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The Nature and Process of Meaning-Making in Text-Based Classroom Discussion of an American Islamic School

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Abstract

This study aimed to uncover how elementary school students and their teacher make meaning as they participate in text-based classroom discussion at an American Islamic school. One English language art teacher and 20 sixth grade students participated in this study. We employed a case study design with classroom observation, field notes and documentation as tools for data collection. The gathered data were analyzed qualitatively. We found that the classroom talks in discussing textual information followed the traditional I-R-E (Initiate-Respond-Evaluate) pattern in which the teacher held control over turn-taking opportunities and interpretive authority. The students' participation in this discourse were restricted to remembering facts, rules and procedures found in the text in which their responses were limited and brief. In contrast, the classroom talks about extratextual information as well as about Islamic knowledge and values were more dialogic in which the conversational flow was not directed by the teacher. The students' responses were longer with elaborated explanation or reasoning to support their position. Their Islamic cultural backgrounds and practices also enabled them to extend the discussion and make better sense of the text. These findings indicate that teachers' didactic strategy in conducting text-based classroom discussion shapes whether students would have meaningful interaction or not. We subscribe to the view that meaning of text and knowledge construction are not solely derived from the text or defined by one person. Instead, they can be co-constructed in dialogic discussion that challenges various voices, tensions and conflicts between members of the class.

Keywords: *classroom discussion, Islamic school, meaning-making, elementary school*

Introduction

Current literature is coming to an increasing agreement that children's interactions with texts in various contexts are meaning-making activities that link their identities and home cultures to the new world they live in (Heath, 2010; Parlindungan & Rodgers, 2022). Some have reported the importance of discussion around text in formal schooling (Cardinale, 1999; Gutiérrez et al., 1999; de Heer et al., 2016; Larson, 1995); the significant use of liturgical texts in faith-based settings like places of worship or faith-based schools (Chao & Mantero, 2014, Garcia-Sanchez et al., 2014; Moore, 2008); and the crucial existence of texts in home environments (Parlindungan, 2017; Al Lily, 2011; Wiseman, 2009). These studies mostly raise an intriguing possibility that contact with texts—which is tightly connected to larger sociocultural settings and social systems that are dynamic throughout time—could be a beneficial tool for knowledge and identity construction.

For more perspective, Muslim students in the US who come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds mostly utilize Islamic schools and Islamic cultural centers for their education. These settings offer opportunities for American Muslim students to develop knowledge that is entwined with religious practices (Parlindungan & Rodgers, 2022). In particular, Lytra, Gregory and Ilankuberan (2016) claim that children in these settings develop rich and sophisticated cultural and linguistic repertoires, which are extended to two or more languages and scripts. The teaching in these settings also encompasses vernacular and standardized languages as well as liturgical languages. Muslim students in these settings not only share Islamic beliefs and principles, but also acquire reading skills through continued socialization that fosters a sense of community and belonging over time and space (Peele-Eady, 2011).

We argue that gaining an understanding of how American Muslim students interact with texts in settings like schools and mosques can give us a window into their experience growing up as members of US communities and as academically educated adults. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of studies focusing on this matter. Despite the fact that Islamophobia and anti-immigrant concerns are receiving more attention

in the US, Muslim students in American Islamic schools continue to be under-represented in research. The present study will enrich or challenge the existing knowledge of what is occurring in an American Islamic school. However, there is so much more to discover about this topic, such as teachers' use of text, how they facilitate classroom engagement and discussion, and how students respond to other students.

Culture and Text in Classroom Context

Learning, especially the learning of a second language, is inextricably linked to culture. It is important to carefully consider what cultural material and whose culture are introduced into the classroom (Parlindungan et al., 2018; Lantolf, 2011). Researchers in previous studies mention that lack of background information about the target culture may make it difficult for students to understand the text's meaning, especially if their own culture is ignored (Drucker, 2003; Hite & Evans, 2006; Toppel, 2015). Making links between the students' culture and the target culture is therefore vital for teaching.

The premise that children must learn specific schema, including cultural schema and background knowledge, in order to interpret text, which forms the basis for the inclusion or integration of cultural material in texts, is supported by research (see e.g., Drucker, 2003; Kganetso, 2017; Louie & Sierschynski, 2015; Sharma & Christ, 2017). In particular, a text's meaning that seems comparable to or close to the students' own culture will be helpful for them (see e.g., Islam & Park, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Lucas, Villegaset al., 2008; de Oliveira & Shoffner, 2009).

Our conceptualization of text is shaped by the evolving landscape of reading research, acknowledging that contemporary definitions of text extend beyond the traditional print system. It is now recognized that text can manifest in various forms, including multimodal compositions. Multimodal texts encompass a fusion of diverse semiotic systems, such as written language, auditory elements, spatial arrangements, gestures and visual components (Sefarini, 2013; Short & Cueto, 2023). This

broadened perspective on text underscores the dynamic nature of communication in the digital age, where the convergence of multiple modes of expression enriches the reading experience. Since text is a dynamic concept that involves both what exists on the page and what is experienced by the reader, it is pivotal to consider not only the words and structure of a written work but also how readers interact with and interpret that text (Rosenblatt, 1978).

As a case in point, Islam and Park (2015) conducted a study investigating how in-service teachers accommodated the students' culture and the target culture into their teaching. They found that the participants employed a number of strategies that satisfied the criteria for culturally relevant teaching. The participants, for instance, helped students in their classroom to develop cultural competency through repeated reading, visualizing, predicting, previewing, questioning, finding connections, and using body language, facial expressions, gestures, and intonation. Additionally, they gave students access to a variety of multicultural texts in the incorporation of reading and writing exercises. Similarly, Lucas et al. (2008) found that some strategies that can be used to support language and reading development in regular classrooms, such as (1) using extra-linguistic supports, (2) enhancing and modifying written text, (3) enhancing and modifying oral language, (4) providing clear and explicit instructions, (5) facilitating and encouraging the use of students' native languages, (6) involving students in meaningful activities where they have numerous opportunities to interact with others and negotiate meaning, and (7) minimizing the potential for misunderstanding.

Classroom Interaction and the Meaning-Making Process

Social interaction plays a pivotal role in language learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Language, in Vygotsky's view, is both a means of instruction and the product of learning itself. In their interactions with others, students actively construct meaning by verbally expressing their ideas and experiences in situated social environments (as cited in Wood,

1998). As learning is conceived as a problem-solving activity, language and texts serve as the mediational means that facilitate the process. In situations when students might not be able to figure out the problem on their own, teachers or other adults with more understanding can use scaffolding language to help them. Later, students gradually assimilate more advanced cognitive inputs that develop into thought. In order to accomplish this, learning takes place first in the inter cognitive process, where children share their social speech in a situated learning environment, and then their understanding is transferred into the intra cognitive process, where students use their private speech to solve problems (as cited in Kong & Pearson, 2003). After that, students internalize higher-level cognitive inputs, where they not only imitate adults' speech but also change it into their own inner speech that becomes thought.

The above notion is supported by Bakhtin (1986) and Cazden (1988) that the co-construction of knowledge and meaning occurring in the classroom is mediated through discussion. Discussion in his sense is the utilization of dialogue that provides student voices and agency or collaborative inquiry between teachers and students (Wilkinson & Nelson, 2013). According to this viewpoint, meaning construction, which is relational and dynamic, occurs not necessarily in the text. Instead, the interaction in which the text is used in a situated environment determines the meaning. Meaning is dialogical in that how students interact with the text and one another in class affects how they understand the text (Garas-York & Almasi, 2017; Murphy, 2015). Various voices, tensions and conflicts then might develop between the members of the class as they work together to co-construct meaning (Nystrand, 2006).

In the traditional classroom interaction, Mehan (1979) mentions that the classroom discourse typically follows the Initiate-Reply-Evaluate (I-R-E) pattern in which teachers hold greater control over the conversational and interpretive authority. This type of interaction has been challenged by reading researchers in that classroom interaction during reading should be more dynamic and student-centered. Since students are active readers, what they bring to the text should be carefully

guided by meaningful interaction (Reznitskaya & Wilkinson, 2017; Rosenblatt, 2013).

To this end, students may have numerous possibilities to advance their language and reading development by active involvement in dialogic discussion, which could further support their academic success (Garas-York & Almasi, 2017; Wilkinson & Nelson, 2013). We are in line with the notion that discussion as a dialogic reading activity in classroom practices helps students to create meaning or interpretation of the texts in order to reach a higher order of thinking.

The Present Study

In a context where religious values and practices are present, the process of teaching and learning can be much more complicated and unique, particularly when the teacher and students are engaged with multiple use of languages and texts. Thus, the present study specifically aimed to answer overarching questions: (1) what is the nature of text-based discussion between the teacher and students in an English language art classroom at an American Islamic school?; and (2) how is meaning of the text being constructed during text-based classroom discussions? We conducted a study that documents the everyday lives of an elementary classroom in an American Islamic school. The students in this setting were learning English as a second or additional language and developing reading skills that may include Islamic values and practices during the process. This study was limited to an Islamic school context—particularly the sixth-grade classroom—situated in the suburban Midwest area of the US.

Method

This study focused on investigating how sixth-grade students in an American Islamic school interacted during the English language art session as well as their attitudes and reactions to their classroom discussion. We employed a case study because it is a suitable method for

qualitatively examining student's experiences and subjectivities rather than the frequencies of outcomes related to causes (Hammersley, 2013). A case study, in accordance with Barone and Eisner (2011), is a descriptive-holistic-analytical tool that can be used to reveal the complexity of a specific scenario, program, event, phenomenon or person that cannot be made clear in other research designs.

Context of the Study

This study was conducted in an Islamic charter school in a suburban Midwestern region of the United States of America, where the majority of the students came from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. We decided to use a sixth-grade language arts classroom by recommendation of the school principal and the teacher's description of the students' involvement in classroom discussion. Students, teachers and staff in this school were self-identified as Muslims who live in diverse American cultures. Beside striving for the state curriculum, they involve Islamic practices and values on a daily basis. The English language arts lesson for grades 1 to 6 lasts for about 84 min (5 days a week). Other learning experiences include mathematics (84 min, 5 days a week), science and social studies (42 min, alternating days throughout the week), art (42 min, 2 days a week), physical education (42 min, 2 days a week), Islamic studies (42 min, 5 days a week), Arabic (42 min, 5 days a week), Quran studies for fourth and fifth grade only (42 min, 5 days a week), and daily prayer or Salah (15 min, 5 days a week).

Participants

The participants in this study were one English language art teacher and twenty sixth-grade elementary school students in an Islamic school situated in the suburban Midwest area of the US. The teacher participant, named with a pseudonym in this study as Akila El Shirazy, was a certified elementary school teacher with five years of classroom experience. She self-identified herself as an American-born Egyptian who speaks English as her first language and Arabic as her home

language. She also held a doctoral degree in English language art teaching from a reputable university in the Midwest of the US. Additionally, the student participants were 20 sixth grade students taught by Ms Shirazy. We received the parental consents for all of the student participants. The student participants were students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as shown in Table 1 below.

Characteristics	Number of students
Number of student participants	20
Male students	5
Female students	15
Age range	11–12 years old
Language background	
● Somali	8
● Arabic	7
● Turkish	1
● Indian	4
Parents' Cultural background	
● Somalia	8
● Syria	4
● Egypt	3
● Turkey	1
● India	4
Socio-economic status	
● High income family	6
● Middle income family	14

Table 1. *Demographic Information of the Student Participants*

Data Collection and Analysis

We conducted classroom observation, field notes and documentation as tools for data collection. A total of sixty English language arts sessions were observed and videotaped. The observations lasted for the 2-hour-defined time of reading instruction for five days a

week. We also made field notes that include a synopsis of what happened in the classroom, interesting details, modifications of the timetable of the reading activities, reflections, and reactions to what happened. Finally, as supplementary information for this study, we gathered various classroom documentation, such as samples of the students' work and the teaching and learning materials used by the teacher participant.

We employed qualitative data analysis informed by Marshall and Rossman (2016). Firstly, we transcribed verbatim data from the video recordings of the observations. Based on the study questions, we carried out coding processes to identify common patterns or themes in the data. We started with open coding, in which we used the participants' words or phrases and searched for recurrence both inside and across transcripts. We determined the primary categories of themes, each of which had subcategories. After that, we refined and regrouped these initial categories to look for more similarities between the categories using axial coding. Based on data similarities, some open coding categories may be combined or collapsed into bigger categories during this procedure. Then, using selective coding, we chose the main categories, meticulously connected each one to the others, and verified their connections. We also matched the information from field notes and documentation with the main categories when comparable trends showed up. As a result, we were able to support the findings as an exemplar and corroborate the categories.

Results and Discussion

In the following, we report the nature of the text-based classroom discussions and how the members of the class constructed the meaning of the text during the discussions. We present the findings in three separate themes: (1) Discussion on textual information; (2) Discussion on extratextual information; and (3) Discussion on Islamic knowledge and values.

It is important to note that we found most of the conversation about the texts took place during a teacher-led whole-class discussion.

During the English Language Art (ELA) lesson, Ms Shirazy had the students read a historical fiction book in which their interaction was mainly divided into three parts: before reading, while reading, and after reading. Ms Shirazy had full authority over organizing the task, choosing who would speak, and giving instructions. Most of the time, she would exercise some kind of control over turn-taking to prevent the student participants from talking over one another and to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to contribute. When participating in the discussion, Ms Shirazy frequently needed to remind the student participants of the class rules, such as "Raise your hand for permission to speak", "Do not yell out", or not to attract attention by yelling "A-B-C-D".

Discussion on Textual Information

Evidence derived from the observation data reveals that the classroom discussion adheres to the I-R-E pattern when responding to comprehension questions about textual content. In this pattern, Ms Shirazy "initiates" a question, the students "react", and Ms Shirazy "evaluates" the responses. The term "textual information" in this study refers to information that is expressed verbally or in writing, such as a text's thesis or its supporting facts. The following transcript shows dialogue when Ms Shirazy and her students read Chapter 15 of *Bud not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999). They were responding to comprehension questions that Ms Shirazy had posed.

Speaker		Transcript	Coding
Ms Shirazy	:	Alright. Number two "Why did the two doors scare Bud?" [Students raise their hands] Arief!	Initiate (I)
Arief	:	So basically, the two doors scared Bud because he's not used to two doors or windows. He's like afraid if there is a monster coming in from them.	Respond (R)
Ms Shirazy	:	Okay, so he was scared of two doors because he thought a monster could get in. What else? [Students raise their hands] Naya!.	Evaluate (E) – Initiate (I)
Naya	:	He's like oh dang! These are creepy doors over here, and he thought that's how ghosts can get it, and hide under the bed or something.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Okay. What doors that they are talking about?	E – I
All Students	:	Closet doors	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Closet doors in the bedroom. Alright. Number three "What does Herman E Calloway do when he goes into the room?" [Students raise their hands] Amri!.	E – I
Amri	:	He goes to Bud because he knew something is wrong. He's like you get the rest of the band fooled, but not me. I am gonna find out something about you.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Yeah, so basically Herman E Calloway goes up to Bud, and he said "okay, you have everybody else fooled, but you don't have me fooled. I know that there is something going on with you. You're not my son. I am gonna figure it out".	E

Table 2. *Transcription on Bud Not Buddy Chapter 15*

The I-R-E discussion pattern is evident in the above transcript. "Why did the two doors scare Bud?" is an example of a teacher-initiated question. Arief, a student identified only by a pseudonym in this study, responded "So basically, the two doors startled Bud because he's not used to two doors or windows". When the student responded, the teacher assessed the student's statement (e.g., "Okay, so he was afraid of two doors because he feared a monster could come in. And what else?"). After assessing, the teacher started the topic again by asking some of the other students to speak. Every time they try to glean information from a text, they use the same dialogic pattern. By asking questions and choosing who should speak, Ms Shirazy controlled and influenced the conversation's flow. Based on the textual information in the text, the students gave their answers to the teacher's questions.

Additionally, the students' answers were frequently brief—one or two sentences—because Ms Shirazy's inquiries were not open-ended. The students did not go into much detail with their responses. Their answers were frequently directed at Ms Shirazy rather than at each other. Another transcript of the discussion in which the class responded to comprehension questions concerning *Bud not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999) Chapter 19 is provided below.

Speaker		Transcript	Coding
Ms Shirazy	:	Okay, let's answer these questions first, and then I'll talk about the activity. We are done with Bud Not Buddy. Okay, number one "Where was Herman sitting when Bud walked into the room? What was he doing?" [Students raise their hand] Fawaaz!	I
Fawaaz	:	He was sitting on the bed facing the mirror.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Hmm ... not really. He was on the bedroom though. [Students raise their hands] Aliya.	E – I
Aliya	:	Herman was sitting in front of the dresser with a mirror in front of it. And he was covering his face like he was crying.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Yes, he was sitting in his bedroom in front of the dresser and was crying. Raise your hand, why do you think he was crying? Fawaaz!	E – I
Fawaaz	:	I think he was crying because he just found out that his daughter that run away got a kid.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Yes, maybe he just found out that he has a grandson, but why would that be a sad thing? [Students raise their hands] Muhammad!	E – I
Muhammad	:	Because he should have been there to support his daughter.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Okay, is there any other reasons? Yousof.	E – I
Yousof	:	Because his daughter just ran off and he found out that she died in such a young age.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Yeah, she passed away and he didn't know that he has a grandson. Number two "What did Bud realize about the room he'd been sleeping in?" [Students raise their hands]	E

Table 3. *Transcription on Bud not Buddy (Curtis, 1999) Chapter 19*

In the above transcript, the discussion also follows the I-R-E pattern, but Ms Shirazy has more interpretive authority when evaluating the students' responses and determines whether they are correct or incorrect. For instance, Ms Shirazy initiated a question: "Where was Herman sitting when Bud walked into the room?" Fawaaz responded: "He was sitting on the bed facing the mirror", but this was not the exact answer that Ms Shirazy was looking for, so she reacted to the response by evaluating it: "Hmm ... not really. He was in the bedroom though". Ms Shirazy then initiated the conversation again by allowing another student to speak. Aliya responded with more details: "Herman was sitting in front of the dresser with a mirror in front of it and he was covering his face like he was crying". Ms Shirazy evaluated the response by affirming that it was right and initiated further talk.

These findings are in line with the literature by which Ms Shirazy talks in this pattern where two-thirds of the time is distinguished by certain registers and boundary markers (Cazden, 1988). Despite the fact that this practice is symmetrical by nature, it nevertheless has significance and power, especially when the teacher is asking questions, because this can assist students to concentrate on important details from the readings (Reynolds, 2016; Zwiers & Crawford, 2009). Additionally, these findings are also supported by Webb (2009) in that the way teachers question students during class discussions can either increase or decrease their engagement. Ms Shirazy in this study used low-level questions to discuss textual information that required the students to remember facts, rules and procedures found in the text (for instance, by asking an engaging question like: "Can someone remind me what happened in Chapter 10?"). The amount of student participation in relation to these questions was brief.

Reznitskaya and Wilkinson (2017) contend, however, that typical classroom discourse, such as I-R-E, emphasizes the teacher's primary role because the teacher controls the talk and restricts student participation. In this type of classroom discussion, students do not participate in robust arguments, do not interact with classmates, and do not have more control over the speech flow. Rifai, Parlindungan and

Nuthihar (2022) also argue that efficient classroom discussion can be developed through distinctive discourses characterized by an openness to the interactions and the shifting of roles. Thus, more opportunities for students to acquire higher-order thinking abilities and in-depth subject understandings need to be provided in today's classroom discussions.

Discussion on Extratextual Information

The extratextual questions posed by the teacher served as the foundation for the class discussion as well. Technically speaking, extratextual information in this study is anything that is not explicitly stated in the text or that is not explicitly written about therein. The author's goal, any subtext, or the text's setting could all be included in this information. Although the discourse still proceeds in an I-R-E pattern, the students' responses in this section are more dialogic, and the teacher has more flexibility in determining the turn-taking opportunities. The classroom conversation about extratextual information is described in the transcript below in which Ms Shirazy and her students read *Bud not Buddy* Chapter 5 (Curtis, 1999).

Speaker		Transcript	Coding
Ms Shirazy	:	Bud runs away from his foster home, do you think that is a wise decision? [Students raise their hands] Ahmad!.	I
Ahmad	:	Yes, because if he would have stayed, he would have still being bullied by Todd, he would have still slept in the shed with a spider, so I think that was a wise decision and I will do that too.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	So you think it was a wise decision because he was protecting himself from a different situation?	E– I
Ahmad	:	Yes, because it's for the sake of himself. He finally can meet Mr Lewis and all of those good people who treat him like a human.	R

Aliya	:	I think it was a wise decision because even if the Amoses did let him out, they would still treat him like he was nothing, like he didn't belong, so it's still gonna be worth it.	R
Arief	:	Honestly, so this is an opinion question right. So that means it can't go wrong or right. So basically, I don't think it was a wise decision because I know how the story goes. It's like fairy tales in real life.	R
All Students	:	[All of them talking]	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Arief, hold on. We are not doing that [Talking to the whole class]. This is his opinion. If he needs something corrected, I will correct him.	Remind the ground rules of discussion
Arief	:	I am not saying that it's a fairy tale story. I am saying that anything can happen. You gotta choose. But in real life, you don't just think "Oh you actually have to go through every single scenario because there are more things. There can be a wild animal that can eat you alive".	R
Ms Shirazy	:	So you are saying that he should not have left because there are more things chasing him outside of the house?	E - I
Arief	:	Yes, because there are cops already chasing him and they can choose. They have a right to choose, especially with a tenth-year old kid or nine-year-old kid like really you are on the street? A hobo may wants to kidnap you like what if Lefty Lewis, he could have been a kidnapper or anything. So there's more danger like now there is even a kidnapper just next to your neighbor.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	So I like what Arief's saying. He's saying that he doesn't agree that he left because there could be more danger outside the foster home than it is inside.	E

Table 4 *Transcription on Bud Not Buddy Chapter 5*

In the transcript above, Ms Shirazy asked the students an open-ended question about their opinion whether Bud's decision to run away from the foster home was a wise one or not. This was a contestable question that has no single right answer. Although Ms Shirazy still initiated the conversation (e.g., by posing the question "Bud runs away from his foster home, do you think that a wise decision?") and evaluated the students' response (e.g., "So you're saying that it depends on the situation?"), she gave the students flexible control over the flow of the conversation. The students' responses were longer. They provided elaborated explanations or reasoning to support their position. For instance, Arief who did not think that Bud's decision was wise, which was contradictory to the rest of the class, provided a reasonable answer why Bud should not have left the foster home. On the other hand, Ahmad, who agreed with the rest of the class that Bud should run away, also supported his argument based on some facts found in the book like "being bullied by Todd", "locked in the shed", and "meet good people like Mr Lewis".

The discussion in this case was not dominated by Ms Shirazy. Who should talk was not decided by her. The turn-taking opportunities were managed by the students. When it was possible, Ms Shirazy decided to step out of the dialogue and return to it only to advance the discussion by assessing the student's response and reiterating the rules of the class, asking clarifying questions, or making affirming statements. For a deeper understanding of the classroom discussion on extratextual information, have a look at the transcript that follows. Ms Shirazy and her students read a poem titled "A tent of pain" from Karen Hesse's novel *Out of the dust* (1997). They were talking about the father's feelings depicted in the poem. Earlier in the novel, the father had placed kerosene near to the stove, and Ma had poured it into the coffee maker, which is what caused her to get so badly burned.

Speaker		Transcript	Coding
Ms Shirazy	:	So her dad left her and her mother at home, and he went out drinking. And he's getting drunk. Raise your hands. Why do you think he was doing this? So he just left Ma. He knows that she is in pain. He knows that she needs water. He knows that Billy Joe's hands hurt that she might not be able to give water to her Ma. [Students raise their hands]	I
Amri	:	So what he did was like when you drink alcohol you don't like to remember anything you did like when you're drunk. So that he was kinda forgot, so then like you know.	R
Naya	:	He was drunk and forgot about things. Also he used the family emergency money to buy alcohol.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Is that a responsible thing to do?	I
All Students	:	No	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Probably not the best thing to do at that time.	E
Amri	:	Especially as a father, right. So he was using that money to help himself forget about the situation, and Billy Joe was having dream about the situation. Nightmare about the situation.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	How do you think her dad feels about himself? What is his sense of self right now?	I
Ahmad	:	He is depressed because he thinks it's his fault. So when they are depressed, they will most likely get alcohol because they think it can make themselves better.	R
Muhammad	:	Why do you think it's his fault though? He wasn't in the kitchen when this happened.	I
Amri	:	Because he left the gasoline there and didn't say anything about it like, "this is kerosene please do not make coffee with it".	R

Ms Shirazy	:	Yeah, he was trying to forget about everything by getting drunk. That's obviously not a good idea because other things can come up by getting drunk.	R
Aisha	:	So you asked this question yesterday about how the apple tree links to Ma's spirit. She has hope when the apples were green and then she was patience even though the situation was getting worse, especially with the father. And then when she died the apples were not green. I think that makes the father even more depressed	I
Ms Shirazy	:	That's a really good connection with the apple tree. Good job.	E

Table 5 *Transcription on A Tent of Pain in Out of the Dust*

The students' responses in the discussion above were also more dialogic with less control over turn taking by Ms Shirazy. The students gave each other feedback, continued the discussion started by the previous speaker, and added their own justification. One of the students (Muhammad) even evaluated Ahmad's answer by asking a question ("Why do you think it's his fault though? He wasn't in the kitchen when this happened."). Although Ahmad did not have a chance to respond, Amri took over the floor by providing adequate reasoning ("Because he left the gasoline there and didn't say anything about it like, 'this is kerosene please do not make coffee with it'"). In addition, Ms Shirazy still directed the conversation and provided evaluation as needed, including affirmative statements and reinforcement (e.g., "That's a really good connection with the apple tree. Good job.").

We can see from the two examples that when the discussion turned from textual information to extratextual information, the pattern of dialogue altered. In comparison to the discussion of textual information, the students' talk was lengthier and Ms Shirazy had less control over when students took turns speaking. One of the causes is that the students had a greater degree of interpretive authority over the subject due to their familiarity and their proximity to its cultural context.

Ms Shirazy also posed challenging questions during the discussion of the extratextual information that forced the students to make inferences and synthesize ideas, which led to longer talk and stronger arguments (for example, Ms Shirazy questioned Bud about why he didn't want to tell the man that he had been living in an orphanage). Similar ideas that the teacher's involvement in promoting meaningful interaction with texts, including offering questions, may result in deeper understanding processes have been established in numerous research (Boardman et al., 2018; Soter et al., 2008).

Discussion on Islamic Knowledge and Values

The third theme that was salient in our data analysis was discussion on Islamic knowledge and values. We found that the students were able to cite evidence for their arguments in this topic of discussion from a variety of liturgical sources, such as the Hadith and the Quran. For example, in our data Ms Shirazy had the students complete a small group project named "End of Activity" after reading the book *Bud not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999). They were divided into six groups and each was given a theme from the book to study, such as (1) racism and discrimination, (2) forgiveness and compassion, (3) knowledge and wisdom, (4) family, (5) helping others, and (6) when God closes one door he opens another/opportunities. Then, the students had to research Islamic perspectives related to each theme and they had to use the perspectives to support their arguments.

Amri argued against the group in the transcript below, saying that "Islam has nothing to do with racism since Islam is not a race, it's a religion", while Aisha claimed that "Islam has something to do with racism because you can't be racist when you're a Muslim". It showed her agency as a Muslim and her understanding of Islam's history with racism. She continued, "Yeah, that's why we have to put a hadith about it", in order to support her claim, implying that there are fundamental Islamic sources that can be cited in favor of this claim.

Speaker		Transcript	Coding
Amri	:	Aliya, Islam has nothing to do with racism because Islam is not a race, it's a religion.	I
Muhammad	:	No, discrimination.	R
Aisha	:	Islam has something to do with racism because you can't be racist when you are a Muslim.	R
Aliya	:	Yeah, but there are some bad Muslims.	R
Aisha	:	Yeah, that's why we have to put a hadeeth about that.	R
Amri	:	Guys, how do you spell discrimination?	I
Aisha	:	D-I-S-C-R-I-M-I-N-A-T-I-O-N [Followed by Amri while writing it down]	R
Amri	:	I didn't find any hadeeth about discrimination here. It's just their own thought.	R
Aisha	:	Miss Teacher we are adding patience into it. We think that it should be good showing patience.	I
Ms Shirazy	:	Well, I think you guys need to talk to each other because she is thinking something different.	R
Amri	:	Actually, we explain it to her.	I
Ms Shirazy	:	Okay. Explain it one more time	R
Aisha	:	So basically, we are adding the patience part because like we are showing that if a person is discriminating against you or being racist to you, you should not be just blow out. You should be patient.	I
Amri	:	So you not only have to deal with discrimination and racist, but also how someone should behave in something like that.	R

Ms Shirazy	:	So are you talking about discrimination in general like why are you a Chinese and stuff like that or discrimination about Muslims?	I
Amri	:	Yeah, but the scene is about Muslims.	R
Muhammad	:	Yeah, the play is gonna be about Muslims.	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Oh I see what you're saying. So the scene is gonna be about Islam. So you are saying patience to people who are racist toward Islam or patience as you are being a Muslim?	R – I
Amri	:	Be patient as a Muslim	R
Ms Shirazy	:	Okay, that's good. Good job.	E

Table 6 *Transcription on Islamic Knowledge and Racism*

Amri's prior understanding of racism was based on his familiarity with the terms "race" and "racism". He drew a connection between the word's literal meaning and the fact that Islam is a religion and not a race, to argue that it has nothing to do with racism. Aisha, however, stated that "you can't be racist when you're a Muslim", as an alternative to Amri's viewpoint. This statement forced Amri to reflect on his preconceived notions of the terms "racism" and "religion", as well as his own agency as a Muslim or someone who adheres to Islam. When interacting with the context of "racist", this agency of being a Muslim then developed throughout the discourse into the idea of "patience in Islam". Thus, the conversation proceeded beyond the terms "race" and "racism" as they were used in contrast to "Islam" and "religion". The four students in the transcript above also assisted one another in comprehending the definition and spelling of words (such as discrimination). The discussion continued to the class presentation as can be seen in the transcript below.

Speaker		Transcript	Coding
Ms Shirazy	:	So what was your theme?	I
Fareed	:	Discrimination.	R
Aliya	:	We have some hadiths about it.	I
Ms Shirazy	:	Before you say the hadith, what does Islam say about bullying and stuff?	I
Amri	:	Islam says that it's not okay to bully because they're of different race, or religion, or they believe in something else. It's still not okay. You should actually be having a nice talk about it. You should be able to share your differences with each other. The Prophet Peace Be Upon Him said: "There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab. Neither is the white superior over the black, nor is the black superior over the white—except by piety".	R
Fareed	:	The prophet Peace Be Upon Him said "The real patience is at the first stroke of a calamity".	R
Aliya	:	So basically what the hadith says is if someone is being racist to you or someone does bad things to you, you should not be backfired or something. You should remain calm and be patient. At the end of the day you'll be a better person.	R
Amri	:	So basically, you know when bullying causes someone else to feel sad and alone, and actually make them angry. This is what we are doing. So let's say I was bullied right. And if someone was helping me, he would eventually get bullied too for being friends with me. So that's the consequences of being friends with the one who is bullied.	R

Ms Shirazy	:	So what does Islam say about that case?	I
Amri	:	Islam says that even if there were gang bullies, by standard, you should be helping other people even though they were being gang bullied, you know, discriminated againts, just because being a different race or different religion, they still should, you know.	R
Fareed	:	Also Islam says if something bad happens, if you can't stop them by hand then you should stop them with your tongue. If you can't stop them with your tongue, then you should pray for them in your heart.	R

Table 7 *Transcription on Islamic Knowledge and Bullying*

The preceding transcript demonstrates that the students were able to apply their knowledge of Islam from the small group discussion to the class presentation, where Ms Shirazy challenged their claims further. The students took turns answering Ms Shirazy's questions on their own. Their argument, which was initially presented by Amri, was that bullying (or racism) towards people of various races or religions is forbidden in Islam. This claim was supported by a hadith. Fareed continued this point by citing a hadith that stressed the value of exercising patience when dealing with racists, and Aliya agreed with Fareed.

The findings above show that the discussion was more dialogic. This is relevant to current literature in that students' voices and active production of meaning are emphasized in language learning that involves dialogic discussion, which is defined by the transfer of interpretive authority from the teacher to the students (Reynolds, 2016; Wilkinson & Nelson, 2013). Through the incorporation of Islamic knowledge and values in the literacy events, the students' reading was expanded from reading secular texts to reading religious texts, which is another significant discussion that can be drawn from the analysis of this study. The current study adds to Zine's (2008) work in a Canadian Islamic school because she did not concentrate on text interaction in the

classroom when literacy instruction was being conducted. The discussion in class about sacred and secular books demonstrates how meaning is created. Students in this study exercise what Heath (2010) and Zine (2008) refer to as knowledge appropriation, by which what students learn about the world by reading secular materials is filtered through the lens of Islamic knowledge and values embodied in the sacred texts. This meaning-making process connects the students' identities and communal heritage to the new world in which they live.

Conclusion

The objectives of this study were twofold: (1) to understand the nature of text-based discussion between the teacher and students in an English language art classroom at an American Islamic school; and (2) to uncover the meaning-making process during the text-based classroom discussions. Through qualitative data analysis of classroom observation, field notes and documentation, we found that the classroom discussion about textual information generally followed the I-R-E (Initiate-Respond-Evaluate) pattern in which the teacher initiated a question, the students responded, and the teacher evaluated the response. The classroom discourse then was dominated by the teacher who held control over the turn-taking opportunities and interpretive authority. Given the nature of questions on textual information, students' responses were centered around remembering facts, rules and procedures found in the text.

On the other hand, the discussions about extratextual information as well as about Islamic knowledge and values were characterized as dialogic discourse. Most of the time, the teacher stepped out of the dialogue and let the students take control over turn-taking opportunities. Students' responses were longer with better arguments supported by evidence. The students were able to extend the discussion by connecting evidence from their prior knowledge and cultural practices. Concerning the context of the school, they were required to follow the state standards with various secular texts to read throughout the academic year.

However, they were committed to integrate Islamic knowledge and values in the curriculum by allowing students to read and discuss sacred texts in relation to the secular texts.

We contend that extending reading from secular to religious literature could open the door for every member of the class to use both secular and religious knowledge as valid ways to know and understand the vibrant world they live in. However, it is necessary to do a more thorough investigation of this issue that presents an integrated viewpoint of reading practices involving the family, classroom and school environments. A larger picture of the factors influencing Muslim children's reading and writing development needs to be constructed. Further studies can focus on questions, such as what is the role of and function of Islamic schools in the American Muslim diaspora? How is a student's identity formed in relation to the application of Islamic principles? What functions do parents and the community play in forming the knowledge and identity of their children in Islamic schools? Research with varied research methods and instrumentation of outcome measures might support the claims we make in this study.

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