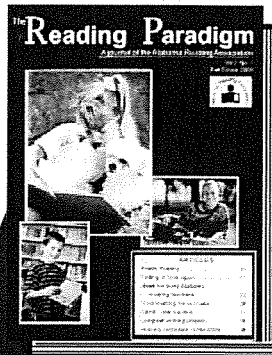


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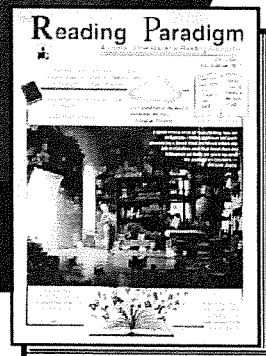
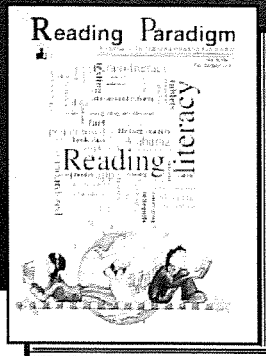
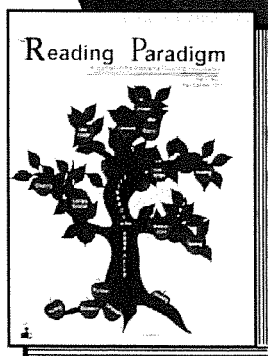
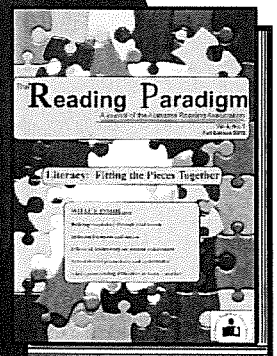
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THE **Reading Paradigm**

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ARTICLES

**Preservice teachers' perceptions of reader response and motivation
when traditional and digital read-alouds are combined**

April Sanders
page five

**Using mentor texts in writing instruction:
when modeling isn't enough**

Christie F. Calhoun
Julianne Coleman
page eleven

Using iPads to reinvent, reimagine, and leverage literacy

Victoria Cardullo
Bruce Murray
page thirteen

**Engaging students in a novel study by using
menus for differentiated instruction**

Susan Clinton
page twenty

Lessons learned from project pre-K to K literacy transition

Cynthia P. Hicks
Pamela T. Wimbish
page twenty-two

Increasing preschool independent on-task book time

Katie Mashimann
page thirty-three

Inspiring a child's passion of reading: A springboard for love and character

Tara L. R. Beziat
Shelly Bowden
Sherry Campbell
Gilbert Dueñas
Erin F. Klash
page thirty-six

Invitations to independence...Extending shared reading in early childhood

Kelly Hill
page forty

Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Reader Response and Motivation When Traditional and Digital Read-Alouds are Combined

April Sanders

As technology and multimodal options evolve, literacy in the classroom is transforming. The expansion of literacy to include technologies is at the core of the New Literacies (text-messaging, blogging, social networking, podcasting, videomaking.) Since the New Literacies are rapidly carving a place in literacy instruction, this study focused on digital read-alouds(DRA). The researcher investigated how pre-service teachers were able to effectively create digital read-alouds based on Layne's (2015) model of digital stories. They examined the participants' views based on Rosenblatt's reader response theory on using a new literacy paired with a traditional option for read-alouds when doing clinical hours in the elementary classroom. All of the created digital read-alouds were part of a lesson taught in local elementary schools and paired with a traditional read-aloud. Data were gathered from preservice teachers who learned how to create digital read-alouds and use pedagogical strategies to effectively implement them as well as traditional read-alouds in the classroom.

Objective

The read-aloud has been a fixture in many elementary classrooms and libraries for decades, but understanding the inner workings of what constitutes a quality read-aloud is not always as clear to educators, parents, and administrators. Simply reading a book aloud to students is not a read-aloud. A traditional read-aloud is when a teacher prepares and reads a book aloud to students. Before reading, the teacher will establish a purpose for reading and listening. In the process of reading, s/he will plan points in the reading to stop and teach reading skills, such as inferencing and sequencing. Then a strategic ending is planned for the book so that young readers can discuss their experience with the text. The educational benefits of read-alouds can range from vocabulary acquisition (Kindle, 2009; Sinatra, 2008) to comprehension (Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008) to fluency (Tompkins, 2006). The landmark study, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) even highlighted the importance of read-alouds: "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (p. 23.)

Even though the traditional read-aloud can be very effective, the tools of literacy are transforming and allowing teachers the ability to incorporate technology alongside printed text. Digital read-alouds are an example of such a pairing of traditional and digital tools. Instead of relying completely on the teacher's one-time reading in the classroom setting, the digital read-aloud allows the teacher to create a video of images and sounds as s/he reads the text. Leading educational organizations in the field of literacy have established the importance of including in the school curriculum technological advances along with more literacy. The International Reading Association (IRA, 2009) strongly encourages the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into literacy. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has established initiatives to define 21st century literacies (NCTE Position Statement, 2008). Those initiatives encourage teachers to provide opportunities for students who are creating original works with multimedia and technology tools. Even though a limited amount of research has been focused on digital storytelling (where students create a story through media), significant research has not been done with digital read-alouds created by preservice teachers and integrated into the elementary classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory is one theoretical lens to use in viewing the reader's response to various new literacies. The distinction between aesthetic and efferent reading is based in the reader's particular stance; for instance, in the pure efferent stance, the reader is concerned with the knowledge or information s/he will have after the reading, but the pure aesthetic stance allows the reader to have an actual experience with the text while reading (Rosenblatt, 1978). The complement of the image to composition can add to the overall experience for the reader/viewer as Rosenblatt describes in this theory.

Rosenblatt created the transactional theory, which moves literacy instruction away from prescribed answers that the teacher or experts have established into more of an experience with literature. The reading experience is so critical in Rosenblatt's transactional theory that she believes meaning from the text is not created until the reader actually connects with the text writing that "a novel or poem or play remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 24). For Rosenblatt, reading transaction is not passive but an active event because meaning is created when the text and reader come together. The reader and the text have a particular affect on one another to create an experience. Works must be experienced and meanings produced as readers relate to texts (Rosenblatt, 2005). In other words, the transaction produces meaning, and its manifestation is the response from the reader to the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). The text does not contain a single meaning; the text and the reader combined create meaning and a unique transaction.

Rosenblatt argues that text must be read and interpreted by the individual; the reading will be influenced by the individual's experience and stance. If the text is more than a literal piece, "the reader must have the experience, must 'live through' what is being created during the reading" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 33). The response emerges from what is in the text but also what is in the reader. The growth of a reader comes from sorting through the "ideas and emotions relevant to the work" in relation to life experiences and literature (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 71). Instead of simply relying on or only regarding the knowledge of a critic or expert, the transactional theory gives credence to the reader and what s/he brings to the text. Whatever the reader brings to the text builds the foundation for the reading, which is particularly significant because the "reader needs to honor his own relationship with the text" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 141). Quite simply, the text is read (and experienced) by the reader, not a literary expert or outside other.

The transactional experience is influenced by the stance of the reader, which can be established by the reader or an outside person, such as a teacher. One's stance can be defined as a position one assumes toward an event or, in this case, text. For Rosenblatt, a reader assuming an efferent stance is one concerned with what one might take away, as the Latin root of efferent means "to carry away." The opposite of the efferent stance is the aesthetic stance. The more literary or aesthetic stance focuses on the combining of the private or personal contributions to the meaning (Rosenblatt, 1995). The experience flows through this transaction that is created when the reader melds text and personal experience together.

Methodology and Research Questions

This qualitative study was a case study involving 43 participants; the study looked at how preservice teachers experienced elements of the reader response theory through digital read-alouds when they combined both traditional and digital read-alouds in an elementary classroom. Rosenblatt's (1978) reader response theory guided this part of the study as themes emerged from questionnaire responses. The questionnaire asked participants to rate their level of comfort in creating and using digital read-alouds versus traditional read-alouds. Additionally, preservice teachers participated in an interview after teaching lessons using the digital and traditional read-alouds in a classroom. The interview questions asked participants to explain their

intended stance and possible transaction during the reading experience. The interviews (Spradley, 1979) were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Using the descriptive coding method (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994), each transcript text was read three times, and participant responses were given descriptive codes summarizing their responses.

All of the participants answered similar questions in their interviews, so themes found after the descriptive coding of transcripts were connected to the questions asked during the interview. Additionally, importance was given to any prominent themes emerging from the texts with regard to a relation to Rosenblatt's reader response theory. A list of emerging themes was constructed from the descriptive codes and then connected to Rosenblatt's transactional theory in order to understand how reader response theory connects to digital read-alouds.

Research questions for this study about preservice preparation and implementation of traditional versus digital read-alouds include:

- *How do pre-service teachers view the option of using the new literacy of digital read-alouds instead of a traditional option in their future classrooms?
- *What aspects of reader response theory are demonstrated by pre-service teachers in the digital read-aloud experience?

Results

This study highlights how a traditional practice can be combined with and transformed through digital literacies to engage students and create a quality product without weakening the integrity of the curriculum content. The combination of the two modes (digital images and print text) related to how preservice teachers saw their stance moving along the aesthetic and efferent continuum explained in Rosenblatt's reader response theory. Participants explained the movement on the continuum based on planned questions and discussions; the content study results substantiated their use of such strategies. The transactional experience varied between the traditional and digital read-aloud, and themes emerging (see Table 1) from the interviews demonstrated that the visual component and ability for repetition in the digital read-aloud could provide a different reading experience from the traditional mode when read-aloud guidelines were properly employed.

Table 1 Themes Related to Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory	
Themes Found in Interview Transcript Texts	Transactional Theory Key Tenets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Choice of Text * Planned Questions vs Unplanned * Type of Questions Asked * Level of Expression * Visual Component * Emotional Response to Text Through Discussion * Connections between Texts Used * Repetition of Video 	<p style="text-align: center;">Efferent-Aesthetic Stance</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Transaction</p>

Choice of Text

Participants reported that choice of text influenced their stance and ultimately how they connected with the text. The book used for the digital read-aloud was the choice of the preservice teacher, but most had to use a book chosen by their assigned mentor teacher for the traditional read-aloud. The chosen book was most often one that directly related to a particular topic from unit the elementary class was studying. Some preservice teachers decided on a book for the DRA that was directly connected to the book the classroom teacher wanted to use for the traditional read-aloud, but this was not a requirement. The majority of participants made at least one comment regarding the positive experience of being able to choose their own piece of reading.

Questions

When planning the questions, the preservice teachers reported that the type of questions they prepared were different after doing the DRA: "By having to prepare the visual and sound effects, I really connected to the book in a different way and planned questions differently. I was able to really ask questions to see how the story affected my students and how it made them feel instead of just asking simple questions about the book." Repeatedly the participants discussed at length how the planning of questions changed after going through the process of the DRA, and the reason for this transformation was related to how they related to the story.

The participants wanted to plan their questions as they began to find themselves "getting into the book" by planning so many aspects related to visuals, sound effects, and music. As the participants' experience with the book changed, then the questions went deeper and their "questions were more about how they [students] engaged with the story instead of just quizzing them." Many remarked on how their planned questions went beyond simple knowledge type questions to ask students more about their own transaction with the text: "I wanted my students to fall in love with the stories. Doing the digital read-aloud made that super important to me. So then when I planned my questions, I realized I was asking about their connection instead of just what happened in the story."

Level of Expression

Participants discussed at length how the digital read-aloud allowed them much more flexibility and options for expression, but above all, all the participants made at least one comment about how the expression "let the story come to life." Using this mode allowed them to change their own voice as well as use music and sound effects.

Most of the participants admitted they wished they had done a better job of expression when reading with their students, but a combination of nerves as well as trying to be aware of classroom management kept them from fully focusing on inflections and voice modifications. Since the digital read-aloud had the advantage of more expression, the participants reported they were in much more of an efferent stance when doing the read-aloud for their video.

Visual Component

The participants fully believed that the visuals related to the digital read-aloud made the reading of the text quite a different experience from the traditional read-aloud, and many reiterated the idea of the story coming to life in the DRA. The reasons participants discussed for believing the visuals were key to the transaction varied to some degree. Some believed having a video allowed them to "zoom in and emphasize key aspects

of the text” they thought their young readers would not be able to see or recognize in a traditional read-aloud. Others thought the visuals were better able to help their students create a connection with the story.

Emotional Response to Text Through Discussion

“I want them to enjoy the text” was the resounding response by the participants when talking about how they planned to execute both the DRA and the traditional read-aloud for their students. The ability to plan specific questions that went beyond simple knowledge about the text led the participants toward creating a discussion with their students that went into discovering the emotional response their students had with the text. After doing the DRA, the participants were connected themselves to the story and then wanted to seek out the connections their students had: “I wanted them to fall into the story, to laugh with and at the characters, and feel as if they too were part of that world. But until I did the digital read-aloud, I honestly never felt so passionately about how I wanted that to happen for my students.” By having this type of response, the participants found the discussion with their students changed and went to a different depth of response than they had previously experienced.

Connections Between Texts Used

Many of the preservice teachers decided to use texts for both the DRA and the traditional read-aloud that had obvious connections in theme or topic. Of those who did choose books with such a pairing, they believed the connection between the two was made stronger for them and the student. The strength came through in their preparation and ability to ask a series of more in depth questions related to the topic as well as the text. The participants believed their students were able to “dig deeper into the unit topic by having both stories tied together.” Almost half of the participants who did pair their texts reported their questions, planning, and expressions used when reading for the traditional read-aloud was much more focused and went into more depth because of doing the DRA first. By doing the DRA first, the participants believed it made them think about how they could set up the same type of experience for the traditional read-aloud. Because they thought “the digital read-aloud was the perfect way to help a student create a connection to a book,” then they were able to move into the traditional read-aloud planning with a similar view of executing an experience with the book instead of just simply reading it.

Repetition of the Video

All of the participants involved in the study reported that the students in their classrooms asked to watch the DRA numerous times after the initial showing of it in class. Some found their students “liked the visual aspect and watched it many times” as a direct result of being able to experience digital images. Five of the participants were able to set up a viewing of the DRA in a center in their classrooms that students could go and watch after the initial DRA was done in class, and all five participants reported that the center was popular with their students. The setting the participants worked to establish in the DRA was also mentioned as a reason for why their students asked to watch the video again after experiencing it in class. When designing and creating the DRA, the participants were purposefully trying to create an environment that was appealing to their students to make them want to watch again.

Implications

Reader response studies explore the transaction occurring between the reader and printed text, but limited research is available including new literacies such as digital read-alouds. Preservice teachers are taught how reader response theory can be implemented in their classrooms with traditional literacy, but the literature does not focus on how the preservice teacher can effectively implement aspects of reader response theory

through digital literacy tools. This analysis demonstrates how the reading transaction can be created through digital tools for read-alouds and impact young readers.

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