Speech and Language Pathologists Supporting Educators and Students in Elementary School Classrooms

By:

Erin O’Shea

A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Teaching
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Copyright by Erin O’Shea, April 2017
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Research Context</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research Problem</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Research Purpose</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Research Questions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Background of the Researcher</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Overview of Research</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Introduction</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Intervention</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Early intervention</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Classroom based intervention</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Responsiveness to intervention</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Collaboration</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Collaboration between teachers and SLPs</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 SLPs as Teachers</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Inclusive Classrooms</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 Perspectives on inclusion</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 SLPs as Beneficial Resources in the Classroom</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Challenges</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Introduction</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Research Approach &amp; Procedures</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Instruments of Data Collection</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Participants</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Sampling criteria</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Sampling procedure</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3 Participant bios</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Data Analysis</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Ethical Review Procedures</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Introduction</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Educators Took Advantage of Learning Opportunities to Better Their Skills When Working With Students With Speech and Language Disorders</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 Educators recognized the importance of developing their knowledge and education by taking Additional Qualification courses</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 Educators’ past experiences demonstrates commitment to working collaboratively to support students’ speech and language needs</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3 Educators acknowledged that the additional training offered through their schools lead them to better assist students with speech and language disorders</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Educators Concurred That The Resources Available To Them Aimed To Develop Their Collaborative Efforts With The Speech And Language Pathologist When Developing Supports For Students With Speech And Language Disorders

4.2.1 The educators in this study concurred that multi-form communication with the speech and language pathologist was a key factor in their ability to support students with speech and language needs.

4.2.2 An approach used by educators while working with a student with a speech and language disorder, was developing strategies with the speech and language pathologist and then implementing them into their classroom.

4.2.3 Educators concurred that collaboration was a key factor in the assessment and early intervention stage in developing resources aimed to support students with speech and language disorders.

4.2.4 Educators concurred that inclusive classrooms were the best form of integration for students with speech and language disorders however, worked best when using a scaffolded approach.

4.3 Educators Concurred That There Were Challenges or Potential Challenges When Working with Students with Speech and Language Disorders in Regards to Early Intervention in the Classroom

4.3.1 Following appropriate protocol is crucial for early diagnosis but could be a potential challenge.

4.3.2 Educators concurred that the lack of availability and open spots to see the speech and language pathologist was a challenge when working with students with speech and language disorders.

4.4 Conclusion
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

ABSTRACT

This Masters of Teaching Research Project is a qualitative study that addresses the topics of supporting students with speech and language disorders in the classroom, specifically within the topic of collaboration between the speech and language pathologists (SLPs) and educators in terms of the importance of early intervention. Although limited, the existing literature on collaboration between SLPs and classroom educators is successful on addressing the early intervention needs of the student however, lacking on how the SLP actually supports the educator in a classroom setting. With this in mind, this study aims to explore if collaboration exists and in what form, guided by the following research question: How does a sample of elementary school teachers and SLPs work together to support students in inclusive classrooms with speech and language disorders?

Overarching themes include additional learning opportunities for educators in order to support students with speech and language disorders, as well as the different collaborative efforts used to support these students and challenges or potential challenges that may arise when working with SLPs. Ultimately, as a beginning teacher, I intend to discover the most beneficial way to support students with speech and language disorders and successful ways to learn and collaborate with SLPs.

Key Words: Speech and Language Pathologists, Elementary Educators, Early Intervention, Inclusive Classrooms, Support
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank my research supervisors, Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic and Sarah Cashmore, for their commitment, continual support, feedback, and guidance through the research process. I would also like to thank the members of cohort P/J 271 for their encouragement and support throughout our two years together at OISE. And finally, I’d like to thank my family and friends, especially my mom and dad, for their constant support throughout my entire post-secondary journey. Thank you for always listening to my struggles, successes and ideas. It is through those small moments that have made such a huge progression of my work and have helped me get to where I am today.
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.0 Research Context

One of the most common developmental conditions that children suffer from in early childhood is speech and language disorders. Speech and language disorders are affecting four to ten percent of children (Muurseep, Aibast, Gapeyeva, & Paasuke., 2012; McKinnon, McLeod & Reilly, 2007). McKinnon, McLeod & Reilly (2007) state that communication disorders can impact the academic achievement of children in the school age years and can affect their choices later in adulthood. In turn, early intervention, such as Responsive to Intervention (RTI), in elementary classrooms can be beneficial to students. Early intervention can help to minimize the more serious consequences of later learning disabilities (Karbasi, Fallah, & Golestan, 2011). Students with speech and language disorders are placed in the regular classroom, however, how are they being supported?

In education policy and practice, the inclusion of students with disabilities in universal primary schools, specifically schools in the public sector, has become protected through law. Recently, the inclusion of students with disabilities in the primary school settings has become the norm in education policy and practice. In reality, the idea of promoting inclusive learning is not a matter of choice, but it is a legal requirement (Smith, 2005). Section fifteen of the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms stated that:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on race,
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability (Robson, 2013, p. 221).

This section of the charter challenged the idea of traditional special education programs.

“The Education Act was amended by the Education Amendment Act, 1980 (Bill 82)” (Equity & Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools, 2014). This Bill required all school boards to provide special education programs and services for students with disabilities. In addition, the Ontario regulation 181/98 requires school boards to consider placing exceptional students into regular classrooms before considering placement in a special education class (Equity & Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools, 2014). According to this act, if a child is placed in special education a reason must be provided. This is when 181/89 introduced the Individual Education Plan (IEP). An IEP is “the educational plan designed to meet the individual needs of each student” (Birnbaum, n.d.). The IEP is becoming the centrepiece in helping to provide special education programs and services to students with special education needs (Birnbaum, n.d.). The Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools document also states that the Ministry of Education has upheld its focus on the ability to provide up-to-date information to the field of inclusive education about evidence-based strategies for the instruction of students with special needs class (Equity & Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools, 2014).

Regular primary schools that are practicing an inclusive environment are becoming the most successful means of stopping and reducing discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all children (see De Boer, Pijl, Post & Minnaert, 2013; Kalambouka, 2007; Pavri,
An inclusive education involves “placing children with disabilities or other special needs in the same classroom as their age-similar peers, often with additional supports” (Robson, 2013), for example with an educational assistant. The traditional idea of special education for children with special needs occurred outside a mainstream classroom and would be taught by a teacher who specializes in the education of children with special needs. However, what would inclusion look like if children with special needs were to be placed in an inclusive mainstream classroom? The general idea of creating an inclusive environment emphasizes how important a general education classroom environment is for all children, regardless of their disability. Rather than just having a child visit a classroom for a short period of time each day, inclusion focuses on creating a classroom environment in which all children have the ability to succeed. Inclusion throughout the school systems allows children, no matter their intellectual ability, to participate in a general education classroom (De Boer, Pijl, Post & Minnaert, 2013). Speech and language pathologists assist in the general education classroom for the initial universal screening of students and they participate in the development and implementation of progress monitoring and the analysis of the students outcomes (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). Research is lacking in the area of collaboration between speech and language pathologists and elementary school teachers.

1.1 Research Problem

As described above, students with speech and language disorders are being placed in the regular classroom. Research states that collaboration among classroom teachers and speech and language pathologists is crucial to the delivery of an effective treatment
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

program and services for students in the inclusive classroom setting with speech and language disorders (Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore, 2010). However, sufficient research is lacking in the area of collaboration between the speech and language pathologist and the classroom educator in regards to supporting students in their classroom with speech and language disorders. How does early intervention benefit students and what collaborative tools are used to support these students? Appropriate intervention helps, and is a preventative method in supporting learning and behavioural problems from becoming larger issues (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007).

Speech and language pathologists are extending their traditional role in the classroom. SLPs are now not only explaining communication needs of the students but also designing objectives and developing and implementing a plan to meet those needs (Dohan & Schulz, 1998). Research says that appropriate intervention helps and is a preventative method in supporting learning and behavioural problems from becoming larger issues (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). Ultimately, given the success of early intervention and the high number of students with speech and language disorders in the classroom, it is problematic that there has been little research done on the collaboration between the two professionals.

1.2 Research Purpose

The research regarding the support that speech and language pathologists provide classroom educators is lacking. In view of this gap in research, the goal of my research is to learn how teachers and speech and language pathologists (SLPs) work together to support students in the classroom with speech and language disorders. Little is known about the perspectives of school-based speech and language pathologists in relation to
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

these services (Power- deFur, 2000). I aim to share these findings with SLPs and elementary school teachers in order to further inform how they can work together to improve intervention.

1.3 Research Questions

The primary question guiding this study is: How does a sample of elementary school teachers and SLPs work together to support students in inclusive classrooms with speech and language disorders?

- What opportunities for learning did these educators have for preparing them to support students’ speech and language needs?
- What experiences informed these educators commitment to working collaboratively to support students’ speech and language needs?
- What factors and resources support these educators in their collaborative effort aimed at developing supports for students with speech and language needs? What do you have to do if you have a concern?
- What challenges or potential challenges do SLPs and teachers encounter when working with a student in the classroom who has a speech and language disorder? What is the response to these challenges?
- What do these educators believe are crucial aspects of support for students with speech and language disorders?
1.4 Background of the Researcher

As someone who has been in a classroom with a student with a speech and language disorder, I am concerned that these students are not getting the support they need. I have encountered a specific student whose parents were unwilling to have their child diagnosed with a speech and language disorder. This was very challenging in the sense that a teacher cannot support the child in the best way possible if the child is not placed on an individual learning plan. Without an IEP, a teacher cannot provide the student with needed extra time. In the case of this particular student, they needed a resource teacher or the classroom teacher to sit with them and read the questions, decode the student’s verbal thoughts, and write the student’s answers.

It is important that the teachers of students with speech and language disorders are collaborating and working with the school’s speech and language pathologist to encourage early intervention. This ensures that no student is left behind and every student has the opportunity for success and the resources that they need to achieve that success.

1.5 Overview of Research

To respond to the research questions, I will be conducting a qualitative research study using purposeful sampling to interview in school speech pathologists and the teachers who work with them about their collaborative efforts to support students with speech and language disorders. In Chapter 2, I review the literature in the areas of speech pathologists in classrooms and the role of collaboration in inclusive classrooms. Next, in Chapter 3, I elaborate on the research design. In Chapter 4, I report my research findings and discuss their significance in light of the existing research literature. In Chapter 5, I
identify the implications of the research findings for my own teacher identity, and proactive and educational research community more broadly. I will also articulate a series of questions raised by the research findings, and point to areas of future research.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature in areas pertaining to students with speech and language disorders, the presence of speech and language pathologists in the elementary classroom, and the role of elementary school teachers in the process of early intervention and team work with SLPs. More specifically, I review themes related to inclusive education, teamwork and collaboration between support staff in the school setting and the classroom teacher of the student with the speech and language disorder. I start by reviewing the research area of the prevalence of students with speech and language disorders in the elementary school classroom and I consider how these students are being included and integrated into the regular elementary classroom. From there, I review how elementary school teachers and SLPs work together to develop early intervention plans, and teaching strategies to best help the student with the speech and language disorder. Finally, I review the current strategies developed for collaboration within the classroom between schoolteachers and SLPs.

2.1 Intervention

Speech and language disorders are affecting four to ten percent of children (Muurseep, Aibast, Gapeyeva, & Paasuke., 2012; McKinnon, McLeod & Reilly, 2007).
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

This is only one reason why early intervention is important for young children who have speech and language disorders.

In order for all of the needs to be met of all the students in the classroom, the education system must use all of its communal resources to intervene early and provide appropriate interventions and supports to the student. Appropriate intervention helps and is a preventative method in supporting learning and behavioural problems from becoming larger issues (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007).

2.1.1 Early intervention

Children were found to benefit from early intervention; however, the type of intervention used should be determined by the nature of the speech and language disorder (Hall, Jesus, Joffe, & Lousada, 2014). Students intervention should be based off of the type of speech and language disorder, rather than a universal intervention being used for all students. In addition, the authors suggest “phonological and articulation therapy have been found to be effective in improving the speech of children with phonologically based SSD with the phonological approach being the more effective of the two when severity measures are used” (Hall, Jesus, Joffe, & Lousada, 2014, p. 584). For the purpose of this study phonological development refers to the formation of speech sounds to clearly communicate language. In this case, articulation therapy is the intervention used to help children produce these challenging sounds (Hall, Jesus, Joffe & Lousada, 2014). This type of intervention would be used for students that have a particular problem with one or two sounds, as compared to other speech and language disorders. Therefore, in this type of intervention the speech and language pathologist would be focusing on this one
particular sound. These types of therapy were used in the study done by Hall et al. (2014), and are therefore, important information to be able to dive deeper into this topic.

In the study done by Hall et al. (2014), fourteen children with phonological based speech and language disorders participated in the intervention. It was found that there were significant improvements noted in the intelligibility in both single words and continuous speech. This only occurred in the children who were receiving the phonology therapy pre- to post-treatment. The intervention for both groups of children comprised of twenty-five individual weekly sessions which were forty-five minutes in length. The phonological awareness activities these children took part in during these sessions included letter-sound knowledge (specifically, listening and discriminating letter sounds), phoneme matching and phoneme manipulation. The children that participated in the study received articulation therapy focused on detecting sound errors in the clinicians’ speech and the direct instruction of sound production. Articulation therapy, for the purpose of this study, was aimed to develop a child’s ability to discriminate and articulate a specific sound accurately by themselves, in syllables, words, and sentences. The results of this study concluded that phonological therapy is an effective means for early intervention and improving intelligibility of students with speech and language disorders. An implication of Hall et al.’s (2014) work for this present research study is that early intervention of phonological therapy can be beneficial to students, but work best when these programs are tailored to the individual needs of the student.

2.1.2 Classroom based intervention

Classroom based intervention puts the most importance on working with and as a team (Beck & Dennis, 1997). When Beck & Dennis (1997) asked SLPs and teachers
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS about how clients learn from their peers (the clients being students with speech and language disorders placed directly in the classroom) and also when asked about turn-taking skills being improved, the SLPs and teachers responded very similarly to these topics. Beck & Dennis (1997) developed a survey asking classroom educators and speech and language pathologists’ direct questions relating to different classroom based interventions. The most common classroom based intervention models discussed in this study were: “one-teach, one-drift”, “one-teach, one-observe”, “team teaching”, “remedial teaching”, “station teaching”, and “supplemental teaching.” In the one-teach, one-drift model, one member of the teaching team has primary responsibility for instruction, while the other assists students and monitors behaviour in the classroom. The one-teach, one-observe model differs in that one member of the teaching team is responsible for the instruction while the other team member simply observes the students. Team teaching, on the other hand, involves both members of the teaching team sharing the responsibility for presenting the teaching material to the students. The remedial teaching model follows the guidelines that one team member instructs students who have mastered the material and the other team member focuses on those students that have not. The station teaching model divides the material into parts, having each team member teaching their part at stations in the classroom. Students are divided into groups and rotate through the stations receiving the same instruction. Finally, the supplemental teaching model presents the material in a standard way by one team member, while the other team member adapts the material to fit the needs of the children with special needs (Beck & Dennis, 1997).

Beck & Dennis (1997) found that the most frequently used classroom-based intervention used by both speech and language pathologists and educators was the one-
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

teach, one-drift model. In this model one of the team members has the primary role and responsibility of instruction in the classroom and the other assists, in comparison to team teaching, which is described as “a series of teachers with each individually providing a single lecture for a course” (Laughlin, Nelson, & Donaldson, 2011 p. 12). In order for team teaching to be beneficial and successful, the team teaching pair must work well together and careful preparation is needed (Laughlin, Nelson, & Donaldson, 2011). The model that Beck & Dennis (1997) explore is a much easier model to prepare for than team teaching because it was found that SLPs and teachers have a difficult time finding the time to plan together as a team.

A study done by Ritter & Saxon (2011) aimed to determine if a classroom-based phonological sensitivity intervention would have a positive impact on early reading skills for children who are at risk of developing a reading disability. Phonological sensitivity refers to the sensitivity to the sound structure of words and an individual’s ability to manipulate the structure of the word separate from its meaning. Developing a sense of phonological sensitivity begins from an early awareness of rhyme, alliteration and sound play to developing into recognizing individual sound segments that make up words (Adams, 1990; Stanovich, 1991; Ritter & Saxon, 2011). Ritter & Saxon (2011) found that students who received the intervention performed significantly better than the group of students that did not receive the intervention.

2.1.3 Responsiveness to intervention

Responsiveness to intervention (RTI) is a multi-layered approach to providing interventions and different services to struggling learners at different levels of intensity that increase in difficulty at a steady rate (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire,
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

2007). The RTI model should be used as a tool when making decisions about general, compensatory, and special education. Speech and language pathologists can use the RTI intervention model to assist in identifying children with disabilities. Then, they can provide the instruction needed to the struggling students in both the general education and the special education settings. RTI involves a universal screening, high-quality instruction and interventions that are set to match the students’ needs. The SLP’s role in the RTI model is to assist in developing and choosing the screening measures used, plan and conduct professional development on literacy, and identify patterns in students language skills. Frequent monitoring of the progress of intervention is occurring throughout the school year and the use of the students’ response data is used to make educational decisions by the SLP to help the student. Once an RTI is completed on the student or child in need, it should be used for making decisions regarding the student about general, compensatory, and special education. This will help to create a well-integrated and seamless system of instruction and intervention guided by the students’ outcome data. Changing the instruction for struggling students to help them improve their performance and achieve academic success is what the RTI seeks to help students with.

Mohling, Sanger & Stremlau (2012) completed a study on the opinions of speech-language pathologists on the response to intervention. The study revealed that SLPs viewed the RTI model of intervention as a very important model being used in the classroom to support struggling learners. However, 80 percent of participants in the study admitted to the RTI model being a bit challenging. The issues related to the challenges of RTI were training, funding, additional personnel, planning time, and administrative leadership. However, it was found that many SLPs who are present in the classroom were
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

or had been trained with the RTI system. SLPs participated in conferences and workshops to become trained in the RTI model, however, not all SLPs agreed that they had been offered these opportunities by the school in which they worked. The majority of SLPs in this study acknowledged the importance of their role as SLPs in the RTI process as well as the value of screening, monitoring the progress, assessment and prevention of continued failure for the struggling learners with a speech and language disorder.

Findings suggest that SLPs acknowledge and recognize that the RTI model signifies a preventative approach. It can allow students who are likely to fall between the cracks in the general education system to be helped (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007; Troia, 2005; Velluntino et al., 2006). The services that RTI provide are preventative approaches to help students with speech and language disorders, instead of approaches that have a wait-until-you-fail type of service (Troia, 2005; Velluntino et al., 2006). In these reactionary cases, it can sometimes be too late to help. The use of RTI prevention can provide avoidance of labeling for special education students and the services that are provided to these students. This can have a detrimental impact on students’ self images which connects to the idea of inclusive education (Moore-Brown et al., 2005), which is discussed further later on in this chapter.

It is still left unknown whether or not SLPs are receiving the support and training they need in order to effectively support students in the classroom and complete the RTI process. Although, Mohling, Sanger & Stremlau (2012) do state that some SLPs are receiving this training. The questionnaire which they completed also signified a great deal of SLPs may not be supported and trained the best way possible to support students
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

in the classroom and therefore, are not trained to use the RTI model. This leaves a gap in this particular research area. How can we better support the SLPs that are in the classroom and train them in a way that can benefit students to the best of our ability so that no one gets left behind or falls between the cracks? Not only will students be better supported in the classroom but they will also be less susceptible to having lower self-images, which benefits their overall health and well being.

2.2 Collaboration

Collaboration is an important aspect of studying SLPs’ and teachers’ relationship in the classroom when working with children in classrooms with speech and language disorders. It is important to understand why collaboration is an important aspect of student success in the classroom. By reviewing previous research done on the collaboration and team effort between SLPs and teachers, we can begin to understand the concept of working in terms of collaboration and what gaps are still left to fill. Collaboration among classroom teachers and SLPs is crucial to the delivery of an effective treatment program and services for students in the inclusive classroom setting with speech and language disorders (Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore, 2010).

Speech and language pathologists work collaboratively with families, teachers, administrators, and other special service providers (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). A critical role that SLPs play is in the collaboration around Responsiveness to Intervention, also known as RTI, an effort which is discussed above. SLPs assist in the general education classroom for the initial universal screening of students and they participate in the development and implementation of progress
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

monitoring and the analysis of the students outcomes (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). A very important job as a SLP is helping families understand the language basis of literacy and learning as well as specific language issues that are present in the individual child.

2.2.1 Collaboration between teachers and SLPs

In a study by Dohan & Schulz (1998) it was discovered that SLPs are extending their traditional role in the classroom by not only examining the communication needs of the students but by also designing objectives and developing and implementing a plan to meet those needs. In this study, SLPs and teachers developed activities and implemented them jointly as a team to help students with speech and language disorders. However, it was found that the collaboration method most used by SLPs was a classroom-based approach that required a lesser degree of collaboration with teachers. The methods most likely used were observation of the students and assisting the students in need with their work individually. Dohan & Schulz (1998) found that it was much less frequent for SLPs to use approaches that require a great degree of collaboration. This meant that the SLP and the teacher would divide the instructional content into two separate parts. The SLP and teacher would arrange students into groups within the classroom and the groups would switch so that all students would receive instruction from each individual. Another collaborative technique used frequently, that Dohan & Schulz (1998) found, was that within the classroom, both the SLP and the teacher present the lesson to the students. This could be done in two different ways: the first being through a shared lecturing
The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2010) outlines the roles and responsibilities of a speech and language pathologist within the area of collaboration. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2010), SLPs should be demonstrating collaborative efforts with other school professionals. SLPs provide services to the school that support the overall instructional program. SLPs not only work closely with general educators, but they also work closely with reading specialists, reading coaches, occupational therapists, physical therapists, special education teachers, school psychologists, audiologists, guidance counsellors and social workers. SLPs are also working directly with school and school district administrators in designing programs and implementing these programs. SLPs are also working collaboratively with families. It is essential that SLPs engage with families in planning, decision-making and program implementation, regardless of the students’ age. And lastly, SLPs collaboratively work with students. According to the association, the students’ involvement in the intervention process is crucial to the promotion of personal accountability of their communication improvement goals. SLPs should be actively engaging students in goal planning, intervention implementation, monitoring their process, all depending on their age and ensuring that their involvement is age appropriate (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010). The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association recommends that speech and language professionals to be clinician-educators, who are able to engage in teaching as well as in clinical activities (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2010; Gerber, 1987). Speech and
language professionals should be able to direct therapeutic programs along with educational programs, for a range of language difficulties, according to Marge and Irwin (1968).

A collaborative team approach, according to Pena & Quinn (2003), is an efficient way to foster positive results for students with speech and language disorders. To target both authentic communication goals and language-based academic goals, classroom based team approaches can be used. The example given by Pena & Quinn (2003) outlines that by providing a classroom-based intervention to a preschool child, teaching teams are providing them with the opportunity to improve their peer interactions, which in result improves their peers’ perception of their communicative competence and therefore, leading to more opportunities for interaction. Pena & Quinn (2003) also found that SLPs who utilize the content in the curriculum reinforce classroom instruction and, in return, teachers reinforce communication goals for these students in daily classroom activities.

Based on research conducted by Gerber (1987), “the SLP should assume a consultative role in the development of curricular activities aimed at preventing deficiencies and fostering adequate communication skills” (p. 108). SLPs should perform demonstrative lessons in the classroom, according to Gerber (1987). An educational approach as a form of collaboration is much more effective in comparison to a medical/therapeutic approach (Gerber, 1987; Marge & Irwin, 1968).

**2.3 SLPs as Teachers**

Prelock (2000) discusses a therapeutic perspective, which discusses that the role divisions originate from the belief that SLPs are not adequately prepared for managing
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

the content in the curriculum. This means that it is believed the SLPs are not prepared or trained for teaching subjects like math, science and social studies. Prelock (2000) found that it is not believed that SLPs should be teaching particular sections of math or science to the entire class. Just because SLPs should not be teaching the entire class, there should be some sort of shared responsibility between the SLP and teacher for a shared success of the student in need. This would require a form of collaborative planning and a plan for successful implementation.

SLPs are not teachers and should not be looked at or have the same responsibilities as teachers. However, as another support in the school setting or in the classroom, they can be very beneficial to the learning of students. Little research has been conducted on the ability of SLPs to be teachers and teach the rest of the students in the regular classroom setting. However, Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore (2010) found that in order for SLPs to be respected and embraced in the regular classroom the teacher needs to slowly integrate them into the classroom setting. This means that SLPs should be invited into the classroom to observe the student first before the intervention starts. This allows the SLP to observe teaching strategies for subjects that are appropriate to them, for example, in reading and writing.

2.4 Inclusive Classrooms

Recently, the inclusion of students with disabilities in the primary school settings has become the norm in education policy and practice. Regular primary schools that are practicing an inclusive environment are becoming the most successful means of stopping and reducing discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an
inclusive society and achieving education for all children (see De Boer, Pijl, Post & Minnaert, 2013; Kalambouka, 2007; Pavri, 2001).

In the general education classroom, students with disabilities have been increasingly receiving services. As a result, SLPs have been using a variety of flexible models to meet the needs of these students. In some schools, they are still providing a pullout program for students with speech and language disorders. However, some schools are increasing the hours that SLPs spend at the school and incorporating them into the inclusive classroom (Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore, 2010; Katz, Fallon, Van Der Linden, & DiDonato, 2006).

### 2.4.1 Perspectives on inclusion

In a study by Prelock (2000) it was found that there are three main perspectives that are implemented in the classroom to include learners with language learning impairments (LLI) or also referred to as speech and language disorders. One of the perspectives that Prelock (2000) discusses is the therapeutic perspective, which is touched on above in the subheading *SLPs as teachers*. One of the perspectives discussed by Prelock (2000) was the scaffolding perspective. This perspective includes careful scaffolding of instruction, which increases the accessibility of the curriculum, which deems critical for students with LLIs. In order for the scaffolding perspective to be beneficial, Prelock (2000) found that careful planning and implementing strategies was most likely to aid a student’s learning. These are seen to be essential aspects of supporting accessibility for the students with LLIs in working with and learning around the curriculum. However, in the scaffolding approach, it was found that in this approach
it is extremely important to ensure that students are not lacking a social interaction component in the curriculum or in the classroom, as sometimes, when working in small groups and having scaffolded instruction, students can sometimes not have the social interaction that they need.

Children with LLIs often have compromised social skills, similar to students with other types of exceptionalities (Prelock, 2000). This then puts them at risk of classroom success. This belief leads to the perspective that Prelock (2000) calls the social interaction perspective. The role of the SLP in this perspective is to carefully assess the social behavior of the children which they serve in the classroom. The SLP must then collaborate with the teacher who is in the classroom regarding the type of peer partnership that may or may not be successful for the student. A frequent expectation that is laid out in the regular education classroom is completing assignments and projects through cooperative groups. This can be a challenging activity for students who have exceptionalities and speech and language disorders. Brinton et al. (1997) examined the social behavior profiles of children with speech and language impairments and how they influenced their capability to work efficiently in cooperative groups. In this study, six children with speech and language impairments were partnered with two separate typically developing peers in four different contexts. The different contexts resembled activities or scenarios that would typically occur in a classroom setting, for example, working on a project. Brinton et al. (1997) found that SLPs were crucial in supporting students with speech and language impairments and their work with classmates on cooperative activities. Therefore, it was discovered that it is important for the SLP to assess the child’s social behavior and then collaborate with the classroom teacher.
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

concerning the kind of peer relationships and partnerships that may or may not be successful for that particular student (Brinton, Fujiki, Spencer & Robinson, 1997).

2.5 SLPs as Beneficial Resources in the Classroom

SLPs can be beneficial resources in the classroom and can make unique contributions in the classroom. The reasons in which Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire (2007) believe that SLPs are unique resources and make unique contributions in the classroom is because SLPs have the opportunity to explain the role of language in the curriculum, how it can be assessed in a fair way, and a successful way to use instruction of language. All of these elements help to create the basis of an appropriate program design for the teacher.

Having SLPs and students with speech and language disorders in the regular education classroom allows for a long-term success for these students, according to Banotai (2006). Having these students integrated into the regular education classroom, dependent on the collaborative approach in which the SLP and the classroom teacher take, allows the student to apply a newly acquired skill that they learned from the SLP to the general education classroom in which they are placed (Banotai, 2006).

An SLP is a benefit to the classroom by helping improve academic skills (Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore, 2010). By welcoming an SLP into the classroom to help with intervention, the SLP may also be able to help the teacher achieve the academic objectives for the student. Staskowski & Creaghead (2001) stated that it may be more effective for reading comprehension to be focused on within the context of the classroom as opposed to a separate room using materials that may differ from the regular education
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

classroom. This allows the SLP to target vocabulary words that are related to the curriculum and will likely help to develop the student’s reading proficiency.

2.6 Challenges

In research done by Pena & Quinn (2003), teachers frequently demonstrated through their behaviour or stated that they were not allotted enough time to meet with the speech and language pathologist to discuss and plan collaboratively. Teachers felt that it was unrealistic to meet with the speech and language pathologist before the child arrived or during scheduled breaks, or lunch times, and unintentionally developed a tension to the collaborative process. Therefore, in order for the support of the collaborative process between speech and language pathologists and educators to be demonstrated by the administration, time must be dedicated for the progression.

Collaboration and consultation are demanding professional requirements that command skills in both the process and the content of interaction among professionals, according to Russel (1981). Although the interactions between the SLP and different educators in the school may enrich the repertoire of educational strategies, challenges are also likely to occur. Gerber (1987) concludes that challenges and conflicts that are likely to arise involve resistance by experienced professionals to recommendations made by individuals outside of their discipline and secondly, a resentment to additional classroom demands. These types of conflicts are likely to arise because of the disregard of information sharing between the two parties and ineffective communication (Gerber, 1987).
2.7 Conclusion

In this literature review, I looked at research on intervention, collaboration, and inclusive classroom settings. The review elucidates the extent that attention has been paid to the role in which SLPs play in the lives of students with speech and language disorders. It also raises questions about how many collaboration techniques are already out there but how little research and implementation is being done to ensure these collaborative techniques are being used. It further points to the need for further research in the areas of early intervention, and what kinds of intensive training SLPs are receiving to better their ability to catch speech and language disorders earlier in the classroom setting. In light of this, the purpose of my research is to learn how teachers and speech pathologists are working together to support the students in the regular education classroom with speech and language disorders. How are SLPs being prepared for the regular education and inclusive classrooms as compared to their original role in pullout programs or private clinical work? Therefore, I am completing a qualitative research study, which includes interviewing classroom teachers and speech pathologists and their work as a team to help students with speech and language disorders get the help and support they need to be successful.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the research methodology. I begin by reviewing the general approach, procedures, and data collection instruments, before elaborating more specifically on participant sampling and recruitment. I explain data analysis procedures
and review the ethical considerations pertinent to my study. I identify a range of methodological limitations, but I also speak to the strengths of the methodology. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of key methodological decisions and my rationale for these decisions.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

This research study explores how speech and language pathologists work collaboratively with classroom educators while supporting students with speech and language disorders.

The study was conducted using a qualitative research study approach, including a review of the existing literature pertinent to the research questions and purpose of the study, as well as the conduction of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with three teachers.

A qualitative research approach is generally used to help deliver details in a context as well as a deliver a different insight of the context (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010). Creswell (2013) states that qualitative research is one of the most effective methods in which to understand perspectives of teachers because it allows for the study of a particular situation in a real-life scenario and context. Qualitative research is one of the most insightful forms of research because it allows the researcher to dive deeper into a study and focus on rich details (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010). Due to the limitation of the amount of participants in my study, using qualitative research is the most ideal method because it does allow me to dive deeper into the limited amount of participants I interact with. By using the qualitative research methodology, readers will explore a sample of a
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

variety of relationships between teachers and students and teachers and speech pathologists in a more holistic approach.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

In the field of education, a common research method and data collection technique used for many years is qualitative interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The primary instrument for data collection used in this study is the semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity to hear about participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). The semi-structured format allows for the interviewer to design and plan an interview that attends to their research focus and questions, while leaving room for participants to elaborate and even re-direct attention to areas previously unforeseen by the interviewer. By using qualitative research, it allows participants to provide a deeper perspective and reflect on their first-hand experiences (Berg, 2001; Warren & Karner, 2010). For the convenience of my participants, the semi-structured interviews were conducted over the phone. Completing interviews over the phone or in person allows the researcher to read the interviewees facial expression, body language, and tone of voice (Irvine et al., 2012).

I collected the data through informal semi-structured interviews with three educators who have students with speech and language disorders in their classrooms. I designed the interview questions to focus on educators’ experiences within the classroom and their experiences working with speech and language pathologists and their students who have speech and language disorders. In particular, the questions targeted their
For my research, I followed a set of questions that helped the teachers explore their own thoughts and experiences with working alongside the speech pathologist and the students in their classroom. Based off of a qualitative design methodological approach, these questions are supposed to complete a picture of teachers’ perspectives (Leko, 2014). When developing my interview questions, I looked to provide questions that draw from the teachers’ experiences, rather than gathering information from a series of tests or experiments, because the type of information I set out to gather can only be gathered from personal experience, not from an artificial environment (Cheseboro & Borisoff, 2007).

The full list of questions may be found in the appendices. Questions include:

- What are some of the positive experiences you have had collaborating with the speech and language pathologists that works with these particular student/students?
- What problems have you encountered while working with speech and language pathologists?
- What is the protocol if you have a student in your classroom that you are concerned may have a speech and language disorder?
3.3 Participants

In this section, I review the sampling criteria I established for participant recruitment, and I review a range of possible avenues for teacher recruitment. I have also included a section introducing the participants and giving some background information.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria

- Educators must be a full-time teacher for five or more years.
- Educators must have had a student in the classroom with a speech and language disorder within the last five years.
- Educators must have a student in the classroom who either is taken out of the classroom by a speech pathologist or a speech pathologist comes into the classroom.

Educators chosen for this study needed to have a minimum of five years of teaching experience because this number of years allows for a wide range of experiences in terms of having students with speech and language disorders in their classrooms. In addition, the educator must have also have supported a student within the last five years with a speech and language disorder. I believe this is important in order to accurately recall experiences working with these students and the speech and language pathologist. Educators must have also had a student either taken out of their classroom by a speech and language pathologist or the speech and language pathologist must be present in the classroom to support the child. I believe this to be crucial because I am looking at how educators are supported by the speech and language pathologist and their relationship when supporting a student.
3.3.2 Sampling procedure

Given the small scope of this study, the sampling procedure that I used was purposive sampling. I chose my participants based on the idea that the “study purpose with the expectation that each participant will provide unique and rich information of value to the study” (Suen et al., 2014, p. 105). By using the purposive sampling method, I ensured that the information received from the participants during the interviews would contribute to the study and give a better understanding of my overall research topic.

In addition to purposeful sampling, convenience sampling was also used as a guideline. By using convenience sampling, participants can be “more readily accessible to the researcher and are more likely to be included” (Suen et al., 2014 p. 105). I relied on my networks and contacts in order to recruit participants for this research study. Specifically, I contacted people that were recommended by other teacher candidates and professors. In addition, I contacted old colleagues and other educational professionals to help recruit participants that best matched this study.

I provided my information rather than ask specific individuals/organizations directly to provide me with the names and contact information of people they believe to be suitable. This helped to ensure that teachers were volunteering to participate rather than feeling pressure or obligation to participate. I have used my existing contacts when sending my information to schools/organizations.

3.3.3 Participant bios

Cara

My first participant was Cara. At the time of the research study, Cara was an English and Math teacher at a private school in the Ottawa region. She has been teaching
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

for 28 years in both the private and public sector. In her first few years of teaching, she taught English to First Nations and over the last few years has been supporting a student with speech and language in her classroom at a bilingual private school in Ottawa, Ontario.

Amanda

My second participant was Amanda. At the time of the research, Amanda was the core resource teacher to Grade Five, Six, junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten. She had been teaching for twenty-one years in the public sector, and has had specifically twelve years of special education experience, four years’ experience teaching in the Intensive Support and Assessment (ISA) program and finally, taught four years as a regular classroom educator.

Jane

My third participant was Jane. Jane has been teaching for thirty-one years in the public sector and at the time of the study was recently retired. Although retired, Jane is still regularly in the school setting by still volunteering and running the Terry Fox Run. Jane, in her career, taught mostly in the primary grades, specifically Grade Two and Three. Jane was also the physical education teacher for four years. Jane has supported many students with Speech and Language disorders throughout her teaching career, but specifically has worked with a student within the last five years.

3.4 Data Analysis

The aspects of the data I investigated were those relating to themes covered in the literature review. Once interviews were completed with participants, I transcribed my
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

findings and converted the recorded data into written form (Warren & Karner, 2010). By using this process, it allowed me to become more familiar with participants responses. It was beneficial recording participants interviews, as it allows researchers to capture “thick data”, meaning it enables one to hear sensitivities in participants voices, such as emotion and inflection (Berg, 2001; Warren & Karner, 2010). I first began by transcribing the interviews of the three teachers that I interviewed. I read and re-read over each transcript carefully, before identifying codes and sorting them into categories (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). I then read and re-read the transcriptions, paying particular attention to spot information relating to the themes when going through the transcribed interview data (Creswell, 2007).

Following transcribing and re-reading my interviews, I analyzed them using the process of coding. According to Warren & Karner (2010), one should have a basic sense of the direction of their findings because they have extensively read, re-read and reviewed them during the transcription process. I highlighted the important quotes and insights in the interview data, and copied them into tables coding each interview separately based on the above-mentioned themes that came out of the interview data. Coding can be best described as the “identification of recurrent patterns or themes” in data (p. 218), and is done by organizing the data into different classifications (Berg, 2001; Warren & Karner, 2010). Specifically for this study, I used “open coding”, which involves reviewing the data multiple times and being open to developing different understandings and spotting new things each time (Warren & Karner, 2010). Once completing the coding process, I synthesized my findings, while searching for greater
connections and themes to the topic of speech and language pathologists collaborating with the educator in the classroom.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

While completing my research, I followed the ethical review procedures outlined and approved by the Master of Teaching program. I kept all our correspondence and meetings private, to ensure the privacy of my participants. Confidentiality is an important aspect, especially when researching a potentially sensitive subject. The participants identities remained confidential and each participant was given a pseudonym (Kaiser, 2009). Prior to interviewing the three teachers, each teacher was provided with a letter of consent detailing their role in my research (see Appendix A). The consent letter outlined the purpose of the study and what was expected by the participant, it also informed the participant if there were any risks in participating in the study, which there were not (Creswell, 2007). I reviewed the terms of our agreement before each interview took place, ensuring they were aware that they would remain anonymous and would be provided with a pseudonym. A pseudonym is a name given to someone to hide or keep their identity private (Kaiser, 2009). Participants were asked to read through the agreement and consent carefully and to ask any questions or raise any concerns before the interview took place. If they had questions, I addressed them all before they signed the agreement. I informed participants that they had the right to withdraw from the interviews at any point should they wish to do so. I also let them know that I would provide them with a copy of transcripts from our interviews if requested as well as my final project. I ensured that they knew that if they would like to change any of their answers at any point during the interviews or once completed they could do so. I also ensured the participants
who wanted it were given a copy of our interview transcript as well as my final paper for their records. Finally, all of the data collected during this study, was stored on a password protected laptop and phone, and all data will be destroyed after five years.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

The most significant limitation of my study was the small sample size. Three teachers only represent a very small number of teachers who have students with speech and language disorders who work with speech and language pathologists in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. As a result, findings cannot be generalized to the broader population (Warren & Karner, 2001; Creswell, 2007).

The MTRP guidelines stated that only teachers can be interviewed, therefore, prohibiting interviews with students, parents and speech and language pathologists. The ethical guidelines restricted the number of participants that we could interview. The small group of participants helped to enlighten my choice of this particular topic, this research would have benefited from a larger sample size. If there had been more participants interviewed, I would be able to get a better sense of the collaboration between speech and language pathologists. Due to the smaller sample size, it made it challenging to generalize findings to discuss research in a larger sense.

This project was executed throughout the two academic school years of the Masters of Teaching program, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. The project began in September 2015; which at this time the research problem was identified and the research questions were articulated. During the Winter of 2015/2016 the literature review was developed in which provided a theoretical
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

basis for this project. During the Spring/Summer of 2016, interviews began and data was transcribed. This timeline was short and made it challenging to figure out exactly what as a researcher I wanted to find out from the participants in the study.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the research methodology that I carried out throughout my study. First, I started by identifying my research focuses on how speech and language pathologists work collaboratively with classroom educators while supporting students with speech and language disorders. This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach, which involved a literature review and semi-structured interviews with educators, and the effectiveness of this approach. Then, I described the participants in the research study, the reasoning behind my sampling and recruitment criteria, finally followed by the difference between convenience and purposive sampling. A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study, as it provides a deeper perspective, and gives voices to those who have firsthand experience working with my topic (Berg, 2001; Warren & Karner, 2010; Creswell, 2007). Next, I discussed the ethical procedures, regarding consent and confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study. Finally, I concluded by discussing the main limitation of the study being the limited sample size. In Chapter Four, I will report my research findings.
CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The data collected in the following chapter attempts to answer the research questions described in Chapter 1: How is a sample of elementary school educators working together with speech and language pathologists (SLPs) to support students in inclusive classrooms with speech and language disorders? These questions arise as a new teacher seeing students with speech and language disorders in classrooms attempting to receive the support that they need.

This chapter will outline overall findings from data collected during interviews with each of the three participants, as presented in Chapter 3. The questions for the interview can be found in Appendix B. The interviews were conducted with elementary school educators who have worked with students with speech and language disorders in the past, or currently work with students with speech and language disorders. Several themes emerged during the interviews and those themes have been grouped together to present the ideas in a more cohesive manner. The thematic groups are as follows:

- Educators took advantage of learning opportunities to better their skills when working with students with speech and language disorders.
- Educators concurred that the resources available to them aimed to develop their collaborative efforts with the speech and language pathologist when developing supports for students with speech and language disorders.
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

- Educators concurred that there were challenges or potential challenges when working with students with speech and language disorders in regards to early intervention in the classroom.

4.1 Educators Took Advantage of Learning Opportunities to Better Their Skills When Working With Students With Speech and Language Disorders

Participants took advantage of learning opportunities that were presented to them in order to better themselves when working with students with speech and language disorders. “Professionals continually learn on the job, because their work involves engagement in a series of cases, problems, or projects which they have to learn about” (Eraut, 1994 p. 10). As educators, we need to continuously learn so that we can better support our students.

4.1.1 Educators recognized the importance of developing their knowledge and education by taking Additional Qualification courses

Both participants spoke about the importance of developing their own knowledge when working with students with speech and language disorders. Participants took additional qualification courses after completing teachers college to further their knowledge. Participants connected their pursuit of knowledge with personal stories of what inspired them to better themselves in that particular field.

Amanda took additional qualification courses in order to better support the students in her class with a speech and language disorder or any other exceptionality. Amanda specifically stated, “I took special education part one and I took all the way up
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS
to my specialist. It really opened my eyes and I have always kind of had a special
connection or desire to advocate for the children.”

Cara spoke of her interest in reading acquisition and how children learn language
as one of her reasons for completing her reading specialist. Cara specifically stated, when
asked what experiences and interests have helped her develop her skills, “I am interested
in language acquisition and how children learn language and I’ve gone to do my reading
specialist.”

Language acquisition is the concept that “a child is believed to be able to
accomplish without explicit instruction in evidence that humans come into the world with
an innate capacity for language, or are even biologically preprogrammed with the basic
parameters of language from birth” (Plante & Beeson, 2004 p. 165). Research shows that
language acquisition is in an active and vigorous debate concerning how it is
accomplished. Although language acquisition is not something that can be programmed
into students, teachers can participate in additional qualification courses that help to
develop their skills while working with students in this specific area.

4.1.2 Educators’ past experiences demonstrates commitment to working
collaboratively to support students’ speech and language needs

Participants reflected on their prior experience working with students with speech
and language disorders and how it helped them to shape and grow into an educator.

Cara recalled her prior experience working with students in northern Quebec with
varying language challenges ranging from a lisp to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Cara
stated that with these students it was best to adjust the program and curriculum to fit the
needs of the student. She described her experience with a particular child and how she
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

worked to support his auditory recognition, for example, playing a lot more games that required mental intuition. Cara’s prior experience working up north helped her to support the student in her classroom today with the auditory recognition difficulty. Cara stated, “Throughout my career I have had experience with varying degrees from common lisps to processing and auditory problems. There has also been dyslexia which affects speech so there has been a variety.”

Amanda described her prior family experience as contributing to her growth as an educator and encouraged her to develop her skills. Amanda said, “Well I had a son who had speech problems. I forget exactly what it was called but he was unable to make any sounds at all because of a difficult birth. He was two years old going to speech therapy every day. That got me really interested in it.” She continued to say that this was when she decided to take additional qualification courses within the field of special education.

Collaboration among classroom teachers and SLPs is crucial to the delivery of an effective treatment program and services for students in the inclusive classroom setting with speech and language disorders (Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore, 2010). Participants recalled past experiences working with students with speech and language disorders, shared personal connections to the disorder and times they have worked with SLPs in the past. Therefore, by having previous experience working with students with speech and language disorders, participants found that it was beneficial to have already supported a student with speech and language. Prior research demonstrates the benefits of collaboration, however, prior experience working with students with speech and language disorders seems to be beneficial.
4.1.3 Educators acknowledged that the additional training offered through their schools lead them to better assist students with speech and language disorders

Amanda described the technology training that is going on during the interview in the classroom that she is in stating “There is assistive technology training, that is going on in the room I am in right now. We have a classroom teacher, and three core resource teachers and then there are the educational assistants and anyone that works with that student. The student is then trained separately. There is a lot of training that is going on.”

Cara and Jane were unable to comment on this particular topic because they could not recall a moment that they were trained through their school or school board to better support students with speech and language disorders. However, Jane said “the resource teacher is a wealth of information in most cases,” which she describes as being her biggest support when working with students with speech and language disorders. She also described how she learns from them and how they develop strategies, which is discussed later in Chapter Four.

Mohling, Sanger & Stremlau (2012) do state that some SLPs are receiving training. The questionnaire which they had participants complete also signified a great deal of SLPs that may not be supported and trained in the best way possible to support students in the classroom. Therefore, there is still a gap in research on what training is being provided specific to educators in order to better support their students with speech and language disorders.
4.2 Educators Concurred That The Resources Available To Them Aimed To Develop Their Collaborative Efforts With The Speech And Language Pathologist When Developing Supports For Students With Speech And Language Disorders

Educators believed that the resources that were available to them were sufficient in being able to support students with speech and language disorders. Educators concurred that strategies were developed between the speech and language pathologist and resource teacher and then passed along to the classroom teacher, in certain schools. Other participants collaborated one-on-one with the speech and language pathologist to develop strategies.

Throughout the subthemes listed below, participants reflected on their ability to communicate effectively with the speech and language pathologist and the tools that they used. Participants discussed the strategies that were developed between the speech pathologist and themselves, and the ways in which the educator implemented them into their classroom.

4.2.1 The educators in this study concurred that multi-form communication with the speech and language pathologist was a key factor in their ability to support students with speech and language needs

Participants in this study agreed that multi- form communication with the speech and language pathologist was an important aspect of support for their students. For the purpose of this study, multi-form communication for the purpose of this study is defined as a combination of verbal and written communication through means of electronic
devices. During interviews, participants described building good rapport with the speech and language pathologist.

Amanda described the initial contact with the speech pathologist was during a case conference. When asked what happened if there are too many kids and not enough openings with the speech pathologist, she responded:

They have to wait or our speech pathologist can help us kind of off the record with programming but we have to do our best. I could take them to a case conference where all of the board personnel meet. We would have our psychologist, behaviourist, our physical management, speech would be there and we brainstorm ideas of what we do in the meantime.

She continued on to say that once the students do start seeing the speech pathologist, it is not the end of their challenges because they are just being assessed. She said that as educators they still have to have strategies and everyone has different ideas and resources. Therefore, it is all brought up during the case conference where they discuss the student in need of support.

Research states that collaboration among classroom teachers and speech and language pathologists is crucial to the delivery of an effective treatment program and services for students in the inclusive classroom setting with speech and language disorders (Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore, 2010). Speech and language pathologists assist in the general education classroom for the initial universal screening of students and they participate in the development and implementation of the progress monitoring and the analysis of the students outcome (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). Research correlates to the participants’ answers because participants reflected on times in
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

which they successfully collaborated with the SLP to support a student in their classroom.

Participants used multi-form communication as a resource to assist with providing the student with a speech and language disorder in their classroom the intervention and support that they need.

4.2.2 An approach used by educators while working with a student with a speech and language disorder, was developing strategies with the speech and language pathologist and then implementing them into their classroom

Cara explained the process that she goes through with the speech and language pathologist when a student is in need of support.

When we met, we would go over strategies, we would look at where the successes are, she wanted to see what was going on in the classroom in terms of the work, for this particular student, it wasn’t the intelligence, it was that he couldn’t get it out onto the paper. She would assess, she would give strategies on how to make sure that everything was being absorbed correctly. For example, chunking and things like that, sometimes we would do scribing or oral so should would check to see if that was going on and you know, we would go from there.

Cara also discussed her teaching experience up north and how a specialized teacher would come into the classroom to work one-on-one with students with any kind of language difficulty. Cara stated that the specialized teacher would come into the classroom to work with the student. The specialized teacher would work one-on-one with the student covering the same curriculum that was being taught in class.
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

Cara stated that collaborative effort was made between herself and the specialized teacher, especially because they were working on the same curriculum and program goals.

Amanda described how the SLP and herself work together to support students with speech and language disorders. Amanda stated that the development of strategies stems from the individual education plan that is developed for the student. Amanda stated that the ways they support and come up with strategies is through collaborating not only with the speech and language pathologist, but also the classroom teacher and other colleagues in the school. Amanda stated that the strategies are developed to reflect the level that the particular student is at. Having students working on communicating with their friends in the schoolyard and developing strategies for that was the example she gave.

Participants in this study concurred the importance of developing strategies with the speech and language pathologist to better support their students. However, this was done outside of classroom instructional time.

Research by Prelock (2000) found that although it was believed that SLPs should not be teaching the entire class, there should be some sort of shared responsibility between the SLP and teacher for a shared success of the student in need. Shared responsibility between the SLP and the classroom educator was discovered in relation to developing strategies for the student, however, in regards to the SLP teaching lessons in the classroom, no benefit was discovered. By the SLP teaching in the classroom, this would require a form of collaborative planning and a plan for successful implementation.
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

Research shows the importance of collaboration, discussed above. It was discovered in a study by Dohan & Schulz (1998) that SLPs are extending their traditional role in the classroom. SLPs are now not only explaining communication needs of the students but also designing objectives and developing and implementing a plan to meet those needs. In this particular study done by Dohan & Schulz (1998), it was found that SLPs and teachers developed activities and implemented them jointly as a team to help students with speech and language needs. Through Cara’s experience working with students up north, it was clear that collaboration between both Cara and the speech and language pathologist was an important aspect of providing students with the support they need in the classroom.

4.2.3 Educators concurred that collaboration was a key factor in the assessment and early intervention stage in developing resources aimed to support students with speech and language disorders

Educators in this study concurred that assessment and intervention were important factors for students with speech and language disorders. Cara described a personal story where her daughter was diagnosed with a lateral lisp at a young age and how early intervention ensured it would not affect her later in life.

My daughter had a lateral lisp and she was identified at an earlier age, the age of four. So it was important to attend those sessions, you know speech impediment that she had of the lisp that she had so that it wasn’t something that was going to affect her later on in life.

All participants came to a similar consensus that there was not enough space for all the students that needed support. The research says that the RTI model is the most
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

beneficial model for early intervention and diagnosis for students. Responsiveness to
intervention (RTI) is a multi-layered approach to providing interventions and different
services to struggling learners at different levels of intensity that increase in difficulty at a
steady rate (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). The services that RTI
provide are preventative approaches to help students with speech and language disorders,
instead of approaches that have a ‘wait until you fail’ type of service (Troia, 2005;
Velluntino et al., 2006). In these cases, it can sometimes be too late. However, in none of
these cases was the RTI model explicitly discussed.

4.2.4 Educators concurred that inclusive classrooms were the best form of
integration for students with speech and language disorders however, worked best
when using a scaffolded approach

In education policy and practice, the inclusion of students with disabilities in
universal primary schools has become a right. Primary schools that are practicing an
inclusive environment are becoming the most successful means of stopping and reducing
discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society
and achieving education for all children (see De Boer, Pijl, Post & Minnaert, 2013;
Kalambouka, 2007; Pavri, 2001).

Jane fostered inclusion of her students by,
Getting them up and speaking with speech and work with explaining but it was
never zeroed in on the particular student who needed the extra support. I would
say “remember you’ve got to slow down” and before they would go up we would
talk about but not every time because I also didn’t want to drill it into them but I
had it within the classroom. I had things like “how to be a good speaker” and “in order to be a good listener” for example, slow down and look at your audience. Jane described how she would encourage positive comments from the students and had students ask questions after presentations. She believed that this encouraged their speaking and helped to develop their dialogue with each other and within her classroom. She stated, “I encouraged for all of my students certain things but importantly building confidence. I saw a big growth from my students over the years because of their comfort level with getting up and doing things.”

Jane is demonstrating the scaffolding perspective. The scaffolding perspective includes careful layering of instruction, which increases the accessibility of the curriculum, which deems critical for students with Leveled Literacy Intervention. In order for the scaffolding perspective to be beneficial, Prelock (2000) found that careful planning and implementing strategies was most likely to aid a student’s learning. These are seen to be essential aspects of supporting accessibility for the students with LLIs in working with and learning around the curriculum. However, in the scaffolding approach, it was found that it is extremely important to ensure that students are not lacking a social interaction component in the curriculum or in the classroom (Prelock, 2000). Jane is implementing the strategies that were given to her to better support the student. By using a scaffolding approach, Jane was ensuring that the curriculum is being covered and also ensuring the student is getting the social interaction that they need.
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

4.3 Educators Concurred That There Were Challenges or Potential Challenges When Working with Students with Speech and Language Disorders in Regards to Early Intervention in the Classroom

A critical role that speech and language pathologists play is in the collaboration around Responsiveness to Intervention also known as RTI, which is discussed in Chapter 2. Speech and language pathologists assist in the general education classroom for the initial universal screening of students and they participate in the development and implementation of progress monitoring and the analysis of the students outcomes (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). However, very little research is done on the topic of collaboration between speech and language pathologists and classroom educators and early intervention. Therefore, asking questions that involved the challenges that educators are faced with when going through the process of early intervention in the classroom were crucial to this study. Discussed below are the potential challenges or challenges that SLPs and classroom educators are faced with. Following appropriate protocol when supporting a student with a speech and language disorder arises as a potential challenge. Other common themes that arose throughout interviews that posed as potential challenges were the lack of availability of the SLP and parents.

4.3.1 Following appropriate protocol is crucial for early diagnosis but could be a potential challenge

In order for all of the needs to be met for all of the students in the classroom, the education system must use all of its communal resources to intervene early and provide appropriate interventions and supports to the students in their system (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). Teachers of students with speech and
language disorders are collaborating and working with the school’s speech and language pathologist to encourage early intervention. This ensures that no student is left behind and every student has the opportunity for success and the resources that they need to achieve that success.

Cara described the protocol that goes on within the private school that she works at when it comes to addressing a concern about a student with a speech and language disorder. Cara stated that if there is a student that she had concerns with, she would go directly to the head of the school. From there, the head of the school and herself would sit down with the parents and have a conversation. Cara stated that it is up to the parents to find their own speech pathologist and the evaluation must be done privately and that it is not covered under the school. Cara specified that she does everything she can at the beginning to get them identified, however, she then has to leave some of it up to the parents.

Cara expanded on a potential challenge when following protocol. She stated that We can’t force them to take their child to a speech and language pathologist, so that sometimes can be an issue. Especially if it is not something that they feel or that they see how it effects their learning of language, or learning to read, or how their speech may be affecting their ability to read, and so on.

Jane described her teaching practice and assessment within the first couple of weeks of school with her students.

Protocol has changed over the years because special education teachers would withdraw students so I would sit down with those supports at the beginning of the year. I get an idea of my students within the first couple of weeks. I watch the
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

students, how they are holding their pencil, where they are sitting within the group, and picking out different things like that. On my observation sheet, I write down if I thought of if they wore glasses, if I thought they had a speech difficulty, if there was some behaviour, what the behaviour was. I did everything from academic assessments, quick little tests with them and then also sort of see how their physical being within the classroom was.

Jane’s teaching practice is best described as independent. Jane assesses her students on her own at the beginning of the year before she brings up concerns to her resource support teachers in her school. The challenge in Jane’s case is that the classroom teacher is expected to assess and find concerns on their own, when in reality, they are not specifically trained to be doing so. However, research by Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore (2010) found that in order for SLPs to be respected and embraced in the regular classroom the teacher needs to slowly integrate them into the classroom setting. This allows the SLP to observe teaching strategies for subjects that are appropriate to them, for example, reading and writing.

Amanda described the steps that she takes when she feels as if she has a concern with a student that may involve speech or language:

If you are a regular classroom teacher, the teacher would go to the core resource teacher and then you would have to go and talk to the principal. Once you’ve spoken to the principal, they may put the student on the list depending on what the teacher says. If there was an outside report done (privately) or whatever then you put the student onto the waiting list for one of the five spots that are available within our school. We may also discuss the student at an SBRT meeting which is
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

a school based resource team meeting where we sit down as a team with the teacher, core resource and the principal and we discuss the student.

At the SBRT meeting, Jane described this as a place where they discuss the student and begin to develop strategies to help the student. After this meeting, the student would go onto the list for seeing a speech pathologist in the school. However, Jane also recounted that sometimes depending on the severity or the situation they may suggest to parents to see an outside agency. Jane said that CCAC (Community Care Access Centre) may come into the school as well. The supports at Jane’s school have also found that parents should also check their child’s hearing because that may be a factor in a child’s speech and language. Jane described CCAC as an alternative while waiting to be seen by the SLP in the school, which relieves the challenges and all of the protocols that must be followed, as the CCAC is an additional support that can be provided to the student if needed.

Research done by Pena & Quinn (2003) found that teachers frequently demonstrated through their behavior or stated that they were not allotted enough time to meet with the speech and language pathologist to discuss and plan collaboratively. This research is parallel to the findings as participants concurred that the lack of available resources for these students was a potential challenge. Through students having to receive support from an outside agency, like the CCAC, it is demonstrated that there are not enough spots for students to see the SLP. It was also displayed that there is not enough time for educators to plan and meet with the SLP if there is not enough support already for the students who are in need.
4.3.2 Educators concurred that the lack of availability and open spots to see the speech and language pathologist was a challenge when working with students with speech and language disorders.

When speaking on the subject of availability of open spots to see the support teachers’ (specifically the speech pathologist), Jane said that receiving extra support “is not going to happen” because there are too many students needing additional support and the school boards will not provide the funding needed, in her opinion. She discussed how the full-day kindergarten is going to create students who need more support in the classroom. She believes that full-day kindergarten will slowly start to wear the teachers and the resource teachers down. She stated, “It seems like every year there are more students that need support and there is less support to give.” Jane stated that it was unrealistic to expect more spots to be opened on the list for students who are needing support. Jane argued that it is a lack of funding and time which influence the lack of support for these students and resources available.

Jane described her relationship with the resource teacher that comes into her classroom to support students with speech and language disorders as a positive one. She stated that, “I received enough support because I had a really good resource teacher but I’ve been in the classroom for awhile now but you know what, in my early years I wouldn’t have, you have to build your own confidence within the classroom.” She continued on to discuss the fact that any more support that classroom teachers can get to help them, would be beneficial. This is because teachers are already expected to do so much especially because “now there are way more students with needs.” Jane continued
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS
to recount when she started teaching and how she had never heard the word Autism
before because it wasn’t anything that was discovered yet.

Jane stated that she only sometimes met with the speech pathologist but that she
“didn’t see them a lot.” The speech pathologist would write what they were working on
with the student on a form so that the parent would know. She said, “but again, it was
because it would be the resource teacher that I would work more directly with.” By Jane
saying this, it was concurred that she, as the classroom teacher, she did not work directly
with the speech and language pathologist, however, it was the resource teacher in the
school that pulled the student out of the classroom that would develop the strategies with
the SLP for that particular student. Jane said,

Because time was limited, the speech and language pathologist would give some
ideas on there and then the classroom teacher would meet with the resource
teacher because they would have worked with a lot more students with not only
the specialists coming in but with the students themselves and a larger number of
these students over the years than us as teachers have in our classrooms.

A very important job as an SLP is helping families understand the language basis
of literacy and learning as well as specific language issues that are present in the
individual child (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). However, with
the speech and language pathologist not being regularly present in the school, classroom,
or environment, they are unable to support the families of these students because of the
lack of collaboration between all parties. Through Jane’s experiences, it was shown that
the SLP was not readily available or often in the classroom. Therefore, because Jane
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

stated she “didn’t see them a lot” when asked directly, it is unlikely there is any connection between the parent and SLP.

When Jane was asked whether she thought her collaboration was with the resource teacher more than the speech and language pathologist, she stated, “yes, if I needed support for anything the resource teacher was always there.” Jane acknowledged that the resource teacher in her school was always there to support her, even if the speech and language pathologist was not.

When Amanda was asked about the barriers when it comes to availability of the speech and language pathologist in her school, she stated, “Our speech pathologist only has five students at a time that they can support and we have to share them with several other schools.” Amanda stated that she speech and language pathologist is shared with other schools, which directly relates to the lack of time that students receive and the lack of students the speech and language pathologist is able to support at one time. This was challenging for Amanda because there are many students that need support and just not enough space for all of them. However, Amanda also directly stated that their speech pathologist assigned to their school is “quick to address needs.” She said,

I emailed him this morning and said, “what are we going do with this particular student? Are you coming to assess? I want to get this student an iPad for support” and he replied with, “I’ll see you this afternoon.” It could be coincidental but he is only working three times a week but he gets back to us quickly and they are quick to adjust needs once the students have become a priority. However, I gave him a speech report and he said that he would look at it later because he had more
pressing things to do. They can only see five students on our list, so we really have to prioritize because there are just so many kids waiting.

Cara was unable to comment on this question because in the private school that she works at, the parent must privately hire the speech and language pathologist to come into the school and work with their child. Cara is only able to support by initially assessing the student and bringing her concerns to the principal and parents.

Research confirms the importance of early intervention. Studies show that appropriate intervention helps and is a preventative method in supporting learning and behavioural problems from becoming larger issues (Ethren, Montgomery, Rudebusch & Whitmire, 2007). A study done by Ritter & Saxon (2011) aimed to determine if a classroom-based phonological sensitivity intervention would have a positive impact on early reading skills for children who are at risk of developing a reading disability. Ritter & Saxon (2011) found that students who received the intervention performed significantly better than the group of students that did not receive the intervention.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the main themes that arose during the interviews with my three participants. Firstly, I discussed the learning opportunities that were presented to my participants to develop their skills to better support students with speech and language disorders, beginning with additional qualification courses, past experiences demonstrating commitment to working with students, and the additional training that is provided in school that helps them to better support students. I then focused on the collaborative efforts put forth between the speech and language pathologist and the classroom educator, concentrating first on the different forms of communication used
between the SLP and the educator, then moving on to discuss how strategies are developed, how collaborative efforts are a key factor in intervention, and lastly, how inclusive classrooms are an appropriate form of integration for students with speech and language disorders. Finally, I focused on the challenges that participants faced when working with students with speech and language disorders and speech pathologists, specifically, zeroing in on following the appropriate protocol and the lack of availability of the speech and language pathologist. In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of this research study, suggest recommendations based on these discoveries and identify potential areas for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

Within this chapter, I will discuss the overall implications and the significance of this research study. I will address key findings that answer my original research question: How is a sample of elementary school teachers and SLPs working together to support students in inclusive classrooms with speech and language disorders? I will also address my sub-questions: What opportunities for learning did these educators have for preparing them to support students’ speech and language needs? What experiences informed these educators commitment to working collaboratively to support students’ speech and language needs? What factors and resources support these educators in their collaborative effort aimed at developing supports for students with speech and language needs? What kind of challenges do SLPs and teachers encounter when working with a student in the classroom who has a speech and language disorder? What do these educators believe are crucial aspects of support for students with speech and language
disorders? How are SLPs being prepared for the regular education and inclusive classrooms as compared to their original role in pullout programs or private clinical work? I begin by reviewing my key findings, both for my own teaching practice and for the educational community. I make recommendations that may be used by other education professionals, such as schools, school boards, teachers, and educators. Finally, I will pose questions and suggest areas that I feel would benefit from further research and discussion.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance

As discussed in the previous chapter, speech and language pathologists support educators and students with speech and language disorders in a variety of ways. My findings revealed that educators took advantage of learning opportunities to better their skills when working with students with speech and language disorders. My study also revealed that educators concurred that the resources available to them aimed to develop their collaborative efforts with the speech and language pathologist when developing supports for students with speech and language disorders. Additionally, educators concurred that there were challenges or potential challenges when working with students with speech and language disorders in regards to early intervention in the classroom.

The educators in this study took advantage of learning opportunities to better their skills when working with students with speech and language disorders. Firstly, educators recognized the importance of developing their knowledge and education and made connections between their pursuit of knowledge with personal stories of what inspired them as educators to better themselves within the field of speech and language disorders. A specific interest within the participants was language acquisition and how children
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

learn language. This interest spiked the learning opportunity to better the participants’ knowledge in that specific area by taking additional qualification courses. Past experience demonstrated a commitment from these educators on working collaboratively to support the students in their classroom with speech and language disorders. Educators also acknowledged that the additional training offered through their school or school board leads them to better assist students with speech and language disorders. Educators were prepared to support students by participating in assistive technology training, for example.

Furthermore, educators concurred that the resources available to them aimed to develop their collaborative efforts with the speech and language pathologist when developing supports for students with speech and language disorders. Educators concurred that the resources available to them were sufficient in being able to support students with speech and language disorders. Educators concurred that strategies were developed between the speech and language pathologist and resource teacher, not themselves, and then passed along to the classroom teacher, in certain schools. Other participants collaborated one-on-one with the speech and language pathologist to develop strategies. Collaboration among classroom teachers and speech and language pathologists is crucial to the delivery of an effective treatment program and services for students in the inclusive classroom setting with speech and language disorders (Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore, 2010). Educators concurred that multi-form communication with the speech and language pathologist assisted with the collaborative efforts. Multi-form communication for the purpose of this study was defined as a combination of verbal and written communication through means of electronic devices. Participants agreed that multi-form
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

communication with the speech and language pathologist was an important aspect for supporting their students.

5.2 Implications

In this section, I outline the implications of my research for both those in the educational research community, including school boards, schools, and educational professionals - and my own practice and development as a new teacher.

5.2.1 The educational research community

The ways in which educators and speech and language pathologists collaborate through multi-form communication has proven to be an effective means of supporting students with speech and language disorders. Concluding from my research, resource teachers and speech and language pathologists demonstrated an effective means of communication in the public school board setting, however, the classroom teacher was not in contact with the speech and language pathologist. As compared to the private school setting, the classroom teacher is the main source of contact for the speech and language pathologist.

The pertaining issue around students with speech and language disorders is the lack of availability of the speech and language pathologist. I recognize the lack of availability for these students and understand the struggle for these learners and their families. Therefore, administrators and other board officials need to recognize the growing number of students that need additional support from the speech and language pathologist and the resource teachers within the school.

Administrators and board officials have the opportunity to potentially alleviate the struggle faced by teachers. Ways in which they could do this include providing more
funding, more learning opportunities, more professional development and more overall time for these teachers. The lack of open spots and additional supports available to these students is in the hands of the administration and the board officials. In reality, these individuals have the opportunity to speak up for the population of their school and acknowledge that there is not enough support for the amount of students with speech and language disorders. If administrators are aware of the struggling learners and aware of the lack of availability or resources for these students, in turn, I hope, they will speak up.

5.2.2 My professional identity and practice

I have always had an interest in speech and language disorders and being able to support all of the students within the classroom. I have been interested in inclusive classroom settings so all learners have a chance to succeed.

After hearing the perspectives of a small selection of educators who support students with speech and language disorders, it is evident that, in addition to bettering oneself in order to support students with speech and language disorders, educators must develop and learn strategies to support these students through their resource team at their school. It was found that classroom teachers may spend little to no one-on-one time with the speech and language pathologist in a public school board setting.

With this in mind, as a classroom teacher, I am committed to sharing this passion for supporting students with speech and language disorders. Similar to the participants in my study, I will develop my own knowledge on speech and language disorders by taking additional qualification courses. I recognize the importance on being knowledgeable on the needs of the students within my classroom.
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

The most beneficial take away for myself, as a future educator, is that as a teacher I will likely collaborate with the resource teacher, rather than directly with the speech and language pathologist. However, knowing this, I still feel that it would be beneficial for the classroom teacher and the speech and language pathologist to have a conversation about the student. I believe this to be important because information can sometimes become lost in translation. Therefore, it would be beneficial for myself, as a soon to be classroom teacher, to understand the strategies and techniques that the speech and language pathologist implement directly from them.

5.3 Recommendations

One of the most rewarding aspects of becoming an educational professional is the opportunity to engage in lifelong learning. In my experience, the best teachers are those who demonstrate a love for teaching, a commitment to teaching, and a commitment to their students. I present my research as promoting one philosophy: that speech and language pathologists should work closely with the resource teachers in the school to support students, as compared to working directly with the classroom teacher. However, I also present the finding that many students are not receiving the support that they need because of the lack of available openings to see the speech and language pathologist. However, with further research into the lack of available time for these students, I feel that these students will slowly be accommodated more within the school. Administrators and school board officials need to understand the rising number of students with speech and language disorders within their school walls, and begin to accommodate and support them accordingly. Ways in which administrators and board officials can do this is by
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

attending workshops and taking additional qualification courses that reflect the students that are in their schools. Administrators and board officials would benefit from delving into current research that reflects the needs to the students in their schools and implementing strategies reflective of current intervention practices. Administrators should spend more time in classrooms throughout the school. This would allow them to have a firsthand experience with the student population and will give administrators a better understanding of the needs of their students.

Furthermore, I believe that first-hand experience working with students with speech and language disorders and the speech and language pathologist is the most beneficial way to learn. It would be beneficial, as a classroom teacher, to sit in on a session between the speech and language pathologist and the student to see first-hand how the strategies the speech and language pathologist is implementing and how to effectively implement them.

Although participants in my study felt that they were prepared enough to support students with speech and language disorders, one of my suggestions to classroom teachers is to reach out directly to the speech and language pathologist that works in the school if a concern arises. Understanding why a student learns the way they do and the specific strategies that can be implemented to support and to assist these students are crucial for the students’ success.

As future and current teachers become more aware of students in their classrooms with speech and language disorders, I suggest they seek out the speech and language pathologist hired through their school or school board. I suggest that teachers, parents and other educators advocate for these students.
5.4 Areas of Further Research

Research regarding the collaborative efforts between the speech and language pathologist and classroom teacher and educator is limited. However, research also states that collaboration among classroom teachers and speech and language pathologists is crucial to the delivery of an effective treatment program and services for students in the inclusive classroom setting with speech and language disorders (Bauer, Iyer, Boon & Fore, 2010). I am confident that, through my research, I have been able to shine light on at least one issue in the field of speech and language disorders in the classroom. Specifically, I have been able to build upon existing research and reveal issues pertaining to the lack of availability of the speech and language pathologist and the small number of students that the speech and language pathologist can see at a time. I feel that future research should be done to explore the funding within schools, compared to the number of students that need support. Further research needs to be completed to understand where the additional funding provided to the school to accommodate these students is going and if it is being spent in the correct places.

I, like the participants in my study, will develop into my practice developing strategies to assist these students with speech and language disorders to support them even if they are unable to see a speech and language pathologist. As a teacher, I understand that it is not my job to diagnose these students, however, it is my job to support them to the best of my ability.
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

5.5 Concluding Comments

In this study, I conducted three semi-structures interviews with experienced educators who have supported students with speech and language disorders, in an attempt to address the question: how does a sample of elementary school educators and SLPs work together to support students in inclusive classrooms with speech and language disorders? In this chapter, I provided a short summary of my findings as outlined in Chapter Four, including educators’ strong commitment and desire to support students with speech and language disorders within the classroom. A desire and commitment was displayed within these educators that was driven by personal connections to speech and language disorders. Additionally, teachers are driven to work with these students because of past experiences working with students with speech and language disorders, personal interests, or personal connections from their personal life. Secondly, it was discovered that educators use multi-form communication, to help aid in the collaborative efforts with the SLP. Educators concurred that collaboration played a large role in their ability to support students with speech and language disorders in their classroom. Finally, educators concurred that lack of availability and following protocol were potential challenges when working with students with speech and language disorders. All of these factors lead these educators to show their commitment to the field.

I then highlighted the significance of my study on my own personal practice and the implications that my research has on the broader educational community. I then discussed the significance of the findings for other educators as well as school boards, and how we can ensure that students are accessing the support that they need.
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

I believe that educators have the opportunity to voice their concerns for students within their classroom and can advocate for the students in their classroom. By doing so, educators are providing their students with the best possible care and education possible. The classroom teacher is the expert on a child in their classroom and is responsible for their well-being. Teachers should be bringing up concerns and following through, to ensure that no student is left behind.
REFERENCES


doi:10.1177/152574019802000102


Equity & Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools., (2014). Guidelines for policy development and implementation: realizing the promise of diversity.

Accessed from:

doi:10.1177/152574018701100108


SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS


Responsiveness to Intervention: Teaching before testing helps avoid labeling.

*Topics in Language Disorders, 25*, 148-167.


doi:10.1080/10459880109599808


doi:10.1177/1525740109356800
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS


SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

Appendix A: Letter of Consent

Date:

Dear ____________________________,

My Name is Erin O'Shea and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on how elementary school teachers and SLPs work together to support students in inclusive classrooms with speech and language disorders. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have students in their classrooms with speech and language disorders who have a speech and language pathologist come into the classroom (or the student is pulled out of the classroom) at least once a week to work with these particular students. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Angela MacDonald. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview to ensure accuracy.
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,
Erin O’Shea
erin.oshea@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Instructor’s Name: Angela MacDonald
Contact Info: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca

Consent Form
I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Erin O’Shea and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ______________________________

Name: (printed) __________________________________________

Date: __________________
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to learn how elementary school teachers and SLPs collaborate to support students in inclusive classrooms with speech and language disorders. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions focused on your past experiences as a teacher and your knowledge and hands on experiences with students who have speech and language disorders. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio- recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background Information

1. What is your current position?
   a. What grades/subjects do you currently teach?
   b. Which have you previously taught?
   c. Do you fulfill any other roles in your school? (e.g. coach, advisor, resource support etc.)

2. How many years have you worked as a teacher? In what educational settings have you worked?

3. For how many years have you taught at your current school?

4. Can you tell me more about the school? (e.g. size, demographics, program priorities)
   a. What kinds of special education resource supports are available in your school?
   b. Approximately what percentage of students in your school has special needs?
   c. What supports are available for students with speech and language disorders?

5. For how many years have you worked with students with speech and language disorders?

6. And for how many have you worked collaboratively with school-based speech and language pathologists?
7. What experiences have contributed to developing your interest and preparation for supporting students with speech and language disorders? (e.g. personal, educational, professional)

Teacher Perspectives/Beliefs
7. In your view, what are some of the core needs of students with speech and language disorders?
8. In your experience, how well do school do in addressing those needs? What gives you that impression?
9. How do you think schools could further support the needs of students with speech and language disorders?
10. What are some of the key barriers that stand in the way of providing that level of support?
11. In your view, what are the benefits and limitations of the inclusive classroom model?
12. In your experience, what range of benefits and outcomes have you observed from students when they have had access to working with a speech and language pathologist?

Teacher Practices
8. How often is the speech and language pathologist physically present in your school?
9. Do you know how many schools they serve?
10. How often does the speech pathologist visit your classroom in a week?
11. How many students are they supporting?
12. 10. What is the protocol if you have a student in your classroom that you are concerned may have a speech and language disorder?
13. How often do you meet one on one with the speech and language pathologist?
14. What is the level of collaboration and communication between you? Can you walk me through how you work together to support students with speech and language disorders? What does this process typically look like?
15. Can you provide me with some examples of cases where you have worked closely with school-based speech and language pathologists?
   a. What were these cases?
   b. How did you work together to support the student?
   c. How does the work that you do together focus on the social and academic well-being of these students?
   d. What outcomes of your collaboration have you observed from students?
   e. What resources enable you to work together the way you do? (e.g. physical space, time before or after school, coverage, email communication etc.)

11. In your teaching practice, what are some of the ways that you foster inclusion for students with speech and language disorders?
   - Are there any particular strategies you find more or less effective?

Supports and Challenges
13. What range of factors and resources support your capacity to communicate with speech and language pathologists to support students?
SLPS SUPPORTING EDUCATORS

14. How do the speech and language pathologists you work with support you and your students?

14. What challenges have you encountered while working with speech and language pathologists? How did you respond to these challenges? How could the education system further support you in addressing these challenges?

Next Steps

16. What changes to the current collaboration between teachers and speech pathologists would you make to better impact students?

18. What advice, if any, do you have for beginning teachers who are committed to supporting the needs of students with speech and language disorders?

Thank you for your participation.