

ORAL READING: The Silent Debate

Thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the relationship between the practice of reading out-loud and the teaching and learning of reading in the primary school. It argues that oral reading is a different practice from reading silently and that it contributes to the construction of a school reader in particular terms. Specifically it contributes to students' understanding of what it is to read and what it is to become a reader in school.

The study adopts a sociocultural view of reading (Freebody & Luke, 1990). Many past studies of oral reading used psychological approaches that ignored the historical, social, communicative and interactive contexts of oral reading practices. This thesis investigates oral reading from the perspectives of students, teachers and the researcher', using three different types of data gathering procedures: questionnaires, interviews and observations. It describes oral reading practices in terms of the pedagogies they maintain, the activities they build and the identities they construct.

The study found that many oral reading activities were not an effective means for either the teaching or assessment of reading. Rather, oral reading activities were characterised by limited explicit instruction, which served to maintain the controlled nature of schooling. The rules, procedures and interactions preceding, surrounding and subsuming the various activities served to construct students' views of themselves as readers and what it means to read in school in restricted terms.

The thesis has implications for reading pedagogy in that it presents a case for the reconsideration of these practices when teaching learner readers in schools.

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STATEMENT OF SOURCES DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or institution or tertiary education.

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ETHICS DECLARATION

This research was conducted within the guidelines of the "National Health and Medical Research Council Statement on Human Experimentation and supplementary notes."

The research received ethical clearance from the James Cook University Ethics Review Committee (Human Ethics Sub-committee) Approval Number H883.

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