

Micro-Paper 41: *Critical Literacy Read-Alouds*

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Defining the Term

Critical literacy read-alouds (CLRA) merge the common early education practice of a picturebook read-aloud with critical literacy. A CLRA is the experience of a picturebook read-aloud where readers are provoked to engage in critical conversations that emerge from asking critical questions based on a text being shared. They are unlike the traditional classroom read-aloud in that students play the roles of active participants/readers rather than passive listeners.

A more notable difference lies within the types of questions asked by the teacher before, during and after the read-aloud experience, which extend far beyond the who, what, where, when, and why of a text. Rather than limit children to the retelling of a text, the types of questions used during a CLRA encourage participants to explore and question the message of a text. These types of questions result in classroom conversations that take on tough topics such as stereotypes, racism, inequality, distortion of reality and hope.

Within an early education classroom CLRAs provide a space for teachers and students to collaboratively explore and develop a critical literacy perspective towards texts. Furthermore, this particular read-aloud strategy becomes a springboard for children to begin discovering the relationship between the word and the world. Although CLRAs are initially designed and led by a teacher, children's experiences and critical literacy development that grow from them will eventually transfer over into their future individual reading experiences.

Connecting it to LSLP

LSLP researchers have been exploring children's literacies in the P-5 context since 2015. The work in

this area has predominantly covered children's personal literacies. As part of this line of inquiry, CLRA contribute to the understanding of the various ways in which children express and acquire what they feel and know about their world.

The concept of CLRA will allow LSLP to extend its research in the P-5 area as it offers a new stage to explore children's personal literacies. CLRA also creates new opportunities to investigate the uses, benefits and practices of critical literacy inclusion within early childhood classrooms.

Expanding Second Language Research

Critical literacy has found its place in the field of second language research. However, there are gaps in the field when it comes to the unique yet ever-growing context of English learners in an early childhood classroom.

Further exploration on critical literacy read-alouds may help address the gaps in the field related to children's literacies in second languages. In addition, we believe that expanding our understanding of CLRA as a strategy may contribute to the development children's literacies as English language learners and their growth as critical readers and citizens of the world.

References

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