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Class interactive reading aloud (CIRA): A holistic lens on interactive reading aloud sessions in kindergarten

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In kindergarten classrooms (5 to 6 year olds) in the United States, interactive reading aloud has long been considered an important part of a comprehensive emergent literacy program. However, while individual components of interactive reading aloud (for example, teacher activity, student activity and text) have been studied, researchers have lacked a model to holistically assess this important practice. Thus, a model was created-Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA)-to use as a lens for the study. Through non-participant observations and interviews covering a four-month period, this case study examined four experienced kindergarten teachers during four interactive read aloud sessions in the naturalistic setting of their classrooms. Strong patterns emerged across the practice of the teachers in each of the components of interactive read aloud sessions. All teachers exemplified the CIRA model to varying degrees. Teacher activity fell along a continuum from highly controlled sessions to sessions that appeared to have little apparent planning. All types of sessions yielded extremely engaged students.

Key words: early childhood, literacy, reading aloud.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of reading aloud to young children in a school setting, prevalent since the beginning of formal early childhood education in the United States, has long been thought to be an important instructional strategy. Bariight (1882) encouraged teachers of young children to read aloud as "the exercise of reading aloud is a mental discipline of children in public schools". Today, reading aloud to children is still considered an important part of a comprehensive emergent literacy program (Beck et al., 2003; Delacruz, 2013; Fox, 2013; Pentimonti and Justice, 2010). When reading aloud is interactive, it is an effective tool for teaching the emergent literacy skills children need to become competent, fluent readers (Henk et al., 2000; Lane and Wright, 2007; Lennox, 2013; Silverman et al., 2013).

In spite of the prevalence and importance of reading aloud to young children in school settings, an extensive review of the literature does not reveal a clear, consistent, or well-defined term, definition, or model to describe this type of reading activity. Instead, the practice of reading aloud to children has many names and definitions: Story Book Reading, Read Aloud, Interactive Reading, or Shared Book Experiences, to name a few. This study illuminates the read aloud practice of four

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experienced kindergarten teachers - specifically the interconnected, literacy-related relationships among book, students, and reader (in this case the teacher) - by studying the dynamic interactions between text, student activity, and teacher practice during kindergarten read alouds. Prior studies have looked at these components separately, rather than investigating how they have the potential to work together to build kindergarteners' emergent literacy skills and content knowledge.

Thus, the study employs a model to understand this important teaching practice: Kindergarten Class Interactive Reading Aloud (CIRA: Figure 1). This model was based on the research literature, holistically describes what occurs when a kindergarten teacher reads aloud interactively to a whole class during a planned period of instruction. This would not include times when a teacher reads a book to the class at a random time not as a part of a planned lesson.

Kindergarten CIRA includes elements of teacher activity, student activity, and texts as they interact during a planned instructional period nested in the context of the classroom, school, community and governance. The Kindergarten CIRA model was used as a lens in order to answer the following research questions: What are the characteristics of teacher practice and student activity, and how do these characteristics interact during a kindergarten CIRA session as practiced by experienced kindergarten teachers? Are there any patterns or discernable characteristics and interactions within or across teachers?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative method of collective case study in order to create a comprehensive description of interactive read aloud sessions in kindergarten. Data collected included observation transcripts and field notes; informal interview field notes; the formal interview transcripts and field notes; the CIRA Text Logs (teachers recorded the name and author of all the books they read for planned interactive read aloud sessions over the course of the study); and Teacher Information sheets (demographic data such as years of teaching, education, etc.). "Considerable Time" was spent with participants (Guba and Lincoln, 2008) as the study took place over the course of four months, thus yielding a rich description and a complex, holistic picture - the hallmark of qualitative case study research (Creswell, 2007; Nolen, 2001; Sipe and Ghiso 2004). The CIRA model was very helpful in gaining a better understanding of how teacher practice, student activity, and text work together during interactive reading aloud sessions.

The four teachers were purposely selected with the principals of the schools based on their years of teaching experience, their level of expertise in the area of reading instruction, and their overall reputation of being an experienced, competent kindergarten teacher whose students routinely met kindergarten benchmarks and expectations by the end of the year. The principals also selected teachers who had taught for a minimum of two years at the kindergarten level and who were tenured or on track to becoming tenured. All four teachers were white females with between 2 and 25 years of teaching experience. Three of the four had a Masters Degree or its equivalent.

At the time of the initial interview, each participating teacher was given a Whole Class Interactive Reading Aloud Text Log for each of the months of the study to record the title and author of books read during CIRA sessions. In addition, they were given a Text Characteristics Guide and a Text Characteristics Guide Glossary, which was developed in order to make sure that all of the participating teachers characterized the texts using the same terms and the same definitions of the terms.

Qualitative research relies on persistent observations to ensure that enough rich data are obtained. These rich data lead to a "thick" description that gives a full and detailed account of the case in point (Creswell, 2007; Goatley, 2000; Nolen, 2001). In order to obtain thick description through persistent observations, four read aloud sessions of each of the four teachers were conducted, for a total of 16 observations. The read aloud sessions were each discretely audio taped and transcribed. Field notes were taken during the CIRA sessions.

Logistical information for each session was recorded including the date, start, and end time of the observation; the location of the students and teacher for the read aloud session; the number of students who participated in the sessions and whether or not changes had occurred during the observation (that is, did any of the students go or return from receiving special services such as English as a Second Language (ESL) or Special Education). After each of the 16 observations, the audiotapes were transcribed and the field notes were embedded into the transcripts in order to create a complete picture of each read aloud session. The transcripts were then read, re-read, and then coded using the CIRA Protocol (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Sipe and Ghiso, 2004). All portions of each transcript were coded.

The same process was employed to code the formal interview transcripts which was used to code the observation transcripts. First, the transcripts were read, and re-read, and each section of the transcript was correlated to each of the research questions. Patterns were then identified within and across teacher observation session and interviews. These data, along with direct quotes from the transcripts, provided a rich description of the 16 read aloud sessions. From these rich descriptions, a collective case study of common characteristics across the practices of all four participating teachers was created using the CIRA model a lens.

After all four read aloud sessions were observed for each teacher, individual interviews were conducted with each teacher at a mutually acceptable time and when the students or other adults were not present. The interviews were audio taped, and field notes were taken when necessary to make sure all the information was captured. Questions for the interviews included ones that clarified and validated what was observed during the four observations. In addition, open-ended questions were asked to assure that all the data had been captured during the interactive read aloud sessions. The participating teachers sometimes had time to chat with the researcher before and/or after the CIRA sessions. These chats built rapport and trust. The conversation were not extensive, but during this time, quite a bit of information was gathered. This information was captured via notes with a pencil and pad of paper, either while chatting or immediately after leaving. These data were a valuable addition to the formal interview data.

Analysis of the data was achieved in several ways. A cross-case analysis was conducted in this case by triangulating across and between observations and interviews (Creswell, 2007). To establish patterns, the findings were verified by checking to make sure there was evidence of the patterns from all of the data sources for all of the participants, including observations, informal teacher interviews,

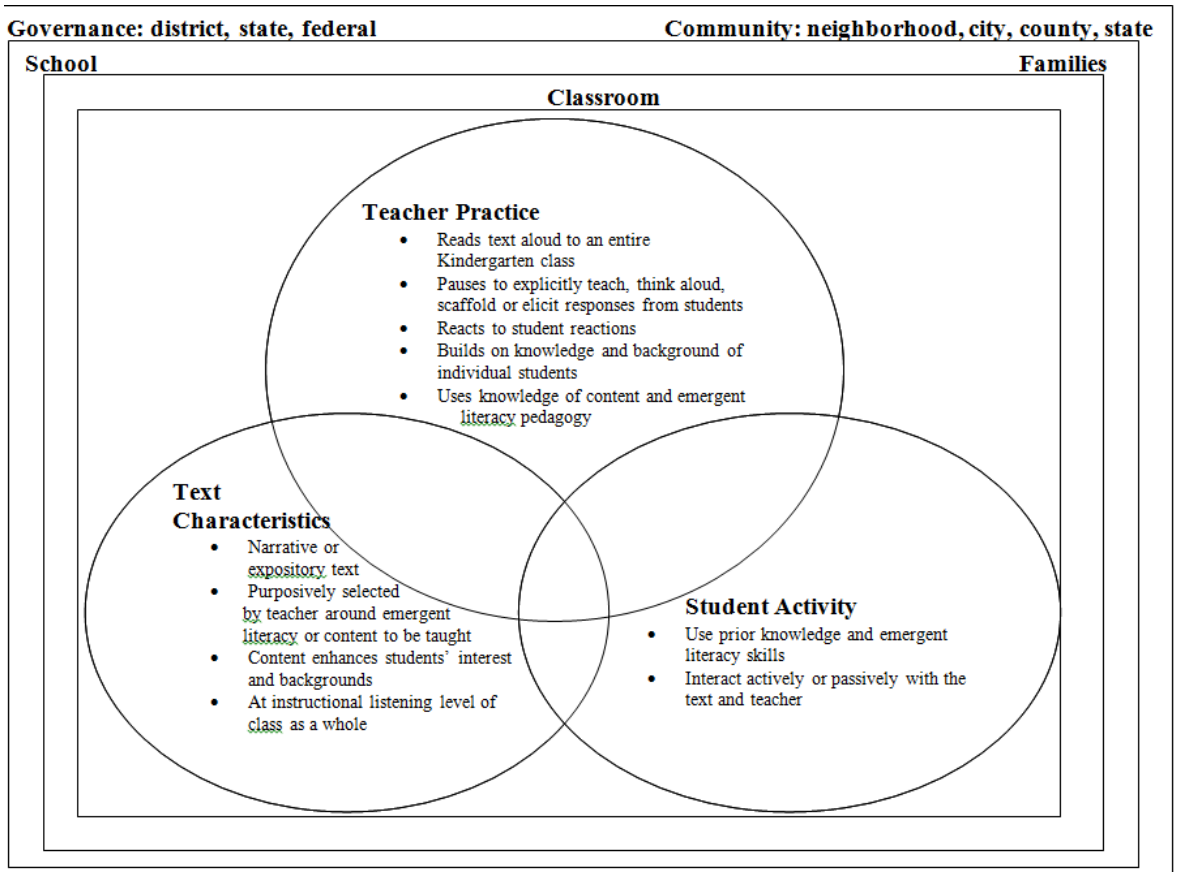

Figure 1. Kindergarten whole class interactive reading aloud (CIRA).

and formal teacher interviews. For example, to make sure all teachers coded texts consistently, the researcher coded the texts used at the 16 observations. This information was obtained on the text section of the CIRA Text Log. The CIRA text log was analyzed to see how the participating teachers had coded the texts.

Finally, the texts were shared with the teachers, and then they were asked how they were coded to make sure the coding made at each of the points matched. In all cases, they did match. This correlation can be attributed to the consistent and detailed information given to the participating teachers at the onset of the study in the form of the CIRA text glossaries. The multiple-perspective levels from which to view teacher-student-text involvement in read aloud sessions all combined together to produce a deep descriptive, interactive, and nuanced look at how reading aloud is experienced by emergently literate students.

RESULTS

Strong common patterns across the four teachers emerged and are reported as a collective case study. An N of four for this study did in fact lead to data saturation (Given, 2008). This section addresses the patterns of Teacher Activity. All four teachers conducted their read aloud sessions after what was considered as a traditional kindergarten opening activities. Such activities include interactively reading a large calendar and a chart with the daily plan on it. These activities introduce, teach, and reinforce literacy and math skills. The opening activities lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes in each of the four classrooms. Two of the teachers conducted their opening activities as soon as the students came into the classroom in the morning. Due to the scheduling of specials (music, media time, physical education, etc.), the other two teachers conducted their read aloud sessions right after students came in from lunch and recess. The read aloud sessions of all four teachers were held after these traditional kindergarten opening activities, whether they occurred in the morning or in the afternoon.

Teacher Activity

The most common code for Teacher Activity, *Evaluation Feedback* accounted for 26% of the codes across the practice of all four teachers. *Evaluation Feedback* is

when the teacher indicates that an answer or student performance is correct, valued, incorrect, or not valued and then provides a reason. The following excerpt illustrated this practice; it is interesting to note that this excerpt is also an example of how the teachers referred to a text's illustrations:

Teacher [*High Order*] You thought Sam I Am was hurting this guy's feelings? Why did you think that?
Student 1 [*Explanation*] He was going after him all the time.
Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Because he was trying to get away. Good! Sam I Am kept bothering him, didn't he? He kept asking him and asking him. In this classroom we would use our debug strategy then, wouldn't we? [*Rhetorical Question*]
Students [*Simple Answer as Group*] Yeah.
Teacher [*High Order*] Let's share one more friend. Student 2 [*uses Student 2s name*], what part are you thinking of?
Student 2 [Alternate Answer] I like the tree.
Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*, *Elaboration*] You liked the tree? Good! Why did you like that part?
Student 2 [*Explanation*] Because it was so funny.
Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Yes, it was funny! [*Very dramatically*] My favorite part is at the very beginning, when they say, " 'I am Sam, I am Sam. That Sam I am. That Sam I am. [*Rereads and shows pictures*] I do not like that Sam I am!' "[*Scaffolding*] I like that part because it is really funny to read it. I think it is funny to hear, "'Sam I Am, I do not like that Sam I Am'", so many times.

Feedback from a teacher is important to student learning. However, neutral feedback that does not let the student know if they are right or wrong does not move learning forward. Teachers in this study used *Evaluation Feedback* in a quick positive manner to let their students know if they were on the right track; thus a means of moving their students forward to new levels of understanding. *Explains Rules and Procedures* was the second most frequent code across the practices of all the teachers (13%). *Explains Rules and Procedures* is defined as follows:

The teacher explains the rules or procedures for listening to the text or for the follow-up activity after the text has been read. No instruction of literacy skills or content (i.e. Math, Social Studies, Science, etc.) is involved. The following excerpt, illustrated a teacher using *Explains Rules/Procedures* for behavior management:

Teacher [*Explains Rules/Procedures*] Remember; quietly look with your eyes and no talking. Student 1 Magic 5. [*Reads title*] "Construction Site". Magic 5 on your bottoms; all our friends look up here.

Scaffolding was the third most common code across the practice of the four teachers (12%). *Scaffolding* is defined as instruction that builds off students' background knowledge and/or models in an interactive manner to move students' thinking forward (usually, a number of exchanges between the teacher and the students). All four teachers appeared to scaffold for the class as a whole, as well as to target certain students to make sure those students understood the text.

In the following exchange between a Teacher and her students, the Teacher had just finished reading *The Three Little Pigs* and was *Scaffolding* the students' understanding of the concept of characters via a whole class discussion. Note how the Teacher does not simply supply information or state what is right or wrong, but rather asks pointed questions to lead the students to their own understanding of the text based on what they already know.

Teacher [*Low Order*] We have been talking about characters [sic] our story. Who were the other characters? [*nods at Student 1 to answer*]
Student 1 [*Simple Answer*] The house, the house!
Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] We are not there yet. The house is the setting. Are there any other good characters? There are the three pigs in the story that we just talked about. Student 2? [*Low Order*]
Student 2 [Alternate Answer] The Mom.
Teacher and their Mom, OK? [*pauses to allow for students to think and then asks Low Order question*] Are there any bad characters in this book Alexia? Are there any bad characters in this book?
Student 3 [*Simple Answer*] Yes.
Teacher [*Question Back to Student*] Who is bad in there? [*Pause then asks Low Order question*] Who do you think of when you think of a character who did bad things?
Student 3 [*Simple Answer*] A wolf.
Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] So, are there bad characters. Yes, the wolf. He is the bad character in the book. The only bad character.

In the aforementioned passage, *Scaffolding* does not happen in a single exchange. Rather it happens in a series of exchanges between the teacher and students, each building on one another until the teacher is sure the students understand what was read.

The code for *Low Order* was the fourth most prevalent across the practice of all teachers. *Low Order* is defined as follows: The teacher asks a question or presents a problem that can be answered directly from the text or from a student's memory. The excerpt above illustrated the *Low Order* code. With only one exception, the Teacher mostly asked *Low Order* questions about the little pigs to check for and build a basic understanding of the text. She did not ask the students to do any higher order thinking to scaffold their understanding, such as making inferences.

The most common response to student misbehavior (which did not occur very often) was no response at all, as coded by *Redirects Conversation or Continues Reading.* A typical minor behavior issue was students talking out of turn. The most common response from all four teachers was to simply ignore students who were calling out and instead call on students who had their hands raised. The redirection most often involved not simply ignoring the behavior but rather continuing instruction in order to maximize instruction during the read aloud session.

A pervasive code across the practice of the four teachers was *Reads Aloud with Inflection.* Virtually every passage that each teacher read was read with fluency, prosody, expression, and inflection. Each teacher varied the tone, tempo or volume of her voice in order to act out the various characters in a given story. Their voices reflected the emotions the texts conveyed, such as fear, happiness, or sadness. Each of the teachers changed the volume of her voice in order to portray the various moods and emotions of the text or to emphasize a certain point. The quotes throughout this section used to illustrate other characteristics also illustrate reading aloud with inflection and emphasis.

In all cases during the 16 observations, all of the teachers brought attention to the illustrations or photographs in the texts. All four teachers made explicit reference to pictures as they went through the story. As a result, students learned extra-textual material related to the authors, illustrators, and even publishers.

Student activity

The second group of codes addresses Student Activity. In all cases, the students appeared to be fully engaged during all of the 16 observed sessions. The most pervasive code across all of the observations was *Listens*, defined in the CIRA glossary as, "the majority of the students are listening to or watching the teacher, another student, or other sources of literacy-related information."

Almost all of the student activity coded was considered *On Task*, defined in the CIRA glossary as "students are academically engaged in the topic at hand. This category includes listening to directions." Student activity termed *Play or Socialize/Off Task* was so rare as to be non-existent (only 8 of 1049 codes). Students occasionally discussed non-lesson related topics or were given to socializing, but these activities took place in the spaces between readings or in moments before the teacher would officially bring the class to order.

Another prevalent overt Student Activity code was *Simple Answer* and is defined in the CIRA glossary as: **"**The student gives a short straightforward answer or statement, gives a definition of a term, says I don't know, says yes or no." This code represented a third of the student activity codes for all teachers. The most common simple answer from students across the observations was a one word utterance - such as Yes or No - or a one or two word answer.

The second most common code of Student Activity across the 16 observations was *On Topic/Out of Turn,* defined as "the student(s) answer is about the text or the topic that the teacher is discussing but the student was not called on." As previously stated, the students were consistently engaged and on task. They reacted to teacher read alouds with excited outbursts, both while the text was being read and while the teacher was pausing to ask questions before, during and after the reading. While these outbursts were on topic because they had to do with the text being read, they were coded off task because the teacher did not call on the student. The following passage is evidence of the code *On Topic/Off Task:*

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] "'Wait here and don't leave! [*Raises voice*] And don't move!' said Ruby. 'Dragon shirt', said Max. 'Max', said Ruby. 'After we buy your new pants we will have no [*emphasis on* no] money left over.' "[*Rhetorical Question*] Why do you think Max keeps saying, "Dragon shirt?"
Student [*On Topic/Off Task*] Because he wants a dragon shirt.
Teacher [*Evaluation Feedback*] Because he wants a dragon shirt. [*nods affirmatively and continues to Read with Inflection*].

A code related to *On Topic/Out of Turn* is *Spontaneous Oral Utterance*, and is defined in the CIRA Glossary as "the student(s) spontaneously reacts as the text is being read with an oral utterance" (for example, wow, aaahhh). This code was the third most common across student activity of all observations. The children making sounds of animals in the story; for instance, growling when a bear appears or laughing at an appropriate time while the teacher was reading can characterize these Spontaneous Oral Utterances. The major difference between *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* and *On Topic/Out of Turn* is that a *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* is just a word or two in response to the text that never requires or expects the teacher to respond. On the other hand, *On Topic/Out of Turn* is usually a longer response to the text that often requests or requires the teacher to respond to the student. The following passage offers two examples of *Spontaneous Oral Utterance*:

Teacher [*Reads with Inflection*] "Now bear was very annoyed so he went home and got a hammer and some nails so he could nail his shadow to the ground."
Students [*Spontaneous Oral Utterance*] NO!
Teacher [*Ignores students and continues to Read with*

Inflection] “He hammered and hammered and hammered but no matter how many nails he hammered he couldn’t nail [*emphasis on* nail] his shadow down.”
Many Students [*sounds of giggling, Spontaneous Oral Utterance*]

The children were so engaged by the story and so sympathetic to the plight of the bear that they spontaneously told the bear not to hammer his shadow to the ground. The teachers did not acknowledge these utterances; however, they were accepted and encouraged by virtue of not being called attention to.

Another code related to both *On Topic/Out of Turn* and *Spontaneous Utterance* is *Choral Reading/Spontaneous.* This response is defined in the CIRA Glossary as: students start to read along with the teacher without being asked to do so. This code accounted for only 3% of the total student activity codes; however, it occurred at least once during each teacher’s four observations. This type of activity is powerful working towards the ultimate goal of reading instruction: fluency.

It is interesting to note that the three categories *On Topic/Out of Turn* (17%), *Spontaneous Oral Utterance* (13%) and *Choral Reading/Spontaneous* (3%) accounted for a total of 33% of the total *Student Activity* codes. These three categories are characterized by the students feeling free to spontaneously react to the text being read. Although these teachers were in firm control of their classes, students were encouraged to participate during the reading. These categories along with *Simple Answer* (33%) accounted for a total of 66% of the total *Student Activity* codes.

Text

The third element investigated was the characteristics of the texts the teachers read. Not surprisingly, the most common text structure was narrative at 84%; narrative prose comprised 76% of the texts and narrative poetry 8% of the texts; as narrative stories are typically the kind of text read to young children. Only 26% of the texts were expository in structure. In the past decade, there has been a push to expose young children to more exposition, and the teachers reported in the interviews that they tended to read exposition before Science and Social Studies lessons.

This could explain why there was so little exposition during read aloud sessions. It is interesting to note that the texts read during the study did not often represent the demographics of the students in the classes. For example, all of the fairy tales read during the study were from the western European cannon of children’s literature. The same literacy content could have been taught using texts that represented the cultures and backgrounds of the diverse student populations in the study.

Interaction of teacher activity, student activity and text

The symbiotic interaction of teacher activity, student activity, and text is essential in creating a kindergarten classroom practice with the potential to teach literacy skills and other content. While most studies look at these components in isolation, CIRA looks at how they interact in order to give a holistic picture of the read aloud practice. Through this method, several salient patterns emerged.

The strongest pattern across these elements was the four teachers' effective execution of classroom management that yielded completely engaged students. The teachers were so expert at this craft that a casual observer might think classroom management was absent, because there were virtually no behavior problems. All four classrooms were full of children who appeared to be content and fully engaged in what they were doing. This expert classroom management did not look identical in all classrooms, yet was just as effective in all of them. In fact, these four teachers, despite producing similar classroom behaviors, fell along a noticeable continuum, from free-flowing and seemingly un-scripted sessions, to more structured and controlled sessions (Figure 2). Such differences among the teachers’ read aloud sessions can be attributed to two distinct factors. One factor is the obviously diverse and multifaceted personalities and backgrounds of the four participating teachers. The other, perhaps more complex, factor is the contextual variations which framed the study.

The highly interactive nature of read aloud sessions meant that student activity and teacher practice influenced performance and retention for all involved students. The salient characteristics of student behavior and student reaction during the read alouds were linked directly to the practice of the teacher. Students were indeed primed for learning, and teachers orchestrated a well-planned CIRA session. Additionally, student receptiveness was dependent on the classroom management and presentational style of the teacher. Teachers who demand good listeners not only encouraged the students to remain engaged, but also managed to have rich discussions about the texts. The sections that follow examine specific characteristics of student activity that relate to learning. Each of these characteristics is an inherent quality of the Student Activity, which the teacher promotes for the benefit of advancing emergent literacy.

A major finding is that all teachers in the study employed positive and transparent classroom management. Moreover, they used scaffolding to improve student comprehension and interaction. Some very interesting patterns emerged around the types of questions asked and answers given. The most common Student Activity Code was *Simple Answer,* meaning that students responded with one or two word utterances or yes or no.

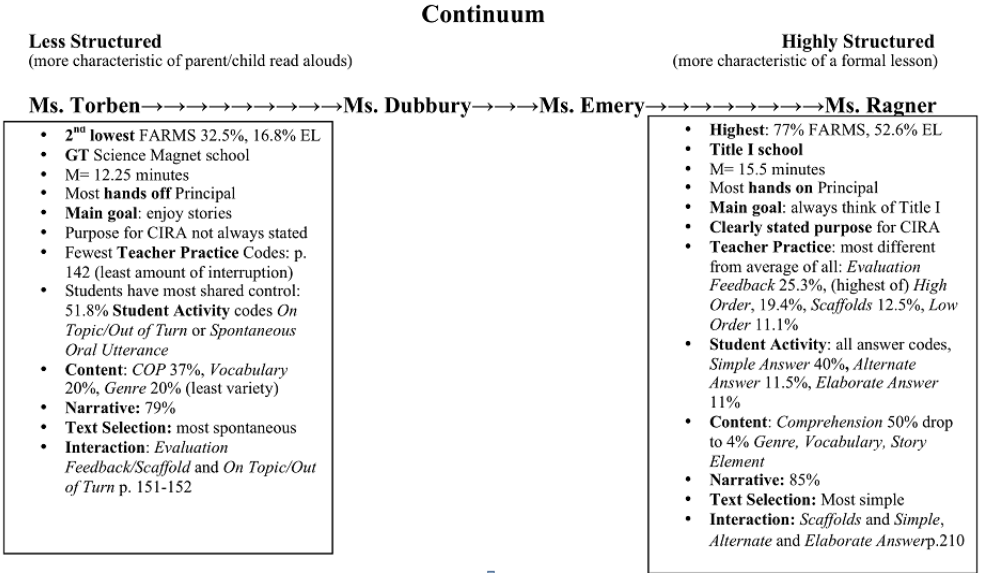

Figure 2. Kindergarten class interaction reading aloud (CIRA) major findings within teacher practice individual teacher case studies.

This is not surprising because a common code of Teacher Activity was *Poses Low Order Task/Problem/ Question; Evaluation Feedback*. It follows that a common response to a *Low Order Question* is a *Simple Answer.* The teachers did use these simple answers as opportunities for scaffolding as the teacher almost always evaluated the response coded as *Evaluation Feedback*. It is interesting to consider what would happen if the teachers had posed higher-order questions more often. Would the students have responded with more complex answers? The teachers already had excellent control of the interactive read aloud sessions. Asking more rigorous questions and requiring more complex answers from the students may have the potential to make these sessions more meaningful learning environments.

Students in the primary grades, particularly kindergarten, can read only very simple texts independently and therefore depend on the teacher to read complex texts to them. Even with regular classroom instruction and support, students will need help with texts that require critical thinking and analysis to fully understand them. Teachers in this study modeled how to read and understand complex texts by reading aloud in order to can show students how to comprehend texts that would normally be too difficult for them to read independently. By effectively using teacher scaffolding to create a warm, personable, and safe verbal interaction with a knowledgeable other, read alouds will help kindergarten students develop increasingly sophisticated reading skills and improve their ability to access complex texts. Examples from this study use texts well above the students' individual reading levels, thus giving kindergarteners access to difficult concepts via a developmentally appropriate means. That being said, teachers need to be careful not to 'trap' their students by asking them only low order questions as evidenced in this study, especially those in lower SES schools and/or English Language Learners. Expectations need to be elevated for all students, and with proper support, all students can meet with success in mastering emergent literacy skills.

Another interesting finding in this study is the type of texts the teachers chose to read. Typically they, chose texts with a narrative text structure. In addition to expanding the emergent literacy skills of kindergarteners through discussion, teachers also need to make wise-and varied-choices in the selection of read aloud texts. Thus, the text part of the CIRA model supports the shifts in the type of text used as tools for literacy instruction. Abundant evidence exists which suggests that it is necessary for children to be exposed to a wide variety of text genres and structures in order for them to be able to comprehend these various genres and structures. Due to the more complex structure of expository text and the potential rigor of the informational content, it is possible that the interactions between teacher, student, and text will become more sophisticated and rigorous.

This study had many facets; thus, the direction for future research could take many directions. A next step would be to use the CIRA model as a lens to

systematically explore interactive read aloud sessions in a wider variety of schools, with a wider variety of teachers, and with different types of texts. The CIRA model could act as a consistent lens to understand the changing variables of teacher, student and/or text. One approach could be to replicate this study in a cross section of schools representing high and middle SES schools and compare the interactions in the CIRA model to those found in this current study of lower SES schools. These additional studies would explore and illuminate the differences, if any, in the interaction between Teacher Practice, Student Activity and Texts read. At that point, a more complete, holistic understanding of interactive read aloud sessions in would be achieved, thereby making literacy instruction more effective for all students.

Kindergarten teachers in this study spent an average of 15 min (per day) reading aloud to their students. This is a large portion of the instructional day, especially when added up over the course of a year (45 h). Interactive read aloud sessions need to be examined more fully so potential learning opportunities can be maximized, particularly for students who are at risk of becoming below-grade readers. These children especially cannot afford to spend their valuable instructional time in ineffective and counterproductive learning situations. Teachers sometimes do not maximize instruction and substantial valuable learning time is wasted. Teachers need to find ways to use time more effectively and efficiently, both in the area of classroom management and in the actual execution of lessons. In this study, much was learned to illuminate the practice of interactive reading aloud in the hands of experienced teachers. Read aloud sessions based on the CIRA model could be an integral part of a kindergarten emergent literacy program because such sessions are a prime example of how instructional time can be maximized in a variety of ways.

Finally, one of the most interesting patterns, which emerged was the interactive patterns between the teacher, students, and texts. Predominately, it was found that teachers used narrative texts and interacted with students largely through '*simple questions'* and '*simple answer'* strategies. Expository text may in fact yield more opportunities for higher-order thinking based on a tendency of exposition to provide more rigorous content and a more complex structure than narrative text.

This study, using CIRA as a model, provides a way to assess interactive read aloud sessions in kindergarten. Teachers who employ interactive read aloud sessions that align with the CIRA model will average 15 min every day not simply reading a book, but instead also teaching emergent literacy skills, as well as content, in developmentally appropriate ways. Additionally, students who participate in interactive read aloud sessions modeled after CIRA will be actively engaged in a literacy activity that has the potential to maximize their literacy learning. This study also provides a model researchers can use to examine the elements of read aloud sessions and the types of learning that occur.

Findings shed light on whole-class kindergarten interactive reading aloud sessions in a novel way because the study specifically looked at the interaction of the teacher's artful and thoughtful practice, the students' productive engagement, and the text's rich possibilities intertwined together and not as disconnected pieces.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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