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An Exploration of Elementary Student Responses to the Interest Inventory for Informational Texts Based on the Teacher Disposition Delivery

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AN EXPLORATION OF ELEMENTARY STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE IN-

TEREST INVENTORY FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXTS BASED ON THE

TEACHER DISPOSITION DELIVERY

by

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ABSTRACT

The impact that a teacher can have on their students is monumental. Teachers often are the only consistent figure of authority that a student sees. Therefore, a vulnerable and conformable environment is crucial for students, so they can share their needs and in return have them met. With this in mind, teachers must consider forming their classroom environment, because of how it is received by the students. This study examined the impact that a teacher's disposition can have on the response of a student through a six-question interview by analyzing the number of words spoken by the students depending on the disposition of the teacher used to ask the question. This study aimed to identify the possible impacts of teacher disposition on student responses using a sample of 17 elementary aged students attending a summer reading clinic at a Florida university. After a face-to-face, six-question interview was administered to the students, results showed some students made a overall shift towards more words spoken when the question was asked in an interested or neutral disposition. These results demonstrate the potential impact of teacher disposition on student response in the classroom. The results of this study complement past research, which has shown that classrooms in a welcoming and comfortable environment are more likely for students to share their needs, leading to success for both students and teacher.

DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated to my parents. Thank you for always supporting me unconditionally and reminding me that I am capable of more than I believe. I am excited about this next chapter of my life and know I would not be where I am without you guys loving me as well as you have.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Teacher disposition, also known as the teacher values, attitude or perceptions, have lost importance over the years due to the No Child Left Behind Act. Teacher disposition can be influenced by a multitude of variables: sleep, stress, frustration, home life, and student behavior. Teacher dispositions are the principles or standards that underpin a teacher's success in the classroom. However, many teachers often do not view their disposition and their students' response as part of an exchange. A teacher's disposition does not simply end with the words they speak or the actions they take, but the return impact it will have on the student as an individual. "We have to remember that we are not just giving students feedback; we are also teaching them to provide it." (Johnston, 2004, p. 37). Although a teacher alone is not responsible for a student's success, it is their job to best equip them. Making sure that the approach is positive, and reinforcing is a great place to start. Often, the teacher corrects the undesired behavior of students rather than reinforcing the positive. Teacher modeling of student expectations will allow students to incorporate more of those positive and desired behaviors as well. "The instructor has to use strategies in the class-room that are student-centered and challenging, and that put the responsibility on the stu-dent as much as on the instructor to enhance student engagement in learning" (Alsharif, 2014, p.ii). The teacher's attitude can be a direct reflection of their classroom. The students are looking to the teacher for guidance; therefore, the role needs to be taken seriously and with care.

How would it feel to begin sharing an area of weakness or something that was important to you and your teacher showing little to no interest? There would be no desire to continue to express the thoughts further because the student would seem minimized, irrelevant, and even cause hesitation with sharing in the future. Allowing vulnerability, especially towards someone of authority, requires bravery. Taking a chance in hopes that your concerns will be heard and prioritized. "Children who doubt their competence set low goals and choose easy tasks, and they plan poorly. When students face difficulties, they become confused, lose concentration, and start telling themselves stories about their own incompetence" (Johnston, 2004, p. 40). How are teachers supposed to foster their students' learning when students are hesitant to share their academic needs? Establishing a comfortable classroom environment for the students is key. When a student is comfortable in the learning environment and perceives it to be a carefree environment then they will be more likely to share their needs. "Children, just like adults, learn better in a supportive environment in which they can risk trying out new strategies and concepts and stretching themselves intellectually" (Johnston, 2004, p. 65). Making sure that the teacher's attitude towards the students is accepting, available, and positive will greatly impact their rapport with the students as well as directly impact their academic success.

Students' responses can be displayed in a multitude of different ways, such as a gesture, verbal affirmation, or a simple shift in behavior. This most often occurs when the student feels as though their thoughts, ideas, and or struggles are important as individuals. Viewing this exchange as dialogue (Plank, 2014, p.98) can assist in creating a more productive environment. Although teachers' job is to foster student's development and deliver

information, they also need to be willing to receive feedback from their students. Often, teachers continually face the same problems of students being unwilling to receive feedback because the student will not vocalize their area of need. We need to collaborate, and to do so, both the teacher and student need to work as a team.

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze students' responses to an interest inventory based on the varying dispositions of a teacher by asking a series of six questions derived from Interest Inventory of Information Texts (Appendix B), (DeVries, 2015) to 17 individual elementary students. The potential benefit of this research was seen in exploring how teacher disposition may or may not impact students' responses and then to bring the results that yield increased student responses into the classroom.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the research literature on how teachers' dispositions influence student responses highlight the impact of teacher enthusiasm as well as student motivation. The student-teacher relationship has a potentially severe impact on how a student perceives and responds to the teacher's disposition. Creating a respectful environment also allows the student to feel comfortable expressing a lack of understanding. Most of this research focuses on influences or impacts on student success because of the teacher's disposition. Much less research exists around the attitude or disposition of the student and how students' dispositions may influence or impact the teacher's motivation with the student. The following review of research literature concentrates on the teacher-student relationship and dialogue while highlighting teacher enthusiasm and classroom environment, including teacher disposition's effect on student success, teacher to student care and empathy, and studies on teacher enthusiasm.

Teacher Disposition's Effect on Student Success

Not many studies have been done measuring teacher behaviors or dispositions that actively promote students' intrinsic motivation to learn. However, existing studies of college students are discussed here. In the first study, 93 students were given a questionnaire consisting of multiple different forms of positive teaching behavior. The results of this study showed that teacher enthusiasm was "the most powerful unique predictor of students' intrinsic motivation and vitality" (Patrick, 2010, p. 217). The second study was conducted with 60 college students and was set to measure high and low levels of student enthusiasm (Patrick, 2010, p. 217). One group was part of a lecture that was divided based on high

levels of enthusiasm that group proved to be more intrinsically motivated and rerouted higher retention.

Teacher disposition can impact, not only the success of the classroom but the life-long success of the individual. "Autonomy-supportive teachers showed a distinctive motivating style as measured by their conversational behaviors, interpersonal style, and attempts to support students' intrinsic motivational and internalization processes" (Reeve, 1999, p.iii). Some think this act has led us away from quality and more towards quantity, "emphasizing knowledge and pedagogical skills", to focus on teaching to the test. Teacher disposition can have long-term impacts on the students and NCATE (The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) felt the need to bring professional disposition back. Early in this decade, NCATE incorporated professional disposition into their accredited standards to ensure it would reenter the classroom. Research has also been done to support this addition going back more than 50 years showing dispositions have a positive influence on student success. "Effective teacher dispositions can be organized into four measurable domains": The most effective teachers perceive themselves as effective. They believe that all students can learn, they have a broad frame of reference and see a larger purpose for what they do, they look at the people element (Hallam, 2009, p. 27).

However, research is only the first step, applying that knowledge to real functioning classrooms is when success may begin to surface. "Instructional leadership better captures the impact of school leadership on student outcome, when compared to its transformational counterpart." (Dutta, 2016, p. 941). Some assessment tools can be found on the NNSED (Northern Suburban Special Education District) site. The tools were originally used in a Ca-

reers in Education course to help students identify the best-fit position for them. The assessments "consist of four assignments including a human relations incident in which students describe how they have worked in a teaching or helping environment, a reflection on the students favorite teacher, self-instructional training on the perceptual rubrics complemented with class discussions on the disposition of effective educators, and an in-depth self-reflection that integrates the other assignments and asks students to self-assess their fit for an education career," (Hallam, 2009, p. 27-28).

Another organization known as LACOE (Los Angeles County Office of Education) has a program called Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) that provides in-service training for teachers that teach K-12. This training is a research-based interactive model that allows teachers to practice supportive and motivational skills in a classroom setting. "I appreciated that TESA addressed the affective side of teaching, which is often easy for young teachers to forget about as they worry about content." (Hallam, 2009, p. 28).

The importance of teacher disposition also comes into play when looking at English Language Learners. "Teachers have to be critically aware of sameness, as well as the differences, of the students in front of them," says Haley (in Hallam, 2009, p.29). A teacher's attitude in the classroom can raise or lower "effective filters" (Hallam, 2009, p. 29). Teachers may need to understand and accept that students will make mistakes, however, it's teacher responses to those mistakes that will determine student motivation to try again. "A student with moderate ability can be inspired to improve by a motivating teacher" (Hallam, 2009, p. 29). Every adult can think of one individual that they would label or identity as their favorite teacher. What did this individual do or say to earn this title? Most likely it was their

disposition. Wasicsko (in Hallam, 2009), has been conducting nationwide research collecting memories about individuals' favorite teachers. "Wasicsko analyzed about 2,500 individuals who reported that favorite teachers cared about them and believed in them. Through a teacher's disposition, teachers can bring out a student's best, whatever that may be. "Those we call our favorite teachers are those teachers who can produce more than a year's worth of change with a year's worth of effort. Not every learner ends up in the same place. But it is our goal to make them feel successful" (Hallam, 2009, p. 27).

Feedback between student and teacher is best framed as dialogue; therefore, both the teacher and student have important roles to play. This study also focuses on the experiences and interactions needed to support the learning needs as well as the disposition of the teacher needed to create a comfortable and trusting classroom environment. When studying the idea of feedback, seeing the importance of both parties reconceptualizing their roles in the classroom is potentially crucial to student success. Teachers are solely responsible, yet classroom control and maintaining community in the classroom are the result of interactive relationships. Teachers cannot expect the students to passively receive the information that is given. Teachers are expected to foster positive, working relationships with the students and create a mindset that will allow them to be independent. Students, on the other hand, must become responsible for their learning and become comfortable with expressing their own learning needs. Understanding that it is imperative to their improvement and success.

The concept of feedback has been criticized in the past due to its one-way format, leading to dependency. However, teacher feedback is better seen as dialogue, intended to

be reciprocated by both parties participating. Feedback can be planned or spontaneous and can occur in different forms, for example; comments, grades, marks, oral responses, or non-verbal gestures. One group of teachers viewed feedback as a process controlled by teachers; however, another group placed more emphasis on the students' roles as well (Plank, 2014, p. 99). They were able to see the importance of the students being active participants and generating feedback about their own learning.

"Not much research has been done about the student's role in the feedback process or how it can be used to modify the teaching that they experience" (Plank, 2014, p. 99). When feedback is framed as dialogue, it is not burdensome and contains detail in the form of prompts or cues. Some students preferred for the teacher to take the lead and direct them with their feedback. However, when directed, the emotional responses range. Although some students can become motivated, many students are also discouraged, or their learning is then inhibited. The culture of the classroom directly impacts the students' willingness to admit that they are confused or are lacking understanding.

` Because of these varied responses to research was aimed to discover a students' understanding of their roles in feedback. How can feedback enhance their learning as well as what influences their willingness to share or conceal their needs? The sample was made up of 14 students from a secondary school for girls in New Zealand. This grade level was selected since by this age they have had experience giving and receiving feedback. The group of 14 was broken into two focus group interviews to promote and explore collaboration (Plank, 2014).

Once the data was analyzed, several themes came from the data set once complet-ed; 1) feedback to improve learning and teaching; 2) classroom climate and teacher attribu-tions conducive to the giving of feedback to teachers and classroom climate; and 3) teacher attributions that inhibit the giving of feedback to teachers. Students wanted to give feedback to their teachers for two reasons. First, they realized that if it the teacher's job to support their learning they need to inform the teachers about their misconceptions, and confusion. Signaling to one's teacher that there is not understanding serves as a reference point that allows teachers to help the individual student with their learning goals. This way, the student and teacher, collaboratively, would be able to "map out what you want to achieve" (Plank, 2014, p.102). Second, providing feedback would enable teachers to be-come more aware of how effective their practices are among their students. Teachers would also be able to better identify if they are meeting the student learning needs. Stu-dents also discussed how they felt the need to affirm their teachers when they were com-prehending material and their needs were being met. They appreciated informal and fre-quent checking in on the students. They also appreciated movement. Movement through-out the classroom allowed for individual dialogue without feelings being singled out. Al-though students felt this feedback to the teachers was important, they were also conscious of how it was delivered. The students felt the need to be sensitive towards their teacher's feelings to avoid harming the teacher-student relationship. Students, therefore, resisted telling the complete truth or being overly critical. The teachers who allowed unsolicited feedback from students were more receptive to feedback and created an overall more posi-tive classroom environment. Students used words such as "comfortable, relaxed, and care-

free" to describe positive teacher role models. "Teachers reactions to students' feedback were critical to students' confidence, responsiveness, and willingness to disclose further learning needs" (Plank, 2014, p.103).

Teacher to Student Care and Empathy

A teacher's impact on a student is not dependent on their socio-economic status. An example of two students is given at the beginning of the article painting a scene for one student who is well dressed, well prepared, and supported by her parents (Harme & Pianta, 2001). The other student is lacking some school supplies and is not as clean cut as his peer. Immediately, he tells himself that he does not belong, and begins adopting the lies his parent have told him about his intellect, as truth. This scenario happens more often than it should, and the disposition of the teacher towards these students that has the potential to build a positive reality.

Unfortunately, socioeconomic status does influence student academic success in school, which students get more academic focus, and which students are "too difficult". However, dedicated teachers, with the right dispositions, can be the key to reaching students who do not come from wealthy or privileged homes. Harme and Pianta (2001) found that students with significant behavior problems in their early years are less likely to have problems later in school if their teachers are sensitive to their needs and provide frequent, consistent and positive feedback. Student perceptions of caring on the part of their teachers are substantially associated with the students' affective learning and their perceptions of their cognitive learning (Teven,1997, p. 3). Harm and Pianta (2001) studied 179 students from kindergarten to eighth grade. Even after evaluating gender, ethnicity, cognitive ability,

and behavior ratings, the intimate student-teacher relationship was most predictive of overall school success. "Teacher involvement is central to children's experiences in the classroom and teacher provision can predict children's motivation across the school year" (Skinner, 1993, p. 572).

Likewise, Davies and Brember's (1999) study found that feelings of being unworthy or worthless contributed to math and reading performance forming their self-image while receiving feedback from others. Laugh and Hoare (2004) linked academic performance and self-esteem in their study by giving the students counseling and support to assist in career and educational decisions. Upon completion, all students involved saw an increase in academic performance.

Teachers may be better equipped to set high self-esteem levels in children at a young age by becoming more aware of chronological junctions in brain development that can impact emotional development. A teacher is the most important element when guiding a student towards or away from success, at a time when developmentally they need and rely on teachers the most. Although teachers are expected to teach their subject well to their students, they first need to be willing to foster student relationships.

A case study in Saskatchewan, Canada among a group of high school students, was created to determine what it was about a teacher that caused the students to thrive, grow, and enjoy creating a desire to return to school each day. The students came from six different socioeconomic and cultural areas and were part of focus group interviews. The student responses did point to several different ideas. However, the most prominent was "teacher relational instincts and capacities" (Stelmach, 2017, p. 1). Of these capacities, there were

three main capacities that the students seemed to lean towards; "empathetic responsiveness to the student as a whole being, the degree to which teacher disposition influenced the relational dynamic with students, and teacher's responsiveness to the full context of the student's life (regardless of culture)" (Stelmach, 2017, p. 1). The study concluded that "teaching attributes of being relational, responsible, and understanding of contextually as influential in fostering engaged learning environments a group of students" (Stelmach, 2017, p. 13).

Factors of Teacher Enthusiasm

"Although teacher enthusiasm is a relevant variable in the teaching context, a clear definition is still lacking. Research on teacher enthusiasm is characterized by ambiguous conceptualizations of enthusiasm as either an effective characteristic of teachers or behaviors of expressiveness." (Keller, 2014, p. 29). Students, regardless of age, can perceive and determine a teacher's level of enthusiasm and feed directly off that alone (Keller, 2014, p. 29). If the teacher lacks the excitement or enjoyment of the topic, it will reflect on the students as well, making it crucial for teachers to align their attitudes and levels of enthusiasm with those desired from their students.

In the book *Choice Words* by Johnston (2012), he opens by discussing the interaction between a mother and baby. Although the baby may be too young to form words, the mother views her child as a conversation partner. She listens for the sounds and noises her child makes and then determines the possibilities of his/her intentions. This notion is also what teachers could do with their students. When a classroom center gets out of hand or a student is confused about a certain strategy, teachers should view this as an opportunity to

adapt their skills to meet the needs of the classroom. The varying student responses that one might have will directly impact the responses that are elicited as well as show the perceived relationships of the speaker and students.

Johnston (2004) next discusses the power of recognition. Teachers have the responsibility to recognize when a student is moving toward, or coming to, an area of confusion. The more that the educator fosters the student's ability to recognize and identify, the less the teacher needs to be the one to identify what focus is important. Teachers also assist students in creating their identity. Using encouraging ideas and positive reinforcement for desired behavior will help in molding these identities. However, often students will see these words as empty. A positive, uplifting, and empowering classroom environment can build rapport with students to solidify the teacher's impact. Normalizing potential failure could also allow students to be successful, encouraging students to discuss disappointments, what went wrong, and how it can be improved for the next time. "If children are not making errors, they are not putting themselves in learning situations." (Johnston, 2012, p. 32).

Wood's study (1988) focused on the cognitive and affective mechanisms underlying the influences of teacher positivity and enthusiasm. To test this, researchers focused on three models: motivation, attention, and memory encoding. Researchers conducted this study on beginning psychology students in a recorded university lecture hall. Each of the students were randomly assigned to one of the four treatment conditions: low enthusiasm, high enthusiasm/ strategic, high enthusiasm/random, and high enthusiasm/uniform.

The low enthusiasm condition contained little to no enthusiastic teaching behaviors; where-as, the high enthusiasm/strategic condition contained high enthusiasm teaching behaviors focused on the topic structure of the lecture. The high enthusiasm/random condition also included many enthusiastic teaching behaviors however they did not always coincide with the lecture topic. The final condition, high enthusiasm/uniform, included frequent enthusiastic teaching behaviors, but they all remained constant throughout the lesson.

The motivation model predicted that "the student learning and motivation for further learning would be higher in all three high enthusiastic conditions than in the low enthusiastic condition" (Wood, 1988, p. 109), and the attention model predicted that "students' learning, attention, and on-task behaviors would be higher in the three high enthusiasm conditions than in the low enthusiasm condition" as well. The memory model predicted that "student learning and memory encoding and topic representation would be higher in the high enthusiasm/strategic condition than in the other three." (Wood, 1988, p. iv).

Unfortunately, the salary of the professional impacts their motivation as well. "The results of the research show that the level of teacher's income has an impact on student's achievements. Confirming the fact that the teaching profession is more popular as incomes increase and therefore attracts more motivated and skilled individuals" (Lukas, 2014). Researchers have identified connections between teacher enthusiasm and positive student achievement, test performance, recall, on-task behavior, attitudes toward learning, intrinsic motivation toward the subject matter, feelings of vitality, and ratings of teacher effective-ness" (Mitchell, 2013, p. 22).

Statistical analysis, done using a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), suggested that teacher enthusiasm has a significant effect on student motivation, attention, and memory encoding (Mitchell, 2013). The memory model that calculated student learning was the most effective model used. The memory model also confirmed, "student learning, was significantly facilitated only when teacher enthusiasm was used strategically to emphasize important points in the lecture" (Wood, 1988, p. iv). Also, text memory was the only variable that was able to be mediated between student learning and teacher enthusiasm. To have a significant impact on student learning, teaching strategies should be enthusiastic, strategic, and in alignment with the topic of a teacher's lesson or lecture. In conclusion, the Wood study showed that you cannot guarantee learning and success simply from teacher enthusiasm.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Statement of Problem

The focus of this research was to determine ow the delivery of an interview question impacted the length of a student's response. This research was conducted by observing student's responses to an interest inventory to determine how student response was influenced by teacher disposition. Existing research has proven that teacher disposition and interest towards students will not only impact student self-esteem and confidence, but student motivation and willingness to contribute. (Plank, 2014, p. 103).

Participants

The sample was selected from a group of 17 elementary-aged students, enrolled in a summer reading clinic at a university in Florida. Given the timeline and available resources for this honors research, a large enough sample size was unable to be procured. Therefore, sufficient data was not collected about each participant to eliminate certain variables. To confirm a correlation, one would need to have a larger sample size as well as a longer period to observe the participants. However, the documented experience of recording and transcribing interaction allowed the researcher to analyze qualitative transcripts to reach a conclusion.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

	Age	Rising Grade	Gender
Student 1	12	6	F
Student 2	10	5	M
Student 3	10	4	M
Student 4	9	5	M
Student 5	9	4	F
Student 6	8	3	F
Student 7	8	3	M
Student 8	7	3	F
Student 9	7	2	F
Student 10	6	2	F
Student 11	6	2	F
Student 12	6	1	M
Student 13	6	1	F
Student 14	5	1	F
Student 15	5	K	F
Student 16	5	K	M
Student 17	5	K	M

Table 1 provides the basic demographics of participants: age, rising grade, and gender. Students' grade and age as of summer transition into a new school year are shown before.

Procedure

    This cross-sectional, qualitative study involved 17 elementary aged students enrolled in a summer reading clinic. Each student was interviewed by the researcher using six questions found on the Informational Text Interest Inventory (DeVries, 2015, p. 465). Question One (What is your favorite subject in school?) and Four (What do you want to be when you grow up?) were asked in an interested tone, Question Two (What subject that is not offered in school do you wish you could study?) and Five (What is your favorite book?) were asked neutrally, and Question Three (On Saturday what is your favorite thing to do?) and Six (If you could hop on a magic carpet, where in the world would you like to go?) were asked in an uninterested tone. The three dispositions were exhibited in the same order for all students. If a student provided a minimal response to a question that was asked, they

were not additionally probed or prompted. The researcher moved to the next question. The interested tone consisted of consistent eye contact, a smile, and a higher pitch in the voice. The neutral tone had no facial expression and the question was read in a robotic tone, however, eye contact was still present. The uninterested tone consisted of no eye contact and a low tone of voice, the question ended in a scowling look elsewhere by the researcher. All student responses were audio recorded and transcribed. The data collected and analyzed included the number of words spoken within the response for each question asked. The amount of time that the student spoke was not utilized as a variable because it contained too many external variables. Once the student completed answering all six questions, they were instructed to return to their seat. No sustained relationship was continued with any of the students and the researcher following the interview.

Consent was obtained from parents or legal guardians using form HRP-502b. The parents or legal guardians were given two weeks to complete the consent form. No anticipated process was needed to ensure ongoing consent. All the mentioned research procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A).

Instrument

The DeVries (2015) Interest Inventory for Informational Text (see Appendix B) was used in this study because it provided a selection of age-appropriate questions that were easily understood by students. This recent Reading Interest Inventory (DeVries, 2015) is a vetted, published assessment intended to be used for academic purposes. Although children under the age of seven are less likely to be able to read independently, even younger students may likely be able to identify a book that they enjoy. The inventory also allowed

room for other responses or questions involving the personal interests of the participants rather than only focusing on academic topics. The Interest Inventory for Informational Text (DeVries, 2015) was used without modification in order to maintain the original intent, reliability, and validity of the instrument. One modification was made by the researcher. That is, the question relating to sports, for example, was omitted in the study because it did not appear to universally apply to the convenient sample involved in this study.

Setting

This study took place at a Summer Reading Clinic at a regional campus of a university in Florida. This three-week clinic was held during the summer to service area children as well as service learning, field experience linked to a language arts methods class, LAE 3414. The researcher set up a desk and two chairs outside of the clinic facility and individually interviewed each of the 17 students. The interview questions that were selected from the survey were displayed on a laptop for the researcher to follow. The entirety of each interview was recorded on a cellular device. Once the interview was complete, the student returned inside the room with the rest of their peers enrolled in the clinic.

Statistical Methodology

Once the auditory transcripts were completed, basic descriptive statistics were calculated by identifying the number of words spoken by each participant per question (see Table 1). The mean was selected because the study is looking for the averages. Given the unique findings related to each student and the factors they bring to the various dispositions displayed by teachers, the researcher decided to include the mean or the average.

Given the age, developmental level, gender, and perhaps personality factors, the researcher decided to examine each word count from the interview sessions. The researcher began this study by considering a more quantitative stance, but realized that a qualitative stance might produce richer findings. Therefore, this study provided word counts and excerpts from transcriptions.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The creation of a vulnerable and conformable environment is likely crucial for students, so they can share their needs and in return have them met. However, what the teacher is doing to form this classroom environment and how it is being received by the student is important. The study sample consisted of 17 elementary students from grades Kindergarten to sixth. Question Three (On Saturday what is your favorite thing to do?), which was asked in the neutral tone scored the highest in regard to the number of words spoken. Followed by Question Four (What do you want to be when you grow up?), which was asked in an interested tone. The remainder of the scores averaged approximately the same number of words. as evidenced in Table Two (see page 21). The interested tone scored second highest, but this difference was not statistically significant. Question Three (On Saturday, what is your favorite thing to do?), four (What do you want to be when you grow up?), and Six (If you could hop on a magic carpet, where in the world would you go?) all had the largest amount of words spoken. Of these, Question Three (On Saturday, what is your favorite thing to do?) is the only question that elicited above five words on average. This means that while students to respond better to an interested tone, the significance is seen more greatly with the absence of interest. The least difference in word count occurred in Question Two (What subject is not offered in school, do you wish you could study?) and Question Five (What is your favorite book?), with a minor change in the mean.

A similar study (Mader, 1982) conducted in a small mid-western college town also yielded similar results. "The study investigated the difference between "warm" versus "reserved" interviewing styles on the significance of quantity and quality. The study showed no

significant differences for any of these variables on the dependent measures of self-disclo-

sure, amount of speech, problem admissions, listing of reinforcers, and rated liking of the

interview. The findings suggest that the establishment of a warm, supporting relationship

may not be necessary for a short clinical child interview for obtaining a certain level of quali-

ty and quantity of information" (Mader, 1982, p. 5).

This research shows the importance of the students as individuals. Although devel-

oping rapport in the classroom is key to achieving success as well as a positive classroom

environment, gaps will remain unless the individual student is addressed. Tailoring curricu-

lum and teaching style to each student's needs is imperative to achieve success. It is im-

portant to understand the learning styles of your students as well. Some may need more

direct, hands-on approach, while others may need a tangible text to follow along with. Tak-

ing your student's body language into consideration can be a visual indicator as well. This

research focused primarily on the disposition of the researcher rather than the student's

perception of the researcher. Analyzing the facial expression, tone, voice volume, eye con-

tact, and body language of the students was not documented. Those factors can be ob-

served by the teacher to then alter their approach in order to be better received by the stu-

dent.

In Table 2, the results of the number of words spoken per student is displayed.

Table 2: Student Response (word count)

(Words Spoken)	#1 interested	#4 interested	Total	#5 uninterested	#2 uninterested	Total	#3 neutral	#6 neutral	Total
Student 1 (6th/F)	1	5	6	4	4	8	1	1	2
Student 2 (5th/M)	1	3	4	4	3	7	3	1	4
Student 3 (4th/M)	1	5	6	1	0	1	4	8	12
Student 4 (5th/M)	1	7	8	2	1	3	13	7	20
Student 5 (4th/F)	2	13	15	9	4	13	0	3	3
Student 6 (3rd/F)	1	5	6	2	1	3	4	2	6
Student 7 (3rd/M)	1	2	3	2	7	9	4	3	7
Student 8 (3rd/F)	1	17	18	2	4	6	14	5	19
Student 9 (2nd/F)	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	3
Student 10 (2nd/F)	1	2	3	3	6	9	19	6	25
Student 11 (2nd/F)	1	3	4	3	7	10	9	4	13
Student 12 (1st/M)	1	7	8	2	0	2	9	3	12
Student 13 (1st/F)	1	2	3	8	9	17	11	3	14
Student 14 (1st/F)	4	2	6	1	0	1	2	2	4
Student 15 (K/F)	1	8	9	9	3	12	7	4	11
Student 16 (K/M)	1	2	3	3	6	9	0	1	1
Student 17 (K/M)	1	3	4	2	1	3	3	5	8
Average words spoken	1.23529411764706	5.11764705882353	6.35294117647059	3.35294117647059	3.29411764705882	6.64705882352941	6.11764705882353	3.52941176470588	9.64705882352941

Table 2 shows the word count for each participant's response to the questions asked. Their responses to each of the varying dispositions are shown below. At the bottom of the table, you will find the average number of words spoken by each participant per question.

Based on the data collected, one pattern detected was that the female students spoke more words in comparison to the males. Three students were then compared from three different grade levels; First, Third, and Fourth grade. All three of these students were female and scored cumulatively the highest amount of words. When looking into the transcription of the first grader (Student 15), she answered "toys" to Question One (What is your favorite subject in school?) and "about people" to Question Two (What subject that is not offered in school do you wish you could study). These questions are both academic as well as contain vocabulary such as "subject" and "offered" that the student may not yet be familiar with. Those factors alone could have had an impact on the number of words spoken by the students because when she was asked Question Three (On Saturday what is your favorite thing to do?) she responded: "Um do something, go somewhere, play somewhere, and have fun somewhere". Question Three in contrast to Question One and Two was not academically based; therefore, her interest may have been higher as well are her

familiarity with the content that was being asked. Student 15 is very social and does well in groups of people. This could have affected her excitement in regards to academic topics because it is not her individual interest. When examining the findings between Student 8 and Student 5, the same pattern of fewer words per academic question was seen.

For example, Student 8 responded "reading" to Question One (What is your favorite subject in school?) and "It would be math" to Question Two (What subject that is not offered in school do you wish you could study). She was a very outgoing individual and talkative for the nonacademic questions. For example, she replied: "My school is not at the weekend so I like learning in the classroom" for Question Three (On Saturday what is your favorite thing to do?). Although she did not seem to understand what Question Three (On Saturday what is your favorite thing to do?) was asking she proceeded to elaborate. Her desire to under-stand did not hinder her desire or ability to respond adequately, making probability of her low word count for the first two questions due to a result of lack of understanding low. Student 5 followed the same pattern as Student 8 responding with the most words when the interested tone was used. For example, Student 5 responded "Probably P.E." to Ques-tion One (What is your favorite subject in school?) and "well I am homeschooled" to Ques-tion Two (What subject that is not offered in school do you wish you could study). However, when she was asked Question 3 (On Saturday what is your favorite thing to do?), she re-sponded with "Play games on my iPad or do school work, wait maybe that is Sunday". Al-though she appeared confused about the complete understanding of what was being asked she still elaborated further than the first two questions because she was able to share something personal that she enjoys and chooses to engage in during her free time.

After reviewing these results, female Students 5, Student 8, and Student 15 re-sponded more extensively when they were able to elaborate on their personal goals and interests. Although they had a response for Question One (What is your favorite subject in school?), their responses to Question Four (What do you want to be when you grow up?) were what contributed to a large number of words spoken. With Question Four (What do you want to be when you grow up?), the students were able to be creative and share their interests with the researcher. Students tend to thrive from being heard as well as a sense of importance. Listening to the student's goals and aspirations as individuals not only sets them apart but validates students.

Limitations and Influential Factors

In the future, I would add more variables to my research to increase credibility rather than simply testing one, such as the number of words spoken. When students responded only with a shrug, the researcher was unable to identify a response. With more time, the researcher might consider working in an alternative question or an adaptation in the case that the student simply misunderstood, as discussed by Doverborg (1984). If the student was unclear as to what the question meant or was unfamiliar with a word that was used, the researcher would be able to glean some important implications. However, given the time to complete this study, adding more factors was not realistic.

One limitation of this study was related to the sample size of 17 participants. A larger sample size may have been beneficial to the study to formulate a correlation between teacher disposition and student responses. Student access by the researcher was also lim-ited due to the time of year that the research took place. Most students were not involved in

school over the summer, making it more difficult for the investigator to create a substantial sample size. Another limitation was the age of the students. Although all grade levels were present in this sample, the amount and ratio of each were inconsistent. This becomes a limitation because developmentally different students, based on age or rising grade, may respond differently to varying stimulus. The question that resulted in the highest mean was asking about the student's activity on the weekend. Possibly, more students were likely to elaborate, compared to Question Two (What subject that is not offered in school, do you wish you could study?) which is more academically focused and difficult for a Kindergarten-aged student to determine due to their lack of experience, and lack of vocabulary development to voice their responses on the same level as the students in the fifth grade. Another limitation was the number of questions asked from the Interest Survey for Informational Text (Appendix B). Although the participants were asked a question with each varying disposition twice, this possibility does not allow for patterns to be determined with a great deal of accuracy.

Another limitation of this data gathered may be that Question One (What is your favorite subject in school?) elicited only a one-word response (What is your favorite subject in school?). In this case, the disposition of the question may not have been the determining factor, but rather the simplicity of what was being asked. Question Five (What is your favorite book?) also posed as problematic since some of the participants may not be able to read yet. Although they may have been read to, they may have few experiences selecting a book and retaining the author, content, and title. The data also showed outliers for Questions Three (On Saturday what is your favorite thing to do?) and Four (What do you want to

be when you grow up?), potentially skewing the data set. While the responses do align with the statement of purpose of the research, too many limiting variables are present to declare a correlation.

Gender was not considered originally, which may have had an impact on the results due to the researcher being female. Also, five more females were involved in this study than males. "Sex differences in interactions with peers in the form of social involvement was observed gradually more frequently in girls than in boys" (Barbu, 2011). Thus, females are more likely to share and talk with more words due to the higher exposure to social interaction. Since boys are less likely to interact socially, they may speak using fewer words.

Per the researcher's observations, many participants also responded with a shoulder shrug or a confused expression rather than words to some of the questions asked. That counted as no response because no words were verbalized. However, the meaning behind the students' shrug remains unknown. The students may have shrugged because they did not understand the question, didn't know how to answer it, or simply did not have anything to say. However, asking if the student needed clarification or having a formatted modification ready if needed, may have then elicited a verbal response that could be quantifiable and would help a teacher better understand students' learning needs. "Sometimes we think that children misunderstood what we were teaching. They answered us, showing us that they had not understood our intentions." (Doverborg, 1993, p. 8). Meaning the students that when asked a question did not have an answer and responded with a shoulder shrug, could simply be due to a lack of understanding. Doverborg's study reinforces the idea that the current study echoes.

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This study aimed to identify the possible impacts of teacher disposition delivery on student responses. The study used a sample size of 17 elementary aged students attending a summer reading clinic at a Florida university. After a face-to-face, six-question interview was administered to the students, results showed some students made a overall shift towards more words spoken when the question was asked in an interested or neutral disposition. The most prominent conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that teachers should consider each student individually. These results demonstrate the potential impact of teacher disposition on student response in the classroom. The results of this study complement past research, which has shown that classrooms in a welcoming and comfortable environment are more likely for students to share their needs, leading to success for both students and teacher.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Some may note that the impact that a teacher can have on their students is monumental. Teachers often are the only consistent figure of authority that a student sees. Therefore, the creation of a vulnerable and comfortable classroom environment is crucial for students to share their needs and in return have them met. What the teacher is doing to form this classroom environment and how it is being received by the student is important to determine. Students must become responsible for their learning and become comfortable with expressing their own learning needs. Understanding that is imperative to their academic improvement and school success.

This study did not necessarily find that teacher disposition influenced student responses, but these findings do reinforce and corroborate past research in the literature review. The findings demonstrate the importance of a vulnerable and comfortable classroom environment. The focus needs to solely revolve around the students as individuals, a skill or concept that may be easily processed by one person may be as clear as mud to another. As an educator, it is important to be effective in forming strong interpersonal relationships with students given rapport is prerequisite to students' achieving any form of academic success.

The most prominent conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that teachers should consider each student individually. It is only when a teacher becomes in tune with the individual needs and learning habits of their individual students that they will truly see improvement. Students need to feel heard; however, this looks different for every student and can be detected through subtle cues, such as body language. The impact that a

teacher has on their students not only is a direct reflection on the teacher's dispositions and expectations of students, but is likely an interactive experience depending on what the student wishes to gain. This exchange should be ideal; and once you are able to establish this rapport. the response of the student, should lead to success. However, parallels can be seen between this study and the study done with Mader (1982). The focus of the Mader study was on clinical child interviews. The students have not received much attention; therefore, the purpose of the study was to see interviewing style's impact on the quantity and quality of information obtained.

In this current Honors in the Major study, the researcher focused less on the interviewee and more on the disposition of the interviewer. Because of this, the researcher was faced with limitations such as shoulder shrugging. Although this is a response, the causation behind it cannot be identified. In the Mader study (1984), they found that research showed that "cold" interviewing was more successful with adults. They believed that this would be the opposite for children, however, their findings did not agree. "They found that the reinforcing factors were not related to the quantity of talk, amount and quality of self-discourse, and their general attitudinal evaluation of the interview" (Mader, 1984, p. 14). As the data is further examined, another limitation to consider was the personality type of the participant, perhaps even the personality of the researcher. Some more extroverted students, regardless of disposition, continued to speak due to their desire to share, creating outliers. While other more introverted students simply had no answer or appeared uncomfortable sharing, since this was each student's first interaction with the investigator. Some participants may be more prone to use more words if more familiar with the researcher.

This research shows the importance of the students as individuals. Although developing rapport in the classroom is key to achieving success as well as a positive classroom environment, gaps will remain unless the individual student is addressed. Tailoring curriculum and teaching style to each student's needs is imperative to achieve success. It is important to understand the learning styles of your students as well. Some may need more direct, hands-on approach, while others may need a tangible text to follow along with. Taking your student's body language into consideration can be a visual indicator as well. This research focused primarily on the disposition of the researcher rather than the students' perception of the researcher. Analyzing the facial expression, tone, voice volume, eye contact, and body language of the students was not documented. Those factors can be observed by the teacher to then alter their approach in order to be better received by the student.

When examining the findings between students, students eight and five-spoke the highest amount of words. These students were both in early elementary years and female. These findings are supported through Barbu's concept of earlier social development in females. When these samples were further investigated it was found that student eight and five also did, in fact, speak more when asked the questions in an interested tone. For example, student eight responded, "math" to question one (What is your favorite subject in school?) and "I like um to I want to be a teacher that does fun stuff and makes crafts" to question four (What do you want to be when you grow up?). She was a very outgoing individual and knew what she wanted to say when answering all of the questions. She seemed to already have had her response in mind regardless of how the question was

asked. Student 5 followed the same pattern as student eight responding with the highest amount of words when the interested tone was used. For example, Student 5 responded "like reading" to Question One (What is your favorite subject in school?) and "I really want to be a singer and a mom and a actress" to Question Four (What do you want to be when you grow up?).

Although a slight increase was seen in the number of words spoken for most students when the disposition delivery was neutral or interested rather than uninterested, not enough data with a particular developmental level was collected to generalize to larger populations. This study points to the conclusion that teachers should consider each student individually. These results demonstrate the potential impact of teacher disposition on student response in the classroom. However, this current research and prior research implies that teacher disposition and student response play a large role in contributing to classrooms that are welcoming, comfortable, and healthy learning environments. Which results in success for both students and teacher.

Future Research

As I move into the field of mental health counseling, I will be able to enact these findings into practice when interacting with clients. In the future, I look forward to researching the impact that personalities may have on individual responses to others. I am interested in looking deeper into the reasons why students interact with others in the ways they do. This will include personal perceptions as well as exploring personality traits such as introverts and extroverts. I would also like to research how personalities are developed in indi-

viduals, whether personalities are established as a part of your DNA or if it develops

through life experiences and interactions with others (nature versus nurture).

Appendix A: IRB

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Alison Elk**

Date: **May 24, 2018**

Dear Researcher:

On 05/24/2018 the IRB approved the following human participant research until 05/23/2019 inclusive:

Type of Review:	UCF Initial Review Submission Form
	Expedited Review
Project Title:	An Exploration of Elementary Student Response to Interest Inventory based on Teacher Disposition.
Investigator:	Alison Elk
IRB Number:	SBE-18-13815
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	SBE-18-13815

The scientific merit of the research was considered during the IRB review. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at https://iris.research.ucf.edu .

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 05/23/2019, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

All data, including signed consent forms if applicable, must be retained and secured per protocol for a minimum of five years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained and secured per protocol. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

This letter is signed by:

Page 1 of 2

Appendix A (Continued)

Signature applied by Gillian Morien on 05/24/2018 11:32:25 AM EDT

Designated Reviewer

Appendix B

C.37   INTEREST INVENTORY FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXTS (p. 218)

THINGS THAT INTEREST ME

All of these questions are about your interests! You can list more than one thing for each question.

NAME: _____   DATE: _____

1. What is your favorite subject in school?
    _____

2. What subject that is not offered in school do you wish you could study?
    _____

3. What is your favorite sport?
    _____

4. What is your favorite TV program?
    _____

5. Who is your favorite athlete?
    _____

6. Who is your favorite actor/actress?
    _____

7. On Saturday, what is your favorite thing to do?
    _____

8. What type of music do you like?
    _____

9. What do you want to be when you grow up?
    _____

10. What is your favorite book?
    _____

11. If you could hop on a magic carpet, where in the world would you like to go?
    _____

12. If you could live in "another time," what time would it be? In the future? In the past?
    _____

13. What subject would you like to read about when we are working together?
    _____

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