified as mixed, one identified as Hispanic, and five identified as White. Teachers taught in grades first through third. Their experience ranged from 1 to 15 years, with an average of 5 years' experience. The spread of teaching experience aligns with the current trends in the teaching workforce, including a growing number of novice teachers and a mode of 5 years of experience among teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2014). The nine teachers represented six different rural school districts in North Carolina. Working in a rural school district was a requirement to be selected for interview and artifact data collection, and I elaborate more on the screening process for rurality in the Screening Survey and Recruitment section. Three teachers worked in districts 5 miles or less away from an urbanized area, and six worked in districts between 5-25 miles from an urbanized area. Additionally, I provide thick, rich descriptions of each individual teacher to promote research validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Table 3.1

Teacher Characteristics

Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Grade Level	Years of Experience	Rural Classification
Abigail	Female	Black	2nd	10	Rural-Distant
Blaire	Female	White	1st	15	Rural-Fringe
Brooke	Female	White	2nd	2	Rural-Distant
Camellia	Female	Black	1st	5	Rural-Distant
Clover	Female	White	2nd	2	Rural-Distant
Dahlia	Female	Hispanic	1st	1	Rural-Distant
Florence	Female	White	3rd	2	Rural-Fringe
Haley	Female	White	2nd	4	Rural-Distant
Magnolia	Female	Mixed	1st	4	Rural-Fringe

Abigail

Abigail is originally from Jamaica and has been a teacher for 10 years. Her district began the school year with the first nine weeks in virtual learning. She described herself as “not very tech savvy” (First Interview, September 5, 2020). She shared how it was challenging to convert her teaching to a completely online environment. She divulged with me that her future instruction, whether in-person or online, will never be the same because she has learned so much about technology and refining instruction throughout remote learning (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Although she is not originally from her school community, she was very conscious of the importance of developing home, community, and school connections. During her traditional in-person instruction, she would often bring in students’ families and members of the community to share about the history of the local area and compare it to their modern-day

community (First Interview, September 5, 2020). She was also reflective of the connections between home, community, and school during virtual learning. Abigail offered personalized support to parents, as they have been more involved in their children's education than traditional school years (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). She also recommended that further training should be offered to parents to aid them in supporting their children during remote learning. Her ELA instruction was informed by a district-wide pacing guide for ELA standards and content.

Blaire

Blaire is in her 15th year of teaching, and she has about 10 years' experience teaching first-graders. Prior to her current position in a rural charter school, she taught in other high-need urban and rural schools. Blaire's charter school remained in virtual learning for the first semester of the school year. She reflected on several of her practices to build upon rural students' local knowledge, including connecting her curriculum to the local community's apple festivals and inviting parents and families to participate in these lessons (First Interview, September 8, 2020). In adapting to the online environment, Blaire often referred to capitalizing on virtual field trips to build students' background knowledge and create experiences for them that relate to the content being taught (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Blaire described her biggest challenge and frustration with virtual learning as the lack of instructional time for small group instruction, as most of her online instruction has been whole group. She noted that normally at the time of our interviews, she would have at least gotten her students started in guided reading groups, so it was "just really killing [her] to teach whole group" (First Interview, September 8, 2020). In remote learning, she alternated weeks between teaching focal stories for ELA standards and texts from her school's vocabulary program, *Wordly Wise*.

Brooke

Brooke has been teaching for two years, both of those years in second-grade in the same rural school district. Her district opened with the first nine weeks in remote learning. In both her online and in-person teaching, she often described supporting students to make text connections to real-world experiences. For example, when reading a story with her students about a brother and sister growing up in the mountains, she facilitated a discussion for students to compare the clothing, stores, and houses in the text to those they see in their community (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Brooke shared one of her personal goals has been to promote cultural diversity in her teaching (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Although she did not grow up accustomed to talking about cultural differences, Brooke has made a conscious effort to connect her teaching to cultural diversity and celebrate her students' cultures as a "personal ongoing initiative" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Her school does not follow a particular ELA curriculum, but she used several digital resources in her instruction, like *RAZ Kids* and *EPIC* for digital texts.

Camellia

Camellia has five years of experience, all in the same rural school district. Her district spent the first quarter in remote learning. Camellia has experience as her grade level team lead, and she is currently working towards her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. Camellia is also from the community in which she teaches. Camellia stated that a significant benefit to virtual teaching has been having greater instructional flexibility in meeting the language and literacy needs of her children (First Interview, September 22, 2020). While teaching in the building, Camellia was expected to only use the texts in her school's curriculum, *Reading Wonders*. She shared that these texts only come in levels of low, medium, and high. She

pointed out that sometimes these three levels of difficulty do not reach all her students, as some kids may need a level lower than the “low” level and some will not be challenged enough by the “high” level. However, she expressed having greater instructional autonomy during remote learning. She conducted running records with her students virtually, to place them into guided reading groups (First Interview, September 22, 2020). She was also able to use an online resource for small group reading that she purchased herself, *Guided Readers*. She used *Guided Readers* to supplement her whole group curriculum, *Reading Wonders*. She felt that having greater flexibility in her small group reading curriculum allowed her to better differentiate instruction for diverse learners during remote learning.

Clover

Clover has taught for two years, both years in the same grade level and rural school district. Clover grew up and is a product of the community in which she teaches. She received a teaching scholarship to return back to teach in her home district, and she currently teaches in the most remote elementary school in her rural county. Her district opened with the first quarter in remote learning. She was passionate about equity in school funding, as she has noticed the disparity in her district between the wealthier schools and the less wealthy schools in more remote parts of the district (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). She articulated, “because to me every kid deserves the same. I don't care how far out you are or where your school is located, they all deserve the same quality of education” (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). Clover felt that the switch to remote learning created several challenges for her small group comprehension instruction, because of the difficulties with modeling online, dealing with technology issues, or waiting for students to log onto their small group time (Screening Survey, September 15, 2020).

She didn't have a schoolwide ELA curriculum, but her school utilized the online literacy program, *Lexia*, for individualized oral language, reading, spelling, and writing skill practice.

Dahlia

Dahlia is in her first year of teaching, and she completed her student teaching in the same rural school. Her district opened with the first quarter in remote learning. In order to build students' knowledge, she would intentionally try to connect ELA content throughout the day with other subject areas. For instance, during Hispanic History Month, Dahlia would connect her real alouds to stories about Hispanic heritage, and she would also incorporate this into social studies to talk about different cultures and traditions (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Dahlia was also invested in exposing her students to diverse cultures in children's books, "I try to use literature or books or whatever to open that window up to them to know that there's, there's a whole world out there" (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Although the online environment prevented students from taking physical field trips, she referenced field trips to the pumpkin patch that her first-graders went to when they were in kindergarten to draw connections between their ELA content and students' local experiences (First Interview, September 18, 2020). While she didn't characterize remote teaching as the worst experience, she did emphasize that technology could not replace the ability to have dialogue and interaction with children in literacy instruction (Second Interview, October 21, 2020). ELA instructional plans and materials were determined in her grade level meetings. Dahlia felt she had less instructional flexibility to choose diverse texts during remote learning, due to strict time constraints for first-grade.

Florence

Florence is a third-grade teacher and has taught in her rural school district for two years. Her school district was the only district to begin the school year in a hybrid combination of in-

person and virtual learning. However, Florence only taught students whose families chose fully online learning in the Virtual Academy. Florence taught virtually from her school building, but actually served children in other parts of the district. Florence described her ELA comprehension instruction as having a strong focus on vocabulary (First Interview, September 9). She stated that she structured her in-person ELA instruction to start with a vocabulary warm-up activity, and she worked to incorporate this in her virtual instruction. Florence discussed how she supported students' agency as active learners through having them share their knowledge and assume teaching roles in virtual discussions (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). When she was working with students to show them how to split their computer screens, one student said that he found an easier way to do it, so she asked him to share his screen and expertise with the class (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). She used multiple curricula and resources for ELA instruction, including *Ready* for whole group lessons, *Reading A-Z* for small group instruction, and *Wordly Wise* for vocabulary.

Haley

Haley has been teaching for four years, three of which have been in her current rural district. Her school district started the first nine weeks in remote learning. Haley cited several technological challenges that stifled classroom dialogue in the virtual setting. She described how children would have to remain muted, due to issues of loud background noise coming in through the microphone (First Interview, September 4, 2020). She would remain online after the live lessons to let students unmute and answer questions but navigating peer discussions in virtual learning proved to be difficult. She expressed the irony in discussions between in-person and virtual, “in-person, normally, we would want them to be quiet and let one person talk at a time, but now, it's like, that's all we can do, and we don't want them to do that, so it's kind of funny”

(First Interview, September 4, 2020). When she learned that her students would be returning to the school building in the coming weeks, she reflected that dialogue will be one of the things students will actually be able to engage in, since they will be in a socially distant form of in-person learning (Second Interview, October 5, 2020). While she did not have a schoolwide ELA curriculum, her district provided resources and materials for all ELA standards.

Magnolia

Magnolia has been teaching in public schools for four years, and she also has 12 years of experience teaching preschool. Her rural school district started the first quarter of the school year in virtual learning. Magnolia described her traditional in-person comprehension instruction as involving a lot of student talk through think-pair-share, as well as letting students guide the discussion while she acts as a discussion moderator (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Due to the technological challenges in facilitating classroom dialogue virtually, her school began to implement virtual small groups for literacy instruction. However, she felt that these small group times were not effective because several students would not show up to their small group time, and the ones who did were exhausted because they just finished an entire morning of live whole group instruction (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Also, Magnolia reflected on the importance of her students seeing their communities represented in the texts they read. She said that she really enjoyed one of the units in her ELA curriculum on neighborhoods, as it showcased diverse communities, including rural school communities like her and her children's (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Magnolia enjoyed virtual teaching and stated that it has made her a better teacher, especially in terms of recognizing and planning to meet individual students' needs (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She used the *Into Reading* curriculum for her whole group ELA instruction and *Reading A-Z* for her small group reading instruction.

Setting

Participant recruitment and data collection procedures took place in the fall 2020 semester of the global COVID-19 pandemic. All participating rural elementary teachers taught in North Carolina. Public schools in North Carolina began the 2020-2021 school year with fully or partially remote instruction, following restrictions given by the state (Hui, 2020). All but one of the participating teachers worked in school districts that began the school year with fully remote instruction. One teacher, Florence, worked in a district which began the year in a hybrid format of remote and in-person instruction, but she only taught students whose parents had chosen entirely virtual learning for their child. All teacher participants began the school year teaching fully online. At the time of our second interviews in October, the North Carolina Governor announced that elementary schools could bring back all students with no restrictions on class sizes (Burns & Fain, 2020). Following this announcement, several teachers' school districts were creating plans to return elementary students to the school building. However, all data collection procedures were completed prior to teachers returning to in-person instruction. In addition to the pandemic-related influences on education, the summer preceding the 2020-2021 school year included large-scale protests to fight racism and police violence. The highly publicized events of summer 2020 spurred nationwide attention and discourse on racial equality. This study took place during contexts of an unprecedented pandemic and heightened social tensions. Therefore, findings from this study must be considered in the contexts of these recent events.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred over two phases. In the first phase, I recruited potential rural elementary teacher participants through widely sharing an online screening survey. The online screening survey was shared via email communication and social media platforms. There were

two purposes to the screening survey. One was to recruit rural elementary teachers who were interested in participating in the virtual interviews. The other was to practice purposive sampling to select teachers whose ELA comprehension instruction aligned with dialogic teaching practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My intention was to recruit rural elementary teachers across grades kindergarten through fifth. Elementary teachers were selected to participate in the second phase of data collection if they taught in a rural school district and if they described their comprehension instruction congruously with dialogic approaches to teaching. By purposely sampling for rural elementary teachers who identified qualities of dialogic teaching prior to the pandemic, the study was able to glean stronger insights into how remote learning impacted teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction.

The second phase of data collection included the virtual interviews and digital artifacts. Each rural elementary teacher participated in two virtual interviews. All interviews were conducted by me. Both rounds of interviews followed semi-structured interview guides. In the interviews, I sought to gain teachers' perspectives on their ELA comprehension instruction and how remote learning contexts influenced their current ability to enact dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction. Additionally, each teacher shared with me a minimum of two digital artifacts of their remote ELA comprehension instruction. One artifact represented their remote ELA comprehension instruction, such as a recent lesson plan. The other artifact provided further information on their current ELA curriculum. Teachers shared digital artifacts of their remote comprehension instruction with me via email prior to the second interview. See Table 3.2 below for a specific timeline of all data collection procedures.

Table 3.2

Data Collection Timeline

Date	Forms of Data Collection
08/10/20 - 09/21/20	Screening Survey
09/4/20 - 09/23/20	First Round of Interviews
10/05/20 - 10/21/20	Second Round of Interviews & Digital Artifacts

Screening Survey and Recruitment

The online screening survey was utilized for purposive sampling, in order to select elementary teachers in rural schools whose ELA comprehension instruction aligned with dialogic teaching practices. It was important to practice purposive sampling to recruit participants who would best inform theoretical insights into dialogic ELA comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The screening survey asked teachers what city, county or district, and state they taught in to determine their school districts' rurality. Through open-ended questions, teachers were asked to describe their goals and priorities for teaching ELA comprehension. Teachers were also asked to reflect on how the current transition to remote learning impacted their ELA instructional methods. The survey gauged teachers' level of familiarity with the concept of dialogic teaching and if they implemented dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction. However, familiarity with the term "dialogic teaching" was not a requirement for being selected for interviews. It is possible that teachers have embodied dialogic practices in their instruction, without necessarily being exposed to the specific terminology. The survey included a statement that familiarity with dialogic teaching was not a strict requirement for being selected for interviews. I did not want the survey to turn teachers away just because of unfamiliarity with the terminology. In addition to asking questions related to rurality and comprehension instruction, the survey asked teachers to

answer basic demographic questions. Teachers were asked about their gender, race, years of teaching experience, and their current grade level. The gender and race demographic questions were not required to complete the survey, but current grade level and years of teaching experience were required questions. See Appendix A for the full list of screening survey questions.

The screening survey was delivered as a Google Form. Prior to answering the screening questions, the first section of the Google Form included the informed consent form for the screening survey data collection. Participants were given informed consent information about the purposes of the screening survey, how the data will be used to determine eligibility for interview selection, as well as when their screening survey data would be destroyed. After teachers provided their digital informed consent to participate in the screening survey, they were then able to access the second section of the Google Form with the screening questions.

I distributed the screening survey widely to recruit rural elementary teachers whose ELA comprehension instruction aligned with dialogic teaching. A digital recruitment blurb with information about the study and screening survey was emailed to several contacts. I sent recruitment information and directions for completing the screening survey to literacy faculty members and graduate students at North Carolina State University, including instructors in the literacy master's program. I shared the recruitment and screening survey information with literacy professors and university social media platforms across North Carolina. I shared it with professors affiliated with the *Literacy Research Association*. I also shared the recruitment information with contacts outside of North Carolina. Professors well-known in the fields of literacy research and/or rural literacy research agreed to distribute my screening survey at Penn State University, Oklahoma State University, Mississippi State University, and Virginia Tech

University. I asked literacy coaches at NC State University to send the recruitment information and screening survey to any of their rural teacher contacts. I also widely shared recruitment and screening survey information through multiple social media platforms. I shared the information through my personal Twitter, and it was retweeted by several literacy scholars and local literacy leaders. I posted the screening survey information to two different North Carolina teacher-specific Facebook groups. I posted the screening survey to two Facebook groups specific to a large rural school district in North Carolina, with one of the groups being focused on virtual teaching. I also posted in a Facebook group associated with the literacy master's program at North Carolina State University. Additionally, I directly emailed several rural elementary teachers who I had previous email communication with via an early literacy induction program at North Carolina State University. Recruiting in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic proved very challenging, so I also practiced a snowballing recruitment method. I asked existing screening survey participants who were eligible for the interview phase of the study to share information about the study with their teacher colleagues. After six weeks of ongoing recruitment, 16 total participants completed the screening survey.

Nine teachers were selected for and participated in the interview phase of data collection, out of the total 16 screening survey participants. Screening survey participants were screened for their rurality status. In order to determine the rural status of participants' school districts, I used the Institute for Education Sciences' public school district search tool (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020b). This enabled me to confirm the rurality of each teacher's school district, and it also gave further information on how far away the rural school district was from an urbanized center. Districts classified as rural-fringe were located 5 or less miles from an urban cluster, rural-distant districts were between 5 and 25 miles from an urban cluster, and rural-

remote districts were more than 25 miles away from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). It was noteworthy to not only confirm the rural classification of teachers' school districts, but also to gain more specific locale information of teachers' rural contexts. The rurality status of the participating teachers was shared previously in this chapter. Additional detail regarding the rurality of teachers' districts was important to avoiding blanket categorizations of rural schools. Three of the sixteen screening survey participants were deemed ineligible, since they did not teach in a rural school district.

Furthermore, I selected teachers for interviews who described their ELA comprehension instruction in a way that relates to dialogic approaches to teaching. Most teachers were not familiar with the exact term of dialogic teaching. However, the teachers selected for interviews did describe comprehension instructional practices that aligned with dialogic teaching. For example, Florence noted that her priorities for ELA comprehension instruction included thinking out loud about texts together with students and having collaborative small group discussions (Screening Survey, August 25, 2020). Screening survey participants did not have to explicitly say that they practiced dialogic teaching, but rather describe comprehension instructional practices that could relate to a dialogic approach to ELA comprehension instruction. From the screening survey data, I was able to purposively select rural elementary teachers whose comprehension instruction was congruous with dialogic teaching approaches for the interview phase of the study. While three of the sixteen screening survey participants were found ineligible to their lack of rurality, one participant was deemed ineligible based on descriptions of her comprehension instruction. This participant stated her goal for comprehension instruction only as fluent reading. Since she did not provide any evidence of practicing dialogic forms of instruction, she was not selected for the next phase of data collection.

While four teachers were deemed ineligible from the screening process, another three teachers did not participate in the interview phase of data collection. Two of the three did not consent to participate in the interview phase of data collection. One of the teachers responded to my request to schedule the initial interview that she was no longer interested in participating. The other was unresponsive to my emails to schedule an interview after five email attempts. The third teacher who did not participate was lost to attrition. She signed the consent form for interview data collection but was unresponsive to multiple email attempts to schedule an interview. Therefore, nine out of the sixteen screening survey participants moved onto the virtual interviews and digital artifact data collection. Although I distributed the screening survey widely to recruit teachers in diverse states and across elementary grade levels in kindergarten through fifth, it is important to note that the nine teachers in this study taught only in North Carolina and grades first through third.

Interviews

Virtual semi-structured interviews were conducted in two rounds with the nine rural elementary teachers. Interviews were conducted individually with each teacher through the web conferencing platform, Zoom. The purpose of these interviews was to gain deeper insights into rural elementary teachers' perspectives of dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction in the context of pandemic-induced remote learning. Prior to participating in the interviews and digital artifact data collection phase, teachers provided their informed consent on an electronic consent form via Google Forms. The first interview was conducted near the beginning of the school year, as many school districts across the state of North Carolina began the year with remote learning plans. I followed a semi-structured interview guide for the first interview (see Appendix B), but asked follow-up questions or probing questions in reaction to

the ideas expressed by teachers in the moment. The first interview asked teachers about their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction during in-person learning prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as during remote learning. It was my intention to learn more about how teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension were impacted by the transition to remote learning. These initial interviews ranged from 28 to 42 minutes long.

The second round of interviews was held approximately one month later, following initial constant comparative coding analyses. As the North Carolina Governor made an announcement that North Carolina elementary schools could resume full-time in-person instruction in October (Burns & Fain, 2020), I wanted to conduct the second round of interviews while teachers were still teaching virtually to understand their instruction during remote learning contexts. During the second interview, I again utilized a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C). The results from my initial first-level and second-level analyses informed the questions I asked during the second interview. In particular, I asked teachers about how they were connecting diverse forms of student knowledge into their virtual comprehension instruction, such as background knowledge and cultural knowledge. I also asked teachers to describe how they incorporated dialogue, especially student to student talk, in their virtual comprehension instruction. The second interview asked questions regarding the digital artifacts each teacher sent me prior to the second interview, in order to examine how teachers reflected upon their remote ELA comprehension instruction. The second interviews ranged from 38 to 70 minutes long. The virtual interviews were audio-recorded on Zoom. Audio-recordings were stored in NC State University's Google Drive and saved under participant pseudonyms. Using Zoom to edit transcripts, I personally transcribed each virtual interview to ensure accuracy across diverse accents and dialects. I replaced all identifying information with pseudonyms. Interview

transcripts were stored in NC State University's Google Drive and saved under participant pseudonyms. I conducted a total of 18 interviews, following general recommendations to conduct about 20 interviews in a grounded theory study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Digital Artifacts

Prior to each teacher's second interview, they were asked to share digital artifacts of their virtual ELA comprehension instruction. One artifact was intended to reflect teachers' remote ELA comprehension instruction, and the other was intended to represent their current ELA curriculum (see Appendix D). For the first artifact of teacher practice, teachers had the option of sharing either a lesson plan from their virtual ELA comprehension instruction or a written reflection of a recent lesson. All teachers chose to share a copy of a lesson plan from their virtual comprehension instruction, and some teachers shared multiple example lesson plans. This lesson plan artifact also served as the springboard for deeper teacher reflection on their virtual instruction during the second interview. For the second artifact representing their ELA curriculum, teachers were asked to share either the name and description of their current ELA curriculum or a list of texts they were using in their virtual ELA instruction. Teachers shared names of their curricula and instructional resources, as well as links to several digital resources. Some teachers shared examples of texts they were using in their virtual instruction. The nine participating teachers shared with me a combined total of 25 digital artifacts. Digital artifacts were stored in NC State University's Google Drive under participant pseudonyms.

Analysis

Qualitative data from the virtual interviews and digital artifacts were analyzed using grounded theory constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Kolb, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory is intended to develop theories of a process or action (Creswell

& Poth, 2018; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). In contrast to methodological approaches which are intended to verify a process through existing theory, grounded theory is primarily concerned with theory development (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). In grounded theory, researchers conduct systematic coding procedures using constant comparative analysis to generate theory that is grounded within the data (Kolb, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The constant comparative method of analysis involves three systematic levels of coding. While the coding process is a systematic set of procedures, coding is maintained as a dynamic and fluid process throughout data collection and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory researchers often engage in a cyclical process of coding, where they will conduct initial data collection, engage in coding analyses, and then again return to the field to collect more data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Following a grounded theory design, I engaged in a dynamic process of constant comparative analysis and data collection to generate theory into rural elementary teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction amidst remote learning. Figure 3.1 depicts each of the steps I conducted for the constant comparative method of analysis.

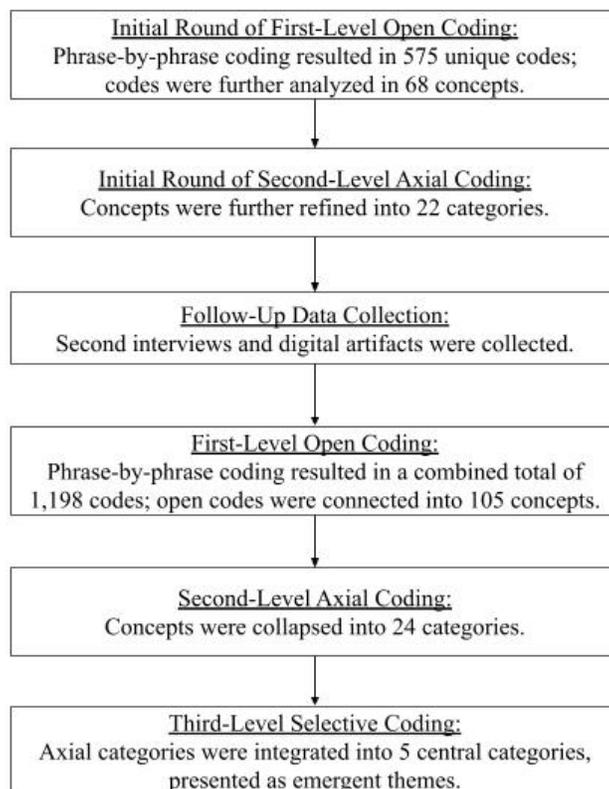


Figure 3.1 Steps in constant comparative method of analysis.

Immediately following the first round of interviews, I conducted an initial round of first- and second-level coding. In constant comparative analysis, the first-level of coding is open coding, as it is intended to identify concepts that represent actions or interactions significant to the data source (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In my initial round of first-level coding, I openly coded the nine initial interviews in the qualitative software program, Dedoose. There are many approaches to open coding, and I applied phrase-by-phrase open coding to thoroughly generate concepts significant to teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In Dedoose, I performed phrase-by-phrase open coding, which resulted in 575 unique codes. Due to the large body of open codes, I then downloaded these 575 codes to finish first-level coding in Google Sheets. Performing the remainder of the coding analyses in Google

Sheets allowed me to better refine and collapse a large number of codes, while still maintaining an electronic record of my coding process. I refined the 575 initial codes into 68 first-level concepts, representing the interactions and phenomena significant to teachers' comprehension pedagogy. For example, "supporting argument with evidence" and "modeling argumentation skills" were two of the original 575 open codes, and these were refined into the first-level concept of "Argumentation Strategies."

For the initial round of second-level coding, I performed axial coding to reassemble concepts by their properties and dimensions into larger categories (Kolb, 2012). Axial coding is a conceptual process of linking concepts together into a dense texture of categories to better explain and understand the phenomena of interest (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In Google Sheets, I further analyzed the 68 concepts from first-level coding into 22 explanatory categories of teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction. For example, the concept "Argumentation Strategies," along with the concepts of "Respect for Diverse Viewpoints" and "Teacher Questioning Strategies," were all refined into the second-level category "Teaching Argumentation Literacy." These initial first- and second-level coding results informed my line of questioning in the second round of interviews, as discussed previously in this chapter. Additionally, researcher memos are instrumental in reflecting the researcher's thoughts behind the flow of the theory-building process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I engaged in memoing to record my thoughts and questions that emerged throughout data analysis, as well as describe the relationships between concepts and categories. Memos were recorded in a codebook in Google Sheets, along with all open codes, concepts, and categories.

Conducting initial levels of analyses earlier on in the research and data collection process is integral to achieving theoretical sampling (Kolb, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theoretical

sampling enables researchers to fully saturate concepts and categories in establishing theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theoretical sampling is often applied with the constant comparative method to gather additional data following analyses. This allows researchers to compare and refine their initial concepts with additional data from the field (Kolb, 2012). The data collection and analysis process in grounded theory has been described as a zigzag process of collecting data, analyzing the data, and returning to the field to collect more data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The dynamic data analysis and data collection process ensures data saturation to fully develop substantive theory in its complexity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hence, I practiced an iterative process of data collection and analysis to build substantive theory of rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction in remote learning.

After conducting the second interviews, I again performed first-level open coding of the second interview transcripts and digital artifacts in Dedoose. I engaged in phrase-by-phrase open coding of the nine second-round interview transcripts and the 25 digital artifacts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Generative phrase-by-phrase open coding resulted in 623 new unique codes for a combined total of 1,198 open codes from initial and second round open coding. Due to the sizable amount of open codes, I again downloaded the open codes from Dedoose into Google Sheets to perform the remainder of the coding processes. Through the process of comparing and connecting new open codes and existing codes from the initial round of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I refined the open codes into 105 first-level concepts, representing the phenomenon of rural elementary teachers' dialogic virtual comprehension instruction. For instance, the open codes "remote student personal experiences as launching pad" and "remote let students arrive at conclusions" were refined into the first-level concept "Collective Knowledge in Virtual Instruction." I then conducted the second round of second-level axial coding to draw

comparisons between the concepts and form descriptive categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this second round of axial coding, the 105 concepts from first-level coding were connected into 24 categories to explain the process of rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to virtual comprehension instruction. For example, concepts such as "Collective Knowledge in Virtual Instruction" and "Growing Critical Thinking in Virtual" were connected into the second-level category "Developing Dialogic Dimensions of Virtual Comprehension."

Finally, I engaged in third-level selective coding to integrate and refine categories, in order to develop substantive theory on rural elementary teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction in remote learning (Kolb, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Selective coding involves determining the central category in which all other categories must relate to, as it represents the main themes of the findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A central category has analytic power, in that it synthesizes all other categories together to form an explanatory whole and interrelated theoretical scheme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this final stage of third-level selective coding, 24 categories from second-level axial coding were analytically integrated into five central categories. For instance, the aforementioned axial category, "Developing Dialogic Dimensions of Virtual Comprehension," along with the categories of "Recognizing Broader Learning Needs" and "Reflecting on Virtual Comprehension Lessons," was integrated into the third-level central category, "Enacting Dialogic Process: Responding to Knowledges, Students, Sociocultural Context, and Instruction." These five central categories are discussed as emergent themes in the following chapter.

Table 3.3

Example of Coding Evolution

Data Source: First Interview	Phrase-by-Phrase Open Coding	First-Level Concept	Second- Level Category	Third-Level Central Category
Magnolia: “I really let the kids guide the discussion and I only tried to participate more like a moderator.”	In person teacher as more of a moderator	Co-Constructed Dialogue in Traditional Instruction	Dialogic Teaching Practices in Traditional Instruction	Describing Dialogic Comprehension in Traditional Contexts: Equity of Learning Ownership

Table 3.3 includes an example of the coding process and evolution of an open code into a central category. Throughout the coding process, I also recorded researcher memos to document my reflections and questions surrounding the data. In grounded theory, researcher memos become a part of developing the theory, where the researcher is beginning to understand and articulate the process under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An example of my researcher reflections from memoing can be found in Table 3.4. Additionally, my research memos and all codes from open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, are maintained in a codebook in Google Sheets. The codebook is stored in NC State’s Google Drive. I also created a spreadsheet in Google Drive to serve as an audit trail, which includes a full record of the steps in my data collection, data analysis, and validity procedures.

Table 3.4

Example of Researcher Memoing

First-Level Concept	Second-Level Category	Third-Level Central Category	Researcher Memo
Virtual Student Talk	Developing Dialogic Dimensions of Virtual Comprehension	Enacting Dialogic Process: Responding to Knowledges, Students, Sociocultural Context, & Instruction	Developing virtual student talk is one of the most challenging aspects of trying to enact dialogic ELA comprehension instruction remotely. The structural barriers of a lack of a breakout room were a major hindrance for most teachers. The only one teacher who had the ability to use Zoom was able to incorporate breakout rooms for students to discuss higher-order thinking questions. However, for most teachers, student talk was limited in the whole group setting to calling on a friend if the student cannot answer the question or typing in the chat if a student has a question. As more teachers become able to use breakout rooms online, I wonder how strategies for enabling student talk online may continue to evolve in the future?

Standards of Evaluation and Validation

I took multiple efforts to address standards of validity in supporting the credibility and trustworthiness of this study's findings. Creswell and Poth (2018) espoused that the purposes of validation strategies in qualitative research are to assess the accuracy of findings through the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, namely the researcher, the participants, and the readers. In contrast to quantitative orientated verification efforts to validity, qualitative standards of validity are intended to strengthen the credibility and authenticity of data from multiple perspectives into the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) contended that the primary imagery for validation is not a fixed, two-dimensional triangle, but that it is better

conceptualized as a crystal which encompasses an array of substances, dimensions, and angles. Crystallization maintains that crystals, like phenomena of study, reflect and retract light and perception based upon the angle of our lens. To promote authenticity and trustworthiness among multiple stakeholders' perspectives in this study, I enacted validation strategies from the perspectives of the researcher's lens, participant's lens, and readers' or reviewers' lens (Creswell, 2016).

Researcher Lens

As one approach to strive for crystallization of the multiple perspectives found within a qualitative study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued the need to triangulate findings through multiple sources of data. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the process of locating evidence to document a code or emerging theme from multiple data sources provides data triangulation and validation to qualitative findings. I have collected multiple sources of data through two rounds of interviews at different time points and several digital artifacts to triangulate my findings on teachers' dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction. The interview transcription data and digital artifacts were analyzed in tandem to provide corroborating evidence from multiple sources of data to support the present findings.

Another critical element to strengthening validity from a researcher lens is to engage in reflexivity, by the researcher openly sharing personal biases, identities, and values (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Charmaz (2020) further expounded upon the significance of reflexivity and methodological self-consciousness for grounded theory research, where scholars must "concentrate on what is happening in the research field, acknowledge that they are part of it, remain flexible, follow empirical events, attend to language and meaning, and take on moral responsibilities arising through their research" (p. 165). In generating theoretical findings in

grounded theory research, it is critical for the researcher to be consciously aware of how one's personal identities and experiences can shape the findings from the data. Researchers should practice reflexivity and transparency as a moral responsibility when building theories that partake in larger public discourses. Later in this chapter, I detail my own identities, experiences, and values that may influence the findings and interpretations of this study. I aimed to address crystallization from my lens as a researcher through practicing data triangulation and researcher reflexivity.

Participant Lens

Validation from the participant lens involved engaging in member checking through both the data collection and analysis phases of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that member checking is the most essential technique for demonstrating credibility in qualitative research findings. During the virtual interviews, I engaged in member checking throughout each interview by periodically confirming with teachers if my interpretations of their perspectives and responses were accurate or not. Similarly, I practiced member checking during data analysis by seeking teachers' feedback of the study's findings. I emailed each teacher a copy of the findings chapter with the theoretical findings that emerged from the data. I asked teachers to share any comments, revisions, or suggestions to the findings to ensure the findings conveyed what teachers intended to express. I sent the email on January 6, 2021 and asked teachers to let me know of any comments, revisions, or suggestions they would like to share for the findings by January 28, 2021. I sent an additional reminder email two days prior to the deadline. One teacher responded to the member checking request and confirmed that the findings accurately captured her insights.

Additionally, qualitative research should continuously seek opportunities to collaborate with participants throughout the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While I did follow a semi-structured interview guide to conduct the virtual interviews, the teachers could also express themselves beyond the pre-planned questions. At the end of each interview, I also sought teachers' insights into any other salient points of view they wanted to share with me. I wanted to seek teachers' input during data collection whenever possible, in addition to collecting the sources of information I was already interested in. In doing so, I learned more about teachers' general emotional reactions to virtual instruction, including both feelings of stress and reward from their experiences teaching remotely. Through engaging in several instances of member checking and seeking possible opportunities for greater teacher collaboration, I aimed to strengthen the credibility of the findings from the lens of a participant.

Reader Lens

I generated rich, thick descriptions of each teacher participant and their remote learning contexts to support validation from the lens of a reader. Describing the participants and their instructional contexts using rich, thick descriptions allows the reader to better discern the level of transferability of the findings to other contexts or populations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I shared the descriptions of each individual teacher previously in this chapter. I also partook in peer debriefing sessions to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Peer debriefing helps to keep the researcher honest during data analysis by asking questions related to the meaning and interpretations gathered from data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through open-ended discussions with debriefers, the researcher and debriefer can reflect on the data, ideas, and method to monitor bias and affirm credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spall, 2016). I met with scholars who have expertise in elementary

teaching, language, and literacy to seek and respond to their questions on my coding process and the resulting emergent themes. Rich, thick descriptions and peer debriefing were enacted to promote the credibility and reliability of findings. I addressed validation from multiple lenses, in order to uphold an ethical researcher relationship with the participants and readers of this study (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Reliability

I practiced several procedures to enhance the reliability of the findings. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained one the primary reliability strategies for qualitative research is to have a quality recording of interviews and text transcriptions of all interview data. Virtual interviews were audio recorded through the Zoom video conferencing platform. Each interview was transcribed and checked for accuracy. It was particularly important for me to confirm the accuracy of the recordings, given the range of regional North Carolinian, as well as international, accents or dialects of the teachers. Interview transcripts were stored in my NC State University encrypted and password-protected Google Drive with all identifying information removed. Transcripts were then uploaded to the qualitative software program Dedoose for open coding. Digital artifacts were also stored in Google Drive with all identifying information removed, and I then also uploaded them to Dedoose for open coding. By open coding interview transcripts and digital artifacts with Dedoose and conducting remaining axial and selective coding using Google Sheets, I was able to maintain a clear electronic record of each phase of the coding process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I maintained a codebook in NC State's Google Drive, which included code names, concepts, axial categories, central categories, and researcher memos from the data analysis process.

Also, I practiced several other strategies for reliability. I created a spreadsheet in NC State University's Google Drive to serve as an audit trail, which maintains records of all procedures completed in the study. Audit trails help to document actions and decisions throughout the study to establish accuracy and credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I engaged in peer debriefing to enhance both the validity and reliability of my interpretations to the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similarly, I enacted member checking during the interview process and after data analysis to seek participants' feedback on my interpretation of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I applied several strategies, including transcribing interviews, use of a qualitative software program, maintaining an audit trail, and engaging in peer debriefing and member checking to strengthen the trustworthiness of the present qualitative findings.

Positionality

I openly share my researcher positionality to enhance the transparency and trustworthiness of my findings (Charmaz, 2020). There are several aspects of my identity that may have contributed to my fluctuating status as an insider and outsider throughout the study. I'm an Asian American female, and I understand what it is like to have my culture marginalized and trivialized by the dominant culture. I also recognize, however, that my cultural experiences and identities will be different from other communities of Color, particularly for African American and Latino populations who are critically underserved by the public education system. I am a rural native to North Carolina, more specifically a high-need rural community in NC, and thus am sensitive to deficit discourse surrounding rurality. Yet, I have neither been a student nor teacher in the specific school districts of the teacher participants in this study. I consciously consider cultural and historical diversity found across diverse rural spaces, and I actively avoid sweeping generalizations of rural communities (Green & Corbett, 2013). As a special education

teacher, I am accustomed to collaborating with a variety of service providers and teachers, including general education classroom teachers. However, I am acutely sensitive to systemic deficit-based approaches to education which may limit students' learning opportunities, particularly among students identified with learning difficulties in language and literacy. I also taught in an elementary school during the year of this study and during the global COVID-19 pandemic. I empathize with the instructional challenges that the rural elementary teachers faced. I simultaneously acknowledge that I taught in a large suburban district, which granted me greater privileges in accessing instructional resources and more reliable Internet connectivity. Altogether, my identity as a female of Color, rural native, and my experiences as an educator influenced my researcher reflexivity throughout the course of this study.

Also, both my teaching and research philosophies are reflected within the dialogic focus of this study. I believe in dialogic approaches to teaching to co-construct knowledge and ideas *with* students. I feel that supporting students to continue to develop as young readers, writers, and critical thinkers are all equally important and simultaneous pedagogical goals. I'm passionate about responding to student cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, personal interests, as well as instructional and social emotional needs in my teaching. I continuously strive to learn about and from my students as young people, as I view teaching and learning as an inseparable cycle in the ongoing creation of knowledge. I personally define dialogic comprehension instruction as a participatory pedagogy, where power over dialogue and knowledges are shared between teachers and students, to build deeper interactions with and understandings of texts. Additionally, my research philosophy is from a transformative, participatory framework (Duckles et al., 2019). I believe in participating in scholarly inquiry *with* students and teachers, rather than conducting research *on* a set of participants. Similar to my teaching philosophy, I believe in dialogic and

participatory research to co-create emerging theories that are contextualized across space and time. Prior to the permanency of the COVID-19 pandemic, I had planned to conduct a more explicitly collaborative and participatory oriented methodology for my dissertation. I adapted the study to apply a traditional qualitative grounded theory methodology. However, my stance throughout this study was to have interviews *with* teachers and to *collectively* generate theoretical insights into dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction *with* rural elementary teachers' insider funds of knowledge. My goal as a teacher, lifelong learner, and scholar is to work alongside teachers and students to collectively sustain diverse forms of knowledge and local school communities.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative study applied grounded theory methodology to generate substantive theory about rural elementary teachers' remote ELA comprehension instruction. I framed the origins of grounded theory research from the approaches of Corbin and Strauss' (2008) pragmatic, interactionist perspective and Charmaz's (2014) postmodern, constructivist orientation. In this study, I intended to develop substantive theory on remote dialogic comprehension instruction (Corbin & Strauss, 2017; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). I also engaged in reflexivity to contextualize theoretical insights within the cultures, experiences, and voices of myself and the rural elementary teacher participants (Charmaz, 2020). In the first phase of data collection, I distributed a screening survey to try to recruit elementary teachers from diverse rural locales. I practiced purposive sampling to recruit rural elementary teachers, who had previously prioritized student dialogue and collective learning prior to physical school closures. In the second phase of data collection, I explored teachers' dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction through virtual interviews and digital artifacts. Interview

transcriptions and digital artifacts were analyzed following the constant comparative method of analysis to generate substantive theory on dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction within rural school contexts (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I detailed my efforts to attend to validity, reliability, and positionality, to promote the credibility and trustworthiness of the present findings. The next chapter discusses the emergent theoretical findings of rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction to the Chapter

I provide a detailed synthesis of the resulting emergent themes as the findings to this qualitative grounded theory study. Following two rounds of virtual interviews and collecting digital artifacts of teachers' lesson plans and ELA curriculum resources, I analyzed 18 interview transcripts and 25 digital artifacts using the constant comparative method of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through engaging in three levels of open, axial, and selective coding, the resulting five emergent themes are grounded in the perspectives of the nine participating rural elementary teachers (Charmaz, 2020; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). These thematic findings also provide the contextual foundation for the theoretical explanation of teachers' perceptions and enactments of dialogic ELA comprehension instruction, which is found in the next chapter. The five emergent themes addressed the following research questions:

1. How do rural elementary teachers describe their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction?
2. In what ways, if at all, do rural elementary teachers incorporate rural students' funds of knowledge into their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction?
3. How has pandemic-induced school closures impacted rural elementary teachers' enactment of dialogic practices in ELA comprehension instruction?

Figure 4.1 shows the alignment between the research questions and specific thematic findings. The first two themes answered the first research question to understand how teachers described their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction across varying

instructional contexts. The first thematic finding, *Describing Dialogic Comprehension Instruction in Traditional Contexts: Equity of Learning Ownership*, represented the facets of rural elementary teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction that were only described in the context of traditional instruction prior to physical school closures. The second thematic finding, *Describing Dialogic Comprehension Instruction Across Contexts: Discourse of Multiple Knowledges*, reflected how the discourse of multiple knowledges in teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction was described across both in-person and remote learning contexts. The third theme, *Contextualizing Multiple Ways of Knowing: Sustaining the Local*, responded to the second research question, by explaining how teachers built holistic school and community ties to contextualize the discourse of multiple knowledges from the local knowledge of students' communities. The last two themes addressed the third research question, to illustrate how pandemic-induced remote learning has impacted teachers' enactment of dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction. The fourth finding, *Regressing to Monologic: Disruptions in Routines, Dialogue, and Collective Learning*, represented how teachers' instruction became monologic due to the many barriers and changes in this new era of pandemic-induced remote learning. The fifth and final theme, *Enacting Dialogic Process: Responding to Knowledges, Students, Sociocultural Context, and Instruction*, encompassed how teachers engaged in the process of becoming dialogic during remote learning. They enacted this process through responding to several factors, including multiple sources of knowledge, their students, the larger sociocultural context, and their reflections on instruction. In this chapter, I analyze each of these five thematic findings in depth.

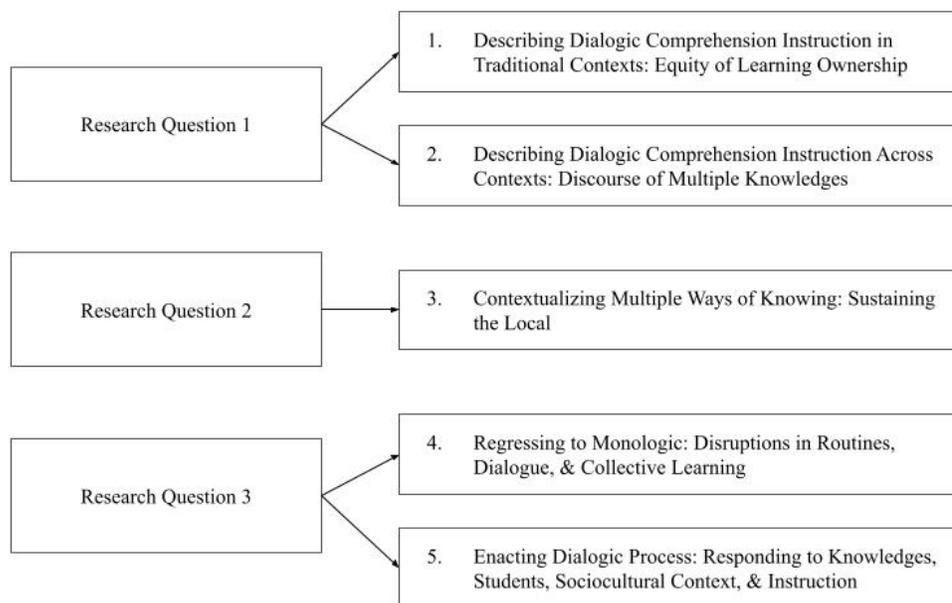


Figure 4.1 Alignment between research questions and thematic findings.

I. Describing Dialogic Comprehension Instruction in Traditional Contexts: Equity of Learning Ownership

This first finding addressed the first research question, by outlining how teachers described their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction. Some elements of rural elementary teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction were not easily translated into the remote learning platform. In particular, teachers described an equity of learning ownership with their students only in the contexts of their traditional face-to-face instruction, prior to pandemic-induced school closures. An equity of learning ownership between the teacher and students was described through several dialogic teaching practices in traditional contexts, including an abundance of dialogue through classroom talk, student talk, and co-constructed dialogue. Also, dialogic teaching practices in traditional contexts included collective learning, student

ownership, and peer collaboration to facilitate shared learning experiences. In addition to describing several dialogic teaching practices, teachers described student-centered teaching practices in the traditional ELA block. Teachers discussed the ability to respond to individual students in the moment during instruction, to better support students' understanding within traditional learning contexts. Through a combination of dialogic teaching practices, student-centered practices, and responding to students in traditional instruction, teachers described comprehension instruction that upheld children as shared owners of their comprehension learning. Figure 4.2 demonstrates how teachers described an equity of learning ownership when teaching comprehension in traditional contexts.

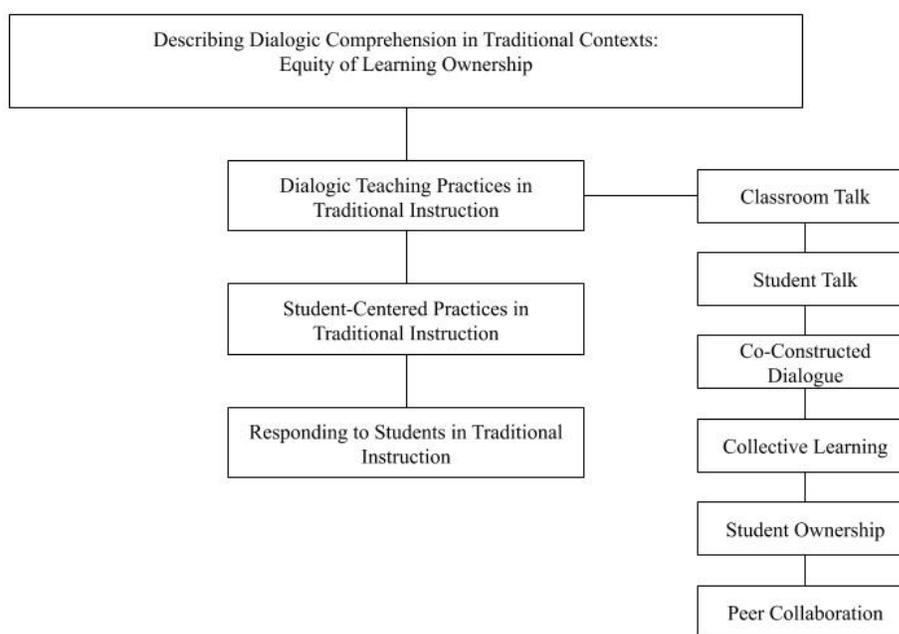


Figure 4.2 Describing dialogic comprehension in traditional contexts: Equity of learning ownership.

Dialogic Teaching Practices in Traditional Instruction

Teachers described the following dialogic teaching practices only in their traditional instructional contexts. Teachers' dialogic teaching practices centered around the power of talk to stimulate students' comprehension development, including classroom talk, student talk, and co-constructed dialogue. Other dialogic teaching practices reflected the collaborative and shared learning experiences in traditional instruction, including collective learning, student ownership, and peer collaboration. These dialogic teaching practices contributed to the equity of learning ownership between elementary teachers and students in traditional school contexts.

Classroom Talk

In the first characteristic of teachers' dialogic teaching practices in traditional contexts, classroom talk was prioritized through ongoing instances of discourse in ELA. Teachers emphasized classroom talk as essential to their comprehension instruction. When asked how she incorporated dialogue into her in-person comprehension instruction, Clover expressed joy in engaging her second-grade students in discussions about texts, "I love getting them to talk about it" (First Interview, September 23, 2020). Clover further noted how she would frequently ask students questions about texts, as well as have students generate questions about texts to facilitate their comprehension. Brooke described having ongoing discussions throughout the week with her second-grade students about the themes of ELA texts, such as identifying with themes of poverty in children's literature (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Ongoing text-based discussions allowed Brooke to determine students' current levels of understanding and inform the direction of future conversations about texts. Teachers described classroom talk as integral to assessing and building upon students' comprehension.

Teachers highlighted the importance of classroom talk across whole and small group instructional settings. For example, Brooke noted that her whole and small group instruction “always centered around turn and talks, discussion, collaborative pairs” (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Classroom talk was described as fluid across different grouping arrangements. Students were able to discuss their thoughts and ideas with peers, as well as share out their small group discussions with the rest of class. Likewise, Florence provided an example of how various modes of classroom talk transversed across whole and small group discussions to build students’ understanding of textual evidence (First Interview, September 9, 2020). Florence would first model how to support a claim with evidence from the text. After modeling and practicing with students how to use evidence from the text, her third-graders would practice these conversations in small groups and later come back to share out with the entire class. Teachers described a prominence of classroom talk in their dialogic approaches to traditional comprehension instruction. A strong focus on classroom talk helped to set the stage for the remaining characteristics of teachers’ perceived dialogic teaching practices.

Student Talk

The second characteristic of their described dialogic teaching practices was student talk. Similar to teachers’ enthusiasm for generating classroom dialogue, teachers were motivated to create ample opportunities for student talk. Several teachers described using discussion strategies, such as “think-pair-share” to stimulate student talk. Magnolia explained that she loved to regularly implement think-pair-share with her first-grade students (First Interview, September 5, 2020). She cited using creative partner themes like “leprechauns” and “lucky charms” to develop different partner groups. The think-pair-share strategy enabled students to share out their own ideas, as well as listen and respond to the ideas of peers. Camellia discussed implementing

think-pair-share for first-grade students to talk with each other about questions she asked throughout the lesson, “I would let them talk to each other, and they would talk about whatever the question was, it could be something simple, or it could be something complex, and that we'll talk and have a conversation about it” (First Interview, September 22). Student talk was used purposefully in traditional classroom contexts for students to collaboratively construct ideas.

Also, teachers described using turn and talk as another strategy for cultivating student dialogue. Haley noted that during read alouds, her second-grade students would each have a partner and they would turn and talk to each other at various points throughout the read aloud (First Interview, September 4, 2020). Likewise, Brooke explained how she incorporated turn and talks in her daily ELA mini lessons, “we would have different turn and talk opportunities with the students to connect their, their experience with anything that's happening in the book, but then also to discuss on different comprehension questions throughout the story” (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Brooke described student talk as the center of her ELA comprehension instruction to engage students in collective text discussions. Teachers ensured that students had multiple opportunities to talk and advance their connections to and understandings of texts in traditional ELA comprehension instruction.

While student talk was at the forefront of instruction to engage students in discussions about texts, student talk was also utilized for developing students' comprehension strategies. Most teachers described their ELA comprehension instruction from a more knowledge-driven, discussion-based approach to support students' background knowledge and connections to texts. However, one teacher explicitly cited the use of student talk to teach specific comprehension strategies. Blaire explained how she implemented reciprocal teaching strategies in her differentiated reading groups for first-grade students to talk about different comprehension

strategies (First Interview, September 8, 2020). During her in-person small reading groups, she would teach strategies like summarizing or predicting before, during, and after reading. After modeling particular strategies, the children would talk through how to use these strategies while reading texts. Blaire facilitated student talk in her small group reading instruction to strengthen students' knowledge and application of comprehension strategies.

Additionally, student talk served to foster students' vocabulary knowledge. For example, Brooke noted that student talk was employed during vocabulary instruction, so that students had several opportunities to discuss new vocabulary words in small groups (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Peer discussions were intended to support students' language and vocabulary development, and, in turn, benefiting their comprehension growth. During teachers' traditional comprehension instruction, teachers described an abundance of student talk. They guided students in collaboratively sharing their ideas and learning from the ideas of their peers. Teachers also leveraged student dialogue to foster language and strategic reading knowledge.

Co-Constructed Dialogue

In the third characteristic of teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction, teachers described dialogue that was co-constructed between teacher and students. As opposed to heavily teacher-led discussion, teachers described dialogue as co-generative to uphold students as active discussion participants. For example, Brooke explained how she valued an equity of voice amongst all her students during discussions, "I gave every single student a time to speak during every small group time and every discussion... that all of my students had a voice in what they were sharing, so that way no one felt left out" (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Brooke expressed her passion for ensuring an equity of voice so all her second-graders felt included in discussions as a part of the learning community. Her response reflected her belief

that classroom dialogue is not isolated to a teacher lecturing, but that all voices should be heard and included in collaborative conversations.

Furthermore, Magnolia expounded upon her role in whole and small group discussions to serve as more of a moderator, rather than a dominator of dialogue. Magnolia stated that her general stance toward her role in classroom discussions was to interfere minimally, so that her first-grade students were able to express their own thoughts and opinions:

“I really let the kids guide the discussion and I only tried to participate when it's kind of like going off topic, more like a moderator versus like— I'm going to give you my thinking, and I want you to think about my thinking” (First Interview, September 5, 2020).

Magnolia realized that if she did not adopt a moderating role in discussions, discussions would result in merely transferring her ideas onto children. She was conscious of her position of power as the teacher and her potential ability to dominate the perspective in a discussion. She instead redistributed this power in perspective amongst her students to allow them to direct the ideas in a discussion, while she provided redirection if needed. When I asked Blaire to describe her in-person ELA comprehension instruction, one of the first priorities she mentioned was leading students to gain more independence in their small group guided reading discussions (First Interview, September 8, 2020). She explained that she and her teaching assistant regularly met with their first graders in guided reading groups, and that her intention was for students to eventually lead text discussions in those small groups. Both examples from Magnolia and Blaire illustrate that their roles in discussions were to moderate or facilitate discussions and allow for students to have equitable agency and ownership in constructing dialogue.

In addition to creating an equity of voice, co-constructed dialogue involved instruction that was responsive to student utterances in discussions. Florence outlined how she would leverage third-grade students' background knowledge to guide her instruction, "we'd start a conversation about it, and it would just kind of feed off of what the students knew... so based on their conversation, it would kind of prompt the way that the rest of the class would go" (First Interview, September 9, 2020). She described co-constructed dialogue not only in terms of equity and inclusion of multiple perspectives, but also in how discussions were driven by student voices. Classroom discussions were open-ended to allow students' ideas and knowledge to guide the direction of conversations, rather than the teacher predetermining the entire scope of the discussion and lesson. When describing dialogic teaching practices in traditional instruction, teachers referenced dialogue that was co-constructed with students.

Collective Learning

In addition to drawing upon the power of talk in the first three characteristics, the fourth characteristic of teachers' dialogic practices was collective learning experiences between the teacher and students. Multiple teachers described collectively creating anchor charts and graphic organizers to stimulate further ELA discussions. When I asked Haley about how she incorporated student dialogue in her traditional ELA comprehension instruction, she referenced how collaboratively constructed anchor charts stimulated class discussions, "we have a lot of anchor charts in person, usually where the students help us create anchor charts... then they're posted around the room, so they're still able to use them whenever we hit the— that standard again later" (First Interview, September 4, 2020). The second-grade students helped to create anchor charts that addressed comprehension standards, and these anchor charts served as ongoing references for dialogue when revisiting previous standards. Also, Clover described

collaboratively making bubble maps with her second-graders to teach them how to ask and answer questions about a text (First Interview, September 23, 2020). She and her students worked together to select key details from the text, craft questions about the text, and then collaboratively answer their questions by searching for evidence in the text. Teachers engaged students as active agents in shared comprehension learning experiences.

Collective learning was not only beneficial for supporting students as active learners, but also for meeting a range of student learning needs and interests. As Haley was discussing how she would place her second-grade students with partners in their literacy centers, she also shared the value that she sees in students collectively working together:

“It's a lot more like, of them getting to see what everybody else, what other students have done to make themselves better also, or to help others also. Like, if somebody else if their partner is struggling, that they can help them to do something, whatever they're struggling with better” (First Interview, September 4, 2020).

Students were able to both learn from their interactions with peers, as well as help teach their peers. Collective learning centered collaboration and shared understandings over individual competition. Also, collective learning took into account students' personal interests to direct future learning activities. Magnolia would often involve students as active agents in their learning, by asking them what they would like to learn about, “I do a lot of what do you want to learn about next, what do we want to talk about next” (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Teachers promoted shared literacy experiences in their traditional dialogic teaching practices, to uphold students as equitable agents in their comprehension learning.

Student Ownership

The fifth characteristic of teachers' dialogic practices was student ownership. Teachers recounted using a variety of practices to promote student ownership in their traditional ELA comprehension instruction. One of the methods that teachers used to enhance student ownership was to assign different leadership roles in the classroom. For instance, Brooke reported that she would have a student station leader at each literacy station, who was responsible for making sure everyone stayed on task (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Similarly, Abigail stated that she would have students assigned to different roles that they were responsible for during lessons to support their learning agency and ownership, such as writing vocabulary words on the board or operating her instructional slides on the computer (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Having students assume leadership roles would allow them to not only be actively involved in their learning, but also to take ownership and responsibility in their comprehension development.

Additionally, teachers described teaching with various enrichment projects that enhanced students' ownership over their comprehension learning. For example, Abigail explained how she upheld second-graders as active agents of their learning through research projects, "I allow them to do a lot of media research so they can be active participants, so if we're going to look at, let's say we're going to be looking at maps, I want them to come with a small map, one of, you know, their community" (First Interview, September 5, 2020). By having students research their own local community, she supported students in having a personal sense of ownership over their learning. Blaire similarly described using research projects about Martin Luther King Jr. to foster students' agency as scholars during Black History Month (First Interview, September 8, 2020). Teachers discussed implementing enrichment activities to build students' active engagement and ownership of their comprehension learning.

Teachers' descriptions of student ownership went beyond keeping students busy during the school day but were genuinely focused on ensuring students were playing a key role in their comprehension development. Dahlia referenced using student choice boards at her literacy centers to support student learning ownership, "they're going to be in charge of making sure that, you know, they're also part of, you know, their learning... and give them a little bit more freedom to do different things that they would enjoy" (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Opportunities for student ownership relinquished power from being solely within the teacher's decision making to including student choice over their comprehension learning. Also, teachers wanted to instill students with a sense of pride in their learning growth. Abigail shared that her students each had a portfolio to keep their reading and writing work in (First Interview, September 5, 2020). She encouraged students to regularly look through their portfolio, to see how they have been challenged and how their learning has progressed over the school year. She wanted her students to have control over their learning and for them to realize that they have ownership over their development as readers. In a dialogic approach to traditional comprehension instruction, teachers relinquished control over students' learning, to empower students as equitable owners of their comprehension development.

Peer Collaboration

In the sixth characteristic of teachers' dialogic teaching practices, teachers described several opportunities for peer collaboration in their traditional ELA comprehension instruction. Teachers reported creating collaborative small group assignments as a predominant method to encouraging peer collaboration. Florence expressed her passion for including collaborative group work in her instruction, "I'm just a huge fan of group work and talking in class. I feel like students are learning best when they're talking about it" (First Interview, September 9, 2020).

Peer collaboration not only cultivated students' engagement as active learners, but also served to create greater opportunities for peer dialogue. Clover would implement student book clubs into her literacy centers to foster student collaboration, "they were accountable for reading their own books, and then coming together, and sharing the books that they had read, what they were about, if they liked it, why they liked it, or why they didn't like it" (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Student book clubs were a meaningful way to engage students in social literacy practices. In teachers' descriptions of their comprehension instruction, peer collaboration bolstered further opportunities to extend discourse surrounding text comprehension. Classroom talk, student talk, co-constructed dialogue, collective learning, student ownership, and peer collaboration were characteristics of teachers' traditional dialogic practices that enriched student agency in comprehension learning.

Student-Centered Practices in Traditional Instruction

In addition to the six characteristics of their dialogic teaching practices, teachers described their traditional ELA comprehension instruction as student-centered. The focus of ELA comprehension instruction was not about students receiving knowledge from the teacher, rather instruction was focused on students engaging in a range of literacy activities to holistically support their comprehension growth. One of the primary ways that teachers described student-centered practices in their instruction was through multiple simultaneously moving pieces in the traditional ELA block. For example, Haley described beginning her second-grade ELA block with a read aloud before pulling small groups of students for reading and spelling (First Interview, September 4, 2020). As she worked with her small groups, other students partook in group activities for phonics or writing. The traditional classroom context afforded multiple moving pieces of student-centered instruction, which allowed teachers to meet a range of

language and literacy skills within comprehension. Also, teachers highlighted literacy centers as a significant component of student-centered traditional instruction. Every teacher discussed implementing a range of literacy centers for multiple skills, including word work, vocabulary, writing, and technology programs for comprehension. They designed multiple literacy centers for students to learn and practice the interrelated literacy skills subsumed in reading comprehension. Teachers' ELA blocks were full of many moving, student-centered activities, to support students as agentive participants in their comprehension development.

Another important aspect of student-centered ELA instruction was teachers' implementation of different student grouping strategies. A prominent grouping strategy was by student reading level. Several teachers mentioned grouping students by reading level or word knowledge level for their small group differentiated instruction. However, teachers also discussed the use of heterogeneous grouping. Camellia explained that she used heterogeneous grouping to encourage student talk, "they were always talking doing their groups with each other, surprisingly on task, but they were always talking about the work, and that's why I kind of did that heterogeneous grouping, so they could talk about the work" (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Heterogeneous grouping was used to stimulate student talk, as well as expose students to different ways of thinking. Florence shared that she implemented heterogeneous grouping in discussions for students to consider different perspectives or problem-solving strategies (First Interview, September 9, 2020). In their student-centered traditional instruction, teachers implemented different literacy centers and grouping strategies, to actively engage students in diverse literacy skills and ways of thinking.

Responding to Students in Traditional Instruction

Along with dialogic and student-centered teaching practices, teachers discussed being able to respond to student learning needs in real time within their traditional instruction. Being in-person with children allowed teachers to effectively model ELA content. For example, teachers were accustomed to having anchor charts in their physical classrooms to help model ELA comprehension standards. Magnolia explained that she often used anchor charts when checking for students' understanding and background knowledge related to comprehension standards (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Dahlia elaborated on how modeling was more effective in-person, "we're there with them, we can actually stand next to them and point them out when they're doing something, so just the connection part of itself was easier, to make sure that they were comprehending what we were doing" (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Teachers felt better able to model reading comprehension with students in the traditional classroom setting.

Scaffolding in the moment of instruction was also more readily implemented in traditional contexts. Dahlia noted how uncomplicated acts, like walking around and checking on individual students, was unique to traditional in-person instruction (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Similarly, Florence detailed how she would prompt individual students during her small reading groups, "they would read in a whisper, and I would go around student to student and kind of prompting them... did that make sense, if not, maybe you should go back and reread it" (First Interview, September 9, 2020). In-person scaffolding allowed teachers to prompt individual students for more targeted comprehension support.

Differentiated small group instruction was another prominent method for teachers to respond to individual student's comprehension learning in traditional classroom contexts. All

teachers mentioned teaching small groups for differentiated reading comprehension instruction. While other students were engaged in their literacy center rotations, teachers were able to pull small reading groups during the traditional ELA block. In addition to pulling small groups during her ELA block, Camellia explained that she implemented comprehension interventions based on Istation literacy assessment results (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Also, Florence felt that she was better able to support individual student's comprehension in small group settings, through teaching them to monitor their comprehension and apply reading strategies in practice. (First Interview, September 9, 2020). Teachers described instructional practices that were responsive to students' learning needs during their traditional comprehension instruction. Responsive, student-centered instruction was specific to traditional instructional contexts, where students were supported as agentive contributors to their comprehension learning.

Theme I Summary

Teachers described their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction as an equity of learning ownership between teachers and students, but only within traditional school contexts. Teachers discussed several dialogic teaching practices that harnessed the power of dialogue and collective learning experiences to uphold students as agentive learners. In addition to describing several dialogic teaching practices, teachers' traditional ELA block included student-centered and responsive practices to engage students as active learning contributors. When in traditional classroom contexts, students were supported as leaders of their comprehension development.

II. Describing Dialogic Comprehension Across Contexts: Discourse of Multiple Knowledges

The first thematic finding addressed the first research question, to illuminate how teachers described their comprehension instruction as an equity of learning ownership in traditional contexts. This second finding also addressed the first research question, to

demonstrate how teachers described their comprehension instruction as a discourse of multiple knowledges across both traditional and remote contexts. Teachers understood comprehension as a product of literacy skills and as a dynamic interaction with texts. They expressed a dialogic stance to teaching comprehension, to collectively construct knowledge with students. They built upon students' academic and cultural knowledge. They extended students' diverse funds of knowledge in facilitating multiple reader-text interactions. Teachers guided students in analyzing a multitude of perspectives through argumentation. Figure 4.3 showcases how teachers described a discourse of multiple knowledges across their traditional and remote instructional contexts.

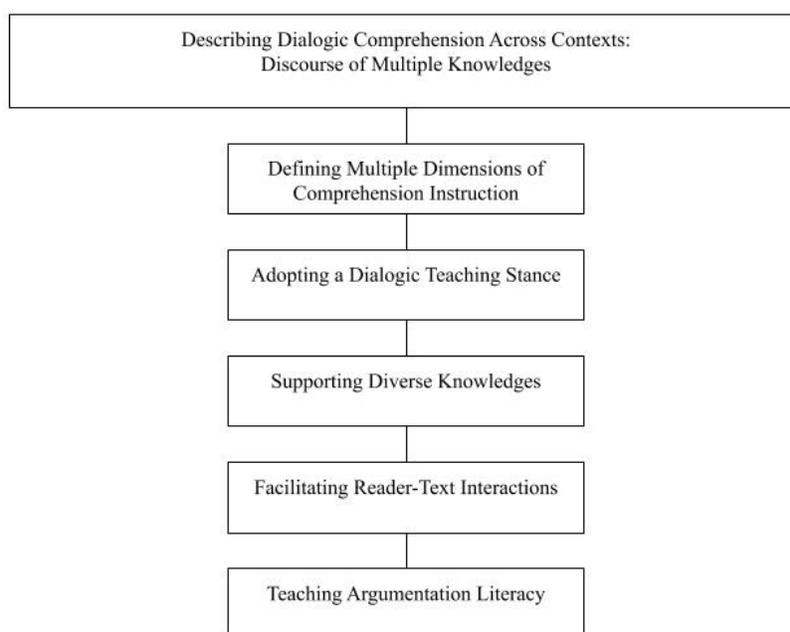


Figure 4.3 Describing dialogic comprehension across contexts: Discourse of multiple knowledges.

Defining Multiple Dimensions of Comprehension Instruction

As teachers were describing their ELA comprehension instruction, they recognized the multiple skills and strands of literacy composed within comprehension. Teachers recognized the

importance of accurate decoding and fluency in facilitating successful reading comprehension. Magnolia shared that her goal for comprehension instruction was to support her first-graders' fluency, so they can expend more mental energy on understanding what they're reading, "one of my biggest concerns is a lot of kids are not fluent when they're reading... so, we try and do everything that we can to make the kids more fluent, so it takes less of their working memory" (First Interview, September 5, 2020). She understood how integral it was to support first-grade students' fluency, so their decoding would not impede their text comprehension. Abigail expressed that her goal for comprehension instruction included both reading fluency and reading for understanding, so that her second-graders would be able to ask and answer questions about texts (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Teachers were focused on addressing students' decoding and fluency as necessary foundations to their overall comprehension growth.

In addition to defining the necessary decoding skills that facilitate comprehension, teachers also defined comprehension instruction in terms of strategic reading knowledge. Blaire described a strong focus on comprehension strategies in her in-person instruction. She had previously conducted research on her own teaching and saw increased student reading gains when applying reciprocal teaching strategies (First Interview, September 8, 2020). Blaire discussed the strongest emphasis on comprehension strategies, but other teachers also included strategic knowledge in their ELA comprehension instruction. For example, Florence included comprehension strategies as a part of her in-person small group reading instruction (First Interview, September 9, 2020). Also, Abigail's lesson plan of her remote comprehension instruction listed an objective for students to practice comprehension monitoring (Digital Artifact). Teachers sought to build students' strategic reading knowledge as another important element in their comprehension development.

Moreover, teachers defined their comprehension instruction inclusive of unconstrained language skills. Namely, vocabulary was a prominent component of teachers' ELA comprehension instruction. In her traditional instruction, Clover explained how she would build students' background knowledge by teaching unfamiliar words in texts before reading (First Interview, September 23, 2020). Clover pretaught new, unfamiliar words in texts by showing her second-graders images, such as images of polar animals, to support their vocabulary and knowledge development when reading ELA texts. During remote instruction, Blaire's school would alternate weeks where she used her *Wordly Wise* texts for vocabulary instruction or focal stories for ELA standards. She shared that she would integrate the types of comprehension questions asked during the focal stories into her lessons with the *Wordly Wise* vocabulary texts, "I firmly believe in practicing those same skills that we're doing in reading instruction and apply it to the vocabulary, so I'm asking them the characters, the setting, what's happening in the beginning, in the middle, and the end" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers understood vocabulary as an essential part of reading comprehension, and they found multiple ways to connect vocabulary and comprehension in both their traditional and remote instruction.

Just as teachers' instruction encompassed multiple dimensions of comprehension, their goals for comprehension were both within and beyond student performance. Several teachers espoused a comprehension goal for increased student performance on reading assessments. Abigail said that her goal for students to do well on reading assessments remained the same in traditional and remote contexts (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Camellia discussed how she would meet with individual students to graph their Istation results and set performance goals during a traditional year (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Schools defined comprehension in terms of assessment scores, and teachers goals likewise included comprehension achievement

as a priority. However, teachers' comprehension goals also went beyond student achievement. Brooke felt it was important to instill a love of reading with her children, "to create a love and joy reading, trying to get us to have opportunities to pick books of their own and to give them examples of how to, you know, really get into the book" (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Magnolia wanted her students to enjoy reading and learning while in remote learning because it was more difficult to engage students through a screen (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Teachers' comprehension goals reflected how comprehension can be understood both as a product of literacy skills and as a personal interaction between the reader and the text.

Adopting a Dialogic Teaching Stance

Similar to teachers' descriptions of their instruction embodying multiple dimensions of reading comprehension, rural elementary teachers espoused a dialogic stance toward teaching comprehension. Teachers expressed that comprehension, even amongst young children, is dynamic. Abigail argued the importance of teaching young children to read for understanding, "I think comprehension for them is not something after they have gotten to the point where they're able to read" (First Interview, September 5, 2020). She felt that teaching comprehension cannot be sidelined until students master decoding but learning to read and reading to learn must be intertwined in the early grades. Dahlia reflected that comprehension was connected to learning in general (First Interview, September 18, 2020). She explained how it can be difficult to discuss comprehension in isolation because comprehension instruction was connected to multiple sources of knowledge and content areas. Teachers also viewed comprehension as an interaction between knowledge and texts. Florence maintained the importance of making real world connections to texts, "you know, anytime you have the opportunity to connect it back to the real world, I think it really sets in more, and it just makes it more engaging" (Second Interview,

October 10, 2020). She felt that comprehension was not about memorizing information but building meaningful connections to texts. In this way, teachers positioned comprehension instruction as a dialogue between skills, knowledge, and text interactions.

Furthermore, teachers' dialogic stance toward comprehension instruction was both about and more than classroom dialogue. Florence described talk as her biggest strategy in building on students' background knowledge in comprehension instruction, "I feel like students are learning best when they are talking about it" (First Interview, September 9, 2020). She sought frequent opportunities for students to talk in class to cultivate their knowledge and comprehension. Teachers' high regard toward dialogue was also evident in the multiple ways they utilized classroom and student talk in their traditional instruction. Yet, teachers' dialogic stance also went beyond classroom dialogue, as teachers positioned themselves in a dialogic learning stance with students. Abigail articulated how learning was not about transferring knowledge from the teacher to students, "learning is not about the teacher... it's not just about me just talking and they're just, and you know, they're just sponging up information, but we are playing [an] active role" (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Students were held as active agents in learning to collectively produce new learning alongside the teacher. Teachers positioned themselves alongside students to collectively explore multiple sources of knowledge.

Supporting Diverse Knowledges

Teachers described supporting students' diverse sources of knowledge in their traditional and remote comprehension instruction. In their traditional instruction, teachers described several methods to support students' academic knowledge. Blaire referred to using inquiry research projects, called "depth of knowledge projects" to build students' academic knowledge related to

the texts they were reading (First Interview, September 8, 2020). Also, Abigail prioritized teaching text vocabulary to her rural students using standard American English:

“I find out that one of the difficulties is that they don't understand the word. So, a child is, who is in a very urban area where they would be more likely to know these words, you know... and it's so funny back when I first started, they tell me, they would ask me if that's a Jamaican word, and I would say no it is an English word, I'm not teaching you Jamaican” (First Interview, September 5, 2020).

Abigail would model how to determine whether a word was in standard English by typing a word on the screen, explaining that colored underlining signaled grammatical errors. Teachers cultivated students' academic knowledge within their traditional comprehension instruction.

Teachers also discussed supporting students' academic knowledge in their remote instruction. Brooke began her remote ELA lessons by either having a quick discussion or collaboratively filling out a KWL chart with students about what they know about a text topic before reading, such as what they already know about spiders (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She explained that they would continue to build upon their discussions and graphic organizers throughout the week to advance students' background knowledge. Teachers also employed digital media resources to build students' academic knowledge, including going on virtual field trips or sharing images and videos with students. Blaire shared how the STEAM specialist at her school came into her online classroom to co-teach and integrate science and ELA standards with the text, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Scieszka, 1989). “We watched a short video about a construction site and what goes on... so like our STEAM teacher had the kids build the strongest structure they could” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020).

Across traditional and remote learning environments, teachers helped to build students' academic knowledge in ELA and interdisciplinary content.

Cultural knowledge was another prominent source of knowledge that teachers supported across instructional contexts. When asked how she included cultural knowledge in her traditional instruction, Blaire revealed how she would invite families from diverse cultures to come in her physical classroom and share about their holiday traditions, "we had a set of twin boys last year that, they were from Kenya... and their dad came in and shared about their traditions that they did at home" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She invited students' families into her traditional classroom to affirm her children's diverse cultural practices. Although teaching about culture can be difficult with younger students, teachers understood the importance of teaching cultural history. Magnolia highlighted one instance where it was difficult for a colleague of hers to manage difficult conversations about the history of racial segregation:

"Not personally in my class, but another teacher on my team, she was talking about this. And the one little girl was like, 'man White people suck.' It was a little White girl. She's like, 'I don't know if I want to be White,' and then she was like 'no, no, no, that's not what we're trying to talk about that, like, this is history'" (First Interview, September 5, 2020).

Magnolia further explained how her grade level focused on teaching inclusivity of diverse cultures, while still remembering this country's challenging history. In addition to learning from history, teachers were passionate about helping students to recognize their own funds of knowledge. Abigail described how she would celebrate students' own lived experiences and ideas as a valid form of knowledge, "I love to put their information on the board, [and say] 'so can you look at this, this is all that I've gotten from you, so the answer was within you'" (First

Interview, September 5, 2020). Teachers valued students' diverse cultures and lived experiences as a valid form of cultural knowledge in their traditional ELA comprehension instruction.

Teachers continued to include cultural knowledge in their remote instruction. As Blaire was planning for her remote second quarter ELA plans, she revealed how she had advocated for her grade level to include more diverse texts. However, her team preferred teaching with the same texts every year. She argued why she was invested in diversifying texts for her children:

“Because yes, we are in a rural school, but I don't have all White children in my class, I have some Hispanics, and some African American children, some Asian children, some mixed-race kids, and I want my kids to be able to read a story and be able to identify with a character that we read about and be like, that's, that's like me” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020).

She felt passionate about having a more inclusive set of texts to provide culturally relevant instruction that reflected the cultural diversity among her rural students. Just as teachers wished for students to culturally identify with texts, they also found ways to introduce different cultures to students online. Dahlia described how reading *Last Stop on Market Street* (de la Peña, 2015) introduced her students to aspects of urban culture, like tall buildings, sidewalks, and food carts, thereby opening up cultural windows for her rural students (Second Interview, October 21, 2020). Teachers saw multicultural children's literature as an accessible way to sustain diverse forms of cultural knowledge in their remote comprehension instruction.

Even during the tumultuous time of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were reflective of the importance of seeking and extending students' cultural knowledge in their online comprehension instruction. In fact, one teacher, Brooke, shared that her personal initiative for this school year was to teach students about culture in a careful, gradual manner, “it's kind of

been an ongoing initiative with my kids that, you know, we're all different, and that the ways that we can accept those differences” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She expressed how she wanted to introduce culture in a very careful and respectful way, given the current climate of racial tensions, as well as the racial differences between herself as a White female and her majority African American students. Brooke also revealed how focusing on culture was initially challenging for her personally, “it was a very touchy subject for me, like I grew up not talking about people's skin color... but it's something that I realized is really important that they need to understand” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Brooke prioritized cultural diversity in her instruction, rather than resorting to the way she grew up and had been taught. Teachers valued and supported cultural knowledge throughout their teaching contexts.

Facilitating Reader-Text Interactions

Teachers discussed facilitating diverse forms of reader-text interactions to sustain multiple sources of knowledge. Stimulating students’ text connections to academic learning was one of the interactions described by teachers. Teachers noted that they often facilitated text connections to other academic content areas throughout the day. In her traditional instruction, Brooke outlined how she would incorporate themes from ELA texts with other subject areas (First Interview, September 22, 2020). When reading texts about sharks in ELA, Brooke would also draw connections to sharks in her morning meetings, small groups, and math instruction. Students’ interactions with texts in ELA were connected to their learning in other subject areas to deepen their understanding and knowledge. In her remote instruction, Blaire read the story *Chrysanthemum* (Henkes, 1996) with her first-graders and then had a discussion about students’ names (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She then linked this text interaction with math content, by splitting students’ names into individual letters and counting the number of letters in

everyone's names. Teachers described making ELA text connections to students' broader academic learning throughout in-person and remote contexts.

Text-to-self connections were another prominent way in which teachers facilitated students' text interactions. Teachers sought opportunities to connect ideas in texts with students' personal lives to deepen their understanding. If students had difficulty making their own connections, Clover would model how she would feel from her perspective or from her experiences when she was their age to stimulate students' text-to-self connections (First Interview, September 23, 2020). Discussing text-to-self connections also facilitated collective text interactions with the entire class. In her traditional instruction, Brooke relayed the following instance where her class drew a deeper connection to the text, *Those Shoes* (Boelts, 2009):

A lot of my students could really relate to the character in the book and how, you know, he wanted to give the shoes to someone else who actually needed them. But then they also took it on a deeper level and understood kind of what was happening in the classroom, when he wanted something that he couldn't have and... Then they also were more considerate of each other's feelings. So, that book really helped to bring in what they were going through at home, but then it also helped to build, you know, a more safe and respectful community within my classroom" (First Interview, September 22, 2020).

She revealed that several of her students could identify with wanting to have something that they or their families could not afford. By students' sharing personal connections with the class, Brooke noticed that their classroom community became more considerate and respectful of each other. Students not only drew deeper individual connections to the text, but their text connections transformed the collective experience of the learning community.

Teachers also supported students in making text-to-self connections in remote learning. When reading a text about cooking, Blaire facilitated students' connections to their own cooking experiences, "the kids were talking about, you know, making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, or helping their mom cook, you know, like the dump and go casseroles in the Crockpot" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers built upon students' personal experiences and knowledge to deepen their text comprehension. Magnolia shared how many of her Hispanic students were able to draw personal connections when reading *Abuela* (Dorros, 1997), "it's really great when they can connect to it... 'oh yeah I know about that, we did that when we went to Mexico', or 'my grandma is from Guatemala and she's told me stories about that'" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Across traditional and remote settings, teachers capitalized on students' personal and cultural forms of knowledge as assets in facilitating text-to-self connections.

While there were less descriptions of text-to-text and text-to-world connections than the former types of text connections, there were a few instances where teachers discussed facilitating these types of connections. During one of her remote lessons, Brooke described how she accompanied their ELA text, *The Salamander Room* (Mazer, 1994), with an informational passage about salamanders for students to compare and contrast informational and fictional representations of the salamander (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). With the same text, she also facilitated students' connections with the illustrators' depiction of the salamander to real life photographs of salamanders (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Additionally, Blaire's digital artifact from her *Wordly Wise* curriculum established a text-to-world connection from the text about cooking to the real-life profession of a chef (Digital Artifact). In facilitating several reader-text interactions, teachers were seeking and sustaining the multiple sources of knowledge that students utilize when comprehending texts.

Teaching Argumentation Literacy

Teachers discussed supporting students' argumentation literacy to analyze and evaluate multiple sources of knowledge. They cited using several argumentation strategies to develop students' argumentation skills. In her traditional instruction, Clover taught her second-grade students to consider diverse perspectives, by asking them to put themselves in a character's situation and thinking about how they would feel from that perspective (First Interview, September 23, 2020). She taught perspective taking to help students understand there can be multiple sides to an argument. Florence detailed how she used the RACE acronym with students to model how to form a perspective in an argument, "it stood for restate, answer, cite, and explain... they were forced to restate that question, answer it using evidence from the text, and then explaining what that meant in the real-world context" (First Interview, September 9, 2020). Her acronym helped to outline the steps of positioning, framing, and expounding upon a perspective in an argument for her third-graders. Teachers focused on argumentation as an analysis of multiple perspectives.

Supporting arguments with evidence was a prominent argumentation strategy referenced by teachers. Teachers overwhelmingly shared that they continuously asked students to support their perspectives or arguments with specific evidence from the text. Abigail described how she explained to students how to answer open-ended questions with evidence, "there's no right or wrong answer, I just want you to be able to support what you say" (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Rather than focusing on finding correct answers, Abigail assisted her students in answering more complex text questions which require evidence to fully support. Clover upheld high expectations for students to identify appropriate sources of evidence, by asking students to write down the page number where they found their source of evidence for their argument

(Second Interview, October 8, 2020). She described using page numbers as students' proof of evidence in both her whole and small group instruction and across traditional and remote contexts. Teachers stressed the importance of students showing evidence to support their claims.

Teachers also employed questioning strategies to cultivate students' argumentation literacy. Several teachers shared that they would teach students about different question stems to acquaint them with answering increasingly complex questions about texts. Haley described gradually teaching second-graders the types of who, what, when, where, why, and how questions in her remote instruction (First Interview, September 4, 2020). In addition to teaching different types of question stems, teachers provided instruction on inference questions. Abigail noted that she would use a lot of probing questions to help students develop inferences about the story, when the information was not explicitly stated (First Interview, September 5, 2020). She would ask probing questions like what could have happened, why did that happen, or what was the character's state of mind. Blaire taught students the difference between recall and inference questions, as what she called "thin" and "thick" questions, "pulling out those thick questions from the text where they're not gonna be able to find a 'right there' teacher answer... using everything that they know so far in their background knowledge to come up with the answer" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Blaire discussed teaching students about thick questions in both her traditional and remote instruction to help students understand how to draw inferences. Teachers supported students' argumentation literacy through building text inferences, using text evidence and background knowledge.

Finally, teachers promoted a respect for diverse viewpoints when teaching argumentation. Many teachers described how they held high expectations for students to respect opinions or arguments that differed from their own. Dahlia stated how she prefaced discussions with students

by pointing out that while an opinion is not necessarily a fact, everyone has a right to an opinion and to cite reasons in support of that opinion (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Florence also shared that one of her biggest rules as a teacher was respect for diverse perspectives, “it's okay to have different thoughts, it's okay for people to be different, and we're going to respect and accept each other for our ideas and who we are, that you can disagree, but you can do so respectfully” (First Interview, September 9, 2020). In teaching argumentation literacy, teachers supported students in exploring, reasoning, and valuing a diversity of perspectives.

Theme II Summary

Across in-person and remote learning platforms, teachers sustained a discourse of multiple knowledges. They strengthened the multiple skills and sources of knowledge involved in successful reading comprehension. Teachers also identified a dialogic teaching stance to engage in discourse and collective learning with students. They supported diverse funds of students' knowledge and incorporated these sources of knowledge when facilitating multiple reader-text interactions. Finally, they guided students in analyzing and respecting multiple perspectives through argumentation literacy.

III. Contextualizing Multiple Ways of Knowing: Sustaining the Local

The third thematic finding answered the second research question, to understand how teachers incorporated rural students' local funds of knowledge in their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction. Teachers integrated students' local funds of knowledge in both their traditional and remote comprehension instruction. Teachers facilitated reader-text connections to the local community and invited local sources of knowledge into their classrooms. In doing so, teachers contextualized the plurality of knowledge in their comprehension instruction from the perspectives of local rural communities. They also cultivated holistic school, family, and

community ties and found enhanced connections to students' home lives during remote learning. As teachers were attuned to the locally situated needs of their students, they advocated for important areas of equity to sustain the future of rural students' literacy education. Figure 4.4 illustrates how teachers incorporated rural students' funds of knowledge in their comprehension instruction, to contextualize a diversity of perspectives.

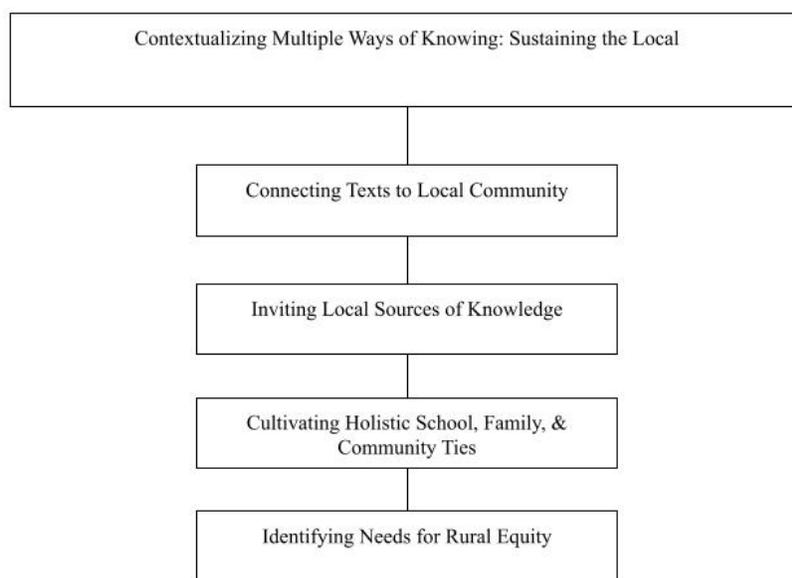


Figure 4.4 Contextualizing multiple ways of knowing: Sustaining the local.

Connecting Texts to Local Community

In addition to the previously discussed forms of text connections that teachers included in their instruction, rural elementary teachers facilitated several text-to-local-community connections. When reading texts, teachers often encouraged students to draw connections to their lived experiences in the local community. For instance, Dahlia supported her first-graders in drawing connections to their text about pumpkins in remote learning, by connecting it to their memories of the field trip to the local pumpkin patch (Second Interview, October 21, 2020).

Even though remote learning prevented teachers from taking physical field trips to the local community, Dahlia drew on the common lived experiences that her students had in their kindergarten year to build a local connection to the ELA text. In addition to drawing on students' experiences in their communities, teachers often made local connections to texts by drawing comparisons to their rural landscapes. In her virtual instruction, Clover shared how she and her second-grade students made connections about the types of suburban houses they were learning about in their ELA texts and the way houses looked in their rural community, "they pretty much all have farmland surrounding their houses... we talked about suburbs... then we talked about ways that they're similar in that they're all still a home, but then we said they are different" (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). Teachers prompted students to compare and contrast different types of neighborhoods and settings with students' local rural communities, to connect their local funds of knowledge with ELA texts.

In addition to reading texts with communities that differ from their rural homes, one teacher pointed out the value of students' being able to read texts that portray their own local communities. Magnolia expressed her excitement that a module in her remote ELA curriculum, *Into Reading*, reflected the tight-knit community of her rural school, "[it's] about this small town fair that a little girl helps work at, and she knows everyone in her neighborhood... that's so much like where we are because a lot of teachers that teach here went to school here" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She noted that rural communities are often underrepresented in texts, and she was proud that her curriculum represented the experiences of her and her students' tight-knit rural school community. Magnolia also shared that having more locally responsive texts helped her students to make richer connections to the content. She noticed that having students share about their life and community resulted in more meaningful text-based discussions

than only following her curriculum's comprehension questions (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers assisted students in drawing local connections to ELA texts, to not only learn about new types of communities, but also to affirm the culture of their local rural community.

Furthermore, one of the teachers expounded upon a text-to-local-community connection, highlighting how the farming and meatpacking industry of their rural area contributed to a broader network of the commercial food industry. Abigail described an instance where she drew on students' local funds of knowledge to develop local connections to a text (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). They were reading about different types of animals, and Abigail shared that their community may not have a lot of animals from that text, but that they do have lots of fields for corn and tobacco farming. Abigail detailed how she extended their local text connection about farmland, to explain how their community played a large role in food production:

“We talk about the big Perdue that we have here, and how everybody works to get the job done, and that's mass production because they're doing a whole lot. So, it's not one, you know, like close stuff, because the chicken is being produced, and it is a supply chain and it supplies a large area” (Second Interview, October 10, 2020).

Abigail extended this text-to-local-community connection to discuss how their local farming and food packaging contributed to a larger network of food production. In this way, she not only drew upon students' rural funds of knowledge, but she also contextualized their local community within the larger context of food production and distribution. Teachers described prompting text-to-local-community connections, to incorporate students' local funds of knowledge in their dialogic comprehension instruction.

Inviting Local Sources of Knowledge

In addition to sparking students' text connections to the local community, teachers noted several ways in which they invited local sources of knowledge into their classrooms. Teachers often referenced asking students to share about their lived experiences in their ELA discussions. In her traditional comprehension instruction, Florence explained that one of the primary ways she drew upon students' experiences in their rural community was to have students openly share about their experiences. Florence recalled the following example of one of her students drawing a connection to the vocabulary words they were talking about with his experiences on the farm, "one of my students said, 'you know, this makes you think about on the farm, when we were doing the tractor and we had one of these'" (First Interview, September 9, 2020). She valued this student's lived experience as a fund of knowledge to be shared in class discussions. Also, Haley noted that she would have students bring in artifacts from their homes when they were in-person to share representations of their home lives with her (First Interview, September 4, 2020). Teachers encouraged students to express their lived experiences and share their local funds of knowledge with the class.

Teachers also invited members of the local community to come into their classrooms to incorporate funds of knowledge from the community into their comprehension instruction. Abigail discussed inviting parents to come into her physical classroom and teach more about the local community, including the process of farming cotton to connect with ELA discussions on farming (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Additionally, Blaire invited local firefighters to her physical classroom, to talk about their work and relate students' knowledge of the local fire department with their ELA unit on community helpers (First Interview, September 8, 2020). When she was working in a different rural community prior to her current rural school, Blaire

also shared how she would incorporate local events in the community into her ELA comprehension instruction. Blaire detailed how she incorporated the rural community's local apple festival into her teaching:

“That is what Blue County is known for, they're known for their apple growers... We had read about Johnny Appleseed, we had researched a little bit, and then invited parents and their kids were there that day and we had a big apple day, where I was teaching the kids how to cook apple cobbler” (First Interview, September 8, 2020).

She incorporated traits of students' local community into her ELA comprehension instruction, by drawing on the community's apple farming traditions. She wanted to connect students' lived experiences in the community with their learning experiences in the classroom. Blaire would often invite family and community members into her classroom prior to school closures. While remote learning made inviting community members to class more difficult, Blaire noted that she invited one of her parents to give a presentation on Zoom about how they raised ducks, in relation to an ELA discussion her class was having about ducks (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Family and community members were welcomed into the traditional and virtual classroom, to develop connections between the local funds of knowledge in children's rural communities and the knowledge gleaned from ELA comprehension discussions.

Teachers Learning from and with Rural Communities

Interestingly, there were two teachers who were not from their rural communities, who highlighted the ways they were learning from and with their students' communities. Dahlia shared she was originally from a large urban city on the west coast, prior to moving to North Carolina. While she has now lived in North Carolina for a while and has since adjusted, she described how the quietness of her rural community was so strange to her at first because she

was used to sleeping with loud sirens and cats (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Having lived in two vastly different spaces, from tall skyscrapers to open fields of tobacco and cotton, she developed an attentiveness to place in her instruction. Dahlia detailed her passion for teaching diverse children's literature for students to see their own rural communities in books and learn about other communities:

“I do like to show the books that show the rural areas and the urban areas and different countries like Japan, and Mexico, and Guatemala. Like just, you know, open it up for them, so that they're able to see it. Yes, this is where we live and we learn and appreciate what we have, but there's also a whole nother world that books, you know, help us get to” (First Interview, September 18, 2020).

Dahlia's own lived experience shaped her motivation to affirm her students' rural community and introduce them to new communities. Her instructional attention to diverse communities in literature revealed how she supported students in developing both pride in their home community and an appreciation of the diversity in the world.

Abigail expressed how much she has adapted to and learned from her new rural community, having moved recently from Jamaica. She noted that she was continuing to learn a great deal about the culture in her rural community, as it has been very different from her home community (First Interview, September 5, 2020). While she has been actively learning about her new community, she has also engaged in community learning alongside her students. Abigail noted that she would engage students in learning about their own history, through having them interview their parents about their experiences growing up in the local community (First Interview, September 5, 2020). She would also invite members of the community into her

traditional classroom, to share about the history of their rural county. Abigail described a time when she invited a parent to talk about the history and changes over time in their community:

“So, they come, and they say to us, ‘growing up when we had a movie theater here, there was a pharmacy down the road,’ and then you would look at it now, and then we say about those things are no longer here... But what has happened is that these rural areas now have become underdeveloped over the years” (First Interview, September 5, 2020).

Abigail not only incorporated the history of the rural community into her instruction, but she also facilitated a more critical discussion about how resources have been lost from their community. The discussion helped to contextualize students’ rural community over time. As Abigail continued to learn from her new rural community, she learned more about the culture and history of the local community collectively with her students.

Teachers described multiple ways of incorporating rural students’ funds of knowledge in their traditional and remote instruction. They integrated students’ lived experiences in the local community through prompting text-to-local-community connections. Teachers invited sources of local knowledge into the classroom to connect ELA content with knowledge from the rural community. They also engaged students in collectively learning about diverse communities and their own rural communities. Teachers drew upon rural students’ local funds of knowledge in their comprehension instruction, to contextualize a discourse of multiple knowledges within the perspectives of their local school communities.

Cultivating Holistic School, Family, and Community Ties

While teachers integrated students’ local funds of knowledge across traditional and remote contexts, the remote setting granted teachers enhanced insights into students’ lived experiences at home. In fact, the strengthened relationship between children’s home and school

lives was one of the few positive outcomes that teachers attributed to remote learning. Florence felt that she was able to learn about her students more quickly in remote learning, “we have been able to learn more quickly about their home life... if they have siblings or not... what their parenting styles are like... all of those things, you know, go into the background knowledge that the student has” (First Interview, September 9, 2020). She described this as one of the advantages to remote learning, as she can incorporate aspects of students’ home lives more readily into her instruction. Several teachers felt they were able to learn a lot about students’ home environments from seeing their homes in the backgrounds of their webcams. Teachers also cited students’ younger age as an asset to their willingness to share about their home experiences in an online classroom. Clover shared how her second-graders were eager to share about their home lives, such as one of her kids taking her laptop outside to show the class the field behind her house with her horses (First Interview, September 23, 2020). Although remote learning brought many instructional challenges, remote learning did facilitate teachers’ insights into students’ lived experiences at home.

A key contributor to the tightened bond between home and school was the increased collaboration between teachers and families during remote learning. While having to rely more on families to support student learning in remote learning, there was one notable challenge that teachers found. Teachers expressed some difficulties in knowing whether student work was completed by the student or a parent. Magnolia found that some of her students’ submissions included a picture drawn by the student, but the sentence underneath was obviously written by an adult (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Dahlia also noted the complications of conducting online assessments with her students, when she could hear parents in the background telling the student how to spell the words or answer the questions (Second Interview, October 21, 2020).

Although assessing students' independence in literacy was complicated at times, teachers understood how challenging remote learning has been for families. Brooke explained that she always remembered to give parents and families a lot of patience, as parents had to take children to daycare or to grandparents' houses throughout the day (First Interview, September 22). Abigail stated that she had an open-door policy with parents, so that they could always message her if they needed her to explain something or show them how to log in (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Since teachers and families had to collaborate and support each other more than they typically have in traditional schooling, teachers gained a deeper understanding of the importance of family collaboration.

Florence reflected on the importance of collaborating with families, after a parent shared with her that she felt better able to help her son in literacy, "I've actually enjoyed the virtual learning because I get to sit here and watch how you teach it... I never knew how to help him because I didn't know how it was being taught" (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). The parent in Florence's classroom revealed how remote learning made literacy instruction more accessible to parents, so they could support student learning at home. While remote learning posed many challenges for teachers and families, teachers focused on ways to support families with flexibility and patience, in order to maintain these home and school connections. Strengthened connections to families and students' home lives was a rare positive outcome from remote learning, allowing teachers to continue to learn about and include students' lived experiences in their instruction.

Identifying Needs for Rural Equity

As teachers discussed how they incorporated students' local funds of knowledge into their instruction, they also identified several areas of need for equity in rural literacy education.

In particular, remote learning caused several challenges for students living in rural areas. Teachers' schools and local communities worked together to address several of these learning challenges. Multiple teachers stated that access to technology was a major obstacle in the beginning of the pandemic, but with support from the school district and local businesses in the community, most students were able to connect online with their teacher. Teachers also noted several sources of support provided by their school, such as backpacks with school supplies that were sent home to kids, as well as free meals for families with children. Local communities also played a significant role in supporting students' remote learning, through offering free hotspots or tutoring services. Brooke shared that her local community created a free after school tutoring program to help students during remote learning (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers reflected positively on the ways their schools and local communities came together, to assist children and families through pandemic-induced remote learning. Clover expressed how proud she was in the way her grade level team stepped up to support families during remote learning, "they packed up like a whole quarter's worth of books to send home... and it's precious, if they couldn't come and pick it up, she brought it to them... there's a really good group of people out here working" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Schools and local communities both worked to address several of the learning barriers created by pandemic-induced remote learning.

Moreover, teachers advocated for ongoing areas of need in their communities, to create more equitable learning opportunities for their rural children. Clover described the inequitable distribution of resources within her rural county, where her school receives the least amount of resources since it is in the most remote rural area (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She noticed that the rural school where she student-taught in the same county was more affluent, where she had her own leveled books in her room. However, her current school is more remote,

and she has fewer resources and texts to use in her instruction. Clover articulated her passion for equitable resource distribution in rural schools, “to me every kid deserves the same— I don't care how far out you are or where your school is located, they all deserve the same quality of education” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She argued the need for rural schools to have equitable access to high quality books that engage students as readers.

In addition to more equitable literacy resources, Abigail maintained that policymakers should consider the unique challenges faced by rural schools when making statewide expectations for literacy achievement (First Interview, September 5, 2020). She noted that rural schools had a later start to online learning, as they had to help more families gain online access in the spring of last year. In contrast, she pointed out that her colleagues in non-rural schools consistently had 25 or more kids online, even at the beginning of remote learning. She argued for policymakers to consider concerns of equity to help rural schools meet statewide demands, “I would want to see what we consider equity, and I’m learning that now versus equality... giving us the amount we need to get the goal that is statewide” (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Abigail’s statement represented the need for additional support and resources for rural schools, to achieve the same statewide literacy expectations as more affluent metropolitan schools. Her advocacy for equity addressed both current and long-term needs for rural equity in literacy education, to disrupt long-standing standardized policies that have ignored local school needs. While teachers articulated how they integrated rural students’ funds of knowledge into their comprehension instruction, they also advocated for equity in rural literacy education.

Theme III Summary

Teachers incorporated rural children’s funds of knowledge directly into their comprehension instruction, by making text to local community connections. They also invited

families and community members into their classrooms to tie ELA content with local community knowledge. Teachers supported a diversity of perspectives in their comprehension instruction, while affirming and contextualizing multiple sources of knowledge within the rural community. Strengthened family partnerships in remote learning reduced traditional separations between home and school learning, enabling teachers to learn even more about their students' lived experiences. While remote learning brought on many challenges for rural students' literacy education, they shared how schools, families, and community members worked together to meet students' learning needs. In addition to addressing students' immediate needs in remote learning, teachers advocated for issues of equity to sustain the future of rural literacy education.

IV. Regressing to Monologic: Disruptions in Routines, Dialogue, & Collective Learning

This fourth thematic finding addressed the third research question, by explaining how pandemic-induced remote learning impacted teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction. Teachers faced many challenges converting their traditional comprehension instruction to remote learning. They experienced a loss of instructional time and content. They faced difficulties with technology, student resources, assessments, and student engagement. These challenges were not surprising, but understandable given the context of pandemic-induced remote learning. These challenges disrupted teachers' routines, classroom dialogue, and opportunities for collective learning in their comprehension instruction. Challenges in remote learning forced teachers' comprehension instruction to regress to monologic teaching practices. Given the novelty of remote learning for elementary grades, teachers had to adjust to a new mode of teaching and learning. At the time of our first interviews, their comprehension instruction was emergent. Figure 4.5 shows how the challenges in remote learning led to monologic instruction.

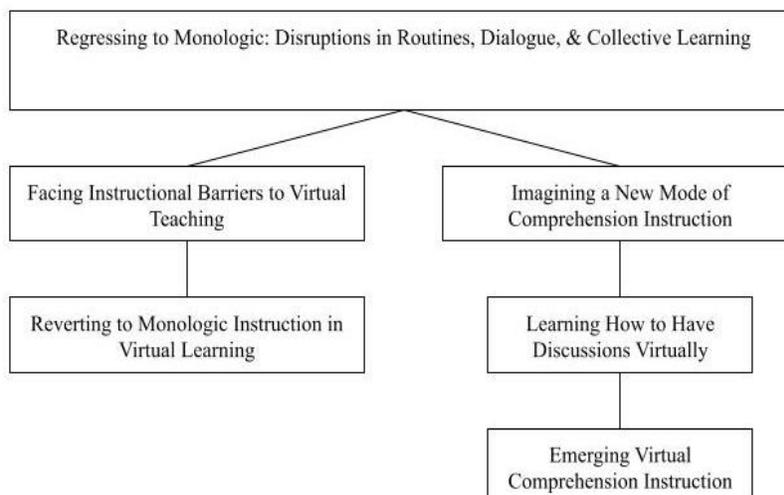


Figure 4.5 Regressing to monologic: Disruptions in routines, dialogue, and collective learning.

Facing Instructional Barriers to Virtual Teaching

Loss of Instructional Time

One of the biggest challenges in remote learning was the loss of instructional time. Several teachers shared that they spent a great deal of time addressing content and standards from the previous grade level, due to students missing instruction when schools first closed their building in spring 2020. Many teachers found that their students hadn't mastered ELA standards from the end of the previous year and spent time in their ELA block addressing learning loss. Magnolia explained that teaching back when schools first closed in the spring was more “emergency teaching,” and now she is working from the ground up to cover content that her first-graders have forgotten after being out of school for seven months (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Addressing content from the previous grade-level consumed a large portion of teachers' virtual instructional time.

Another major impediment to the available instructional time in remote learning was the restrictions on screen time for primary-grade students. Many school districts placed time restrictions on how long younger students could participate in synchronous virtual instruction.

Dahlia's school limited morning meeting and the ELA block for first-grade to only one hour altogether (Second Interview, October 21, 2020). After receiving observation feedback from her teacher mentor to shorten her morning meeting to fit the ELA block within the one-hour limit, Dahlia shared that there's "just so little time too when you're online, just hard to get to everything" (Second Interview, October 21, 2020). Blaire noted the discrepancies between only being able to teach ELA with her first-graders twice a week for 45 minutes, whereas her fourth-grade son in the same school received 45 minutes of daily ELA instruction (First Interview, September 8, 2020). Having limited live instructional time with children was a significant barrier to teachers' adjustments to virtual teaching. However, teachers also recognized the developmental concerns of having students sit in front of a screen for extended periods of time. While Haley felt it was challenging to teach her second-graders in a limited amount of time, she also said she wouldn't necessarily want to keep students online longer, because it was hard for second-grade students to remain focused on a screen for a long time (Second Interview, October 5, 2020). Finding a balance between adequate instructional time and young children's developmental capacity proved to be difficult in remote learning.

Another facet to the loss of instructional time in remote learning was the slower pace of learning. When asked to describe a typical day of her virtual ELA comprehension instruction, Florence revealed that online teaching goes a lot slower than traditional instruction (First Interview, September 9, 2020). She explained that children's attention spans, dealing with technology, and students figuring out how to follow their schedules independently made teaching and learning slower. Discussions in particular took longer. Magnolia explained how discussions take longer with young students, as they have to find the unmute button to share out (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Online discussions required more logistics for young children to

remember than the free-flowing conversations that can occur in person. Magnolia shared how the slower pace of discussions complicated students' attention and engagement with discussion content. In addressing learning loss from the previous year, dealing with screen time restrictions, and operating at a slower pace online, teachers experienced a critical loss of instructional time.

Loss of Instructional Content

Coupled with a loss of time, teachers also noted a loss in the amount of instructional content they could cover during remote learning. Clover found that remote learning took the most instructional time and content away from her small group reading comprehension instruction. Clover shared that she was not able to finish reading texts with her small group or have discussions afterwards, "it's really impossible unless I cut something out one day... I'm having to send them off during the independent time and finish recording reading... and then give them independent work where they're answering questions" (First Interview, September 23, 2020). Her small group comprehension instruction was reduced to independent student assignments. Blaire had to alternate her curriculums each week, where one week she taught with texts from her *Wordly Wise* vocabulary curriculum and the other where she taught a focal story using children's literature for ELA standards (First Interview, September 8, 2020). In contrast, Blaire would have been able to use both sets of texts to support her comprehension instruction every week in traditional contexts. Not only did less instructional time result in less time to work with students, but it also reduced the amount of content teachers could cover in remote learning.

Teaching new expectations and routines for remote learning also took away further time to cover instructional content. At the beginning of the year, teachers described teaching expectations for the virtual classroom. Brooke regularly reviewed with students when they should be on mute (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Florence taught third-grade students

how to email her and bookmark resources for virtual learning (First Interview, September 9, 2020). Using already limited time in remote learning to go over technology further minimized time to cover instructional content. Florence described how teaching students how to navigate remote learning reduced critical time for ELA content, “a lot of our time these first few weeks has been spent on teaching them how to use a computer, so that has really eaten into our ability and our time to cover standards” (First Interview, September 9, 2020). Teachers were able to cover markedly less content in remote learning.

Instructional content was not only limited in terms of ELA standards, but it also made incorporating diverse sources of knowledge and higher-order thinking more difficult. Camellia shared that she was not able to incorporate cultural knowledge into her virtual whole group ELA instruction to the extent that she would have wanted, as she had limited time to read multicultural literature outside of her curriculum (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Blaire explained that since her school administration’s focus during remote learning was heavily on core reading and math instruction, she had not been able to spend as much time collaborating with the local community as she typically would like to (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Remote learning also made teachers’ inclusion of critical thinking within comprehension instruction more challenging. Haley revealed how the loss of instructional time limited her ability to prioritize critical or higher-order thinking in remote learning:

“Sorry, I can't think of anything for ELA, at least recently, um yeah we kind of just haven't focused on that too hard, like higher level higher-order thinking or anything, because we're just trying to get them to do what they're supposed to do first. I'm still, I mean, we're still barely getting through that much” (Second Interview, October 5, 2020).

Focusing on deeper forms of comprehension like critical and higher-order thinking was a challenge in remote learning, where just getting through the basics of standards and assignments took considerable time and effort. The loss of time and content were significant barriers to overcome in teachers' virtual ELA comprehension instruction.

Challenges with Technology and Non-Technological Resources

While in an entirely virtual environment, teachers experienced several challenges with technology. Most teachers' schools used Google Classroom and Google Meet as their virtual classroom platforms. Teachers expressed concerns with Google Meet's lack of breakout room capabilities at the beginning of the school year. Clover discussed how it was difficult to encourage student collaboration without any breakout rooms (First Interview, September 23, 2020). Likewise, Dahlia noticed the limitations for student dialogue without being able to use breakout rooms (Second Interview, October 21, 2020). While most students had been able to secure Internet access through their district by the beginning of the school year, there were still some connectivity issues in maintaining a reliable Internet connection. Magnolia pointed out that the Internet often went out or froze in her rural community (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Such technological challenges were particularly troubling during remote learning.

There were also barriers in getting non-technological resources to students. Haley explained that families were only allowed to come to the school to pick up Chromebooks, so she had no way of knowing if her students had books at home to read (First Interview, September 4, 2020). Florence taught students enrolled in Virtual Academy all throughout the county, and she was unable to get resources to kids or know if the resources would be returned to her base school (First Interview, September 9, 2020). Finding ways to get resources to students during remote

learning was difficult. Challenges in accessing technological and non-technological resources were further barriers to teachers' virtual comprehension instruction.

Challenges with Assessments

Teachers faced notable challenges in trying to assess student comprehension during remote learning. Dahlia's school was in the process of changing assessment tools from Istation to mClass and didn't have access to the assessment until after the school year started (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Since Camellia's school began the year without a literacy assessment tool in place, she conducted virtual running records with her students to obtain some assessment data to inform her small group instruction (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Even though teachers were able to conduct some assessments virtually, having a clear sense of students' level of understanding was difficult to gauge remotely. Abigail felt that it was difficult to determine an accurate representation of students' comprehension and vocabulary development, when she was not able to see students complete their independent reading or assessment questions (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Magnolia thought her students responded well to her recent small group lessons, but she wasn't certain if their level of understanding would be enough to demonstrate student growth during remote learning (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Obtaining accurate and reliable data about students' comprehension was another considerable barrier to teachers' virtual comprehension instruction.

Challenges with Student Engagement

A critical challenge to engaging students in remote learning was the prevalence of student absences. Teachers shared concerns with some students who regularly missed class. Camellia shared that a few of her students regularly missed their small group instruction time (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). She was concerned with her students falling behind, since they

frequently didn't attend their online sessions. Magnolia highlighted the challenges in getting her students to attend their small group instruction in the afternoons, "we do it in the afternoon after teaching live from like 9 to 11, so they're kind of just over it" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Remote learning placed a lot of burden on students to remember their schedules and persevere through screen fatigue. Even when students were in attendance online, it was challenging to elicit their full participation. As Brooke was explaining how difficult it was to promote student dialogue, she said that it was also challenging to engage students in discussions when they wouldn't say anything or would keep their cameras off (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Attendance and engagement are necessary prerequisites for any meaningful learning to occur, and these were major obstacles to teachers' virtual comprehension instruction.

Reverting to Monologic Instruction

Faced with several instructional barriers, remote learning caused teachers' comprehension instruction to become more monologic than dialogic. Namely, virtual ELA comprehension instruction became teacher dominated. When asked how she incorporated student dialogue online, Florence divulged how she had dominated discussions:

"And I hate to say this because this is not my favorite form of teaching, but it really is more of a question-and-answer type of conversation. So, I asked a question, students raise their hands and then they answer the question out, just because you know it is chaotic when all students are trying to talk at once... it really is just a lot of lecture style teaching, which I'm not a huge fan of" (First Interview, September 9, 2020).

Having no access to virtual breakout rooms, she adopted a lecture style of teaching, which went against her own teaching beliefs. Teachers felt forced to take more ownership over the lesson than they were accustomed to. Dahlia explained that she has taken the greatest agency in remote

learning “because of the time constraint, it's mostly me doing everything and telling them what to do or asking them and... I don't know, they're first-graders and using technology” (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Given the many challenges in teaching young children comprehension online, teachers resorted to dominating the discussions and instruction.

Whereas teachers' traditional instruction had ample opportunities for student talk, teachers' remote instruction was largely done as a whole group. Most teachers lacked breakout room functions at the beginning of the year, and there were several challenges in scheduling small group instruction. Having to teach ELA comprehension in mostly whole group settings severely limited opportunities for student dialogue. Magnolia pointed out that she was unable to implement student talk strategies, like think-pair-share as a whole group online (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Dahlia similarly reflected how it was easier to engage students in discussions with small groups during traditional contexts (First Interview, September 18, 2020).

Being forced to teach more whole than small group instruction went against teachers' own preferences to engage students in differentiated small group comprehension instruction. Blaire expressed how much she missed teaching guided reading groups to support her students' comprehension, “so this is just really killing me to teach whole group... I love to differentiate for each set of kids that come to my blue table, as I call it, and work with them on whatever their individual needs are” (First Interview, September 8, 2020). Teachers knew the importance of differentiated small group instruction to reach individual students' learning needs. However, the barriers posed by remote learning inhibited small group instruction and discussion. Due to disruptions in their traditional routines in remote learning, teachers changed their teaching methods in ways incongruent with their own dialogic teaching beliefs.

In addition to causing instruction to become dominated by the teacher in mostly whole group settings, remote learning inhibited opportunities for student agency. Magnolia shared that it was hard to build students' agency in online comprehension instruction, when she had fewer opportunities to seek student input and interests in small group settings (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Brooke noted that she was not able to assign leadership roles like she used to in her traditional instruction (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Overall, teachers had difficulties finding ways to build student agency in remote learning. Most of the expectations for student agency were confined to students completing independent assignments. Haley stated that their limited instructional time prevented students from taking an active role in their learning, so students just completed quick independent assignments a couple of days per week to be accountable for their learning (Second Interview, October 5, 2020). While teachers' traditional instruction included responsive and student-centered practices to build student agency, remote learning relegated student agency to completing independent work. Teachers' ELA comprehension instruction regressed to monologic practices amidst remote learning, with teacher dominated instruction, minimal opportunities for student dialogue, and a lack of learner agency.

Imagining a New Mode of Comprehension Instruction

With the disruptions in routines, classroom discourse, and collective learning, teachers had to conceptualize an entirely new mode of comprehension instruction. Haley described how her grade level team at the beginning of the year was trying to figure out all the materials they would need to teach remotely, as they didn't have a specific curriculum for ELA (First Interview, September 4, 2020). On the other hand, Magnolia's school had an ELA curriculum, but she noted that it had not been simple to adapt it for remote learning (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Pandemic-induced remote learning forced teachers to abruptly change their materials and

plans for comprehension instruction. Also, teachers and students had to refigure an entirely new way of scheduling lessons throughout the day. Florence articulated the confusion in trying to maintain small group meet times with her third-graders:

“Because right now, it's taking so long because you know you have to tell them, ‘okay, you're coming back at two,’ or like ‘you don't leave but you can leave’... in a classroom, you just have it on the board ‘group four’ and then their names and say, ‘all right, group four come see me,’ but right now it's kind of, it's more on them, it's their responsibility to remember to come back and that's hard for an eight year old” (Second Interview, October 8, 2020).

It was clear that the same routines and methods for teaching comprehension in-person did not always translate to teaching virtually. Elementary teachers faced a novel challenge in learning how to teach young children comprehension virtually during the pandemic.

In many ways, teachers had to reinvent their structure for the school day. They greeted students during morning meetings online. They planned their day around synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Dahlia explained that she strived to connect students’ asynchronous work with the lesson and standard that they covered together synchronously (Second Interview, October 21, 2020). They held office hours to answer parent or student questions. Teachers adjusted their daily schedules to better meet students’ needs. When Blaire noticed that no one was coming to her office hour time, she changed it to an optional 1:1 intervention time for students (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers adapted to the uncertainties of remote learning, to design a new mode of comprehension instruction.

Learning How to Have Discussions Virtually

As teachers reimagined their ELA comprehension instruction, they learned how to facilitate discussions in a virtual environment. Teachers set expectations for muting and unmuting during whole class or small group discussions. Magnolia explained that she wouldn't ask students in her small groups to mute their microphones but would ask all students to mute during whole class discussions so one person could share out at a time (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). In order to know when an individual student wanted to share out, teachers using Google Meet asked students to use the raise hand feature. Blaire was the only teacher using Zoom, and her instructional assistant helped her call on students when she could not see online meeting participants during screen-sharing mode (First Interview, September 8, 2020).

In addition to learning when and how to speak out in virtual classrooms, teachers facilitated discussions with chat features in virtual meetings. Clover frequently asked her students to type the letter "S" in the chat to share out or a "Q" to ask questions during discussions (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). Abigail utilized the chat feature to encourage students to talk with one another and ask each other questions (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). She said that it was difficult at first to get her second-graders to talk with each other in the chat, but that they were improving as time went on. Teachers used meeting features to their advantage, to gain new modes of student input in virtual discussions.

While teachers found new ways to organize the logistics of discussions virtually, the progression of virtual discussions was still very different from traditional classroom discussions. The pace of online discussions was much slower. Magnolia stated that discussions were slow because her first-graders had to figure out how to mute and unmute every time they talked (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Brooke also explained how discussions took much longer

online, especially when students unmuted to tell her “anything and everything” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She highlighted that school was an awkward time for students during remote learning, and they would get antsy being at home on the computer every day. Engaging young students in online discussions was a gradual process.

Another unique element of virtual discussions was the absolute necessity of one person talking at a time to hear what was being said. Haley compared the practice of one student talking at a time online versus in-person, “trying to keep one person talking at a time, which is I guess technically ideal, but not really is not what's going to happen in person” (First Interview, September 4, 2020). Although it was harder to build more collective discussions with young children online, teachers discussed attempting to link student responses. Magnolia would ask students to build upon each other’s utterances, ““what can someone add on to what your friend just said, or why do you think your friend just said that”” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She further elaborated on how her facilitation was more involved when attempting to build collective dialogue online, “so you're kind of having to facilitate like picking other students, but trying to get that dialogue, but you're having to do a lot of the intermediary more so than you normally would” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers tried to generate co-constructed dialogue, but this involved more direct teacher intervention during remote learning.

Emerging Virtual Comprehension Instruction

At the time of our first interviews, teachers were in the emergent stages of developing their online instruction. Teachers were in the early stages of designing whole group ELA comprehension instruction, and there were minimal details about their comprehension lessons. Teachers were also in the emergent phases of creating small groups for virtual comprehension instruction. Several teachers had not yet begun meeting with small groups. Blaire particularly

struggled with the fact that her school had not yet begun guided reading groups, “this like I said is my fifteenth-year teaching and I’ve never gotten this far in the year without doing guided reading groups” (First Interview, September 8, 2020). While Brooke had started meeting with small groups, her students would not consistently log in for their meet times (First Interview, September 22, 2020). In redesigning their ELA comprehension instruction for remote learning, teachers’ whole and small group instruction were emergent at the beginning of the school year.

Theme IV Summary

Remote learning created many barriers in terms of instructional time, content, assessments, and student engagement. The challenges in remote learning disrupted daily school routines, classroom dialogue, and collective learning practices. As a result, teachers’ comprehension instruction unfortunately regressed to monologic forms of teaching. Comprehension instruction in remote learning was characterized by teacher dominated instruction with minimal opportunities for student talk or student agency. Despite the many challenges in pandemic-induced remote learning, teachers learned new methods of facilitating virtual discussions and began the emergent phases of designing instruction. Teachers engaged in the arduous task of pioneering virtual comprehension instruction for young children.

V. Enacting Dialogic Process: Responding to Knowledges, Students, Sociocultural Context, and Instruction

The previous thematic finding addressed the third research question, to explain how pandemic-induced remote learning inhibited teachers’ enactment of dialogic ELA comprehension instruction. This final theme also addressed the third research question, to encapsulate how teachers engaged in an iterative process of developing dialogic approaches to remote comprehension instruction, in spite of the challenges explained in the previous finding.

Teachers engaged in an ongoing process of designing and reflecting upon their dialogic comprehension instruction in remote learning. The foundation of teachers' virtual lesson plans began with addressing ELA comprehension standards. Building upon these standards, they developed further dialogic approaches to promote collective knowledge development in their virtual comprehension instruction. Teachers also accounted for larger sociocultural influences on students' learning. Finally, teachers reflected on several elements of their comprehension instruction, in enacting the process of developing dialogic comprehension instruction for remote learning. Figure 4.6 demonstrates how teachers enacted this dialogic process.

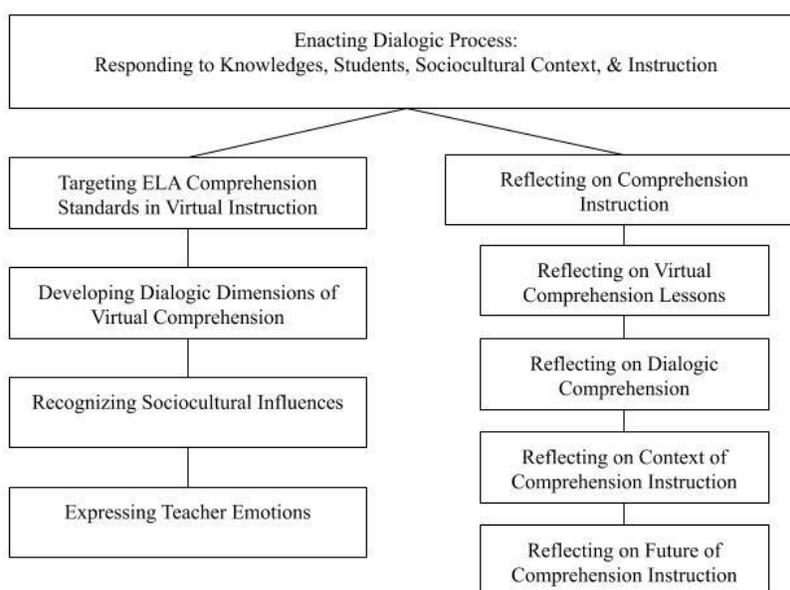


Figure 4.6 Enacting dialogic process: Responding to knowledges, students, sociocultural context, and instruction.

Targeting ELA Comprehension Standards in Virtual Instruction

ELA comprehension standards were at the core of teachers' virtual comprehension instruction. Teachers addressed several early elementary comprehension standards, such as

identifying the main idea and key details in an informational text. For example, Haley's virtual ELA comprehension lesson plan focused on the standard "RI 2.2- Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text" (Digital Artifact). Since identifying the main idea and key details were newer concepts for her second-graders, Haley introduced this standard by having students identify the main idea of a picture (Second Interview, October 5, 2020). She showed students a picture of a chipmunk eating a nut on a PowerPoint slide, and they discussed as a class what the main idea of the picture should be. Then later in the week, they read a multiparagraph text on ocean life as a class and discussed the main idea of each paragraph. She built upon students' understanding of the main idea of an image to eventually identify the main idea of each paragraph within a multiparagraph text.

Teachers also focused on standards for reading literature. Florence's virtual comprehension lesson addressed the third-grade standard for using details from a story to determine the central message (Digital Artifact). At the beginning of the week, she first modeled how to identify a central message using a short cartoon of a boy riding a bike. Florence encouraged students to collaboratively come up with a central message for the cartoon, "I kind of let them come up with a central message, instead of saying like, you know, this is what I think it is" (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Florence guided students in developing their own interpretation of the central message and explained that she would provide redirection only if their ideas were off topic. Their week continued with guided practice of identifying the central message of longer texts and finding details to support the central message. Students then completed an independent assignment on Friday to determine the central message and details of a new story. Florence's central message lesson gradually released responsibility from teacher modeling, to guided practice, and ended with independent student practice.

Dahlia's lesson also addressed the literature standard of using illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events (Digital Artifact). As a class, they examined the images in their text about pumpkins to discuss the setting, characters, and events in the story.

Dahlia's students also relied on the illustrations to develop a deeper understanding of the story's theme of treating others the way you would like to be treated:

“We're focusing on looking at the illustration, looking at their faces and they, you know, they were able to say, ‘oh the pumpkins are being bullies... they're not treating them right you know,’ and one girl says, ‘we're not using, they're not following the golden rule to treat others the way you want to be treated’” (Second Interview, October 21, 2020).

Dahlia's lesson utilized illustrations to strengthen students' comprehension of children's literature. Although teachers' comprehension instruction was more emergent during our first interviews, teachers were able to provide more detailed accounts of their ELA comprehension instruction by our second interviews. In designing their virtual instruction, teachers targeted several elementary ELA comprehension standards.

Developing Dialogic Dimensions of Virtual Comprehension

Growing Critical Thinking

As teachers were constructing their virtual ELA comprehension instruction around specific standards, they were also developing further elements of dialogic teaching. Although limited instructional time was a challenge for teachers to overcome, there was evidence that a greater focus on critical thinking was beginning to emerge as remote learning continued. Brooke asked higher-order questions throughout the week as the class was reading *The Salamander Room* (Mazer, 1994), like “Why does the illustrator draw the salamander looking out the window?” (Digital Artifact). Likewise, Magnolia focused on asking students more open-ended

and higher-order thinking questions, rather than just retelling questions as the school year progressed (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Moving past retelling information from the text, teachers included more open-ended questions to stimulate higher-order thinking in online discussions. Over time, teachers' instruction became more focused on critical and higher-order thinking, in striving towards dialogic text-based discussions.

Promoting Collaboration

To overcome the largely teacher dominated aspects of remote learning, teachers found further opportunities to promote collaboration in remote learning. Several of the guided practice activities in teachers' virtual comprehension lessons included opportunities for collaboration. After Clover modeled a tree map graphic organizer with key details, she and students collaboratively completed one to identify the key details that supported the main idea in their texts (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). In Abigail's lesson for formulating who, what, when, where, why, and how questions, she asked students to create questions about the text as they read (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). When they reread the text the next day, they collaboratively answered the questions that students formulated the day before. While designing collaborative learning was challenging in remote learning, teachers still found ways to include whole class collaboration in their virtual comprehension lessons.

Building Collective Knowledge

Although collective learning was limited in remote learning, teachers pieced together various sources of student knowledge to build towards collective knowledge development. Florence shared how students took the lead in the discussions to connect their personal experiences to texts, "instead of really me doing more of the connections... it's more of the students, saying, well, 'hey, you know, this makes me think about when I do this or when we

read about this” (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Florence explained that she used student-initiated text connections as a launching pad to discuss their ideas and connections further, “so let's talk more about that and how that connects to what we're talking about today” (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Abigail would also seek student’s background knowledge related to texts to form a collective base of student background knowledge, ““can they liken this situation or this place or this machine to something they might have seen’... they say like, ‘okay, here we have a backhoe at home’... ‘how many have seen that’” (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). She facilitated a collective source of background knowledge amongst students within their ELA discussions. Teachers activated and connected students’ background knowledge and lived experiences, to facilitate collective knowledge development in remote learning.

Seeking Student Talk

Teachers overwhelmingly stated that developing student to student talk was the most challenging aspect of remote learning. Teachers found it difficult to incorporate student talk in their whole group ELA comprehension instruction. Camellia pointed out that student talk strategies like think-pair-share were not easily transferred to remote learning (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). Most teachers used Google Classroom for their virtual platform, which had not yet rolled out their breakout room feature. Since Blaire was the only teacher whose school used Zoom, she was the only teacher who had the capability to implement breakout rooms in her whole group ELA instruction (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). By our second interview, Blaire had started using breakout rooms with her first-graders, where they could discuss higher-order thinking questions with a partner prior to coming back and sharing with the whole group. Having the capacity to use breakout rooms allowed Blaire to generate peer dialogue and interaction in her whole group ELA comprehension instruction.

While most teachers were limited in their ability to include student talk in whole group instruction, they developed additional opportunities for student talk as they began meeting with their virtual small groups. Being in smaller groups provided flexibility for students to unmute and voice their ideas in text discussions. Magnolia's students were able to leave their microphones unmuted in small groups without there being too much background noise (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She found that students enjoyed talking to each other in small groups, as they could bounce ideas off each other and help one another read and discuss texts. Florence noted she was able to prompt more student-to-student dialogue in small groups (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). After one student gave their opinion about a passage, Florence would then prompt another student to respond to their classmate with what they thought about that idea or if they agreed or disagreed. She was able to transition to a discussion mediator and promote more student talk in small groups than in a whole group. While student talk was vastly different in remote learning, small group settings allowed for greater opportunities for student dialogue. By seeking opportunities for critical thinking, collaboration, collective knowledge, and student talk, teachers' virtual comprehension instruction began to develop dialogic practices.

Recognizing Broader Sociocultural Influences

In addition to developing dialogic practices to support students' knowledge development and comprehension, teachers understood that they needed to build positive relationships with students to help them succeed in remote learning. Abigail shared her goal to support students' holistic learning needs during remote learning, "my goal is to love them, to make sure they're safe, and to teach them and teach them to the best of my ability" (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Abigail recognized that students not only needed content instruction, but they also needed to feel cared for and safe, especially during remote learning. Florence also reflected on the

significance of student relationships to develop responsive instruction, “I feel like the most important thing about teaching in general is just getting to know your students, so I would often just relate [discussion] back to things I knew about them” (First Interview, September 9, 2020). Engaging students in dialogic discussions involved teachers knowing about their students and incorporating their knowledges and experiences in discussions. Remote learning made clear the importance of student relationships to develop dialogic and responsive practices.

Teachers found creative ways to enhance student relationships in remote learning. For instance, Camellia organized a remote lunch with the teacher, where she and students ate their lunch together and watched fun videos to build strong relationships remotely (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). Also, Brooke made time for informal conversations with students to build positive relationships in remote learning, “sometimes they just need to talk, so sometimes we just have a full-blown discussion... I just let them talk and we just sit there and laugh and giggle and whatever else that we want to do” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Remote learning stifled the social interaction found within traditional contexts, but teachers strived to strengthen student relationships. Teachers not only gained dialogic practices in their virtual comprehension instruction, but they also developed positive student relationships, positioning themselves in remote learning *with* students.

Moreover, teachers’ instruction was contextualized within the larger pandemic crisis. Abigail revealed that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic influenced ELA discussions with her second-graders: “a lot of discussion, unfortunately, is about the pandemic and life, you know, living in this in this time... now we’re considered to be in the red, you know, we’ve talked about why we are in the red” (First Interview, September 5, 2020). Rather than ignoring the current context, Abigail integrated the current sociocultural context into her comprehension instruction.

Abigail read *Little Lion Goes to School* (Magnus, 2003) with her students, which was a story about a boy who lives and goes to school in a fishing village in Jamaica (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). After reading the text, she facilitated a discussion with students about how they think the boy's life in his village and his school may have changed during this pandemic.

Abigail wanted students to understand that they were not alone in the global pandemic:

“We can have those discussions about changes around the world, so they understand that this system, this whatever is happening, is not only affecting us, it's also affecting everybody. It's affecting the entire world and people are coping or dealing with it differently... It is happening and people are facing it, so don't feel alone” (Second Interview, October 10, 2020).

Abigail facilitated students in making connections between the text and the larger worldwide pandemic to help students cope with the pandemic crisis. She contextualized her lesson within the sociocultural context of the current pandemic. In developing dialogic teaching for remote learning, teachers attended to significant sociocultural influences on students' learning.

Expressing Teacher Emotions

As teachers reflected on their instruction, they also expressed feelings of discouragement from their experiences of teaching during pandemic-induced remote learning. Florence felt that it was difficult to remain positive when talking about her remote instruction, “I'm going to try to stay positive about it— it's not the way that I would want to teach it, though” (First Interview, September 9, 2020). She expressed feelings of discouragement in being confined to teach from a question-and-answer type of approach. When I asked Magnolia how she felt her small group instruction was going since it had recently started, she shared her frustration with limited student attendance and attention, “it's not great, and they're so distracted by what everything that's

around them that they're just really not into it, so which really, because I put a lot of effort into it" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers felt overwhelmed by the switch to remote learning. In order to deal with these frustrations, they took a day by day approach. Brooke stated, "at this point, I'm taking one day at a time, I'm thankful for who joins and we just, we make it work together, day by day" (First Interview, September 22, 2020). Trying to enact dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction in remote learning was certainly challenging, and teachers understandably felt discouraged and stressed. Teachers persevered through remote learning day by day to continually refine their ELA comprehension instruction.

Reflecting on Comprehension Instruction

Reflecting on Virtual Lessons

During our second interviews, teachers were asked to reflect on a recent lesson from their virtual ELA comprehension instruction. In doing so, they had several reflections related to the content and focus of their comprehension lessons. Since limited instructional time was a notable challenge in remote learning, Florence determined she could combine additional ELA standards within her whole group lesson on central message if she were to reteach it, "maybe include a play in there because then they're not only working with central message, but it's kind of pulling in that other standard... of what plays look like and how we read them" (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Florence problem-solved methods to combine multiple standards, so that students would continue to read and comprehend a range of text genres in remote learning. From her whole group lesson, Dahlia realized the need to include a larger range of texts to teach students how to use illustrations to help with comprehension and retelling (Second Interview, October 21, 2020). While her grade level team decided to stick to one text for the week, Dahlia reflected on the importance of teaching with multiple texts to show a range of text settings.

Teachers also had reflections specific to their virtual small group instruction. In thinking about how she might continue to revise her virtual small group instruction, Magnolia reflected on how she wanted to explicitly target specific strands of literacy to facilitate students' comprehension (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She connected her recent participation in early literacy professional development to her focus on explicit instruction, "I don't know if you ever heard of LETRS... so, I'm doing that training right now, so really, you know, it's a balanced equation to have comprehension... I want to include more comprehension and more phonemic awareness" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Magnolia reflected on her small group instruction and recent professional development to determine a need for explicit instruction in the multiple strands of language and literacy within reading comprehension.

Furthermore, teachers reflected on the importance of differentiating their comprehension instruction for diverse learners. Camellia shared that her biggest takeaway from her virtual instruction was to ensure all students, particularly students who needed further support, understood the lesson:

"I try to get them involved in the whole group as possible, and then when, you know, when we do the guided reading and writing, I try to like encourage them to try something, you know, push their self forward and you know be persevere, and I think that's like the biggest takeaway I've noticed with like all my lessons. And I'm always trying to figure out, like who really understood, and if they didn't understand, what can I do to make them understand" (Second Interview, October 8, 2020).

Camellia reflected on the need to determine students' understanding to inform the next steps in her teaching, particularly for students who benefit from additional support. Blaire referenced how she would normally start her literacy centers by the second week of school to provide

differentiation and was determined to find ways to promote differentiated instruction in remote learning, “we're gonna have to start differentiating for them, we can't wait any longer” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers’ reflections on their virtual lessons were focused on meeting diverse learners’ needs.

Teachers also reflected on the ways they collaborated with their colleagues to design virtual comprehension instruction. As a first-year teacher, Dahlia shared she felt hesitant to speak up with her concerns about only using one text for the whole week to teach text illustrations. However, Dahlia realized the need to “open up and suggest stuff that I think will be better for my students” (Second Interview, October 21, 2020). She learned the importance of voicing her ideas with her grade level team, to better design instruction for her students’ needs. Blaire reflected on how she received pushback from her team about wanting to incorporate more diverse texts in the second quarter, “you know, we live in a changing world... and if changing our stories up so that we're being more inclusive of the children that we serve, then that is what is best for kids” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Despite her colleagues wishing to continue to use the same texts, Blaire advocated for multicultural texts that were inclusive of diverse cultures.

In addition to advocating for the interests of students amongst their colleagues, teachers expressed the need for greater teacher collaboration during remote learning. Camellia stated, “remote learning makes you feel like you’re more in a bubble than ever before” (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). Beyond having training on specific digital platforms and tools, she felt that teachers needed schoolwide time to collaboratively plan and share ideas with one another. Blaire suggested North Carolina’s Department of Public Instruction create a statewide database for all teachers to share their lessons from remote learning (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She also recommended teachers include their reflections to share insights with others,

“and even like their reflections on, you know, here's my lesson, but during this part I did this and this and this, because it just worked better for this group” (Second Interview, October 7, 2020).

Teachers reflected on several facets of designing virtual comprehension instruction, in the process of becoming dialogic in remote learning.

Reflecting on Dialogic Comprehension

Teachers gave further reflections regarding the development of dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction in remote learning. Developing a greater emphasis on deeper forms of thinking in comprehension instruction was identified as an important area of need. Abigail reflected how remote learning stole the ability to focus on critical thinking, “I think being online has robbed that some because now you have to do more explicit teaching, cause they’re gonna get distracted, they’re gonna get bored” (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Challenges with maintaining student attention and engagement stifled teachers’ ability to spend as much time on developing higher-order thinking as they could when they were in person. Magnolia also shared concern with her first-grade students’ ability to answer higher-order thinking questions, as she has had to spend more time reteaching kindergarten content (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers were gravely concerned with the current limited focus on higher-order thinking in remote learning. In planning to incorporate critical thinking in her upcoming virtual comprehension instruction, Blaire explained that she intended to use anchor charts to better support her first-graders’ critical thinking (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She planned to include anchor charts with thinking stems and question stems, to stimulate deeper conversations and critical thinking. While teachers were able to engage students in some forms of complex thinking, such as argumentation literacy in the second finding, they were not able to facilitate students’ deeper thinking in their virtual instruction to the extent that they normally would. As

such, incorporating critical and higher-order thinking was a prominent area of reflection for developing teachers' dialogic approaches to remote comprehension instruction.

As limited student talk was described as the greatest obstacle to overcome in remote learning, cultivating student talk was also a key point of reflection. Haley shared that she had continued to reflect after our first interview on the challenges with developing student dialogue in remote learning, “we talked about like the dialogue, trying to do that online is really difficult... and then if they unmute then you could hear the entire daycare... we try to dialogue—it never really works” (Second Interview, October 5, 2020). She highlighted that the logistical challenges in trying to generate student talk inhibited the level of dialogue that could be achieved in a virtual classroom. While student dialogue was identified as a critical area for continued growth in remote learning, Florence also reflected on the complexity of facilitating student talk in general (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Florence explained that developing student talk in any setting requires careful planning and facilitation:

“Not only is it hard with virtual learning, but I feel like that's more difficult in general just because I feel like it takes a little more planning to do that, and you have to know the right moments to do that” (Second Interview, October 10, 2020).

She explained that developing student talk in comprehension instruction involved considerable effort and planning even in traditional contexts, and the complexity of integrating student talk was even more apparent amidst remote learning. Also, teachers pondered future implications for student talk after remote learning. Magnolia was interested in seeing how her first-graders will be able to engage in conversations when they return to the school building because they have spent so much time talking or typing through a computer (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She considered how the uniqueness of student dialogue in a virtual classroom could potentially

impact students' language development for in-person discussions. In the process of developing dialogic comprehension instruction for remote learning, teachers reflected on the importance of developing higher-order thinking and student dialogue.

Reflecting on Context of Comprehension Instruction

Teachers also considered the significance of their evolving instructional contexts on their comprehension instruction. In particular, teachers longed to teach students in-person again.

Dahlia looked forward to being able to work with her students in-person once again, as she will have more opportunities to teach small, guided reading groups to bolster critical thinking and student talk (First Interview, September 18, 2020). Not only did teachers long for the affordances of teaching in person, but they also maintained that technology could not adequately replace traditional instruction. Clover reflected on how collaborating with technology could not replace in-person peer collaboration, "I could assign something... like a Google Doc where they're both adding to it... so that's one way they could work together. I still feel like that's different than actually talking live and working on it together in person" (Second Interview, October 8, 2020).

While remote learning equipped Dahlia with greater knowledge of digital tools to use in her ELA instruction, like Seesaw, she felt that teaching solely with technology was more of a hindrance than an enhancement (Second Interview, October 21, 2020). Dahlia further elaborated that teaching virtually was particularly troublesome for ELA, since it inhibited collective discussions:

"I think that's easier with math because, you know, they have a whiteboard they do the stuff they show me the steps, I'm like, oh they got it down, they know what to do, but when it comes to ELA it's more of me talking and me reading. I don't think when it comes to writing and reading... I don't think it's a good, a good way of teaching" (Second Interview, October 21, 2020).

Remote learning limited opportunities for collective discussions to advance students' comprehension and knowledge. Teachers reflected that teaching students face-to-face was irreplaceable, especially for dialogic ELA comprehension instruction.

While several teachers' school districts planned to resume in-person instruction in the weeks following our second interviews, teachers faced the sobering reality that they would still not be returning to normal instruction. Abigail noted that she would need to modify collaborative activities if her students returned to the building, so they would not be physically sharing materials or working too close together (First Interview, September 5, 2020). In this way, in-person instruction during the pandemic would still not be a return to normalcy. Similarly, Haley shared that she would at least be able to foster student dialogue when students return to the building, since they can still follow social distancing when holding discussions (Second Interview, October 5, 2020). Teachers were aware that students' return to the physical classroom amidst the pandemic would still be very different from their traditional instruction. Several teachers also said their schools would be switching students across classrooms, to accommodate families' different choices for in-person or remote learning. Teachers continued to face uncertainties in their teaching contexts amidst the ongoing pandemic.

Although teachers found traditional instruction more effective than virtual instruction, they did reflect on the value of preparing students for a technology driven society. Camellia explained how it was important to teach students technological skills to participate in this "digital era" (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). Likewise, Brooke acknowledged there have been many challenges in remote learning, but a benefit has been students' improved use of technology that can prepare them for the real world (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers also realized that technology would continue to play a significant role in education, even beyond the

pandemic. Blaire predicted that districts would continue to use remote learning, even after the pandemic subsides to accommodate inclement weather days (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). She envisioned that public schools would continue to utilize some form of remote learning, signaling the lasting need for technological literacy. As remote learning may continue to be a permanent fixture in education, teachers highlighted the significance of equipping students with technological knowledge and skills in their virtual instruction.

Even though the remote context came with many instructional barriers, several teachers reflected upon their time in remote learning as a rewarding experience. Magnolia stated that she enjoyed teaching virtually because it motivated her to work harder to meet her students' needs, "I think seeing the kids, and seeing where they are versus where they should be, is even more motivation to work even harder to get them where they need to be" (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Blaire also reflected on how remote learning strengthened her ability to scaffold individual students in developing a response in discussions, rather than just moving on to another student who has a response prepared (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). In addition to finding rewarding impacts on their instruction, teachers valued the opportunity to reflect on their virtual comprehension instruction. At the conclusion of our first interview, Haley revealed how she enjoyed reflecting on the ways her comprehension instruction changed from traditional to remote contexts, "it's cool to talk about it, to think about it" (First Interview, September 4, 2020). Teachers reflected on their unstable instructional contexts, to continuously redesign their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction.

Reflecting on Future of Comprehension Instruction

While the future of pandemic-induced remote learning is unclear, teachers identified several ways in which their future teaching has been impacted by remote learning. Teachers felt

remote learning strengthened notable aspects of their instruction. Since remote learning had improved Blaire's scaffolding of individual students in discussions, she wanted to continue this practice in her future teaching (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Magnolia felt that remote learning made her a better teacher overall, after working to maintain children's engagement through a screen (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Teachers also planned to continue to use digital resources, like Seesaw, for whenever they return to some state of normalcy. Brooke intended to optimize students' technological expertise to "double the fun" of in-person teaching with digital tools from remote learning (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Also, Abigail summarized how everything she learned from remote learning will forever impact her teaching:

"I think teaching for me will never be the same. I've learned so much, and that has been a struggle is incorporating technology, and I've learned so much, might be very little to somebody, but I've learned so much of how to incorporate technology to aid these 21st century learners. And I would have a different approach because I now can see the flip side of not being face-to-face, or the challenges that I face and see how I can better improve those challenges. And there are so many things going on in my mind but, Janet, teaching for me would never be the same" (Second Interview, October 10, 2020).

Abigail not only gained confidence in applying technology in her pedagogy, but she also felt better able to face challenges in continuously improving her instruction. While the new normal for teaching is yet to be determined, teachers' felt their experiences in pandemic-induced remote learning would have a lasting impact on their comprehension instruction.

Finally, teachers identified multiple areas for professional development in the event that remote learning continues to be a prominent instructional platform. As facilitating discussions was a critical challenge in remote learning, Brooke recommended professional development for

supporting student engagement in discussions (Second Interview, October 7, 2020). Abigail also suggested professional development to elicit critical and higher-ordering thinking in ELA discussions (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Due to the loss of instructional content in remote learning, Florence felt that teacher support for combining comprehension standards would be helpful (Second Interview, October 10, 2020). Another important area for support was small group instruction. Dahlia desired more support for implementing virtual small group comprehension instruction (Second Interview, October 21, 2020), and Clover likewise wanted guidance on scheduling, resources, and engagement for small groups (Second Interview, October 8, 2020). Outside of comprehension specifically, several teachers recommended training for virtual writing instruction and support for parents to navigate online learning systems. While the future of remote learning is uncertain, teachers carefully considered future implications for their comprehension instruction. In reflecting upon their current and future practice, teachers enacted the process of developing dialogic ELA comprehension instruction for remote learning.

Theme V Summary

Developing dialogic comprehension instruction in remote learning was an ongoing process. Teachers enacted this process through targeting ELA comprehension standards to set the foundation for their virtual lessons. They also contemplated ways to develop dialogic approaches to teaching comprehension, including higher-order thinking, collaboration, collective knowledge, and student talk. As they continued to develop their practice, they addressed notable sociocultural influences of student relationships and the global pandemic on children's comprehension learning. Teachers also expressed their emotional reactions to teaching remotely, and they persevered to strengthen their instruction despite feelings of stress and discouragement.

Finally, they reflected on multiple aspects of their virtual comprehension instruction in the ongoing process of becoming dialogic.

Chapter Summary

The five emergent themes outlined in this chapter provided a deeper understanding of how rural elementary teachers perceived and enacted their dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning. In contexts of traditional schooling, teachers described their comprehension instruction as an equity of learning ownership with students. Students were upheld as equitable agents in their learning through dialogic, student-centered, and responsive practices. Across both traditional and remote settings, teachers described supporting multiple sources of student knowledge in their comprehension pedagogy to engage in a discourse of multiple knowledges. Teachers drew upon students' local funds of knowledge to contextualize multiple ways of knowing within the local rural community. The transition to remote learning caused disruptions in instructional routines, dialogue, and collective learning, thereby limiting the capacity for dialogic instruction. Despite notable instructional barriers, teachers engaged in the ongoing process of designing and reflecting upon instruction, to develop dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction. These five themes inform the substantive theory of rural elementary teachers' process of developing dialogic ELA comprehension instruction for remote learning, which is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction to the Chapter

This study explored how nine rural elementary teachers described and enacted dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction during contexts of pandemic-induced remote learning. Given the limited scholarship surrounding dialogic ELA comprehension instruction with young learners in virtual classrooms, this study employed grounded theory methodology to develop substantive theory of how remote learning impacted teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction. For my first research question, I sought to understand how teachers themselves described their dialogic comprehension practices, both prior to and during pandemic-induced remote learning. I also examined how elementary teachers drew upon their rural students' diverse local funds of knowledge in their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction, to address my second research question. To answer my third research question, I investigated how pandemic-induced remote learning influenced teachers' ability to enact these dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction. Therefore, this study provided emergent theoretical explanations of rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction across unstable instructional contexts and pandemic times.

In this fifth and final chapter, I summarize the qualitative grounded theory design and constant comparative method of analysis. I also summarize the five thematic findings presented in the previous chapter. I then situate the findings within this study's dialogic theoretical framework, to construct substantive theory of the process of perceiving and enacting dialogic comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning (Glaser & Strauss, 2017;

Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After synthesizing the substantive theory built from this study's findings, I discuss the emergent findings in relation to the existing research literature on comprehension instruction, dialogic teaching, and rural literacy education. Lastly, I conclude this dissertation with implications for practice, policy, and research.

Summary of Methodology

I utilized grounded theory methodology to create theoretical explanations of rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction. Grounded theorists build theoretical explanations of a process, by grounding the emerging theory in the data collected with research participants (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Researchers often select a grounded theory approach to qualitative research when there is no existing theory to describe a process or action (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To the best of my knowledge, no prior research has investigated rural elementary teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction with young children in remote learning. Accordingly, this study applied grounded theory methodology to develop substantive theory on rural elementary teachers' perceptions and enactments of dialogic ELA comprehension instruction amidst the novel era of pandemic-induced remote learning.

To best understand how remote learning impacted rural elementary teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction, I purposely sampled rural elementary teachers who described their traditional comprehension instruction in alignment with dialogic practices, using a screening survey. After distributing the online screening survey, nine rural elementary teachers participated in virtual interviews and digital artifact data collection. All teachers selected for the study taught in a North Carolina rural school district and their comprehension practices and goals were congruous with dialogic teaching. Elementary teachers taught in grades first through third and held 1-15 years of experience. Three of the teachers taught in a rural-

fringe district, which was located five or fewer miles from an urbanized area. Six teachers taught in a rural-distance district, being more than five but less than twenty-five miles from an urbanized area. Each teacher participated in two virtual interviews, approximately one month apart in time. Prior to the second interview, teachers also shared digital artifacts of their virtual comprehension lesson plans and information on their current ELA curriculum.

I analyzed 18 semi-structured interview transcripts and 25 digital artifacts using the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After conducting the first round of interviews, I conducted the initial round of first-level open coding, to uncover concepts informing teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction. I refined these codes into categories for the initial round of second-level axial coding. Then, I collected additional data through the second round of interviews and teachers' digital artifacts to ensure qualitative data saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After collecting these additional data, I once again enacted first-level open coding and second-level axial coding. Next, I analyzed and compared the entire body of codes and categories, to determine five central categories in third-level selecting coding. These five central categories represent the theoretical scheme of how rural elementary teachers perceived and enacted dialogic ELA comprehension instruction amidst remote learning.

Summary of Findings

I. Describing Dialogic Comprehension in Traditional Contexts: Equity of Learning

Ownership

Teachers described dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction as equity of learning ownership within traditional, in-person contexts. Prior to pandemic-induced remote learning, teachers' traditional ELA comprehension instruction centered dialogic teaching

practices to leverage dialogue and collective learning experiences. Teachers described an abundance of classroom talk, student talk, and co-constructed dialogue to foster comprehension in their traditional ELA block. Students were upheld as active agents in their learning through collaborative learning experiences. Teachers described their traditional instructional practices as dialogic, student-centered, and responsive, to support students as equitable owners over their comprehension learning.

II. Describing Dialogic Comprehension Across Contexts: Discourse of Multiple Knowledges

Teachers described incorporating multiple sources of student knowledge in their ELA comprehension instruction, both in-person and online. They were attuned to the multiple strands of literacy that contribute to successful text comprehension and supported a range of decoding and language skills to develop children's early comprehension. In addition to identifying multiple cognitive influences on students' comprehension, teachers also adopted a dialogic stance to teaching comprehension, which focused on engaging students in dialogue and collective learning experiences. They facilitated reader-text interactions to support diverse sources of students' academic and cultural knowledge. Teachers guided students to analyze and reason through a multitude of perspectives, by promoting their argumentation skills. Across both learning platforms, teachers described attending to diverse funds of knowledge in their ELA comprehension instruction.

III. Contextualizing Multiple Ways of Knowing: Sustaining the Local

As teachers described the multiple sources of knowledge that they leveraged in their comprehension instruction, they also revealed the ways in which they incorporated rural students' local funds of knowledge. Teachers facilitated students' text connections to local rural communities to both affirm their local funds of knowledge and introduce them to the cultures of

diverse communities. They also invited community members into their classrooms to integrate ELA content with the local knowledge of children's rural communities. Also, two teachers who were not originally from the rural school community, Abigail and Dahlia, were highly conscious of the significance of place in their instruction. Dahlia discussed using diverse texts to expose students to new communities, while also expressing pride in students' local communities. As Abigail continued to learn about the local community, she also engaged students in collectively learning about the history of their rural community. While teachers cultivated diverse sources of knowledge in their instruction, they contextualized a diversity of perspectives from the perspective of the local rural community. Teachers not only integrated students' local knowledge in their instruction, but they also collaborated with families and the local community to support students through remote learning. In considering the needs of their local communities, teachers advocated for equity in their local schools to sustain the future of rural literacy education.

IV. Regressing to Monologic: Disruptions in Routines, Dialogue, and Collective Learning

Pandemic-induced remote learning created many instructional barriers, limiting teachers' ability to enact dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction. Teachers' traditional routines, classroom dialogue, and collective learning practices were disrupted by the switch to remote learning. Teachers faced several challenges to developing virtual comprehension instruction, including less instructional time, less content, challenges with assessments, and reduced student engagement. These barriers caused teachers' instruction to revert to monologic practices during remote learning. In particular, virtual comprehension instruction was characterized by teacher dominated instruction, stifling opportunities for student talk and agency. Transferring ELA comprehension instruction to virtual learning required teachers to reimagine their comprehension instruction. They learned how to facilitate discussions with young learners through virtual

platforms. At the time of our first interviews, teachers were still in the emergent phases of planning and designing a new mode of virtual comprehension instruction.

V. Enacting Dialogic Process: Responding to Knowledges, Students, Sociocultural Context, and Instruction

By the time of our second interviews, teachers had spent more time refining their virtual comprehension instruction. Teachers engaged in an ongoing process of designing and reflecting upon their virtual instruction to develop dialogic teaching practices. Teachers' comprehension lessons were centered on specific ELA comprehension standards to target students' comprehension development in the early elementary grades. Teachers also developed dialogic dimensions to their standards-driven virtual comprehension instruction, including seeking further opportunities for higher-order thinking, collaboration, collective knowledge construction, and student talk. In recognizing the influence of student relationships and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, teachers attended to key sociocultural impacts on students' comprehension learning. Refining virtual comprehension instruction was an arduous process, and teachers revealed emotions of discouragement and stress while enacting this process. Nonetheless, teachers persevered by adopting a day by day philosophy of navigating virtual comprehension instruction. In addition to continuously refining their instruction, teachers reflected upon several aspects of their virtual comprehension instruction. They contemplated their recent comprehension lessons, dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction, unstable instructional contexts, and the future of their pedagogy. Therefore, teachers enacted an ongoing process of refining and reflecting upon instruction, to continuously cultivate dialogic approaches to virtual ELA comprehension instruction.

Theory Building: The Process of Dialogic Comprehension Instruction

This study applied grounded theory methodology, to build theoretical explanations of rural elementary teachers' perceptions and enactments of dialogic ELA comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning. The purpose of grounded theory is to develop substantive theory for processes which have no existing theoretical explanations (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This study positioned teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction as a process within specific contexts of place and time. Following this study's dialogic theoretical framework for comprehension, I now outline the substantive theory for rural elementary teachers' process of developing dialogic comprehension instruction in remote learning.

Perceiving Dialogism in Comprehension Instruction

Teachers' process of developing dialogic comprehension instruction during remote learning began with their beliefs and epistemologies toward the construct of comprehension. Specifically, teachers identified a dialogic stance towards ELA comprehension instruction, drawing upon multiple theoretical paradigms to understand comprehension from diverse perspectives (Bakhtin, 1981). Dialogism embraces diverse conflicting viewpoints through heteroglossia to construct broader and deeper understandings (Bakhtin, 1981). Likewise, teachers invoked both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives in describing their dialogic comprehension practices. Teachers' comprehension beliefs included cognitive theoretical paradigms, to understand comprehension as a product of constrained decoding and unconstrained language skills (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Paris, 2005). Teachers also upheld sociocultural views of comprehension, by recognizing comprehension as a social interaction between students' funds of knowledge and the messages presented in texts (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Moll et al., 1992;

Moll, 2019; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Teachers understood comprehension as an outcome score and sought to increase students' reading comprehension achievement.

Simultaneously, they valued students' engagement in comprehension as a social activity, to extend existing knowledge and collectively construct new knowledge. Through embodying these conflicting ways of defining comprehension (Bakhtin, 1981), teachers perceived comprehension as both a summative goal and a means to cultivate deeper learning (Pearson et al., 2020).

In addition to intertwining multiple theories in their comprehension beliefs, teachers identified a dialogic stance towards the role of knowledge in comprehension instruction. Teachers supported the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and comprehension (Duke et al., 2011; Pearson et al., 2020). In the construction-integration model (Kintsch, 1998), readers construct a situation model of a text through connecting their understanding of the text with existing knowledge from previous learning or lived experiences. Teachers understood the importance of activating students' existing knowledge through facilitating reader-text connections to promote text comprehension. They viewed comprehension as an active reading process, which engaged students' representations of textual ideas and their prior knowledge in a cyclical interaction to develop new understandings (van den Broek et al., 1999). Teachers prioritized collective discussions in a knowledge-building approach to comprehension instruction, where comprehension was maintained as an ongoing dialogue between knowledge and ELA text content.

Furthermore, teachers promoted a plurality of knowledge in their ELA comprehension instruction. Teachers did not feel that there was one way of thinking about or responding to texts, as they affirmed students' diverse ways of knowing as assets to develop their reading comprehension (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Milner, 2020; McIntyre, 2010; Moll et al., 1992; Moll,

2019). Across their traditional and remote instruction, teachers leveraged students' academic, cultural, and local funds of knowledge to denounce a singular way of engaging in literacy practices (Mills, 2016). Instead of perceiving students' diverse cultural backgrounds and lived experiences as deficits to dominant perceptions of language and literacy (Milner, 2020; Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2018), teachers capitalized upon students' cultural knowledge to advance their comprehension learning (Gay, 2002; Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Paris, 2012). Similarly, they understood literacy and comprehension in relation to their local spaces (Corbett & Donehower, 2017). They contextualized a plurality of knowledge within the local funds of knowledge of their students' rural communities. Teachers believed comprehension to be an interaction of multiple cultures, knowledges, and lived experiences (Mills, 2016).

Dialogue was at the heart of teachers' comprehension and knowledge ideologies. Language was an essential instrument in their ELA comprehension instruction (Vygotsky, 1978), as teachers felt students learned most effectively when they were engaging in collaborative discussions about texts. Just as languages in heteroglossia reflect mirrors of diverse perspectives in the world (Bakhtin, 1981), teachers integrated students' voices in discourse to understand ELA texts from the range and depth of students' collective worldviews. Teachers embodied Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism in seeking deeper understandings through listening to diverse and divergent voices. They approached collaborative discussions and argumentation literacy as conduits to constructing multi-layered understandings from ELA texts. Teachers' dialogic teaching philosophy was evident in the ways in which they upheld students' as equitable agents in constructing knowledge. They identified a dialogic perspective to comprehension and knowledge, by centering collective discussions to co-construct new knowledge with students

(Alexander, 2020; Bakhtin, 1981; Mercer, 2019). Hence, teachers perceived their instruction from a dialogic and relational view of comprehension paradigms, knowledges, and voices.

Enacting Dialogism in Comprehension Instruction

While teachers upheld a dialogic view of ELA comprehension instruction, their enactment of these dialogic beliefs was inextricably shaped by unstable instructional contexts (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). In the traditional classroom, teachers were able to uphold students as agentic co-constructors of their comprehension learning. However, the transition to pandemic-induced remote learning limited teachers' enactment of dialogic comprehension practices. The virtual setting disrupted teachers' traditional schedules, classroom dialogue, and opportunities for collective learning. Teachers' ELA comprehension instruction became predominantly monologic within the virtual classroom. Although teachers espoused dialogic beliefs toward comprehension instruction, monologic instructional activities in the context of remote learning inhibited teachers' enactment of collective discourse and knowledge construction.

While the virtual instructional context caused their comprehension instruction to regress to monologic approaches, teachers nonetheless began the process of developing dialogic ELA comprehension instruction during remote learning. In designing a new mode of dialogic comprehension instruction, teachers targeted ELA comprehension standards in clearly defined instructional activities for remote learning (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Teachers focused on specific comprehension learning objectives to ground their newly emerged form of remote comprehension pedagogy. In the face of many instructional barriers and challenges in remote learning, teachers continued to prepare lessons to advance students' understanding of ELA content. Also, teachers' virtual comprehension instruction continued to support a plurality

of students' funds of knowledge (Gay, 2002; Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Moll et al., 1992; Moll, 2019; Paris, 2012). This discourse of multiple knowledges was the only element of teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction that translated from traditional to remote learning contexts. In teachers' standards-driven virtual ELA comprehension lessons, the focus on sustaining a plurality of knowledge remained evident.

Moreover, teachers attended to broader sociocultural influences on students' comprehension learning (McIntyre, 2010; Mills, 2016; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Teachers recognized students' need for social interaction and positive relationships during times of isolation in pandemic-induced remote learning. They found creative ways to build rapport with students in the virtual setting to promote their engagement in literacy learning. Teachers also understood the pressures of living through a global pandemic on young learners. Ways of coping with pandemic life became common topics in ELA discussions. Teachers knew that students' comprehension learning could not be separated from their current sociocultural context (Mills, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978), so they addressed notable sociocultural influences from the pandemic in their virtual comprehension instruction.

Teachers also sustained the sociocultural perspective of their local rural communities in their virtual comprehension instruction (Corbett & Donehower, 2017; Mills, 2016). Across traditional and remote learning contexts, teachers integrated students' local funds of knowledge in their comprehension instruction through text-to-local-community connections. They also invited local sources of knowledge into their classrooms to bridge ELA content with local perspectives. Teachers encouraged students to share about their lived experiences in online discussions and invited community members to their virtual classrooms to share knowledge from the local community. Not only did teachers continue to leverage knowledge from the local

community in their instructional discourse of multiple knowledges, but they also found enhanced partnerships with families during remote learning. Teachers felt more connected to their students' families as they worked collaboratively to support students' reading comprehension. This was a rare positive outcome of remote learning, since students' language and literacy knowledge from the local community has been historically overlooked in traditional literacy instruction (Heath, 1983). Remote learning disrupted the traditional separation between academic and local literacy knowledge in comprehension instruction. These enhanced connections to students' local funds of knowledge and lived experiences became an asset for teachers to draw upon in their virtual ELA comprehension instruction.

As teachers responded to diverse knowledges and sociocultural contexts to support students' comprehension learning, they continuously reflected on their comprehension instruction. They considered their virtual comprehension lessons, dialogic approaches to instruction, and instructional contexts to reimagine dialogic comprehension instruction for pandemic-induced remote learning. Teachers reconstructed their comprehension teaching practices to account for challenges in their instructional context. They also reimagined possibilities for dialogue, higher-order thinking, and collective knowledge development in the virtual classroom. In this way, students were not expected to conform to the limitations of the sociocultural context, but teachers pondered and refined remote instruction to nurture students' comprehension. Therefore, teachers enacted a sociocultural process of assessing and refining dialogic comprehension instruction in the remote learning environment, to continuously support students' comprehension development (Dudley-Marling, 2004; McIntyre, 2010).

In summary, teachers' process of enacting dialogic comprehension instruction can be likened to the process of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is a recursive process

of constructing meaning from texts through unstable individual and sociocultural interactions (Catts & Kamhi, 2017; Cervetti et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2015; Kintsch, 1998; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; van den Broek et al., 1999). Similarly, teachers' process of enacting dialogic comprehension instruction involved a relational interaction between comprehension, knowledge, voice, place, and time. Teachers espoused a relational stance toward a plurality of comprehension, knowledge, and voice to co-construct deeper ways of understanding texts with students. They also responded to the particularities of local places, virtual spaces, and pandemic times to reconstruct a new mode of dialogic ELA comprehension instruction. This dialogic process was an ongoing, unstable cycle of refining and reflecting upon instruction. Therefore, the process of enacting dialogic comprehension instruction is unresolved and will continue to evolve amidst changing particularities in diverse sociocultural contexts. Figure 5.1 demonstrates the substantive theoretical explanation of teachers' perceptions and enactments of dialogic comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning.

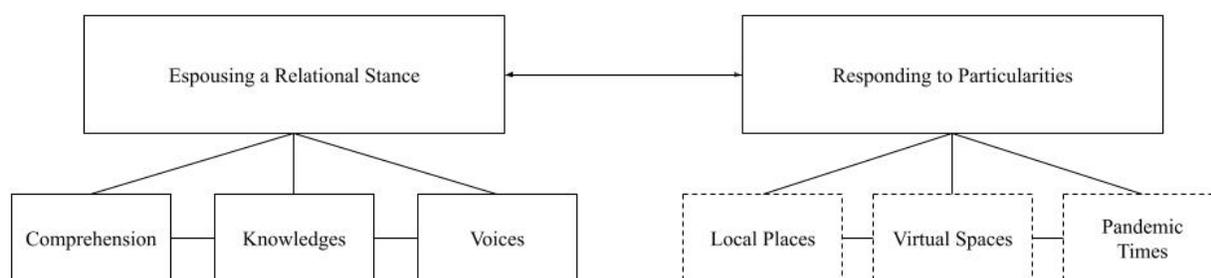


Figure 5.1 Iterative process of rural elementary teachers perceiving and enacting dialogic ELA comprehension instruction.

Discussion

I now situate these present findings within the existing literature on comprehension, dialogic teaching, and rural literacy education. I analyze the thematic findings from each research question, to understand how the current study expounds upon existing research. To the best of my knowledge, no prior studies have examined the intersections of dialogic comprehension instruction, elementary teachers, rurality, and virtual learning. This study is exploring new themes and questions necessitated by place and time. Finally, I conclude this dissertation by offering implications for practice, policy, and research, to further support rural elementary teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction during remote learning.

Research Question 1: How do rural elementary teachers describe their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction?

A great deal of the existing research on dialogic teaching in elementary classrooms has focused on observing teachers' discourse moves to facilitate student talk and deeper learning (Chen et al., 2017; Muhonen et al., 2016). This study offered a new perspective into teachers' perspectives of how they implemented dialogic teaching practices. In addition to describing their teaching practices in traditional and remote contexts, the findings exhibited teachers' perceptions and epistemological stances toward dialogic comprehension instruction. While comprehension instruction in the secondary grades has largely shifted to a dialogic instructional framework, the research on dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension has been particularly limited among the elementary grades (Pearson et al., 2020). Additionally, previous observational research studies on teachers' dialogic discourse facilitation have largely ignored the significance of local sociocultural contexts on dialogic comprehension pedagogy. Prior research focusing on teachers' discourse facilitation has taken place in rural, midwestern schools and international schools

(Chen et al., 2017; Muhonen et al., 2016), but the local school contexts were not relevant to the findings on teachers' dialogic teaching practices. This study centered rural elementary teachers' local sociocultural contexts as having prominent influences on their practice (Gruenewald, 2003; Donehower et al., 2012), especially their dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Hence, this study fills a critical gap in the research, by gaining a conceptual understanding of how rural elementary teachers perceived and enacted their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction.

Teachers' descriptions of their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction corroborated the current literature in many ways. In particular, dialogic teaching has been defined as a particular approach to language instruction, which focuses on the power of talk to stimulate knowledge development (Alexander, 2020; Reznitskaya, 2012). Likewise, teachers described promoting an abundance of talk in their traditional ELA comprehension instruction. Whole group ELA comprehension instruction was characterized by collaborative discussions to ask and answer questions about ELA texts. Teachers highlighted the fluidity of whole and small group conversations. Florence explained how small group discussions would be shared out and elaborated upon in whole group collective discussions. Also, they discussed an emphasis on promoting student talk through specific strategies. Magnolia, Dahlia, and Camellia cited using think-pair-share as a strategy to stimulate student talk in whole and small group instruction. Haley and Brooke referenced implementing turn and talk strategies throughout read alouds and mini lessons. Teachers described their traditional ELA instruction as centered around dialogue to promote students' connections to and deeper understandings of ELA texts.

Moreover, teachers' descriptions of their role in ELA comprehension discussions espoused the co-constructive nature of dialogic discussions. Reznitskaya (2012) outlined the six

indicators of dialogic ELA discussions as authority, questions, feedback, meta-level reflection, explanation, and collaboration. Similarly, teachers described their traditional ELA classroom dialogue using several of these indicators. Teachers shared authority over the content and progression of discussions. Magnolia described her role in discussions as that of a moderator, to minimize her influence over students' ideas. Florence shared that students' personal connections to texts would often drive the direction of their discussions. Also, teachers described the use of open-ended and higher-order questioning to build students' inferential thinking and deeper understandings of texts. Blaire referred to her open-ended questions as "thick" questions, which required her first-graders to use their inference skills to fully answer the question. Teachers' descriptions of the purpose of their feedback in conversations were to extend and deepen students' thinking. Abigail explained that she used additional probing questions to help students develop inferences beyond what was explicitly written in the text. Teachers also shared how they supported students to develop further explanations in their responses, by supporting their ideas with specific sources of evidence in the text. The collaborative focus in discussions was evident in how teachers strived to maintain an equity of voice with students in classroom discussions. Brooke maintained her focus on creating equitable conversations, where all students were heard and contributed to the conversation as a learning community. Teachers facilitated collaborative discussions to strengthen students' comprehension learning. They utilized different grouping strategies to promote diverse perspectives in discussions. Camellia explained her reason for implementing heterogeneous grouping was for students to be able to talk to and learn from their peers. In traditional contexts, teachers supported collaborative discourse to co-construct knowledge with students in their comprehension instruction.

Teachers' descriptions of their ELA discussions related to several characteristics of dialogic discussions. However, without access to observe live discussions, the characteristics of students' talk in ELA discussions remained unclear. Dialogic discussions are not only determined by the role of the teacher, but also by the way students listen and respond to each other to co-construct knowledge (Reznitskaya, 2012). Therefore, teachers described their role in ELA discussions as dialogic in traditional settings, but it cannot be determined whether their students' contributions would also be considered dialogic.

In addition to applying a dialogic approach to discussions to support language comprehension, teachers identified a dialogic stance to teaching ELA comprehension. Dialogic teaching "is both talk and more than talk, for it enacts a dialogic stance on knowledge, learning, social relations and education itself" (Alexander, 2020, p. 1). As opposed to monologic forms of instruction, where knowledge is transferred from teacher to students, teachers in this study described a dialogic stance to comprehension instruction, as students were upheld as knowledgeable co-constructors of their learning (Freire & Macedo, 1995; Mercer, 2019; Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013). Abigail maintained that learning should not be about the teacher talking and giving information, but that students should be active agents in their learning and knowledge development. Teachers described their traditional ELA comprehension instruction as an equity of learning ownership, where students were supported as agentive knowledge producers. In their traditional instruction, teachers noted being able to design student-centered instruction through their literacy centers and diverse grouping strategies. They also facilitated students' ownership over their learning through giving classroom leadership roles, enrichment projects, and student choice. Dahlia cited using student choice boards in her literacy centers to provide students more freedom over their learning. In this way, teachers positioned themselves

dialogically *with* students, sharing power and ownership over student's learning (Freire & Macedo, 1995).

Teachers' dialogic stance to ELA comprehension instruction was also seen in their integration of multiple bodies of knowledge, which was described in both in-person and remote learning contexts. Teachers shared how they extended diverse sources of knowledge in dialogue to deepen students' comprehension. Likewise, dialogic teaching scholars contend that voices in dialogue represent multiple arguments, cultures, and perspectives (Alexander, 2020; Bakhtin, 1981). Teachers discussed their ELA comprehension instruction inclusive of both cognitive and sociocultural orientations to comprehension. Magnolia stated that one of her goals for comprehension was to build students' fluency, recognizing the influence of constrained decoding skills on students' text comprehension (McKenna & Stahl, 2015; Paris, 2005). Teachers also placed a focus on teaching vocabulary to strengthen students' background knowledge and language development, reflecting the significance of unconstrained language skills on reading comprehension (McKenna & Stahl, 2015; Paris, 2005). In capturing the third strand of strategic reading knowledge within successful comprehension (McKenna & Stahl, 2015), Blaire used reciprocal teaching to teach students specific comprehension strategies, like clarifying and predicting. In addition to capturing cognitive paradigms in descriptions of their comprehension instruction, teachers also conveyed sociocultural perspectives. Brooke shared that one of her main goals for comprehension instruction was to instill a love of reading in her kids, recognizing comprehension as sociocultural interaction between readers and texts (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1969). Teachers' descriptions of their ELA comprehension instruction included multiple theoretical perspectives towards comprehension.

Teachers cited incorporating multiple sources of student knowledge in their ELA comprehension instruction, as well. Teachers described a knowledge-building perspective to comprehension that prompted students to make text connections, through thinking within and beyond the written text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). Teachers facilitated a variety of text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections to extend multiple sources of student knowledge. Brooke explained how she prompted students to make textual comparisons from their fictional text about a salamander to an informational text on salamanders, advancing students' background knowledge across text genres. Text-to-self connections were one of the primary types of connections referenced by teachers, which allowed teachers to support students' lived experiences and cultural funds of knowledge (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Moll et al., 1992; Moll, 2019). Magnolia explained how her Hispanic students' personal connections to the text, *Abuela*, drew upon their cultural knowledge and experiences. Teachers were particularly attuned to the importance of building upon students' cultural knowledge in their comprehension instruction. While Brooke did not grow up accustomed to speaking openly about cultural differences, she revealed that it was her personal mission to include culture in her instruction in a gradual and purposeful way. Several teachers also highlighted the value of multicultural literature to seek and extend students' cultural funds of knowledge. Blaire was passionate about developing a more diverse text set for her second quarter online instruction to be more inclusive of the diversity of her students. Although minimal research has examined how comprehension instruction can leverage diverse funds of student knowledge to deepen comprehension (Pearson et al., 2020), teachers in this study discussed building upon a diversity of student knowledge in their ELA comprehension instruction.

It is also important to consider the potential influence of recent nationwide protests surrounding police violence and racial inequity on teachers' focus on cultural knowledge. Brooke shared she attended to culture and race in a careful, gradual manner due to the current racial tensions in American society. Blaire also framed her desire to include culturally responsive texts within the need to reflect the diverse world that her children live in. While teachers did not explicitly reference the recent protests and discussions on systemic racism, these large-scale current events in the summer preceding the school year may have shaped their view of cultural knowledge, as well as their role in supporting diverse ways of knowing in comprehension pedagogy. Scholars have already called for greater attention to cultural funds of knowledge in language and literacy instruction (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Milner, 2020; Moll et al., 1992; Moll, 2019; Paris, 2012; Pearson et al., 2020), and the present need to promote a plurality of cultural knowledge in comprehension instruction is clear.

Furthermore, collectively deliberating diverse perspectives is an essential element of dialogic teaching (Alexander, 2020; Mercer, 2019; Reznitskaya, 2015a). Teachers discussed supporting students' argumentation literacy to analyze a multitude of perspectives in their ELA comprehension instruction. Their descriptions of teaching argumentation aligned with Reznitskaya and Wilkinson's (2017) criteria for promoting argumentation literacy in dialogic teaching. Teachers utilized open-ended and inference questions for students to consider and discuss diverse perspectives from a given text. They guided students to support their arguments with clear sources of evidence from texts. Florence explained using the RACE acronym to instill in her students the need to restate, answer, cite, and explain their argument. Also, teachers supported students in connecting diverse points of view to come to a collective understanding. Abigail shared that she would link similarities between students' diverse perspectives to bring

the discussion back to a common ground. Teachers revealed not only how they embraced a plurality of knowledge, but also how they helped students to reason through diverse perspectives in the quest for knowledge.

Therefore, teachers' descriptions of their dialogic comprehension instruction reflect much of the existing scholarship. However, since this study solely focused on teacher descriptions of their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction, the perspective of the student in co-constructing knowledge through dialogue cannot truly be ascertained. Interestingly, teachers also described the significance of responding to individual student needs through scaffolding and small group differentiated instruction, as a part of supporting students as equitable owners of their comprehension development. Scarce research has examined differentiated instruction within the contexts of dialogic comprehension instruction, presumably due to the already limited research on comprehension with young readers (Stahl, 2016). Future research will need to explore the ways in which elementary teachers' differentiated instruction may facilitate diverse learners' agentic participation in dialogic comprehension instruction.

Research Question 2: In what ways, if at all, do rural elementary teachers incorporate rural students' funds of knowledge into their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction?

Teachers incorporated rural students' local funds of knowledge throughout their traditional and virtual comprehension instruction. While there is a paucity of research examining how rural elementary teachers extend students' local funds of knowledge in their instruction (Azano, 2015; Eppley et al., 2011), teachers facilitated students' text-to-local-community connections to build upon students' local knowledge. In contrast to Eppley and scholars' (2011) findings that preservice elementary teachers were reluctant to focus on rural children's lived experiences in connection to rural themes in texts, teachers in this study actively sought students'

local funds of knowledge in relation to ELA texts. Clover, Camellia, and Magnolia shared examples of how they prompted students to draw comparisons between their local communities and the communities within texts. Teachers were conscious of the significance of local contexts on students' learning (Gruenewald, 2003), and applied students' knowledge of their local rural communities to advance their ELA comprehension.

In facilitating text to local community connections, teachers promoted a plurality of cultural knowledge from diverse communities in their ELA comprehension instruction (Gay, 2002; Paris, 2012). Teachers emphasized using multicultural literature to teach students about diverse cultures and communities. Dahlia explained how she not only strived to affirm students' pride in their local community, but also sought to introduce them to new types of communities through multicultural literature. As teachers drew connections to diverse communities in ELA texts, they embraced a plurality of cultural knowledge (Paris, 2012), while still sustaining the knowledge of children's local rural communities (Green & Corbett, 2003; Gruenewald, 2003). Teachers contextualized students' local funds of knowledge within the larger discourse of multiple knowledges in their comprehension instruction. By attending to the significance of students' rural funds of knowledge, they supported students in interacting with texts from the perspective of their home communities (Brooks & Browne, 2012).

Minimal scholarship has addressed the utilization of diverse forms of knowledge in comprehension instruction (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Pearson et al., 2020), but teachers in this study leveraged local funds of knowledge in their ELA comprehension instruction. They encouraged students to share their own lived experiences in ELA text discussions to build deeper connections to texts. Teachers also invited local community members to relate lived experiences in students' local communities to ELA content. Blaire shared how she would often invite parents and

community members into her traditional and virtual classrooms to connect local experiences with content found in ELA texts. Teachers valued the particular cultures and traditions in their rural communities as an asset to their ELA comprehension instruction (Roberts & Green, 2013).

Furthermore, teachers' incorporation of students' local funds of knowledge was also handled from a dialogic approach. They sought students' lived experiences and local funds of knowledge as a driving force in their comprehension instruction. Teachers engaged in learning about local rural communities with students (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Abigail detailed how she would invite family members into her traditional classroom, to share the history of their rural county and collectively learn about the community with students. In this way, she embraced a dialogic stance towards education, by engaging the rural community, students, and ELA content in a co-constructed dialogue (Alexander, 2020; Mercer, 2019). Rural elementary teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction understood comprehension and rurality from a relational perspective (Corbett & Donehower, 2017), where the relationships between knowledge and place deepened students' comprehension.

While teachers recounted the ways in which they personally integrated rural students' local funds of knowledge into their comprehension instruction, they also illuminated how their schools and communities collaboratively supported students and families' needs during remote learning. Remote learning caused many barriers for students and families, especially in rural areas (Diallo, 2020; Jung, 2020; Opalka et al., 2020). Teachers explained how the school and local community supported students during remote learning through providing Internet access or after school tutoring. Teachers also found that one of the benefits to remote learning was the enhanced collaboration between themselves and their students' families. Teachers noted the

significance of maintaining school, family, and local stakeholder ties to foster children's language and literacy development in their rural community (Hall & McCombs-Thornton, 2018).

In their discussions of comprehension instruction and their local communities, teachers also identified critical areas of need for equity in rural literacy education. Clover pointed out the lack of quality instructional texts and resources at her rural school, reflecting the gross underfunding of rural schools (Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2019). Abigail also advocated for policymakers to make more equitable expectations for statewide literacy performance, as her rural community does not have the same resources as more affluent metropolitan schools. Her reflection is critical of the assumption that literacy in rural schools must be remediated to achieve metrocentric learning standards (Corbett & Donehower, 2017), without consideration to inequitable distributions of resources and power between urban and rural areas (Corbett, 2017). Teachers advocated for equity in resources and policy decisions, to support particular areas of strengths and needs across rural schools (Roberts & Green, 2013).

Hence, rural elementary teachers integrated students' local funds of knowledge in ways that expound upon the research on place-conscious pedagogy (Eppley et al., 2011; Gruenewald, 2003), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2002; Paris, 2012), and diverse knowledges in comprehension pedagogy (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Pearson et al., 2020). Their dialogic comprehension instruction was socially constructed around knowledge and rurality. It will be pertinent for future research to further explore the dynamics between knowledge and sociocultural context in comprehension. In particular, observations of text discussions which activate and extend students' local funds of knowledge are needed. As teachers highlighted the importance of community collaboration and advocated for equity in rural literacy, they disrupted common deficit narratives toward literacy in rural schools (Corbett, 2017). Further research

should continue to center the voices of rural educators and community members to support literacy and comprehension in socially responsive ways.

Research Question 3: How has pandemic-induced school closures impacted rural elementary teachers' enactment of dialogic practices in ELA comprehension instruction?

Given the novelty of virtual comprehension instruction for young learners, this study adds to the dearth of research on virtual elementary literacy instruction (Kiili et al., 2020). In particular, studying virtual literacy and comprehension instruction with rural teachers is necessary to both understand the local challenges of limited broadband connectivity (Jung, 2020; Opalka et al., 2020; Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2019) and to contextualize comprehension, literacy, and knowledge within diverse rural contexts (Roberts & Green, 2013; Corbett & Donehower, 2017). This study attended to both the particular needs of rural school contexts amidst remote learning (Roberts & Green, 2013), as well as the ways in which teachers integrated rural students' local funds of knowledge into their comprehension instruction (Azano, 2015; Eppley et al., 2011). Also, these findings were specifically situated within the unprecedented contexts of pandemic-induced remote learning. The effects of the pandemic on elementary literacy education are only an emerging area of research, with emerging research focusing on potential student learning loss (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). As the global pandemic continues to influence public education, it is imperative to understand its impacts on elementary language and literacy instruction in diverse school contexts. As such, findings from this study offer opportune insights into rural elementary teachers' enactment of dialogic ELA comprehension instruction amidst pandemic-induced remote learning.

The transition to remote learning had substantial impacts on teachers' dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction. Namely, the instructional barriers in remote

learning limited teachers' enactment of the defining instructional principles in dialogic teaching (Alexander, 2017). Dialogic teaching is constituted by collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful instruction (Alexander, 2017). However, the challenges teachers faced in remote learning inhibited their collective instruction. In dealing with loss of instructional time, instructional content, student engagement, and challenges with technology, virtual ELA comprehension instruction was dominated by the teacher. Florence noted that her teaching style changed to a question-and-answer type of instruction during remote learning. Dahlia also shared that she exerted the greatest agency in remote learning, rather than the students collaborating with her. With minimal collective instruction during remote learning, teachers' comprehension instruction regressed to monologic approaches.

As virtual ELA comprehension instruction lacked collectivity, it was also limited in its reciprocity (Alexander, 2017). Teachers overwhelmingly cited the lack of student talk as the most difficult obstacle to overcome in remote learning. Whereas teachers' traditional instruction was characterized by ample opportunities for classroom and student talk, dialogue was grossly hindered by the virtual classroom. The majority of teachers' virtual instruction was conducted as a whole group, and teachers explained the technical complications of students unmuting their microphones to share out. Teachers were not able to implement student talk strategies, like turn and talk or think-pair-share. Dialogue in remote learning was relegated to the chat function in virtual classrooms. With scarce opportunities for students to voice their ideas, teachers and students were not able to fully listen to each other's ideas in a reciprocal approach to discourse and instruction.

The scarcity of reciprocal discourse in virtual comprehension instruction also inhibited teachers' ability to foster cumulative discussions (Alexander, 2017). Haley relayed the

challenges in establishing cumulative discussions, when virtual conferencing platforms are limited to one person speaking at a time. Magnolia also explained how she had to become more heavily involved in classroom discussions, in contrast to her role as a moderator in traditional instruction. Teachers were not able to cumulatively build student ideas together with the scant level of discourse in remote learning. Due to the complexities of switching to pandemic-induced remote learning, rural elementary teachers' instruction lost collective, reciprocal, and cumulative dialogue (Alexander, 2017).

Although remote learning hindered teachers' abilities to enact dialogic comprehension instruction, teachers continued to persevere and strive towards dialogic instruction. Teachers enacted the ongoing process of designing and reflecting upon their virtual instruction. At the foundation of their virtual comprehension instruction, teachers designed lessons to address ELA comprehension standards. They maintained the purposeful principle of dialogic teaching, to design dialogue and instruction that was focused on specific learning objectives (Alexander, 2017). Their virtual comprehension lessons targeted standards for comprehending informational and narrative texts. They centered their lesson materials, discussions, and asynchronous activities on specific ELA comprehension standards. Also, teachers built upon these purposeful lessons to develop further dialogic approaches in their ELA comprehension instruction. They contemplated ways to promote critical thinking, collaboration, collective knowledge construction, and student talk, within their purposeful virtual comprehension instruction (Alexander, 2017).

Additionally, teachers' virtual comprehension instruction included the principle of supportive instruction (Alexander, 2017). Teachers were supportive of students' academic learning and holistic social emotional needs during remote learning. Blaire was proud of the level of scaffolding she provided to help individual students develop a response in discussions,

rather than scold or ignore them for not knowing a “right” answer. Brooke recognized how difficult remote learning was for her students, and she made time for informal discussions to build positive relationships. Abigail also understood how the ongoing pandemic caused emotional stress for her students. She connected ELA discussions to the ways in which communities worldwide were coping with the pandemic, to remind students they were not alone in this time of crisis. While pandemic-induced remote learning prevented teachers from enacting many dialogic teaching practices, teachers' virtual comprehension instruction remained purposeful and supportive (Alexander, 2017).

Thus, these findings contribute to the paucity of research examining dialogic and knowledge-building approaches to virtual comprehension instruction with young children (Kiili et al., 2020), particularly in pandemic-related virtual learning contexts. Findings from the present study revealed notable challenges to converting dialogic comprehension instruction into a virtual setting. However, teachers developed dialogic approaches to their comprehension instruction over time. Teachers' process of enacting dialogic comprehension instruction in remote learning suggests that there are possibilities for dialogic teaching practices in virtual elementary classrooms but refining these practices will take time. Even with greater time, dialogic comprehension instruction may not directly translate from in-person to virtual contexts. Facilitating virtual conversations with young children was entirely different through a computer screen, so dialogue must be reimagined in the contexts of remote learning. Additional research is urgently needed to better understand the potential of dialogic comprehension instruction with young children in virtual settings.

Implications for Practice

As remote learning is a new context and an emerging area of research for elementary literacy, these findings have timely implications for developing dialogic comprehension instruction in virtual learning. The reduced instructional time and predominance of whole group instruction were critical barriers to fostering dialogue with children online. However, teachers cited being able to facilitate more student talk as they began their small group reading sessions. Magnolia noted she was able to let her students remain unmuted during small groups because there was minimal background noise within the small group. Teachers reported small group instruction as the most realistic instructional option for promoting student talk in the virtual classroom. As virtual learning continues to exist within elementary literacy instruction, schools and teachers should find ways to build in additional small group instruction and collaboration in the virtual schedule. Since the primary grades in elementary schools may face stricter screen time limits, small group instruction may need to be built within the whole class ELA block to ensure young students' have opportunities to engage in dialogue, collaboration, and collective knowledge construction.

Increasing the amount of virtual small group instruction will also support the intersections of differentiated instruction and dialogic teaching for comprehension development. Although minimal research has explored dialogic teaching within the contexts of differentiated comprehension instruction, teachers were particularly attuned to the need for differentiated instruction to stimulate students' reading growth during remote learning. Providing small group interventions targeting high-level comprehension in the primary grades has already been identified as a priority for supporting early comprehension development (Stahl, 2016). Likewise, teachers described the need to provide more differentiated instruction for their students through

virtual small groups. If elementary schools and primary grade teams can establish additional small group instruction in their virtual schedules, they will be able to better meet the needs of diverse learners through extended dialogue and knowledge construction around texts. In this way, elementary teachers can build upon whole group comprehension instruction that addresses specific ELA standards, to create virtual small group comprehension instruction that is purposefully designed for individualized learning objectives (Alexander, 2017). Greater small group instruction is warranted to develop virtual dialogic comprehension pedagogy, which supports all students' comprehension through collective, reciprocal, and cumulative dialogue in knowledge construction (Alexander, 2017).

Also, the findings have important implications for incorporating rural students' local funds of knowledge in dialogic ELA comprehension instruction. Teachers in this study integrated their rural students' local funds of knowledge into their comprehension instruction through facilitating text connections to the local community. They assisted students in comparing or contrasting communities in texts to their own rural communities. As facilitating text connections to the local community was an accessible means of including students' local funds of knowledge into comprehension instruction, selecting texts with prominent rural settings or themes should be a future priority for rural educators. Selecting texts which portray rural life is a notable avenue for designing ELA instruction that attends to significance of place on students' learning (Eppley et al., 2011). Texts centering rurality will allow teachers rich opportunities to cultivate students' local funds of knowledge and deeper engagement with ELA texts. Moreover, teachers in this study critiqued common narratives of rural communities as culturally and racially homogenous (Azano, 2015), as they recognized and valued the cultural diversity of their rural students. Texts used in comprehension instruction should also highlight cultural and racial

diversity in rurality. Utilizing texts with diverse cultural and community representation will support students in activating multiple sources of knowledge in text comprehension (Hattan & Lupo, 2020; Pearson et al., 2020), and in interacting with texts from the multiplicity of their cultural and community identities (Brooks & Browne, 2012).

In addition to prompting text and local community connections, the findings demonstrated how teachers invited local family and community members into their classrooms to incorporate local knowledge with ELA content. Although Blaire shared that she had more opportunities to invite family and community members into her traditional classroom, she also had the experience of inviting local community members into her virtual classroom. As elementary teachers continue to remain in virtual instruction, they can consider new possibilities for bringing in knowledge from the local community with their ELA comprehension instruction. While American society continues to be transformed by the pandemic with more parents and community members participating in telework than ever before, teachers may find remote learning to be a unique opportunity to invite more family and community members into their virtual classroom. Developing stronger relationships with families and communities in virtual learning can support the bridge between in and out of school learning (Ito et al., 2020). Having enhanced collaboration between educators, schools, families, and community stakeholders can also provide a more comprehensive support system for early language and literacy education in rural communities (Hall & McCombs-Thornton, 2018), especially during the pandemic.

Additionally, findings from the present study offer directions for teacher professional development. As virtual learning will likely continue to be a part of public schools' calendars and instructional delivery, future professional development is needed to develop teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction in the virtual environment. As navigating student talk was

one of the most arduous obstacles in virtual learning, Florence suggested professional development focused on engaging students in virtual discussions. Teacher professional development should address criteria for dialogic text discussions (Reznitskaya, 2012), while problem-solving how to adapt these criteria in a virtual platform. Argumentation literacy is another key factor to promoting higher-level comprehension (Alexander, 2020; Reznitskaya & Wilkinson, 2017), and Abigail recommended professional development for fostering critical and higher-order thinking in virtual discussions. Professional development should unpack methods to develop virtual ELA text discussions that support elementary learners' comprehension through critical reasoning and argumentation. Given the instructional time limits in remote learning, Florence suggested professional development for combining ELA standards. Training and support for combining standards should consider the contexts of reduced instructional time, while still exposing students to a large volume and range of texts (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2019; Duke et al., 2011). Several teachers also desired professional development for virtual writing instruction. The relationship between writing and reading comprehension has been under-examined (Graham, 2020; Pearson et al., 2020), and future professional development should investigate the potential to support early comprehension through writing. There is also a critical need for further small group instruction to develop dialogic comprehension instruction in virtual learning, as Clover and Dahlia expressed the need for support on virtual small group instruction. As such, teachers should receive professional development for designing virtual dialogic small group comprehension instruction that is responsive to diverse learners.

Since developing dialogic comprehension pedagogy for a virtual environment will take considerable time, ongoing professional development opportunities should be provided to assist teachers in the process of continually refining and reflecting upon their virtual dialogic

comprehension instruction. Teachers in this study reflected on several aspects of their virtual comprehension instruction in our interviews. Professional development should also include ongoing opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice through recorded lessons (Alexander, 2020). Teachers can record their virtual comprehension instruction and then reflect on the ways they facilitated talk and knowledge to strengthen students' comprehension. Camellia pointed to the increased need for more teacher collaboration to share ideas with one another during remote learning. Accordingly, ongoing professional development should also be collective, where the entire school is bought-in to transform pedagogy in dialogic ways (Alexander, 2020). Further continuous and collective professional development is necessary to support elementary teachers in the ongoing process of enacting dialogic comprehension instruction for virtual learning.

Implications for Policy

These findings pose implications for policymakers to consider the diverse skills, knowledges, and contexts surrounding comprehension (Cervetti et al., 2020; Israel, 2017). When making school or district-wide policies for comprehension instruction, policymakers should understand the interactions between skills, knowledge, and sociocultural context on comprehension instruction (Catts & Kamhi, 2017). In particular, education leaders should allow teachers the instructional flexibility to supplement ELA curriculums with local sources of cultural and community knowledge, in order to address the range of reader-text-activity-sociocultural influences on student comprehension (RAND Reading Study Group, 2003). Magnolia explained that discussions where students were able to connect their local lived experiences to texts were richer than only following the questions in her curriculum. Policymakers should allow teachers the instructional autonomy to adapt and supplement

schoolwide ELA curriculum, to situate dialogue and comprehension within students' local lived experiences. Also, policymakers should support teachers in their development of virtual dialogic ELA comprehension instruction. Blaire recommended that the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction organize a database, in which all elementary teachers in North Carolina could contribute their virtual comprehension lesson plans and reflections. Teachers hold a tremendous amount of insight into the novelty of virtual comprehension instruction for young children. Policymakers themselves should take a dialogic approach in facilitating teachers to collectively learn from and with their colleagues in refining their virtual comprehension pedagogy (Bakhtin, 1981; Mercer, 2019).

There is also a critical need for policymakers to address issues of equity in rural literacy education. Abigail specifically advocated for policymakers to consider equity for rural schools when making statewide literacy mandates. Although rural schools in North Carolina receive less funding for students, schools, and teachers, policies for early literacy performance are standardized across all school districts (Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2019). Rather than identifying literacy in rural schools as deficient by the standards of metropolitan schools (Corbett & Donehower, 2017), policymakers should urgently address the local needs of rural schools to support their early language and literacy development. In order to promote equity for literacy in rural schools, policymakers must reconceptualize comprehension from a standardized assessment score to a socially situated process.

Implications for Research

This study provides a deeper theoretical understanding of the ways in which rural elementary teachers perceived their dialogic ELA comprehension practices and enacted these practices during pandemic-induced remote learning. Findings from this study add to the dearth of

research examining rural elementary teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction. However, additional research is warranted to further understand the tensions surrounding comprehension, knowledge, talk, and rurality. While teachers described their ELA comprehension instruction similarly to the existing literature on dialogic teaching, this study is limited to only the perspective of the teacher. Future research should uncover dynamics between teachers' descriptions of their dialogic comprehension instruction alongside observations of their dialogic ELA text-based discussions with students. It will also be necessary for future research to include a wider range of elementary grade levels, to discern how dialogic comprehension instruction may vary between primary and upper elementary grade levels. Future research can utilize Reznitskaya's (2012) *Dialogic Inquiry Tool* as an observational method for understanding dialogic ELA text discussions across grade levels. Also, this study was particularly situated in the teaching contexts of teachers in rural districts in North Carolina. Future scholarly inquiries should focus on dialogic comprehension instruction within other rural contexts, as rural spaces are composed of diverse cultures, histories, and particularities (Roberts & Green, 2013). Since virtual learning is an emergent instructional platform for young learners, there is a critical shortage of research investigating elementary comprehension instruction in online settings. As the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual learning continue to be significant influences on elementary education, new digital data collection methods are needed to better understand dialogic ELA comprehension instruction within virtual classrooms. Future research of dialogic comprehension instruction in virtual learning may need to apply synchronous observations of live lessons or asynchronous observations of recorded lessons to collect further data within virtual elementary classrooms.

The grounded theory methodology in this present study developed emergent theoretical explanations for the scarcity of research on rural elementary teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction, particularly amidst remote learning. Future research would benefit from adopting participatory methodologies, to support elementary teachers in strengthening their dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension instruction. Researchers should partner with elementary teachers to investigate and develop their dialogic comprehension instruction. Studies following a design-based approach would be a promising methodology for collaborating with teachers to develop dialogic ELA comprehension instruction as a pedagogical goal (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). Analyzes could also compare relationships between changes in teachers' dialogic comprehension instruction and changes in students' language and comprehension performance. As design-based research focuses on achieving a pedagogical goal within a particular context (Reinking & Bradley, 2008), this methodology would be ideal for supporting teachers to enact dialogic comprehension instruction within the specific affordances and barriers of their local instructional contexts. In addition to partnering with individual teachers, scholars should collaborate with local elementary schools to create professional development that refines dialogic comprehension instruction collectively within the school community (Alexander, 2020). In particular, establishing research partnerships with local rural schools will be vital to cultivating early language and literacy in collaborative and socially responsive ways.

Limitations

There are notable limitations to consider in the interpretation and generalization of these findings. First, there are several limitations specific to this study's methodology. The context of pandemic-induced remote learning imposed unique methodological limitations to collecting research data, particularly with the closing of physical school buildings. While I strived to

develop new theoretical insights into rural elementary teachers' perceptions and enactments of dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension instruction, it is challenging to fully understand teacher practice without observational data. Future examinations of dialogic approaches to remote ELA comprehension pedagogy should consider digital observation methods to glean deeper perspectives into rural elementary teachers remote teaching practices. This study was also limited in duration, as all data sources were collected in one semester. Future research should seek funding opportunities to observe rural elementary teachers' virtual ELA comprehension instruction over longer periods of time. Given the limitations to collecting observation data during the global COVID-19 pandemic, this study focused on the perspectives of rural elementary teachers through interview and artifact data collection methods.

Furthermore, this study focused on dialogic comprehension instruction within online, synchronous instructional formats with less consideration given to offline deliveries of remote instruction. Since many families in rural communities have faced barriers in accessing reliable Internet connectivity during this time of pandemic-induced remote learning (Blackburn, 2020), remote literacy instruction in some rural schools may include offline forms of instruction and student practice. The rural elementary teachers in this study all had regular access to live, synchronous instruction with the majority of their students, but this may not be the case for all rural elementary settings.

Given the novelty of remote elementary ELA comprehension instruction, this study examined a broad overview of teachers' virtual comprehension practices, including their whole and small group instruction. However, notable differences in instructional barriers and facilitators were found between teachers' whole group and small group virtual comprehension instruction. Future research should hone in on rural elementary teachers' instruction within one

particular context of virtual whole group or small group ELA comprehension instruction. Since virtual small group instruction offered the most potential for dialogue and collective learning practices, future research studies should prioritize examinations of elementary teachers' dialogic text-based discussions in virtual small group settings.

Although I distributed the screening survey across multiple states to recruit a wide range of rural contexts, the teachers in this study all worked in rural districts in North Carolina. While this allows a deeper understanding of the context of virtual ELA comprehension instruction in rural North Carolina districts, this does limit the generalizability of the present findings. Findings should be contextualized within the specific contexts of the nine rural elementary teachers who work in various regions across the same state. Readers should take caution in generalizing findings from the present study to other remote learning contexts, including among other rural communities in different states or countries. Rural communities reflect diverse cultures, histories, and ways of engaging in literacy (Roberts & Green, 2013), so the substantive theory constructed with the participating teachers in this study may not relate to the experiences of elementary teachers in diverse rural locales.

In addition to the limited context of one state, there was a lack of diversity among grade levels in this study. I had hoped to recruit a diverse range of K-5 elementary teachers. However, the grade levels in this study are limited to first- through third-grade. Findings from this study may not apply to the virtual ELA comprehension instruction of kindergarten or upper elementary teachers. The kindergarten ELA block may especially look different, as kindergarteners' first introduction into navigating schooling will be delivered through a computer screen. As students in the beginning of first- through third-grade are approximately six to eight years old, developmental concerns often limit young children's instructional time on the computer.

However, upper elementary grades will often have fewer restrictions on the amount of time they spend in synchronous online instruction, establishing considerable differences between primary and upper elementary students' remote learning schedules. Upper elementary grades also spend more time on advanced language and literacy skills, including comprehension, than the early elementary grades (Stahl, 2016). Readers should take caution in generalizing findings on virtual dialogic ELA comprehension instruction from this study to other elementary contexts.

Also, the nature of grounded theory methodology creates further limitations to the interpretations of the findings in this study. By applying a constructivist orientation to grounded theory in embracing and extending the diverse beliefs and experiences of the rural elementary teachers to co-construct theory (Charmaz, 2020), this study is subject to the biases of the researcher and participants. In efforts to address limitations of subjectivity in the research process, I shared my positionality statement in this study's methodology chapter. I provided a detailed statement of my positionality to be honest and transparent of my biases, experiences, and philosophies that may have influenced the interpretation of these findings. The constant comparative method of analyses in this study enabled the emergent theory to be grounded in the perspectives of the participants within the data (Glaser & Strauss, 2017), but I also openly acknowledge that my subjectivity has impacted the entire research process (Charmaz, 2020). Readers of this study should consider the influence of the subjectivities of the researcher and the rural elementary teacher participants, before attempting to transfer these findings to other contexts or populations.

Conclusion

This grounded theory study examined how rural elementary teachers perceived their dialogic comprehension instruction, and how they enacted these dialogic practices amidst

pandemic-induced remote learning. While teachers described their dialogic ELA comprehension instruction as an equity of learning ownership exclusively in traditional classroom contexts, they described supporting a discourse of multiple knowledges across instructional contexts. They contextualized a plurality of knowledge from the perspective of rural students' local funds of knowledge. Although the challenges in virtual learning caused teachers to enact monologic practices, they persevered through these barriers to enact the process of designing and reflecting upon their dialogic comprehension instruction. Emergent substantive theory explained how rural elementary teachers engaged in an iterative process to develop dialogic comprehension instruction amidst remote learning. Teachers espoused a relational stance toward a plurality of comprehension, knowledge, and voice. They acted upon their ideological beliefs, through responding to the particularities of their unstable sociocultural contexts. This study offered new theoretical insights into rural elementary teachers' dialogic ELA comprehension instruction during pandemic-induced remote learning. Yet, further research is still critically needed in these uncertain times, to maintain a plurality of knowledge, lived experience, and voice in early comprehension pedagogy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Screening Survey Questions

Please complete this screening survey to be considered for interviews. The researcher will contact you via email if you are selected to participate in the interviews. Please contact Janet Outlaw (jkboone@ncsu.edu) if you have any questions.

Name

Email

Gender

Race/Ethnicity

Do you teach in a rural elementary school?

Yes

No

What city do you teach in?

What county or school district do you teach in?

What state do you teach in?

What grade do you teach?

How many years have you been teaching?

How would you describe your goals for teaching comprehension in English Language Arts?

What are your priorities for teaching comprehension in English Language Arts?

How has the transition to remote learning impacted your English Language Arts comprehension instruction?

Are you familiar with the concept of dialogic teaching? If so, please describe in your own words how you have provided dialogic approaches to comprehension instruction? (Familiarity with the term “dialogic” is not a requirement for interview selection).

Comments (optional)

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Guide: First Interview

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I'm going to ask you about some of your experiences in teaching ELA comprehension. Keep in mind that I'm not looking for any right or wrong answers, just wanting to learn more about your teaching experiences. To start us off, can you please share a little bit about yourself and your teaching experience?

This first set of questions asks you to reflect on your ELA comprehension instruction prior to remote learning. How would you describe your traditional in-person English Language Arts comprehension instruction?

What did a typical day of your comprehension instruction look like during your ELA block before the physical school closures? Did you use a particular curriculum or course text list?

How did you implement practices to further students' knowledge in your ELA comprehension instruction?

In what ways did you incorporate student dialogue into your traditional ELA comprehension instruction? In what ways did you incorporate student agency? In what ways did you encourage divergent perspectives? How did you help build students' argumentation skills and critical thinking?

In what ways did your ELA comprehension instruction build upon rural students' backgrounds, cultures, or lived experiences? Can you give some examples?

How would you describe your ELA instructional goals for comprehension prior to physical school closures?

Transitioning into contexts of remote learning from physical school closures, how would you describe your ELA comprehension instruction during remote learning? What does your ELA comprehension instruction look like during remote learning?

In what ways are you able to further students' knowledge in your ELA comprehension instruction?

In what ways are you able to draw upon student dialogue in remote ELA comprehension instruction? In what ways are you able to draw upon student agency? In what ways are you able to encourage divergent perspectives? How did you help build students' argumentation skills and critical thinking?

How have you been able to build upon rural students' backgrounds, cultures, and lived experiences in remote ELA comprehension instruction? Can you give some examples?

How, if at all, have your instructional goals for ELA comprehension instruction changed due to pandemic-induced school closures?

In referencing your description of your dialogic teaching practices from the recruitment survey (reference their personal response), how do you feel remote learning has impacted your ability to enact dialogic approaches to ELA comprehension teaching?

Is there anything else you would like to share today?

*Thank you for speaking with me today! Before our next interview, I will ask you to send me some artifacts of your remote ELA comprehension instruction. At least one artifact should be from your teaching practice (e.g., lesson plan or written reflection on a lesson) and the other artifact should represent your ELA curriculum (e.g., either a description of your curriculum or list of ELA texts you're using). Please send these artifacts to me before our next interview, and feel free to email me with any questions in the meantime.

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Guide: Second Interview

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me again. Is there anything in particular about your teaching context or your comprehension teaching practices that have changed since our first interview?

Is there anything that you have reflected on or thought about again from our first conversation?

What have you currently been working on in your ELA comprehension instruction? Are you using the same curriculum or list of texts (reference artifact on curriculum information)?

Thank you for sharing your remote learning artifact. Could you share a little more about the context of this lesson? What are some of your biggest takeaways in reflecting on this lesson? What did you think went well? What would you like to see improved in a future lesson? How did your students respond to this lesson?

In what ways are you supporting students' background knowledge in comprehension instruction? How are you connecting students' personal experience in comprehension instruction? How are you connecting students' cultural knowledge in comprehension instruction?

In what ways are you presently incorporating student dialogue? How are you able to facilitate peer to peer dialogue?

How do you feel you are currently able to promote students' agency as active learners? Critical thinking?

How are you connecting rural students' backgrounds and lived experiences into your ELA comprehension instruction? Can you share any examples?

What are some ways that your school has worked collaboratively with the rural community during virtual learning?

What types of supports would you recommend for rural elementary schools to strengthen their ELA comprehension instruction during virtual learning?

If virtual learning is to continue, what areas of professional development for elementary teachers would you recommend?

How do you feel this time of virtual learning might impact your future comprehension instruction?

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix D

Artifacts Description

Prior to our next interview, please share at least 2 artifacts to represent your remote English Language Arts comprehension instruction. Please email these artifacts before our next interview (jkboone@ncsu.edu).

Share 1 (minimum) artifact of your remote English Language Arts comprehension instruction.

Options Include:

- Lesson plan from a remote English Language Arts comprehension instruction
- Personal written reflection after an English Language Arts comprehension lesson

AND

Share 1 (minimum) artifact of your English Language Arts curriculum information.

Options Include:

- Name and brief description of your current English Language Arts curriculum
- List of texts you are using in your English Language Arts instruction