

Examining literacy demands for children during teacher-led episodes of reading aloud across the transition from Preschool to Kindergarten

Jessica Mantei and Lisa Kervin

University of Wollongong

ABSTRACT

That an educator should read texts aloud to children is a cornerstone of literacy pedagogy. And although it is well established that reading aloud to children occurs frequently across educational contexts, less clear is the ways those unique contexts shape the text choices, teaching strategies and expectations for children's engagement with these literacy learning experiences. The findings shared in this paper sit within a larger study examining the changing literacy demands for learners across their schooling years. The paper examines the literacy learning demands during acts of reading aloud as they were offered in two pre-school settings (prior-to-school) and two Kindergarten classrooms (the first year of formal primary schooling). Analyses of classroom observations and teacher semi-structured interview transcripts through the interactions, the time structures, the use of space and of resources illustrate Bernstein's theory of visible and invisible literacy learning pedagogies evident in these representations of reading aloud. Considered in the paper are implications for children when pedagogical decisions constrain and enable early literacy learning. The paper contributes to existing understandings about early literacy learning by arguing for greater clarity in the ways the teaching of reading is positioned and articulated for children.

Introduction

The importance of early literacy education is well documented and universally supported. Seven (2010) identifies transition from prior-to-school settings to the first year of formal school as a 'major challenge children must face during their early childhood' (p. 347). Further, Schleppegrell (2008) points to the power of cumulative experiences in developing literacy knowledge across transitions. As such, educators working in both settings must collaborate for smooth transitions so all children 'may have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and the nation' (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2009, p. 5).

Children's early reading experiences lay important foundations for success because early development of

code knowledge, oral language and social skills impacts long-term academic achievement (e.g. Hill, 2004; Turunen, 2014). However, the path to this development is contested, and focused on assertions about what children *need*. Chall (1983) argued children experience significant academic, physical, social and emotional growth until age six, and, in terms of literacy learning, need an explicit focus on teaching oral language and sound structures. But Paris and Luo (2010) disagree, labelling early decoding instruction unwarranted, while Xue and Meisels (2004) recommend a mixed program offering phonics and language arts. Another body of literature focuses on the importance of play in supporting the development of social discourses through the reproduction of cultural knowledge and roles within different social contexts (Fleer, 2013;

Kervin & Verenikina, 2017; Roskos, Christie, Widman & Holding, 2010). The question of what children need and how teachers respond through the experiences they offer across school contexts is addressed in this paper.

Literature review

Turunen (2014) identifies the transition from pre to primary school contexts as a key life event for young children. A smooth transition is linked in the research with identity development and positive social and educational outcomes, not only for early development, but for ongoing success as well (Turunen, 2014). And, as each setting presents different literacy demands and expectations, it falls to educators to understand the different contexts and to facilitate children's accumulation of literacy knowledge.

Australian prior-to-school and school contexts operate under separate mandated national curricula. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) in the prior-to-school setting promotes play-based theories that acknowledge the important role of early years educators in developing children's social, emotional, communication and language skills (DEEWR, 2009). Within the EYLF, educators support children's reading with a range of texts and by conducting discussions related to the making of meaning and understanding literacy concepts (DEEWR, 2009). The Australian Curriculum: English drives reading pedagogy in Australian primary schools (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2014). It promotes a skills-based definition of reading as 'using and combining contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge to decode texts' (ACARA, 2014, p. 12), and students' reading development is tracked and tested via national assessments. Whilst the settings differ in philosophies and mandates, a common experience across them is reading aloud.

The value of reading aloud to all children regardless of background and ability is well established (e.g., Bennett, Gunn, Gayle-Evans, Barrera & Leung, 2017; Clay, 1991; Copeland & Keefe, 2016). Reading aloud enables educators to support the development of foundational literacy skills by teaching specific reading processes, building comprehension and vocabulary, developing understandings of story structures, making connections between print and visual elements, and modelling fluent and expressive reading (Burkins & Croft, 2010; Johnston, 2016; Massaro, 2017). Reading aloud to children provides opportunities for meanings to be negotiated through discussions prior to, during and following reading (Clay, 1991; Lightner & Wilkinson, 2017), and offers opportunities to focus on meanings within, about, and beyond the text (Fountas

& Pinnell, 2006; Rogers, Labadie & Pole, 2016). Such is the value placed on reading development that pedagogical constructs (reading 'episodes') have been manufactured that direct teachers' attention to different rules or processes for teaching. Whether the reading is defined as a 'read aloud', 'shared reading' or 'guided reading', what remains unchanged is a focus on making meaning with the ultimate aim of motivating students to read (Rog, 2001; Wright & Cervetti (2016).

Previous research about reading aloud focuses on pedagogy, for example, teaching style and instruction (Fisher, Flood, Lapp & Frey, 2004; Lightner & Wilkinson, 2017; Martinez & Teale, 1993), teacher questioning (Walsh & Hodge, 2016), text selection (Fisher et al., 2004; Johnston, 2016; McGee & Schickedanz, 2007), and comprehension and vocabulary assessment (Edwards Santoro, Chard, Howard & Baker, 2008; Wright & Cervetti, 2017). This paper takes a new focus by examining the literacy demands related to reading aloud across transition contexts, and the implications of these demands for reading pedagogy.

Theoretical framework

Bernstein's (1975) theory of invisible and visible pedagogies enables analysis of social interactions and their connections with student learning. The theory acknowledges movements between contrasting forms of pedagogies and pedagogic discourses in a learning environment (Bernstein, 1975). The hierarchies within pedagogies differ depending on the manner and degree of specificity in which content and expectations are communicated and the ways overt knowledges, structures and interactions are demonstrated. More invisible pedagogies comprise implicit transmissions of information and criteria, while visible pedagogies are defined by more specific expectations. Bernstein's (1975) theoretical frame of visible and invisible pedagogies affords an examination of reading pedagogies that will provide insight into the expectations on the learner during acts of reading aloud, which can lead to understandings about what such practices mean for children's learning and their agency over that learning.

Visible pedagogies are associated with strong classification, strong boundaries and strong framing within the curriculum regulated by sequencing rules and explicit criteria (Bernstein, 1996). Practice is strongly framed by a careful articulation of specialised knowledge and disciplines, limiting learner agency in favour of strict criteria. Visible pedagogical practices are often contained within rigid policies and curricula where the educator controls the ways students interact. Stephen (2010) observes that the learner, while strongly scaffolded toward an end goal, is socially and creatively restricted.

Invisible pedagogies are associated with weak classification, weak boundaries and weak framing. Invisible pedagogies afford wider curriculum choice, resulting in more flexible and open-ended domain content. Classroom practices are flexible as boundaries are widened and students appear to have more control (Bernstein, 1996). Educators are freer to respond to opportunities learners present, and learners themselves appear freer to explore and engage with creative processes (Kervin, Turbill & Harden-Thew, 2017). Invisible pedagogies decrease overt educator participation and increase learners' action as they seek their own knowledge sources that enrich their learning experiences. However, scaffolding towards the learning goals is limited, potentially disadvantaging less experienced learners (Goouch, 2008; Stephen, 2010).

Four key areas to explicate the theory

A framework of visible and invisible pedagogies enables examination of reading aloud from the point of view of the acquirer (in this case the child) rather the transmitter (the educator) because it provides insights into the ways children are positioned for learning, in this case, about the reading process. Four key elements (see Figure 1) afford explication of Bernstein's (1975) concept:

- *interactions* between and among educators and children during an act of reading aloud;
- *time structures* for the literacy experience;
- *use of space* both inside and outside the physical classroom structures;
- *resources* selected and the ways they were used.

It is important to note that the elements are interconnected, and that learning occurs through *interactions* within certain *spaces* and *times*, and with the *resources* on offer.

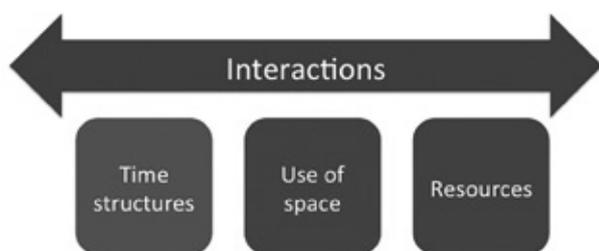


Figure 1. Explication of visible and invisible pedagogies

Interactions. Social control features in any discourse (Bernstein, 1975), and becomes evident through the interactions between participants. Interactions in this paper are limited to exchanges between and among educator and children in the setting so the control and use of power can be examined. Within this definition,

interactions include exchanges that are verbal and nonverbal, individualised and generic, managerial and pedagogical (Stephen, 2010). Understanding interactions supports an analysis of the ways time structures, space and resources are used within a continuum of visible to invisible pedagogies.

Time structures. Time defines the broader activity through the sequencing and pacing of experiences (Bernstein, 1996) and more narrowly to focus on the specific teaching focus and learning criteria. The way time features in the interactions between participants provides insight into the invisible and visible pedagogies at play. Invisible literacy pedagogies are characterised by implicit time management, and sequencing and personalised learning progression with a focus on the child's inner development (cognitive, moral or emotional). For visible literacy pedagogies, time is regulated by explicit sequencing, management and progression through content.

Space. Broadly, the use and organisation of space is examined in the physical educational environment (indoor and out), and through a narrower lens in the structures and boundaries of the learning experiences (Bernstein, 1996). Since rules related to the use of space differ between contexts, and are often invisible (Kervin, Turbill & Harden-Thew, 2017), an examination of space provides insights into the impacts of visible and invisible pedagogies on learning. The weak classifications of invisible literacy pedagogies are often characterised by flexible spaces that allow freedom of movement and creativity. Conversely, the strongly classified spaces of visible pedagogies are educator controlled and fixed, such as a designated reading space.

Resources. Kervin et al., (2017) observe that much can be learned about the ways power and control feature in settings from an examination of who chooses the resources, the purpose for which they are chosen, and the ways they are used. Whilst the term 'resources' is broad and includes human, material and emotional, to name a few, in this paper, resources are the physical objects participants use as part of their literacy learning. In more invisible pedagogies, the children may select and contribute resources, but in more visible pedagogies, this remains the educator's role.

Methods

This paper reports data collected within a larger Australian longitudinal multiple-method study of the language and literacy experiences of approximately 200 children across educational settings. Following

Table 1. Overview of observation data in each setting

Setting	Total observations	Average duration of observations	Educator interviews	Number and age range of children	Educators in the space
CITY CLUSTER					
Preschool 1	5	90 minutes	2	Up to 25 (3–5 years)	4–5
Kindergarten 1	5	60 minutes	2	20 (4–5 years)	1
COASTAL CLUSTER					
Preschool 2	6	90 minutes	2	Up to 26 (3–5 years)	5–6
Kindergarten 2	3	120 minutes	2	20 (4–6 years)	1

ethics approval, participants were recruited from three clusters that represent diverse social and cultural backgrounds of a region in New South Wales, Australia. Each cluster comprises one prior-to-school setting, one primary and one high school. One cluster is located in the industry hub, another in the city's central business district, and the third in a southern coastal township. This paper draws data from schools located in the coastal and city clusters only. Sharing findings from just two of the three clusters allows us to account for similarities and differences between the clusters yet still convey depth in the findings.

Examined here are two foundational years of education – the year before formal school (referred to as preschool in New South Wales (NSW)) and the first year of formal schooling (referred to as Kindergarten in NSW). Preschool is voluntary in NSW and children typically attend at 4–5 years. NSW primary classrooms can see a difference of 18 months or more between the oldest and youngest student because children may enrol in kindergarten if they turn five before June 30, and must be enrolled by the year they turn six. The school year extends from the end of January to mid-December.

This paper responds to the following questions:

1. What literacy demands are evident during the act of reading aloud at the transition from preschool to kindergarten?
2. How do visible and invisible pedagogies shape the interactions, time structures, use of space and selection of resources for literacy learning in the reading experience?

Data reported in this paper were collected in the

preschool setting at the end of a school year, and in kindergarten commencing the following school year. Data were gathered as educator semi-structured interviews and open-ended non-participant observations in the preschool and kindergarten classrooms (summarised in Table 1).

Pre-observation interviews focused on educator beliefs and practices related to the organisation, resources and routines of the educational setting. These interviews included questions such as:

- What are some resources you draw on to plan your literacy lessons or support your literacy focus?
- What do you see as challenging aspects of literacy learning for your class this year?
- What is important for your students at the moment?

Also sought was information about the children, their perceived needs and available literacy opportunities. Post-observation interviews sought clarification of and elaboration about emerging points of interest, particularly about the roles of children and educators, movement of children and resources used. These interviews comprised questions such as:

- How did you feel about the teaching and learning we observed?
- What might you teach next?
- What do you want your students will know and be able to do by the end of this term?
- What do you see as most important for students to gain control of this year?

Data comprised field notes and video recordings of the literacy experiences observed. Tables 2 and 3 summarise the literacy experiences observed in the preschool

Table 2. Literacy experiences observed in the City and Coastal prior-to-school settings

Literacy experience	Examples	Frequency
Written and visual text creation	Writing centre activities print and digital	14
Painting/drawing	Work at the easel, at tables	14
Three dimensional text creation	Building, gluing	13
Socio-dramatic play	Home corner, office, dress ups	12
Fine motor tasks	Cutting, threading	12
Constructive play	Sand/dirt pit	11
Reading (child led)	Book browsing	11
Singing/storytelling	Singing familiar songs	9
Reading aloud	Teacher led experience	8
Puzzles, games with rules	Jigsaw, Ludo	7
Total experiences observed		111

Table 3. Literacy experiences observed in the City and Coastal Kindergartens

Literacy experience	Examples	Frequency
Independent word work	Writing/making words	15
Independent letter activities	Sorting, tracing, making, sounding	12
Guided reading and guided writing	Small group teacher led episodes	11
Teacher led word activities	Reading lists, flash cards	8
Teacher led letter activities	Letter ID, sorting	8
Writing and text creation	Independent work with print and image	7
Reading aloud (teacher led)	Teacher read to students	4
Reading (child led)	Students read alone or with peers	3
Role play	In response to a story of scenario	3
Total experiences observed		71

and kindergarten settings. Categories for identifying the literacy experiences were drawn from analysis of interview transcripts. As the preschool offered small group learning centres, many more experiences were offered than in the formalised large group primary school environment.

Early categorisation of these data revealed reading aloud by the teacher as a common experience across all settings, and so forms the focus of this paper.

Data analysis

Analyses of acts of reading a text aloud to children using Bernstein's (1975) theoretical frame of visible and invisible pedagogies affords an insight into the literacy demands for children in terms of the interactions, and the ways time, space and resources were used. Analysis

began with video footage and field notes of the classroom during the act of reading aloud. Instances of interactions between and among participants, the ways resources were selected and used, the ways time featured in defining the experience and the ways the spaces were used for literacy learning were coded into the analysis frame (see Figure 1). As understandings were developed, they were checked against educator interview transcripts to triangulate observations with the educators' stated aims. From this analysis, suitable excerpts were identified to be used as vignettes so observations within and between the settings could be made, hence providing insights into the literacy demands on the children across contexts. Given the bound nature of the research design and cohort, these findings are not presented as generalisable, instead they offer the reader

an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and beliefs about the nature of literacy learning for children as they transition through educational settings.

Findings to examine episodes of reading aloud

Following are four vignettes providing insights into reading aloud as captured in each setting. Barter and Renold (2000) define vignettes as short scenarios intended to provide concrete examples of observations that captured the ways ‘meanings, beliefs, judgements, actions are situationally positioned’ (p. 308). In this paper, vignettes afford both an understanding of each setting, and a way to talk about the literacy demands across those same settings. The first vignette features an educator reading aloud in the city preschool, and the second in the coastal preschool. Following those are vignettes first from the city kindergarten, and then the coastal kindergarten. Interpretive comment follows each vignette, drawing together observation and interview data, and offering some clarity to the first research question related to identifying the literacy demands for learners.

City preschool – an educator reads picture-books aloud

An educator invites interested children to join her for a story. She is outside in the play area on a park bench with a pile of picture-books and the children gathered around. Some books are familiar to the children, others are new. The educator selects a new story, introduces it and invites the children to examine predict the plot. The educator identifies the author saying, ‘and she made this story up so you could listen to it’.

The story reading begins with a small group of children sitting close to the educator. Other children join as the story progresses. Some are on a nearby climbing frame, others are close. Children walk in and out of the reading. Some run around the group, ride bikes, push wheeled toys, and call to each other. Those on the ground have their faces upturned to the story and the educator. Those on the climbing frame pause, also interested. The educator engages children in a conversation about the final scene.

Educator: Look at this beautiful picture! What can we see?
 Unison: Clouds
 Educator: A cloud, and seagulls. What else can we see?
 Child 1: [A child points] Stars
 Educator: Ahhh! Stars. What else can we see?
 ...

Child 2: [A child calls from behind the climbing frame] I can see a shooting star.
 Educator: A shooting star! Where? Come up and show me.
 Child 3: I’ll show you [leaps up and approaches the picture-book]
 ... The educator finishes the story and asks, ‘Will we have [read] another one?’

Interactions. The educator shared at interview an overt aim to teach children about books and stories. The educator’s control is evident in the selection of the text, in reading the text aloud and in choosing the events to be discussed. Within this stronger frame, however, the teacher created spaces for children to exercise their own power, evident in their making of suggestions for the choice of text, offering predictions and physically identifying details on the pages. The children demonstrated an understanding about their flexibility in accessing this experience. Observations revealed some children focused solely on the reading (e.g. sitting in front of the educator) while others combined listening with another activity (e.g. climbing on the outdoor equipment).

Time. This reading occurred during the two-hour morning session of a preschool day. It was not scheduled, but the educator explained at interview that it had occurred in response to the children’s interest. On this day, the children had flexibility to move between in and outdoor environments and between the activities on offer. The type and duration of the activities was open-ended, giving them discretion to spend as little or as long at the reading experience as they chose. The children extended the experience by accepting the educator’s offer to read more.

Space. The educator was observed to create a physical space within which to read. While not designated for reading, its low bench, soft covered ground and sun shelter lent itself to the participation in a range of ways, as a removed spectator, or a closer participant. This activity provides an example of the flexibility of movement between indoor and outdoor spaces and the nature of literate practices encompassing both. The physical location of the reading clearly indicates to the children that reading stories is an appropriate outside activity.

Resources. The range of colourful and rich stories on offer reflected a view of reading as the sharing of story. The mix of familiar and new texts was important to entice the children through both familiarity and curiosity. All texts shared in this read-aloud were selected by the educator.

Coastal preschool – an educator reads a Big Book (basal reader)

The educator sits outside under a shade sail, cross-legged on a small, upturned plastic tub, holding a big book. *The New Pony* by Usborne Children's Books tells the story of a neglected horse taken in by a family. The educator orientates the text as fiction, points to the top left of the page, announces, 'I'm going to read *The New Pony*,' and begins, pointing to the words as she reads. After each page, she draws the children's attention to the illustrations, pointing to characters and images that depict the setting. She reads on, no longer pointing to words, but to illustrations as they relate to the plot.

As the story unfolds, the educator invites the children to make connections between the image and text. The following transcript recounts an interaction between the educator and children.

- Educator: Look at the pony. Does she look like a happy pony?
 Children: [shake heads]
 Educator: No? What does she look like?
 Children: [Unison] Sad!
 Educator: [Nodding] A little bit sad. How do we know she looks sad?
 Children: [Child raises hand, educator nods, inviting him to speak.]
 One child: Because she's alone.
 Educator: [Repeats] Because she's alone? [Upward inflection implies only tentative agreement.] What's she doing with her head?
 Children: [No response]
 Educator: She's putting it down. Sometimes when we're sad we put our head down.
 One child: Maybe she's eating grass and that's why she has her head down because she's hungry.
 Educator: [Correcting] Maybe she's eating some grass to cheer herself up.

The educator continues to invite the children to explore the pony's feelings, and concludes by explaining that the pony will now be happy. This story is told over seven minutes. No child left the group and all remained cross legged in front of the book.

Interactions. These interactions reflect this educator's overt pedagogical frame, one she identified at interview as important 'so they can understand the story'. The educator asked a question, a child answered, and she evaluated it. The children were not observed interacting among themselves. An example of the strong framing is revealed when a child suggested the pony's lowered head indicated hunger rather than sadness, and the

educator realigned the child's response with the 'right' answer with a reference to comfort eating. The expectation appears to be that the children take on the educator's interpretation of the story.

Time structures. The educator selected a time for reading and invited the children along. All children remained for the entirety of the story. The educator determined the sequencing and pacing, both managerial in directing the read aloud, and pedagogical as she evaluated and recast children's responses. Her responses formed oral language models, and also made social comment related to moral and ethical behaviour.

Space. The educator created a reading space in the outdoor area where the children sat in rows on the mat, cross-legged and facing the educator. The book was balanced on the educator's lap and she moved it closer to the children as required. This use of space presented both flexible and less flexible learning environments. For example, children complied with institutionalised educational practices such as raising a hand to speak, something the educator had indicated would prepare them for school. But at the same time, they read in an area not specified for reading, and the educator was observed accepting spontaneous responses as well as those that complied with the hands up rule.

Resources. As a basal reader, *The New Pony* is designed for teaching structural and meaning making concepts. The educator's text selection seems to align with her intention to prepare the children for school, and perhaps positions this reading with the skills focus more commonly associated with the strong framing of institutionalised learning.

City kindergarten – a teacher reads a Big Book (basal reader)

The teacher sits on an upholstered chair in the reading area holding a big book, pink tiara and star topped wand. She directs the children to their places saying, 'You know this story, so you're going to help me read it'. It is a familiar text. The teacher reveals *In a dark, dark wood* by The Story Box, a spooky tale where a ghost jumps out.

Once the teacher wears the tiara, no one may speak or raise their hand, an established procedure. The teacher begins reading, using the wand to point to the print. She asks questions focused on comprehension and vocabulary, for example, 'What word describes your feelings when you saw the dark stairs?'. The teacher selects children with raised hands. They supply short answers including 'freaking out' and 'scared' with she repeats and evaluates. After some responses, she

directs, 'That's enough answers now, hands down.'

This process is repeated throughout the story. When gathering responses to the question, 'What word describes how you feel when you see a dark cupboard?', the teacher chooses a child who didn't have his hand up.

- Teacher: Benny, what's a word that tells us how you feel?
 Benny: [Extended pause] I didn't have my hand up
 Teacher: I know you didn't have your hand up, but I can still ask you!
 Benny: [Pause again] Scared?
 Teacher: Scared!

The teacher elicits dramatic freeze frame responses that express the feeling. She directs them to stand, strike a pose and resume their place. Each response is less than 1 minute. Despite being a well-known story, excitement builds towards the climax as the teacher has replaced the ghost in the box with a new object. In fact, it is a green rectangle, one of the two dimensional shapes she intends to use for the upcoming maths lesson.

Interactions. Interview transcripts indicating the preference for a strongly bound pedagogic purpose in this experience are supported by observations of the interactions. The teacher identified the lesson's goal as 'teaching comprehension and vocabulary'. Her pedagogic interactions appear carefully crafted to this focus. Managerial interactions bring the children close, allowing the teacher to observe and reach each child. The tiara is a visible cue for the rules and, as its only wearer, the teacher's power is absolute. Children are expected to respond when called upon and to understand the 'rules' of interaction, perhaps including that the teacher is allowed to break those rules and call on someone without their hand up!

Time structures. This reading experience operates within the visible pedagogic construct of the daily literacy session. However, its pace differs in its sense of urgency. The teacher controls the way time is spent. The children must come quickly to the floor, and respond to questions and drama tasks quickly. The teacher decides who will respond to questions, the quality of those responses and when the right number of responses have been shared.

Space. This classroom has a designated reading space bound by the distance the teacher feels is 'too far away from the book'. She explained that children are 'allocated specific spaces to sit', managerial in terms of expected behaviour and pedagogical in that readers

considered lower in ability sit closer to the text (and therefore the teacher). The teacher directs the use of the space, and instructions about how to sit and to refrain from touching others serve as reminders about the strict criteria for participation.

Resources. Specific resources are associated with this reading. The wand, tiara and easel are markers of the social expectations of the task. The basal reader indicates an overt focus on the reading process, and the fact that it is a familiar text positions its reading as something to be mastered within the strict criteria of learning to read.

Coastal kindergarten – a teacher reads a picture-book

Seated in a low upholstered chair in the reading corner, the teacher holds a picture-book close and invites the children to gather for the story, *Wombat Stew* (Vaughan & Lofts, 1984). He uses a turn and talk strategy where the children predict the plot and, without inviting further discussion, says, 'Let's read about this naughty dingo together'.

The teacher begins to read while the children continue to find preferred places to sit. At the end of each page, he pans the book over the group for an extended view. Responses to questions such as 'How do you think Wombat is feeling?' are shared with turn and talk partners, prompting them to consider their emotional and moral responses.

The story has a repeated chant, which the teacher has replicated in large font on the Interactive Whiteboard. The teacher leads the children in learning the chant, and then they do it alone as he calls on everyone to participate. The teacher also directs an analysis of letter-sound relationships. They begin matching sounds with symbols in /w/o/m/b/a/t/.

Teacher: We want to write 'wombat' [Articulates slowly, looks at the children sitting in silence]. Freya, what can you hear at the beginning?

Freya: Double u [The letter name]

Teacher: That's the name of the letter, not its sound. Andrew, what can you hear?

Andrew: /w/

Teacher: Correct. /w/ is the *sound* [Writes 'w' on the whiteboard]

These interactions continue until the children have articulated and the teacher recorded the selected words. They return to the story. The chant becomes louder as the suspense builds. Some children rise to their knees, while others scramble closer to the picture-book, anticipating Dingo's demise.

Interactions. Evident here is an overt frame for building the skills of reading embedded within a more implicit focus on emotional and moral development. While their teacher directed their interactions, he indicated at interview the desire for the children to ‘think creatively and share connections’, and so the criteria for success appeared to shift across the tasks. The children addressed the aesthetic elements of the story through their emotional connections. While these remained unmonitored, the teacher applied strict criteria for success when it came to item knowledge, something not mentioned during interview. Reading the chant together was observed to be socially supportive as the children experimented with creative expression. There was, however, no option to decline reading the chant aloud with the group.

Time structures. The reading experience operated during the visible pedagogic construct of the daily literacy session and the teacher directed the sequence and pace of the lesson. He was observed giving time to observe the illustrations, to make connections and to develop explicit knowledge about letters and sounds, but it is he who decided when to move on.

Space. The reading experience occurred in the classroom’s specialised reading space with the teacher on the reading chair. The children, while expected to attend, appeared to have some flexibility in deciding their proximity to the text, their teacher and peers. This proximity was observed to be fluid as the suspense in the story grew and the children clamoured closer.

Resources. The upholstered chair and reading space acted as markers to the bound nature of the process and expectations of task. The use of a quality text supported the teacher’s stated aim to engage the children in a rich story that could evoke creative thinking. And the whiteboard allowed all children to participate in the writing of specific words.

Discussion of the findings

This paper set out to respond to the research questions:

- What literacy demands are evident during the act of reading aloud at the transition from preschool to kindergarten?
- How do visible and invisible pedagogies shape the interactions, time structures, use of space and selection of resources for literacy learning in the reading experience?

As expected, the literacy demands during reading aloud experiences in each preschool and kindergarten featured similarities and differences as each educator

operated within the mandates and contexts of their setting. Extracted examples of practice and interview transcripts in this paper, analysed through the lens of interactions, time structures and use of space and resources, have not only demonstrated the types of demands on children, but now enable a theorisation of those experiences. Findings shared in this paper indicate the need for reflection about expectations placed on children as they transition from one setting to another, and the frame of visible and invisible pedagogies offers a starting point.

Visible pedagogies

In the city and coastal preschools, educators controlled the social base upon which the experiences occurred. Their intentions were clear as they determined the criteria for learning, sequence and pacing of the experience, and the ways learning is controlled. The children engage with the texts through educator-designed and led interactions. It is argued in the literature (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Rogers et al., 2016) that reading aloud offers opportunities for working within, about and beyond the text. But this paper argues that these connections may not be possible when educators’ decisions define children’s choice about their individual engagement with the text.

The preschool educators select resources and timetable the experiences within the daily morning session. Resource selection and use sends clear messages about what is valued within the context. While both preschool contexts provided a variety of picture-books, the educators controlled their selection and use. The literature identifies text selection as key to reading engagement (Johnston, 2016; McGee & Shickedanz, 2007). However, this paper contends that children’s engagement could be enriched if they, like their teacher, had some control over the selection and manipulation of resources themselves.

In the kindergarten reading, the overt frame and characterisation associated with visible pedagogies are evident. Each teacher controlled the resources, the communication, sequencing, pacing and criteria, sending strong messages about what it takes to be successful as a literacy learner. Interactions happened through the teachers, who worked to achieve their pedagogical aims. The role of the children was to respond to and comply with their teacher’s direction, potentially limiting opportunities for any negotiations of meaning (Clay, 1991; Stephen, 2010).

In both kindergarten classrooms the reading was timetabled into the morning literacy session. It occurred within a specialised reading space that housed the teachers’ preferred resources. No child in these

examples contributed physical resources to the space. The children were required to attend and remain in the space, and to use it as expected and directed by their teachers. The teachers worked hard to demonstrate the concepts being taught, and to apply the criteria for success. Fisher and colleagues (2004) identify the important role a teacher's style plays in literacy learning. However, it could be that adoption of such overt pedagogies limits opportunities for children to make choices about the ways they can express their own understanding and interpretation of the content. Furthermore, teacher questioning that seeks specific or 'correct' answers (Walsh & Hodge, 2016) restricts the possibilities for diversity and imagination in children's responses.

Invisible pedagogies

Invisible pedagogies will feature weaker frames and characterisation within which the teacher operates with apparently lower levels of power and control. Power over the child is implicit (Bernstein, 1975) as the educator creates experiences that appear to afford learners greater flexibility and autonomy.

Both preschool readings occurred in outside spaces with no specialised use. And, while the educators had selected the books for inclusion in the experience, the children were invited to make requests from the collection, or to engage with the texts in creative ways. The educators were not observed to direct the children about a particular place or way to listen. While the city preschool vignette provided clear example of the children's freedom in listening to the story, the coastal preschool was more school-like. However, neither educator insisted a child respond to questions, instead inviting interactions and responding to the children's talk.

While there was evidence of invisible pedagogies in both kindergarten readings, there is no doubt that much of the reading pedagogy was visible. What was less visible appeared to be managerial, and related to the social aspects of the institution. For example, evidenced in the vignettes was that the children were expected to know how the teacher wanted them to sit, to listen, to ask questions and to respond. There even seemed to be preferred answers for questions related to proving comprehension rather than a search for creative and innovative thinking or problem solving. The invisible pedagogies appeared to relate to the 'doing' of school rather than to learning to read.

Invisible pedagogies related to socialisation into schooling are potentially confusing for some children and supportive for others (Bernstein, 1996; Goouch, 2008). For those who attend preschools that adopt

school-like practices similar to some seen in the preschool examples, the unspoken 'rules' for being in the classroom are familiar and perhaps even supportive of a transition to the more formalised demands of primary school. However, for children who have come from preschools that are more closely aligned with the play-based theories of creativity and imagination, or indeed, for those who do not attend preschool at all, Stephen (2010) argues that invisible pedagogies may be unsupportive. Findings shared in this paper prompt us to ask, 'How does one comply with rules and meet the criteria for success if they are implied rather than stated? If they don't know about the rules until they've broken them?'

Concluding comments

Bernstein's theory of visible and invisible pedagogies as an analytic code – articulated through interactions, time structures, space and resources – reveals a set of complex pedagogies through which a child is expected to navigate and ultimately learn to read. The four vignettes represent the re-contextualisation of the single act of reading aloud across sites. In our study, children from the city and coastal clusters will transition from the demands and expectations of their preschool to the city and coastal kindergartens. In educational settings, children are generally not part of the design of learning experiences, nor are they privy to the different purposes teachers prioritise for each one. Yet, they are expected to comply, adapt and understand the overt and implied expectations in order to meet the seemingly ever-changing criteria for success.

Given Seven's (2010) findings about the challenging nature of transitions, and Schleppegrell's (2008) observations about the need for cumulative literacy learning experiences, there is much to consider in terms of the pedagogies of reading teaching and the ways children understand them. As educators, we must reflect on the ways our interactions, choices and expectations support and hinder a child's ability to participate. We must find ways to articulate to children the purposes, similarities and differences in the demands of different tasks. And we need a better understanding of the ways visible and invisible pedagogies both constrain and enable children's learning so that children can participate with greater agency and control as they develop the skills of reading.

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Jessica Mantei teaches and researches Language and Literacy in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Wollongong. Jessica's research interests focus on teacher pedagogies and on children as consumers and creators of text as they explore and respond to the messages they are exposed to and those they might convey in their own compositions. Jessica currently serves ALEA as State (NSW) Director.

Lisa Kervin researches in Language and Literacy at the University of Wollongong. Her research interests include: children's literacy practices, how children use technology and understand digital literacies and how teachers may be supported in using technology in classroom literacy experiences. Lisa has collaborative research partnerships with teachers and students in tertiary and primary classrooms and prior-to-school settings. Lisa has served in many ALEA roles and is the 2016 ALEA Medal Recipient.