

QUESTIONING THE AUTHOR IN A SCANDINAVIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

The present study is a follow-up qualitative study to a quantitative intervention study in which the programme Questioning the Author (QtA) was evaluated in a Scandinavian context. The aim was to evaluate how teachers develop QtA discussion moves in small groups of six participants. The video recordings from the sessions were investigated in terms of QtA discussion moves. The study suggests that (a) developing QtA in the classroom takes time. During the first year of intervention, initial progress was made, but the teachers had difficulties to keep the discussion focused and constructive. During the second and third years, these difficulties had mostly disappeared. (b) Some discussion moves seemed to be practiced more fluently than others: turning back, recapping, revoicing, and annotating. (c) The teachers' strategies/discussion moves scaffolded the students' comprehension processes and provided opportunities for reflections.

Keywords: Intervention, QtA, text talk, comprehension strategies, expository texts

1. INTRODUCTION

When Swedish students enter the third grade, they are faced with the challenge of comprehending expository texts, and from grade 4 on, this text type receives increasing emphasis in Swedish schools (Lundberg, 2010).

The structure of expository texts differs from that of the narrative texts that the students have mostly read in grades 1 and 2. Narrative texts are personal, and each includes such elements as a theme, actors, a plot and conflict, and consequently, it is easy for the reader to become involved and to identify himself or herself with some of the actors. The process of building understanding is directed mainly at understanding how a story unfolds and how different elements contribute to its unfolding (Lundberg, 2002).

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Expository texts present unique challenges to students because in order to extract meaning from them, readers must apply more complex cognitive operations than those that narrative texts demand (Reichenberg, 2008). The cognitive operations required to explore expository texts can be promoted through reading instruction programmes. Little research about such programmes has been conducted in Scandinavia; notable exceptions are Andreassen and Bråten (2011), Takala (2006), Reichenberg (2008, 2009), Reichenberg and Wadbring (2008). In other parts of the world, however, educational reading research is more extensive and includes, for example, the work of Palincsar and Brown (1984); Beck and McKeown (2006); Sandora, Beck, and McKeown (1999); Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, and Schuder (1996); Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Perencevich, Taboada, Davis, and Tonks (2004). These studies demonstrate the importance of the long-term and explicit instruction of a repertoire of deeper-level comprehension strategies integrated into subject-matter learning. Moreover, the main findings from these studies are an increase of students' reading comprehension when exposed to structured training.

The programme *Questioning the Author* (QtA) is of special interest since it can function for different text types. Thus, QtA has been successfully used with both expository and narrative texts. This includes texts in science, civics, novels, narrative nonfiction, short stories, and poems (Beck & McKeown, 2006).

1.1 Aim and research questions

An initial and primarily quantitative study (Reichenberg, 2008) used the programme *Questioning the Author* (Beck & McKeown, 2006). That study investigated the learning outcomes and effects of teachers' questions, students' answers and the distribution of speech.

However, QtA is not only about posing different types of questions. On the contrary, one may employ many discussion moves, or comprehension strategies, to encourage students to wrestle with a text's ideas. Specifically, the initial study did not address the ways in which the discussion moves—the reading process—in QtA were *performed* in the classes. Thus, the present study's overall aim is to evaluate how teachers adapted QtA discussion moves in small groups of six participants each (see the chapter Literature Review for a more elaborate description of the programme).

The study focuses on the following research questions:

- 1) What strategies did teachers use to encourage students to actively engage the text when reading?
- 2) In what way, if any, did the teachers' strategies change over time?

1.2 Theoretical framework

This study focuses on how comprehension strategies are used to enhance reading comprehension. The study draws upon a sociocultural view of teaching and learning. I argue in accordance with Mercer (2010) that sociocultural theory can be used as a framework in intervention studies for analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data where the latter will be the focus of the study.

Inspired by sociocultural theory, I also argue that discussion scaffolds collaborative reading and understanding a text. Furthermore, discussions can scaffold higher-order thinking, i.e. reflecting about the text read and thus going beyond extracting information from the page. However, the student needs adult guidance or collaboration with more capable peers (see also Cazden, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978).

1.3 Literature Review

Reading is a complex activity that basically consists of word decoding and comprehension. In this study, reading comprehension is defined as the ability to read between and beyond the lines and to reflect upon what is read (cf. Lundberg, 2010).

One dilemma in teaching reading comprehension is the strong belief of many teachers that if students constantly read texts silently by themselves, they will become skilled at comprehending texts. However, there is no reason to believe that students will automatically discover how to read between the lines, how to clarify difficult passages in texts and so on. They need to be instructed (Dole, 2003). A second dilemma is that many teachers often assume that students will know exactly what to do when they are asked to 'discuss' a topic or to 'talk and work together' to solve a problem. Consequently, students are left to somehow work out what is required and what constitutes good, effective discussion, but they rarely succeed in doing so. A third dilemma is that teachers often discuss the author's message when reading narrative texts. More seldom do they seem to do so when reading expository texts. Many students tend to attribute their difficulties in understanding expository texts to their own shortcomings as readers. However, it is of vital importance to make them aware of the fact that behind each expository text there is also an author (Reichenberg, 2008).

During the past 30 years, research has demonstrated the roles of language, social interaction and guidance in the comprehension of texts (Nystrand, 2006). Some of these studies have been concerned with the efficiency of teachers' interactional strategies in assisting students' learning and development (Alexander, 2008; Beck & McKeown, 2006; Mercer, 1995; Mercer & Howe, 2012; Slavin, 2009). Without guidance, instruction, and encouragement from a teacher, many students may not gain access to some very useful ways of using language for reasoning and for working collaboratively because those 'ways with words' are simply not a common feature of the language used in their out-of-school communities (Heath, 1983; Mercer & Howe, 2012; Slavin, 2009).

1.4 Questioning the Author

A range of classroom interventions (e.g., Andreassen & Bråten, 2011; Brown et al., 1996; Guthrie et al., 2004; Palincsar & Brown, 1984) provide evidence that strategic processing can be taught in classrooms with positive effects on students' reading comprehension.

In *Reciprocal Teaching* (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), for example, students are explicitly taught the strategies of predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing. *Transactional Strategy Instruction* (Brown et al., 1996) typically includes several more strategies in addition to those four—for example, relating text content to prior knowledge and constructing internal mental images of relations described in text. In *Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction* (Guthrie et al., 2004), students are explicitly taught the strategies of activating background knowledge, questioning, searching for information, summarizing, organizing graphically and identifying story structure. Andreassen and Bråten (2011), Takala (2006), Reichenberg (2010), Lundberg and Reichenberg (2013) and Reichenberg and Löfgren (2014) have used the programme Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) in their studies.

In *Questioning the Author* (Beck & McKeown, 2006), the text is viewed as the product of a human author who is potentially fallible in communicating ideas. When the QtA process is used with students, it is important for them to know that any problems they have with comprehension may actually reflect the author's inability to communicate the information clearly. Thus, the text is open-ended and incomplete, and the reader has to make something of the text in order to complete it. In a QtA discussion the teacher participates as a collaborator in building meaning. The teacher has two perspectives: the students' and her own perspective. As such the teacher has to keep in mind that, to her students, the text may at first seem confusing, information-dense and ambiguous. Thus, the teacher has to consider what discussion moves she can utilize in order to challenge the students. One action is segmentation.

When students read a text during a QtA lesson, they are taught to address text ideas immediately. In order to make this work, the text is read segment by segment. The teacher segments the text in advance at points where he or she expects students to have difficulties; students stop reading at these places and, through discussion, they build up meaning as they read. Stopping to discuss a text allows readers to consider alternatives. Building understanding during reading gives students the opportunity to learn from one another, to question, to consider various possibilities and to test their own ideas in a safe environment (Beck & McKeown, 2006). In QtA, teachers can also apply comprehension strategies—discussion moves—in order to ensure that students 'wrestle with text ideas':

- 1) *Marking* involves responding to student comments in a way that draws attention to certain ideas. By marking, a teacher signals to students that an idea is of particular importance to the discussion (Beck & McKeown, 2006). Here, teachers can ask students what, for instance, the author has

omitted and what readers need to fill in; students thus generate questions directed to the author.

- 2) *Turning back* can be used (a) when a student has misread or misinterpreted something in the text, (b) when students drift away from the text, and (c) when a student's contribution does not fully respond to the issue at hand.
- 3) *Revoicing* is a strategy/discussion move that helps students to express their own ideas. The intention of revoicing—the teacher's expression of a student's answer in different words—is to provide a more articulate expression of students' ideas so that they can become part of the discussion.
- 4) *Recapping* is when teachers summarize the ideas that the students have developed so far in the discussion.
- 5) *Modelling* is a strategy for 'making public' some of the processes at work when 'experts' think. When teachers model, they attempt to show students how their minds are actively interacting with the ideas in the text. Effective modelling can help students to observe things in texts they may not have noticed and thus allows students to observe and overhear how an expert thinks through a complicated idea (Beck & McKeown, 2006).
- 6) *Annotating* is providing information to fill in gaps in a text when the students obviously do not have this information but need it in order to construct meaning from the text.

These six discussion moves serve as comprehension strategies that students, after practising, will learn to use on their own.

To the best of my knowledge, the present study is unique to the field in that it expands upon previous research on QtA in a Scandinavian context (Reichenberg, 2008). Originally, QtA was designed for a whole-class approach (Beck & McKeown, 2006) and was performed in urban and inner-city areas in the United States. In my unique design, QtA is performed in small groups in rural areas of Scandinavia and thus may offer new insights (Carlgren, Klette, Myrdal, Schnack, & Simula, 2006). As already mentioned, unlike the North American educational context, Scandinavia does not have an educational tradition of reading instruction programmes; Scandinavian students receive comparatively more individual work (Carlgren et al., 2006). Furthermore, rural and urban areas might hypothetically differ in terms of content-specific knowledge, meaning that students in urban and rural areas are likely to recognize different aspects of texts as meaningful because their prior knowledge of urban and rural elements differs.

2. METHOD

2.1 *Participants*

Six groups of students from four classes in four rural schools¹ participated in the present study—four of the groups were QtA groups, and two were control groups (see Reichenberg, 2008, for further description of the selection of the QtA and control groups). The students were attending grade 4 at the beginning of the study, and their average age was 10.3 years. Six students were placed in each of the six groups—two good comprehenders and four poor comprehenders (see Reichenberg, 2008, for definition of good and poor comprehenders). Good comprehenders were included in order to facilitate discussion and to instil cognitive courage among the poor comprehenders (Lundberg, 2013). Students were selected on the basis of tests involving decoding and reading comprehension, together with teacher ratings of student attitudes towards reading, their ability to reflect and infer, and their propensity for superficial reading. No statistical significant differences were found between the QtA groups and the control groups regarding these issues (Reichenberg, 2008, for further description of the tests used).

Six teachers—four female and two male—participated. The teachers were selected simply because they were interested, not because they were nominated as exemplary. Four of the teachers were quite experienced, having taught between 16 and 33 years. One teacher in a control group had only three to four years of teaching experience. The names of the students and the teachers have been changed in order to protect their privacy. The students were given both verbal and written information outlining the details of the research project. Consent was secured by providing consent letters and consent forms to parents.

2.2 *Intervention texts*

For the first video-recorded lesson, the teachers in the QtA groups and in the control groups chose the texts. The texts varied in size, from six pages to half a page, and were taken from textbooks in geography and science. Because it was their first video recording, it seemed best that the teachers used texts with which they felt comfortable. For the remaining lessons, the investigator chose the texts. These texts varied in range from 214 words to 252 words. They dealt with living conditions for Swedish children during the 20th century and the living conditions of children in other countries. Issues included Save the Children campaigns, child soldiers and an eight-year-old Chinese girl who was forced to run a marathon each day.

The texts may seem short. However, all texts were information-dense, and several gaps were present in each. Furthermore, some infrequently used words and concepts appeared in them. Consequently, poor comprehenders would be ex-

¹ *Approximately 12,000 inhabitants were in the municipality.*

pected to encounter difficulty with gaining a deeper understanding if they read these texts silently to themselves in the classroom.

Each text was introduced to the teachers in the QtA groups and in the control groups one week prior to video recording. None of the students or the teachers in the QtA and control groups had encountered the texts at school before.

2.3 Procedure

The data examined here come from an intervention study between 2004 and 2007 and consist of 34 video-recorded lessons; of these 34, a total of 12 were from the control groups. The teachers in the QtA groups as well as in the control groups were instructed to talk with their students for 20–30 minutes about the text.

The data for the first year consist of 18 video-recorded lessons²—six from the control groups—and the data for the second year consist of five video-recorded lessons—two from the control groups. In the third year, 11 lessons were recorded—four from the control groups.

During the intervention, the teachers in the QtA groups were invited to seminars where we discussed texts' readability, segmentation of texts and discussion moves. I focused on turning back, marking and modelling during the first seminars and then continued with annotating, recapping and revoicing.

During the seminars, the teachers could also watch their video-recorded lessons, and they received transcribed versions of them. Together, we analysed the transcripts with regard to the teachers' use of discussion moves, segmentation etc.

Furthermore, I had demonstration lessons where I modelled the teacher's role, while the teachers were asked to assume the students' roles. Six seminars took place during the first year, two during the second year and three during the third year. Every seminar lasted about three hours. The teachers also received written information about QtA and the same written instructions when practicing QtA on their own.

The teachers in the control groups were not invited to the seminars. However, they used the same texts as the teachers in the QtA groups did. Furthermore, they were only instructed on the duration of talking time. They received no response regarding the video-recorded lessons and received no transcribed versions of them.

The data presented in the current study was proofread and validated by the teachers (i.e. "member checking", which is an accepted form of validation in qualitative research) (Maxwell, 1992).

² One of the teachers was on sick leave for almost a year. Consequently, her class could not continue to participate in the study.

2.4 *Transcription*

In all of the transcripts, standard punctuation has been used to represent the grammatical organization of speech as interpreted by the researcher. Nonverbal actions and other information that is deemed relevant to the interpretation of the dialogue is presented in italics. The poor comprehenders' names appear in bold.

2.5 *Methods of analysis*

The coding of the data is based on the comprehension strategies of QtA as the unit of analysis. The comprehension strategies/discussion moves were: segmentation, marking, turning back, modelling, recapping, revoicing, and annotating. A qualitative coding of the transcriptions was conducted in NVivo (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The strategies were embodied in the process of interaction. Hence, strategies were coded as teaching processes (Saldaña, 2009).

3. RESULTS

The present study reports the results of the qualitative analysis of teachers' strategies. In other words, the results show how the teachers *used* the comprehension strategies of segmenting, marking, recapping, revoicing, annotating, modelling and turning back as scaffolding in order to build meaning before, during and after reading. I start with the first year in the intervention and compare it with the second and third years.

3.1 *The first year*

Teacher Berg: David, could you start, please, and tell us a little about sheep?

DAVID: Well, they're very patient animals, and they're really valuable to the environment.

Teacher Berg: What do you mean by *patient animals*?

DAVID: They're hardy animals.

Teacher Berg: What do you mean by *hardy*?

DAVID: They can stand cold weather and stuff.

Teacher Berg: Yes, OK, since they have such nice woolly coats. Right—and you also say they're of great value to the environment. In what way?

DAVID: I don't know.

Teacher Berg: What do you think, Neil?

NEIL: What?

Teacher Berg: David says that sheep are very patient animals. They can stand cold weather, live outdoors and they're valuable to the environment. In what way are they useful to the environment?

NEIL: Eh? Are we talking about sheep now?

Teacher Berg: Yes, now we're reading about sheep.

DAVID: [*Points at the picture*] Mr. Berg, what is this picture supposed to mean?

Teacher Berg: We are talking about sheep now. We can talk about that another time. Yes. [*Turns to Neil*]

NEIL: Well, they just eat and stuff. And a lamb is only 6–8 hectogrammes per person. [*Reading directly from the text*]

Teacher Berg: And year?

NEIL: What?

Teacher Berg: So, what advantages do we gain from sheep? Humans want to find the advantage of everything. We don't keep sheep just because they are cute.

NEIL: We get lamb.

Teacher Berg: Meat, yes. Is there anything else that we use?

NEIL: The tongue.

Teacher Berg: Yes. Is there anything else that we use from sheep apart from the meat?

NEIL: The horns.

Teacher Berg: The horns? Well, yes, maybe. Then there is something else, you know. [*Points at Ellen*] You can answer that.

Ellen: The wool.

Teacher Berg: What do we make from that?

Ellen: We can make different kinds of blankets.

Teacher Berg: You shear sheep.

This excerpt shows that the teacher asked numerous questions that students could answer with just one word. The teacher used the Initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) pattern—nominating a student to answer his question when the teacher already has a correct answer in mind that he or she wants the student to figure out (Dillon, 1990; Nystrand, 1997). The lesson continued in the same manner. Suddenly, David's interest was awakened; he had discovered a picture and was eager to know what it meant. However, the teacher did not follow up his answer. He simply responded in this way: "We are talking about sheep now." Then, the teacher wanted to know what people gain from sheep. He already had a particular answer in mind (wool) and wanted the students to answer in this way. The poor comprehender Neil had three suggestions: lamb meat, tongue and horns. However, these were not acceptable responses according to teacher Berg.

The teacher was at a loss; however, he did not take the opportunity to encourage and to challenge the students to express their own ideas by applying the strategy of turning back. Neither did he attempt to draw the students' comments together or to highlight the meaning or significance of their answers. He simply collected their answers without promoting the students' thinking, and lastly, he turned to the good comprehender Ellen; her answer, wool, was accepted. By using this question strategy, the students will not have the opportunity to read between and beyond the lines and to reflect upon what they have just read.

Reading a text about animals on a farm can be difficult for students who live in a city, but the students in this study lived in the countryside, and some of them even lived on farms. Consequently, they had adequate prior knowledge of rural life, but this prior knowledge was never tapped into an effort to fill in the gaps in the text. Further, the teachers asked many questions that students could answer without having read the text, as seen in the following excerpt:

Teacher Woods: Do snakes eat hedgehogs?

PETER: No.

Teacher Woods: You don't think so?

PETER: Yes, maybe ...

Let us also consider one of the control groups.

Teacher Taylor: Today, we are going to read about Western Sweden.

LIAM: How fun. [*Ironically*]

Teacher Taylor: Good. Open up your books to page 140, and look at the map.

[*After a while, he asks one of the six students, Lily, to read aloud*]

Teacher Taylor: Very good read, Lily. . . . Felicia could you go on? [*Felicia reads aloud*]

Teacher Taylor: Do you remember the rivers in the county of Halland?

[*Felicia names three of the four rivers*]

Teacher Taylor: Exactly. We read about that earlier. You remember it, don't you?

FELICIA: One of them is Lagan.

Catherine: One of them is Nissan.

Teacher Taylor: Nissan—that's right. I'll ask you about that on the test, I assure you—just to let you know. I'll test that you know the names of the five rivers. You just have to think about the names of the five rivers when you study Halland.

During the beginning of the first year, the two teachers in the control groups utilized strategies that are typical of both teacher-centered and student-centered teaching (Cuban, 1993). On one hand, the teachers utilized teacher-centered pedagogical strategies, such as having each of the six students read one section aloud. Furthermore, teacher Taylor taught to the test. On the other hand, the teachers expended considerable effort trying to connect what was stated in the text with

students' experiences (i.e. student-centered). However, first, making every student read aloud probably decreases each student's engagement, causing struggling readers to hesitate because they have to focus so much on the decoding process. Second, focusing on students' experiences is not necessarily a bad thing, but in the preceding text excerpt, the talk did not focus on the text content. Furthermore, there seems to be an inherent problem with transitioning from students' experiences to the content of the text.

At the end of the first year, the style of talking with the students was consistent with the style observed at the beginning of the year. The teacher still utilized a mixture of teacher-and student-centered strategies that left students less engaged in the text. This was almost certainly not the intention. As illustrated below, the teacher asked all of the students to read even though the text did not make sense to them.

Teacher Taylor: Let's read the text again.

Alice: I don't want to be the last one to read it out loud.

Teacher Taylor: You're not going to read the same text.

Catherine: We can reverse the order.

Teacher Taylor: No; I want to choose the order you'll read aloud in.

Catherine: That's fine with me.

Teacher Taylor: Will you start, Lilly?

3.2 *The second and third years*

During the first year, the teachers did not encourage their students to comment on their peers' contributions spontaneously. The students therefore did as they were accustomed to doing: They raised their hands before answering. This changed during the second and the third years of the intervention. Consider the following excerpt:

Teacher Woods: What do you think the author wants to tell us in this text segment?
[Author-oriented question]

ANNE: That he—he knows what it's like to be a murderer, and he's probably murdered a few people, and now he feels guilty and wants to stop other children from murdering.

Teacher Woods: Hm. **[Turning back to the students]**

ANNE: Or he thought it was horrible, and now he wants to stop other children from being used as child soldiers.

Teacher Woods: Hm. **[Turning back to the students]**

ANNE: It's rather horrible what he's done, and he's probably murdered so many people.

The teacher did not need to call for students' contributions because the students, including the poor comprehender Anne, spontaneously contributed to the text talk and managed to read between and beyond the lines. Not only the teacher but also the students could annotate the text. To encourage them do this, Woods apostrophized the author and used the verb *think*. After Anne's first answer, Woods only said, 'Hm', thus encouraging the student to think further (third year of intervention).

3.3 *Turning back*

One teacher encouraged students to turn back to the text when they discussed child soldiers.

ANNE: I think many child soldiers fight in guerrilla wars to get money for their families...

Teacher Woods: But before, you said you believed that their families had been killed, and that's the reason why the child soldiers don't hesitate to kill other people. **[Turning back to text]**

Philip: Even child soldiers are different.

Alva: I agree. They're different. I can't imagine child soldiers having parents. **[Student follow-up]**

Philip: Me neither. Their fathers are probably in the army, too. **[Student follow-up]**

Alva: Maybe their parents, their brothers and sisters, and other relatives have been killed. **[Student follow-up]**

Teacher Woods: What do you think gets them to participate in guerrilla wars apart from earning a hundred dollars a day? **[Turning back to text]**

Philip: They get food.

Alva: Maybe they want revenge. **[Student follow-up]**

Teacher Woods: A moment, please! You have to wait your turn.

Alva: Maybe they want revenge because their parents have been killed in guerrilla wars. **[Student follow-up]**

ANNE: They want revenge. **[Student follow-up]**

In the preceding discussion, the poor comprehender Anne initially answered without checking whether her answer connected with what they had read earlier. Teacher Woods then applied the strategy of turning back to the text: "But before, you said ...". Turning back to the text is a move that involves rereading a segment of text. Rereading provides students with another chance to consider the text and to reflect on the ideas in it (Beck & McKeown, 2006). Rereading sparks the cognitive processes in the students' minds, and in this instance, the good comprehender Alva began to build a chain of inference. The good comprehender Philip comment-

ed, and then Anne chimed in again. They were very engaged, so the teacher had to remind them not to interrupt one another (third year of intervention).

3.4 Segmenting texts

The teachers in the QtA groups segmented the texts regularly. Consider the way in which one teacher segmented the final text read in the intervention, ‘Hiu Minh, 8, Runs a Marathon—Per Day’.

Hiu Minh is eight years old and runs a marathon every day. The little girl is training hard for the Olympics.

—I want to win a gold medal, she says. (*first segmentation*)

Hiu Minh is not the only one undergoing tough training before the Olympics. Several thousand children are estimated to attend so-called training camps, where most of the day consists of training sessions. In 8-year-old Hiu Minh’s case, her dad is her coach. He wakes her up at three in the morning, according to Sky News, to face a day of super-tough training.

Before the sun goes down, Hiu Minh has run the distance of a marathon, the equivalent of 42 kilometers ... (*second segmentation*; third year of intervention).

Teacher Berg marked his first segmentation after the third sentence; it seems he thought that students would have many questions about the 8-year-old Chinese girl who wanted to win a gold medal. The second segment comprises five sentences. In this segment, as in the first, a great deal of information is implied, and students must fill in the answers to questions that are raised there. The text is also demanding in that the students need to be media-critical. The phrase *according to Sky News* appears here, but the text was published in the Swedish newspaper *Expressen*. The following discussion excerpt shows that teacher Berg used several moves in the ensuing discussion.

Teacher Berg: Has the author expressed himself explicitly? [**Author-oriented question**]

RICHARD: No.

Teacher Berg: You don’t think so? [**Turning back to student**]

RICHARD: No.

Teacher Berg: How do you mean? [**Turning back to student**]

RICHARD: Does she have any spare time to be together with her friends when she has to train all day long? [**Student initiates a question**]

MATTHEW: Has she got time to eat? [**Student initiates a question**]

RICHARD: Is it possible for her to take a break when running? Take a break for a snack? [**Student initiates a question**]

...

RICHARD: It didn’t say anything about what Sky News is. [**Student finds a gap in the text**]

Teacher Berg: What do you think Sky News is? **[Turning back to students]**

This excerpt shows that Teacher Berg used the author-oriented questions effectively. The poor comprehenders Richard and Matthew found several gaps and unanswered questions in the text: “Does she have any spare time ...?”, “Is it possible to take a break ...?”, “It did not say anything ...”. Teacher Berg used the discussion move of turning back to students in order to find out if anyone had prior knowledge of Sky News.

3.5 Revoicing

Teacher Berg: Does she really have a life of her own? Is that what you mean Richard?
[Revoicing]

The revoicing move has a function similar to that of marking. In both cases, the students have already done the thinking work, and the moves emphasize and establish ideas so that they can become part of the text talk. The original meaning of revoicing is that the teacher tries to interpret, as Berg did in the preceding text excerpt, what students are struggling to express and rephrases the ideas so that they can become part of the discussion. Revoicing is thus a rendering “in other words” (Beck & McKeown, 2006, p. 96). In this study, however, teachers used the strategy of asking students to revoice. This helps *students* to express themselves more clearly and focused as can be seen in the excerpt below.

Teacher Woods: Can you express in your own words what the author wants to tell us in the text segment you just read? **[Author-oriented question]**

PETER: That all athletes should train to run in the Olympic Games.

Teacher Woods: Hm. What does that mean? **[Turning back to student]**

PETER: That all athletes should train in order to run in the Olympic Games. Or everyone should keep on training. **[Student revoices]**

...

Teacher Woods: Do you think she runs a marathon every day voluntarily? **[Turning back to text]**

ANNE: No.

CHARLES: Maybe. **[Student follow-up]**

Teacher Woods: A moment please. You have to speak one at a time.

ANNE: I think she’s chosen to do it voluntarily. It doesn’t seem necessary. She has to go to bed at five o’clock in the afternoon. **[Student follow-up]**

CHARLES: I think ... she wants to participate in the Olympic Games, and she must know she has to train very hard. **[Student follow-up]**

PETER: I think she must be mad. **[Student follow-up]**

ANNE: I agree. You don’t run a marathon every day. **[Student follow-up]**

Philip: How can she have so much time to run? **[Student follow-up]**

ANNE: Maybe her family is poor, and if she wins a marathon, they'll get money and get sponsors and stuff. So maybe her father wants her to get an Olympic medal. **[Student follow-up]**

3.6 *Recapping*

Recapping what has been read can be done in several ways. Teachers Berg and Woods regularly recapped after each segment and after all segments.

Teacher Berg: Would you tell us in your own words what this section was about? **[Recap a segment]**

...

Teacher Berg: Do you see any similarities between schools then and schools now? **[Recap the whole text]**

Teacher Woods: Do you see any similarities between schools then and schools now? **[Recap the whole text]**

Teacher Berg: Let's summarize the whole text! **[Recap the whole text]**

...

Teacher Berg: Let's recap. Will you do that, Molly? **[Recap the segment]**

As these excerpts show, teachers Berg and Woods asked students to summarize all of the segments, using the same question. Teachers who lead talks often use this kind of summary, in which students recap and reformulate. Allowing students to summarize helps them to become accustomed to consolidating what they have just read. Summarizing shows that they have grasped the essential meaning of the text and are ready to move on to the next segment (cf. Beck & McKeown, 2006).

3.7 *Marking*

Teacher Woods: The text states that the classes consisted of students of different ages. What does that mean? **[Revoice]**

PETER: That there weren't very big schools and one single grade couldn't be alone in the classroom but had to be there together with other grades.

...

FREDERIC: They didn't have enough classrooms. **[Student follow-up]**

Teacher Woods: Maybe. **[Turning back to the students]**

FREDERIC: And not enough students in each grade.

HARRY: Maybe there were just a few students in each grade. **[Student follow-up]**

Teacher Woods: Will you repeat...? **[Marking]**

HARRY: Maybe there weren't so many young students but many older ones, so they had to share a classroom.

The students had read a text about schools during the 19th century. In this exchange, the teacher used the strategy of marking—that is, she drew attention to what Harry had said in order to emphasize its importance. Bringing a student's idea into the public arena is important because it represents a first step in using students' ideas to develop discussion. Through marking, a teacher also acknowledges students' efforts to build meaning.

3.8 Annotating

Teacher Berg: If you look at the bottom of the page, you can see *TT-AFP*. What does that mean?

NEIL: A newspaper.

Teacher Berg: It's a Swedish news agency. The news agency receives news from all over the world and sends it to newspapers. AFP is another news agency. **[Annotating]**

...

Teacher Berg: Is there anything in the text that the author has omitted? **[Teacher asks students to annotate]**

Teacher Berg: The text states that the pupils read and had math and laboratory work at school.

NEIL: What does *laboratory work* mean? **[Student initiates a question]**

Teacher Berg: Do you know what *laboratory work* means? **[Turning back to the students]**

Mary: I couldn't pronounce it.

Teacher Berg: What do you think it means? **[Turning back to students]**

[No answers]

Teacher Berg: At secondary school, you have to do laboratory work in physics and chemistry. **[Annotating]**

The text did not state what the abbreviations TT and AFP stood for, but teacher Berg asked the students to explain what the abbreviations meant. Because they did not know exactly, he filled in the necessary information. In the second excerpt, Neil wanted to know the meaning of *laboratory work*, and teacher Berg turned Neil's question back to the other students. When no one answered, teacher Berg himself annotated.

3.9 What happened in the control groups?

At the end of the second year of study, teacher Taylor was conducting lessons in much the same way as he had in the first year. In the text excerpt below, the students had read the text 'Save the Children'.

Teacher Taylor: We help many countries nowadays where there is a war going on.

Alice: Is there any country in the world that does not help poor countries?

Teacher Taylor: I am sure there is.

Catherine: We're neutral, teacher Taylor.

Alice: We're neutral.

Teacher Taylor: We're neutral and do not participate in NATO.

Alice: What is NATO?

Teacher Taylor: Or the Warsaw Pact.

Catherine: What about Finland?

Teacher Taylor: We can be on good terms with other countries.

Catherine: Denmark.

Teacher Taylor: You can't compare them.

Catherine: What about if Denmark and Norway started a war?

The lesson ended with little progress.

Teacher Taylor: Time has passed quickly. We have to conclude.

Alice: What does *conclude* mean?

Teacher Taylor: 'Finish'.

Alice: Let's finish, then.

[*The lesson ends*]

The text was read aloud, and the talk after a while soon departed from the content of the text. Instead of talking about 'Save the Children', the talk was mostly about Nordic defense policy. Thus, the students did not get the opportunity to grapple with ideas in the actual text. As already mentioned, it is important to encourage students to build upon their classmates' comments in order for text talk *to be practiced* effectively. The good comprehenders, Alice and Catherine, were allowed to dominate the text talk. Although the good comprehenders built on each other's comments, these were not comments on ideas in the texts. The teacher never applied the strategy of turning back or recapping. The text talk ended in the middle of nowhere.

Furthermore, the teacher did not make any further effort to encourage the four poor comprehenders to participate in the discussion. This observation aligns with the Slavin hypothesis (2009), which states that under unstructured teaching conditions, high-achieving students will be dominant. Unstructured teaching conditions thus disadvantage low-achieving students because those students take less initiative and receive fewer opportunities to participate. One might argue that this teacher had not participated in the seminars in which teachers in the QtA groups were instructed in QtA; however, turning back and recapping as strategies are not

unique to QtA. On the contrary, they are found in most instructional contexts (Anmarkrud & Bråten, 2012).

4. DISCUSSION

The present study's overall aim is to evaluate how the teachers adapted QtA discussion moves in small groups of six participants. No such study has been conducted in a Scandinavian context.

Over the three years, the communication patterns in the QtA groups were changed. During the first text talk, the IRE pattern (Dillon, 1990) was dominant and the teachers had difficulties to keep the discussion focused and constructive. But the IRE pattern changed during the course of the intervention. Thus during the second and third years, these difficulties had mostly disappeared. One explanation for this may be that during the seminars, teachers were able to watch the video recordings and to evaluate, in cooperation with the researcher, their use of the QtA discussion moves. In contrast to the teachers in the control groups, the teachers in the QtA groups were more attentive to where the students were in the construction process, prior knowledge, etc.; and that may have affected the way they directed the text talk.

The teachers seemed to prefer the strategies: turning back, recapping, revoicing and annotating. The teachers used annotating in two ways: Sometimes, they themselves provided the additional information needed, but they also asked students to do this. In order to do this, they mostly used author-oriented questions. In addition, the teachers also used turning back in two ways—turning back to the text and turning back to the students. Revoicing, likewise, was employed in two ways—the teacher either reformulated or asked the students to express the idea in their own words.

Why, then, were modelling and marking not preferred? One explanation may be that these strategies are more difficult to practice fluently. That is because fluency in text talk is hard to achieve. Accordingly, teacher's major challenge in QtA is to use students' responses in order to build productive text talk. Encouraging students to listen and respond to one another does not succeed at first (cf. Beck & McKeown, 2006). Learning QtA takes time. That is because teachers need training over longer periods of time to get comfortable with the discussion moves. Thus an explanation for the successfulness may be that the training process for QtA has consisted of seminars over longer periods of time. During the seminars, the teachers could watch their video-recorded lessons. Together, we analysed the transcripts with regard to the teachers' use of discussion moves, segmentation etc. Furthermore, I had demonstration lessons. The training and lesson practice had the effect that the teacher implemented all the strategies over the second and third year.

Compared with previous QtA studies in which whole class design was used, the present study used small group design (Sandora et al., 1999). The study indicates that this design can support the meaning-making process due to the fact that the

students are given more opportunities to interact with the teacher as well as with their peers. The teachers' strategies scaffolded students' comprehension processes, thus providing opportunities for them to reflect upon events and ideas and to scrutinize connections as they were encountered in the expository text being read (see also Beck et al., 2006; Sandora et al., 1999; Slavin, 2009).

The study *concludes* firstly that all the teachers in the QtA groups applied all of the strategies in QtA. Secondly, the teachers need training in how to teach comprehension strategies in order to apply them systematically in practice. Thirdly, developing QtA in the classroom requires time.

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