Engaging Reluctant Readers in a French Immersion Classroom

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Abstract:
Reading engagement is like a puzzle consisting of many pieces to emplace for successful engagement to occur. The author, a French Immersion teacher/researcher, found that many of her grade one reluctant readers—those students who could read but chose not to—approached reading with some pieces of the puzzle. They had strategies and knowledge but lacked motivation to engage in reading. This led to the question: How do reluctant readers in my classroom respond to practices designed to increase their motivation to read?

This study is qualitative-oriented action research. The author fulfilled the dual role of teacher and researcher as she introduced and taught seven classroom practices to see which ones helped the reluctant readers to increase their motivation to read. By applying multiple data collection methods the teacher/researcher set out to record what reluctant readers had to say about each of the classroom practices.

This study was designed to investigate how reluctant English readers in a French Immersion setting responded to classroom practices that were especially intended to increase their motivation and engagement in reading. Additionally, this research was simultaneously intended to inform the first author's own teaching practices. The first author (Amanda) was an early year's French Immersion teacher who worked with readers of various capabilities and attitudes towards reading. For ease of readability, hereafter this study is reported in the first-person voice of the first author of this article.

Literature Review

For the purpose of this study, two primary foci were identified for the review of the literature. Because this study involved exploration of classroom practices designed to increase the motivation of unmotivated readers, the twin foci were motivation and motivational classroom practices.

Motivation

Never underestimate the power of motivation. When a student is motivated to do something, whether it is an assignment, playing a sport, or reading, it is far more likely to get done and done well. Students who are motivated to read, read more often inside and outside of school (Hiebert 2009) and outperform unmotivated readers in school tests (Schwabe, McElvany, & Trendtel, 2015).

It is important when discussing motivation to note the two different types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is one indicator of a students' desire to read. There is a high correlation between intrinsic motivation and the frequency and breadth of students' reading (Hiebert, 2009). Intrinsically motivated readers will often read at school, at home, for work, or for fun. It is important to foster this motivation in students. This can be done by supporting self-selection of books, access to books, and positive reading environments (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997). To help intrinsically motivate young readers, teachers should allow them lots of time, opportunity, and choice in their reading (Fink, 2006).

Extrinsic motivation often involves prompting and rewards for completion of tasks. Ormrod (1998) says, "Extrinsically motivated students may have to be enticed, cajoled, or prodded [and] are often interested in performing easy tasks and meeting minimal standards" (p. 476). There might be little pleasure found here for reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997) because reading is not in and of itself seen as rewarding. Rather, other rewards—other values—are being imposed. As Gambrell and Marinak (2009) said, if you want children to value pizza give them pizza as rewards for reading.

Optimally, motivating students to read would not be about offering rewards and stickers. Intrinsically motivating students is what is desirable, showing students why reading is important and enjoyable, showing them different means of reading that are both quiet and socially charged, as well as by providing them with a multitude of opportunities to read. Cunningham and Allington (2007) said that, in their experience, "major motivation for reading by students came from having time for independent reading of books of their own choosing and teachers reading aloud to them" (p. 13). By being aware of our students and motivational techniques we can appropriately employ those techniques most likely to work with each student (Hebert, 2008). In the following section describing study participants, mention is made of why the participants in this study were identified as lacking in motivation.

Classroom Practices

As Powell-Brown (2006) said, it is important for educators to help reluctant readers "develop a love for recreational reading" (p. 88). To do this, educators should employ classroom practices that are engaging as well as educational. A review of the professional and research literature was conducted. As a result of that review, seven engaging and educational practices were identified as capable of being efficiently implementable in my classroom. The study participants were then asked about these seven practices.

Many of the classroom practices in this study had a social component to them and therefore necessarily involved oral language as well as written language. The oral language/socialization is a key component. Reading does not have to be an isolating, quiet event; it can be noisy and shared. This opportunity to socialize can make reading more personally meaningful to a reluctant reader. Classroom practices that engage students socially can be a natural transition from active enjoyable playground experiences to active enjoyable reading experiences. As Hiebert (2009) writes, "just as they crave social interaction on the playground,

when in the classroom, discussion and collaboration are natural parts of a student's learning and development, and students will readily embrace collaboration with peers as a reason to read" (p. 66).

Throughout the use of all strategies, it is important to note the significance that the teacher has in showing and modelling to the students how to engage in the various practices, since in the classroom, and in some students' lives, the teacher is the primary reading role model. Research has shown that when teachers increase their modelling and demonstration of reading strategies and practices, in turn, students' reading achievement can increase (Allington, 2001). The following seven practices were the classroom practices chosen for this study. As well as providing opportunities for social interactions, increasing knowledge, and strategy development, the research literature suggested these practices were motivating.

Drama. For many students, the use of drama in the reading classroom is a different way of reading and interacting with books and can lead to further exploration of texts (Charters & Gately, 1986). Since drama is performance-oriented, it is an approach that engages students and teacher in conversations about what has been read and how it can best be presented through a different medium (Honig, 1996). Drama provides many opportunities for social interactions between peers and texts, allowing students to extend their knowledge of, and relationship with, the story. Drama can be used in many different ways to engage students in their reading, including acting out a favourite part of the story, conducting interviews with main characters, and improvisation (Cullingford, 2001).

Reader's Theatre. Reader's Theatre involves students working in small groups to read a story out loud, each student taking on the role of one of the characters in the story. How students choose to represent the voice of the character is left open to their interpretation of the story and the character. Reader's Theatre is a way for students to practice their oral reading while working on reading with expression, intonation, and appropriate speed (Fink, 2006). It is a strategy that allows reluctant readers to actively participate in reading and to relate to characters from common books/stories of interest. This type of engagement can help with comprehension, making the book more exciting to the reader (Powell-Brown, 2006) as well as prompting students to read more books from the author or to read books in a similar genre. Reader's Theatre allows for more than just the retelling of a story, it opens the door for students to work together, problem solve, and generate meaningful conversations and questions that can facilitate their learning or promote their interests.

Author's Theatre. In her research, Haas Dyson (1997) used a similar strategy to Reader's Theatre entitled 'Author's Theatre', which allows students to take their own stories and have their peers act them out. Students create, write and read their own stories, as well as those of their peers to engage in Author's Theatre. Author's Theatre provides students with the chance to make social connections to one another, as well as to bring their play lives and interests into the classroom in a meaningful and valued way. Sharing their knowledge and interests in this way can motivate and engage students, by providing them with a sense of community and belonging in the classroom (Hiebert, 2009). The nature of Author's Theatre allows for students to share a part of themselves.

Read Aloud. Read Aloud is one of the most influential factors motivating students to read (Cunningham & Allington, 2007). Read Aloud is story time. It is when the teacher selects a story to read to the class. Read Aloud allows for reluctant readers to engage in stories without the burden of decoding. Many reluctant readers may say that they do not like to read; however, very few children decline the opportunity to listen to a good story (Beers, 2003). Teachers who read

aloud to their students have the opportunity to teach them how to love language, stories, and reading (Cullingford, 2001; Powell-Brown, 2006; Robinson, McKenna, & Wedman, 2000). Reading aloud should involve more than just pulling a book off a shelf and reading through the pages. It needs to be done with purpose—a favourite story, a story with meaning, a book that ties in with something that is being taught—and it should be read with expression and enthusiasm. Most often, stories that are read aloud are the ones that students gravitate towards later, when they get to choose their own reading material. Those books are the ones that many students want to read during self-selected reading time or to borrow for home reading (Beers, 2003; Powell-Brown, 2006).

Literacy Circles. Literacy Circles are similar to book clubs and their structure is designed for students to share books that they have read and share thoughts about what they read (Powell-Brown, 2006). Literacy Circles, where students work together in small groups, allow for reluctant readers to engage in reading a text of their choosing. Students are able to share and discuss books that interest them with their peers, which can enhance their experience with the book and positively increase their attitudes towards reading (Powell-Brown, 2006). Literacy Circles allow for students to talk with one another, share their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs.

Inquiry. Inquiry as a strategy to engage reluctant readers can be an interesting process for both students and teachers. Inquiry revolves around the students' interests and is typically geared towards areas of non-fiction, which in turn is designed to lead to student-directed learning projects within the classroom. When teachers allow students to generate topics of interest to be explored in the classroom then they are allowing students' a choice and a voice in what they are learning and how they will learn it. This provides students the opportunity to select their own texts to find information as well as their own means to finding it (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Hiebert, 2009). Inquiry is assisted by the teacher, but enacted by the students. Success with inquiry could be due to the fact that teachers use what students are interested in and what their desires are to motivate them to read and write (Cunningham & Allington, 2007).

Self-Selection. Throughout the day, students should be encouraged to make self-selected reading choices. Whilst there are elements of self-selection in all of the above practices, in this case the self-selection of books is done purely for enjoyment. That is to say, unlike Drama, Reader's Theatre, Author's Theatre, Literacy Circles, Read Aloud and Inquiry, there is no activity required beyond reading for pleasure. The amount of time set aside for self-selected reading depends on the age of the children but it is important that time is set aside for it every day (Depree & Iverson, 1994). The reason self-selected reading time works so well is that all students have the opportunity to read a text of interest to them (Allington, 2001). The self-selection of books allows students the chance to read alone, with a friend, or with a teacher. Having the opportunity to choose has the potential to motivate students to read (Bryan, 2009).

Purpose of Conducting the Study in a French Immersion Setting

Gambrell (1996) wrote that reading engagement consists of four main components—strategies, knowledge, motivation, and social interactions. These components act as pieces of a puzzle. When all pieces are connected, a student is able to be engaged in reading. However, when pieces are missing, students may struggle to engage. I have found over the years that many of my students who are reluctant readers come with only some pieces of this puzzle—usually they have the knowledge and strategies to read, and interact socially about reading, but sometimes are lacking the motivation necessary to be engaged in reading. They can read but often choose not to. Students who remain unmotivated and reluctant to read early can end up with a life-time distaste for reading (Worthy, 1996). Motivation is a key to engaging students

alike, including reluctant readers (Bryan, 2009; Hebert, 2008). For that reason, it becomes important to recognize the information that they bring with them as valid, and to use their knowledge to find ways to motivate their reading. It is also necessary for reluctant readers to be provided with multiple opportunities to interact socially with their teachers and their peers. After all, despite traditional notions that quiet classrooms are productive ones, "silence in the room is not an indicator of student engagement" (Hiebert, 2009, p. 68) or productivity.

Having studied the professional and research literature, I found many suggestions of how to motivate reluctant readers and ways to implement opportunities for them to socially interact with reading. However, the literature was generally presented from a monolingual perspective, which left me wondering how these suggestions would work in a bilingual classroom. Would these suggestions be as successful in a classroom setting that had less time set aside daily for them? Because of French Language Arts, French Immersion classrooms generally have less teaching time allotted for English Language Arts (ELA)—approximately one hour daily is all the time teachers have to teach English. Yet, regardless of whether a student is in an English class or a French Immersion class there are still the same expectations in terms of reading levels and reading development. These expectations, with limited time to meet them, can be stressful and daunting for classroom teachers. Since teaching time is limited in ELA, it is imperative to find the most effective and efficient classroom practices to engage all readers, especially those who are reluctant. Getting reluctant readers to read in their first, let alone second, language can be difficult. Providing students with classroom practices that motivate them and that are socially interactive in English could increase their engagement of reading in all subject areas. When students read more in English they improve their English first language. This allows them to use that increased English knowledge and transfer it to their French second language. Given the limited time, finding those practices that are most successful in engaging and motivating reluctant readers will help teachers create an ELA program that effectively and efficiently helps students meet academic expectations.

Research Question

It is important that students not only learn how to read but also enjoy reading. The participants in this study were capable but reluctant readers. While I recognize that descriptors such as capable and reluctant are value-laden labels, such terms are necessary here for clarity. That is to say, these study participants had the strategies and knowledge to read, as well as participate in purposeful social interactions, but were lacking the motivation to become engaged readers. They did not find reading enjoyable and they rarely participated in reading on their own. With this in mind, the research question that I sought to answer was: How do reluctant English readers in a French Immersion setting respond to classroom practices designed to increase their motivation to read?

Methodology

Since I conducted my research with my own students, I used qualitative-oriented action research. Action research, which is cyclical and ongoing, allowed for me to be both teacher and researcher and to work within a 'real-world' situation, which was my own classroom. By applying this method of research, I was able to create a research environment that encouraged co-learning between myself and students, and the opportunity to learn and apply my findings to my own teaching as it occurred.

Participants were asked about their views on a series of different classroom practices. These practices were designed to enhance their engagement through motivation. Additionally,

participants were observed to see what evidence their behaviours suggested about their levels of motivation pertaining to the various practices.

School Setting

The school, which for the purpose of confidentiality will be referred to as John J. School, was in an urban school district in western Canada. John J. School was a bilingual dual track Nursery to Grade Six school with 365 students. The cultural make-up of the school was diverse, with Caucasian, Indigenous, Spanish, African-American, and Asian students. There was one Educational Assistant assigned to work with a small group of English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners. John J. School had higher enrollments in their French Immersion program, with the highest number of students being in Kindergarten and Grade One. In the community, John J. School was the only school to offer French Immersion, and therefore received many students from out of catchment areas.

The socio-economic makeup of the community was low income and working class. Many of the families in the community were young parents with more than one child. I worked in a grade one French Immersion classroom and had a total of 20 students. For all but one, whose first language was Mandarin, the first language for these students was English. My classroom consisted of 14 boys and six girls, and at the time of this study most students were 6 years old, with a few having just turned 7.

My students were taught primarily in French, with only 60 minutes a day being allotted to ELA. My day was structured so that ELA was taught in the afternoon, typically after lunch unless students were scheduled for Physical Education. Nineteen of my students [those who first language was English] attended French Kindergarten where all of their instruction was in French. Therefore, this was their first time participating in a structured ELA program.

Classroom Setting

McNiff and Whitehead (2008) discussed research occurring in our living practices, defining this as research collected on site, and in my case, the classroom. By conducting research in my classroom, it allowed for me, as the researcher, to reflect on the action (participants engaging in classroom practices designed to increase their motivation to read) as it was occurring and to take a step back to reflect on it after. Schön (1983) refers to this as reflective practice, which is both reflection in-action and reflection on-action (McNiff & Whitehead, 2008, p. 144).

One of the common elements of ELA time in my classroom was what the students and I referred to as "explore time". Explore time was an opportunity for students to participate in activities of their choosing. These activities included the use of such items as Lego, the sand table, and computers. Alternatively, students could choose more "traditional" classroom activities including reading, writing, drawing, and acting.

All students in the classroom were taught and exposed to the same classroom practices as the study participants. Since daily reading activities occurred in the classroom, and I was observing their reading behaviors, the classroom was the ideal place for data collection to occur.

Study Participants

Written parental permission was obtained for each study participant and pseudonyms were employed when reporting the study results. In this study, I employed purposive, convenience sampling. The children selected for participation in this study were three boys who were capable but unmotivated grade one readers from my own French Immersion classroom. In Mark's case, he would become defiant when asked to read and would often argue with me or worse, throw his shoes when told he needed to engage in reading. When Jon was asked to participate in reading he would sit there and play with his pencils, talk with his peers, and repeatedly asked to use the bathroom. Sonic's reaction to reading was similarly

unmotivated; he would engage in unrelated conversations about recess with his peers and wander the room instead of reading. A brief description of each study participants' background information, general academics, reading, language, personality, and interests can be found in Table 1.

Table 1.
Summary of Study Participants

	Mark	Jon	Sonic
Background information	• 6 years of age • Caucasian • Lived within walking distance of the school • Youngest child of two in a nuclear family • Completed French Immersion Nursery and Kindergarten • Working class family • Known to teacher since 2 years old (had taught older sibling)	• 6 years of age • Chilean descent • Second generation Canadian • Split family home • Mother remarried • Lived in neighboring community • Bussed to school • Youngest child of two • Completed French Immersion Nursery and Kindergarten • Working class family • Known to teacher since 3 years old (had taught older sibling)	• 6 years of age • Hispanic descent • Had experienced speech delays and was receiving ongoing speech therapy • Driven to school by parents • Youngest child of three in a nuclear family • Working class family • Stay at home mother • Known to teacher since 2 years old (had taught older sibling)
General academics	• Unmotivated student • Capable student without any special weaknesses or strengths • High spoken vocabulary • Creative thinker • In a rush to finish assignments	• Easily distracted • Capable student who performed well in math • Resistant to paper and pencil tasks • Rarely invested strong efforts into completion of classroom tasks • Rush to complete assignments	• General struggles • Unfocussed • Mathematics weaknesses • Poor fine motor control • Performed admirably in gym class
Reading	• Capable, but unmotivated reader • Well able to use different cues to assist with decoding	• Capable • Preference for non-fiction text • Rarely read on his own but enjoyed reading with the teacher	• Capable, but reluctant to read at school • His strongest academic pursuit • Stated preference for Mo Willems books
Language	• English first language and the only language spoken within his home	• English first language and the only language spoken within his home • Exposed to Spanish through visits to extended family in Chile	• English first and only language • Spanish spoken by his parents, but not by him
Personality	• Volatile • Disinclined to extend himself	• Rambunctious • Energetic	• Passive • Kind • A follower of his peers
Interests	• Video games • Television cartoons	• Video games • Physical activities • Wrestling	• Video games • Soccer

I recognize that in any grade one classroom students are going to be at developmentally different stages with regards to such things as classroom behaviour, reading motivation, and reading capability. As the teacher, I expect and recognize this diversity yet, not withstanding, I endeavour to assist all of my students in moving forward. In this study, I focused especially on these three study participants, however, ultimately I am doing my best to assist all students. Regardless of the age, abilities, or attitudes of my students I am trying to help them all. An effective way of doing this is to find out what practices are most likely to motivate the students.

Data Collection

Data was collected Monday through Friday over a period of 7 consecutive weeks. I used five methods of data collection: a general questionnaire; learning conversations; journaling; observations; and recording sheets. The questionnaire was completed by the three study participants at the start of the study, whereas the learning conversations were conducted individually throughout the study. Similarly, journaling, observations, and the recording sheets were ongoing throughout the study.

Questionnaires. Data collection commenced with the completion of a questionnaire. This allowed me to gather data that would aid in the construction of profiles of the study participants as readers, including their own self-perceptions. The chosen questionnaire— McKenna and Kear's (1990) Elementary Reading Attitude Survey—was easy for young children to understand and respond. This child-friendly questionnaire used Garfield's moods as representations of the reader's attitudes towards reading, ranging from feeling very upset to feeling very happy. For instance, in one question participants were asked about how they felt using their free time reading a book. Did it make them feel happy, upset, or somewhat in between? In another question, participants were asked how they felt about reading a book for fun at home. All 20 questions were similar in nature.

Because I deemed the information of potential value to me as their classroom teacher, the survey was administered to the entire class. In order to help ensure that the questions were understood, I read each question to the students and encouraged them to seek clarification in any case where they did not fully understand what the question was asking.

Learning conversations. I conducted seven one-on-one learning conversations with each of the study participants at the end of each week for the duration of the study. Each conversation was audio recorded for transcription and analysis.

Learning conversations were intended to allow each participant to express his opinions about a variety of classroom practices designed to increase his motivation to read. Questions were open-ended, allowing for discussion and honest responses. Before asking a participant about each specific classroom practice, I checked to see that he knew what the given practice was so that it was fresh in his mind. The participants were asked to discuss those things, if any, about each practice that they found to be enjoyable and/or useful in helping them to develop as readers and, conversely, to talk about those things that they found not to be motivational and/or useful. Each conversation lasted from 5–10 minutes—a total of approximately one hour per participant.

Although I was asking about a specific classroom practice in each learning conversation, they were only semi-structured. This allowed for more freedom and potentially greater depth and/or breadth in participant responses. For example, one of the open-ended question was "what kind of books do you like?" Additionally, in response to a participant's positive reply about an activity I asked "can you tell me why you like it?" In some instances, I had to prompt the participants and try to encourage them to be as expansive as possible in their various responses.

When speaking with the participants, I member checked frequently. That is, I would repeat or reread what they had previously said to see if that was correct or if they wanted to change or add to their answers. By conversing with these study participants, I made them part of their learning process.

Journaling. I used a personal reflection journal to record my observations of my participants during the seven classroom practices. As I introduced the practices I noted not only my observations of their participation in these practices, my own personal reflections on what I was seeing, but also comments that they made, such as Mark saying, "I love this part when the dad spits out the cookie! Ha ha ha…you're so funny Madame!" I recorded my observations as soon as possible in my personal reflection journal. All observations were dated.

Observations. One of the means that I used to gauge the study participants' apparent levels of motivation was by observing their reactions to the different classroom practices, how they interacted with each classroom practice, as well as how that seemed to affect their reading engagement and their motivation to read during their own time. For example, Jon was observed laughing and saying "Madame you sound funny. How did you do that?" during Read Aloud time. Observations allowed me, as teacher and researcher, to watch the participants in their classroom environment. I was able to observe how they were interacting without teacher guidance during explore time and see expression and interest, and sometimes lack of, for each of the different classroom practices used.

Recording sheets. My final form of data collection was the use of recording sheets. I had a sheet for each week with each participant's pseudonym on it to tally how often they participated in each of the study's seven classroom practices during explore time. According to Bryan (2009, p. 92), "a typical observational data collection method is that of event recording. This involves observing and counting the number of times an event occurs." Event recording is an appropriate technique when the observed behavior is short and countable (Richards, Taylor, Ramasamy, & Richards, 1999). I made a tally mark each time I observed the study participants choosing any of the seven classroom practices. Thus, I used recording sheets as a means of recording the participants' choices during explore time.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed to provide answers to the study research question. This involved the creation of a reading profile for each study participant. It also involved identification of those things that the study participants' comments seemed to indicate that they found to be motivational or not to contribute to their reading motivation.

Questionnaires. The completed questionnaire for each participant was analysed with an eye towards finding out about each individual as a reader and his attitude towards recreational reading and academic reading. Once study participants completed their questionnaires I added their ratings for each section, determining how they felt about themselves as both recreational and academic readers. The questionnaire was designed so that the higher the score, the better they saw themselves as readers. The questionnaire was specifically used for the purpose of generating a profile of each participant. This helped to contextualize the comments made by the students in the learning conversations. The participants' profiles included teacher perceptions about them and their classroom attitude and behaviours towards reading, such as "Mark would rather draw Mario figures on his desk than read with his group, his attitude is very aggressive when confronted."

Learning conversations. Having recorded and transcribed the learning conversations, the next step in data analysis was what Stringer (2008) referred to as "unpacking or

'interrogating' the epiphany" (p. 94). I went through the recorded data looking for ideas, phrases, thoughts, and feelings (hereafter just called ideas) that were articulated by the participants and that emerged as reoccurring themes. From these reoccurring themes 20 categories emerged, including positive judgments, negative judgments, humour, and family. Each idea was placed into a category. While it is true that a given idea may have been appropriately placed in more than one category, I employed the notion of "best fit" (Bryan, 2009).

   Journaling. Working alongside the study participants and recording in my journal their comments and my observations, provided me with the chance to analyze key experiences that arose and how these key experiences seemed to have metamorphosed across the duration of the study. That is to say, for instance, that early in the study reading activities were met often with resistance, whereas later reading opportunities were often embraced. At the end of each school day, I went through and reread what I had written for the day in my journal and identified things that I considered to be important. The changing behaviors and the changed attitudes that these behaviors seemed to effect were important. They suggested that at least some of the introduced classroom practices were having the desired effect.

   Observations. Observations allowed me, as researcher, to make notes on what the study participants were doing once the classroom practices had been introduced and which, if any, seemed to affect their motivation and reading engagement. For instance, when explore time was offered in the class, and the study participants selected one of the seven classroom practices without prodding from me, I considered that a noteworthy experience. Similarly, when a study participant said something reflective of his motivation and engagement I also considered that to be noteworthy. After all, motivation cannot be directly observed. Rather, we infer motivation from those things we can observe (Bryan, 2009). Observations were recorded in my journal and were used to identify the common elements that the participants most seemed to enjoy.

   Recording sheets. At the end of each week I counted up my event recorded tallies for each of the practices to see which practice was most often selected. I believed the most often selected practices provided a reflection of which activities the students found to be more or less motivational and engaging. During explore time the students were effectively free to choose to participate in whatever they found most attractive, and therefore, selecting some classroom practices over others reflected varied levels of motivation for these different practices.

   I recognize that the amount of times a child elected to participate in one of the study's classroom practices may have been influenced by the order in which those practices were introduced. For instance, the children may have chosen to participate in a given practice more or less often because that practice was the one that we were focusing on in that particular week. While this order of introduction may have influenced the results, it was necessary to stagger the introduction of the practices because they could not all be taught at one time. The recording sheets were used more as a form of triangulation to confirm the things the students were saying about their participation or lack of participation in the various practices rather than being used as an indicator of engagement. I used them to confirm the accuracy and the truthfulness of what they were saying.

Criteria for Ensuring Research Quality

   It is important when conducting qualitative-oriented action research to work with criteria for establishing research quality. Addressing these criteria shows readers that the research presented is accurate and reliable, as well as protects research findings and participants.

Trustworthiness. For research to have established trustworthiness, Stringer (2008) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted four areas that needed to be considered: (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) confirmability.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is confidence in the truth of the findings. In this study, ensuring credibility involved such things as persistent observations, prolonged participation, triangulation of multiple data sources, member checking, and the use of a second coder. Working alongside me throughout this process was my research assistant, who was also a professional colleague and graduate student. She had been an early year's teacher for 5 years and we had worked together during those years. She was familiar with the community and the students. I was able to discuss my observations with her daily. My research assistant and I met at the end of the seven weeks to categorize the learning conversations. Having determined the categories that would encompass the learning conversation data, my research assistant and I collaboratively analysed the transcripts for one learning conversation. After this period of training, the research assistant and I independently analysed all of the remaining transcripts. With Jon, the percentage of agreement was 94.29%; with Sonic, the percentage of agreement was 95.78%; and with Mark, the percentage of agreement was 87.14%. The coding categories employed included those contained in table 2.

Transferability necessitates the provision of rich, thick descriptions of the elements of the study. Although my research and results were specific to the reluctant readers of my classroom, I aimed to facilitate the transferability of my findings. When I refer to transferability I am not saying that my research findings were generalizable, like Shenton (2004), I am instead saying that there is sufficient background information and detailed explanation of the study that comparisons can be made to it.

Dependability of a study is based on the adequacy and suitability of the study's research procedures (Stringer, 2008). In this study, ensuring dependability involved the use of multiple and appropriately interrelated data collection strategies which supported one another, such as questionnaire, journaling, observations, recording sheets, and learning conversations.

The accessibility and availability of the recorded information in a study is a simplified version of Stringer's (2008) definition of confirmability. Confirmability in this study was established through the use of triangulation, which amalgamated and amplified my data, and through journaling which showed reflexivity to confirm my results.

Validity. My study met the high standards for classroom based research. This was done through the specific criteria for action research identified by Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (1994). I met democratic validity by tape recording my learning conversations with my study participants to ensure that the data was not lost and that what I was recording was accurate. I believe that my research had a positive impact on my study participants and has informed and improved my teaching and, therefore, achieved outcome validity. By tracking my process and conducting my research in a competent manner, I was able to show process validity. Process validity, like dependability, showed that by using multiple data sources I was able to have consistency in my findings.

The results of my study caused me to take a different look and approach to my own teaching. Based on the results of this study, I incorporated certain practices, such as Author's Theatre, in my teaching. Because I moved to take action to further inform my practice in an ongoing way, my research showed catalytic validity. Dialogic validity—a study that causes conversation and interaction between people, was met in that my research was and is being presented in a public fashion. As such, it has been subject to peer review and dialogue amongst teaching professionals.

Results

Introducing the seven classroom practices to the students was an easy process for me. This ease was due in part to the first three strategies being ones that were part of my classroom routine since September. Additionally, I was familiar with most of the practices so there was a level of comfort in executing the teaching. The only practice that I was unfamiliar with was Author's Theatre, which required me to do some research and planning.

Study Results for Mark

Mark viewed himself as a reader but did not enjoy it and was not motivated to engage in it. This description was based on his completion of the Reading Attitude Survey as well as on observations of him in class.

All but two of Mark's answers in the recreational reading section of the survey were the mildly upset Garfield. He answered question 9, how he feels about going to a book store, higher than the rest by circling the slightly smiling Garfield. Countering this slight shift towards the positive, Mark circled the very upset Garfield for question 7, which asked how he felt about reading during the summer.

Mark's views of himself as an academic reader were the same as his views of himself as a recreational reader. Out of the 10 questions in this section of the survey, Mark circled all but two as being a mildly upset Garfield. For question 17, how he feels about stories read in class, he circled the slightly smiling Garfield. This finding was consistent with observations I made on his reaction to daily story time, which was always positive. Question 19 asked students how they felt about using a dictionary; this elicited a very upset Garfield response from Mark.

Mark consistently showed a positive attitude when it came to story time, or Read Aloud, in the classroom. In the middle of a story, he often called out how funny things were or how he liked the voices I gave to the characters. Although he showed a positive reaction towards being read to, he also showed considerable disinterest in reading on his own and with his peers. During reading time, he was often observed doodling or talking with his friends about playing Mario at recess or about how he did in his video game the night before.

Throughout the 7-week period of data collection, Mark made some connections between the different classroom practices being taught. He was able to connect the practices that used voice and movement, seeing how they built upon one another in the classroom and how they extended to his life outside of the classroom where he began to take a more active role in playing with his peers around stories.

Mark consistently mentioned in his learning conversations his fondness for stories that were funny and available to use right away. Regardless of the classroom practice, Mark did not like when he did not get to use the book of his choice. This impatience seemed to be the most influential factor stopping him from reading.

Looking at his responses in the learning conversations and the recording sheet information, the classroom practices that seemed to motivate Mark to read were the ones that used different voices for different characters and involved physical movement. In addition to appearing to motivate him to read, Author's Theatre also motivated him to write.

The practices that Mark seemed to find to be least engaging were Literacy Circles and Inquiry. Although Mark mentioned liking Literacy Circles, when they were made available for daily use he did not choose to participate in them during his explore time, choosing instead to participate in classroom practices that were more physical and dramatic in nature.

Study Results for Jon

Jon saw himself as a reader but primarily engaged in reading when he was working one-on-one with me. The description of Jon as a reader was based on my observations of him in the classroom and his views of himself indicated on the questionnaire.

In recreational reading, Jon responded with equal numbers of mildly upset Garfield ratings and very upset Garfield ratings. The only question where Jon provided a positive response was question 10 where he was asked about reading different kind of books. For this question, Jon gave a slightly smiling Garfield rating. This is consistent with my observations about Jon's enjoyment of selecting his own books, which often varied from what his classmates often picked for story time. During Self-Selected Reading time, Jon was more enthusiastic when he picked non-fiction books on animals. Despite this, I often observed him quickly putting his book of choice to one side and participating in unrelated conversations with his peers.

Jon scored slightly higher on his view of himself in academic reading. Jon circled an equal number of slightly smiling Garfield's and mildly upset Garfield's. He circled two very upset Garfield's, which were for questions 12 and 19. Question 12 asked about his attitude towards worksheets and workbooks and question 19 asked about how he felt about using a dictionary. Again, these results were not surprising, as Jon was often distracted and difficult to work with during Literacy Circles or during any structured activity where he was expected to do pencil and paper work.

In class, Jon was observed avoiding reading during reading time unless it was with me. I noted that Jon would often rush to complete his agenda to read with me, however if I was busy with another student he did not read, he wandered the room, talked with others, or started to play with different things in the classroom.

Over the 7-week span that this research took place, Jon showed the biggest growth during the fourth week with the introduction of Drama. From this week forth, Jon no longer was so heavily dependent on me as a reading partner. Previously, Jon liked the idea of selecting his own books but really did not invest a lot of time reading them unless he was reading to me and I was praising him for a job well done. He found humour and pleasure in what he perceived to be shocking me with his great reading skills. With the introduction of classroom practices that involved movement, choice, peers, and humour Jon was able to start to find a place for himself as a reader.

Study Results for Sonic

According to the questionnaire results, Sonic's view of himself as a reader varied greatly from his recreational reading self to his academic reading self. With regards to his view of himself as a recreational reader, for six of the 10 questions, he circled the slightly smiling Garfield. For the other four questions he circled the mildly upset Garfield. Some of the positive responses included question 1, how he feels about reading on a rainy day; question 4, how he feels about getting a book for a present; and question 5, how he feels about spending his free time reading.

Sonic's view of himself as an academic reader, however, was noticeably lower than his view of himself as a recreational reader. He rated four questions with a very upset Garfield and three questions with a mildly upset Garfield. Sonic expressed a dislike of doing worksheets and workbooks, using a dictionary, learning from a book, and reading out loud.

My observations of Sonic were more consistent with his views of himself as an academic reader. I observed Sonic's lack of participation in reading books from the classroom, as well as his unfocused behaviour during Literacy Circles. After his mother signed consent for Sonic to

participate in this study, she approached me and told me that he was reading a lot at home and that he loved Elephant and Piggie books. She said also that they were now making regular trips to the public library so that he could have some of his favourite books at home. She asked if he could bring some to school to read, and was told he could. After that he had asked to read to the class two or three times a week.

Sonic had positive things to say about each of the seven classroom practices introduced during this study, and really started to thrive as a reader during Self-Selected Reading when he was able to choose his own Elephant and Piggie stories to read.

Although Sonic talked a lot about liking Drama, Reader's Theatre, and Author's Theatre, he did not select them as often as he did the other practices during explore time. When Sonic did participate in those classroom practices it was usually when friends of his were already there and they would ask him to join them.

Observations on my recording sheet during explore time for Sonic's engagement in Literacy Circles and Inquiry were consistent with what he talked about in his learning conversations. Each of these two classroom practices had features that he liked, but neither was one that he would choose to participate in on a regular basis.

Combined Summary of What Mark, Jon, and Sonic Had to Say

As mentioned, the participants' comments were categorized into 20 themes that emerged from the data. Although there were 20 categories, for the purpose of brevity table 2 contains a brief description and example of only the top six categories.

Table 2.
Description and Example of the Top Six Categories

Category	Example	Explanation
Positive Judgement	Amanda: What do you think about how we used Drama? Jon: It makes centre time better.	Mention of a positive feeling or response in regards to one of the seven classroom practices.
Negative Judgement	Mark: It's not my favourite. I mean, it's a lot of reading of real things. I don't like that.	Mention of a negative feeling or response in regards to one of the seven classroom practices.
Positive Social	Amanda: So, you like your friends in your group… Sonic: Yeah. It is fun to read with them, they read some, I read some. I like that.	Mention of positive interactions or positive comments about interactions.
Teacher	Amanda: You like to pick your book and then read it with me? Jon: I like to show you how good my reading is.	Mention of the teacher, teacher reactions, or teacher expectations.
Characters	Amanda: Tell me what you think about it. Sonic: I liked being Mortimer! Mortimer was loud and didn't sleep and the police had to come!	Mention of characters from printed or digital texts.
Play	Amanda: It's more fun with your friends? Jon: Yeah. We go to the puppets and we make up stories like the owl and the wolf fighting. Sometimes they wrestle!	Mention of physical manipulation of things such as puppets, props, or their bodies in enjoyable interactions with their friends.

Table 3 contains the combined results for each of those top six categories. In the table, the right hand column represents the total number of comments for each of the six most populous categories. The bottom row represents the combined totals for all 20 categories—the six most populous as contained within this table plus the 14 categories not otherwise represented.

As can be seen, the vast majority of ideas expressed by the three study participants were comments categorized as positive judgements. Indeed, the next three highest categories combined (a total of 96 comments) only just eclipses the total of positive judgement comments (91) alone. There were almost three times as many positive judgements as there were negative judgements about the seven classroom practices (37). However, not all of the practices received more positive than negative judgements. There were more than twice as many negative judgement comments about inquiry (14) as there were positive judgements (6). For Literacy Circles, there was little difference between positive judgements (8) and negative judgements (6).

The results for the Drama classroom practice are noteworthy. One-third (10) of all the comments categorized as positive social ideas (30) were made in relation to drama. Similarly, more than one-third (11) of all of the comments categorized as play ideas (27) were made in relation to drama. Each of these categories consisted of comments making reference to enjoyable, engaging experiences. Furthermore, across all 20 categories, there was a total of 87 comments about Drama. The highest number of comments about any other classroom practice was 61 for Author's Theatre. This represents an increase of more than 42% between the second most "talked about" activity and the first. Drama clearly was not merely something the students enjoyed but, indeed, it was something they wanted to talk about. For inquiry, there were 45 comments in total, but the 14 negative judgements represent almost a third (31.1%) of that total

Table 3.
Frequency of Themed Comments for Combined Group by Classroom Practice

	Read Aloud	Self-Selected Reading	Literacy Circles	Drama	Reader's Theatre	Author's Theatre	Inquiry	Total
Categories								
Positive judgement	13(28%)	15(28%)	8 (22%)	19(22%)	18(31%)	12(20%)	6 (13%)	91
Negative judgement	5 (11%)	1 (2%)	6 (17%)	3 (3%)	2 (3%)	6 (10%)	14(31%)	37
Positive Social	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	5 (14%)	10(12%)	5 (9%)	7 (12%)	2 (4%)	30
Teacher	3 (7%)	9 (17%)	2 (6%)	6 (7%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)	3 (7%)	29
Characters	4 (9%)	7 (13%)	0 (0%)	8 (9%)	9 (16%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)	31
Play	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	11(13%)	5 (9%)	7 (12%)	0 (0%)	27
Combined totals from all 20 categories	46	54	36	87	58	61	45	

The percentages included in Table 3 show the percentage of comments about a given practice that the raw figure represents. For instance, of 46 comments of Read Aloud, 13 were positive judgements, representing 28% of all comments for read aloud. Of 54 comments about SSR, 15 were positive judgements, representing 28% of all comments about SSR. Note that these percentages do not tally to 100% of all comments of a given practice because, as explained, Table 3 contains only the results for each of the top six of all of the 20 categories. At the end of

the 7 weeks I tallied the number of times each participant chose a particular classroom practice during explore time. These choices are represented in Figure 1. For instance, Mark chose the Read Aloud option 40% of the time. As the figure shows, each study participant had a different practice that he chose with greatest frequency (Mark: Read Aloud, Jon: Author's Theatre, Sonic: Self-Selected Reading). As can be seen in the figure, Read Aloud and Self-Selected Reading were the practices chosen far more regularly than the others. With the exception of Jon's participation in Author's Theatre, Read Aloud and Self-Selected Reading were the most popular of all of the choices for all of the participants. The large numbers for Mark's selections of Read Aloud and Self-Selected Reading reflect his propensity for oscillating between activities. The traditional reading practices of Read Aloud and Self-Selected Reading were in the top three chosen classroom practices for each participant
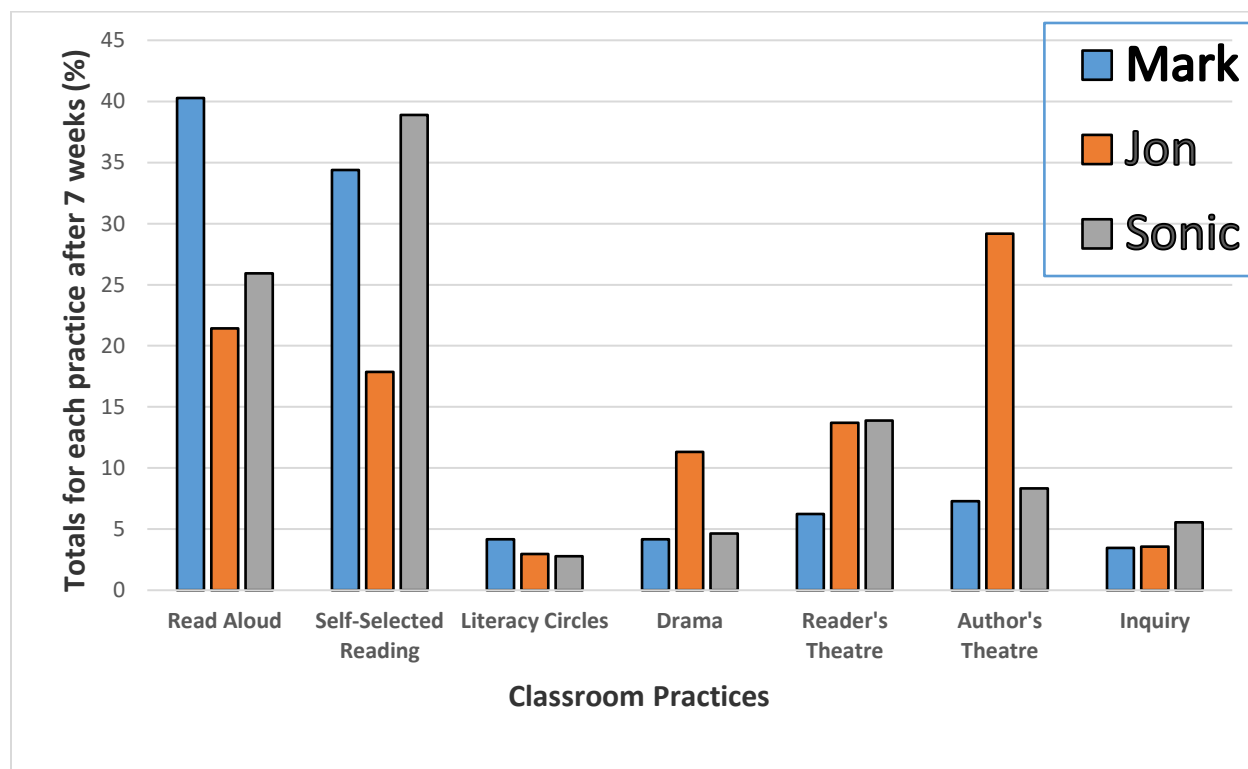

Figure 1. Frequencies of Mark, Jon, and Sonic's participation by classroom practice during explore time over the 7-week study period.

Discussion

The research findings pertained to classroom practices that motivated reluctant readers. This seems an effective and efficient way for teachers in a French Immersion setting to make best use of their limited ELA time.

Pedagogical Significance of the Study Findings

The seven classroom practices selected for this study involved different learning styles that were, for the most part, social in nature. Study participants were involved in practices that were hands-on, auditory, and visual. Providing the study participants with multiple ways to experience reading allowed them the freedom to choose what best suited their learning styles and interests. It appears as if each one of the three study participants found at least one of the seven

classroom practices motivating. This seemed to have increased the amount of times they were engaged in reading.

I presented these classroom practices in a sequential order over the 7 weeks, starting with the most familiar for the students, Read Aloud, and progressing to the ones that would be the least familiar. I placed Drama, Reader's Theatre, and Author's Theatre one after the other. This worked out well, from a teaching stand point, as the practices were similar and afforded the students a sense of the interwoven nature of these distinct but compatible approaches to reading and reading instruction. Drama was an ideal connecting point between the more "literary" practices that proceeded it and the playful nature of the practices that followed it. Having classroom practices that blend into each other so easily, particularly when there was limited time to teach, was not only practical but enjoyable for the students. As well, because these classroom practices were similar in nature, it took less time to teach them and allowed for the students to become independent at a faster rate.

The participants talked a lot about the use of varied voices when being read to and how much they enjoyed that. This suggests that when a story is read to the class with expression, it can change how a student feels about reading. The opportunity to exercise freedom in choosing the books that they read was motivational because it validated participants' likes and interests. They were not stopped from engaging in books that had fighting or weapons, and were encouraged to read whatever interested them.

This study also showed that, despite my school division's move towards certain practices, students were not always motivated by them. Over the past few years my school division moved towards the increased use of Inquiry. Many believed that in allowing students to choose what they wanted to study they would be motivated to learn. In my research, the participants resisted the Inquiry approach. They seemed not to be motivated by this practice. Although my study participants were not completely negative about Inquiry, they all mentioned how they did not really enjoy it, and out of all the classroom practices it was the second-to-least chosen.

The results demonstrate that for these study participants the classroom practices that motivated them to read were ones that allowed for physical movement and humour. They also seemed to be motivated by the element of choice. However, this appreciation of choice was not so strong that it encompassed an Inquiry approach to reading because of the perception that it resulted in too much auxiliary work.

Research Significance of the Study Findings

The research findings for five out of the seven classroom practices support studies that had already been conducted in this field. Cunningham and Allington (2007) stated that one of the most influential factors in motivating students to read was being read to. My research supported this claim, with all three study participants enjoying being read to, provided it was the right material. My research suggests that reading with expression and purpose books of interest can motivate children to read on their own.

The data showed that Self-Selection of reading material was popular, appreciated, and motivational. When it came to Inquiry, the only part that all three study participants liked was the choosing of their own stories. My research findings lend support to research conducted by Bryan (2009) which showed that allowing students to select their own books daily had the potential to motivate them to read.

My research into the use of Drama supported previous research that found it provided opportunities for social interactions with peers around texts (Cullingford, 2001). Through this

research I found that with the limited amount of time available to teach reading, Drama was a motivator in getting reluctant readers involved and enjoying reading time.

Lapp and Flood (1992) described Reader's Theatre as an oral interpretation of stories that students enjoy. Powell-Brown (2006) wrote that Reader's Theatre made books more exciting. My research supported these findings. The study participants all enjoyed participating in Reader's Theatre, and during explore time were found engaged in this classroom practice. Study participants liked social interactions with their peers and the use of voice and movement to read and tell stories.

I found that Author's Theatre was a motivating classroom practice for the study participants, as it provided them with the freedom to create and act out their own stories. These findings supported Haas Dyson's (1997) research into Author's Theatre about how it allowed even reluctant readers to "bring their peer play life into the official school world" (p. 4).

My research findings for two of the classroom practices, Literacy Circles and Inquiry, counter previous studies done in these areas. Powell-Brown (2006) cited research findings that Literacy Circles provided children with a social aspect of communication that was crucial in forming positive attitudes towards reading. My research showed that, although study participants may have enjoyed aspects of Literacy Circles, as a whole it was not a favourite practice. Two of the study participants specifically mentioned not liking the practice of Literacy Circles. They said it took too long and that it was boring. The greatest discord between my research and others' research was related to the idea of Inquiry as a classroom practice to motivate reluctant readers. Prior claims, such as those by Cunningham and Allington (2007), discussed how using what students are interested in and creating means of representing that in the end would motivate them to read and write. My research indicated otherwise. The study participants all enjoyed selecting what interested them; however, they did not enjoy the amount of time they had to put into reading books or doing the auxiliary work.

This research has generated interesting results that require further research. One avenue that could be studied further is the use of Inquiry in the elementary French Immersion classroom. Would Inquiry be a more successful tool to motivate if there were more time to engage in it? Would the results found in this study be the same if it were to have been conducted over the span of a school year, allowing for more time between the classroom practices? How would the results vary if the study participants were reluctant *female* readers? How would the results vary if the study participants were in a non-French Immersion classroom.

Concluding Remarks

When I set out to find out what reluctant English readers in a French Immersion setting had to say about classroom practices designed to increase their motivation to read, I had ideas of where I thought it would lead me. The research literature suggested that the seven classroom practices were potentially motivating for reluctant English readers. These practices were social in nature and drew upon various learning styles which were intended to engage these reluctant readers. Throughout this process I was able to learn a lot about which classroom practices worked best within the time constraint of 60 minutes a day and really see and hear what was motivating to the study participants in my French Immersion setting. What this study shows is that classroom practices that allow for social interactions, choice, and use of voice and movement while in an environment that supports all learning styles are the best ways to motivate young reluctant French Immersion readers.

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