

We taught them about reading but what did they learn? A UAE Case



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Outline of Presentation



- The study: issues, methodology, analysis
- Findings: 3 key themes
- Pedagogical and conceptual implications for other contexts
- Limitations and idiosyncrasies
- What did they learn?

The study: issues, methodology, analysis



Key components of the study 

Contextualized	Realistic	Authentic	Relevant
Considerate of previous learning	Continually developing curriculum	Constructivist	Systematic
Practical	Modeled	Interactive	

Theoretical Background of the Research: Three issues 

- **Issue 1:** Effective Initial Language Teacher Education
- **Issue 2:** Impact of Teacher Education Delivery Approaches upon Student Teacher Practices
- **Issue 3:** The Power of Prior Reading Experiences

Research Focus 

Perceived and observed impact of reforming:

- *Curriculum*
- *Delivery approaches...of a revised teacher education reading methodology course*

...on knowledge, reading teaching practices and prior beliefs of Emirati student teachers

Participants 

Key participants:

- An intact group of 16 Year Two B.Ed. Emirati women at college x
- Researcher/key teacher educator at college x

Secondary participants:

- 79 B.Ed. students from five other colleges across the Emirates
- Seven teacher educators

Tools, contexts, timeframe and phases for the study 

- **Tools:** Focus groups, documentation, online discussions, observations
- **Contexts:** College classroom, government school classroom
- **Timeframe:** 6 months
- **Phases:** Intervention, application, interpretation

Data Analysis – a Hybrid Approach 

- **Deductive approach**
(Crabtree and Miller, 1999)
- **Inductive approach + discourse analysis**
(Boyatzis, 1998)
- **'Cut and paste' technique**
(Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990)
- **Critical incident technique (CIT)**
- **Colour coding**

Findings: 3 Key Themes



Findings: 3 key themes



1. Behaviourist vs constructivist reading paradigm
2. Transformational teacher education pedagogy
3. Becoming 'agents of change' through reconstructing conceptions of practice

1. Behaviourist vs Constructivist reading paradigm



Traditional Reading Paradigm	Progressive College Reading Paradigm
Teacher-centered	Student-centered
Behaviourist bottom up approaches e.g. Round Robin Reading using textbook reading and the alphabetic approach	Using a variety of approaches (constructivist + behaviourist) e.g. shared reading, reading aloud, reader's theater, phonics
Accuracy	Fluency (Reading with intonation, focus on meaning)
Passive	Active—share the reading, role play, include props and instruments

1. Behaviourist vs Constructivist reading paradigm



Traditional Reading Paradigm	Progressive College Reading Paradigm
Listen, repeat and memorize	Develop comprehension, questioning skills, criticality and reflection
Bare walls	Print and literacy rich environment
Whole class choral reading	Differentiated reading and scaffolding
Teach for exams—summative	Teach to learn-formative assessments
Drilling of reading textbook	Developing a love of reading/reading for pleasure/authentic texts

2. Transformational teacher education pedagogy



Systematic microteaching

- Links **theory to practice**
- Develops **pro-activity, confidence, resourcefulness, reflection and improvisation**
- **Minimizes the risk of failure** in the EFL primary classroom
- An alternation between school and college, taught **Theory (T) and (t)**

2. Transformational teacher education pedagogy



Explicit modelling of EFL reading strategies

- Shared Reading and Reading Aloud
- Reader's Theatre
- Electronic books
- Vodcasts
- Intonation and Predictive Questions
- Musical approaches to reading
- **Implicit modelling of positive attitudes** towards reading
- Connections between **college modelling** of reading strategies and **best practices in private English schools**

2. Transformational teacher education pedagogy



Problem-based learning

- **Challenged and motivated** student teachers' beyond what was just out of their reach
- **Discussed, authored and documented example cases** within the context of teaching reading in an EFL Emirati environment
- Produced their **own language of practice**
- Developed **collaboration and reflection on contextualized teaching**

3. Agents of change



Becoming a versatile foreign language reading teacher that enacts pedagogic change, may be more challenging than expected

Emerging Styles of Teaching



1. Developing Reading Teachers

- **Interactive styles**
- Promoted constructivist approaches
- Took **some risks**, sometimes adapting lesson plans
- **Compartmentalized learning** from year to year

Emerging Styles of Teaching 

2. Reluctant Reading Teachers

- **Behaviourist styles**
- Promoted constructivist approaches
- Took **few risks**
- Perceived teacher educator performance modelling as an exclusive way of teaching
- **Unconsciously, past experiences are the primary influence on teaching styles, when observed**

Conflicting beliefs and practices for Group 2 

- The reluctant reading teachers **aspired to become agents of change** and constructivist reading teachers
- The **realities** of an EFL Emirati class
- Fall back into **old patterns** of behaviourist learning experiences
- **The power of prior learning - the 'apprenticeship of observation'**

(Lortie, 1975; Clarke, 2007)

Emerging Styles of Teaching 

3. Confident Reading Teachers

- **Eclectic styles** (both interactive and behaviourist)
- Promoted a **combination of approaches**
- **Assimilated/accommodated** past and present influences
- **Took many risks, adapted lesson plans, were versatile, accommodated knowledge and skills**
- Developed a **personal orientation to teaching**
- **Aware of the artificiality and limitations** of situated college practices.
- **Raised challenges** they may face when entering the EFL Emirati classroom environment

Student A: In my Classroom...



"In my classroom, I will try to implement several reading approaches that help EFL to develop their reading skills like Reading Aloud, Shared Reading and Reader's Theatre, either at the end of the day or at the beginning of the day. I want to encourage students to love reading, to motivate and encourage them to participate in discussions. I want to take good points from each method, including behaviourist ones"

(ODP, No. 49, 2008)

Student A: Observational Analysis



"Combining her previous learning experiences as a learner with college experiences, her reading teaching style included a combination of behaviourist and interactive methods...depending on her aim at that particular time in the lesson... She used the best of both methods. She set up a temporary reading corner and created a literacy-rich and print-rich environment, while remaining enthusiastic and focused throughout the placement... Student A has excellent potential as a future EFL student teacher."

(College X, TPCMR: Confident Student teacher, 2008b)

Student B: In my Classroom...



" I think I will use the reading strategies promoted in college in UAE classrooms because this is the right way to teach reading. I will forget about the traditional way because I didn't learn that much from it... it forced us to read"

(FGD, Group 3: 2008, p.9).

Student B: Observational Analysis



“Student B’s style of teaching is traditional and teacher-centred. She uses lots of repetition and focuses on accuracy of reading. She has good classroom control. However, she needs to work on eliciting sentence level answers from students by giving them time to answer, developing her own questioning techniques to include more open-ended questions and engaging students in the story itself.”

(College X, TPCMR, Reluctant Student teacher, 2008b)

Pedagogical Implications for other contexts



Pedagogical Implications for other contexts



- Co-construct understanding of content and build **concrete links between reading theory and practice**
- Adopt a **balanced pedagogical approach** with EFL student teachers, using both constructivist and behaviourist approaches
- Engage in **curriculum review** processes
- **Teach by example** - be a model of good practice
- Prepare students for the **practical realities** of an EFL environment
- Engage in **alternations of practice with theory**

...Pedagogical Implications for other contexts



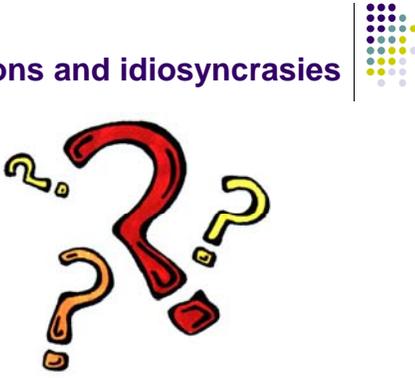
- Connect to **previous learning** experiences
- Use the **'Think Aloud'** technique
- Engage in **paired microteaching**
- Use **contextually appropriate materials**
- Engage in **'what if...?' Scenarios (PBL)**
- Scaffold experiences through **assisted performance, guided participation and collaboration**
- Make college learning **realistic, contextualized and meaningful**

Conceptual Implications



- Developing in student teachers, **an awareness of the influence of prior beliefs/experiences** upon their developing teaching styles
- **The formation of teaching styles as a dynamic process of identity development** involving both past and present influences
- **Paradigm shifts may happen for only some student teachers**, regardless of quality of delivery and pedagogical approaches used.
- Developing a **culturally responsive context for learning.**

Limitations and idiosyncrasies



Limitations



- **Over-scaffolding, over-assisting performance and over-guiding participation**
- Data collection over a **six month period** in Year Two of a four year degree
- The influence of **mentor school teachers' teaching practices** on student teachers' developing reading styles has not been as strongly attended

Idiosyncrasies



- Participants as **first nationals** to become professionally qualified English teachers
- **Widespread reform** of their country's educational system
- The **small numbers** of student teachers involved
- Relatively **few constraints** on innovation due to a new programme

We taught them about reading teaching but what did they learn?



We taught them about reading teaching but what did they learn?



- Diversity of EFL reading approaches
- Importance of explicit/implicit modelling
- Improvise as a teacher
- Challenge the status quo and solve problems
- Importance of a print and literacy-rich environment
- Importance of addressing previous learning experiences

We taught them about reading teaching but what did they learn?



- Importance of realistic, contextualized teaching
- Teaching does not always equal learning
- Teach for learning
- Develop their own styles of reading teaching
- Assimilate past and present influences
- Agents of change or implementers of the curriculum?

Conclusion



Contact



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