

5-6-2014

# Middle School Teachers' Listening Orientations During Individualized Conferences With Struggling, Average, and High-Ability Readers

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## Middle School Teachers' Listening Orientations

During Individualized Conferences With Struggling, Average, and High-Ability Readers

Cindy Marie Gilson, Ph.D.

University of Connecticut, 2014

Incorporating higher-level questions into classroom discourse as an instructional practice is one recommendation for challenging readers. Recent evidence has demonstrated that teachers' effective use of follow-up questions during classroom discourse can be used in a variety of ways to support student learning. Interpreting students' contributions and then responding with appropriate follow-up questions, while concurrently engaged in discourse around text, requires careful listening on the part of the teacher. Teachers' *listening orientations*, or how teachers listen, has gained increased attention in the field of mathematics education. This research has indicated that mathematics teachers listen to students for different purposes. Furthermore, how teachers listen may influence the direction of the discourse and teachers' selection of follow-up questions and comments. Little is known, however, about how reading teachers listen to their students. In this qualitative study, I investigated five middle school reading teachers' listening orientations as they conducted individualized reading conferences with students identified as struggling, average, or high-ability readers. The study took place during the first year of implementation of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model—Reading Framework (SEM-R). Applying a basic interpretive design, I analyzed multiple-data sources to discern patterns in

teachers' perceptions and evidence of their listening. Close examination of the data revealed that middle school reading teachers listened to students with different listening orientations including *evaluative, interpretive, student-oriented, teacher-oriented, undetermined, and multiple* listening orientations. Few differences emerged in how teachers listened to students at varied reading levels as the teachers exhibited primarily an interpretive listening orientation with most of their students.

Middle School Teachers' Listening Orientations

During Individualized Conferences With Struggling, Average, and High-Ability Readers

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B. S., University of Connecticut, 1998

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A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Connecticut

2014

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APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my wonderful advisor, Catherine, for your patience, belief in me, kindness, and friendship. You truly are Catherine the Great and the best listener I have met! Thank you to Jean and Tutita for your encouragement and giving me the opportunity to work on multiple research studies that transformed me from a teacher into a researcher.

Thank you to my parents who taught me to always work hard and put forth my best effort into every task I endeavored. I cannot express how appreciative I am for your patience when I missed out on countless family gatherings. While I dedicated all my time into this dissertation, you were still there for me sending notes of encouragement and homemade meals.

Thank you to Chris, my little brother, for being a big role model! You have been my inspiration and guide as I navigated the unfamiliar waters of academia. Thank you to Diana Massicotte who always corrected me and said “when I get accepted to UConn” instead of “if I get accepted to UConn.” I appreciate that you always took time to listen to me talk on and on about education.

To my dear friends and family at Tasker, a very special thank you goes to so many people! I wish there was more room to thank everyone who has been an integral part of my life over the past 4 years. Thank you, especially to Micah and Amy who have been my loyal cheerleaders believing in me every step of the way. Amy, without our Saturday dissertation boot camps, I would never have finished!

In memory of my Nana and Papa. Your unwavering love and support have shaped who I am today. You taught me to be kind to others and find joy in being creative. Your kitchen table filled with years of happy memories gave me the strength to keep typing no matter how tired I was!

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*“Above all, we must listen to and take seriously what children have to say as we talk with them about the tasks in which they are engaged”*

*~Wells & Wells (1984, p. 5)*

Classroom discourse is a complex phenomenon that has received a wealth of attention from researchers (Nystrand, 2006). In particular, researchers have found that alternative approaches to more traditional classroom discourse patterns have the potential for enhancing reading comprehension instruction (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Elizabeth, Anderson, Snow, & Selman, 2012; Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Piccolo et al., 2008). The definitional components of classroom discourse include teacher and student questions, responses, and listening. Higher-level questions, or those that ask students to apply, analyze, evaluate, or problem solve (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Gall & Rhody, 1987), within the context of classroom discourse are often promoted to challenge all levels of readers, especially as a means of differentiating for the special needs of high-ability readers (Reis, 2008; Roberts & Inman, 2008; Shaunessy, 2000). The act of listening is a dynamic and complex yet essential component of discourse exchanges between students and their teachers (Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008), especially when teachers select to respond to student answers with follow-up responses. Differences in teacher listening, however, is a topic rarely addressed in the empirical literature on reading education or differentiated instruction.

Recent empirical research, primarily outside the reading education field, supports the potential for follow-up questioning strategies within instructional discourse exchanges to

promote challenge, learning, and participation (Chin, 2006; van Zee & Minstrell, 1997). Given the wide range of readiness levels in any given classroom and the emphasis on differentiating for students by varying one's use of questioning strategies (Reis, 2008; Roberts & Inman, 2008; Shaunessy, 2000), it is essential to fill the gap in the literature to widen our understanding of how middle school teachers listen differently to the adolescents they are charged with educating, including struggling, average, and high-ability readers.

### **Background Literature**

Teachers have a very important responsibility in preparing and challenging all students—regardless of academic readiness, socioeconomic background, and learner differences—to become proficient and critical consumers of text. Effective and appropriately challenging reading curriculum and instruction is vital in preparing students for their futures as life-long learners and productive members of American society. Developing proficiency as a reader goes beyond just reading fluently from multiple text sources. Students must be prepared to comprehend and articulate to others what they have learned from texts. According to the International Reading Association (IRA, 2012), adolescent literacy encapsulates the “ability to read, write, understand and interpret, and discuss multiple texts across multiple contexts” (p. 2). Speaking and listening skills are also emphasized in the English Language Arts component of The Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010). Therefore, teachers have multiple responsibilities in developing students' literacy skills which includes students' ability to participate in instructional discourse around text.

Classroom discourse is a complex and dynamic phenomenon (Imm & Stylianou, 2012; Louca, Zacharia, & Tzialli, 2012) that has intrigued and inspired empirical investigations for

many educational researchers. Classroom discourse is equally complex to define as there are multiple conceptions of the term and not one agreed upon definition. For clarity, in the current study, classroom discourse was conceptualized as the interactive conversations between participants in the classroom context that are instructional in nature (Cazden, 1998; Nystrand, 2006; Piccolo, Harbaugh, Carter, Capraro & Capraro, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978).

The various formats of classroom discourse such as whole group or peer discussions, debates, and individual conversations (Cazden, 2001; Nystrand, 2006) are prevalent across many different subject areas (Greyling, 1995; Wells, 1993). There are also different patterns, or ways that teachers and students respond within the various formats of classroom discourse, which will be expanded upon later (e.g., Chin, 2006; van Zee & Minstrell, 1997). Based on the existing literature, it is challenging to discern the extent to which different formats or patterns of discourse occur in modern classrooms as some studies have indicated that teachers typically use a lecture approach (Brighton, Hertberg, Callahan, Tomlinson, & Moon, 2005) or exhibit a predictable teacher-student turn-taking discourse pattern (e.g., Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Others have found that the discourse patterns depend on the teacher (Nystrand, 2006) or that teachers use a blend of approaches (Imm & Stylianou, 2012).

Most recently, studies have shown that alternative approaches to traditional discourse practices have supported increased student achievement and/or participation by shifting the teacher's role from lecturer to that of a facilitator of instructional discussions (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Elizabeth, Anderson, Snow, & Selman, 2012; Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Piccolo et al., 2008). For example, Applebee et al. (2003) investigated *dialogic instruction* in middle and high school English classrooms. Dialogic instruction is a discourse format that includes the use of *authentic questions* or teacher-initiated questions without predetermined

answers. Applebee et al. found that student achievement on challenging tasks was enhanced when students had the opportunity to participate in dialogic instruction.

Classroom discourse has the potential to support student reading achievement and promote participation; however, some traditional patterns of discourse have been criticized for being too restrictive (Chin, 2006; Lemke, 1990; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1990). One such traditional teacher to student discourse pattern described by Mehan (1979) includes three essential moves or turns, often referred to as the IRE pattern. First, the teacher initiates (I) a question, then the student responds (R), and finally the teacher evaluates the accuracy of the student's answer (E) before moving on to a new initiating question. Similarly, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) also described a variation of this three-turn discourse pattern called the IRF pattern in which the third move is replaced with a follow-up (F) move in which the teacher provides the student with a comment about the student's response, further instruction, or an acceptance of their response instead of an evaluation. The IRE and IRF discourse patterns can support reading teachers' instructional decision making, especially if the objective is to assess student comprehension (Chin, 2006).

Teachers may exhibit a range of questioning strategies within these patterns and approaches to classroom discourse (e.g., Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Teachers might ask recall type questions, which are also referred to as *fact, test, recitation, or lower-cognitive* questions (Gall & Rhody, 1987; Nystrand, 2006). An overemphasis on questions such as recall type questions that access lower-level thinking has been criticized for limiting students' participation and critical and creative thinking (Cunningham, 1987). Questions that access higher-levels of thinking are those that ask students to apply, analyze, evaluate, or problem solve (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Gall & Rhody, 1987). Studies investigating the effect of asking

questions that access higher-level thinking on student achievement have demonstrated positive effects on student achievement (Caulfield-Sloan & Ruzicka, 2005; Redfield & Rousseau, 1981; Samson, Strykowski, Weintin, & Walberg, 1987). The frequency to which teachers ask certain levels of questions varies. Some research has also indicated that teachers tend to ask questions that access lower-level thinking requiring students to simply recall previously learned information (Nystrand, 2006; Tienken, Goldberg, & DiRocco, 2009), while others tend to ask questions that access higher-level thinking more often (Fogarty, 2006).

These types of questions may also have certain functions within the aforementioned discourse patterns that should be aligned with the teachers' objectives (Cazden, 2001). Teacher questions may function to check for student comprehension, review prior knowledge, encourage student participation, or challenge students to think in different ways (Cazden, 2001; Costa, 2001b, Cunningham, 1987; Struck & Little, 2011). Incorporating higher-level questions as an instructional strategy within the context of classroom discourse is often recommended to teachers as a way to challenge readers and support student learning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Cazden, 2001; Peterson & Taylor, 2012; Tienken et al., 2009; Wilen, 1987).

The way a teacher responds to a student's contribution in a discussion can be just as important as the initiating question (Lee, 2007; Louca et al., 2012), especially given that just because a teacher asks a higher-level question, that does not mean the student will comprehend the question (Peterson & Taylor, 2012). The student's response may necessitate further teacher support, scaffolding, or rephrasing. Alternatively, if the student provides an adequate response, the teacher must also consider if the student may need further challenge. This requires that the teacher must listen carefully to the students' responses. Listening within a sociocultural context, such as the discourse exchanges between a teacher and students in the classroom culture, of

(Vygotsky, 1978), is an interpretive and interactive rather than one-sided process of communication (Davis, 1994; English, 2011; Purdy, 1986). This means that the teacher must listen to the student's response, interpret that response, and then determine how that information will inform his or her follow-up responses.

There are a variety of follow-up questions that teachers may ask students (Chin, 2006) to support or challenge their thinking. Most recently, a qualitative study demonstrated that elementary teachers implementing the Schoolwide Enrichment Model—Framework (SEM-R) asked a range of follow-up questions that accessed higher- and lower-level thinking (Gilson, Little, Ruegg, & Bruce-Davis, 2013). Also, Wolf, Crosson, and Resnick (2005) found that probing follow-up questions asked by reading teachers effectively promoted student elaboration. Recent research in fields outside of reading education has also demonstrated the potential of follow-up questions to provide scaffolding (Kim, 2010; Lee, 2007), deepen students' understandings (Chin, 2006), and challenge students to consider different perspectives (van Zee & Minstrell, 1997).

Within the context of classroom discourse, follow-up questions can help support teachers in differentiating instruction for the varied levels of readers in their classrooms. Responding to the needs of students is vital as there may be a wide range of reading levels within one classroom (Firmender, Reis, & Sweeny, 2013). Teachers who differentiate for students determine their current level of readiness gleaned from formal or informal assessments that informs further instructional decision-making. Varying one's use of questioning strategies is one instructional practice often recommended to differentiate for students. Higher-level questions are especially common as a recommendation for promoting learning in high-ability readers (Cooper, 2009; Reis, 2008; Shaunessy, 2000). The effective use of follow-up questioning in differentiating

instruction for varied levels of readers may require careful listening; however, there is a lack of empirical research in the reading field to substantiate this hypothesis.

Nevertheless, there is a growing empirical body of literature related to mathematics teachers' listening behaviors during classroom discourse (e.g., Coles, 2002; Davis, 1994, 1997; Davies & Walker, 2007; Empson & Jacobs, 2008; Harkness, & Wachenheim, 2008; Wallach & Even, 2005). Davis's (1994, 1996, 1997) qualitative research on middle school mathematics teachers' *listening orientations* in particular has paved the way for other researchers in his field to explore the role of effective listening within instructional discourse. Davis (1997) defined the construct of a teacher *listening orientation* as "the manner in which the teacher listens" (p. 355). Davis (1994) stated that teachers' listening is influenced by the speaker and what is being listened *for* in students' responses. This indicates the relationship between teachers listening and the questions they ask, and sheds light on *how* teachers respond during discourse. Davis (1994) also pointed out, "the student must trust that the teacher or fellow learner is willing and able to listen before investing much effort in articulating certain ideas" (p. 280). This may also help in understanding why some students do not provide elaborated responses to teachers' higher-level questions.

Davis (1997) identified three different, yet not mutually exclusive, listening orientations including *evaluative*, *interpretive*, and *hermeneutic listening*. Davis described an evaluative listening orientation as one in which the teacher listens primarily for the accuracy of students' answers and controls the direction of the discourse. The interpretive listening orientation is different in that the teacher listens to understand the students' sense-making and to ensure that the teacher comprehends the students' contributions. The direction of the discourse is influenced by students' responses; however, the teacher ultimately holds the authority of the knowledge. In

hermeneutic listening, the teacher and student engage together in a more conversational format in which the teacher is willing to listen to the student and learn from him or her. The learning space is shared between both participants of the discourse, and the teacher is more of a partner than the authority figure of the knowledge.

Davis's (1996, 1997) work on teacher listening orientations revealed two important concepts. First, the mathematics teachers in his studies appeared to listen in different ways and these orientations can shift over time with professional reflection. Effective methods used by other researchers in training pre-service teachers to promote professional reflection on their listening behaviors included math interviews (Crespo & Nicol, 2003) and journaling (Dunphy, 2010; Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008).

Second, Davis's (1996, 1997) also revealed in his work that the three types of listening orientations appeared to reflect teachers' *beliefs* about who controls the direction of the classroom discourse, thus influencing how teachers followed up to their students' responses. That teachers' listening may influence who holds the authority of the discourse is especially concerning given that the IRA (2012) and CCSS (2010) both recommend that students have opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. If reading teachers have an authoritative, lecture style format of teaching and provide little opportunities for student talk, then, unfortunately, students may miss out on vital learning opportunities to develop their own speaking and active listening skills.

Teachers' expectations of their students can also influence their listening. In a separate study, Wallach and Even (2005) found that an elementary mathematics teacher "heard" in varied ways. The teacher also had different expectations for her two students at different readiness levels as they were videotaped solving a math word problem. The researchers noted that there

was a mismatch between what the students said and what the teacher heard due to her differing expectations. This study clearly indicates that teacher listening is an important practice worthy of investigating within the context of classroom discourse.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Based upon the background literature on discourse, it seems logical to conclude that teacher listening may also play an essential role in the effective use of questioning within classroom discourse to promote student reading achievement. First, authors of both research and practitioner literature have demonstrated strong support in asking higher-level questions to challenge all levels of readers (Cooper, 2009; Peterson & Taylor, 2012; Piccolo et al., 2008; Reis, 2008; Shaunessy, 2000; Struck & Little, 2011). To determine if students comprehend these questions or need further support or challenge, teachers must listen carefully to their students' contributions. Second, follow-up questions have the potential to enhance student creative and critical thinking, promote participation, and support students in answering higher-level questions (Chin, 2006; Kim, 2010; Lee, 2007; van Zee & Minstrell, 1997; Wolf et al., 2005). How a teacher responds with a follow-up question is contingent upon the students' responses (Chin, 2006; Lee, 2007), thus teachers must again listen to students' responses to inform subsequent instructional decisions. Therefore, teachers' listening has a vital role in effective classroom discourse as an instructional strategy.

The challenge of this logic is that there is a lack of empirical literature solely focused on reading teachers' listening and questioning practices within the sociocultural context of classroom discourse when working with students at varied reading levels. If teacher listening is of interest to researchers in the mathematics field, why is it relatively unexplored in the reading field when discourse and questioning strategies show potential for promoting student reading

achievement for all readers? The findings from the corpus of literature from the mathematics field can both inform investigations of reading teachers' listening and support the need for filling the gap in the literature (e.g., Coles, 2002; Davis, 1994, 1997; Davies & Walker, 2007; Empson & Jacobs, 2008; Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008; Wallach & Even, 2005).

Davis's (1997) explication of middle school mathematics teachers' listening orientations provided direction for investigating teachers' listening behaviors in other studies indicated that teachers do indeed listen in different ways to their students (Coles, 2001; Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008; Kaplan, Rosenfeld, & Appelbaum, 2000). It may be possible, too, that reading teachers display differences in their listening. Furthermore, listening is an important skill for teachers to learn (Aracavi & Isoda, 2007; Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008), and research has shown that teachers can both improve (Lundgren, 1972) and transition their listening orientation over time (Davis, 1997). If teachers listen differently and one way of listening is more effective than another, then understanding reading teachers' listening differences may have important implications for future professional development and possibly student reading achievement.

Furthermore, limited research exists attending to how teachers listen differently to students at varied levels of achievement, particularly when working with students in a one-to-one setting. What can be gleaned from the research on mathematics teachers' listening is that teachers' expectations of their students can mediate the effectiveness of their listening (Davies & Walker, 2007; Wallach & Even, 2005). This finding leads to an important unaddressed question in the reading education research literature as well: How do reading teachers listen to students based on reading levels or teacher expectations of students?

Brighton et al. (2005) found that teachers in their study did not feel differentiating for gifted students in general was necessary. Is it possible then that teachers' beliefs about

differentiation or expectations of students at different reading readiness levels could influence their listening? Understanding how and if teachers adjust their listening orientations based on the students' individual levels could have important implications for professional development on how teachers might differentiate for students through discourse.

To better prepare adolescent readers at all developmental levels to become productive citizens, critical consumers of text, and engaged readers, teachers must be knowledgeable of all the tools available to improve their practice. As the research supports the potential of discourse and questioning to enhance student reading achievement, we must have a more comprehensive understanding of how reading teachers' listening fits within this complex phenomenon.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Given the positive support for discourse as a means for promoting reading comprehension (Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Nystrand, 2006) which can include the potential for follow-up questions to challenge and/or support students in the learning process (e.g., van Zee & Mistrell, 1997; Wolf et al., 2005), teacher listening and related follow-up questioning behaviors are an important component of reading instruction overall. Therefore, investigating evidence of teachers' listening orientations and teachers' perceptions of how they listen to and interpret students' responses to questions may provide insight in how to further support reading teachers' differentiated instruction through discourse.

This study explored teacher listening within the naturalistic context of individualized reading conferences between middle school teachers and their students during implementation of the SEM-R. The SEM-R is one approach to reading that provides all students, including high-ability readers, with differentiated and appropriately challenging literacy instruction. The SEM-R also provides students with opportunities to engage in meaningful and motivating experiences

with self-selected high-interest novels. A key feature of SEM-R is the emphasis on whole group and individualized teacher to student discourse around high-interest novels. For this study, I selected to study teachers' listening during individualized reading conferences because this context offered the opportunity to just focus on discourse exchanges between the teacher and student at one reading level at a time. I felt that this context would be a good starting point for understanding teachers' perceptions of how they listen to their students at different reading levels.

Evidence of different reading teachers' listening orientations may provide a starting point for discussion on how to improve discourse as an instructional practice and extend our knowledge in how reading teachers may use questioning strategies more effectively in response to the individual needs of struggling, average, and high-ability readers.

### **Research Questions**

This study explored teacher listening within the naturalistic context of individualized reading conferences between middle school teachers and their students during implementation of the SEM-R.

A basic interpretive design was applied to answer the following research questions for this qualitative study:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of how they listen to question responses from students at varied reading levels during individualized reading conferences?
2. What types of listening orientations do reading teachers exhibit during individualized reading conferences with students at varied reading levels?

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To set the stage for exploring the background literature on teacher listening, I will first discuss the role of classroom discourse in differentiating instruction for students at varied reading levels. There is an emphasis in the both the gifted education and general education (Dooley, 1993; Ivey, 2000; Petrilli, 2011; R. Tobin, 2008) literature recommending differentiation in reading instruction in response to the wide range of reading readiness levels that exists in classrooms today. One way to meet the diverse needs of readers is to flexibly use questioning strategies in response to students' current demonstration of their understanding of text (Roberts & Inman, 2008). High-ability readers who have learned to apply reading strategies effectively can be further challenged through higher-level questioning centered on their text (Cooper, 2009; Reis, 2008; Shaunessy, 2000). Questioning strategies may be applied during the discourse interchanges between teachers and students or students to students in multiple grouping structures: one-to-one, small group, or large group. From a theoretical and empirical standpoint, meaningful discourse that incorporates questioning strategies, including use of follow-up questions, has the potential to enhance student comprehension, engagement, and participation. What is missing from the reading discourse literature is explicit attention to how teachers listen during questioning exchanges with students at varied readiness levels. Evidence from empirical studies of mathematics teachers suggests that listening is a vital component of discourse and that teachers even display different types of listening behaviors (Davis, 1997). Some research suggests that teacher expectations of students may influence what the teacher hears versus what the student actually says (Wallach & Even, 2005). What is not clear in the

reading literature is how or if teachers listen differently to students at varied reading levels as a key practice of their effort to differentiate instruction for students.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to address the gap in the literature by exploring teachers' perspectives on how they listen to students at varied reading levels. In this literature review, a synthesis of the relevant body of knowledge on differentiated instruction, classroom discourse, questioning strategies, and teacher listening behaviors is presented.

### **Theoretical Framework**

From a sociocultural perspective, student learning and development occur during the teacher-to-student social language interchanges of classroom discourse (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning (1978), conceptual understandings and higher-level functions are first modeled through an interpersonal social context; thereafter, the learning gained by the student during this process is internalized, and development appears at the individual level, independent of the teacher's support.

Compatible with Vygotsky's (1978) theory, Gee (2001) viewed interactions with adults through discourse as a way for students to build meaning from language and learn new perspectives on experiences, thus allowing them later to consider and imitate these independently. Therefore, discourse, whether during whole class, small group, or teacher-to-student individual exchanges, has the potential to play a vital role in promoting student advancement and understanding. Nystrand's (2006) review of research studies on discourse in reading classrooms supported the "potential of classroom discussion to enhance reading comprehension instruction" (p. 401).

Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical perspective has further implications for teachers' instructional decision making. The alignment between a teacher's knowledge of the student, the

learning task, and instructional practices is essential to promoting student development. According to Vygotsky, “. . . learning should be matched in some manner with the child’s developmental level” (p. 85). Vygotsky also explained that students learn at an optimal level when teachers provide support and appropriate levels of challenge within a zone of proximal development. In this zone, students are exposed to materials, problems, and learning experiences that are slightly beyond their actual developmental levels—the students’ independent levels of mental functioning—but are still able to master the learning objectives with support from the teacher. Teacher assistance, delivered during discourse interactions with the students, for example, may be in the form of leading questions, providing clues for the solution, or modeling (Vygotsky, 1978). In this context, discourse can serve as a metaphorical scaffold to support student learning, which also requires careful and complex listening behaviors on the part of the teacher (Cazden, 2001).

Recognizing the important role of teacher behaviors during instructional classroom discourse exchanges, Vygotsky’s (1978) and Gee’s (2001) theoretical views of student growth and development in the social context of discourse guided this study of how middle school reading teachers listen to students at varied levels of readiness. The reading classroom can provide a rich setting for investigating teacher listening during discourse exchanges.

### **Student Differences and Differentiated Instruction**

Vygotsky’s (1978) conceptualization of a zone of proximal development reflected a recognition that not all learners are the same and may need different levels of challenge, instruction, and curriculum approaches. He also acknowledged that students who are at the same initial developmental levels may achieve different levels of growth with assistance from the teacher coupled with the opportunity to solve challenging problems. In other words, students

may differ in their readiness levels at the start of an instructional unit or they may differ in how much growth they exhibit and at what rates.

Student academic differences, both in their initial level in any given course and their rate of growth, are quite evident in modern reading classrooms. Firmender et al. (2013) assessed students' reading fluency and comprehension levels in grades 3-5 across five elementary schools and found a wide range of reading achievement. Fluency scores ranged from below the 10th percentile to above the 90th percentile, and there was a range of 9.2 to 11.6 different grade levels within each grade for reading comprehension. Their study demonstrated the vast disparity in student reading readiness levels in classrooms, suggesting the need for differentiated instruction in response. Tomlinson (2000) explained that, "The differences in students are significant enough to make a major impact on what students need to learn, the pace at which they need to learn it, and the support they need from teachers and others to learn it well" (p. 6). Similarly, specifically focusing on adolescent readers, the IRA (2012) posited, ". . . adolescents deserve differentiated literacy instruction specific to their individual needs" (p. 2).

Differentiated literacy instruction for students should include those at all reading levels. Even high-ability readers need to be appropriately challenged (Reis et al., 2004). In fact, Dooley (1993) stated, "Appropriate, differentiated reading programs are essential for the academic growth of highly capable readers and for the preservation of their desire to learn" (p. 547). There is an unfortunate misconception in many schools that gifted children will be successful no matter what the odds (Hertberg-Davis, 2009). Furthermore, although there are exemplary schools that have demonstrated instructional and curricular modifications for gifted and talented students (Westberg & Archambault, 1997), unfortunately, this is not the case in all schools (Brighton et al., 2005; Reis et al., 2004; Westberg, Archambault, Dobyms, & Salvin, 1993). For example, in

their study of nine 3rd and 7th grade urban and suburban reading classrooms in which high-ability readers resided, Reis et al. (2004) found that only three of the suburban classrooms observed indicated that high-ability readers received some challenge, such as using challenging books, asking higher-level questions, or using advanced instruction (p. 326). Little (2012) explained “. . . if schools are to promote world-class achievement, they must provide opportunities for students to encounter material that is consistently challenging and that promotes ongoing growth” (p. 702).

Central to the tenets of differentiating instruction is the respectful, proactive, and responsive nature of the teacher to students’ needs. Tomlinson (2001) explained, “In a differentiated classroom, the teacher proactively plans and carries out varied approaches to content, process, and product in anticipation of and response to student differences in readiness, interest, and learning needs” (p. 7). Teachers can gain knowledge of students’ differences gained either formally or informally by using ongoing assessments of students’ current instructional levels.

Differentiating for students in reading may include a variety of flexibly implemented instructional practices in response to students’ current levels of readiness. These practices include, but are not limited to, flexible grouping, leveled books, curriculum compacting, providing choice and different degrees of independence, and varying instructional strategies and levels of questions (Fogarty, 2006; Reis, Burns, & Renzulli, 1992; Reis et al., 2004; Sweeny, 2008; Tomlinson, 2001).

### **The Schoolwide Enrichment Model—Reading Framework**

The SEM-R is one approach that reading teachers can use to address the diversity of learners in their classrooms (Firmender et al., 2013). The SEM-R was created at The National

Research Center on the Gifted and Talented to provide teachers with a framework for engaging all students in individualized and group enriched reading experiences. The purpose of the SEM-R is to expose students to a variety of books, genres, and authors, promote enjoyment in reading, increase reading comprehension, fluency, and achievement, and encourage students to become independent readers (Reis, 2009).

This framework is theoretically based on the Enrichment Triad Model (Renzulli, 1977) that incorporates three types of enrichment. During Type I enrichment, students experience content that is not typically covered in the regular curriculum. Type II enrichment activities are designed to teach students skills that practicing professionals might use. In a Type III enrichment activity, students apply these skills by producing a creative product, performance, or service. Similarly, there are three levels to the SEM-R framework: Phase 1, 2, and 3, described below.

**Phase 1 of SEM-R.** In the first phase of SEM-R, teachers facilitate whole group discussions by exposing students to a variety of books, authors, and genres. This “book hook” discussion is meant to pique students’ interests and to entice them to read different books they may not typically select for themselves. Teachers also incorporate mini-lessons during this book hook discussion; in these mini-lessons, they might engage students with higher-level questions, model reading skills and strategies, discuss appropriate reading behaviors, and explore text-to-self, text-to-world, or text-to-text connections.

**Phase 2 of SEM-R.** In this second phase of SEM-R, students silently read their high interest, self-selected books that are slightly above their reading level, while the teacher confers with students individually in reading conferences (Reis et al., 2005). Teachers ask students challenging questions, provide differentiated instruction, and model higher-level responses to the

text to move students forward in their learning and to help them gain a deeper understanding of the text, reading strategies, and self-regulation skills.

Typically, a SEM-R reading conference is about 5-7 minutes in length and includes the following components:

1. The teacher asks the student to identify the title of the book, share if he/she likes the book, explain why it was chosen, and summarize briefly what has been read so far.
2. Teacher has the student read a short passage from the book for about 1 minute.
3. Teacher asks the student one or more challenging questions generated by the teacher or from a list of higher-level questions from the SEM-R bookmarks. Teachers use the bookmarks to check comprehension and to prompt higher levels of thinking by asking students to determine importance, make connections, make inferences, synthesize, visualize, or demonstrate other skills or strategies. Teachers may ask follow-up questions to support or challenge students.
4. Teacher may discuss the appropriateness of the match of the book to the student's current reading level or self-regulation skills, or may discuss details for the next conference.
5. Teacher documents the conference discussion in the student's SEM-R reading log, making note of goals for the student for the next conference. (Reis, Fogarty, Eckert, & Muller, 2008)

Phase 2 reading conferences allow time for the teacher to determine if students are reading books that are appropriately challenging. The conferences also provide students with an opportunity to ask questions, share what they have read, and receive individualized reading strategy instruction from the teacher. Teachers trained in SEM-R are provided with numerous bookmarks organized by genres and by literary element. These bookmarks serve as a resource

for a multitude of higher-level questions that may be used to support discourse and to challenge students to think deeply about their books. (See Appendix A for an example.)

**Phase 3 of SEM-R.** In the third phase of SEM-R, students develop and explore reading interests. There are many enriching and creative options for students to engage in during this component of SEM-R, including, but not limited to, independent studies, critical thinking skills development, book chats, writing activities, author studies, and Internet research (Reis et al., 2005).

In the current study, Phase 2 of SEM-R was the primary setting for data collection as it provided the context for carefully examining teachers' listening orientations during one-to-one discourse with students. Instructional discourse among teachers and students has received attention from many researchers over the past century (Nystrand, 2006) as it plays an important role in the learning process (Imm & Stylianou, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). When students are reading challenging books, discourse between the teacher and student provides the context for essential instruction, scaffolding, and modeling of reading strategies as needed. It also has the potential to provide students with the space for practicing and demonstrating their current understandings (Lawrence & Snow, 2011).

### **Classroom Discourse**

Discourse in Latin comes from *discursus*, meaning “running to and fro.” This definition provides us with a unique visual of the possibilities of the social interactions (Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008) that may occur between teachers and students engaged in classroom discourse. Whether in a whole group, small group, or individual teacher-student format, classroom discourse is a complex yet common phenomenon that serves a central role in the

learning process (Greyling, 1995; Imm & Stylianou, 2012; Piccolo et al., 2008; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1993).

This essential role of discourse in adolescents' learning is reflected in local and national standards for curriculum and instruction for language arts. For instance, the CCSS (2010) states that to be prepared for college and their future careers students, "must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations—as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner—built around important content in various domains" (p. 48). More recently, the IRA (2012) stated that to prepare students for the 21st century, they must "talk about a variety of texts with others, including teachers, peers, members of their own communities, and the larger world population" (p. 2).

Discourse may be conceptualized as the interactive conversations between participants (Cazden, 1998; Piccolo et al., 2008) within the sociocultural context of a classroom (Vygotsky, 1978). Specifically, discourse was used to refer to interactive conversations between the teacher and student that were instructional in nature. Piccolo et al. (2008) defined ". . . rich, meaningful discourse as interactive and sustained discourses of a dialogic nature between teachers and students aligned to the content of the lesson that addresses specific student learning issues" (p. 378). This "dialogic nature" that Piccolo et al. was referring to was characterized by both teachers and students asking questions to each other.

### **Traditional Discourse Patterns**

Researchers have long been interested in studying classroom discourse across multiple subject areas (Chin, 2006; Lemke, 1990; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Wells, 1993). Although classroom discourse is a common phenomenon (Greyling, 1995; Wells, 1993), there are variations in the types of discourse patterns.

Nystrand (2006) reviewed research from the past 150 years on classroom discourse and its relation to reading comprehension from the past 30 years. While the review was not an in-depth meta-analysis, Nystrand did include a range of studies with a variety of methodologies that looked at different grade levels within both small- and whole-group discourse. He found that, traditionally, classroom discourse was dominated by teacher-initiated recall questions that functioned primarily to determine mastery of the content in a lecture format. Two specific types of traditional discourse patterns will be discussed: the IRE and IRF discourse patterns, followed by a brief discussion of a few alternative approaches.

**IRE discourse patterns.** A typical teacher-to-student discourse pattern or exchange prevalent in many classrooms (Wells, 1993), called the IRE pattern (Mehan, 1979), includes three distinct moves from the participants: beginning with a teacher initiated question (I), followed by a student response (R), and then concluding with a teacher evaluation (E). An example of an IRE pattern is exemplified in the following excerpt from a lesson on map reading (Mehan, 1979, p. 114):

Teacher: This is the long word. Who knows what it says? (Initiating question)

Student: Cafeteria (Response)

Teacher: Cafeteria, Audrey, good for you. (Evaluation)

This brief IRE interchange, often referred to as “triadic dialogue (Lemke, 1990), can be a valuable tool for teachers as it allows them to have the last turn speaking and evaluate students’ comprehension (Chin, 2006). Furthermore, the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) found that providing students with feedback on the correctness of their answers was an effective strategy for improving student comprehension. Although there are benefits to the IRE discourse pattern, it has been criticized for restricting students’ thinking (Chin, 2006), giving too much control to the

teacher (Lemke, 1990), and potentially resulting in a “passive stance towards learning and non-engagement with text” (Wilson & Smetana, 2011, p. 84).

**IRF discourse patterns.** Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) described a variation of the IRE triadic dialogue exchange, called an IRF pattern, in which the evaluation move might incorporate a follow-up comment or acceptance of the student’s response. In the example below from an elementary social studies lesson on hieroglyphics, the teacher provided a follow-up acceptance and a comment (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, p. 71):

Teacher: Can you say anything about those symbols? (Initiating question)

Student: They’re all easy to draw. (Response)

Teacher: Er yes. Reasonably easy to draw. (Follow-up – acceptance)

That’s a good point isn’t it. (Evaluation)

Because if they were very complicated it wouldn’t be very easy to put them on whatever you wanted to put them on. (Comment)

Recent research has indicated that teachers can move away from the typical evaluative response of the third move and instead ask follow-up questions within the third move of the IRF pattern to support student learning in a variety of ways that are more responsive to students’ needs (Chin, 2006; Gillies, 2011; Kim, 2010; Lee, 2007; van Zee & Minstrell, 1997; Wolf et al., 2005).

### **Alternative Discourse Approaches**

While classroom discourse is common in classrooms, it is not entirely clear what specific types of discourse patterns are predominant in modern classrooms, because Nystrand’s (2006) review of more recent studies revealed that reading instruction discourse formats vary considerably depending upon the individual teacher. These formats included debates, open-ended

whole-class discussions, or elaborated question-answer recitations. However, in Brighton et al.'s (2005) study of differentiated instruction implemented by middle school teachers following professional development, the researchers found that teachers primarily used lecture and direct instruction, and student talk occurred generally when they were asked questions.

What is known is that there is an emphasis in the literature on the importance of promoting more meaningful discourse. Researchers have referred to these alternative approaches as *rich, meaningful discourse* or *rich discussion* (Lawrence & Snow, 2011; Piccolo, et al., 2008), *academic discussions* (Elizabeth et al., 2012), and *open discussions* (Applebee et al., 2003).

Lawrence and Snow (2011, p. 331) detailed the characteristics of *rich discussions*:

- The discussion begins with a worthy question.
- Participants share in the authority of knowledge and participation time.
- Time for peer to peer discussion is available.
- There is a goal for the discussion.
- Participants are all aware of the rules for contributing to the discussion.

As teacher talk tends to dominate traditional discourse approaches (Piccolo et al., 2008; Wells & Wells, 1984) in predictable patterns of turn taking, what these alternative approaches appear to have in common is that they are more flexible in nature and emphasize more student participation and authority over the discourse. For example, Elizabeth et al. (2012) described *academic discussions* as

. . . conversations between two or more students centered on an educational topic that is supported by academic materials (e.g., a book, short story, chart, graph, explicit instruction from the teacher). While the teacher may be an active participant in an academic discussion, ideally students dominate the talk by introducing evidence- and

reason-based claims, questioning information, and making perspectival interpretations.  
(p. 1215)

The descriptions of alternative approaches to classroom discourse emphasizing more student talk imply that teachers should take on a more facilitative and listening role. There is a lack of attention in the reading research that investigates how teachers listen to their students in these types of approaches. Rather, much of the research focuses on the effect of meaningful discourse on student outcomes. Recent research has supported the potential for certain types of alternative classroom discourse to enhance student reading achievement and higher-level thinking, to influence student engagement, and to encourage further student participation (Applebee et al., 2003; Imm & Stylianou, 2012; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1990, 1991; Soter et al., 2008; Wolf et al., 2005). For instance, Applebee et al. (2003) found that student achievement on challenging literacy tasks was enhanced by “discussion to develop comprehensive understanding, encouraging exploration and multiple perspectives rather than focusing on correct interpretations and predetermined conclusions” (p. 722).

### **Reading Achievement and Student Engagement**

There are some examples of empirical research related to the effectiveness of discourse practices on student reading achievement and student engagement (Applebee et al., 2003; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1990, 1991; Soter et al., 2008). Applebee et al. (2003) examined the relationship between student literacy achievement and multiple variables including, extended curricular conversations, challenging academic work, and dialogic instruction across a total of 1,111 students at 19 middle and high schools. To highlight a few of their findings, dialogic instruction was characterized by the following discussion based-approaches: (a) open discussion—“free exchange of information . . . that lasts longer than 30 seconds,” (b) authentic

questions—teacher questions that did not have predetermined answers, and (c) questions with uptake—questions that included information from what the student had previously stated (p. 670). The researchers found that challenging academic work, the use of discussion-based approaches, and students’ track level (i.e., high track versus low track) predicted literacy achievement across students at varied levels of readiness.

Applebee et al. (2003) also found that, on average, all students participated in open discussions for about 1.7 minutes per 60 minute class; however, there were differences for students at varied levels of ability. Students in lower achieving groups spent less time participating in open discussions (average of 42 seconds) compared to students in higher tracks (average of 3.3 minutes). This raises the question about why some students are not talking as much as students in other tracks.

Nystrand and Gamoran (1990, 1991) investigated student engagement and learning of over 1,000 students in 8th and 9th grade English classrooms. Findings demonstrated that the types of discourse practices the teachers exhibited influenced student engagement. Two types of engagement were described: (a) *substantive*—sustained and genuine engagement in literature and related content and issues, and (b) *procedural*—students were on-task and attended to the rules and routines of the classroom. The discourse practices, indicative of a more conversational style and *substantive student engagement*, and in the authors’ opinion, more high-quality talk, included the use of authentic questions, uptake, and high-level evaluation. Nystrand and Gamoran (1990) stated, “The extent to which classroom discourse resembles conversation is in fact an excellent criterion for judging both the instructional quality of classroom discourse and the extent of substantive student engagement” (p. 14). They found that the more traditional discourse approach called *recitation* or the use of the IRE pattern (Mehan, 1979) rarely engaged

students substantively. Nystrand and Gamoran described the behaviors of both the teachers and students during recitation: “. . . the teacher initiates and dominates; students are passive and are expected to recall, when asked, what they have learned and to report other people’s thinking” (p. 16). Across the 58 classes in this study, procedural engagement was observed to a high degree while substantive engagement and discussion were limited; however, based upon the results of regression analyses, the authors concluded that students performed better on reading achievement in classes using more uptake, authentic questions, and more discussion time, whereas procedural engagement had a weaker relationship to achievement.

Soter et al. (2008) investigated nine different classroom discourse approaches to identify indicators of students’ higher-level thinking and comprehension. These approaches included *Grand Conversations*, *Book Club*, *Literature Circles*, *Instructional Conversations*, *Questioning the Author*, *Junior Great Books*, *Collaborative Reasoning*, *Philosophy for Children*, and *Paedeia Seminar* and were similar in that all discussions centered on a text and promoted student participation. The research team analyzed video-taped, teacher-led and student-led discussions and found the most productive of the discussions, or those characterized by students talking for extended periods of time, included teacher use of uptake and open-ended or authentic questions (i.e., those that generated more elaborated student responses), student elaboration, and student use of reasoning words (i.e., because, agree, disagree). Approaches using a critical-analytic or expressive stance were associated with more opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-level thinking and comprehension. Discussion approaches with a critical-analytic approach promoted questioning text to explore and infer the book authors’ arguments or beliefs. Those with an expressive stance accessed students’ emotional responses to text and fostered an authentic discussion between engaged readers.

## Discourse Approaches From the Mathematics Education Field

Research studies on classroom discourse from the mathematics education field have shown evidence of the relationship between discourse and student achievement, engagement, and participation. For instance, Imm and Stylianou (2012) investigated the structure of three different types of classroom discourse evident in five middle school math classrooms, the relationships between the student tasks and discourse, and how the discourse structures engaged students in discussions around conceptual understanding. Imm and Stylianou described the following types of classrooms, as linked to discourse: (a) *high discourse classrooms*, defined by an appreciation for students' contributions and "where rich, inclusive, and purposeful mathematical conversation happened;" (b) *low discourse classrooms*, in which teachers' talk is "one-directional 'telling';" and (c) *hybrid discourse classrooms*, characterized by a mix of both low and high discourse classroom characteristics (p. 131). The researchers also described the classroom discourse as *univocal*, or having the purpose of communicating information to be learned and clearly delivered from speaker to receiver, or as *dialogic*, in which the primary goal is "to initiate understanding of an idea or the construction of a new idea, achieved when participants actively made sense of text or speech by questioning, validating, or even rejecting it" (p. 132). Teachers may have exhibited characteristics of each depending upon their instructional purposes. In the *high discourse* classrooms, the teacher's role moved away from that of "the primary source of knowledge, the originator of questions, and the evaluator of mathematical correctness of students" (p. 144). Imm and Stylianou concluded that most teachers' classrooms were indicative of hybrid discourse.

For teachers to shift from traditional teacher-centered discourse approaches to discussions in which students talk more, it would seem that teachers would need to take a different role as a

listener rather than primarily as a speaker. However, very little research exists about teacher listening in general or specifically about how reading teachers listen to their students during discourse exchanges. Investigating teacher response behaviors such as questioning strategies can signal how teachers listen to their students (Davis, 1994, 1997).

### **Teacher Questioning**

In this section, I will present the literature on teacher questioning as it is a definitional component of classroom discourse and the types of questions teachers ask may indicate how teachers listen to students. In a review of literature on questioning and discussion, Lawrence and Snow (2011) found that, “A key strategy in launching authentic discussion is to start from genuine and stimulating questions, often ones worthy of discussion and ones on which opinions can legitimately differ” (p. 331). In addition to being a component of discourse, asking students questions has continued to be an essential and widely popular component of a teacher’s repertoire of instructional practices (Cazden, 2001; Cotton, 2001; Tienken et al., 2009; Wilen, 1987). According to Wilen (1987), “The types of questions that elementary and secondary school teachers ask and the techniques and strategies they employ can make the difference between reflective, active learners and parroting, passive learners” (p. 9). Teacher questions can serve multiple functions, such as checking for comprehension, engaging students in metacognition, reviewing previously learned material, encouraging student participation, controlling behavior, or challenging students to think critically or consider alternative points of view (Costa, 2001b; Cunningham, 1987; Struck & Little, 2011).

These functions are not mutually exclusive; as Cazden (2001) explained, “At their best, teacher questions can both assist and assess student learning” (p. 92). Reflecting Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning (1978), teacher questions may serve an important instructional

role as a tool for assisting in advancing student learning within their zone of proximal development. To move students forward, a teacher needs to determine students' current levels of understanding, which can be assessed, as Cazden pointed out, through questioning. Much of the more recent research surrounding discourse, primarily in the math and science fields, has also emphasized teacher questioning practices that can promote student engagement in quality discourse and achievement (e.g., McConney & Perry, 2011; Caulfield-Sloan & Ruzicka, 2005).

### **Types of Teacher Questions**

There are multiple classifications of the types of questions teachers ask across different subject areas. Most commonly, questions tend to be classified by level of cognitive demand (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), more specifically, into those that access lower or higher-levels of thinking. For instance, Gall and Rhody (1987) described lower-cognitive questions, sometimes referred to as *fact questions*, *test questions*, or *recitation questions*, as those necessitating one's memory or access to a text to look up the information. These types of questions can have an important role in classroom instruction if they are aligned to the teacher's objectives (Cazden, 2001; Costa, 2001b; Gall & Rhody, 1987). For example, factual type questions can be used if the teacher's objective is to assess student's recall of content knowledge. Nevertheless, overemphasis on questions that emphasize lower-level thinking has been criticized. Cunningham (1987) warned,

Selecting mostly factual recall questions limits drastically the number of things students can do with information and is manipulative as well; the consequence is to build dependence in students. Students will not become self-sufficient when someone is always directing their thinking. This eliminates possibilities for critical and creative thinking. (p. 68)

Teachers are often encouraged to use higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), such as the applying, analyzing, evaluating, and

creating levels, while limiting an overemphasis of the remembering and understanding objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Shaunessy, 2005). Asking questions that access higher-levels of thinking is often recommended as a means for challenging students, including high-ability learners (Cooper, 2009; Reis, 2008; Shaunessy, 2000). Gall and Rhody (1987) explained, “Higher-cognitive questions are usually defined as questions that require students to use such thought processes as analyzing, problem solving, predicting, and evaluating” (pp. 31-32). These separations of types of questions based on cognitive demand can support teachers in varying the questions they ask as Costa (2001b) suggested that because questions can invite students to engage in different levels of thinking, teachers should ask all levels of questions to all students.

The results of meta-analyses of the effects of teacher questioning on student reading achievement have yielded mixed findings. Some studies revealed positive effects on student achievement when teachers asked higher-level questions compared to those who did not (Redfield & Rousseau, 1981; Samson et al., 1987), while other earlier studies found no differences (Winne, 1979). These mixed results may be explained due in part to the analysis methods for meta-analyses available at the time, academic readiness of the participants in the studies or how higher versus lower order questions were defined by the researchers (Gall & Rhody, 1987). In a more recent study, Hattie (2009) found a medium positive effect size across more than 200 studies demonstrating a relationship between questioning and student achievement.

Caulfield-Sloan and Ruzicka (2005) studied the effect of professional development on third-grade science teachers’ use of higher-order questioning strategies and student achievement on assessments. Treatment teachers were encouraged to use divergent higher-order thinking questions, as defined within the higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy, more frequently. Caulfield-

Sloan and Ruzicka found that students in the treatment group performed better on open-ended science assessments than the control group.

Some researchers have studied the frequency of questioning types asked by teachers. Tienken et al. (2009) investigated the frequency of *reproductive*, or lower-order questions, and *productive*, or higher-order questions, asked by 98 teachers in grades 3-12 over the course of 6 years. Productive questions were defined as those that provided “students the opportunity to create, analyze, or evaluate. These questions are frequently open-ended and divergent in nature,” and “Reproductive questions prompt students to imitate, recall, or apply knowledge and information taught by the teacher, through a mimicked process. . . . Reproductive questions are typically convergent and have only one correct answer” (Tienken et al., 2009, p. 40). These researchers found that 76% of the questions asked by the teachers were reproductive, while only 24% were productive-type questions.

In two recent studies investigating SEM-R teachers’ questioning behaviors, teachers gave students opportunities to field both higher and lower-level questions (Fogarty, 2006; Sweeny, 2008). Fogarty (2006) found that both grade 3-7 reading teachers using SEM-R as the treatment and control groups used higher-level strategy questions more often than lower-level questions; treatment teachers who used the SEM-R framework during whole group and individualized conferences asked more higher-level strategy questions than control teachers in whole class discussions. The treatment teachers asked lower-achieving readers to monitor their comprehension and create their own questions, while questions asked of talented readers were about challenge level, theme, connections, and summarizing the story. Similarly, Sweeny (2008) investigated how grade 3-5 SEM-R teachers differentiated for high, average, and low readers during Phase 2 conferences. She found that the teachers asked questions requiring students to

different reading strategies; however, those accessing higher-level thinking were minimal. There were some differences based on student reading levels in her findings in that higher performing student engaged in more discussions during conferences with teachers, while lower performing students focused on vocabulary strategies.

As mentioned previously, the practitioner literature often recommends varying the levels of questions posed to students for a variety of reasons, including as a means of challenging talented readers (Cooper, 2009; Peterson & Taylor, 2012; Reis, 2008; Shaunessy, 2000). Some studies have revealed that this is not happening in classrooms. For instance, in Westberg et al.'s (1993) study of elementary classrooms in schools with and without gifted programs, the researchers found no significant differences between the levels of questions (i.e., knowledge or comprehension questions versus higher-level questions) for high-ability students and average-performing students. Similarly, Coleman (2006) asserted that, "Teachers in gifted and talented classes behave much like teachers in general education and infrequently differentiate" (p.350) and that they infrequently pose higher-level questions to students.

Although there have been mixed results on the effect and frequency of teacher questioning on student achievement, asking higher-level questions is still widely promoted as an important and effective instructional practice for challenging all students to think more deeply during classroom discourse (Cooper, 2009; Peterson & Taylor, 2012; Piccolo et al., 2008; Reis, 2008; Shaunessy, 2000; VanTassel-Baska & Little, 2011).

### **Listening and Follow-up Questioning**

What is missing from the body of literature on questioning is the role of teachers' listening behaviors while they are engaged in challenging students with higher-level questions. After teachers ask students questions, teachers must determine how to respond. This requires

listening to and processing the students' responses. Piccolo et al. (2008) described this process: "When students ask questions or make comments . . . a process is triggered that challenges the teacher to quickly consider the following and respond: (a) assess student thinking, (b) formulate a plan, and (c) engage or dismiss the comment" (p. 382). Lee (2007) pointed out that a teacher may respond to a student's answer in a multitude of ways, but may first consider if the production of the student's response was *correct, adequate, relevant, accurate, convincing, or reluctant*. How a teacher responds to the student is contingent in part on the student's preceding turn if the student produced a response. The diverse possibilities of how a teacher may respond during the third turn of the IRF discourse pattern or in subsequent turns illustrate the importance of careful listening in formulating a decision on how to follow up. Providing students with feedback during teacher to student discourse exchanges is an important instructional technique (Gall & Rhody, 1987).

**Follow-up questions during discourse.** Although teachers' initiating questions are a vital component of classroom discussion, asking follow-up questions in response to student answers is just as essential to the discourse exchange (Lee, 2007). According to Costa (2001b), posing questions and responding to students can "invite, maintain, and enhance students' thinking in the classroom" (p. 359). To provide feedback to students, teachers must carefully listen to what students say.

Very few current research studies have examined follow-up questions in the reading classroom. In one rare example, Wolf et al. (2005) conducted a qualitative analysis of elementary and middle school reading teachers' questions to promote high-level thinking. Teachers' *probing* follow-up questions resulted in further student elaboration and engagement in classroom discourse. Examples of probing questions included

- Can you show me which part of the text tells you that information?
- What do you mean?
- Why do you think that?
- Can you explain that more? (Wolf et al., 2005, p. 35)

The authors discussed that teachers needed to use probing questions substantively by providing students with wait time and that teachers should not answer their own questions. This suggests that teachers need to be open to listening to their students after asking probing questions.

Recent studies on classroom discourse, particularly in areas outside of the reading research field, have focused on the role of follow-up questions in serving as an effective instructional strategy for challenging students. Reporting on a study of 7th grade science teachers' classroom discourse moves, Chin (2006) noted how the teachers "pose a question that stimulates further productive thought, based on their evaluation of students' previous responses" (p. 1316). This indicated the need for teachers to listen to students' responses to further the discussion. Chin also noted that follow-up questions were used to encourage deeper exploration and understanding of challenging science topics. Similarly, van Zee and Minstrell (1997) investigated how follow-up questions in a science class encouraged students to clarify their thinking, consider a variety of viewpoints, and monitor the discussion and their own thinking. This demonstrated how teachers' follow-up questions could be used to encourage more responsibility on the part of students to take more ownership in the learning process as well as participate in class discussions.

Furthermore, asking students a higher-level question does not necessarily ensure that the student will be able to understand or answer the question (Peterson & Taylor, 2012). Follow-up questions may also be used as a means for providing the students with appropriate scaffolding to

move them forward in their learning within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Lee (2007) and Kim (2010) found that teachers used follow-up questions to scaffold instruction for English Language learners. While the literature in fields outside of reading supports follow-up questions as an effective instructional strategy, there is minimal mention of the role of teacher listening in this process.

**Types of follow-up questions and wait time.** Follow-up questions, like initiating questions, may also be classified into questions that access lower- or higher-level thinking. Follow-up questions that access higher-level thinking include complex inferential questions or open-ended questions, in which there may not have a single correct or expected response. Lower-level or higher-level follow-up questions might also be used in conjunction with other teacher responses such as an evaluation of the accuracy of a student's response. For instance, Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) described a move called *high-level evaluation* in which the teacher may evaluate the student's response but then ask a follow-up question working the student's answer into the question.

Although the majority of the follow-up questioning research comes from fields outside of reading education, the reading practitioner literature supports a focus on follow-up questions. For example, Kucan (2007) developed a coding manual for reading teachers to use in reflectively analyzing transcripts of classroom discussions. Included in the manual are three commonly used follow-up responses: (a) *collect*—the teacher repeats or rephrases a question, (b) *probe*—the teacher asks for more evidence or reasons, or requests a clarification or further explanation of a student's response, and (c) *connect*—the teacher asks students if they agree, disagree, or would like to comment on another student's response. Different reading approaches and enrichment programs often promote the use of follow-up questions to challenge students and differentiate for

high-ability readers, including Great Books and Junior Great Books (Parker, 1989), Socratic Seminar (Paul, 2001; Shaunessy, 2005), Questioning the Author (Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan, & Worthy, 1996), and The Schoolwide Enrichment Model-Reading Framework ([SEM-R], Reis et al., 2005).

Wait time, while not a follow-up question, is an effective strategy for following up on student contributions. Costa (2001b) described the different ways teachers respond to students to “create and maintain a thoughtful environment that creates trust, allows risk taking, is experimental, creative, and positive” (p. 366). These teacher behaviors included using wait time. He also explained that to create this environment, teachers need to listen to students and their ideas. Research on teacher wait time has provided further insight into the relationship between teacher behaviors and student learning and participation. Rowe (1986) described two types of wait time: (a) wait time 1—the teacher pauses after she asks a student a question and (b) wait time 2—the teacher pauses after a student responds. In the early research on wait time, Rowe (1986) found that typically teachers waited only 1 second or less before responding to a student. While challenging, if teachers extend their wait time to 3 or more seconds, students are more likely to think about the questions, elaborate their responses, make inferences, and ask their own questions; additionally, teachers are more likely to be flexible in how they respond to students, probe for elaboration, and improve their use of students’ responses (Rowe, 1986; K. Tobin, 1986). When teachers use wait time as an instructional technique, this also offers them additional time to listen, think about the students’ response, and then decide how to follow up.

### **Teacher Listening**

The role of teacher listening in the literature on classroom discourse and teacher questioning strategies is implicit; however, there is an explicit and implicit expectation and

school norm that students are to listen to and actively engage in what teachers say during classroom instruction. In turn, teachers have the responsibility to listen to their students (Cazden, 2001). Tomlinson and Kalbfleish (1998) described the differentiated classroom as one in which “Students and teachers continually work to accept and appreciate one another’s similarities and differences—to be respectful of one another” (p. 55). When teachers actively listen to their students, teachers can communicate this respect and value for students’ different points of view and ideas about the subject matter being discussed (White, 2003). Caine and Caine (2006) explained:

A key to nurturing an appropriate state of mind in learners is the sense of safety and community that is generated in a course or class. Indispensable keys for creating such a community are being listened to and knowing how to listen. This applies to both instructor and students. (p. 58)

The question remains, in what ways do reading teachers listen to their students after they ask higher-level initiating questions around students’ books? Although many researchers have analyzed patterns of classroom discourse and teachers’ use of initiating and follow-up questions between teachers and students (e.g., Chin, 2006; Lemke, 1990; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Wells, 1993), a gap exists in the reading literature around this question. The body of literature on questioning and discourse points to the importance of teacher listening in this complex phenomenon. Fortunately, there is a growing empirical body of literature related specifically to mathematics teachers’ listening in the context of instructional discourse.

### **The Complexity of Listening**

According to Harkness and Wachenheim (2008), without listening, discourse cannot happen. So what does it mean for teachers to listen during discourse with students? While one

may readily agree “. . . a good listener simply tries to understand what the other person is saying” (Costa, 2001a, p. 81), listening is a challenging (Aracavi & Isoda, 2007; Cazden, 2001; Dunphy, 2010; Empson & Jacobs, 2008) and complex process (Hoag & Wood, 1990). Cazden (2001) explained, “Being able to hear students’ ideas, to understand the sense they are making, is not as easy as it may sound” (p. 89). Costa (2001a) also pointed out the complexities of this human endeavor when he stated, “Some psychologists believe that the ability to listen to others, empathize with them, and understand their points of view is one of the highest forms of intelligent behavior” (p. 81).

Purdy (1986) described listening as a “process that happens in the interpretive interaction of communication” (p. 3) that continues even when the speaker has completed his or her statements. Davis (1994) also posited, “. . . listening is not a solitary act, it is a reciprocal engagement” (p. 280). Listening is an interpretive interaction, as each participant has the role of understanding and making meaning of what the other is saying. For example, teachers and students may ask each other questions to check or clarify one’s interpretation of the other person’s intentions. Therefore, the ways that teachers interpret and respond to students can be indicators of teacher listening.

Even though listening and interpreting others can be challenging, it is an important skill for teachers to learn to listen effectively and accurately to their students (Aracavi & Isoda, 2007; Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008; Hoag & Wood, 1990). One such practice of potentially improving teacher listening includes the use of journals. Journals may be used to encourage reflective thinking and provide teachers with an opportunity to consider how they listen to students and ask questions. For instance, in Dunphy’s (2010) study of 58 pre-service early childhood teachers in Ireland, participants interviewed children to learn about their mathematical

thinking and then reflected on this experience in journals. Some of the teachers reflected on how they asked too many questions or how they gave students too little time to think and respond. In a similar study, Harkness and Wachenheim (2008) had 21 pre-service teachers in a math methods course write entries in *listening journals*. The aim of their study was to encourage the teachers to think about how listening is a component of classroom discourse. An interesting finding was that some of the teachers considered themselves to be good listeners “until they were forced to think deeply about listening. Their reflections revealed that this awareness was at times painful because they had to come to grips with the fact that listening was an area in which they needed to improve” (p. 68). Although these studies investigated using journals with pre-service teachers, this medium may potentially provide a wealth of information about how reading teachers think about classroom discourse with students.

### **The Role of Teacher Listening During Discourse**

The conceptualization of listening as a process that includes teachers’ responses has important implications for understanding the role of teacher listening during discourse. Responsive teacher listening is especially important when teachers use higher-level questioning to challenge students during reading discourse, as simply asking a higher-level question does not necessarily guarantee that the student will understand it well enough to respond (Peterson & Taylor, 2012). Some students may lack the experience to field these types of questions and may find them too challenging and only provide a brief or surface level response (Peterson & Taylor, 2012; Wilen, 1987). Therefore, careful teacher listening and interpretation of students’ responses are necessary to determine how to respond effectively in a way that will enhance students’ ability to grapple with high-level questions.

How a teacher chooses to follow-up to a student's response is contingent upon the student's response (Chin 2006; Lee, 2007; Louca et al., 2012). Nystrand and Gamoran (1990) proposed that responding to each other is characteristic of more conversational exchanges and that in high-quality instructional discourse, teachers "take students seriously, acknowledging and building on what they say" (p. 15). An example of this is seen when a teacher asks an *uptake* question. As mentioned previously, with uptake the teacher weaves what the student stated into a follow-up question. Nystrand and Gamoran pointed out the role of listening when using uptake, ". . . discussion displays regular uptake so long as the conversants listen and respond appropriately to each other" (p.14).

### **Teacher Listening in the Mathematics Education Field**

A growing empirical body of literature centered on mathematics teachers' listening behaviors (e.g., Davis, 1997; Empson & Jacobs, 2008; Harkness, & Wachenheim, 2008; Wallach & Even, 2005) has indicated that not all teachers listen in the same way, and that individual teachers listen in different ways for different purposes. Teachers' varied listening practices and purposes may also contribute to how they interpret and respond to their students (Davis, 1997).

In one noteworthy study, Wallach and Even (2005) investigated one math teacher's ways of *hearing* as she described and interpreted two students' discourse and actions while solving math word problems. The teacher observed her two students as they interacted and then had an opportunity to watch the videotaped observation multiple times. The researchers discerned five unique ways this teacher *heard* her students:

- over-hearing—teacher hears information that was not actually stated,
- compatible-hearing—what teacher hears is compatible to students' statements,

- under-hearing—the teacher ignores or does not hear some parts of what the students stated,
- non-hearing—the teacher does not hear larger portions of students’ statements, and
- biased-hearing—what the teacher hears is influenced by the teachers’ prior beliefs about the students.

The findings of this study were particularly concerning because they demonstrated the fallibility of teachers’ listening and interpretation skills even when the teacher had the opportunity to watch the video of the students’ conversations repeatedly. Wallach and Even (2005) concluded that the varied ways in which the teacher heard her students may have been influenced by her hopes that the students would be successful in the task, her own prior knowledge of her students, and her own understanding of the task and the solution.

An alternative classification of teachers’ listening behaviors comes from Davis’s (1996, 1997) qualitative research and theoretical writings on middle school mathematics teachers’ varied *listening orientations*. A listening orientation is a mode or way of listening to students. Davis explained that listening is not just an act, rather it is an orientation. The theoretical framework for the current study is based on this theory that teachers may exhibit different listening orientations.

Davis (1997) explicated three potentially overlapping listening orientations: evaluative, interpretive, and hermeneutical listening. Although they are not necessarily mutually exclusive, Davis distinguished the orientations as follows:

To contrast the three modes of listening in a single sentence: the lesson trajectory of evaluative listener is largely unaffected by student articulations, the lesson trajectory of

the interpretive listener is modified according to student contributions, and the lesson trajectory of the hermeneutic listener is defined by student participation. (Personal Communication, Feb. 14, 2012)

These three types of listening orientations are described below in conjunction with typical patterns of discourse in classrooms between teachers and students.

**Evaluative listening orientation.** According to Davis (1997), a teacher with an evaluative listening orientation listens primarily *for* the correctness of a student's answer. Davis critiqued this orientation due to the lack of utilization of teachers' potential listening capabilities, because the teacher only passively listens for the correct answer and may disregard the rest of the student's response. Similarly, Jackson (2001) argued, "Too often, the teacher focuses her listening on hearing an expected answer, , , " (p. 459).

Conversely, this type of listening may be useful if the teacher's sole purpose for discourse is to assess students' recall. Also, listening *for* a purpose has its benefits, because listening is challenging in the sense that a multitude of information may come at the listener all at once (Brown, 2006). When teachers listen purposefully, they determine what information to focus upon and process. Based upon their assessment, teachers can provide an appropriate response.

**Interpretive listening orientation.** Davis (1997) described this orientation as subjective, interactive, interpretive, and negotiated. Influenced by a constructivist theory of learning, the teacher's goal is to listen to actively interpret or make sense of the student's response and meaning. Listening to students' responses helps the teacher determine how to guide students toward the "true or correct understanding of the concept at hand" (Davis, p. 365). The teacher also checks with students to clarify that he or she is accurately interpreting the students'

responses (Coles, 2002), with the understanding that the teacher's interpretation of the student's thinking may be fallible. Harkness and Wachenheim (2008) explained that the purpose of this listening orientation is to offer "opportunities for more discourse within the classroom" (p. 60). Questions are "information-seeking . . . requiring more elaborate answers and, very often, some sort of demonstration or explanation" (Davis, 1997, p. 363). This indicates that teachers who ask follow-up questions to encourage students to elaborate upon their thinking or explain their answers may exhibit an interpretive listening orientation. However, while discourse with teachers with an interpretive listening orientation is a more "negotiatory process" (Davis, p. 364), the authority still rests with the teacher as he or she is the one ultimately to decide which of the students' responses should be elaborated upon or not.

**Hermeneutic listening orientation.** Hermeneutic listening has its basis within the hermeneutic phenomenology of qualitative research (Stewart, 1983). There is a connection between this qualitative stance and how individuals listen. The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is to understand. Stewart (1983) explained that it is a mutual process by which interlocutors, or listeners, participate in developing meaning that is dependent upon the context of the conversation and the participants' own personal histories. There is less of an emphasis on transmitting information to the second person to have them objectively and positively grasp the "true" intention of what was communicated. Rather, there is an acknowledgement that "what occurs is the co-constituting of understanding in talk" (Stewart, 1983, p. 383).

Davis (1996) explained that hermeneutic listening ". . . is more negotiatory, engaging, messy, involving the hearer and the heard in a shared project" (p. 53). By listening to students in this way, teachers participate with students in the learning process and explore and question accepted knowledge without intentionally leading students toward preconceived answers to

questions. According to Harkness and Wachenheim (2008), teachers who exhibit hermeneutic listening are open to listening to students to learn from them and possibly change how they view the subject area based on the students' ideas. Hermeneutic listening overlaps with interpretive listening in that the teacher may be aware that what she hears may not match the speakers' intentions, but is different from interpretive listening in that both teacher and student may change their original thinking about the topic of discussion.

Hermeneutic listening may have important implications for reading teachers if the purpose of reading discourse is to give students an opportunity to take the lead as independent readers and contributors to their own learning process. Providing choice and opportunities to develop independence as readers is especially important for high-ability readers (Reis, 2008). To differentiate for high-ability readers, teachers might need to reorient their listening style away from a primarily evaluative listening orientation towards the development of a hermeneutic listening orientation. By doing so, teachers may begin to become more comfortable actively listening to students' points of view without filtering for a preconceived answer and follow up with questions that will allow both the student and teacher to extend their thinking. Harkness and Wachenheim (2008) expressed, "If we believe providing an environment in which children are able to socially construct their own meaning is best practice, then hermeneutic listening should become more than a vision" (p. 69).

### **Factors Influencing How Teachers Listen**

Various factors may mediate how teachers are oriented to listen to their students. Based on mathematics education research on teacher listening behaviors, these factors include subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and knowledge about students (Davies & Walker, 2007; Johnson & Larsen, 2012). In addition, how teachers understand the role of student

talk, as related to learning, may influence how they listen to their students. For instance, Wells and Wells (1984) investigated the amount of children's talk that occurred at home versus at school. Their findings were very concerning in that teachers dominated the conversations and children participated much less in school than at home. Student responses to questions were abbreviated, they asked fewer questions, and they took fewer turns to speak during exchanges. Wells and Wells (1984) posed possible explanations, one of which included how adults perceived student talk to influence learning:

But all the time we are talking, we are stopping our pupils from trying out their understanding in words. We are also depriving ourselves of valuable information about the state of their understanding and thus our opportunity to plan future work to meet their specific needs. Thus we believe we must reassess our role as teachers, shifting our focus away from ourselves as instructors to a concern with children as learners, recognizing that our most important role is as facilitators of children's learning. . . . Above all, we must listen to and take seriously what children have to say as we talk with them about the tasks in which they are engaged. (p. 194)

Teacher discourse moves and practices communicate information to students about adults' beliefs regarding where knowledge originates in the classroom. In other words, teachers' discourse moves communicates who has the power over the knowledge to be learned. As Nystrand (2006) pointed out, "What counts as knowledge and understanding in any given classroom is largely shaped by the questions teachers ask, how they respond to their students, and how they structure small-group and other pedagogical activities" (p. 400).

Brighton et al. (2005) found that middle school teachers' beliefs influenced teachers' responses to implementing differentiated instructional practices. For instance, teachers tended to

believe that teaching was synonymous with talking. Teachers viewed that it was their responsibility to talk, and when they began to move towards a more student-centered approach, teachers felt guilty that they were not doing their jobs. Although the study did not directly address teachers' listening behaviors, this finding raises the question of how teachers' beliefs about their roles as educators in more traditional teacher-centered classrooms versus student-centered classrooms might influence the degree to which teachers are willing to listen to their students and take speaking turns with students.

### **Conclusion**

In conjunction with the SEM-R Framework (Reis et al., 2005), Davis's (1997) explication of mathematics teachers' listening orientations guided the theoretical framework for this study. Although the theory that teachers can exhibit different types of listening orientations has been applied to other mathematics education research studies (e.g., Coles, 2002; Davies & Walker, 2007; Johnson & Larsen, 2012; Kaplan, Rosenfeld, & Appelbaum, 1999), it has not been generalized to the field of reading education. The background literature in this chapter helped to inform this study of how teachers describe their listening orientations within the context of middle school classrooms, and of observable indicators of their listening as they conducted individualized reading conferences in the context of implementing SEM-R.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

Questions that access higher-level thinking and follow-up questioning strategies within discourse exchanges between teachers and students have demonstrated potential as an effective instructional practice for promoting student participation, critical thinking, and conceptual understandings (e.g., Caulfield-Sloan & Ruzicka, 2005; van Zee & Minstrell, 1997; Wolf et al., 2005). An essential component to the overall discourse process is that of teacher listening. However, there is a paucity of research investigating reading teachers' listening behaviors while engaging in questioning practices through discourse around students' texts. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' listening, and their perspectives on their listening, in the context of conferencing with readers at varied levels during SEM-R Phase 2 discourse exchanges. The design of this study, participant selection and demographics, and data analysis methods used to answer the following research questions will be explicated in this chapter:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of how they listen to question responses from students at varied reading levels during individualized reading conferences?
2. What types of listening orientations do reading teachers exhibit during individualized reading conferences with students at varied reading levels?

#### **Study Design**

A basic qualitative research design (Merriam, 2009) was used to investigate teachers' listening. Within this type of a design, the theoretical framework will heavily influence the procedures for data analysis (Patton, 2002). The empirical research literature and related theoretical writings surrounding teacher listening (Davis, 1996, 1997) and the Schoolwide Enrichment Model—Reading Framework (SEM-R; Reis et al., 2005) informed participant

selection and procedures for data collection and analysis. For instance, because SEM-R was designed to challenge students at all levels, teachers were asked to select three students at different reading levels to participate in the study.

According to Merriam (2009), “a central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds” (p. 22). As I was interested to understand how teachers perceived their own listening behaviors in the social context of the classroom as they interacted with their students, a basic qualitative research design was appropriate for this investigation. Furthermore, Merriam explained that this form of qualitative methodology is commonly applied to studies that take place in the education field and that “The overall interpretation will be the researchers’ understanding, mediated by his or her particular disciplinary perspective, of the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 38). Therefore, I was the primary instrument for this study.

### **Participants**

The data for this study were collected at an urban, general education middle school in a Northeastern region of the United States. The school was selected for this study as a convenience sample. I worked at the school during the course of the study as a SEM-R reading coach to guide the first year of implementation of the new reading program. My responsibilities included providing the middle school reading teachers with weekly, individualized professional development to assist them in implementing SEM-R for the first time during the 2012-2013 school year.

Based upon 2010-2011 school year data retrieved from the study site’s State Department of Education website, 85.4% of students were eligible for free/reduced-price meals, 12.7% were English Language Learners, and 20.1% had disabilities. Total enrollment was 1,206 students in

grades 6-8. The percentage of teachers in this school with a Master's degree or above was 76.5%, and on average teachers had 11.9 years of experience. The percentage of minority professional staff was 11.4%. The ethnicity breakdown of student population at the time of the study in this school was as follows: Hispanic (51.6%), African American (33.6%), Caucasian (13.3%), American Indian (.2%), and Asian American (0.1%), and two or more races (1.2%). The percentages of students in grades 6, 7, and 8 who met goal on the reading component of the standardized state test were 46.5%, 49%, and 43.3%, respectively.

Students in grades 6-8 were divided into three houses or groups with six reading teachers in each for a total of 18 reading teachers in the school. Three sets of two teachers per house taught a total of five reading classes. Each dyad was charged with teaching a reading and language arts block to each of the five classes. SEM-R was conducted during the reading portion of the blocks; this portion typically lasted about 45-50 minutes per day.

In this particular middle school, students were assigned to one of five different semi-flexible groups of classes based on State Mastery Tests and teacher recommendations. There were five levels that students could score at for the state tests: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Goal, or Advanced. Group 1 students or "academy" students typically scored at Goal or Advanced levels in math, reading, and language arts on the State Mastery Tests. These students remained clustered together throughout middle school, and they had been grouped together as advanced students in elementary school. Students in groups 2 through 5 were grouped based on their mathematics state test scores. Group 2 through group 5 students were flexibly grouped and, if necessary, switched to a different group. Group 2 students scored at the Proficient, Goal, or Advanced range on the mathematics State Mastery Test and were described as a high functioning group that reads on grade level. Group 3 and 4 students were described as average students and

English Language Learners, and Group 5 included primarily special education students. All students in this study were from either Group 1 or Group 2.

**Teacher recruitment.** After IRB approval, a meeting with the middle school principal was scheduled to explain the details of the study and to request permission to invite the teachers to participate. Permission was granted, and at the next regularly scheduled SEM-R meeting I explained all the IRB forms that were distributed to the teachers, and an opportunity to answer questions was provided. All 18 SEM-R middle school teachers were invited to participate in the study and none were excluded.

I anticipated that between 5 and 15 teachers would agree to participate in the study. After the initial recruitment, four teachers agreed to participate in the study. At that point, an amendment to the IRB protocol was completed to offer all teachers an incentive to participate in the study. After I offered the incentive, two additional teachers agreed to participate, bringing the total to 6 teachers (see Table 3.1 for teacher demographics). Data collection for the teachers began only after teacher permission forms were signed and returned. Five teachers completed all three phases of the study, including the Initial Interview, teacher-student conferences, reflection forms, and In-Depth Interview (see Appendix B for summaries of teachers' implementation of SEM-R). Ms. D'Lore did not complete all components of the study due to her busy schedule and, therefore, was not included in the final data analysis. As Table 3.1 indicates, the teacher sample for this study represented a range of experience, grade levels taught, and highest degree earned. Data in regards to teacher ethnicity was not collected.

Table 3.1

*Teacher Participant Demographics*

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Teacher	Grade Level	# of Years Teaching	Highest Degree
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Mr. Curtis	8	5	Master's +15 credits
Ms. Gigi	7	12	6th Year
Ms. D'Lore	7	9	6th Year +15 credits
Mr. Green	7	10	6th Year
Mrs. Brown	7	8	6th Year +15 credits
Ms. Nalana	6	9	Master's +15 credits

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*Note.* Pseudonyms were used for teacher participants' names.

**Student recruitment.** Each teacher identified three students at different reading levels in one of his or her SEM-R reading classes to participate in the study. Students were not excluded based on ethnicity or age. Teachers were asked to select a struggling (S), average (A), and high-level (H) reader, relative to the other students in their particular group (see Table 3.2 for student demographics). The teachers received parent and student permission forms for at least three students each at different reading levels in their classes. Most of the teachers recruited three students as described; Ms. Gigi recruited four students, two high-ability readers, and one average and one struggling reader. However, her struggling student, Roberto, was audio recorded for just one reading conference, so Ms. Gigi's data focuses on the two high and one average reader. Data in regards to student ethnicity was not collected.

Table 3.2

*Student Participant Demographics and Number of Reading Conferences Conducted*

Teacher	Grade Level/Group	Student	Gender	Level	Number of Conferences
Mr. Curtis	8/2	Anna	F	High	3
		Candy	F	Avg	4
		Darius	M	Struggling	3
Ms. Gigi	7/1	Fabian	M	High	4
		Tamara	F	Avg	4
		Ricky	M	Struggling	1
		Murphy	M	High	3
Mr. Green	7/1	Jaime	F	High	3
		Kristen	F	Avg	4
		Israel	M	Struggling	4
Mrs. Brown	7/2	Jake	M	High	3
		Amelia	F	Avg	3
		Maggie	F	Struggling	3
Ms. Nalana	6/1	Lilly	M	High	3
		Eoin	F	Avg	3
		Kayden	F	Struggling	3

*Note.* Pseudonyms were used for student participants' names

**Data Sources**

Typically data sources in qualitative studies may include interviews, field observations, and documents (Merriam, 2009). The primary data sources for this study included teacher interviews and audio and video recordings of teacher-student reading conferences. Secondary data sources included researcher-developed Conference Reflection Forms.

**Teacher interviews.** The data sources to answer Research Questions 1 and 2 included two semi-structured interviews with each of the participating teachers in the study (see Appendices C and D for interview protocols). Semi-structured interviews were selected to allow room for follow-up questions based on teachers' responses to the interview questions. Characteristics of semi-structured interviews that were applied to this study included the following:

- A mix of more and less structured interview questions;
- Flexible use of questions;
- Specific data usually required from all respondents;
- Largest part of interview guided by list of questions or issues to be explored; and
- No predetermined wording or order (Merriam, 2009, p. 89).

***Initial Interviews.*** A total of six semi-structured *Initial Interviews* were conducted with the teachers at the middle school, one for each teacher (see Appendix C). These interviews were scheduled after teachers consented to participate in the study. Interviews took place during school hours and were audio recorded to allow for thorough documentation of response and data analysis (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of the Initial Interviews was to ask questions about teachers' perceptions of their listening and follow-up questioning behaviors by student reading level. Also, I asked teachers to elaborate upon what they viewed their and the students' roles were during the reading conferences. Also, I reminded the teachers about the procedures for the study and showed each teacher how to set up and use the recording equipment, which included a digital video camera, tripod, audio recorder, and charger for both pieces of equipment. All equipment was provided to the participants in a box for convenient storage. Teachers were reminded to keep the equipment in a secure location.

***In-Depth Interviews.*** A second set of interviews, referred to as *In-Depth Interviews*, were conducted after teachers completed at least one teacher-student reading conferences with each of their student participants (see Appendix D). During each interview, we discussed one *exchange*, which will be defined below, from the student-teacher reading conference. The teachers had the opportunity to read the transcription of the conference exchange and watch the video recording for the same exchange.

The purpose of the In-Depth Interviews was to discuss how teachers listened to their students during one discourse *exchange* and how they formulated their responses to the students' answers. For the purposes of this study, the definition of an exchange was drawn from Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) research. An exchange was defined as a segment of discourse between the teacher and student that typically began with either an initiating question from the teacher, a directive, or a statement. An exchange captured all the responses between the student and teacher, and ended before the start of a new initiating question (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). These exchanges also included at least one SEM-R bookmark question or other open-ended question that went beyond basic literal interpretation of the text. The following illustrates an example of an exchange between Mr. Green and his student, Jaime (H) (March 13, 2013). In the story, the stepfather was talking with his stepdaughter.

- 1 T: Okay. What do you think, based on the stepfather and like how he, how the argument went, how would you describe him? Any words come to mind based on that one scene?
- 2 S: Annoying.
- 3 T: Annoying. Okay, why do you say that?
- 4 S: Because he was listening to the radio station, but she doesn't like bad radio stations so she keeps changing the station and he asks her to stop and she gets an attitude.
- 5 T: Uh huh, okay, okay. So that kind of, the way he like tells her what to do is, you think annoying. Yeah, I would agree, I would agree. (Mr. Green & Jaime, March 13, 2013, Conference 1)

All the In-Depth Interviews were conducted and audio recorded at the school and then subsequently transcribed to facilitate future analysis of the data (Merriam, 2009). As the interviews were semi-structured, I asked follow-up questions to encourage teachers to elaborate. I also posed follow-up questions to confirm or disconfirm any developing insights and hypotheses about teachers' listening behaviors formulated as a result of conducting the Initial Interviews and reviewing the teacher-student conferences in preparation for the In-Depth Interviews. Patton (2002) explained that “. . . later stages [of fieldwork] bring closure by moving toward confirmatory data collection—deepening insights into and confirming (or disconfirming) patterns that seem to have appeared” (p. 436). In addition, during the In-Depth Interviews, teachers were asked to confirm the accuracy of the identification of the exchanges. The process by which the exchanges were identified in the transcribed conferences will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Teacher-student reading conferences.** The data sources to answer Research Question 2 consisted of the transcribed audio and video recorded reading conferences between each teacher and his or her three students at different reading levels. Each teacher was asked to record three to five reading conferences with each student during the regularly scheduled SEM-R class time (see Table 3.2 for the number of conferences recorded for each student). A total of 53 reading conferences across all teachers were collected; however, since Ms. D'Lore did not finish the study, only 51 conferences were analyzed. The reading conferences ranged in length from about 2.5 to 16 minutes. Two undergraduate students, a transcription agency, and I transcribed the audio recordings of the conferences.

**Researcher-developed Conference Reflection Forms.** Teachers were asked to complete a brief reflection form for each conference with the student participants. Teachers were given the

option to either complete the form by hand or type their responses. On the form, teachers reflected upon how they listened to their students and how they formulated responses to the students' contributions to the discourse during one exchange (see Appendix E). The reflection forms were intended to provide a source that would contribute to the triangulation of any themes emerging from the teacher interviews and teacher-student reading conferences related to the teachers' listening orientations.

### **Initial Data Preparation**

All data sources, including videos, audio files, transcriptions from the teacher interviews, transcriptions from teacher-student conferences, and conference reflections forms were screened prior to data analysis to remove any identifying information that would link the data sources to the participants in the study. All transcriptions were also formatted consistently to facilitate the ease of accessing the data for organization, analysis, and checking to make sure all data had been collected from the participants. To organize the data sources and to protect the identity of the participants, I used numerical codes and/or pseudonyms to label all data sources. A back-up paper copy of all transcribed data sources and documents was made and stored in a secure location.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

To answer the research questions, I applied inductive coding procedures borrowed from grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory may also be applied to other types of qualitative studies (Merriam, 2009). It should be noted that the data analysis methods presented here in this general overview and in the subsequent explications were not necessarily conducted in a sequential fashion. Using a constant comparative procedure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I created open codes and then classified them

into categories (Strauss, 1987). I also applied axial coding, meaning that I analyzed the categories of codes to determine relationships between them and then subsumed them into core categories (Strauss, 1987). Next, I identified any recurring core categories and then reread all coded data and selectively coded as necessary for each of the core categories (Strauss, 1987). This was done to strengthen the credibility of the findings. Each teacher's set of data was coded individually first, and then coded data were analyzed across participants to determine if there were any similar patterns or themes among the teachers in the study (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Each procedure is explained below.

**Inductive analysis.** According to Patton (2002), "Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's data. Findings emerge out of the data, through the analyst's interactions with the data . . ." (p. 453). As the purpose of a basic qualitative study is to determine what patterns emerge across all the data, I continually asked myself, "What recurring patterns do I see in the data across data sources for each participant?" I also kept a copy of this question, along with the research questions, next to my computer as I analyzed all the data sources.

Also, I conducted inductive analysis of the data in an on-going fashion rather than waiting until all data were collected (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). As Merriam (2009) pointed out, "Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating" (p. 171). Therefore, memos (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008) were also recorded on a continuous basis to document any initial and "illuminating" responses to the data or potential themes that appeared to emerge related or unrelated to the research questions. One benefit of keeping memos and reviewing the data continuously was that it gave me the opportunity to think of questions for *member checking* during the In-Depth Interviews. Merriam

(2009) described member checking as a means of ensuring credibility of the findings, accomplished when the researcher asks for feedback from the participants on any emerging findings. The following is an example memo recorded while I was transcribing a reading conference between Mr. Curtis and his student Anna (H):

Mr. Curtis rephrases almost everything Anna says. He also says ‘Ok’ a lot—possibly just as an acceptance and not in an evaluative manner. He seems to just want to understand the structure of the story (Ex. time hints) and what is happening in the story. Not sure though—should ask during the In-Depth Interview. His rephrases show that he is listening and following along with what she is saying. Is he listening for personal understanding of the story? (Memo, May 26 & 27, 2013)

**Data preparation for the In-Depth Interviews.** Concurrent with the initial readings across all data sources, one transcribed teacher-student reading conference for each student was coded deductively to prepare for the In-Depth Interviews with the teachers. A total of 15 reading conferences were deductively coded to identify all exchanges, initiating questions, and follow-up questions. Deductive codes are those based upon a given existing framework (Patton, 2002). In the current study, these included the types of follow-up questions. Exchanges and initiating and follow-up questions were deductively coded using definitions from Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Mehan (1979) definitions. Briefly, an initiating question was a question that began a new exchange while a follow-up question was one that came after the initiating question but before a new exchange. A total of 40% of the coded exchanges for the teacher-student reading conference transcriptions were checked by two second coders before I conducted the In-Depth Interviews. Any disagreements on where the exchanges started or ended were discussed until there was 100% agreement.

After all exchanges were identified, one exchange per student reading conference was selected to discuss with the teacher during the In-Depth Interview. Only one exchange per student was selected to ensure that the interview stayed within the pre-approved IRB time parameters. Exchanges had to meet certain criteria to be included for discussion in the In-Depth Interviews. The exchanges had to include the following elements:

- a SEM-R bookmark question or an open-ended question for which there was no single answer;
- an initiating question, follow-up question(s) or other follow-up response(s) provided by the teacher;
- student responses;
- substantive discourse for me to ask teachers questions about their listening and follow-up questioning behaviors; and
- any indications in the exchanges of how the teachers were or were not listening to the students.

SEM-R bookmark questions were included in the criteria as they are part of the protocol for conducting Phase 2 SEM-R conferences with students.

The teacher participants recorded a total of 3-4 conferences for each student. I selected a sampling of conferences for discussion during the interviews. For the first In-Depth Interview with Ms. Brown and Ms. Gigi, I selected the first set of conferences they conducted with their students. For the second two interviews with Mr. Green and Mr. Curtis, I selected the second set of conferences they conducted. Finally, for Ms. Nalana, we discussed the last set of conferences she completed with her students. Interviews with the teachers were scheduled in the order in

which the teachers completed the study. I also checked the exchanges to determine which ones met the previously mentioned criteria.

**Second review of data.** After all data were collected, I reviewed all data sources again to formulate a holistic sense of any emerging patterns across the participants. During this process, I documented memos of any initial insights regarding how teachers listen. Here is an example from my transcribed audio-recorded memo written in list form from the In-Depth Interview with Mr. Green (Memo, May 24, 2013):

- Listening for “foundational skills”
- Listening for particular answers
- Listening informs how they will respond to students
- Listens for clarification
- Teacher’s opinion of the what the correct answer is plays a part
- Steering student towards a “correct answer”
- Admits he did a lot of talking
- Teacher’s prior knowledge informs how he listens and questions—instructive role or instructive listening versus open listening

### **Open Coding Phase**

For the open coding phase of data analysis, I carefully reread and assigned open codes to each teacher’s complete set of transcribed interviews, reading conferences, and reading conference reflection. One teacher’s data set was coded at a time so that I could immerse myself completely to gain a deeper sense of any emerging patterns by teacher. Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined open coding as “The analytical process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (p. 101). These initial codes were “open” in nature because the researcher’s goal is to “open up the inquiry” by scrutinizing each unit of analysis, asking questions about the data that will inform the next steps of the process, and approaching the process in an unrestricted way (Strauss, 1987, pp. 28-29). When assigning a name for each new code, I kept in mind Saldaña’s (2009) definition: “A code in qualitative

inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3).

I used NVivo-9 software (QSR International, 2010), a qualitative data management program, to facilitate the inductive process of coding the teacher interviews, reading conferences, and video recordings. Pencil and paper coding was applied to the Conference Reflection Forms. The units of analysis for the teacher interviews and Conference Reflection Forms were primarily at the sentence or in some cases with the interviews at the paragraph level. The unit of analysis for the teacher-student conferences was at the teacher utterance level and exchange level. A constant comparative method was applied when coding the data following Glaser and Strauss’ rule (1967) that “. . . while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (p. 106). I started this comparison method by going back to each coded sentence, but then eventually the comparisons were made based on memory of the incidents (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Numerous open codes were identified as part of the process of being unrestrictive during this step (Strauss, 1987). As any new open codes emerged, that particular teacher’s number code was noted along with the description of the code. This served as a reminder to go back to the other teachers’ data sets to code deductively for the new codes. To facilitate the management of the open codes, the codes were organized into general categories aligned to the interview questions. The general organization of the codes included the following categories for Research Question 1: *Teacher’s Role*, *Student’s Role*, *Follow-up Responses*, and *Types of Listening*. The codes for Research Question 2 were organized by student reading level: *Struggling*, *Average*,

*High-Ability*, and *Any Reader*. Other categories were added during later phases of the analysis. Other types of codes applied within these categories are described next.

**In vivo codes.** As the study focused on teachers' perceptions of their own listening behaviors for Research Question 1, I used *in vivo* codes to best capture the teachers' voices. Strauss (1987) defined *in vivo* codes as, "terms used by the people who are being studied" (p. 30). Examples of *in vivo* codes from the current study included "listening like a teacher" or "further student learning." When *in vivo* codes were not applicable, I assigned my own codes to the data.

**Concurrent a priori deductive codes.** For Research Question 2, while assigning initial open codes to the student-teacher reading conference, I used a priori deductive codes, or those determined beforehand (Saldaña, 2009), for the teachers' follow-up questions. These were applied using a framework established by Little, Gilson, Kearney, and Ruegg (2014) from a recent study of SEM-R reading teachers' questioning techniques during reading conferences with elementary students (see Appendix F for the follow-up question codebook). However, I was still open to any new types of follow-up questions that emerged from the data.

**Codebooks.** Open codes for the teacher interviews and reading conferences were organized into two separate codebooks (Patton, 2002) using Microsoft Excel and NVivo (QSR International, 2010). Two separate codebooks were used due to the nature of the two different research questions. These codebooks included names of the codes, code definitions, and in some cases examples and non-examples. Codebooks were not created for the videos or Conference Reflection Forms. Documentation of the analysis of these two sources will be further explained later.

I analyzed data for one teacher at a time as suggested by Saldaña (2013) when there are multiple participants in a study. After each teacher’s data set was analyzed, I went back and checked all the code names and code definitions for redundancies, clarity of the wording, and any initial patterns of relationships between the codes. Second coders also checked different iterations of the codebooks and provided informative feedback. For example, Figure 3.1 shows a screenshot of one portion of an early version of a codebook for the teacher interviews from Research Question 1. This codebook included comments between a second coder and me in which I clarified her confusion over the definition of the code *listening for confidence*. It should also be noted that the codebook in Figure 3.1 was organized into a hierarchy of categories and codes. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described codebooks as “organized lists of codes (often in hierarchies)” (p. 781). This organizational format was helpful in keeping the multitude of codes of the initial iterations of the codebooks organized in an easy to read format.

51	Category/Code	Definition of Code	# of references	Researcher's Comments/Memos
52	Types of Listening		0	
53	assumptions	Teacher makes an assumption about what student said.	2	Not sure if this is a type of listening
54	challenges of listening	Teacher describes any challenges in listening to average	1	
	evaluative listening	Teachers evaluate average student responses or discuss listening for their ability to achieve an objective (Ex. ability to discuss connections). (Non-ex. teacher gives a preconceived example of an answer she was listening for).	10	
55				
56	listening for character understanding	(new code T004) Teacher listens for student understanding of the characters. Could include listening for character traits or	10	
	listening for confidence	(new code T001) Teacher is listening for different levels of confidence	1	The teacher listened to feel out the student to assess how confident the student was in his or her knowledge of the book. He listened for confidence in tone of voice.
57				
58	listening for connections	Teacher is listening for student to make a connection. (If there is any mention of evaluating the connection code, as evaluative	8	
59	listening for examples or elaboration	(new code T001) (code any elaboration of connections in 'listening for connections' in this code instead)	3	
60	'preconceived ideas'	Teacher was listening for a preconceived answer, response, type of connection, or anything that was of value or important to the teacher. Teacher gives an example of the answer she or	3	

Figure 3.1. Excerpt from one iteration of the codebook for Research Question 1.

**Shift from open coding to deductive coding.** The coding phase of the data analysis eventually shifted to a combination of open and deductive coding and then to primarily deductive coding as fewer and fewer new codes emerged. Strauss (1987) described *data saturation* as when “nothing new is happening” (p. 31). Given that there were only five teachers from grades 6 – 8 in this sample, I am hesitant to state that data saturation was reached in regard to teacher listening orientations; however, a total of 167 codes resulted from the open and deductive coding phase for Research Question 1. A total of 42 codes emerged from this phase for Research Question 2.

### **Conference Reflection Forms**

The Conference Reflection Forms served as a secondary resource for Research Question 1. A total of 47 Reflection Forms were also analyzed using open inductive codes. Since most of the teachers hand-wrote their Reflection Forms, open coding was conducted via pencil and paper. The codes were organized into a table using Microsoft Word. As new codes for each new teacher’s data set emerged, they were noted in the table of codes as a reminder to go back and deductively code the previously coded data. As there were not an extensive number of codes for the Reflection Forms and many were similar to those from the interviews, definitions of the codes were not documented. Instead, each teacher’s set of codes was summarized.

### **Videos**

The videos of the teacher-student reading conferences were coded by analyzing general patterns of teacher movements during the first 15 seconds for each 1 minute segment. The descriptions of the patterns were documented using NVivo (QSR International, 2010). This was done for each teacher’s data set for one student at a time so that I could completely immerse myself in the data to determine a holistic view of the listening patterns. After viewing the videos for each student, I wrote a summary of my impressions in a Word document. The videos,

however, were inconsistent in quality across the teachers. Some conferences were filmed sideways or only focused on the teacher's head or ceiling; therefore, it was difficult to make any substantive inferences of teacher listening patterns within or across teachers.

### **Development of Core Categories for Research Question 1**

Concurrent with the open coding phase of the data analysis, analysis of emerging categories supported the organization and management of the large number of codes from the open coding phase for both research questions. The 167 open and a priori codes were initially organized into a total of 9 categories and 18 subcategories. The nine categories included *Any Level Reader*, *Average Readers*, *Dynamic of Discourse*, *High-ability Readers*, *SEM-R Routine*, *Struggling Readers*, *Student Ability Levels*, *Teachers' Reflections*, and *Unanticipated Findings*. The major subcategories within the *Average*, *High-ability*, and *Struggling Readers* categories included teachers' perceptions of their *Follow-up Questions*, *Types of Listening*, *Student's Role During the Conference*, and *Teacher's Role During the Conference*. These subcategories aligned to the structure of the interview protocol.

The establishment of this organization scheme was done to manage coding the large amount of data I collected and to make comparisons using NVivo (QSR International, 2010) across and within teachers by student reading level. It made it easier to code teachers' data by interview question. For example, when I read teachers' comments on their listening with high-ability readers, there were only 23 related deductive codes in the final codebook. This was more manageable than selecting from 167 codes. I was still open to creating new codes throughout the whole process.

Next, all codes from the interview codebook were further analyzed to determine which were most relevant to the research questions and which ones best represented patterns across

teachers and students by reading level. Using a constant comparative process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I again analyzed every definition of each open code and compared it to the other codes. Then I subsumed the codes into 13 categories that were most relevant to the research questions or potentially relevant to future research, discussion, or professional development (see Appendix G for an example). These 13 categories included *Listening to Evaluate*, *Listening to Clarify*, *Listening for Teachable Moments*, *Listening for Elaboration/Participation*, *Student-Directed Listening*, *Listening Based on Prior Responses*, *Listening for Connections*, *Social/Emotional Considerations*, *Teacher Attitudes*, *Physicality of Listening*, *Challenges of Listening*, *Teacher Self-Criticisms*, and *Other*.

### **Axial Coding Phase for Research Question 1**

Next, axial coding (Strauss, 1987) was conducted to determine the relationships among the categories using a constant comparative procedure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). One category at a time was compared to another category and/or subcategory to determine how each was connected to the other (Strauss, 1987). Strauss (1987) explained this process of *axial* coding as the analysis process that “revolves around the ‘axis’ of one category at a time” (p. 32). Examples of criteria for discerning a core category as described by Strauss (1987) included (a) the core category related to many of the other categories, (b) the core category was frequently identified in the data, (c) easy to explain the relationship with the other categories, and (d) the core category represented “maximum variation” in the data. Thomas (2006) recommended reducing the number to 3-8 most important categories.

The 13 categories from the analysis of data from Research Question 1 were subsumed into seven core categories using axial coding. These core categories included *Evaluative*

*Listening, Interpretive Listening, Student-Oriented Listening, Teacher Attitudes, Physicality of Listening, Challenges of Listening, and Teacher Self-Reflections.*

Next, every coded segment of data in each category was reread again and compared against the definitions of the categories. Some categories included data that were better matched with a different core category. In these instances, the data were subsequently coded into different categories rather than double coding any of the data. Davis (1997) pointed out that listening orientations were not mutually exclusive. This explains why some of the listening orientations may have had the similar categories; however, they were operationalized differently. For example, the category *Listening for Connections* that was subsumed under *Evaluative Listening* included instances in which teachers assessed student connections; whereas, *Listening for Connections* within *Interpretive Listening* included instances in which teachers listened to understand students' connections. The following shows an example of how 8 of the 13 categories were subsumed into three core categories for teacher listening orientations with average readers:

- Core Category: Evaluative Listening
  - Category: Listening to Evaluate
  - Category: Listening for Connections
  - Category: Listening based upon Prior Responses
- Core Category: Interpretive Listening
  - Category: Listening to Clarify
  - Category: Listening for Teachable Moments
  - Category: Listening for Elaboration/Participation
  - Category: Listening for Connections
  - Category: Listening based upon Prior Responses
- Core Category: Student-Directed Listening
  - Category: Open Listening

After this first round of axial coding was completed and each of the seven categories defined, three second coders independently double coded a combined 78% of the teacher interviews. Miles and Huberman (1984) advised that double-coding is “a good reliability check”

(p. 63). The second coders were given a codebook of the seven core categories and corresponding definitions. The first two coders used NVivo (QSR International, 2010) and a third coder used paper and pencil to conduct the second coding. Using NVivo, I ran an analysis to calculate the *agreement percentage* between my coding and the first two second coders' coding for each teacher interview. This is calculated by the following formula (nv10.qsrinternational.com):

$$\text{agreement percentage} = (\text{the number of characters not coded by either coder} + \text{agreements}) / \text{total number of possible coded content}$$

The result was a range of 86.21% to 100% agreement percentage. A third coder used paper and pencil to code the data. To calculate the intercoder reliability between my coding and the third coder's coding, I applied Miles and Huberman's (1984) intercoder reliability formula (p. 63) to each coded interview:

$$\text{reliability} = \text{number of agreements} / \text{total number of agreements plus disagreements}$$

The range for the intercoder reliability was 83% to 100%. Miles and Huberman (1984) recommended that intercoder reliability should eventually be in the 90% range. Each discrepancy between my coding and a second coder's was discussed with another second coder until 100% agreement between at least two coders was achieved across the entirety of the double coded data.

Next, the core categories were further analyzed to reduce the number of categories to those most relevant to the research questions. The final four core categories that became the findings for Research Question 1 included: *Evaluative Listening*, *Interpretive Listening*, *Student-Oriented Listening*, and *Teacher Reflections*. One core category, *Challenges of Listening*, while very interesting, was not included as a finding since it did not directly answer the research question. *Physicality of Listening* and *Teacher Self-Criticisms* were subsumed into one core

category called *Teacher Reflections*. Using NVivo (QSR International, 2010), I was able to discern that all five of the teachers' voices were represented within each of these four core categories.

After the four core categories were determined for Research Question 1, *selective coding* was used to pull illustrative and supportive quotes from the interviews and Reflection Forms. Strauss (1987) defined selective coding as “coding *systematically* and concertededly for the core category” (p. 33). This was also conducted as a means of checking my coding to ensure that all data was properly coded into the corresponding categories.

### **Development of Core Categories for Research Question 2**

The process for developing the core categories for Research Question 2 was similar to the process as explained above for Research Question 1. Briefly, the 42 open and a priori codes from the coding phase of the teacher-student reading conferences were subsumed into three core categories using a constant comparative procedure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The process of moving from codes to categories to core categories was one that was continuous and overlapping rather than three separate and distinct phases. To answer Research Question 2, I analyzed each teacher's complete set of data one at a time. For instance, I analyzed all the videos and transcribed reading conferences between Mr. Curtis and his three students before moving on to another teacher's set of data. After each set of analyses, I checked the codebook in NVivo (QSR International, 2010) for redundancies, clarifications, and any codes that could be categorized together.

The three core categories for Research Question 2 included *Teacher Initiations*, *Teacher Listening*, and *Teacher Responses*. These core categories subsumed other categories, subcategories, and/or codes. Some codes became categories due to the large number of coded

text. For instance, across the data set there were 580 *Acknowledgements*, or comments that demonstrated that the teacher has heard the student's remarks. Therefore, this code became a category. The following is an excerpt of an example of the categories, subcategories, and/or codes that were subsumed into the core category, *Teacher Responses*:

Core Category: Teacher Responses  
Category/Code: Acknowledgement  
Category/Code: Comment  
Category/Code: Evaluation  
Category: Follow-up Directive  
    Subcategory/Code: Check the text  
Category: Follow-up Question  
    Subcategory/Code: Clarify  
    Subcategory/Code: Do you agree?  
    Subcategory: Elaborate  
        Code: Why?

The line by line analysis using NVivo (QSR International, 2010) allowed for the comparison of certain teacher utterances across teachers and within teachers by student reading level. This was also helpful in determining the total number of the most common teacher utterances. To answer Research Question 2, I switched to paper and pencil analysis of the coded teacher utterances at the exchange level rather than the line by line level. This was done to gain a more holistic sense of teacher listening by student reading level within each exchange. This type of analysis was not feasible with NVivo, (QSR International, 2010), as I was unable to analyze the total number of each type of teacher utterance at the exchange level.

First, I kept the NVivo (QSR International, 2010) file open on my computer so that I could see the original coding. Next, I identified the start and end of each exchange on the printed copy of the teacher-student reading conferences. I analyzed each exchange and asked myself the following questions:

- Who directed/guided/facilitated the exchange?

- Was there a break in the teacher-student turn taking?
- What teacher listening orientation is evident based on the definitions explicated in Research Question 1?
- What codes were assigned to teacher utterances in this exchange? What type of follow-up functions am I noticing?
- What memos can I document about the teachers' questioning and listening patterns?

Analysis at the exchange level was organized in a Microsoft Excel document (see Figure 3.2). I created three separate spreadsheets to organize my analysis: one for each group of students by reading level. After analyzing each set of teacher-student conferences at the exchange level, I summarized the teachers' listening behaviors. These summaries assisted my comparisons between and across each teacher's set of conferences with their struggling, average, and high-ability readers.

Teacher/Student/Date/Exchange	T006 Jake April 2 exchange 3	T006 Jake April 2 exchange 4	T006 Jake April 2 exchange 5	Concluding thoughts: T006 and Jake
Who led/facilitated exchange?	teacher	teacher initiated the exchange but didn't talk much after that	teacher	Teacher 006 seems to listen for opportunities to infuse instruction especially related to connections, character traits, and proper academic vocabulary. At times she redirects student with follow up questions scaffolding the conversation to answer the IQ or stay focused on the learning objectives. I think she is listening to assess if he is answering the question and filters out much of what he says at times. In other instances, the student talks a lot and she just listens, indicating student-oriented listening. In some instances, the exchange is directed by
Break in teacher-student turn taking?	no	no	no	
Teacher listening orientation	interpretive/student-oriented	interpretive	interpretive	
codes used	scaffold, clarify, comment, tell me more, explain, go deeper, Inst-R, S-Ans, Do you agree with me, Inst-R clarify, repeat	initiating directive, Inst-R, initiating revisit (or uptake), clarify,	Inst-R clarify, explain, go deeper, clarify, do you agree with me?, tell me more, eval, rephrase, scaffold, clarify, explain, Inst-R,	
Memos	<b>QUOTE THIS ONE!</b> This was a very long exchange (5.5 pages). Some leading to her own opinion. Some openness to going in a	Teacher interrupts student once. Exchange ends with student comments. Teacher doesn't respond. I wonder why???	IQ leads back to making connections (lost opportunity for exchange 4). Teacher seems to be leading him at times, but she also seems open to	

Figure 3.2. Example of exchange coding organization for reading conferences data analysis.

To further interpret what my data were showing me, I calculated the total number of exchanges identified as exhibiting a particular listening orientation or if there was evidence of multiple listening orientations. As the number of reading conferences was variable across the teachers, these totals were converted to percentages. Further explication is provided in Chapter 4.

Two second coders double coded a combined total of 34% of the teacher-student exchanges. Using a copy of the final iteration of the teacher-student conferences codebook, each second coder separately coded a sampling of the exchanges from the teacher-student conferences. The intercoder reliability was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1984) formula as for Research Question 1. The intercoder reliability range across the two second coders was 33% to 100%. On average one coder's reliability was 83% and the other's was 86.67%. Each discrepancy was discussed between two or more second coders until 100% agreement was achieved.

### **Trustworthiness**

Once the major findings of the study were formulated for each research question, I consulted the two second coders to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Any discrepancies were discussed until they were resolved. Creswell (2007) recommended that qualitative researchers employ at least two methods to verify the findings in a study, or to establish *trustworthiness* as Lincoln and Guba (1985) described it. The following trustworthiness strategies were used to reduce the influence of researcher bias: credibility, dependability, and transferability as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The methods for each of these strategies will be discussed below.

**Credibility.** The strategies used to increase the credibility, or how valid or true the findings of the study are, included triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When considering the credibility of a study, one would ask how closely the research findings drawn from the data match that of reality (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). I selected to use multiple data sources to triangulate the findings. This also increases the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This method reduces the overreliance of one particular data source to draw from to answer the research questions.

As mentioned previously, preliminary findings were shared with two other coders as a means of processing the information and communicating coherently what was emerging from the data. This form of peer debriefing also increased the credibility of the findings.

Member checking was completed during the In-Depth Interviews by asking the teacher participants to confirm my use of exchange coding and by restating the participants' statements to determine whether my interpretations were accurate. Here is an example from the In-Depth Interview with Ms. Gigi on May 13, 2013:

C: So what I did was I just chunked out one exchange, which means that in general, your conversation with this student starts with an initiating question and all the responses from you and the student that come after that until it's time for a new question that's something a little bit different. And so I actually wanted to ask you about this. When you asked 'What do you think's going to happen?'—that prediction question in line 53—did you feel like, alright, you were ready to go onto a new conversation, or did you feel like that's still part of the previous one?

T: That's still part of the previous one.

C: Okay.

**Dependability.** Dependability, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), referred to the reliability of the findings. Strategies included creating an audit trail, peer debriefing, and triangulating the data as described above.

An audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009) was recorded throughout the data collection and analysis phase of the study. This consisted of detailed memos (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008) documenting all procedures used to collect, monitor, organize, and analyze the data, as it is the responsibility of the researcher to “monitor and report their own analytical procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible” (Patton, 2002, p. 434). The following is an example of a process memo recorded on 5/19/2013 for the audit trail:

Went through all of teacher Mr. Curtis’ audio and video files. There are 3 conferences recorded for each student. The teacher is planning on doing one more round. He hasn’t given me any reflections yet though. . . . Planning on scheduling the last interview next week.

Peer debriefing included an examination of the codebook, second coding procedures, and analysis of the research findings. First, the second coder examined the codebook to ensure that the codes and/or categories were mutually exclusive and that the definitions were comprehensible. Next, to determine if the codebook could be reliably applied to the data sources, the second coder coded each data source. This was done by having the second coder use the code definitions and names of codes I established (Thomas, 2006).

**Transferability.** Lincoln and Guba (1987) suggested that to establish rigor in a qualitative study, a researcher should present thick descriptions as a strategy for establishing transferability or how applicable the research findings are to the reader’s particular context or population. Rich

and thick descriptions of the findings using verbatim quotes from the participants in the study were provided in the presentation of the findings in Chapter 4 to allow the reader to use his or her own discretion in determining how the findings might be transferred or generalized. The sample was also described as thoroughly as possible to clearly communicate the population to whom the findings of this study would be most applicable.

### **Subjectivity Statement**

As stated earlier, in qualitative research “The overall interpretation will be the researchers’ understanding, mediated by his or her particular disciplinary perspective, of the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 2009, p. 38). As a graduate of the University of Connecticut’s Integrated Bachelor’s/Master’s Program in Education (IB/M), it was expected that I would go out into the world as a teacher leader. High-expectations are also linked to my cultural background. There was always an expectation that if I was going to do something, I should do it right the first time. My parents’ high expectations and role modeling of working hard at everything greatly influenced my own personal work ethic. I have very high expectations and standards for all teachers and assume that they all can rise to those standards. I realize that I am somewhat of a perfectionist when it comes to teaching, but more importantly, I have realized that I have an “other-oriented” perfectionistic tendency (Hewitt & Flett, 1991), meaning that I expect other teachers to be perfect or at least to strive to perfect the art and science of educating and motivating students to learn. Recognizing that the teachers in this study may have had different views about their own personal work ethic and about how their students learn, I tried to keep an open mind to these differences and to be aware of any subjective judgments made on my part.

Given my perfectionistic tendencies, theoretical beliefs, and pedagogical preferences, I tried to remain very aware of my high expectations of teachers when I created my interview protocols. I tried not to ask leading questions or impose my beliefs on other teachers through the interview process. Furthermore, I tried not to judge teachers negatively as I conducted interviews. Finally, when I analyzed my qualitative data, I tried to do so with an open mind and not focus only on what teachers could do better, but rather on what patterns and themes emerged from the data relevant to the research questions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

In this chapter, I will present the findings of this qualitative study. The first research question investigated middle school reading teachers' perceptions of how they listened to students at varied reading readiness levels. The teachers participated in an Initial Interview prior to data collection and an In-Depth Interview after they had conducted at least one reading conference with each of their participating students. Teachers' Conference Reflection Forms were used to triangulate the findings. Data sources were analyzed using a basic interpretive approach to discover patterns within and across teachers' perceptions of their listening. The second research question investigated evidence of listening in the reading conferences between the teachers and students. The conferences were also analyzed using a basic interpretive approach to determine how teachers listened to students at varied reading levels.

The study findings in this chapter are presented in two sections organized by research question. The section on findings from Research Question 1 begins with an overview of the major themes, followed by an explication of the defining characteristics and supporting data by student reading level for each theme. The themes for Research Question 1 included (a) *evaluative listening orientation*, (b) *interpretive listening orientation*, (c) *student-oriented listening orientation*, and (d) *professional teacher reflection on their listening*. For Research Question 2, the following themes are presented: (a) *Teachers exhibited different types of listening orientations during individualized reading conferences*, and (b) *Teachers exhibited evidence of multiple listening orientations within individual discourse exchanges*. In addition, two types of *outlier listening behaviors* are presented. In the section on Research Question 2, findings across teachers will be presented first, followed by findings within teachers.

## Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked: What are teachers' perceptions of how they listen to question responses from students at varied reading levels during individualized reading conferences? Analysis of the Initial Interviews (II), In-Depth Interviews (IDI), and Conference Reflection Forms (RF) revealed patterns across and within the five middle school reading teachers' perceptions of how they listened to their students' question responses during SEM-R Phase 2 individualized reading conferences. Teachers' comments and reflections on their listening and questioning behaviors yielded evidence of three major types of *listening orientations*. For the purpose of this study, a listening orientation was conceptualized as a mode of listening or how teachers are oriented to listen *for* something in a student response (Davis, 1997). Indicators of listening orientations also included how teachers interpreted and responded to students.

The three major types of listening orientations that emerged from the analysis of teachers' perceptions included (a) *evaluative listening*, (b) *interpretive listening*, and (c) *student-oriented listening*. These perceptions were evidenced in all teachers' discussions of their listening with students at all reading levels (i.e., struggling, average, and higher-level), with two exceptions. Mr. Green's and Ms. Gigi's perceptions did not indicate student-oriented listening with neither his average readers nor her struggling readers. An additional theme, *professional teacher reflections on their listening*, follows the presentation of the three listening orientations.

### **Evaluative Listening Orientation**

Some of the teachers' perceptions of their listening and questioning behaviors were characterized as an *evaluative listening orientation*. This type of listening orientation was evident across all teachers at some point in their discussions about students at each reading level. The defining characteristics of an evaluative listening orientation included the following:

- Teacher listens to assess if a student can or cannot answer a question.
- Teacher listens to assess the accuracy or inaccuracy of student's comprehension of text.
- Teacher listens to make a positive assessment of student's response.
- Teacher listens for a preconceived answer to a question.
- Teacher's role is to direct the reading conference.

When teachers discussed or reflected upon what they were listening for in students' responses to their questions, it appeared that at times their listening served as an assessment tool for multiple purposes. First, teachers shared that they listened to "see" if students could provide *an* answer to a question. This was an indication to the teachers that students could comprehend the question itself. Teachers' listening appeared to be a tool for evaluating students' literal and/or basic inferential comprehension of the text, as evident in behaviors such as recalling characters' names, stating the genre of the text, or summarizing the plot of the story. Teachers also discussed providing students with feedback on the accuracy of their answers. It should be underscored that some teachers expressed that at times they listened *for* inaccuracies, or as one teacher referred to it as "*faults*," in students' responses, while at other times they listened *for* anything accurate or positive in students' responses to support their self-confidence.

Teachers' perceptions also revealed that they listened to determine if students could recall previously taught literary terms; this indicated that the teachers were purposefully listening for certain preconceived answers or ways of answering questions. Some teachers expressed that doing so seemed to result in their filtering out the rest of student contributions for the sake of listening for that specific answer. The teachers' comments also revealed their perception that they had the responsibility for leading the discussion and determining the accuracy of all

questions answered. Examples of teachers' perceptions demonstrating evidence of an evaluative listening orientation with students at varied reading readiness levels follows.

**Evaluative listening with struggling readers.** All participating teachers' discussions and reflections indicated evidence of an evaluative listening orientation when they are conducting reading conferences with struggling readers. Teachers expressed that they listened to assess whether students were able to understand and answer questions about their books. For instance, Ms. Gigi explained what she was listening for when listening to struggling readers: "That they're able to comprehend my question and answer the question" (II, January 11, 2013). Mr. Curtis listened for the same purpose while also evaluating the quality of students' responses. For example, while discussing his conference with Darius (S), Mr. Curtis stated, "He wasn't ever sort of cognitive with his responses. There was no thought process like ok let me find the first quick answer that I have and sort of give it to you" (IDI, May 27, 2013).

An evaluative listening orientation was further characterized by teachers' listening to assess students' ability to recall and apply previously learned information. For instance, Mr. Green pointed out, ". . . I've been really listening for if they're remembering some of the basics that we went over that, for an example, with an open-ended question that required inferencing, just, just seeing if they come out with giving a character a trait in their mind" (January 18, 2013).

Analysis of the teacher Conference Reflection Forms also revealed a pattern in the relationship between teachers' evaluative listening orientation and their learning objectives. For example, Mr. Green wrote that he chose a bookmark question about the main idea and details of Israel's (S) book because "It is [state test] aligned and heavily focused on. Israel had a new [non-fiction] book, and I wanted to check his understanding of foundational skills," (Mr. Green & Israel, RF, February 6, 2013). In response to what he listened for, Mr. Green wrote, "I listened

for his comprehension of basic ideas what [the] section is ‘all about.’ Also if he could verbalize relationship [between] [main idea] and details.”

Teachers shared how they listened for the accuracy of students’ responses to their questions. When asked to describe her listening with struggling students, Ms. Nalana explained that she asked herself the following questions:

Does it sound like it would be accurate or do I need to kind of look into the book and see if it’s exactly right? ‘Cause I notice a lot of the times, they’ll say things that I’m like that doesn’t sound like it would be in the story or, you know, if I have an idea of what’s going on in the story. (II, March 24, 2013)

Mr. Green indicated that he listened for “issues” or “faults” in students’ comprehension. In the following excerpt, Mr. Green discussed his thinking with struggling readers (II, January 18, 2013):

I’m always looking for fault first, and if, if there’s something missing or something that they could add, or if there’s a just a general misunderstanding, then that, I look to try to help them find the better response or the correct response. (II, January 18, 2013)

Teachers also reflected on how they listened specifically for something positive in students’ responses and provided positive feedback. Ms. Gigi explained:

So, I guess, [I’m] always trying to be listening for the positive. What they did get and adding from that, all while stroking the ego a little bit and giving that one-on-one attention, like you’re important because they just love to come up and read. They would read all day to you. (II, January 11, 2013)

Furthermore, teachers' perceptions revealed that they had preconceived answers to their questions in mind that they listened for specifically with their struggling readers. Ms. Nalana's seemed to listen for a match between her struggling student's answer and her own:

Yeah I, I do that a lot, like I have the answer in my head almost and then I'm waiting for them to match their answer with my answer and when they don't it kind of like throws me off. . . . And then it's like if they don't, I don't know I guess I kind of hang on maybe one little thing that worked with my answer. (IDI, June 4, 2013)

Ms. Nalana expressed that she would filter out a portion of what students shared outside of what worked with her thinking. She explained, "Yeah so it's almost like when I hear the good parts or the ones that are right, or I consider a good, uh response. I kind of listen to those and then kind of yeah weed out the other ones (IDI, June 4, 2013).

Finally, teachers' discussions of their listening indicated a pattern of directing the conferences for their struggling readers. For instance, Ms. Brown had clear objectives for students during conferences, and when these levels were achieved, she ended the discussion. "So with a lower level learner I may just end when I get to yes, you've made your connection" (IDI, May 8, 2013).

**Evaluative listening with average readers.** As was the case with struggling readers, teachers listened for average students' basic or literal comprehension of their text. Ms. Brown reflected, "My average readers remain a lot like the struggling readers, where their role is still to identify the key materials" (II, March 13, 2013). Similarly, Mr. Green explained, "I'm really just listening for the content of what they're saying when they answer a question" (II, January 18, 2013). He further expressed, "Uh, there's been, as of now, there's been such, such focus on the open-ended, that's pretty much what I'm looking at. When they first tell me the answer out loud, I

listen for, do they have those three components . . . . But that's really the focus of my listening.” The three components were his criteria for a quality response to an open-ended question.

Teachers also expressed listening to assess the quality or accuracy of their average readers' responses. For example, Ms. Gigi reflected on her conference with Tamara (A), stating, “If you lived a life like that, how would you, how would that make you feel? [reading from transcript] And I don't think that she significantly answered it by saying sad and mad” (IDI, May 13, 2013). Ms. Nalana also wrote in her Conference Reflection Form that she was listening to Eoin (A) “To see if what he said was accurate with the story so far” (RF, May 8, 2013).

During our In-Depth Interview around his conference with Candy (A), Mr. Curtis' reflections indicated an evaluative listening orientation as he directed the discussion and assessed the quality of her answer:

I feel like this time when I was listening and responding I was trying to more or less, lead her. I notice every time I ask a question I never ask just like one piece. It's like was it this or this or this or this. Like here almost like a multiple choice question. Like, pick one! Please! Just pick something! And in this case I feel like, based on watching the video, as I'm listening I'm realizing that all the answers are very vague and they're very short and they're more than yeah, no, maybe, sometimes, ok. But there's still only like two or three words. They're not the in-depth that I want. (IDI, May 27, 2013)

Listening to assess students' fluency was important to some of the teachers. Ms. Gigi shared, “I'm looking at the text and I'm seeing what words they're struggling with. What context areas. They're not stopping at periods. They're not pronouncing things correctly” (II, January 11, 2013). Ms. Nalana also indicated that she was listening for students' fluency skills: “Again, I

have some students that comprehend well, but then the fluency isn't, you know, good. So, I might be listening more on the fluency part of it" (II, March 24, 2013).

**Evaluative listening with high-ability readers.** Teachers' perceptions revealed that their evaluative listening with high-ability readers had the same characteristics as with struggling or average readers. Teachers discussed listening for students' ability to recall previously taught content, comprehension, fluency, and preconceived answers. Ms. Brown indicated an evaluative listening orientation with her high-ability readers, stating, "I listen for their vocabulary, their use of the literary terms that we discuss and use" (II, March 13, 2013). She also reflected on her conferences with Jake (H), ". . . I notice that in the conferences, I have like trained my mind to go in and listen for the skill I'm trying to get out of them" (IDI, May 8, 2013). This suggested that she had a preconceived idea of how students might respond during discussions. Ms. Nalana also explained that she listened for specific literary terms during an exchange with Lilly (H):

. . . I feel like I was starting to answer the question for her even though she was doing a good job explaining it, and then I kind of just like jumped in and was like "yeah." I guess saying it in the way that maybe I wanted her to say it um, cause here I'm like "oh talking the internal conflict." I think I wanted to hear that word. (IDI, June 4, 2013)

Ms. Nalana shared her reflections about listening to evaluate her high-ability students. She explained, ". . . I'm thinking like, you know, they're doing such a good job or I'll think, like, this kid pretty much understands everything and then, I guess that's, you know, what I'm thinking about that they're doing well and they're getting the information right and . . . that's basically it" (II, March 24, 2013). If a student did not answer a question the way she anticipated, she would redirect students. Ms. Nalana shared, ". . . I feel like if I'm not happy with the answer I

kind of like direct them in a different way to get them to say something I think is better” (IDI, June 4, 2013).

### **Interpretive Listening Orientation**

In addition to evidence of an evaluative orientation, teachers’ perceptions also revealed an interpretive listening orientation. This was evident across all teachers with each level of reader. The characteristics of an interpretive listening orientation were similar across all student reading levels and included the following:

- Teacher listens for student understanding and/or listens and responds to clarify his/her understanding of students’ comprehension.
- Teacher listens and responds to students to clarify teachers’ understanding of the story.
- Teacher listens and responds to promote and/or scaffold for
  - student participation,
  - student learning of a preconceived learning objective or answer, and
  - a “deeper understanding.”
- Teacher’s role is to guide or facilitate the reading conference.
- Teacher considers student responses more than in evaluative listening.

Characteristics of an interpretive listening orientation included listening beyond simply evaluating the accuracy of students’ responses, which was more the case with evaluative listening. Instead, teachers revealed perceptions that they listened to understand students’ interpretations of books and/or what the books were about. There appeared to be an element of assessment in determining if students understand their books, and teachers who indicated an interpretive listening orientation may still have a preconceived answer or learning objective in

mind. However, teachers seemed more open to listening to student thinking to help guide the student towards the objective rather than evaluating their answer and asking a new question.

A defining characteristic of an interpretive listening orientation across all teachers was that they listened *for* students to supply evidence of a deeper understanding of books beyond literal comprehension or basic recall of story elements. Teachers listened for students to demonstrate this understanding with elaborated responses, examples from the text, and/or evidence from students' lives. Further, how students responded influenced how the teachers responded with follow-up questions, comments, or instruction.

**Interpretive listening with struggling students.** When teachers discussed their listening with struggling readers, again, a pattern emerged in which teachers appeared to listen interpretively. Teachers shared instances in which they listened for student comprehension, participation, clarity of what the book was about, and opportunities to support student learning.

Although teachers seemed to listen to assess *if* students understood their books, teachers' perceptions indicated that at times their listening went beyond just evaluating the accuracy of students' literal comprehension. Instead, they listened for students' ability to argue, support their thinking, or provide evidence from the text. For example, Mr. Curtis explained, "Honestly, whether or not the information is correct is irrelevant, and I tell them that in my class all the time. It's not whether or not you can give me the right answer, it's whether or not you can argue that your answer is right" (IDI, May 27, 2013). Likewise, in her conference with Maggie (S), Ms. Brown was "listening to see if she could support her point of view with which person it was in" and "give examples from the text" (IDI, May 8, 2013). These quotes demonstrate that the teachers were listening for more than just an accurate, brief answer, rather they were listening for students' sense-making.

Teachers' perceptions further revealed that they listened to *clarify* their understanding of students' responses. Teachers voiced that when they did not understand students' thinking, the teachers would ask follow-up questions to probe for further clarification, thus indicating that teachers' responses are contingent in part on student answers. Ms. Gigi explained her approach to gaining a better understanding of her students' thinking, especially when students' responses were not clear or elaborated enough:

And I find if I say things like tell me more, I don't get what you're saying, it's like they have to help me and they feel better about helping me than if I said that answer isn't good enough. You didn't give me . . . you didn't write enough. Help me. I don't understand this. (II, January 11, 2013)

This quote also indicated that Ms. Gigi was sensitive to her students' emotions, which could be classified as a student-oriented listening orientation; however, since she was scaffolding for student participation it was coded as interpretive listening.

Additionally, a component of an interpretive listening orientation was that teachers listened to gain an understanding of what the students' books were about. This was exemplified when Mr. Curtis discussed his thinking when conferencing with struggling readers:

Since so many of the books I have not read, I have to hope that they give me an answer that is sufficient enough that I can understand what it is that they are actually reading. So, I will be sitting there and I am thinking, alright, based off this answer, do I actually understand what it is that they are trying to tell me, or do I actually understand, sort of, how this book works. (II, January 6, 2013)

An interpretive listening orientation included listening for opportunities to support or scaffold student participation. For instance, Ms. Gigi explained how she thought about if students understood their books and also how she would encourage them to elaborate:

Ms. Gigi: Did they get it at all and then to move on from there. And, in their writing, they might have just gotten it very superficially.

Researcher: What do you mean 'get it'?

Ms. Gigi: Um, you know, "What did you like about this book?" [Student:] "I like this book 'cause it was prison." [Teacher:] "All right, now. Let's talk about this. There's more to this answer than that. Tell me more. And that's ultimately what I want to see you write down." Always with the CMTs in mind . . . .

(II, January 11, 2013)

In discussing their roles during the reading conferences, it appeared that at times teachers viewed themselves as a guide or facilitator of the discourse with struggling readers. Teachers talked about digging deeper into the students' thinking to encourage student participation or provide instruction. Mr. Green explained his role: "Um, always start at the low level to move, you know, to build a foundation of their understanding and then I feel like at that point my job is to, over time, push them to higher levels when they're ready, you know, as they progress through with the process" (II, January 18, 2013). Similarly, Ms. Gigi explained that her role was ". . . to pick out something of what they're reading out loud to be able to work with" (II, January 11, 2013).

**Interpretive listening with average readers.** As with the struggling readers, teachers listened to their average readers to clarify their own understanding of the students' interpretation of their books. Mr. Curtis listened to understand his students' perspectives:

Where with an average reader, they might say something where they would have my attention and I might still be a little off focus, but they may say something where I say, 'Wait a second, say that to me again, what exactly are you getting at? What are you trying, what is your perception on this?' (II, January 6, 2013)

Mr. Curtis' reasoning for asking clarifying questions was illuminated in his reflection on a conference with Candy (A) when he wrote, "I was hoping for some clarity and an in-heartening [sic] response that would provide me with some ideals as to the level of comprehension so that in our next discussion I could go with a more thought-provoking question" (RF, April 23, 2013). In other words, Mr. Curtis was hoping to understand what the book was about first so that he could eventually ask more challenging questions.

An interpretive listening orientation included listening to determine if students understood their books. Ms. Brown noted that she listened to ". . . just their understanding and their ability to discuss it. If they can have a coherent discussion with me about their novel and about their characters and their connections" (II, March 13, 2013). This was evident for Ms. Gigi as well when she wrote, "I listened to ascertain that Tamara was able to discuss some difficult decisions Alice faced" (RF, April 2, 2013).

Ms. Brown viewed her role with average readers as one in which she encouraged participation by guiding students to think further and deeper by asking "probing" and "guiding questions" (II, March 13, 2013). According to Mr. Green, having students explain their reasoning was important. Reflecting upon his conference with Kristen (A), he shared, "Um, when she came

out with the word selfish, you know I find that that question of what, what makes you say that? Or why do you say that? Um, really puts the ownership on the student to give evidence to support that claim” (IDI, May 21, 2013). This was also important to Ms. Gigi when conferencing with her students as she wrote that she was listening for “Not so much that their predictions were correct as their thinking process behind their prediction including their reasoning for it” (RF, March 28, 2013).

In addition to probing for participation, teachers listened to challenge average level readers. This appeared to be an objective that teachers had in mind prior to conferences with students. Ms. Gigi explained, “I’m listening to see how far I can push a kid without him getting frustrated that he’s not getting enough out of the book” (II, January 11, 2013). Ms. Gigi’s objectives included listening to determine if students were comprehending and answering “higher-level thinking questions.” She also shared, “my biggest one working with them is ‘You are that main character’ . . . . I’m trying to get those readers to put themselves into the book” (II, January 11, 2013). Similarly, Ms. Brown shared, “I listen for their ability to connect on that deeper level” (II, March 13, 2013). Mr. Green viewed his role with average readers as “it’s more about pushing them to those upper levels as quickly as possible . . . . So I feel like my job is more just to assess the level they’re on and trying to, as quickly as possible and consistently, push them to a higher level of understanding” (II, January 18, 2013).

**Interpretive listening with high-ability readers.** Teachers’ perceptions of their listening with high-ability readers indicated a pattern of listening that was similar to that with struggling and average readers. Typically, teachers described their role as one of a guide, facilitator, or listener with high-ability readers. For instance, Ms. Brown expressed, “My high ability readers, I am still the facilitator of creating discussion with them” (II, March 13, 2013). She explained

further, “I listen for their ability to just discuss with me what’s happening” (II, March 13, 2013). This indicated an element of assessment; however, student responses seemed to be considered more in an interpretive listening orientation than with an evaluative one, and movement toward a discussion was encouraged and/or expected.

Teachers also expressed listening to understand their students’ thinking or their book. Ms. Brown shared her thinking while conferencing with Jake (H): “I think I was trying to get clearer about this particular novel with the student. So I guess I was trying to gain my own clarity” (IDI, May 8, 2013). In discussing Anna’s (H) Steven King novel, Mr. Curtis expressed his purpose in trying to clarify what her novel was about, “. . . please explain to me what transpired in the story so that way I can understand where you’re going. So sometimes it is just to get a better understanding of the book because then it’ll at least lead to, questions that I can comprehend. (IDI, May 27, 2013).

In addition, it appeared that teachers’ expectations for high-ability readers informed their interpretive listening. Ms. Gigi’s high expectations were evident when she stated, “I’m listening for an ah-ha moment where they grasp something and they might not even know what it is they’re grasping but they say something profound” (II, January 11, 2013). In response to how she listens to high-ability readers, Ms. Brown explained how her objectives guided her listening: “My listening is based on what goal that I have when I’m going into the conference” (IDI, May 8, 2013). She further explained, “I notice that I am always listening as a teacher, and I’m always looking for teaching moments. The one on one conferences give me such an opportunity to take what I do in front of the class or in small groups and bring it just to individual lecture” (IDI, May 8, 2013).

Many of the teachers expressed listening for high-ability readers to make connections to their books or for opportunities to guide students toward this learning objective. Ms. Nalana shared, “I listen for, you know, connections and things like that. If they can take it to, I guess, a different level with the story” (II, March 24, 2013). This appeared to be connected to her high expectations of her students: “. . . a lot of times, I expect them to kind of make like, you know, connection[s] to either a story or a movie that they’ve seen ‘cause they’ve read so much that they usually do make connections to their story” (II, March 24, 2013). In the following, Ms. Brown described how she pushed Jake towards making a connection:

And since it’s a science fiction book with characters being the animals, I had felt that the connection needed to take place on a deeper level because it wasn’t just something that they had in common. Oh, I liked a girl and so did my character. I mean, we’re really comparing apples to oranges, a human with an animal. But, I was trying to push Jake towards that connection. That we are connecting to feelings and connecting to that protective instinct that the animals were having in the novel towards his in society. (IDI, May 8, 2013)

An interpretive listening orientation also included teacher consideration of student thinking or responses to inform how he or she will guide the direction of the exchange. For example, Mr. Green shared how his higher-level readers’ contributions informed his subsequent instructional decisions:

Because if it's, it depends on what they're saying. If they're saying, if they seem really interested, if they're going from their book to something else and they're making a connection and they seem really interested in that, it might be about teaching something new. But if they seem to be talking about something that seems unclear, then it might tell

me that I have to review something or, or just explain something in a different way” (II, January 18, 2013).

An interpretive listening orientation also included instances in which teachers were listening for students to elaborate on or explain their thinking. Mr. Green conferenced with Jaime and asked her to describe a trait for one of the characters; she replied that the character was considerate. He explained, “I was definitely listening carefully to see if, she um, if she could explain a part where the character showed real caring for her family or an individual member” (IDI, May 21, 2013). Mr. Green wrote on his Conference Reflection Form with Jaime (H) that he “...listened for an honest opinion along with evidence/examples to support this opinion” (RF, March 18, 2013).

### **Student-Oriented Listening**

A student-oriented listening orientation was evident across all teachers in the study with some differences based on student reading level. The majority of teachers expressed perceptions that revealed a student-oriented listening orientation with students regardless of reading level. The one exception was between Mr. Green and his average reader. The following characterizes a student-oriented listening with students at all reading levels:

- Teacher listens and responds without a preconceived idea of an answer to a question/learning objective.
- Teacher listens and responds to facilitate an authentic discussion.
- Teacher is open to student leading the direction of the exchange.

Student-oriented listening was characterized by a greater openness to student contributions and student directing, guiding, and/or talking during the reading conferences compared to evaluative or interpretive listening. To a lesser degree, two of the teachers in the

study, Mr. Curtis and Ms. Brown, discussed how they were open to listening to learn from their students. Teacher listening and follow-up questions contributed to the facilitation of an authentic discussion in which teachers were curious about student thinking and did not appear to have preconceived ideas in mind. Further, teachers expressed wanting students to talk more.

**Student-oriented listening with struggling readers.** Four of the five teachers expressed openness to sharing their role in guiding the conferences with their struggling readers. Rather than the teacher being solely responsible for formulating all the questions, the teachers shared this role with the students. Mr. Green said, “I think my job is first, first order of business I usually ask what questions they have. So I think I just like to start and see what questions they have” (II, January 18, 2013). Ms. Nalana had an expectation that students would ask questions: “Um, with my struggling readers, I would hope that they, you know, would ask me questions if they don’t understand something, you know, to . . . which they do even if it’s just a word they don’t understand” (II, March 24, 2013). This implied an openness to listening to what the students would like to discuss during conferences.

Ms. Brown discussed being open to listening to students’ thinking. This was evident when she shared, “So then we begin to have those discussions, and they can create more inferences about what is happening in the book and formulate their own opinions and ideas” (II, March 13, 2013). This implied a step away from listening for a preconceived answer and instead having an expectation that the student to share in the authority of the knowledge. Similarly, Mr. Curtis expressed a comfort with students changing the direction of the discourse when he stated, “. . . I asked you this question and I expected it to lead in direction A and you brought it in direction B, and I didn’t even see it coming, but let’s build off that, which is fine, because that is the essence of conversation anyway” (II, January 6, 2013).

Ms. Nalana appeared to be simply curious to know students' thinking, which indicated student-oriented listening. After conferencing with Kayden (S), Ms. Nalana wrote that she selected the following bookmark question "Would you change the ending to the story? If so, how would you change it?" because "A lot of times students want to change something about their story, so I thought it would be interesting to see what she said." She then wrote that she listened for "How she [Kayden] would change the ending" (RF, April 23, 2013). This also pointed to the relationship between teachers' selection of questions and functionality of their listening.

**Student-oriented listening with average readers.** Characteristics of a student-orientated listening orientation with average readers were the same as with the struggling readers. Four of the five teachers indicated a student-oriented listening orientation with average readers. It appeared they responded to students without the influence of a preconceived idea to a question. Mr. Curtis shared: "One of the big things I have always focused on when teaching is that nothing is black and white in this classroom. No answer is wrong, if you can prove it. No story you have read is misinterpreted, if you can explain how you have misinterpreted it" (II, January 6, 2013).

Teachers also appeared to want a connection with their average readers during the conferences. Ms. Gigi expressed, "It's that five minutes of personal attention that I'm trying to give them. 'You're special. This is cool. Let's share this together. Tell me what's going on.' So, making a bond" (II, January 11, 2013). Ms. Nalana also expressed an interest in knowing if students were enjoying their books and wanted to encourage them to stay motivated to keep reading. She was participating in a competition with her students to see who could read the most books that school year. Ms. Nalana indicated a student-oriented listening orientation when she stated, ". . . with the average student, it's more them telling me what they've been reading, and

you know if they enjoy it” (II, March 24, 2013). So here again was an instance in which teachers were willing to share the role of leading the discussion with their students.

**Student-oriented listening with high-ability readers.** The patterns in teachers’ perceptions of their listening with high-ability readers included a willingness to share in the ownership of the talking space. For instance, Mr. Curtis quantified his perception of the proportion of talk time for each interlocutor, “[H]aving them do, instead of 50/50, now it’s 70/30; with them the 70 and me the 30; them doing more of the talking” (II, January 8, 2013). Some teachers qualified an authentic discussion with students as one in which teachers handed over the reins to the students to lead the discussions by talking more while the teacher listened. For example, Ms. Brown described a “meaningful discussion” as she shifted her role towards one of a listener:

And then, as the time has gone on with the conferences, I’m thinking more just like the listener and easily listening. And there’s times when I don’t even write anything down on their SEM-R books and just listen to what they’re saying and have a meaningful discussion. (II, March 13, 2013)

Some of the teachers in general also shared how they listened to high-ability readers in terms of participating in a “conversation.” For example, Ms. Gigi reenacted a typical “two-way conversation” she might have with a student:

“Well, what’s going on here? What do you think about this?” And I’ll ask them, because I don’t know most of the stories, “Well, you tell me. What’s going on? And then, let’s talk about it.” And it can be a real good two-way conversation of written material, and I don’t think the kids are used to that, and I know I’m not used to that. (II, January 11, 2013)

Mr. Green appeared to indicate that he felt comfortable with Jaime (H) leading the exchanges:

You know to someone like her, like I said she would come with a lot of thoughts, a lot of questions where um, it was, I could really just ask a question and just let her go. You know. And, and I get a lot of good information about um, what she's thinking about and the direction she's going in. (IDI, May 21, 2013)

Teachers also appeared to be willing to share control of the direction of the conferences through student-selected questions and comments as opposed to teacher-selected questions. Ms. Brown expressed having high expectations for students to ask her questions about the novel, share their own connections, and “. . . mainly come to conferences with opinions and inferences” (II, March 13, 2013).

Both Mr. Green’s and Mr. Curtis’s listening and follow-up responses appeared to be contingent upon the quality of a student’s response. Mr. Green shared, “. . . with the high readers, like I said, it's more about, I can quickly see that they're still maintaining a high level of response, so that I'm listening more to just the conversation about it” (II, January 18, 2013). Likewise, Mr. Curtis explained

Where if I get a very in-depth, sort of, elaborate detailed response, I might almost ask them to lead me somewhere else. I might say, “Alright, based off all of this, where should we go from here? What do you think maybe should be my next question” or “What information do you want to share with me because you think it’s more or less important.” Okay, because sometimes I might not ask the question that is the topic that they actually want to talk about. (II, January 8, 2013)

The characteristics for student-oriented listening with high-ability readers were also similar to those with struggling and average readers with one exception. In two cases, teachers expressed instances in which they learned from their high-ability students. For example, Ms. Brown indicated a willingness to learn from students, thereby sharing the authority of the knowledge with students, when she stated, “It’s more of them telling me and educating me on something. They’re playing teacher in that position” (II, March 13, 2013). In the following example, Mr. Curtis shared his thoughts about potentially being receptive to new perspectives about a book that he could learn from a high-ability reader:

And then my advanced reader might be so abstract, that I might be completely engaged in “Wow, I never thought of it that way,” or “This is a perspective I have never looked at before,” or “You completely just blew my mind with that”. . . . (II, January 6, 2013)

### **Professional Teacher Reflection of Their Listening**

The final major theme for Research Question 1 included *Professional Teacher Reflection of Their Listening*. Teacher perceptions that were classified into this theme included: teachers’ self-assessment of how easily and how frequently they listened to students, preferences for listening to students, and goals for improvement of their listening practices. Some teachers reflected upon their listening behaviors in ways that were unanticipated relative to the research questions. At times, the teachers were candid in comparing the ease of listening to one particular group of students over another. They also shared preferences for listening to certain groups of readers. Additionally, the teachers described the frequency and quality of their listening with different groups of readers. Furthermore, teachers set goals for themselves for future improvement of their listening behaviors.

**Listening comparisons by reading levels.** Most of the middle school teachers commented on their preferences for listening to certain groups of readers and how often they listen to particular readers. Three of the teachers were forthright in stating their preference for listening to their high-ability students due to either the ease of listening or the enjoyment experienced from the discussions. Mr. Green shared his preference stating, “Um, I think in general I think the stronger the reader I, I like to listen to them more . . .” (IDI, May 21 & 27, 2013). Ms. Nalana also expressed more of an enjoyment talking to her high-ability students as it was easier; therefore, she had more trust in the probable accuracy of their responses. However, due to this trust she did not listen to them as closely as she did with other students and was “more lax with them” (II, March 24, 2013). She reflected, “I mean, I would like to think I listen with each kid the same, but I probably don’t do it as much with the, you know, the kids who don’t struggle because they’re usually really accurate” (II, March 24, 2013).

Ms. Brown made the following comparison: “. . . I am more of a listener [with my high-ability readers] than I am with my average and low readers. I listen more to their opinions” (II, March 13, 2013). She went on to explain, “My listening is easier with the high-ability readers because it’s more of a discussion” (II, March 13, 2013). This was also evident in Ms. Brown’s written reflection, “It is easy to listen to Jake [H] because he has a good grasp of the material in his book. He is able to openly discuss the main idea and theme so it is my job to make him become more of a critical thinker when reading” (RF, March 26, 2013).

Mr. Curtis shared his thinking about the degree of attention he provided when listening to his struggling readers’ literal responses to stories:

With my listening, what I find with my struggling reader is, there doesn’t need to be in a sense, as much focus; not that I am not focusing, but their answers tend to be so sort of

simple that it doesn't seem to involve like that attention to detail. . . . The answers, they are so simplified that it doesn't need that extensive level of attention from me. (II, January 6, 2013)

Conversely, Ms. Brown stated, "With my struggling readers, my listening is strained" (II, March 13, 2013). She further clarified, "It is strained because with so many probing questions and such short responses, I feel like I am pulling and pulling information out of them" (II, March 13, 2013). Ms. Brown also shared her thoughts about listening to average readers: "My average student sometimes is frustrating as well because I am still asking questions and still trying to pull information out of them" (II, March 13, 2013).

**Professional teacher reflection and goal setting.** Interviews with the teachers and to some extent the Conference Reflection Forms revealed that at times all five of the teachers were evaluative about their own listening skills. Teachers went beyond discussing how they listened to their students to sharing their criticisms, questions, and future goals.

At times, some teachers seemed unsure about how they were listening and wondered if they needed to change their approach, while others stated the types of listening behaviors they wanted to change. In speaking about her thinking during an exchange with Kayden (S), Ms. Nalana shared concerns about listening for a match to her answer:

Um, that's probably not what you're supposed to do but, you know, I have like you know something set and then it's like 'Ok, is she going to basically answer it the way I, I would answer it?' (IDI, June 4, 2013)

Mr. Green questioned his listening which he referred to as "looking for fault":

I guess, and maybe I need to change my thinking. I'm always looking for fault first, and if, if there's something missing or something that they could add, or if there's a just a

general misunderstanding, then that, I look to try to help them find the better response or the correct response. Um, and then, and that's, that's really how I always approach it even with the, the really strong readers. (II, January 18, 2013)

During the Initial Interview, Ms. Gigi provided some insight to why she talked so much during the reading conferences: “I’m thinking I did too much talking, again. That’s a habit of mine. I’m a talker, and it’s like you gotta fill up that empty space. And then, kids will . . . kids will understand you’re going to do that and then they’ll let you do it” (II, January 11, 2013).

During the In-Depth Interview, Ms. Gigi reflected upon an exchange she had with Tamara (A) and explained why she might “fill up that empty space.” She began by reading part of the transcript from the conference (January 30, 2013):

I throw out something without letting them finish or making them think harder. Like, line 83. “No, it’s like.” [student words]. And I went, “okay.” I mean I didn’t give her any reason to go ahead with it. So I talked, spoke too quickly. And I think I’m afraid of silence, that’s why I kind of keep it going. (IDI, May 13, 2013)

Ms. Gigi also made note of this behavior with her higher-level students on her Conference Reflection Form with Murphy (H). It was also a behavior she was working on changing: “I have a tendency to talk a lot but try vigilantly to let the student lead the conversation, after my initial question. I think it was pretty equally divided” (RF, March 28, 2013).

Watching the video-taped student-teacher interchanges allowed teachers to “see” how they were listening to their students. Mr. Curtis was critical of his listening behavior when viewing the video between himself and Darius (S):

And I, I do also notice that during parts of the exchange I am writing down a note on

something that he's already said. And I respond to a question by, when, as I'm looking down. Which is kind of terrible I should've looked back up at him and sort of relayed my question and then maybe gone back to my note. (IDI, May 27, 2013)

In one instance, Ms. Nalana changed her interpretation of how she was listening after she watched the video of her conference with Eoin (A). At first, Ms. Nalana described her listening as “active listening” and listening to understand him, “. . . I think, and I may be wrong, but I think the way I responded here I gave some feedback so it was like I was kind of actively listening. He says this, I'm repeating this, or I'm repeating what he's saying to understand it” (IDI, June 4, 2013). Upon viewing the video she retracted her statement and explained that instead rephrasing Eoin’s words was her way of confirming the accuracy of his answer:

I actually think it was the other way. I was saying it to um, let him know that his answer was ok. That I was saying it to like support what he was saying. Cause I like tapped on the book and I'm like talking to him was more of like reassuring him that the answer was you know good, and I was agreeing with it. (IDI, June 4, 2013).

At times when teachers shared their evaluations of their listening or personal preferences for listening to one group of readers over another, they set goals to improve their practice. Ms. Brown set a goal to improve her listening with struggling readers after she described the reasoning behind her lack of engagement when students do not provide coherent responses:

It makes me lose interest in what they’re saying and it makes me kind of confused in what they’re saying and need to ask the questions and most of my questions begin with “wait, wait, wait I don’t understand what you’re saying.” . . . So those are the things I want me to improve on. A lot of my listening with low level learners. (II, March 13, 2013)

During the In-Depth Interview, Ms. Brown further defined her listening with Maggie (S) as “naively listening” because she originally had more trust that Maggie (S) was sharing accurate information; however, Ms. Brown discovered Maggie (S) misinterpreted her novel. This frustrated Ms. Brown and affected how she listened to Maggie (S) thereafter. The following quote reflects this shift as Ms. Brown compared her listening with Maggie (S) to Jake (H):

And my listening to her [Maggie] instead of listening for deep connections and deep meanings like I do with Jake, happens on a more surface level. So my listening, and as you could see in this conference, [I] was distracted by her not knowing some of the information in the text. So my listening becomes a little strained, and I have to have an ear more for her factual information in the book than I do for her relating it back to her own life and her own connections. (IDI, May 8, 2013).

Not all the teachers’ evaluations of their listening during the interviews were critical. Ms. Nalana recognized that she made improvements with her listening when she discussed her third conference with Eoin (S). Ms. Nalana noted,

But even in this part too where he says um, you know, where he says that “it doesn't show Miss Baker here and I think that it would be good to just show her too.” I'm saying “Oh yeah, good. And it actually goes, what you just said goes with my next question.” So I know I'm listening better. Because I, I made that connection, like “yup, and actually that's going to go with my, the next question, I'm going to answer, ask you.” So I feel like I probably did a better job. (IDI, June 4, 2013).

### **Conclusion for Research Question 1 Findings**

Research Question 1 investigated middle school reading teachers’ perceptions of how they listened differently to their students at varied reading readiness levels. Systematic analysis

of the Initial and In-Depth Interviews and Conference Reflection Forms revealed that teachers' ways of listening or listening orientations, included *evaluative*, *interpretive*, and *student-oriented listening*. In general, teacher perceptions that were classified as evaluative listening included behaviors such as listening to assess the accuracy or inaccuracy of students' answers and/or listening for something positive in students' responses. An interpretive orientation included teacher reflections about how they listened to understand student thinking and/or students' books, and/or how they listened for opportunities to support student participation and learning. Finally, teacher perceptions indicating a student-oriented listening orientation included teacher listening that opened the opportunity for students to lead the conferences and talk more instead of the teachers.

Across all participating teachers, the perceptions that teachers revealed showed evidence of all three listening orientations. There were just a few differences, however, within teachers based on students' reading levels. Mr. Green's reflections on his listening did not show specific evidence of student-oriented listening with his average readers. Ms. Gigi also did not indicate this listening orientation with struggling readers; however, this may be due to that she only had one conference with a struggling reader for the study. Teachers also shared comparisons in how they listened to students in regards to teacher attention, enjoyment, and ease of listening. In addition, teachers shared how they criticized, questioned, or evaluated their own listening and created goals for themselves to make improvements.

### **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 stated: What types of listening orientations do reading teachers exhibit during individualized reading conferences with students at varied reading levels? The transcribed Reading Conferences (RC) served as the primary source of data for Research

Question 2 and were analyzed at the *exchange level*. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, an *exchange* was operationalized as one segment of the discourse between the teacher and one student that began with an initiating question, directive, and/or statement. In rare occurrences, an exchange began with a student question or comment. Exchanges also included any responses from the student or teacher and ended before the start of a new initiation (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), and they included at least one SEM-R bookmark question or other open-ended question that went beyond basic literal interpretation of the text. Exchanges in which teachers asked students to summarize their books were also included in the analysis if they included discourse between the teacher and student.

Analysis of the SEM-R Phase 2 teacher-student exchanges from the transcribed Reading Conferences revealed two major themes about how the participants listened to students at varied reading levels: (a) *Teachers exhibited different types of listening orientations during individualized reading conferences with students as described in Research Question 1*, and (b) *Teachers exhibited evidence of multiple listening orientations within a single discourse exchange*. The analysis of Research Question 1 indicated that the majority of teachers exhibited each of the three major types of listening (i.e., evaluative, interpretive, and student-oriented) that were also found from the analysis of Research Question 1 with at least one student by reading level and across each teacher's set of conferences. All teachers also exhibited at least one or more of the multiple listening orientations with at least one student. A minor theme also emerged demonstrating two outlier teacher listening behaviors called *teacher-oriented listening* and *undetermined listening*. Evidence demonstrating these outlier listening behaviors follows the discussion below of the two major themes.

### **Teachers Exhibited Different Types of Listening Orientations**

The findings related to the first theme will be presented in two major sections. First, the findings across all five teacher participants are presented, followed by findings within teachers. The latter includes excerpts of exchanges or complete exchanges from the teacher and student reading conferences to illustrate the differences and similarities in how teachers listened.

**Findings across teachers.** In general, the analysis of the reading conferences revealed that all teachers listened in different ways with students; none of the teachers maintained a single listening orientation throughout. The majority of teachers demonstrated evidence of the three major types of listening orientations presented in Research Question 1 including *evaluative*, *interpretive*, and to a lesser degree *student-oriented* listening (see Figure 4.1 for an overview of the three major listening orientations).

Tables 4.1 to 4.4 show the percentages of teacher-to-student exchanges that were coded as either *evaluative*, *interpretive*, or *student-oriented* listening. Included in these tables are the percentages of exchanges that were coded with more than one listening orientation: *evaluative and interpretive*, *evaluative and student-oriented*, *interpretive and student-oriented*, and *other* listening orientations. These will be described further in the second theme and supported by data from the video and audio data collected during the conferences. The *other* category included the two outliers of teacher listening previously mentioned, *teacher-oriented* and *undetermined listening*, which will be elaborated after the second theme. Because of differences in length of the exchanges and number of exchanges across teachers and students, percentages were used for the purpose of comparison.

<b>Evaluative Listening Characteristics</b>	<b>Interpretive Listening Characteristics</b>	<b>Student-Oriented Listening Characteristics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher appears to listen to assess the accuracy of student’s comprehension of text.</li> <li>• Teacher appears to listen to make a positive assessment of student’s response.</li> <li>• Teacher appears to listen for a preconceived answer to a question.</li> <li>• Teacher appears to listen to assess if a student can or cannot answer a question.</li> <li>• Teacher appears to direct the exchanges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher appears to listen and responds to students to clarify teachers’ understanding of what the book is about.</li> <li>• Teacher appears to listen and respond to clarify teacher’s understanding of students’ comprehension of the text.</li> <li>• Teacher appears to responds to support/scaffold student participation/learning.</li> <li>• Teacher appears to respond to guide or facilitate the direction of the exchange toward the teachers' predetermined learning objectives or preconceived answer to question.</li> <li>• Teacher appears to consider student responses more so than evaluative listening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher appears to listen and respond without a preconceived idea of an answer to a question.</li> <li>• Exchanges appear to resemble more of an authentic discussion than the other orientations.</li> <li>• Teacher appears open to student leading the direction of the exchange.</li> </ul>

*Figure 4.1.* Major teacher listening orientations as evidenced by teacher-student reading conferences.

Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 all contain similar findings. In Table 4.1 all teachers had the greatest percentages of exchanges with struggling readers coded as revealing an interpretive listening orientation. The least percentages were those coded as student-oriented listening. In Table 4.2 three of the five teachers had the greatest percentage of exchanges with average readers coded as interpretive listening. One exception was that Mr. Green had the greatest percentage of exchanges with his average student coded as evaluative listening. Ms. Brown had an equal percentage coded as evaluative and interpretive with her average student. Again,

student-oriented listening had the smallest percentages of exchanges. Table 4.3 again shows that most teachers listened with an interpretive listening orientation with high-ability readers. One exception was between Ms. Gigi and Fabian (H) who exhibited primarily an evaluative listening orientation with this student.

Table 4.4 illustrates that all teachers, except for Mr. Green, showed evidence of each listening orientation with at least one of their participating students. Mr. Green did not have any exchanges coded as student-oriented listening except for one that showed evidence of both evaluative and student-oriented with his average reader. Exchanges that included combinations of or shifts in listening orientations will be discussed further in the second theme.

Table 4.1

*Percentage of Exchanges by Listening Orientations for Struggling Readers*

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Evaluative</b>	<b>Interpretive</b>	<b>Student-Oriented</b>	<b>Evaluative &amp; Interpretive</b>	<b>Evaluative &amp; Student-Oriented</b>	<b>Interpretive &amp; Student-Oriented</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total Number of Exchanges</b>
Mr. Curtis	15% (2)	85% (11)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	13
Ms. Gigi	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mr. Green	30% (3)	40% (4)	0% (0)	30% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	10
Ms. Nalana	0% (0)	67% (6)	11% (1)	0% (0)	11% (1)	11% (1)	0% (0)	9
Ms. Brown	13% (2)	60% (9)	0% (0)	27% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	15

*Note.* The total number of exchanges by listening orientation is in parentheses.

Table 4.2

*Percentage of Exchanges by Listening Orientations for Average Readers*

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Evaluative</b>	<b>Interpretive</b>	<b>Student-Oriented</b>	<b>Evaluative &amp; Interpretive</b>	<b>Evaluative &amp; Student-Oriented</b>	<b>Interpretive &amp; Student-Oriented</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total Number of Exchanges</b>
Mr. Curtis	0% (0)	82% (14)	6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6% (1)	6% (1)	17
Ms. Gigi	30% (6)	40% (8)	5% (1)	10% (2)	0% (0)	10% (2)	5% (1)	20
Mr. Green	57% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	29% (2)	14% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7
Ms. Nalana	10% (1)	50% (5)	30% (3)	0% (0)	10% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	10
Ms. Brown	31% (5)	31% (5)	13% (2)	13% (2)	0% (0)	6% (1)	6% (1)	16

*Note.* The total number of exchanges by listening orientation is in parentheses.

Table 4.3

*Percentage of Exchanges by Listening Orientations for High-Ability Readers*

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Evaluative</b>	<b>Interpretive</b>	<b>Student-Oriented</b>	<b>Evaluative &amp; Interpretive</b>	<b>Evaluative &amp; Student-Oriented</b>	<b>Interpretive &amp; Student-Oriented</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total Number of Exchanges</b>
Mr. Curtis	0% (0)	69% (11)	6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (4)	0% (0)	16
Ms. Gigi*	18% (2)	64% (7)	0% (0)	9% (1)	0% (0)	9% (1)	0% (0)	11
Ms. Gigi**	56% (9)	19% (3)	0% (0)	6% (1)	0% (0)	6% (1)	13% (2)	16
Mr. Green	13% (1)	63% (5)	0% (0)	25% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	8
Ms. Nalana	14% (1)	57% (4)	0% (0)	14% (1)	0% (0)	14% (1)	0% (0)	7
Ms. Brown	22% (4)	50% (9)	11% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	17% (3)	0% (0)	18

*Note.* The total number of exchanges by listening orientation is in parentheses. \* = Murphy; \*\* = Fabian.

Table 4.4

*Percentage of Exchanges by Listening Orientations for All Readers*

Teacher	Level of Reader	Evaluative	Interpretive	Student-Oriented	Evaluative & Interpretive	Evaluative & Student-Oriented	Interpretive & Student-Oriented	Other	Total Number of Exchanges
Mr. Curtis	High	0% (0)	69% (11)	6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (4)	0% (0)	16
	Average	0% (0)	82% (14)	6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6% (1)	6% (1)	17
	Struggling	15% (2)	85% (11)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	13
Ms. Gigi	High*	18% (2)	64% (7)	0% (0)	9% (1)	0% (0)	9% (1)	0% (0)	11
	High**	56% (9)	19% (3)	0% (0)	6% (1)	0% (0)	6% (1)	13% (2)	16
	Average	30% (6)	40% (8)	5% (1)	10% (2)	0% (0)	10% (2)	5% (1)	20
	Struggling	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mr. Green	High	13% (1)	63% (5)	0% (0)	25% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	8
	Average	57% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	29% (2)	14% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7
	Struggling	30% (3)	40% (4)	0% (0)	30% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	10
Ms. Nalana	High	14% (1)	57% (4)	0% (0)	14% (1)	0% (0)	14% (1)	0% (0)	7
	Average	10% (1)	50% (5)	30% (3)	0% (0)	10% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	10
	Struggling	0% (0)	67% (6)	11% (1)	0% (0)	11% (1)	11% (1)	0% (0)	9
Ms. Brown	High	22% (4)	50% (9)	11% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	17% (3)	0% (0)	18
	Average	31% (5)	31% (5)	13% (2)	13% (2)	0% (0)	6% (1)	6% (1)	16
	Struggling	13% (2)	60% (9)	0% (0)	27% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	15

*Note.* The total number of exchanges by listening orientation is in parentheses. \* = Murphy; \*\* = Fabian.

While the majority of teachers exhibited all three major listening orientations that were described in Research Question 1, a pattern emerged from the analysis of the reading conferences. Across all teachers the majority of exchanges were coded as interpretive listening with most of the students *across reading levels*. As seen in Table 4.4, Mr. Curtis and Ms. Nalana had greater percentages of their reading exchanges coded as interpretive listening for their struggling, average, and higher-level readers than evaluative and student-oriented. Ms. Brown had an equivalent percentage of exchanges coded as evaluative as she did interpretive listening. In the case of Ms. Gigi and Mr. Green, the majority of exchanges with two out of three of their students were coded as showing evidence of an interpretive listening orientation.

Beyond the pattern of interpretive listening across all teachers for the majority of students, there were very few clear patterns in how teachers were listening to students by reading level. For instance, Mr. Curtis only had two exchanges coded as evaluative listening, both of which were with his struggling student. Mr. Green and Ms. Brown had the greatest percentage of exchanges coded as evaluative with their average readers. Finally, Ms. Gigi and Ms. Nalana had the greatest percentage of exchanges coded as evaluative with their higher-level readers. However, of the four teachers who did show evidence of only student-oriented listening in an exchange, three teachers had the greatest percentages of exchanges coded as student-oriented listening with their average students. Mr. Curtis had the same number of exchanges coded as student-oriented for his higher-level and average level readers.

**Findings within teachers.** Although there were few differences across teachers in how they listened to students at varied reading levels, findings within teachers showed some discernable differences in how each teacher listened to his or her struggling, average, and high-ability students. Table 4.4 shows the differences in the frequencies of exchanges within teachers

by each reading level that were coded primarily as evaluative, interpretive, or student-oriented listening. Each teacher's listening patterns are presented below, with further descriptions of the listening orientations himself/herself.

**Mr. Curtis.** Analysis of the reading conferences between Mr. Curtis and his three participating students, Darius (struggling, or S), Candy (average, or A), and Anna (high, or H), revealed that he primarily listened with an interpretive listening orientation with all students regardless of reading level. The greatest percentage of exchanges coded as interpretive listening was with Candy (A) (see Table 4.4). There were some slight differences in how Mr. Curtis listened with Darius (S) compared to his other two students. There was no evidence of Mr. Curtis having only an evaluative listening orientation with Candy (A) and Anna (H); however, 15% of his exchanges with Darius (S) were evaluative. On the other hand, 6% of the exchanges with Candy (A) and Anna (H) were coded as student-oriented listening, while 0% was coded as such with Darius (S). To further illustrate Mr. Curtis's listening behaviors, especially interpretive listening, exchanges from his reading conferences with his students are presented next.

The conferences between Mr. Curtis and Candy showed a pattern of interpretive listening. A defining characteristic of an interpretive listening orientation was that teachers listened to understand in two major ways: (1) Teachers listened and responded to students to better understand the plot, characters, or setting of the students' books, and (2) Teachers listened to gain an understanding of what their students were trying to say in their responses. This was evidenced by the type of follow-up questions teachers asked after students provided their comments.

In general, Mr. Curtis appeared to listen to gain a better sense of what Candy's books were about, as indicated by the content of the *clarifying follow-up questions* (see Appendix F) he

asked and his use of *rephrasing* throughout their conferences. Rephrasing is when the teacher restated the student's words in a different way. He seemed naturally curious about her story, but his use of follow-up questions seemed to lead the direction of the exchanges. Mr. Curtis's interpretive listening with Candy (A) is illustrated in the following excerpt from a longer exchange in which they discussed the characters in Candy's novel, *The Vampire Diaries*. Prior to this excerpt, Mr. Curtis asked a series of follow-up questions to gain an understanding of who all the characters were in her novel. The exchange continued until Mr. Curtis asked Candy to confirm his understanding of the book. His intent is clearly stated in lines 3 and 5:

- 1 T: Ok so the story is that Stefan and that's why she didn't die when her parents died?
- 2 S: Yah.
- 3 T: But therefore her aunt doesn't know anything that happened. Ok. Just want to make sure that we're clear here. [laugh]
- 4 S: [laugh]
- 5 T: Trying to understand this book that I've never read before.

(RC, April 23, 2013)

The following excerpt from the next conference with Candy (A) served to further confirm that he was listening to clarify his own understanding of her novel, *Vampire Diaries*, with an interpretive listening orientation:

Alright, now the last time we sat and we talked, we spent a lot of time sort of picking your brain to help clarify what was going on in the story so that way I could understand a little bit better how the characters were sort of working out. Let me make sure that I remember this correctly . . . . (RC, April 29, 2013)

Often Mr. Curtis listened interpretively to understand Candy's (A) book and began their exchanges with a clearly stated open-ended question or *uptake* (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003), meaning that he referred to her statements from a previous exchange or conference. At times the direction of the exchanges veered away from the initiating question. In

the previous exchange with Candy (A), Mr. Curtis did not appear to be listening to understand her thinking as much as he wanted to understand who the characters were in Candy's book (A).

Mr. Curtis also listened interpretively with his higher-level reader, Anna (H) to understand what her book was about. His conferences with Anna (H) tended to be conversational in nature. As with Candy (A), occasionally, he seemed to not return to the initiating question. He often responded to Anna (H) with curious and clarifying follow-up questions about the events in her book as in the following excerpt from a discussion around the novel, *Gerald's Game*.

- 1 T: Ok so if you were to then judge the character what are her strengths or her weaknesses? Or what do you think is going to help her either get out of this or keep her in this situation?
- 2 S: Um the voices in her head keep her like—well not kind of sane but kind of ok cause they keep talkin' to her like things she should have done, things she shouldn't have done, like she just argues with them so I guess that kind of passes the time. Or she just she has enough arm length to reach across the dresser so she'll play with the stuff that's up there like her make-up something like that.
- 3 T: Ok so she can reach other things to at least entertain herself.
- 4 S: Mhmm.
- 5 T: But basically she's kind of stuck in boredom.
- 6 S: Yes.
- 7 T: With no way to get out, no phone anything like that. When does this story take place? Does she have a cell phone that she can try to get to or just?
- 8 S: I think that this is um I don't think she can go to a cell phone. I don't think this is like modern now probably back then.

(RC, April 23, 2013)

At other times, Mr. Curtis listened more to clarify his understanding of Anna's (H) interpretation of her novel. This was another way teachers listened to *understand* as part of the defining characteristic of an interpretive listening orientation. In the following exchange Anna (H) and Mr. Curtis continued to discuss her book, *Gerald's Game*.

- 1 T: Alright so would you recommend this book to a friend then?
- 2 S: Nope.
- 3 T: No. You don't particularly like it?
- 4 S: Uh uh.
- 5 T: So on a scale of one to ten what would we give it?
- 6 S: Probably a six.

- 7 T: A six. Ok. So what is it then that you don't like? Is it just that it's too confusing? Or is it too disturbing?  
8 S: It's a little disturbing.  
9 T: Alright.

(RC, May 6, 2013)

In this short exchange, Mr. Curtis began with an open-ended question in line 1 and then followed up in line 3 with clarifying follow-up question to confirm his understanding of Anna's (H) opinion. Then he asked another follow-up in line 5 using the pronoun "we" which suggests that possibly the ownership of the thinking here is shared rather than just Anna's. Finally in line 7, it is noteworthy that Mr. Curtis asked follow-up questions to further inquire about her thinking, however, he provided example responses for her to select from. Mr. Curtis's responses indicated that he was leading the exchange and providing support to encourage student participation; therefore also indicating an interpretive listening orientation.

In some exchanges with his students, regardless of reading level, Mr. Curtis appeared to be listening to understand what the book was about *and* to understand his students' thinking. This was often the case with Darius, Mr. Curtis's struggling reader. The direction of their conferences seemed to be modified by Darius's responses or lack of elaboration. Mr. Curtis's voice was very present in their exchanges as he asked multiple follow-up questions to encourage Darius to answer the question with elaboration or explain his thinking. Mr. Curtis asked many clarification follow-up questions to which Darius (S) would typically respond "yeah." Mr. Curtis's interpretive listening orientation was exemplified in the following discussion with Darius (S) about the novel, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*:

- 1 T: So then let's ask this. How then does the personality of our main character contribute to his eventual success or his failure? Is it his personality that basically turns us to see him do such a bad job?  
2 S: Um, well yeah. Well, yeah.  
3 T: Why?  
4 S: Because he doesn't like he doesn't really like to do work and stuff.

- 5 T: Ok.  
6 S: Yeah.  
7 T: So he wants the job to keep himself busy but he doesn't actually like to do the work. (clarify student thinking or scaffold)  
8 S: Yeah, he doesn't really like to do the work.

(RC, April 29, 2013)

In line 3 of this exchange, Mr. Curtis asked Darius (S) "Why?" which indicated an openness to listen to understand his thinking. This is also an example of a follow-up question with an *explain* function (see Appendix F). Then in line 7, Mr. Curtis summarized Darius's (S) statements, which Darius confirmed in line 8. Mr. Curtis then continued the exchange by asking a series of follow-up questions to clarify what jobs the main character had to do versus the partner. To conclude the exchange, Mr. Curtis shared his interpretation of Darius's (S) thinking:

- 1 T: Ok Greg would only mow half the lawn. So because of his laziness I guess is what you're saying then the fact that he doesn't like to do work that results in sort of the failure of the company . . . .  
2 S: Yeah.  
3 T: . . . is basically what you're telling me. Ok.

(RC, April 29, 2013)

To a lesser degree, Mr. Curtis showed evidence of evaluative listening but only with Darius (S). In those cases, Mr. Curtis appeared to not accept Darius' answers as seen in line 5 and 7 of the following exchange around *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*:

- 1 T: So do you think then that the setting of the book then influences the characters' actions? Like does – Where he sort of determines how he acts.  
2 S: Um, sort of . . .  
3 T: Can you give me an example?  
4 S: . . . well, not really.  
5 T: Not really. So no matter where he is he sort of acts the same? So if he's at the country club he's going to act the same way if he was at the mall, or if he's in the bathtub.  
6 S: Yah.  
7 T: Ok. So his personal behavior is just the same all the time?  
8 S: Yah. I think so.  
9 T: Ok.

(RC, April 23, 2013)

Line 5 indicated that Mr. Curtis did not accept Darius's (S) answer and challenged him by saying "So not matter where he is he sort of acts the same?" and then asked the same question again in line 7. This is noteworthy as the student had answered in the affirmative in line 2. It is possible that Darius's (S) response in line 4 meant only that he couldn't provide an example rather than he did not feel the character changed his actions depending on the setting; however, Mr. Curtis's multiple follow-ups seemed to clarify this possibility.

Finally, Mr. Curtis had only two exchanges showing evidence of mainly a student-oriented listening orientation, one each with Candy (A) and Anna (H). In the following exchange, it appeared that Mr. Curtis was listening to open the space for Anna to share her thinking about the book rather than guiding her towards a certain response, scaffolding with multiple follow-up questions or asking for clarification of what the book was about. When teachers exhibited a student-oriented listening orientation, they listened without an apparent preconceived idea of what the answer should be to a question, and students either led the exchanges or did most of the talking. In this exchange excerpt, Anna (H) shared her opinion about the novel, *Gerald's Game*, with Mr. Curtis and did most of the talking while he listened and accepted her responses.

- 1 T: What is your overall opinion then of the book right now?
- 2 S: I'm just kind of waiting for her to get out because she's kind of going on her dresser and taking lotion oils trying to like grease up the handcuffs so she can slide out. For now, she's—before I came over here, I read this part where she's going to try harder to get out the cuffs without cutting herself or she might lead to death or she might bleed to death. That's what her voices are telling her not to go too deep. Her voices are actually being cautious telling her steps that she could do to get out of the handcuffs.
- 3 T: Ok. So if someone were to ask you about the book as of right now would you suggest to them to read the book or not to read the book or what would your opinion be?
- 4 S: It probably would be—you could be. I would tell them that the book is kind of ok cause it's really detailed in the book cause if she has a dream it will keep going

after chapter after chapter about that dream instead of getting to the main point whether she's not going to get out. So I would say it's a very detailed book.

5 T: Ok.

6 S: That's why it's so long.

(RC, April 29, 2013)

**Ms. Gigi.** As mentioned previously, Ms. Gigi completed the study with one average student, Tamara (A), and two high-ability students, Murphy (H) and Fabian (H). She only conducted one conference with a struggling student, Ricky (S). As the data were incomplete for Ricky (S), this conference was not included in the analysis. In regard to Ms. Gigi's listening, she exhibited either an interpretive or evaluative listening orientation with her students. Exchanges between Ms. Gigi and Tamara (A) were coded primarily as interpretive listening (40%) or evaluative (30%). Only one exchange with Tamara (A) was coded as student-oriented listening (5%). No exchanges between Ms. Gigi and the boys were coded as only student-oriented listening; however, the majority of exchanges with Murphy (H) were coded as interpretive (64%) while 59% or the majority of exchanges with Fabian (H) were coded as evaluative (see Table 4.4). Ms. Gigi's listening with individual students is elaborated below.

The majority of Ms. Gigi's exchanges with Tamara (A) were interpretive, as Ms. Gigi listened to understand Tamara's (A) thinking, to guide her towards a particular way of answering a question, or to understand what was happening in the book. Ms. Gigi demonstrated an interpretive listening orientation when she discussed a particularly emotional part of *Go Ask Alice* with Tamara (A).

1 T: What, what kind of shape is she in right there?

2 S: She's in bad shape.

3 T: Bad shape. Tell me what does she think she might do?

4 S: Kill herself.

5 T: Kill herself. And what does this mean to you? 'At this stage of my life nothingness is a lot better than somethingness.' [teacher read from the book]

6 S: Nothingness . . . [pause] Nothingness is like.

7 T: What does it mean to her?

- 8 S: That she'd rather be nothing than something.  
9 T: Alright but what, what is something? What's her something?  
10 S: Um, a drug addict.  
11 T: Ok um.  
12 S: Oh no, it might be cause she went to another party and had (inaudible) and.  
13 T: Said what?  
14 S: She had sex.  
15 T: Oh dear.  
16 S: And cause of the drug they gave her.  
17 T: Uh huh.  
18 S: And she thinks she doesn't want to be . . .  
19 T: [Teacher talks to other student]  
20 S: She thinks that since she did it for the first time that she's going to end up being pregnant and she's so worried. That's why she can't sleep.  
21 T: Ok. And her something is that worry. She'd rather have nothing in her mind. Be zonked out with drugs than to be thinking of the something that is her real life situation.

(RC, March 27, 2013)

In this exchange, Ms. Gigi provided *scaffolding* follow-up questions in lines 7 and 9 to support Tamara (A) in answering the initiating question. Also, it appeared that Ms. Gigi had a preconceived idea of how she wanted Tamara (A) to answer the question, since Ms. Gigi provided the answer at the end of the exchange in line 21, but not until after she had listened to Tamara (A) explain the events of her story in lines 10-18. This also may have informed Ms. Gigi's formulation of the answer. There were evaluative elements to this exchange, however, Ms. Gigi seemed more open to listening to Tamara (A) share her thoughts rather than only assessing the accuracy of her thinking.

Ms. Gigi demonstrated one instance of primarily student-oriented listening with Tamara (A) when discussing *Go Ask Alice*. While Ms. Gigi was thinking of the next initiating question to ask, Tamara (A) jumped in and started the discussion instead.

- 1 S: Yeah this was her first diary right here.  
2 T: Mhm.  
3 S: Since she finished all the pages now it's a second diary.  
4 T: Oh ok.  
5 S: She's onto to number two.

- 6 T: Ok. And it still just continues on. Um.  
 7 S: In the rest, some of the, most of these pages in this chapter have question marks cause that's when she ran away and she can't remember the dates.  
 8 T: Why can't she remember the dates?  
 9 S: Cause of how much she'd been smoking.  
 10 T: Wow.  
 11 S: But she did some really grown up things in this.

(RC, April 23, 2013)

Tamara (A) and Ms. Gigi continued to discuss her book in a more conversational style in which she led the direction of the discussion.

The majority of exchanges between Ms. Gigi and Murphy (H) also showed evidence of an interpretive listening orientation. In general, Ms. Gigi either listened to understand his thinking, the story elements of his book, or both. She also listened to gain an understanding of how his books were structured or if he comprehended the text vocabulary.

In the following excerpt, Ms. Gigi asked multiple follow-up questions to support Murphy (H) in elaborate a question about *39 Clues #4*. She also asked questions to clarify her understanding of his thinking and the story characters as in lines 10-14 in which he explained why she was inaccurate in her interpretation.

- 1 S: He's a pop star that was part of the family cause the family's like really big um.  
 2 T: And why is he bad?  
 3 S: He's bad because just like a couple pages back when I was reading he, he's been there following them and he, he tried to get them but he kept tricking them. He tried to get them to be their ally but he is just recently, they didn't want to be his ally. Just recently um.  
 4 T: Were they friends with him before?  
 5 S: No.  
 6 T: Uh, is this a new character?  
 7 S: Uh no he's been there since the first book.  
 8 T: Ok has he always been the antagonist?  
 9 S: Yes.  
 10 T: Or an antagonist. And he's trying to trick the kids, trying to get the kids on his side.  
 11 S: No, first he tried to, but then since they ne—uh he tries to do everything to try to uh um, try to get them off of the chase.  
 12 T: Oh tr, try to like, get them, in going in a different direction

- 13 S: Mhm  
14 T: . . . and uh mislead them.

(RC, April 3, 2013)

Ms. Gigi's listening with Fabian (H) was primarily evaluative. She had a tendency to direct the trajectory of the conferences and focus on listening for his ability to comprehend vocabulary. Ms. Gigi seemed curious about his book and asked multiple follow-up questions to encourage him to elaborate and clarify her own understanding of the book. In other instances she seemed willing to move in a different direction based on Fabian's (H) responses rather than guiding him back to the initiating questions. In the following exchange around the novel *Seal Team Six*, Ms. Gigi seemed to listen to assess his ability to identify an example of figurative language as opposed to interpreting its meaning. Her feedback was encouraging and positive.

- 1 T: Ok in this paragraph show me something that, that looks like figurative language. It's kind of interesting.
- 2 S: Um, we were meals on wheels.
- 3 T: See how you could find it right away?
- 4 S: Yeah.
- 5 T: So if you were beginning to go off track this kind of would bring you back.

(RC, March 27, 2013)

**Mr. Green.** Mr. Green's listening with students could be described as either interpretive or evaluative, as was the case with Ms. Gigi. Analysis of the reading conferences between Mr. Green and Israel (S), Kristen (A), and Jaime (H) revealed some slight differences. The majority of exchanges between Mr. Green and Israel (S) were coded as interpretive (40%); however 30% of their exchanges were coded as evaluative (see Table 4.4). In his conferences with Kristen (A), 57% of the exchanges were coded as only evaluative, representing the greatest percentage of exchanges coded as evaluative across all students in the study (see Table 4.4). The remainder of her exchanges was a combination of listening orientations, which will be discussed in the next section. Also, no exchanges with Kristen (A) were coded as only interpretive or only student-

oriented. In fact, none of Mr. Green's exchanges with any of his students were coded only as student-oriented. The majority of the exchanges with Jaime (H) were coded as interpretive (63%) and just one exchange was evaluative (13%).

To begin, Mr. Green's listening with Israel (S) was typically interpretive in nature. He seemed to listen to Israel (S) to clarify his own understanding of the basic story elements and to scaffold for Israel's (S) comprehension. Mr. Green exhibited a positive listening orientation throughout his conferences as he appeared to be listening for something in Israel's (S) responses to compliment. In this exchange, Mr. Green and Israel (S) discussed the novel, *The Last Shot*:

- 1 T: Alright so the, the question I want to ask that I mentioned to you for is what do you think the most important event is in the story so far?
- 2 S: When the, when the coach from Louisville I think told, told him that he was watching him.
- 3 T: Mhm. And did he tell him that like before the game or after the game?
- 4 S: Well he tells him like, during the game he tells the coaches to tell him that he was watching him.
- 5 T: Ok and what—did it explain a reaction like did he react to that or did he just start playing and choke? Was that like what happened? So he, he didn't say anything to, (talks to other students) Um.
- 6 S: He got excited that's why.
- 7 T: He got excited cause they're there for him. But ultimately that excitement turned to nerves and he, he blew it.
- 8 S: Yeah.

(RC, March 26, 2013)

In this excerpt, Mr. Green asked follow-up questions in lines 3 and 5 to encourage Israel to provide further elaboration about an important event in the story. In line 7, Mr. Green's follow-up served to clarify his own understanding of the story, which Israel confirmed in line 8.

In the next excerpt from an exchange, Mr. Green exhibited an evaluative listening orientation with Israel (S). They discussed the conflict in *The Contender*.

- 1 S: . . . Alfred, he went to go look for James. And then his friends, they came and they started making fun of him.
- 2 T: Mhm.
- 3 S: And he was calling them all these names.

- 4 T: Like what? Give me an example.  
5 S: Um, slave.  
6 T: Yup, yup.  
7 S: And then they told him that they were going to rob a store.  
8 T: Right. And how do they know to rob that store?  
9 S: Because the, what's his name . . .  
10 T: Alfred.  
11 S: The people, yeah Alfred told him that the people that owned the store was at church. I think.  
12 T: Exactly, exactly. So, he didn't mean to but he was talking about his job and how they left at a certain time. And once they heard that, they decided if they're at church, we're going to rob the store. So that little conflict with them making fun of him led to them trying to rob a store.

(RC, May 14, 2013)

In lines 9 and 11, Mr. Green provided evaluations. As the exchange continued Mr. Green continued to ask follow-up questions about the conflict and provided positive evaluations. At the end of the exchange, Mr. Green gave Israel (S) a positive evaluation of his comprehension overall and ended the conference:

Good, so you got both conflicts. The part where they were making fun of him and the fight scene. And you inferred that they caught James 'cause he was not at all seen after that robbery. Nice job, you're good. (Mr. Green & Israel, RC, May 14, 2013)

In general, across all students regardless of reading level, Mr. Green was often very positive in his evaluative remarks. This was not the case in all exchanges though. In the following excerpt with Kristen (A), Mr. Green gave a lengthy explanation about why he disagreed with the character trait she chose to describe a character from *A Boy Named Twister*.

- 1 S: So I think she's kind of selfish.  
2 T: Okay. I'm thinking of another word. When you say it, when you describe it like that it sounds like she has a low self-esteem. You know, that she views herself as like not good enough, but then she views other girls as like real pretty. Better than her, you know? To me that sounds like more like low self-esteem, you know? Selfish, when I hear selfish, I think of someone who just cares about themselves, like if there was a piece of cake, or whatever, okay and it was like big enough to split between two people, they would take it all for themselves and tell the person there's none left. You know what I'm saying? Just care about

themselves, you know? They don't care about the other person. (Speaks to other students). So I think that your understanding is correct, but the word is a little off. Like selfish I think that, she may be selfish. You may find that out later in the book that she is. But I think that based on just the part you're saying, it sounds like she's got a low self-esteem. That's more like how I'd describe her.

(RC, March 13, 2013)

Mr. Green's listening with Jaime (H) was mostly interpretive as 63% of their exchanges were coded in this way. Mr. Green tended to rephrase Jaime's (H) responses to clarify his understanding of her thinking. He also provided positive feedback. Mr. Green asked follow-up questions to guide her in elaborating and thinking deeper about her stories. These listening patterns are illustrated in the following discussion around the book, *Girl's Life Online*:

- 1 S: . . . she is thirteen and she worries about all of it too much. Like, she worries about her clothes, her wardrobe, and how she looks before she goes to school.
- 2 T: She really gets caught up in like the whole appearance thing, okay.
- 3 S: And she hears rumors about people that give her a different perspective of them instead of asking them what really happened.
- 4 T: Mhm.
- 5 S: And her mom is divorced from her dad. So she has a stepdad and one day they were driving to school and they were in the car. They don't speak a lot.
- 6 T: Mhm, the family doesn't speak . . .
- 7 S: No.
- 8 T: . . . to each other
- 9 S: Yeah basically.
- 10 T: Ok.

(RC, March 13, 2013)

As Jaime (H) summarized her story, Mr. Green rephrased her statements to either follow her thinking or to confirm his understanding of her thinking as in lines 5-10. He also asked a follow-up to further clarify his understanding of the events of the story in line 12.

**Ms. Nalana.** Ms. Nalana's reading conferences with Kayden (S), Eoin (A), and Lilly (H) revealed that her listening tended to be classified as interpretive in nature. The greatest percentage of exchanges coded as only interpretive were with Kayden (S) (67%). Half of the exchanges with Eoin (A) were coded in this way and 57% with Lilly. Only one exchange for

Eoin (A) (10%) and one for Lilly (H) (14%) were coded as evaluative. Also, 30% of exchanges were coded as student-oriented for Eoin (A) and 11% for Kayden (S). No exchanges were coded as only student-oriented for Lilly (H) and none were coded as only evaluative for Kayden (S).

Supporting evidence from the exchanges between Ms. Nalana and her students follow.

When conferencing with Eoin (A), Ms. Nalana exhibited mostly an interpretive listening orientation in that she listened to support his understanding of questions and to clarify her interpretation of his thinking. This was evident in their discussion of *The Wednesday Wars*:

- 1 T: So it says [reading from a SEM-R bookmark] describe how events in the story alter characters' perceptions of each other. So how do um things the in story, how do they perceive one another by events that take place in the story? So he, you were saying he didn't think she liked him.
- 2 E: Yeah. So.
- 3 T: So what led him to believe that?
- 4 E: Wait what led him to believe that she didn't like him?
- 5 T: Yeah.
- 6 E: Um. He let, she was like acting rude only towards him and to the other students it was kind of like special treatment.
- 7 T: Okay.
- 8 E: And um he basically was just like right now like trying to get himself up to the level of her liking him. And I guess she's trying to, she doesn't not, she doesn't like not liking him . . .
- 9 T: Mhm.
- 10 E: . . . if that makes sense.
- 11 T: She doesn't like not liking him. So she admits she doesn't like him?
- 12 E: No, not yet.
- 13 T: Oh. Okay.

(RC, April 23, 2013)

This exchange was noteworthy as it was one of the very few times in which a student asked for clarification of the teacher's question as in line 4 and for confirmation that the teacher understood what the student stated as in line 10.

Ms. Nalana used follow-up questions in different ways with Lilly (H) while discussing *Life as We Knew It*. While her use of follow-up questions was different, this next exchange exemplified an interpretive listening orientation with Lilly (H).

- 1 T: Alright um how does the book demonstrate that not all changes can be predicted or controlled?
- 2 L: The fact that Mom's trying to stop her from basically meeting him, it's gonna be impossible because they both go to school every day and they meet there.
- 3 T: Okay. So how about what it has to do with, not the tsunami, but when the meteor hits the sun, or the moon?
- 4 L: The astronauts, they think it's just gonna hit the moon a little bit and it's not gonna have that much force. But actually it has so much force that the moon gets so big that the world gets terrified to even look at the sky every day. And whenever it's day time, you can still see the moon there.
- 5 T: Oh okay. So basically, here is says, it couldn't be really predicted. Like, the book shows that it was saying how the astronomers were like no it's not gonna be that big of a deal and all chaos basically breaks out because of it.

(RC, April 23, 2013)

Ms. Nalana accepted the student's response with her "okay" in line 3, but then her follow-up question in that same line changed the direction of the exchange and guided the student towards what appeared to be the teacher's idea of what the answer should be to the question. In line 5, the teacher used evidence from the book to support her own answer.

The majority of exchanges coded as primarily student-oriented listening were with Eoin (A) (30%). In this next exchange, Ms. Nalana and Eoin (A) have a discussion about *The Wednesday Wars*:

- 1 T: Alright, so this is just a question about like the cover of the book. So it says "Is the cover of the book good—a good match for what you find inside? Why or why not?"
- 2 S: I think it's like 50/50.
- 3 T: Mhmm.
- 4 S: Because it does like display stuff from the school.
- 5 T: Mhmm.
- 6 S: But like the book is mainly about Miss Baker and him like, like, like not feuding but like being around each other and stuff.
- 7 T: Mhmm.
- 8 S: And like it doesn't show Miss Baker here and I think that it would be good to just show her too.
- 9 T: That goes with like the next question. Like how would you change it to suit better the book?
- 10 S: Um, if Miss Baker and him like show their faces in here I think yah it would look kind of better because like um then you'd be able to see them and like how they feel around each other like in the beginning and stuff.

11 T: Yah, cause like here you just say like ok kid is in class so you know it has to do with school, but then you have no idea that it has to do with a teacher and them might not be getting along.

(RC, May 8, 2013)

This exchange indicated student-oriented listening as Eoin (A) spoke more, and Ms. Nalana challenged him with to *go deeper* with his thinking in line 9 (see Appendix F). Throughout the exchange, Ms. Nalana mostly responded with “Mhm,” but at the end in line 11, she agreed with his thinking and provided her own reasoning. Furthermore, Ms. Nalana did not appear to guide Eoin (A) towards a preconceived idea for the answer to the question.

Only one exchange was coded as student-oriented with Kayden (S) (11%). It was a rarity that exchanges began with a student turn in the entirety of the data set. This exchange showed that Ms. Nalana was open to Kayden (S) leading an authentic discussion about her book, *Bones*.

- 1 S: . . . I was just explaining. ‘Cause I love reading this book. I go to my mom and just explain what happens and she. . .
- 2 T: What do you like most about it?
- 3 S: Well my favorite, out of all, my favorite story is the fiddler's um, I think. Wait, let me see. [flipping pages of the book] It's a lot of stories. [laugh]
- 4 T: I see. [laugh] How many are in there, fifteen?
- 5 S: Um I think so. But it's the fiddler story. And he like he's a fiddler but he doesn't know how to play the violin. So he said, I'll give anything to be the best fiddler at the town. And I don't know where the devil comes and says, I want your soul, would you give your soul up? So he says yes, and then he does these crazy things and ends up saying I don't want the deal anymore. And he says . . .
- 6 T: It's too late. [laugh]
- 7 S: Yup.
- 8 T: That sounds like it would be a good one. So that one is the one you like the most?
- 9 S: Yeah.

(RC, April 1, 2013)

Ms. Nalana and Kayden (S) appeared to be enjoying their conversation indicated by laughter in line 6. Also, Ms. Nalana seemed open to listening to Kayden (S); this is evident in the fact that Ms. Nalana was responsive to Kayden's (S) comments and allowed them to guide the trajectory of the conference.

**Ms. Brown.** The exchanges between Ms. Brown and her students, Maggie (S), Amelia (A), and Jake (H), also revealed some slight differences. With Maggie (S), the greatest percentage of their exchanges was coded as indicative of an interpretive listening orientation (60%), and also represented the greatest percentage across all three of her students (see Table 4.4). The same percentages of exchanges were coded as evaluative and interpretive between Ms. Brown and Amelia (A) at 31%. They also had the greatest percentages of exchanges coded as evaluative (31%) and student-oriented (13%) across all students for Ms. Brown. Analysis of the exchanges between Ms. Brown and Jake (H) showed the greatest percentage was coded as interpretive (50%), followed by 22% as evaluative, and 11% as student-oriented. Ms. Brown's listening will be discussed further with each student below.

In her exchanges with Maggie (S), Ms. Brown often guided the direction of the discourse by asking follow-up questions that focused her on connecting back to the initiating questions. These questions functioned to have Maggie (S) *go deeper, explain, tell me more, or clarify* Ms. Brown's understanding of the book or what Maggie was saying (see Appendix F). Ms. Brown tended to probe for a deeper understanding rather than asking probing questions to find out what the book is about, although there were instances in which she asked questions to clarify her confusion about the book due to the Maggie's (S) lack of comprehension. She also seemed to listen for opportunities to incorporate instruction into her exchanges.

The following discussion about *Alligator Bayou* was representative of a typical exchange in which Ms. Brown exhibited an interpretive listening orientation.

- 1 T: What was the interaction between Calegero and Patricia?
- 2 S: Um, for now they're just friends, but Calegero really likes her now.
- 3 T: Is he in love with her?
- 4 S: Yes.
- 5 T: How do you know?
- 6 S: He has stronger feelings— he said in the book.

- 7 T: So he states that in the book? Cause he's the first person narrator.  
8 S: Mmm  
9 T: What other feelings is he sharing with you the reader?  
10 S: Um, that he doesn't, well he misses, um when he used to live back in Sicily because he misses his little brother Rocco.  
11 T: So he's talking about his little brother Rocco. Are his parents still in Sicily?  
12 S: His mom had died and his dad had left them when they were like 5.  
(RC, April 2, 2013)

This exchange demonstrated how Ms. Brown would ask questions to confirm her interpretation of what Maggie stated, determine if Maggie could support her reasoning, and confirm her own understanding of the book. This particular exchange also demonstrated how Ms. Brown infused reading instruction as well.

Ms. Brown demonstrated all three listening orientations with Jake (H). Her listening in general seemed to be purposeful in that she appeared to be listening for opportunities to infuse instruction as well, especially related to making connections, identifying character traits, and using reading strategies terminology. At times she guided Jake (H) in answering an initiating question by using scaffold follow-up questions. She also seemed to listen to determine if he could provide an answer to her given question. In other instances, Ms. Brown indicated student-oriented listening when Jake (H) did most of the talking and leading of the discussion, while she appeared to encourage him to continue talking.

The next exchange illustrated Ms. Brown's interpretive listening orientation. They discussed the book *The Girl Who Owned the City*:

- 1 T: Now since you are done with this book, I'm gonna ask you if you liked it. If you would recommend it to your friends, and why or why not.  
2 S: Well, I would recommend it to anyone who likes intensity and they like, they like sitting on the edge of their seat, like being—I forget the word. They just like being surprised and everything.  
3 T: Ok.  
4 S: And it's an intense book.  
5 T: It was an intense book, and it was a page turner?  
6 S: Mhm.

- 7 T: What would you say? Like you were eager to continue reading and turning the page and all of that? Ok.  
8 S: Suspense.  
9 T: Mhm.

(RC, March 25, 2013)

In lines 5 and 7, Ms. Brown asked *clarify* follow-up questions to encourage Jake (H) to elaborate upon his thinking about the initiating question and to clarify her interpretation of his thinking. However, her efforts elicited very brief responses from Jake (H).

When Ms. Brown conferenced with her average reader, Amelia (A), Ms. Brown demonstrated an equal percentage of both interpretive and evaluative listening. In general, when listening interpretively, she seemed to listen for opportunities to infuse academic language and instruction into the conferences. At times she also provided scaffolding to guide Amelia (A) towards a certain way of responding to a question. Ms. Brown often had a clear objective in mind for the conferences, however, in some exchanges Amelia (A) had choice in determining which question she would answer. When Ms. Brown exhibited more of an evaluative listening orientation, she listened to assess whether Amelia (A) could actually answer her questions about *The First Part Last*, and she listened for preconceived types of answers. The following exchange illustrated Ms. Brown's evaluative listening with Amelia (A):

- 1 T: And then what are the reasons that you think he cannot take care of the baby?  
2 S: Well sometimes when his friends are around, he just like, [pause]  
3 T: I'm thinking about a word, immature. Do you think Bobby's immature?  
4 S: Sort of yeah.  
5 T: And do you think he's distracted by his friends?  
6 S: Yeah.  
7 T: Can you expand on those?  
8 S: He's (long pause)  
9 T: But you said his friends wanna hang out, and he wants to go. So it's kind of like he's side-tracked or distracted.  
10 S: Yeah. Cause his friends like really pull him a lot,  
11 T: Mhm  
12 S: But then sometimes he can take the baby, when they just go over a friend's house just to hang out.

- 13 T: Mhm  
14 S: But if they go like to a restaurant or something he can't bring the baby all the time.  
15 T: Mhm, He's a only a few years older than you, he's only about 5 years older than you. Would you be able to see in your life that everywhere you go you'd have to take an infant who needs so much care? No. So there's reasons why Bobby could make a really good dad and is trying and there's other reasons why he, he really can't. So the advice that you would give yes or no, you're on the spot. You know what it takes to raise a baby. You know how your mom loves you. You've seen how a parent you know guides their child and has to put their child first. Can he do it? Yes or no?  
16 S: I don't think so.  
17 T: No.  
18 S: No.

(RC, April 2, 2013)

Lines 3 and 5 demonstrated that this exchange was evaluative as Ms. Brown seemed to be listening for preconceived answers and clearly directed the discourse. In some lines, Ms. Brown provided Amelia (A) with answers. Then at the end of her turn in line 15, she directed her to give a yes or no answer.

In an exchange coded as student-oriented, Ms. Brown seemed to be curious to know about Jake's (H) opinion of his novel, *The Girl Who Owned the City*, without a predetermined answer in mind. After two probing questions in lines 3 and 5, Jake (H) opened up and did all the talking in the remainder of the exchange.

- 1 T: Do you like the book so far?  
2 S: Yeah  
3 T: Is it a page turner like your last book?  
4 S: Mhm.  
5 T: What makes it so interesting?  
6 S: Because a lot of the, a lot of the things you'd like, you just don't know what's going to happen next like, and then once you do know what's actually wrong,  
7 T: Mhm.  
8 S: You want to hurry up and find out the solution, like what's going to be the end of the book.  
9 T: Ok.  
10 S: Cause usually in most books there's always a good ending.  
11 T: Ok.

(RC, March 25, 2013)

## **Teachers Demonstrated Multiple Listening Orientations**

As seen in Table 4.4, there were some teacher-student exchanges that showed evidence of multiple listening orientations. With seven of the 15 students in the study, a smaller percentage of exchanges were coded as student-oriented listening only than as student-oriented along with another orientation. For example, Table 4.4 shows that 5% of the exchanges with Tamara (A) were coded as only student-oriented listening, whereas 10% of their exchanges were coded as both student-oriented and interpretive. Five of these seven students were high-ability readers, while one was average and one was a struggling reader. Six out of the 15 students had an equivalent percentage of exchanges coded as student-oriented only or a combination. This also included those who had 0% coded in this way, as was the case with Mr. Green's three students. There were only two instances in which a greater percentage of exchanges were coded as only student-oriented as opposed to a combination. These included Ms. Nalana and Ms. Brown with their average students.

With regard to evaluative listening in combination with either interpretive or student-oriented listening, there appeared to be greater percentages of exchanges coded as evaluative and interpretive together as opposed to evaluative and student-oriented. This was true regardless of reading level. Also, for seven of the 15 students, the majority of whom were either average or higher-level students, there was a smaller percentage of exchanges coded as evaluative in combination with another orientation rather than just evaluative. There were only two cases in which the percentage of exchanges between a teacher and student was greater in combination than solely evaluative. Both were with a struggling reader.

Finally, in all instances across teachers with each of their students, a greater percentage of exchanges was coded as interpretive versus interpretive in combination with either evaluative or

student-oriented listening. There was one exception with Mr. Green and his average student, in that 29% of the exchanges were coded as evaluative and interpretive together while 0% was coded as solely interpretive listening.

Furthermore, the different listening orientations presented themselves within exchanges in two different types of patterns. In some cases, teachers appeared to exhibit a blend of or combination of two different ways of listening, while in other cases, teachers seemed to shift their listening orientation from one to another. Evidence demonstrating these two different patterns of exhibiting multiple listening orientations is presented below.

**Combinations of listening orientations.** The exchanges that exhibited a blend of different listening orientations included a combination of *evaluative and interpretive*, *evaluative and student-oriented*, and *interpretive and student-oriented listening*.

The following exchange represents an example of a blend of evaluative and interpretive listening. Mr. Green and Israel (S) discussed character traits from the book *The Last Shot*:

- 1 T: How would you, besides talented, you know because obviously they've got to be talented to play, how else would you describe the three of them or Stephon specifically?
- 2 S: Motivated.
- 3 T: Motivated, okay. And why do you say that?
- 4 S: Cause they go to the courts every single day.
- 5 T: Okay.
- 6 S: And they practice until they just can't move anymore.
- 7 T: Okay. That's a definite example of motivation. Okay, anything else?
- 8 S: No.
- 9 T: Um, do you think, obviously it's early so they're not talking about other parts of life, but anything else, does it seem like they're smart in school, or smart in life? Are they like, do they make good choices, are they bad kids who make bad choices?
- 10 S: (inaudible)
- 11 T: Nothing like that yet. Alright. Considering it's early, you do have a pretty good handle on the story so far, you know saying they're talented and motivated. Good example, I mean, thirteen pages in, I'm not expecting much.

(RC, March 13, 2013)

In lines 7 and 11, Mr. Green provided positive evaluative comments about Israel's (S) responses while in line 3 Mr. Green asked a follow-up question to encourage Israel (S) to explain his thinking, which indicated an interpretive listening orientation. Further, in lines 7 and 9, Mr. Green asked for further elaboration of his thinking.

Some teachers demonstrated an *evaluative and student-oriented listening* orientation within the same exchange. In the following exchange between Ms. Nalana and Kayden (S), the student did most of the talking about her book, *The Graveyard Book*, while the teacher responded with positive evaluations and one probing follow-up question mid-exchange. As the teacher did not indicate a dominating presence in controlling the conference or guiding the student towards a different answer, the exchange was determined to be more student-oriented than interpretive. It was also coded as evaluative since the teacher provided multiple positive evaluations.

- 1 T: Um. Alright I'm going to ask you a question . . . identify a character you think needs a friend. How might a friendship enhance his or her life?
- 2 S: Um a person in this book that needs help is the woman that's taking care of the baby because she lives in a house all by herself and nobody like really cares about her.
- 3 T: Mhmm.
- 4 S: And all they expect is her to cook and clean. She needs somebody to talk to and let out all her feelings to. I think it would changer her life because she will actually wake up and be happy in the morning and not be depressed and might as well don't and just try to have a good life or something like that.
- 5 T: That's a good answer. Um let's see um so what qualities - so you say she needs someone to talk to— she needs to like let out let off some steam what kind of— we talked about personality traits this morning so how what kind of personality traits would that person need—the friend who is coming in to her life?
- 6 S: I think she needs to be energetic, careful like she needs to care for her and be always be like by her side and just be a good friend like a good person to talk to.
- 7 T: Good. That's awesome. You've done a nice job. Alright so that was it. And [flipping papers] alright you did an awesome job. I loved your answers. I think you did a really nice job with them. Alright.
- 8 S: Ok.

(RC, May 22, 2013)

In line 5, there was an indication that the teacher's listening informed her next question as she restated her student's words. This was an example of *uptake*. By listening to the student's response, the teacher was able to formulate a *go deeper follow-up question* that appeared to prompt a further response from the student in exploring the initiating question. However, the teacher continued to listen evaluatively rather than listening for further ways to probe the student thinking. It should be noted that Ms. Nalana had a pattern to her conferences with students in that typically at the end of the conference she gave an overall evaluation of the student's fluency, comprehension, or quality of responses.

Mr. Curtis exhibited a blend of both interpretive and student-oriented listening with his high-ability reader, Anna. The dyad was discussing her novel, *Gerald's Game*:

- 1 T: Now um, if you were going to describe this book to a friend in one event what one event would you use to them to try to convince them to read this book? Or to explain to them like how good this book could potentially be?
- 2 S: Um, the one event would be when the dog mysteriously appears in the house and starts eating chunks out of the, out of the man who's dead on the floor while the hus, while the wife watches.
- 3 T: Ok why? Why? Why that particular event?
- 4 S: I mean I, I guess that people tend to like, cause they would probably try to find out why is the wife watching this? Where'd the dog come from? Why is the guy dead on the floor? So probably interested in then reading the book to find out why that all happened.
- 5 T: Ok so you're thinking that if you just sort of told them just this one piece that basically there's a, a women handcuffed to a bed, her husband's dead, and there's a dog in the bedroom eating the husband. That would be like the only thing you would tell them? Do you think that would be enough to get them to be like oh god I got to read this? Cause it would just be like creepy to them, or confuse them, or baffle them?
- 6 S: That is the only thing I would say.
- 7 T: Ok.

(RC, May 6, 2013)

Evidence of an interpretive listening orientation was in line 3, where Mr. Curtis asked a follow-up explain question to further probe her thinking and then in line 5, Mr. Curtis shared his interpretation of Anna's (H) thinking by clearly stating "Ok, so you're thinking . . ." which in

response, Anna (H) confirmed his interpretation of her thinking. This exchange was also indicative of a student-oriented listening orientation in that the exchange flowed in a more authentic way in that the teacher seemed curious about her thinking rather than focused on directing or leading the conference. Also, Anna's (H) opinions seemed to direct the exchange.

**Shifting listening orientations.** To a small extent teachers exhibited multiple listening orientations that shifted from one to another. For example, the teacher may have begun the conference indicating an evaluative listening orientation and then mid-conference shifted towards an interpretive listening orientation rather than having a blend of the two throughout the exchange. In the first conference with Amelia (A) around her book, *Matched*, Ms. Brown's listening was classified as both interpretive and student-oriented. Here is an excerpt from the exchange:

- 1 T: Ok. So is love a topic that you like to read about? Have you read other books about love, or?
- 2 S: Sort of.
- 3 T: Ok. So that's something that you like. Umm, but you like the idea of arranged marriages kind of thing? Cause it is matched so they're being arranged to date each other, right?
- 4 S: Mhm.
- 5 T: And at 17 they're being arranged. Do they have to marry each other or is just matched to date?
- 6 S: They date and then when they're I think 21 they have to sign some papers and get married.
- 7 T: Ok. So it's just one partner that they have to have in that community. What happens if they're not compatible?
- 8 S: Then that's, in the book it's called an infraction, and then they're, they're gonna have to be single for the rest of their life. And they're gonna be called as an aberration.
- 9 T: And what's aberration mean?
- 10 S: It means like, it's that you haven't caused something but say like one of your parents did something wrong and they like, like if they had to go away that'll go on you, so you would have to take the blame, even though if it wasn't you.
- 11 T: Oh. Interesting.

(RC, March 18, 2013)

Throughout the exchange, Ms. Brown asked follow-up questions asking Amelia (A) to explain her thinking, such as in line 3. Then in lines 7, 9, 11, and 13, Ms. Brown asked *clarifying* questions about her book and her thinking. At the end, Ms. Brown shifted her listening to a student-oriented listening orientation in line 15, which is noteworthy because she learned a new term from Amelia (A). This showed an openness to share in the authority of the knowledge.

Mr. Green demonstrated a shift from student-oriented listening to an evaluative listening orientation. In this exchange with Kristen (A), he asked her to explain her thinking and then provided her with a positive evaluation and further reading instruction. Kristen (A) did the majority of the talking in this conference around her book, *A Boy Named Twister*.

- 1    A: Alright, so I mean, you know the question, right, I was going to ask you. You know, the most memorable part. Do you think that so far, what is the most memorable part?
- 2    S: I think that the first time he saw her, in the class when he, well he was, well this kid Marco was making a distraction in class, like there was a mosquito.
- 3    T: Mhm.
- 4    S: And with all the commotion he looked over and saw her and smiled.
- 5    T: Mhm.
- 6    S: And she smiled back at him. I think that's the most memorable part.
- 7    T: Why is that memorable that he smiled at her, she smiled back at him?
- 8    S: Because if you don't remember that part, then you'll never remember how they got to be together and how they started getting closer and stuff.
- 9    T: Good point. Right, that's the small thing that really shows why they care about each other, how they feel about each other. That's a good answer. Alright? That's it. That was very good. We'll stop there for today.

(RC, March 20, 2013)

### **Additional Teacher Listening Orientations**

In addition to evaluative, interpretive, student-oriented listening, and multiple listening orientations within one teacher-student exchange, three of the teachers, Mr. Curtis, Ms. Gigi, and Ms. Brown, exhibited other types of listening behaviors. These were classified as *teacher-oriented listening* and *undetermined listening orientation*.

**Teacher oriented listening.** Teacher-oriented listening included exchanges or large parts of exchanges between the teacher and student in which the teacher did all or most of the talking and the student did not speak or only spoke at a minimum. These exchanges also did not fit with the characteristics of the other listening orientations. An example can be seen in the following brief exchange between Ms. Gigi and Fabian (H) about his book *Seal Team Six*:

- 1 T: Tell me about hell week. Uh it was like, cause he's in Seals and they have to learn . . .
- 2 S: Mhm
- 3 T: . . . to fight in the sea, land and air. But this session was in sea so they were testing them how long they could hold their breaths. How far they could swim and how long they could stay floating. And was it just one week? [shh to the class]
- 4 S: Yes.
- 5 T: Um, Ok.

(RC, March 27, 2013)

Ms. Gigi did the majority of the talking and answered her own question that she directed to him in the first line “Tell me about hell week.” Fabian (H) only spoke one word in this conference in line 4 and then the exchange ended in line 5.

**Undetermined listening.** Furthermore, in a few teacher-student exchanges, it was difficult to determine what type of listening orientation the teacher exhibited or if the teacher was listening at all as there was not enough teacher response. These instances were classified as *undetermined listening* and were characterized by one or more of the following characteristics:

- Student does all the talking.
- Teacher responds only with “Mhm” or does not give a response before moving on to a new exchange.

Ms. Gigi and Fabian (H) had a brief exchange around the main characters of *Goosebumps: Haunted Mask*.

- 1 T: Umm tell me who the main characters are in this book.
- 2 S: Uhh, Sabrina. Carly Beth is the main character.

- 3 T: Mhmm.
- 4 S: Are her friend Sabrina and that's really it for now. Steve and um what's his name? Chuck. They're like just more side characters.
- 5 T: Ok.
- 6 S: Nothing really to do.

(RC, January 30, 2013)

Mr. Curtis and Candy (A) also had a brief exchange in which the listening orientation was not determined. This exchange around the characters in *Vampire Diaries Book #1* does begin with an open-ended question; however, it ends abruptly.

- 1 T: Alright, um and you told me that you liked Elaina's personality because she's willing to stick up for her friends. That she's so strong and sort of independent. Has that personality changed at all or has it carried throughout the story?
- 2 S: It carried on.
- 3 T: Ok.

(RC, May 6, 2013)

This is also an example of a lost opportunity. Had the teacher asked a probing follow-up question, the student may have provided a more in-depth response.

### **Conclusion for Research Question 2 Findings**

Analysis of the SEM-R Phase 2 reading conferences revealed that the five participating middle school reading teachers at times each exhibited evidence of an evaluative, interpretive, and/or student-oriented listening orientation. They also demonstrated different combinations thereof. To a lesser, yet noteworthy extent, three teachers indicated teacher-oriented listening and/or undetermined listening, both representing outliers in the data set. Across all five teachers and 15 students, the greatest percentage of exchanges were coded as primarily interpretive listening with only three exceptions by student. The least prevalent listening orientations, across all teachers, included student-oriented listening and a combination of evaluative and student-oriented listening. There were no major differences across teachers in how they listened to their

students differently based on the three general reading levels. Closer analysis within teachers indicated some slight differences in listening orientation by student reading level.

### **Synthesis of Research Questions 1 and 2**

The analysis of both Research Questions 1 and 2 demonstrated that teachers' perceptions about how they listened to students matched evidence gleaned from the reading conferences. The findings indicated that the majority of teachers at times listened with an evaluative, interpretive, or student-oriented listening orientation or some combination with students at all reading levels.

While each teacher listening orientation had individual defining characteristics, there were some characteristics related to teacher assessment, expectations for student participation, and how open teachers were in sharing the control of the direction of the conference that seemed to cut across the listening orientations. These components could be conceptualized on a continuum of increasing or decreasing degree from evaluative to interpretive to student-oriented listening. For instance, all teachers expressed an expectation for students to participate in the reading conferences; however, when teachers indicated student-oriented listening, they appeared to have greater expectations for students to come prepared to lead conferences in comparison to when teachers expressed an evaluative or interpretive listening orientation. Figure 4.2 illustrates this continuum. Again, these listening orientations had overlapping components and were not mutually exclusive, as most teachers expressed *some* degree of each orientation with students at all levels.

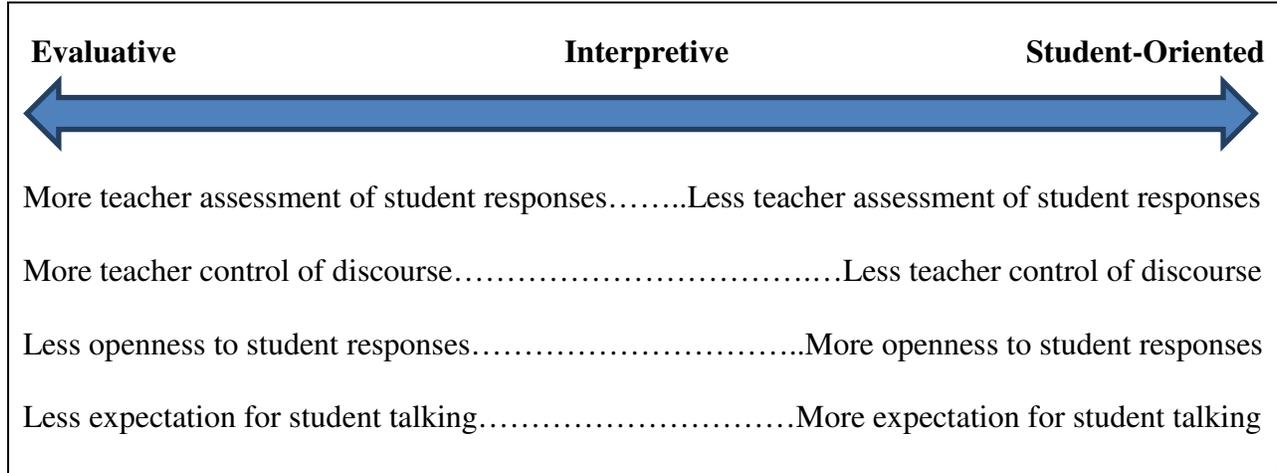


Figure 4.2. A continuum of teacher listening orientations..

Given that these listening orientations were not necessarily mutually exclusive, it was not surprising that all five teachers who completed the study showed evidence of all three of these listening orientations; however, there were two exceptions when the findings were analyzed by individual teachers. Ms. Gigi and Mr. Green did not express perceptions indicating student-oriented listening with struggling and average students, respectively.

Another characteristic that cut across all the teacher listening orientations was that teachers appeared to be sensitive to developing students' enjoyment, engagement, and self-confidence in reading. Teachers who indicated an evaluative listening orientation listened *for* evidence in which they could compliment their students on something positive in their responses. Within an interpretive listening orientation, teachers seemed supportive and positive as they listened for opportunities to support student learning, especially in making connections to their books to deepen their understanding of the books. Probing follow-up questions and teachers' interest in understanding their students' thinking appeared to promote more participation. Furthermore, teachers wanted to challenge their students to participate in enjoyable, authentic discussions by exhibiting a student-oriented listening orientation. Finally, within all these

listening orientations there seemed to be an emphasis on building a positive rapport with students via teacher listening. This was indicated by Mr. Green's discussion on how he listened to students in general:

Um, I just, I think, you know, just being open to, to their responses I think can build a rapport and build a comfort level and how it relates to reading, and I think that will just make for a better year of, of working with this program. You know, these kids aren't used to reading on their own and talking about it, so by my listening, I think that the more that I listen and I let them speak, the more comfortable they're being, the more successful they'll be in the long run. (Mr. Green, II, January 18, 2013)

In closing, the evidence from both research questions indicated that reading teachers listen in different ways to their students during instructional discourse. The interpretation of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate middle school reading teachers' perceptions of their listening behaviors while conferencing with students at different reading levels and to discern evidence from these conferences indicative of teacher listening. This qualitative investigation was meant to be the first step in exploring how teachers listen to their students within the context of a reading enrichment program designed to differentiate for the needs of varied readers. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of how they listen to question responses from students at varied reading levels during individualized reading conferences?
2. What types of listening orientations do reading teachers exhibit during individualized reading conferences with students at varied reading levels?

#### Overview of Major Findings

Based on patterns of teachers' perceptions about how they listened to students, the themes for Research Question 1 included: (a) *evaluative listening orientation*, (b) *interpretive listening orientation*, (c) *student-oriented listening orientation*, and (d) *professional teacher reflection on their listening*. All five participants' perceptions reflected all three types of listening orientations with at least two groups of readers. The findings corroborate other research showing that teachers listen in different ways (Davis, 1994, 1997; Empson & Jacobs, 2008; Harkness, & Wachenheim, 2007; Wallach & Even, 2005) and that teachers listen *for* something in a student response (Davis, 1997), particularly within evaluative and interpretive listening orientations.

Two major themes emerged during the investigation of Research Question 2: (a) *teachers exhibited the three aforementioned types of listening orientations during individualized reading*

*conferences*, and (b) *teachers exhibited evidence of multiple listening orientations within a discourse exchange with students*. In addition, the data analysis revealed two types of outlier listening behaviors, *teacher-oriented listening* and *undetermined listening*. All teachers showed evidence of all three listening orientations and/or combinations of these listening orientations with at least one or more of their students during the reading conferences. The greatest percentage of reading conference exchanges across teachers was coded as interpretive listening, while student-oriented listening represented the smallest percentage. Furthermore, there appeared to be no major patterns of differences in listening orientations by student reading level across the teachers, with the exception of student-oriented listening. Only one teacher exhibited student-oriented listening with a struggling reader. Further discussion of the findings from Research Questions 1 and 2 appears below.

### **Evaluative Listening**

In this study, teachers' perceptions and behaviors reflected an evaluative listening orientation similar to Davis's (1996, 1997) mathematics teachers' evaluative listening, in that teachers seemed to be listening to assess the accuracy of a student's response. In the current study, teachers assessed the accuracy of students' reading comprehension, whereas the teachers in Davis's study were assessing students' correctness in math. Teachers' perceptions expressed in the interviews and especially the Conference Reflection Forms also revealed that at times when teachers were listening *for* certain answers their listening was aligned to both their questions and to predetermined learning objectives for the conference. This was not surprising as the practitioner literature recommends that teacher questions should be aligned with the objectives of a teacher's lesson (Cazden, 2001; Costa 2001b; Gall & Rhody, 1987). Furthermore, providing feedback is an effective strategy for improving students' reading comprehension

(NRP, 2000). Therefore, it could be argued that if teachers' listening is used as an evaluation tool, then it too should be aligned with their learning objectives. Also, listening *for* a purpose has additional practical benefits; listening is challenging in the sense that a multitude of information may come at the listener all at once, so purposeful listening may help teachers focus their listening (Brown, 2006).

On the other hand, if teachers are only listening for certain answers to predetermined questions, they may lose out on listening to what else the student is thinking outside of the specific question asked. Some of the teachers in this study critiqued this pattern of behavior and set a goal to listen more openly. Davis (1997) and Jackson (2001) were critical of this behavior as well because teachers may disregard the rest of students' responses for the sake of listening just for the anticipated answer. This is especially concerning for high-ability readers who are advanced in their oral expression and may both benefit from and enjoy speaking at length about their novels at any level or for any level of reader who may think differently than their teachers.

There were three noteworthy exceptions in the overall patterns of evaluative teacher listening behaviors within the reading conferences. Mr. Curtis did not indicate evaluative listening with Candy (A) and Anna (H), and every exchange between Mr. Green and Kristen (A) was coded as evaluative listening or a combination with another listening orientation. Also, the greatest frequency of exchanges between Ms. Gigi and Fabian (H) was coded as evaluative listening. Were these patterns indicative of a specific variable such as the students' relationships with their teachers, teachers' expectations of students based on past performance, or the complexity of the students' books? Future studies might include a follow-up interview to gain teacher insight to these questions.

Across the data sets for both research questions, teachers' evaluative listening was also characterized by listening for positive responses to build student self-confidence and comfort in conferencing. Future studies might consider investigating the effect of this practice in establishing a positive rapport between the teacher and student, especially at the beginning of the school year when teachers and students are just beginning to get to know each other or when teachers initiate programs that place an emphasis on discourse. Other temporal considerations might include determining when teachers are exhibiting an evaluative listening orientation. Are teachers more evaluative at the end of exchanges as a means of giving closure to an exchange or providing the student with evaluative feedback? Or are teachers more evaluative during reading conferences at the start of a new book to determine if it is an appropriate match for a student?

### **Interpretive Listening**

Interpretive listening appeared to play a ubiquitous role in the discourse, with a few exceptions in the analysis of the reading exchanges. An interpretive listening orientation was indicative of teacher listening that was more responsive to the student in comparison with an evaluative listening orientation. Teachers listened for opportunities to scaffold participation, encourage students to make connections, provide instruction, and support and guide students toward a learning objective.

The teachers' perceptions and reading conferences both revealed that teachers listened to students to clarify their own understanding of students' thinking. Teachers' interpretive listening appeared to guide teachers in understanding the students' comprehension of their novels and informed teachers' next steps in instruction decision making. These characteristics are similar to how Davis (1997) defined mathematics teachers' interpretive listening, in that the teacher's goal was to listen to actively interpret or make sense of the student's response and meaning making.

Furthermore, interpretive listening of mathematics teachers included that the teacher checks with students to clarify that the teacher is interpreting the student correctly (Coles, 2002). Teachers in the current study also listened to clarify their understanding of students' novels. In a few cases, when teachers asked students to clarify or confirm the teacher's thinking or knowledge about the book, the student corrected the teacher's inaccurate listening. In these instances, teachers accepted students' corrections and then moved on with the exchange.

Follow-up questions appeared to have a major role when teachers listened with an interpretive listening orientation. Teachers initiated exchanges with their students using the SEM-R bookmarks and used follow-up questions similar to *probes* as described by Kucan (2007) and Wolf et al. (2005) to support student elaboration and participation as well as to guide students towards a learning objective via discourse. Similarly, Davis (1997) explained that mathematics teachers' interpretive listening, influenced by constructivist theory of learning (Gee, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978), helps the teacher determine how to guide students toward the "true or correct understanding of the concept at hand" (Davis, p. 365).

Teachers' interpretive listening appeared to be purposeful as a tool for determining how to guide students toward either a predetermined learning objective or preconceived answer to a question. This assessment aspect was similar to evaluative listening; however, rather than listening just for a preconceived answer, providing an evaluation, and moving onto a new question, teachers exhibiting an interpretive listening orientation listened to understand student thinking and hear more of what students had to say. In this sense, teacher listening could be viewed as a tool for assessing students' current readiness levels and as a means for informing teachers' follow-up questions. Teacher listening is often not discussed in the context of differentiating instruction practices; however, assessing students' current readiness levels to

inform how a teacher might best optimize student learning is part and parcel to differentiation (Tomlinson, 2001).

An interpretive listening orientation represented a movement away from evaluative listening due to the comparatively less authoritative nature of the teacher's role in the conference exchanges. With an evaluative listening orientation, teachers seemed more in control of assessing the accuracy of answers to questions and thereby directing the nature of the exchange, whereas when teachers used or talked about interpretive listening, their role was one of guide. Teachers listened for student explanations and clarifications of teachers' inferences or predictions about the book. This indicated that teachers were more open to sharing the authority of the knowledge about the book with the students than they were within an evaluative listening orientation. Nevertheless, it was clear that teachers who indicated an interpretive listening orientation were still in control of guiding the direction of the exchanges, particularly as compared to their behaviors within a student-oriented listening orientation. Similar to Davis's (1997) findings about interpretive listening, the authority ultimately still rests with the teacher since it is the teacher who decides which of the students' responses should be elaborated upon or not.

### **Student-Oriented Listening**

Student-oriented listening was different from both evaluative and interpretive listening in that teachers seemed the most open in this orientation to having students lead the direction of the exchanges. The teachers expressed listening out of curiosity just to "see" what the student had to say in response to a SEM-R bookmark question rather than listening for a particular answer in mind or for opportunities to correct student thinking or provide guided instruction. In these cases, teachers discussed listening to have a "meaningful discussion" or "more of a discussion." These discussions are reminiscent of what Lawrence and Snow (2011) described as *rich discussions* in

that participants share in the authority of knowledge and participation time. Along the same vein, Applebee et al. (2003) described *dialogic instruction* to include authentic questions or the questions teachers asked that did not have predetermined answers. In the current study, a student-oriented listening orientation seemed to be expressed through teachers' use of authentic questions and a genuine curiosity to know what students had to say about their books..

Teachers' perceptions of their listening that were characterized as student-oriented listening relate to what Davis (1996, 1997) described as hermeneutic listening in that teachers did not intentionally lead students towards a preconceived answer to the question. With student-oriented listening, the student has a greater role in directing the discussion and talks more. Student-oriented listening was different from hermeneutic, though, in that teachers exhibiting hermeneutic listening were open to learning from their students and sharing the authority in the knowledge that is central to the discourse (Davis, 1996, 1997; Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008). There was very little evidence from the reading exchanges that teachers learned new knowledge from their students or changed their thinking due to what they learned from students. Some evidence from the interviews indicated that teachers were open to thinking in different ways based upon student perspectives.

Student-oriented listening represented the smallest percentage of coded exchanges across all three of the listening orientations. All students, even struggling readers, should have opportunities to lead the direction of a reading conference exchange and have their opinions and thinking be central to the discourse exchanges. Furthermore, connecting back to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning, after concepts are modeled for students via discourse with support from the teacher, students internalize learning and develop independent of the teacher's guidance. When teachers exhibit a student-oriented listening orientation, it can be

argued that students could have the opportunity to demonstrate to teachers their mastery of reading strategies.

If struggling readers select books that are appropriately challenging, one might argue that students should be capable of formulating their own opinions about their book and engage in authentic discussions with their teachers. A counterpoint might be that struggling readers may need further instruction or scaffolding to participate in discourse exchanges in addition to learning how to comprehend text at a higher level, which may limit the degree to which the student leads the discussion. Future researchers might consider replicating this study to include a follow-up interview to determine, if applicable, why there are so fewer indications of student-oriented teacher listening compared to the other orientations.

There was a low percentage of exchanges coded as student-oriented listening for high-ability readers as well. High-ability readers can be described as having advanced levels of reading and oral skills, and high levels of enjoyment of reading (Reis, 2008). To challenge high-ability students, one would assume that all the participating students in this study would have had the opportunity to participate in discourse in which the teacher exhibited an openness to allowing the student to lead the discourse about their books. This was not the case, as three of the five teachers did not indicate a student-oriented listening with high-ability readers during the reading conferences. Two of these teachers had just one exchange coded as a combination of student-oriented and interpretive listening.

There could be multiple explanations for the low percentages of exchanges exhibiting student-oriented listening with high-ability readers. First, students may have selected books too challenging for them, which may have limited their confidence in leading the direction of the exchanges or providing more elaborated responses. Second, students and teachers may not have

had prior experience engaging in the type of classroom discourse that incorporates student-oriented listening as this was the first year of SEM-R implementation at the school. Students may have had some reservations in being more open and authoritative during the exchanges. Also, teachers may have also been unaccustomed to listening to students in a way that was more open to student leadership and voice. This could have be true for the average and struggling readers in the study as well. With further professional development and training in SEM-R, the teachers' listening orientations during the Phase 2 SEM-R conferences may demonstrate different findings. Future research designs should include a fidelity measure for implementing SEM-R conferences.

It is noteworthy that based on the interviews with the teachers, most of the participants indicated that they listened to their students regardless of reading level in ways that were characterized as student-oriented listening. Given that the number of reading conference exchanges coded as student-oriented listening was so low for all students, this raises the question about the match between teachers' perceptions and how teachers are actually listening to their students. This has important implications for teacher professional development. If teachers' perceptions are not matching their practice, it is imperative for them to have the opportunity to systematically document and reflect upon how they are listening during individualized reading conferences. Teacher educators and researchers might consider using techniques such as listening journals to facilitate reading teachers' reflection on their listening within the context of classroom discourse (Dunphy, 2010).

If the goal of education is to move all students forward, and provide appropriately challenging learning experiences, especially for high-ability readers (Reis, 2008), students must have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of reading strategies via leading an authentic discussion around text. This may require a shift in how teachers typically listen, as this study

underscores. One way for high-ability readers to take the reins may be for teachers to listen openly without a preconceived answer in mind. A benefit to student-oriented listening is that when teachers listen without a preconceived idea or answer to a question, they consider more of what the student has to say. This may offer opportunities to discover what students at any reading level are capable of and avoid under-hearing their students (Wallach & Even, 2005). Even the teachers in this study critiqued their own listening when they filtered out what students had to say for the sake of “hearing” a match to the teachers’ preconceived answers.

### **Multiple Listening Orientations and Complexity**

Classroom discourse in itself is a complex phenomenon (Imm & Stylianou, 2012; Piccolo et al., 2008). This dissertation corroborated others’ findings that listening is also a complex and challenging phenomenon (Cazden 2001; Costa, 2001b; Hoag & Wood, 1990). For example, the complexity of teacher listening was evident in the finding that a teacher’s listening orientation was not a fixed phenomenon in all instances, meaning the teachers’ listening was not restricted to just one type of orientation. Instead, in some cases teachers showed evidence of multiple listening orientations within one exchange. These instances were evident as either a shifting or a blend of listening orientations. In general, the frequencies of the multiple listening orientations were smaller in comparison to the percentages of exchanges coded as solitary listening orientations, with the exception of student-oriented listening in some cases, and did not represent the most frequent type of listening for any one teacher. Also, Davis (1996, 1997) found that elements of teacher listening orientations are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as was the case in the present study, further supporting the complexity of teacher listening.

No clear patterns emerged with differences in multiple listening orientations by student reading level across teachers. However, one noteworthy observation was that teachers had

greater percentages coded as a combination of student-oriented listening with another orientation than just by itself. Perhaps this occurred because the teachers were not accustomed to this type of listening and only exhibited this behavior in instances within exchanges. Perhaps, too, given the instructional context of a teacher-student reading conference, teachers may have had an objective in mind and therefore may not have considered handing the reins over to the students.

Alternatively, maybe student responses altered the teachers' listening orientation. Lee (1997) offered a glimpse at the complexity of a teacher's thinking after a student responds to a question:

The teacher carries out complex analytic work, estimating what students know and what they do not know, discovering particular identities of their students and their problems, finding and repairing what becomes problematic in the second turns, steering the discourse in particular directions and exploring alternative interactional trajectories in the course of action. (p. 1226)

If a student struggled with a question, answered incorrectly, did not give an answer, or clearly provided a higher-level response, this may have influenced how the teacher listened thereafter. Other researchers may consider investigating questions such as if teachers begin an exchange with the intention of having a student-oriented listening orientation, do they shift their listening due to a student's response?

The presence of combinations or shifts in teacher listening orientations could be explained by the fact that some teacher-student interchanges were longer than others and spanned multiple pages of transcribed text, whereas others were a fraction of a page in length. Further analysis of the data might include confirming if there was indeed a relationship between length of the exchanges and multiple listening orientations.

As the reading teachers exhibited multiple listening orientations within an exchange and at times shifted their listening orientations, one might argue that these are not listening orientations. However, just as a GPS may redirect your intended course due to unexpected variables, teachers may also find the need to change direction, shifting their listening orientations in response to student contributions that may not always be anticipated. That teacher listening is dynamic may also lead one to believe that teacher listening may also be malleable, which could have implications for professional development.

Additionally, listening is complex because the questions themselves may alter how the teachers are listening to their students. For example, Mr. Green pointed out that his listening “. . . depends on the type of question that they're focusing on . . .” (Mr. Green, II, January 18, 2013). The reading Conference Reflection Forms also showed a clear relationship between teacher listening, questions asked, and the school or state curricular objectives. The downfall to this tight alignment is that student contributions outside of the learning objective may be filtered out.

### **Listening as Differentiation**

When teachers differentiate instruction for students, they take into consideration students' interests, readiness levels, and learning preferences based on formal and informal assessments (Tomlinson, 2000, 2005). Teachers use the information they collected about their students to intentionally design respectful, differentiated tasks to support, engage, and challenge students. Providing appropriately differentiated reading curriculum and instruction is essential for promoting student growth, including among high-ability readers (Dooley, 1993; Little, 2010; Reis, 2008; Reis et al., 2004). Questioning and follow-up questioning strategies are a means of addressing the wide range of learner differences in classrooms (Caulfield-Sloan & Ruzicka, 2005; van Zee & Minstrell, 1997; Wolf et al., 2005).

This study revealed teachers' perceptions of their listening and how teacher listening is enacted in different ways within this context of asking questions to students at varied reading levels. It may be valuable to consider emphasizing this in our understanding of how teachers differentiate for students. A teacher's listening should be considered a tool for differentiation, as the teachers in this study responded to their students differently based upon what they listened to and listened for in students' responses. As other studies revealed, how teachers followed up was contingent on what the student stated (Chin 2006; Lee, 2007; Louca et al., 2012). This responsive nature of listening aligns to the responsiveness of differentiated instruction.

This also leads to the question of intentionality. If teachers are intentional in how they collect information to make decisions about differentiating instruction and curriculum, should teachers' listening to be considered a tool for differentiation also be intentional? In other words, should teachers be aware of how they listen and establish a predetermined listening orientation before the conference with students? In many instances, the teachers in this study appeared to be listening intentionally to their students. For example, the reading reflection forms showed an alignment between the learning objective, initiating and follow-up questions, and teachers' listening purposes. The teacher-student reading conferences and interviews indicated that teachers' listen *for* certain purposes, whether to assess student responses, to clarify teachers' understanding of the students' comprehension or what the content of the book, to invite participation or leadership in directing the conference.

How a teacher *should* be oriented to listen to high-ability readers may depend on multiple variables such as the teachers' learning objectives, the challenge level of the student's book, how participatory the student is, and the quality of the student's response. Further research is necessary to determine which type(s) of listening orientation(s) will optimize readers' learning,

especially high-ability readers who may have already mastered the reading curriculum. If high-ability readers demonstrate advanced fluency, vocabulary, and oral expression, and have shown mastery of the grade level reading strategies such as making connections or supporting their thinking with evidence from the text (which was central to many of the reading exchanges in this study), then it could be argued that teachers should be open to listening with a student-oriented listening orientation. Opening the space for students to lead the exchange and participate in an authentic discussion may better challenge these students; however, more research is needed to substantiate this claim.

### **Relationship Building**

Teacher listening plays an important role in establishing a safe, respectful, and thoughtful learning environment in the classroom (Caine & Caine, 2006; Cazden, 2001; Costa, 2001b). Across the listening orientations, it appeared that teacher listening had a role in building relationships between teachers and students. Within evaluative listening, some of the teachers shared they were listening for something positive in students' responses so they could build students' confidence. In interpretive listening, teachers indicated that by listening to understand what students were thinking, they communicated that they cared about what students had to say while also developing a common bond of enjoying the experience of reading books. Teachers also expressed listening to students to establish a comfort in being able to talk and share about their books, especially at the beginning of the school year. Student-oriented listening also may have the potential for helping teachers build rapport with students, in that teachers hand over the ownership to students to lead the reading conference. This expresses to students that their voice is important and the teacher trusts that the student is the holder of the knowledge of the book.

### **Professional Teacher Reflection**

Professional teacher reflection was a theme from Research Question 1 that provided insight into understanding possible factors that might have influenced teachers' listening orientations. In sum, teachers discussed the ease of listening to and their preferences for listening to one group of readers over another, which seemed to be related to their trust in students' knowledge about their book, the ease of listening to the students, and/or enjoyment of the participating in a reading conference with their students. Teachers also shared how often they listened to certain groups of readers and shared their views of the quality of their listening with one group over another. These factors may have mediated how the teachers were oriented to listen to their students. Researchers in the field of mathematics education have found that certain variables influencing one's listening included teachers' subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, prior knowledge about students, and expectations of students (Davies & Walker, 2007; Johnson & Larsen, 2012; Wallach & Even, 2005). Given the subjectivity of some of these factors, it may be beneficial for other teachers to reflect upon their discourse with students to increase awareness of any possible subjectivities related to their listening patterns.

The teachers in the current study expressed an appreciation for having the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon their listening by reviewing the audio and video recordings and using the Reflection Form. Reflecting on one's listening is a practice that has been applied in the training of pre-service mathematics teachers (Crespo & Nicol, 2003; Dunphy, 2010; Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008). Future research investigations might focus on training pre-service or in-service reading teachers to use this tool as well.

Teachers in this study were critical of their own listening during the conference exchanges. Given that all five teachers evaluated their own listening without explicit provocation from me, at least for these teachers there was a potential need for professional development.

Accurate, intentional listening and interpretation of another's contributions during the shared experience of discourse is a challenging feat, yet listening is a necessary component to discourse and thus an important skill for teachers to learn (Aracavi & Isoda, 2007; Harkness & Wachenheim, 2008; Hoag & Wood; 1990). During the interviews, the teachers discussed having goals for improving their listening and their own judgments of what qualified as the ideal way of listening. This was an interesting finding in that at no point during the study did I provide professional development or indications on best practice with listening behaviors. All the teachers expressed a goal in improving their listening skills, which in some cases included simply letting students talk more while the teacher talked less.

Ms. Gigi brought up a noteworthy critique of her role during reading conferences that may have important implications for professional development or future research. During the interviews she expressed a dislike of silence and felt a need to fill the space to *rescue* her students. She further explained her students were aware of this and just let her continue to talk. As listeners and educators, it would be worthwhile to reflect upon what role students should have during discourse. If our goal is to model reading strategies for the purpose of promoting student independence as readers, then having an overly teacher-dominated presence during discussions may preclude students from opportunities of practicing the skills of discussing and applying reading strategies. In fact, research has found that teachers tend to dominate the talking space in traditional discourse (Piccolo et al., 2008; Wells & Wells, 1984).

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this qualitative study may inform improvements for future research of a similar nature. The context of this study included a sample of five teachers across different grade levels at one middle school. Due to the small sample size, caution should be used in

interpreting the percentages presented in Research Question 2. These percentages were calculated to provide me with a general understanding of the degree to which teachers were listening to students at different reading levels in various ways. Also, the specific findings of this study cannot be generalized to all middle school reading teachers; however, I hope that these findings will initiate professional dialogue among educators and researchers about the importance of listening as a component of instructional discourse. Future researchers might also consider investigating perceptions of teacher listening orientations across other grade levels.

The teacher-student discourse structure was specifically selected to support the investigation of teachers' perspectives of their listening with students at particular reading readiness levels. Also, while student listening is an essential component to discourse interchanges and has been the subject of other studies (e.g., Friend & Caruthers, 2012; Owca, Pawlak & Pronobis, 2013), student perceptions of their listening were not included in this study; instead, the intention was to initiate the first steps in the exploration of teachers' insights on their listening. It would be worthwhile to include students' perceptions in future investigations to compare with their teachers' insights. Furthermore, it seemed that at times teachers in this study filtered what students were saying. It would be worthwhile to explore how students feel when teachers filter their listening, if students are aware of this behavior, and if so, what effect it has on their motivation to learn.

The findings cannot be generalized to other contexts such as whole group discussions or student-to-student interchanges. Investigations of alternative discourse formats to the teacher-student dynamic might reveal further insights into the complexities and challenges of teacher listening. It would also be interesting to determine if teachers' pattern of listening changed depending upon the given discourse format.

A possible threat to the credibility of the findings was that I served as both a researcher and a SEM-R reading coach during the course of the study. My dual role may have influenced how the teachers responded during the interviews.

Also, I was unable to ensure that there was an appropriate match between the challenge level of the students' books and their reading readiness levels. Also, identification of the student participants was determined by the teachers through the use of local and standardized test scores. I did not oversee this identification process. To ensure the credibility of findings in future studies, researchers should establish a clearer and more rigorous protocol for identifying students at varied reading levels.

An unanticipated limitation was that Ms. Gigi did not complete two of conferences with her struggling reader. This incomplete data set made it challenging to make any conclusions about the patterns of Ms. Gigi's listening with Ricky (S) as evidenced from the reading conferences. Therefore, caution should be used in interpreting the patterns of teacher listening related to struggling readers. What was very interesting, however, was that instead of conferencing with Ricky (S), Ms. Gigi identified an additional higher-level reader. Analysis of the reading exchanges showed differences in her listening orientations with these two high-level readers. It would be interesting to replicate the study with one teacher and multiple students at the same reading level to see if there are differences in the teacher's listening orientations.

Finally, all teachers in this study were new to the SEM-R program and expressed being unsure or nervous about implementation for the first time, even when reassured that this study was not evaluative. Audio and video recording made some of them nervous as well. One teacher mentioned that she had difficulty listening to her student when she was taking notes for the study during the reading conference. Perhaps the teacher could audio record the conference and take

notes later after listening to the recording. That way the teacher is more focused on listening to the student. Also, in many classrooms, there was a thin folding wall that separated rooms which distracted the teachers when conducting the reading conferences. The transcribed conferences do indicate a number of interruptions to the reading conferences as well from other students in the class and classroom visitors. The challenges of listening in a middle school setting might also illuminate our understanding of how teachers listen to their readers.

### **Conclusion**

Wells and Wells (1984) advised educators to “listen to and take seriously what children have to say.” It is my hope that the findings of this study may serve as the springboard for professional discourse among researchers and educators around *how teachers should* “listen to” children. The middle school reading teachers’ perceptions and other data sources revealed that they listened in different ways and for different reasons with their students. Many questions about the relationship between teachers’ listening and effective teacher-student instructional discourse around texts still remain for future research. While listening is a dynamic component to the ebb and flow of discourse, it is challenging to observe, we as educators have a responsibility to the students we serve to try and further our understanding of this classroom phenomenon to support excellence in teacher practice and achievement for all students.

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Appendix A  
SEM-R Bookmarks

Character	
<p>Think of two questions you have about the protagonist. Do you think the questions will be answered as you continue with the story? Why or why not?</p> <p>Describe the protagonist of the book in five or fewer words. Avoid using trite words (nice, good, bad, mean, etc.).</p> <p>Identify a decision or choice made by a character. Do you agree with this decision? Why or why not?</p> <p>Describe a character's action that surprised you. In what ways was the action consistent or inconsistent with what you know about the character?</p>	
<small>Project SEM-R University of Connecticut www.gifted.uconn.edu</small>	<small>C-1</small>

Character	
<p>Who is the antagonist in the story? What clues from the text help you to determine this?</p> <p>How would you feel if you were one of the characters in the book? Explain.</p> <p>Describe a gift that you would give to the protagonist, and explain what details from the book influenced your decision.</p> <p>What is a question that one of the characters seems to be struggling with in the story? How does this character seek answers or advice to resolve the question?</p>	
<small>Project SEM-R University of Connecticut www.gifted.uconn.edu</small>	<small>C-2</small>

Character	
<p>If you could choose to become one of the characters, whom would you choose? Why?</p> <p>How would the book be different if told from another character's point of view?</p> <p>Compare and contrast the protagonist in this story with a character in another book.</p> <p>Create a new problem for the protagonist that is similar to a problem you once faced. Do you think the protagonist would respond to the problem the same way you did? Why or why not?</p>	
<small>Project SEM-R University of Connecticut www.gifted.uconn.edu</small>	<small>C-3</small>

Retrieved from <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/SEMR/about/teacherdownloads.html>.

## Appendix B

### Summary of Teacher Participants' Phase 2 SEM-R Routines

Mr. Curtis implemented SEM-R in his classroom by giving students an open-ended question on Mondays to think about in preparation for their weekly conferences. Students also completed a weekly essay for this same question. To participate in the conferences, Mr. Curtis provided students with sticky notes to record ideas on what they would like to discuss during the conferences. Typically, during the conference with his students, Mr. Curtis would ask his students where they were in their books and what book they were reading. He would then summarize what they talked about during the previous conference and then ask a SEM-R bookmark question or other open-ended question. At the end of each conference, he would ask students about the challenge level of their books or if they had any questions.

Ms. Gigi posted her weekly SEM-R prompt question on the board to guide the students' reading and writing for the prompt of the week. She would also indicate the reading strategy that the students needed to focus on. Each week Ms. Gigi would conduct a mini-lesson related to the question or reading strategy. When Ms. Gigi met with students she would have them read their prompt of the week in their SEM-R reading logs or she would begin with a SEM-R bookmark question. If the students read their prompts first, Ms. Gigi would ask the students a SEM-R bookmark question. In some instances, Ms. Gigi would have her students read from their books. At the end of each conference, Ms. Gigi would give students a goal for their writing, ask students if they had question, and give them a compliment.

Mr. Green's SEM-R routine included asking students if they had any questions during the conference. He would answer their questions and then have students summarize or retell what is happening in the students' book. Next he would ask questions to determine how students were

comprehending their books. At times, Mr. Green had students read from their books. With all level students, Mr. Green focused on the students' SEM-R writing prompts in their SEM-R Reading Logs, but the higher level students were expected to come to the conference with questions for discussion. At the end of the conferences, Mr. Green would give them a compliment.

Ms. Nalana provides her whole class with a SEM-R question. If the question does not pertain to a student's book, she will change the question. If the question is too challenging for her struggling readers, she will modify the question. When Ms. Nalana meets with her students, she has them give her a summary of their book. Then she will check their SEM-R prompt question of the week that the students wrote in their Reading Logs. If the student struggled, they will discuss the prompt. Then the students will read some or all of the prompt out loud. Next, Ms. Nalana has her students read from their book and then they discuss the SEM-R bookmark questions. To conclude the conference, she gives students compliments and suggestions for reading strategies to work on.

Ms. Brown has a theme of the week that she integrates into the students' reading conferences and open ended writing prompt in their SEM-R Reading Logs. Each conference begins with a review of what had been shared during the previous reading conference and what they are learning for the theme of the week. Questions discussed during the conference may relate to what the student responded to in the log. Ms. Brown asked SEM-R bookmark questions and these are linked to the 7th grade curriculum or a genre study. Teacher took notes and referred to them while she conferenced with the students. When a student began a new novel the teacher asked the student to read aloud to check for fluency and asked basic questions about the book to

check for an appropriate match to their reading level. Ms. Brown ended her conferences by giving students a goal for the week and a question to answer in their reading log.

Appendix C  
Initial Interview Protocol

**Principal Investigator:** Catherine A. Little

**Student Researcher:** Cindy M. Massicotte

**Study Title:** An Investigation of Middle School Reading Teachers' Listening Orientations During Individualized SEM-R Conferences with Talented, Average, and Struggling Readers

**Protocol #:**

**Initial Teacher Semi-structured Interview Protocol:**

**Part 1: Interviewee Background Information**

In this section of the interview, I would like to ask a few questions about your teaching background.

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. What grade levels have you taught?
3. What is the highest educational degree you have earned?

**Part 2: Teacher Listening Information**

Next, I would like to ask you some questions about your SEM-R Phase 2 reading conferences.

1. What do you feel is your role during SEM-R Phase 2 reading conferences with (a) struggling readers, (b) average readers, and (c) high ability readers?
  - a. What are your students' roles at each reading level during these conferences?
  - b. Possible follow-up question: What is your role when a student at each reading level is answering a bookmark question?
2. In general, what does it mean to you to listen to students during reading conferences?  
Listening for . . . to see . . .
3. Please describe your listening when you have a reading conference with a student at each of the different reading levels.
  - a. Possible follow-up question: What do you listen for in a student's answer when they are responding?
  - b. Possible follow-up question: What do you think about when a student is responding to your questions?
4. How do you decide how to follow-up to a student's response?

Appendix D  
In-Depth Interview Protocol

**Principal Investigator:** Catherine A. Little

**Student Researcher:** Cindy M. Massicotte

**Study Title:** An Investigation of Middle School Reading Teachers' Listening Orientations During Individualized SEM-R Conferences with Talented, Average, and Struggling Readers

**Protocol #:**

**In-depth Teacher Semi-structured Interview Protocol:**

For this in-depth interview, I would like to talk to you about your listening during one exchange that you had with each of the three students who participated in this study. First, we will talk about the exchange from the conference and then we will take a look at the video clip from this one exchange.

**Part 1: Discussion of One Discourse Exchange from the SEM-R Phase 2 Reading Conferences**

Please take a moment to read the exchange you had during conference # \_\_ with your struggling reader.

1. Please describe your listening while you had this exchange with your struggling reader.
  - a. Possible follow-up: What were you listening for when the student gave his/her response on line # \_\_\_\_?
  - b. Possible follow-up: How do you decide how to follow-up to your student's response on line #\_\_\_\_? What were you listening for?

Questions will be repeated for discussion about the average and talented reader's exchange with the teacher.

**Part 2: Discussion of Video Clips from Discourse Exchanges from the SEM-R Phase 2 Reading Conferences**

Next we are going to look at the video clip from the same discourse exchanges as was discussed in Part 1 with each of your three students.

Please describe what you notice about how you were listening to your student during this video clip.

Appendix E

Teacher to Student SEM-R Individualized Conference Reflection Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Bookmark Question: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why did you choose this bookmark question? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did you listen for in your student's response to this question?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If any, what follow-up questions did you ask after your student responded?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why did you ask these follow-up questions?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who talked more in the conference, you or your student?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### Follow-Up Questions Codebook

Follow-up Function	Description
Scaffold	to provide the student support in responding to a question. The student may have given an inaccurate response, not understood the question, or not answered the question.
Clarify	to confirm the teacher's understanding of the student's response or the student's text; checking the teacher's interpretation of what the student says; to check to make sure the student understands the text or the teacher's question.
Tell me more	to elicit more details about story elements (characters, setting, plot) or information in the text (nonfiction); to elicit additional responses to the question; to check for literal comprehension; students' responses may be brief, not fully elaborated, or inaccurate. Can also be checking to see if the student understands the words he or she is using. (Tell me more about the story-explain a story element)
(Explain) Justify, Support, Tell me what you're thinking	to encourage student to explain an opinion, prediction, or inference; to encourage the student to justify or support predictions, inferences, or opinions; student's response may be brief, not fully elaborated, or incomplete.
Go Deeper	to promote thinking about different perspectives; to encourage student to analyze the text and formulate an interpretation or prediction about the characters, story arcs, or author's writing style; to encourage the student to put himself or herself in the position of a character (in some contexts).

Promote Self-Regulation	to encourage the student to monitor his or her understanding of the text or reflect on the appropriate match of the text to the student's reading level or reading preferences.
Checking before Instruction	to check a student's prior knowledge or activate prior knowledge before providing some instruction

*Note.* This codebook was applied from Little et al.'s (2014) study on SEM-R teachers' questioning and differentiation practices.

## Appendix G

### Hierarchy of Categories and Codes for Research Question 1

Here is an excerpt from an example illustrating the organizational hierarchy of the categories and codes for teachers' perceptions of their listening with struggling readers. Note that the initial subcategories were retained in this hierarchy so that I could ascertain the original location of the code in the codebook since some of the codes had similar names.

- Category: LISTENING TO CLARIFY
  - Subcategory: Follow-Up Responses
    - Code: clarify
  - Subcategory: Types of Listening
    - Code: listen to clarify
- Category: LISTENING FOR TEACHABLE MOMENTS
  - Subcategory: Follow-up Responses
    - Code: follow-up for instruction
    - Code: follow-up for reteaching
  - Subcategory: Teacher Role
    - Code: answer questions
    - Code: further student learning
    - Code: guide students
    - Code: instruction
    - Code: lead the conference
    - Code: support student participation
  - Subcategory: Types of Listening
    - Code: listening for concept or deeper understanding
    - Code: listening to support
    - Code: listening to challenge student
- Category: LISTENING FOR ELABORATION/PARTICIPATION
  - Subcategory: Follow-up Responses
    - Code: encourage elaboration
    - Code: teacher wait time
    - Code: provide positive emotional support
  - Subcategory: Student Role
    - Code: ask questions
  - Subcategory: Type of Listening
    - Code: listening for examples
    - Code: wait time