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Oral Reading: Practices and Purposes in Secondary Classrooms

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Structured Abstract

Purpose: We investigate teacher initiated whole-group oral reading practices in two ninth-grade reading intervention classrooms and how teachers understood the purposes of those practices.

Design/methodology/approach: In this qualitative cross-case analysis, we use a literacy-as-social-practice perspective to collaboratively analyze ethnographic data (fieldnotes, audio recordings, interviews, artifacts) across two classrooms.

Findings: Oral reading was a routine instructional reading event in both classrooms. However, the literacy practices that characterized oral reading and teachers' purposes for utilizing oral reading varied depending on teachers' pedagogical philosophies, instructional goals, and contextual constraints. During oral reading, students' opportunities to engage in independent meaning making with texts were either absent or secondary to other purposes or goals.

Implications: Findings emphasize the significance of understanding both how and why oral reading happens in secondary classrooms. Specifically, they point to the importance of collaborating with teachers to (a) examine their own ideas about the power of oral reading and the institutional factors that shape their existing oral reading practices; (b) investigate the intended and actual outcomes of oral reading for their students; and (c) develop other instructional approaches to support students to individually and collaboratively make meaning from texts.

Originality/value: This study falls at the intersection of three under-researched areas of study: the nature of everyday instruction in secondary literacy intervention settings, the persistence of oral reading in secondary school, and teachers' purposes for using oral reading in their instruction. As a result, it contributes new knowledge that can support educators in creating more equitable instructional environments.

Oral Reading: Practices and Purposes in Secondary Classrooms

Oral reading in classrooms has traversed centuries and contexts (Cole et al., 2017; De Castell and Luke, 1983; Huey, 1908; Warner and Crolla, 2015). Most recently, researchers have documented the pervasiveness of oral reading in secondary classrooms in the United States (Albright and Ariail, 2005; Ariail and Albright, 2006; Klecker and Pollock, 2005). As qualitative educational researchers working in different ninth-grade reading intervention classrooms, we (Maneka and Kate) were attuned to this trend: A hallmark of both classes was frequent oral reading during whole-group instruction.

While research suggests that certain ways of using oral reading can be beneficial (Rasinski et al., 2009), this is not true for all types of oral reading. For example, unrehearsed reading aloud by students in U.S. classrooms across grade levels is a persistent trend despite a preponderance of evidence to suggest that it is not beneficial to students (Ash et al., 2008; Frankel, 2017). Moreover, research has documented how an overreliance on whole-group oral reading can place the responsibility for meaning-making on the teacher (Brooks, 2015; Harklau, 2001). Therefore, we were motivated to examine *how* and *why* teachers in two different ninth-grade reading intervention classrooms utilized oral reading.

This article's findings contribute to the limited research on (a) the instruction that characterizes literacy interventions for older readers (e.g., Frankel, 2016, 2017; Learned, 2016; Skerrett, 2012) and (b) the persistence of oral reading practices in secondary school (e.g., Brooks, 2015; Warner and Crolla, 2015; Warner et al., 2016). In addition, the findings provide much-needed insights into teachers' purposes for engaging in oral reading. Therefore, this research contributes new knowledge that can support educators to interrogate the assumptions

that underlie taken-for-granted pedagogical decisions and to design more equitable instructional environments.

Theoretical Framework: Literacy as Social Practice

Although the focus of this article is on teachers and their instructional decisions, we were careful to ensure that our theoretical and analytic choices allowed for a more multifaceted representation of classroom interactions. To do this, we drew on Street's (1984) conceptualization of literacy as ideological social practice, which goes beyond acknowledging that literacy practices are contextual to make explicit that power relations impact literacy teaching and learning (Street, 2012). Through this theoretical lens, we understood literacy practices to be more than just observable actions—they also include ideas and beliefs about literacy (Barton and Hamilton, 2000).

Understanding literacy as ideological and social was critical to making visible the significance of both power and context to the whole-group oral reading that was the focus of our analysis. The teachers' use of oral reading was not monolithic; it entailed multiple literacy practices. Moreover, these literacy practices were enforced by the power of the teachers to determine, among others things, what and how texts were read in their classrooms. Drawing on Bloome (2008), we conceptualized these literacy practices to be some of the *official* reading practices of the classroom because they were organized and sanctioned by the teacher. Our research questions were:

- (1) What were the official whole-group oral reading practices of each classroom?
- (2) How did teachers understand the purposes of these practices?

Literature Review: Oral Reading in Secondary School

We situate this work within the descriptive literature published since 1998 about *how* and *why* secondary teachers use oral reading.

The *How* of Oral Reading

Previous research describes two predominant oral reading practices—teacher read-alouds and student read-alouds—that utilize a variety of texts.

Teacher read-alouds. In this form of oral reading, a teacher vocalizes a written text to students. Teacher read-alouds have been documented through survey research (Albright and Ariail, 2005; Ariail and Albright, 2006); teacher self-reports (Richardson, 2000; Lawrence et al., 2009); and qualitative studies of secondary classrooms (Athanasos and de Oliveira, 2014; Brooks, 2015, 2016; Frankel, 2017; Ivey, 1999).

The instruction depicted in the most detailed descriptions of teacher read-alouds in secondary school (Dreher, 2003; Gallagher, 2012; Rief, 2000; Watanabe, 2008) is consistent with many of the characteristics of “effective interactive” read-alouds (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey, 2004, p. 10). For instance, these descriptions of teacher read-alouds frequently noted that teachers selected texts to reflect specific instructional goals and students’ multiple identities and abilities.

Student read-alouds. In this form of oral reading, a student vocalizes a written text with or without the participation of the teacher. In the research, one approach to student read-alouds was documented primarily in English language arts (ELA) classes through interactive reading such as reader’s theater (Dreher, 2003; Rief, 2000), preparing poems for performance (Ivey, 1999), reading with a partner or small group (Dreher, 2003; Ivey, 1999; Watanabe, 2008), and choral reading (Ivey, 1999). Another documented approach, which has been repeatedly problematized in the research literature, occurred across disciplines and entailed individual

students engaging in unrehearsed reading aloud to the whole class through Round Robin Reading (i.e., reading aloud in a preselected order; Ash et al., 2008; Ivey, 1999), Popcorn Reading (i.e., reading aloud in an apparently random order; Brooks, 2015; Gorlewski and Moon, 2011), and voluntary or self-nominated reading (Frankel, 2017; Ivey, 1999).

Texts. In ELA, reading intervention, or English language development courses, typically literature and poetry are read aloud (Ariail and Albright, 2006; Frankel, 2017; Gallagher, 2012). For example, Athanases and de Oliveira (2014) described the use of *Kindred* (Butler, 1979) and *The Crucible* (Miller, 1953) in eleventh-grade ELA. The limited information about texts used in other content areas includes mentions of textbooks and biographies (Albright and Ariail, 2005; Ariail and Albright, 2006; Ivey, 1999), an internet article (Brooks, 2015), and teacher-authored notes (Brooks, 2016).

The Why of Oral Reading

Teachers report reading texts aloud to their students for a variety of reasons, including modeling oral reading fluency (Albright and Ariail, 2005; Dreher, 2003; Richardson, 2000) and comprehension strategies (Brooks, 2015; Dreher, 2003); making the content accessible to students (Albright and Ariail, 2005); facilitating classroom management (Albright and Ariail, 2005); and promoting a love of reading (Ariail and Albright, 2006; Richardson, 2000). For instance, teachers in Brooks's (2015) study identified "oral reading" as a classroom management strategy and as a way for students to witness models of fluent reading. However, beyond practicing oral reading and assessing oral reading abilities (Brooks, 2015; Dreher, 2003; Ivey, 1999), there is less information about why teachers have students read aloud. One exception is Rief's (2000) explanation that she used reader's theatre to facilitate engagement and comprehension.

Methodology

The data we analyzed for this article was independently collected by Maneka and Kate as part of two larger studies about literacy teaching and learning in ninth-grade reading intervention classrooms. Post-data collection conversations in which we noted the predominance of whole-group oral reading in both classrooms motivated us to design a cross-case analysis in which we collaboratively analyzed the collected data. A cross-case analysis allowed us to supplement our emerging descriptions of *how* teachers organized whole-group oral reading in each classroom with a deeper understanding of *why* it was happening across classrooms (Miles et al., 2014).

Settings and Participants

Maneka collected data in Carla's classroom of 15 students at Eastbrook High School. Kate collected data in Mark's classroom of 11 students at Northern High School. Although the schools were located in different states in the Southwestern U.S., there were similarities between Carla and Mark's backgrounds and instructional contexts. Both teachers were credentialed, held graduate degrees in education, and had more than 10 years of classroom experience. Their reading intervention courses were compulsory for students identified for supplemental instruction through their performance on a computer-based assessment (Carla) and a combination of middle school teacher recommendations and standardized test scores (Mark). In addition, the majority of their students were African American or Latino. However, despite these similarities, the instructional frameworks that guided the two classes were different. Carla's class met on Mondays and Wednesdays for 90 minutes and on Fridays for 45 minutes and used a mandated commercial literacy curriculum: READ 180i. However, as described in more detail in the findings, Carla chose not to implement the program with fidelity. Mark's class met Monday through Friday for 60 minutes each day. Unlike Carla, Mark had the autonomy to develop and

implement his own curriculum.

Data Collection

Most of the data used in this analysis—field notes, audio recordings, classroom artifacts, and teacher interviews—were collected during the second semester of each year-long class.

Observations. Both authors engaged in biweekly participant observation that included audio-recordings and field notes of classroom instruction. We were each present in our respective classroom for approximately 30 hours between January and June (Maneka in Carla’s classroom and Kate in Mark’s classroom). One of the foci of field notes was documenting how teachers organized reading opportunities for students. Therefore, field notes were an important data source for understanding how whole-group oral reading occurred and how teachers talked about it with students.

Interviews. Understanding teachers’ purposes for the official literacy practices of their classrooms entailed talking to them explicitly about their instructional goals and their ideas and beliefs about those practices. In our analysis, we used excerpts from teacher interviews where the teachers discussed whole-group oral reading. For Maneka, this included excerpts of transcriptions from two approximately 45-minute-long interviews. Kate drew from excerpts of transcriptions from three interviews that were 45-80 minutes long.

Artifacts. Both authors collected artifacts that were relevant to understanding classroom literacy practices. The analyzed artifacts were those that were used or created as part of official literacy practices that involved whole-group oral reading (e.g., handouts, pictures of book covers, student work) or that contributed to our understandings of teachers’ purposes for oral reading (e.g., teachers’ letters to students).

Data Analysis

We began by each coding our own field notes (augmented by selected transcriptions from audio-recordings) for instructional reading events that involved whole-group oral reading. We defined instructional reading events as instances where the reading of a written text(s) was central to teacher-organized instruction (Brooks, 2015). Next, we used emergent process codes (Saldaña, 2013) to characterize how oral reading occurred during these instructional reading events. This step took place individually and involved multiple rounds of coding. Then, we met for a series of analytic meetings to examine instructional reading events across classrooms. We established a common list of codes that captured the range of literacy practices within the broader oral reading category (see Figure 1). Throughout data analysis, we engaged in analytic checks and resolved coding discrepancies through discussion (Smagorinsky, 2008). Below, we explain the final code list and analytic process that we used to analyze data across classrooms.

Final collaborative coding processes. Each instructional reading event that involved whole-group oral reading was initially coded as ORAL. The first set of sub-codes identified whether the literacy practices that characterized these events entailed the teacher reading aloud (TRA) or the students reading aloud (SRA). Within the SRA code were two additional codes to differentiate between the students reading aloud with teacher participation (SRA-T) or without teacher participation (SRA-NT) (see Figure 1). Although two instances of oral reading might have the same code, their exact nature differed across classrooms. This point is reflected in our findings where we discuss the intricacies of whole-group oral reading in each classroom. During this phase of analysis, we used classroom artifacts to corroborate field notes and deepen our understanding of coded data.

To gain insight into how teachers understood the purposes of oral reading, we analyzed transcriptions from teacher interviews, teachers' classroom commentary (captured through

audio-recordings and field notes), and classroom artifacts. We identified instances where teachers discussed their reasons for engaging in oral reading, including sub-codes to further identify instances where teachers explained their reasoning behind the previously coded literacy practices (TR-TRA, TR-SRA, etc.) (see Figure 1). Finally, we wrote and discussed teacher-specific analytic memos (Saldaña, 2013) to document emerging findings.

Findings

Whole-group oral reading was a routine instructional reading event across both classes. There were similarities and differences in the literacy practices that constituted oral reading and the teachers' purposes for this kind of reading. We begin by describing what oral reading looked like in each classroom, and then examine each teacher's purpose(s) for using oral reading.

Whole-Group Oral Reading in Carla's Classroom

In Carla's classroom, whole-group oral reading usually occurred for 30 of 90 minutes of class time. On some days, it occupied the majority of the class period. There were two ways that this type of oral reading occurred: the teacher reading aloud and students reading aloud.

Teacher reading aloud. Carla usually selected "Level 1" or "Level 2" books from the classroom's READ 180 independent reading library. For example, Carla read aloud the adapted texts *War of the Worlds* (Olson and West, 2002), with a Lexile Score of 320, and *Life of a Slave Girl* (Flood, 2004), with a Lexile Score of 250. Because these books were intended for independent rather than whole-group reading, Carla typically read aloud from the one copy of the text available in the classroom.

As Carla read aloud, she expected students to "silently" and "actively" listen. Carla interspersed her reading with oral questions, brief summaries, and modeling of reading comprehension strategies. Since students did not have copies of the text, Carla expected them to

practice comprehension strategies while she read to them. Students typically asked questions, responded to Carla's questions, and/or completed a worksheet.

The following example illustrates characteristics that typified Carla's read-alouds:

Carla reads from Chapter 3 of *Almost Famous* (Hay, 2004), a Level 2 book with a Lexile score of 550. As with the previously mentioned texts, there is only one copy of this book in the classroom.

Carla reads a few sentences aloud: "On with the show. The fans love Stu and Miami, but what would the judges think. Half the crowd outside of the TV studio was yelling a cheer for Stu..." Carla pauses to explain what students should be visualizing:

What should be happening in your mind right now is that you should be mentally...seeing a picture in your mind of what's going on. I've seen reality shows so I can envision what I've seen facing me, how crowded it is, and how the performers perform, and where the judges are sitting. That's what's in my mind right now when I'm picturing...envisioning in my mind while I am reading this.

Carla continues reading aloud with interspersed commentary, expecting students to listen, practice comprehension strategies, and respond to the worksheet question that Carla developed: Who are the contestants in the story?

Students reading aloud. The texts students read aloud were usually articles from the READ 180 rBook (Scholastic, 2012), a workbook intended for use in teacher-facilitated small groups. For example, students read articles which discussed boot camps for "troubled" teens and censorship. If a class text set was available, Carla also used books from the classroom's READ 180 library that were intended for independent reading.

The students read these texts aloud through what Carla termed “popcorn reading.” Unlike traditional popcorn reading, Carla pre-assigned students text sections and provided them with opportunities to individually rehearse their assigned sections before reading aloud. The primary responsibility of the students was to provide an oral realization of the text. When students did not meet Carla’s expectations for oral reading fluency (e.g., because they read too quickly or too quietly), Carla asked them to repeat their read-aloud. While one student read aloud, Carla expected the rest of the class to follow along silently. As students took turns reading, Carla asked questions, defined vocabulary, formulated summaries, or shared contextualizing information.

In the following representative example, the students read aloud a chapter about a football player with a “visual impairment” from the book *Reality Strikes* (Damio, 2005):

After one student finishes reading his assigned section and before the next student starts to read, Carla asks the class a question, “So, do any of you all play on a team where you have a student where the coaches have to use certain equipment for them?” Students shake their heads or mumble “no.” Carla responds, “No. Pay attention for them because it is happening.” Here, Carla attempts to facilitate students’ use of comprehension strategies (i.e., activating prior knowledge) and active engagement with the text. However, in this as in many other cases, her attempt does not meaningfully connect to students’ background knowledge.

Carla’s Purposes for Whole-Group Oral Reading

Carla observed that many of her students did not read during the independent components of the READ 180 program (e.g., independent reading, computer-based instruction). She explained, “They’ll do the common goofing off, pretend to read, you know, it’s not helping their negative attitude towards reading.” She noted that these behaviors were amplified because the majority of her students had used READ 180 for several years and were unmotivated by it. In

interviews, Carla highlighted three key difficulties: (a) the repetitive nature of the software frustrated students; (b) students were disengaged with the READ 180 texts; and (c) the program did not address students' "negative attitudes" towards reading. She saw these difficulties as a recipe for behavior problems. However, her critiques of the program were not only organizational. She attributed her students' reading difficulties to the lack of "phonics instruction" in elementary schools, and was frustrated that the READ 180 program did not sufficiently emphasize basic reading skills. Carla's purposes for whole-group oral reading were informed by her observations about the limitations of the program and included: (a) ensuring that students were on task, (b) attempting to get students to enjoy reading, and (c) providing supplemental instruction that reflected her beliefs about what literacy instruction should entail.

Purpose of the teacher reading aloud. Since students were not reading their independent reading books and completing the READ 180 computer-based quizzes about those books, their grades suffered. Carla adapted the program in an effort to help her students be more successful. She described her read-alouds as helping students to feel the success of completing a book and being able to "test" it on the READ 180 software, thereby demonstrating completion of a graded assignment. Carla's reasoning circled back to her interest in managing behavior and creating successful reading experiences for her students. In addition, she saw whole-group teacher read-alouds as a way to engage students in meaningful literacy learning. She shared, "So, [through reading books aloud] I am focusing on listening comprehension and discussions and applying higher-level thinking skills when I choose a book for whole group reading. Plus, I am modeling good reading, too. I use that opportunity to model what good readers do when they are reading." During interviews and classroom talk, Carla referenced pedagogical and classroom management goals as explicitly shaping her decisions to read aloud.

Purpose of students reading aloud. During interviews and informal conversations with Maneka, and during instructional conversations with students, Carla articulated her reasons for asking students to read aloud to the class. She viewed this oral reading practice as (a) a way to ensure that students were reading, (b) a method through which she could assess—and students could practice—“oral reading skills,” and (c) a way to develop “listening comprehension.” Carla understood listening comprehension to be more than the ability to understand oral language. As she explained during class:

I just want to remind you that when we're reading, this is the first time that I noticed that a couple of us are not tracking with our eyes. You have to follow along. You have to listen. You are gonna be held accountable to answer questions about what we're reading today. We're working on your listening comprehension. You need to visualize, paint a picture in your mind, what's being read that helps you understand. This is our oral reading practice time and it's our listening.

For Carla, student read-alouds ensured that students remained on task and practiced reading skills that she believed were important to their reading development.

Whole-Group Oral Reading in Mark's Classroom

Whole-group oral reading in Mark's classroom typically occurred for 20-30 minutes during each 60-minute class period and was preceded or followed by a text-related activity. Mark selected the texts that the class read together, several of which are discussed in the sections below. In an interview, Mark explained his rationale for choosing texts:

I want it to be something engaging and gripping...I also hope that each individual book has some interesting and relevant and maybe-powerful message for them...And by

reading it all out loud it gives access to everybody, even the kids who, so especially the kids who would not be able to read it by themselves.

In Mark's classroom, the practices that constituted whole-group oral reading included the teacher reading aloud and the teacher and students reading aloud.

Teacher reading aloud. Mark read to students and expected them to follow along in their own copies of the text. When Mark read, he asked questions about previous events in the story; the meaning of a particular word, image, or concept; features of the setting; and similarities and differences between characters. Mark scaffolded these questions by including guiding questions or activities on the board or inviting students to respond to brief writing prompts.

One instance of Mark reading aloud provides an example of the structure of this oral reading practice:

The class is reading the first two chapters of *Rite of Passage* (Wright, 1994). On the board is the outline of a "book map," which Mark tells the students they will complete after he finishes reading. Before Mark begins reading, he reminds the students about what's happening in the book through a series of teacher-led questions (e.g., "In chapter one, do you remember, who was Johnny talking to?"). As he reads, students follow along.

As Mark finishes chapter one, a student asks why Johnny gets adopted. Mark clarifies that he was already adopted; he asks if another student can explain what has transpired in the story. As he and the students discuss the plot, Mark says:

Remember that this takes place in the 1950s, it's really old. But still, it sounds like, yeah why would they do that to him? It doesn't make sense. Maybe he's just trying to show how messed up the city is. Imagine that, do you remember how old he is? [Students call

out responses.] 15. That's about how old you are. You show up today, at home, you see your stuff outside of your house, packed up, your mom says, "Guess what? You're not really my child..." What would you do? What do you think Johnny's gonna do?

In this representative example, Mark engages his students in meaning-making as he reads aloud by encouraging them to consider the personal implications of the story.

Teacher and students reading aloud. In Mark's classroom students' whole-group oral reading responsibilities were either *unplanned* (e.g., the teacher called on students to read without advance warning), *semi-planned* (e.g., weekly readings of Friday poems followed a set routine), or *pre-planned* (e.g., reading roles were negotiated before the teacher or students began reading). Unplanned reading aloud occurred most frequently and began with the teacher reading and subsequently calling on students to read. Pre-planned reading aloud was least common and usually occurred when the class read texts that were conducive to the assignment of reading parts (e.g., plays).

One representative example of students' oral reading responsibilities involved the teacher and students reading the poem "Jimmy Jet and his TV Set" (Silverstein, 1974):

Mark introduces the poem by talking about the author, Shel Silverstein, and why he likes Silverstein's poems. He explains that he chose this poem because it's a parable, a literary term that they are discussing in relation to *American-Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006). Before reading, Mark explains, "So, your job today, I'm gonna read it, then you guys are gonna read it, and then you're gonna tell me what makes this a parable. So please follow along." Mark reads the poem to the students. Then, five students each read one of the stanzas while the rest of the students follow along.

Mark's Purposes for Whole-Group Oral Reading

Mark's stated purpose for whole-group oral reading was to provide students with many opportunities to build their reading skills and strategies and increase their reading engagement. Another purpose was to expose students to a wide variety of topics and genres and push them to read texts they might not choose to read on their own. He explained:

There's increased reading fluency, increased access to words to build vocabulary, to learn about the world and about themselves, to enjoy reading more, to build up a stamina towards reading, just to get in the habit of reading, to improve their reading comprehension, to improve their writing, their spelling, their grammar...And then the ability to have something that we all have access to so we can all practice and learn reading strategies, specific vocabulary to those books and specific vocabulary towards literary terms and academic terms. Also to expose them to different genres, authors, types of books.

In his letter of introduction to students in the fall, Mark articulated similar purposes:

I designed [this class] to help 9th graders become better readers...It's about becoming a better, faster, more confident reader, one whose vocabulary flourishes and comprehension expands. The way you will become a better reader is by guess what...??? That's right—*by reading*.

Mark's purpose for whole-group oral reading consistently focused on building students' reading skills and strategies, as well as boosting their reading engagement and repertoires.

Discussion

Our findings indicate that Carla and Mark each used whole-group oral reading as a substantial component of instruction. During oral reading, students' opportunities to engage in independent meaning making were either absent or secondary to other purposes or goals. Below,

we discuss the similarities and differences in how Carla and Mark organized oral reading, as well as their purposes for engaging in it.

Characteristics of Whole-Group Oral Reading Across Classrooms

Teacher read-alouds. There were some similarities in teacher read-alouds across classrooms. For example, both teachers modeled reading strategies and summarized the text while reading aloud to students. In addition, they both engaged in direct questioning about the text. However, when Mark read aloud every student had the opportunity to follow along in their own copies of the text. Moreover, Mark included opportunities for open-ended questions and activities that required students to independently generate meaning from those texts. These characteristics of Mark's classroom have much in common with the "effective interactive" teacher read-alouds identified by Fisher et al. (2004). Teacher read-alouds in Carla's class did not provide similar opportunities for independent engagement because students did not have access to individual copies of the texts.

Student read-alouds. There were additional differences in how students read aloud across the two classrooms. Mark provided opportunities for students to engage in unplanned, semi-planned, and pre-planned reading. Notably, students sometimes had opportunities to read aloud for authentic purposes and to articulate their own understandings of the texts. Also, Mark frequently participated in these read-aloud activities. His use of semi-planned and pre-planned reading is consistent with prior research that has documented similar practices in secondary classrooms (Dreher, 2003; Ivey, 1999), as well as research establishing the benefits of such practices to students' reading development (Rasinski et al., 2009). In Carla's classroom, students read aloud primarily through reading pre-assigned sections of texts which they had the opportunity to briefly rehearse. Carla did not join in when her students read aloud, but she did

regularly interject to discuss specific aspects of the text, explain vocabulary words, or ask direct questions. As with teacher read-alouds, Carla did not provide students with opportunities to engage in independent meaning-making while they read aloud.

Texts. Consistent with prior findings (Ariail and Albright, 2006; Gallagher, 2012), the texts read aloud in both classrooms included literature and poetry. Although both teachers attempted to select texts that would be engaging for students, the exact nature of the texts differed dramatically across the two classrooms. While Mark purposely selected texts to capture students' attention, to share powerful and relevant messages about life, and to expose them to different text types, Carla's choices were constrained by the limited books available in her READ 180 library.

Oral reading across classrooms. Our findings illustrate that detailed descriptions of how whole-group oral reading is enacted in classrooms can shed light on who is doing the meaning-making and what is being read. In Carla's classroom, instruction that co-occurred with teacher- and student read-alouds served as a forum for Carla to make meaning of texts *for* her students. This is a trend that has been documented in previous research about oral reading in high school classrooms (Brooks, 2015; Harklau, 2001). In contrast, students in Mark's class had more frequent opportunities to independently construct meaning. However, it is important to note that he, too, regularly explained the text to his students or asked one student to explain the text to the rest of the class. Another important difference in oral reading across the two classrooms was that Mark's students had the opportunity to engage with authentic literature; in contrast, Carla's class read adapted texts with low Lexile scores from the READ 180 library.

Purposes for Whole-Group Oral Reading

Taken together, Carla and Mark's purposes for utilizing whole-group oral reading echo previous findings about why secondary teachers use oral reading (Ariail and Albright, 2006; Dreher, 2003; Reif, 2000). However, Carla's and Mark's individual reasoning about their decisions was distinct. They each grounded their pedagogical decisions in their own philosophies about literacy teaching and learning and the contexts in which they taught.

Carla framed her decisions around ensuring that students were on task, providing them with enjoyable reading experiences, and attending to sound as a component of reading comprehension. Carla's reasons for using oral reading differed between teacher and student read-alouds. She viewed teacher read-alouds as a way to provide students with access to texts, facilitate their engagement with literacy, and model comprehension strategies. However, Carla saw student read-alouds as a way for students to practice oral reading and for her to assess their oral reading abilities. Carla also highlighted the importance of promoting her students' "listening comprehension" skills, a purpose which reflects a "simple" view of reading as a direct product of oral language comprehension and decoding abilities (Hoover and Gough, 1990) that has not been documented in previous literature on secondary teachers' purposes for oral reading. In contrast, Mark's reasons for engaging in oral reading were rooted in a sociocognitive perspective (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). Across practices, his reasons focused on (a) modeling fluent reading and comprehension strategies, and (b) providing students with access to—and engagement with—new authors, vocabulary, and text types that they might not otherwise encounter or read on their own.

Implications

Both Carla and Mark were highly educated, experienced, and thoughtful professionals who cared deeply about their students' success. They relied on whole-group oral reading because

they viewed it as a way to address the many difficulties they believed their students faced as readers. Moreover, their reasons for engaging in oral reading were connected to their specific background knowledge about reading and their unique classroom and institutional contexts. Nonetheless, their extensive use of oral reading meant that students' opportunities to engage in independent meaning making were either absent or secondary to other purposes or goals.

Therefore, the findings from this cross-case analysis have important implications for how to support teachers who over-rely on oral reading in similar ways. Specifically, the findings point to the importance of providing teachers with opportunities to (a) examine their own ideas about the power of oral reading and the institutional factors that shape existing oral reading practices; (b) investigate the intended and actual outcomes of oral reading for their students; and (c) develop other instructional approaches to support students to individually and collaboratively make meaning from texts.

Meaningful engagement with teachers to move away from an overreliance on oral reading is a collaborative process. While any effort to enact pedagogical change is complex and unique to the context in which it occurs (Valdés et al., 2017), our findings point to a series of recommendations to guide future efforts to disrupt unproductive oral reading practices. The first recommendation is to listen closely to teachers and their reasons for engaging in oral reading, both those reasons that are tied to personal experiences with and philosophies about reading as well as reasons that are shaped by institutional constraints. The second and third recommendations are intertwined and involve supporting teachers to investigate their own instruction in light of current research on secondary literacy instruction and to make meaningful adjustments to their instructional approaches through an ongoing process of examination, investigation, and modification.

For example, Kate used these three recommendations to guide the development of a collaborative partnership between university faculty and in-service teachers. Together, she and a cohort of secondary teachers examined their existing instructional approaches while also reading and discussing literacy theory and research to deepen their understanding of reading (especially comprehension) and to build their repertoires of alternative practices—for example, introducing “talking to the text” routines (Schoenbach et al., 2012) and creating opportunities for student-led, text-based discussions (Lee, 2001)—to provide both teachers and students with windows into *how* others engage with texts as part of the meaning-making process, whether they are reading those texts independently or in the company of others.

Conclusion

Joining the findings reported here with previous work that has raised questions about the prevalence of oral reading in secondary school (Alvermann, 2016; Frager, 2010; Warner and Crolla, 2015), we conclude this study of how and why two ninth grade reading intervention teachers use whole-group oral reading with a call for researchers and practitioners alike to carefully and critically attend to what types of reading happens with which groups of students in school, for what purposes, and to what ends.

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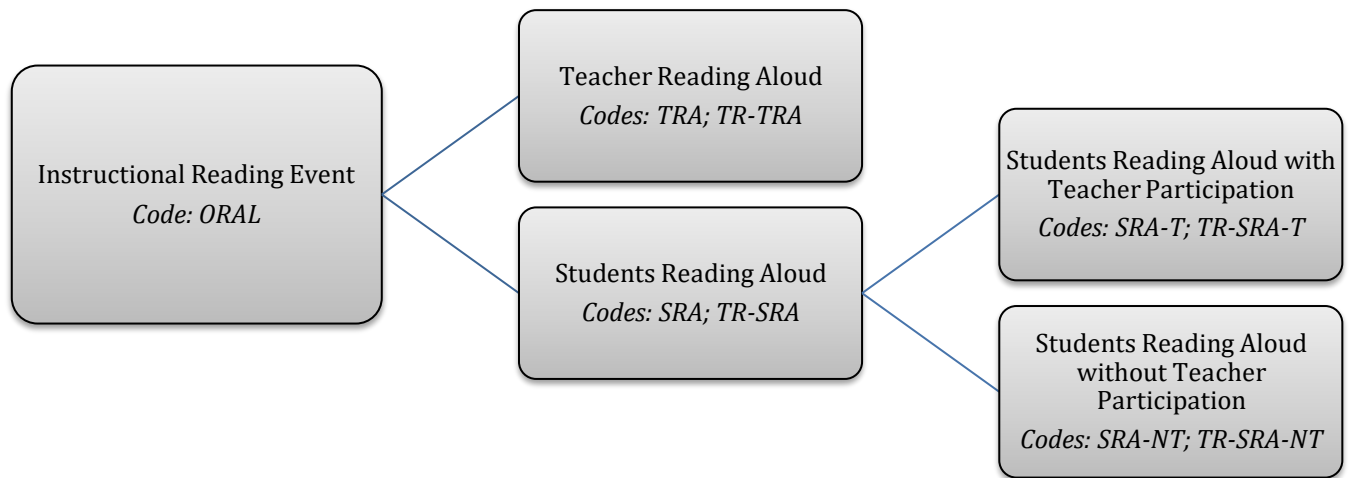
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Figure 1.



i <http://www.hmhco.com/products/read-180/instructional-approach.php>