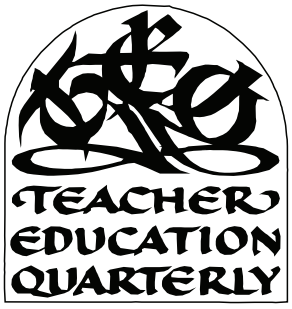


# What Characterizes Unfulfilled Case Discussions?

## Particularity-Based and Norm-Based Readings of Pedagogical Decision Making During Professional Development Dialogue

**Maren Aukerman**

## Abstract

This study examined how teachers read cases in a professional development academy for reading teachers. It drew on reading theory, particularly Tierney and Pearson's (1981) work on *text-based* and *reader-based* readings of traditional print-based text, to analyze conversations about cases where a specific focus on pedagogical decision-making got lost. Using two vignettes, the article traces how such unfulfilled case discussions were discursively produced. In the first instance, the shift away from analysis of pedagogical decision making developed when participants moved toward a *particularity-based reading* of the case, emphasizing its uniqueness in ways that made subsequent analysis appear irrelevant. In the second instance, the shift emerged from a *norm-based reading,* in which dialogue about overarching pedagogical beliefs submerged talk about local, specific aspects of the pedagogical decision making in the case at hand. Notably, such readings appeared to be collaboratively constructed, and professional developers often participated

Maren Aukerman is an assistant professor in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Email address is: maren.aukerman@ucalgary.ca
© 2018 by Caddo Gap Press

in the shift toward particularity-based and norm-based readings. The article closes by proposing ways in which professional developers might be respectful of and responsive to particularity-based and norm-based readings that appear within professional development conversations about cases but also draw teacher attention to the specifics of pedagogical decision making in the cases discussed.

## Introduction

> A case is a partial, historical, clinical study of a situation. . . . It provides data—substantive and process—essential to an analysis of a specific situation, for the framing of alternative action programs, and for their implementation recognizing the complexity and ambiguity of the practical world. (Christensen & Hansen, 1987, p. 27)

Cases, especially those that make use of audiovisual case data, are increasingly a part of the professional development landscape (e.g., Hughes, Packard, & Pearson, 2000; Koehler, 2002; Merseth, 1996), particularly because they have the potential to stimulate analysis of specifics within a teaching event. Yet, their initial promise has not always borne fruit; thoughtfully selected cases have not necessarily fostered change in pedagogical decision making (Moje, Remillard, Southerland, & Wade, 1999). If teacher learning through cases has a role to play in fostering substantive teacher learning, then it is imperative for teacher educators and professional developers to examine not only where such cases have served their purposes well but also when and how they might fall short of their promise.

This study considered the use of cases in a summer professional development academy for reading teachers. In this academy, each teacher tutored a middle school student in reading, and teachers shared aspects of their teaching practice primarily through telling stories (self-reported audio cases) and through sharing video clips (audiovisual cases) of this one-on-one instruction; other teachers subsequently reflected on these cases and discussed them as a group. The aim—from the perspective of the professional developers—was to have these discussions focus on the specifics of the pedagogical decision making of the teacher in the case and the ways in which that pedagogical decision making might have shaped what the student did during the tutoring session. Analyzing the specifics of pedagogical decision making in a case shows promise as a means of transforming teacher practice (Merseth, 1996), and this professional development academy aimed to tap in to that promise.

Although some of the resulting case discussions did take on this analytic character, not all of them did: In some discussions, teachers ended up talking in ways that were less focused on the pedagogical decision making. I call these unfulfilled case discussions: Though they may have served other purposes, they did not illuminate the case teacher's pedagogical decision making nor the potential effects of that decision making on the student in the actual case, thus not fulfilling the original intent of the case discussion (from the perspective of the professional developers).

Although the task of examining the pedagogical decision making in cases might be productively analyzed from multiple different perspectives, one potentially useful framework is conceptualizing the case as a kind of text—albeit a text that takes on audio or audiovisual form. A text, after all, can be thought of something that one interprets and makes sense of in light of one's own prior knowledge and preferred ways of reading (Kress, 1997; Rumelhart, 1981). When a teaching case is viewed this way, as a case text, then the task of thinking about the case (whether individually or as a group in a professional development context) becomes an act of reading—of making sense of this case text. Treating case discussions as case-text discussions opens up the possibility that insights from the field of reading might illuminate what teachers are doing as they make sense of case texts.

In this study, I examine two vignettes to answer the question, How did these conversations move away from close analysis of local pedagogical decision making? In doing so, I draw on several ideas from reading theory and adapt these concepts to apply to the work teachers do in analyzing case texts. Specifically, I build on the work of Tierney and Pearson (1981), who specified several ways in which there is sometimes a mismatch between the expectations of a teacher and a student's orientation toward the text. I argue that there may be an analogous mismatch in some case-text discussions between the expectations of a professional developer and the teacher's orientation toward the case text, a mismatch that may not be fully recognized by the professional developers. I propose that, if professional developers can identify and understand the features of that mismatch, it may be possible for professional developers to better honor existing teacher readings of case texts while inviting them to consider additional ones.

## Teaching Cases as Case Texts

Several researchers have noted that teaching cases used to foster teacher learning can function as texts; they may be interpreted and discussed just as traditional print is read (Bliss & Reynolds, 2004; Hess, 2004). In keeping with understandings of the reading process drawn from schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Rumelhart, 1981) and transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 1978; Smagorinsky, 2001), Bliss and Reynolds (2004) have pointed out that cases are not autonomous messages (Olson, 1977), passively absorbed; rather, observer-readers draw on their own schemata (Rumelhart, 1981) and prior experience to make sense of them.

Yet, beyond the initial, broad insight that teachers apply prior experiences to read text, there has been little effort to bring specific insights from the field of reading into the field of teacher learning. If readers' textual sense making is directly analogous to how teachers make sense of case texts, then the field of professional development must look beyond just whether teachers are reading case texts to consider how those readings take place using insights from what reading researchers have studied over the past 50 years. The present work can by no means exhaustively address this question,

but I choose to focus on two insights from reading research and theory and discuss how I see these potentially illuminating the work of teachers reading case texts:

> 1. Texts never contain a single inherent meaning to be extracted; rather, readers interpret them to reach often different, but legitimate, conclusions about textual meaning (Aukerman, 2013; Rosenblatt, 1978). If teachers are not simply extracting a single "true" meaning from a case text, then perhaps the case text should not be treated as though there is just one available meaning; perhaps professional developers would do well to recognize up front that the same case text will engender differing readings, and this variation in meaning making should be seen as a resource rather than a liability.
>
> 2. Readers bring their own prior understandings, strategies, and motivations to reading; prior understanding, strategies, and motivations that particular readers bring to reading may shape the meanings they produce; teachers who are unaware of the prior understandings, strategies, and motivations of their students may misjudge their students and fail to value legitimate readings (cf. Hull & Rose, 1990; Lewis, 1993). Where teachers and professional educators do not share similar prior understandings, reading strategies, and motivations, their readings of case texts are likely to differ and may interrupt the intended flow of the case-based activity. Thus a program that demands the reading of a video clip as "exemplary practice" (Kinzer & Risko, 1998; Shrader et al., 2003; Teale, Leu, Labbo, & Kinzer, 2002) may produce "failed" readings in observer-readers who deny the "exemplary" nature of what they are observing (Seago, 2004; Sheard, Harrison, & Pead, 2004). Although these resistant readings are legitimate and may even further teachers' professional knowledge, they may not feel successful to professional developers.

I believe, then, that close examination of how teachers approach cases may depend on recognition of how the teachers are expected to read cases, in tandem with a look at what teachers actually do as they read. In the project I examined, the professional developers sought to structure cases so that teachers would read pedagogical decision making, using interactional evidence to analyze the teacher's decision making, much as is done in Reading Recovery behind-the-glass sessions (Pinnell, 1991). And, much of the time, the data indicated that teachers were doing so. However, there were instances where the conversation seemed unfulfilled, from my perspective, where the reading(s) of the case text did not function to analyze decision making. In this study, I asked, What characterized the nature of the case-text reading undertaken by teachers and/or professional developers during those times when the discussion did not fulfill the goal of analyzing specific teacher decision making?

## Method

The Reading Teaching Academy (RTA—a pseudonym, as are participant names) took place in a small-town region in the western United States. The program brought a cohort of teachers through a course sequence that included two 6-week summer academies and two school-year courses. The first academy focused on the teaching

of early literacy, the second on teaching reading to adolescents. The study here is based on data collected from the adolescent reading academy, which consisted of three key components: (a) one-on-one literacy tutorials with middle school students; (b) discussions of teachers' tutorial concerns, course readings, and instruction they observed; and (c) case-text discussions, usually centered around video of a participating teacher's tutorial lesson or a self-reported incident shared by a teacher.

### *Participants*

There were three academy instructors: Seth, a teacher of Puerto Rican heritage from a different school district with 23 years of teaching experience, and two university-affiliated European American instructors, including Joey and me.

The academy was open to all teachers in the district who chose to participate, and 14 teachers enrolled. Of the 13 for whom data were collected (one teacher declined participation in the study), all were women; one identified as Latina, one as South American, and the rest as European American. (To preserve participant confidentiality, I do not report individual teacher ethnicity.) During the regular school year, nine of the participants taught elementary school, three taught middle school, and one was a substitute teacher. There were two early career teachers (2–4 years teaching), five mid-career teachers (7–12 years of experience), and six veteran teachers (18–27 years of experience); one teacher did not report her number of years teaching.

Each teacher worked one-on-one with a middle school student who was attending summer school at the school location where the academy took place. These students were pulled from regular summer school classes; all assessed as below grade level on the Qualitative Reading Inventory–II (Leslie & Caldwell, 1995) administered at the beginning of the summer. Two Latino students, Alfredo (Grade 5) and Roberto (Grade 7), were discussed in the case texts discussed in this analysis; both were native Spanish speakers who were learning English as an additional language.

Table 1 provides an overview of the professional developers, teachers, and students who appear in the vignettes analyzed here.

### *Program Orientation: Hypothesizing as a Strategy Focus*

Seth, Joey, and I were explicit with the teachers about our beliefs: We argued for the value of open-ended forms of questioning, avoiding evaluation of student responses, and of allowing children to develop their own lines of reasoning even when they were not fully consonant with textual understandings an adult reader might have. We also began the summer by structuring our course work around classic domains of comprehension strategy instruction (cf. Duke & Pearson, 2002). But as the first few weeks of instruction unfolded, we realized that this comprehension strategy instruction could be at odds with the more student-centered pedagogy we were proposing.

And so, 3 weeks into the program, the program instructors worked to articulate a new strategy focus, one that centered more on the learner: formulating, extending,

and revising hypotheses. We brought the teachers together to talk for the first time about what came to be referred to as the "new" strategy focus, and the next day, we conducted a video observation session of a lesson where one of the professional developers (Seth) used this unusual strategy focus as he read with a summer school student. The teachers expressed both strong attraction and deep discomfort vis-à-vis the "new" strategy focus; many expressed open ambivalence. This new strategy focus, and the teachers' ambivalence, was central to the two vignettes described here.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Sixteen discussions among the teachers, including 10 video observation sessions, were recorded and indexed; the sections selected for microanalysis were transcribed in full. In multiple passes through these data, I looked for places where the conversation about multimodal cases veered away from the purposes of analyzing pedagogical decision making. Operating from within the tradition of teacher research (Ballenger, 1992; Fecho, Commeyras, Bauer, & Font, 2000; Lewis, 1993), I used my professional developer perspective as an analytic lens through which to identify the moments that, to me, felt unfulfilled in their potential for the discussion about the case text to be observation based in ways that illuminate teacher decision making and its potential impact on students. I conducted further inductive analysis (Strauss, 1987) to arrive at two major coding categories (particularity-based and norm-based readings of the cases) described in the findings section; nearly all unfulfilled case discussions I identified were characterized by one or the other, and I chose a conversation representative of each for further microanalysis.

I put together a topical time line of both transcripts to identify what topics emerged, the length of time devoted to each, and whether and how each discussed topic indexed

**Table 1**
***Participant Overview***

| *Role* | *Participant (pseudonym)* | *Years teaching* |
|---|---|---|
| Professional developer | Seth | – |
| | Joey | – |
| | [Researcher] | – |
| Elementary teacher | Pam | 23 |
| | Trish | 24 |
| | Hilary | 27 |
| | Shelley | 4 |
| | Terri | 18 |
| Middle school teacher | Jo | 2 |
| | Eliza | 8 |
| | Melanie | not provided |
| Student | Alfredo | – |
| | Roberto | – |

particular pedagogical decisions made by the case-text teacher. I noted how many transcript lines occurred between each major topic shift and represented these by merging the number of cells necessary to represent the length of time on a topic. I used this analysis as a systematic way of getting at when pedagogical decision making became salient. Upon confirming that there were substantive shifts away from discussion of pedagogical decision making, I returned to a holistic analysis of each vignette to examine how this shift was discursively initiated and sustained by discussion participants.

## Overview of Cases

The two cases discussed can be summarized as follows:

1. *The meaning of snorkeling case* was a self-reported audio case shared by Trish: Trish's student, Roberto, had struggled over the meaning of the word "snorkeling" and had raised a question (unprompted by Trish) about what the word might mean. Trish did not tell him and, after he initially articulated a faulty hypothesis about the meaning—he thought it might mean a boat bobbing up and down—he read further and said, "Oh, I think it's when they go in the water and look at fish." Trish herself did not step in to evaluate either claim, even when Roberto asked, "Am I right?" I asked her to share the case because I felt it pointed to the kind of hypothesizing possible when the teacher withheld evaluation.

2. *The teacher expressing confusion case* was an audiovisual case that documented a lesson one of the professional developers (Seth) undertook with a fifth grader, Alfredo. Seth often told Alfredo that he himself found aspects of the text difficult to understand or confusing and then asked Alfredo to explain what he thought was going on. Alfredo shared many ideas and revised his hypotheses over the course of the lesson in response to more textual information. We (the professional developers) thought the case text offered teachers the chance to see how, without being directive in asking a student to adopt a particular interpretive technique (e.g., a traditional strategy focus), the student could explore his hypotheses in a meaningful way. We stopped the video after 5- to 10-minute segments for discussion.

## Findings

### *Discussing the Meaning of Snorkeling Case: Shift Into Particularity-Based Reading*

I asked Trish to share the snorkeling example, which she had shared with me at an earlier point in the day, because I wanted her story to help other teachers be able to visualize the kind of student thinking possible when teachers withheld evaluation. After she shared the basic chronology, I jumped in to articulate what I thought was going on:

> So you've got this student, and he's making a hypothesis. And Trish as a teacher made a decision at that point to not go the route of telling him what the word was.

> And in fact actually she didn't even go, I mean, I might have been tempted to go to, "Well, what do you think?" Which, for Roberto, that apparently wasn't necessary. He simply gave his own hypothesis. Um, and basically, at that point, there were some interesting things going on in terms of him reading on, and revising his hypotheses on what he was reading.

In how I recounted and summed up the story, I was, in part, indexing pedagogical norms about what I considered to be "good teaching." Trish, in response, did so as well, adding,

> But he [Roberto] continues to read, he does his own retell out loud in the order of events, and then what was really interesting, it's the most expression I've ever heard him use, in any time of talking. And then he continues and he says, "So snorkeling is like going underwater and seeing the fish and everything." And I've got to tell you, I haven't said one word to him.

However, the two of us were also arguing that Trish had made a series of potentially generative pedagogical decisions when she chose to step back from a more evaluative stance. Take, for example, my statement that referred to a particular decision Trish had made: "In fact actually she didn't even, she didn't even go, I mean, I might have been tempted to go to, 'Well, what do you think?' Which, for Roberto, that apparently wasn't necessary." I was explicitly acknowledging another tempting pedagogical course of action and proposing that—in this case, with this particular student—such a move was superfluous because Roberto's subsequent participation indicated that he could do without such questions.

**Text-based and particularity-based readings**. But the focus at this level of specificity was interrupted by Hilary:

> *HILARY*: The whole point is, if the kids were doing this on their own we wouldn't be doing this.
>
> *JOEY*: Um hm.
>
> *HILARY*: So, it's not like this is something that's going to happen on a regular basis, that's the whole point!
>
> *TERRI*: That's why we're here. [She laughs.]
>
> *HILARY*: That's why we're here!

Hilary spoke up, not to evaluate the pedagogical decision Trish had made, nor even to question the pedagogical norms we were indexing, but to question the relevance of the specific example. No longer was the talk about what had happened between Roberto and Trish. The subject had shifted to the notably unspecific "the kids" and why we (collectively) were doing this (tutoring).

In Hilary and Terri's view, the success of the episode apparently had much more to do with situational factors (Roberto being a uniquely metacognitive child, for example) than with the enactment of pedagogical decisions, as described. In

short, Hilary neither questioned nor endorsed Trish's pedagogical decisions; instead, she put forward a position that implicitly denied them as something to be analyzed at all. This may have stemmed from how the event was presented; because Trish was the only one who had been present, Hilary and the other participants in the conversation did not have as much access to the events described as they might have needed to engage in an analysis that would add anything to what had already been said (cf. Little, 2001).

In any event, Hilary gave an evaluation of this event that was too particularity based to undertake the kind of reading that I had hoped. In developing this descriptive term, I am explicitly drawing an analogy to a related phenomenon that has been described in theories of text comprehension, something Tierney and Pearson (1981) referred to as an approach to reading that is too text based. In their view, a reader may engage in a given reading task in a manner that is "too text-based for the text and purposes for reading," for example, if they "perceive the task of reading to be detached from self and tied to a text" (p. 508). Table 2 provides a fuller comparison.

**Continuing the shift away from the case**. After Hilary made this forceful particularity-based statement, Trish tried to wrest the conversation back to the case she was describing by bringing up other details, but one of the professional developers (Joey) stepped in and made an assertion as broad and atemporal as Hilary's assertion had been: "We are weighing in. We are manipulating the situation; we are engineering the situation, the approach. We're not just sort of sitting outside."

**Table 2**
***Readings That Are Too Text Based or Too Particularity Based***

| *Approach to reading* | *Type of text* | *How are textual claims made?* | *What is not laid open for analysis or discussion?* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Too text based | Print-based text | Made primarily in relation to things directly stated in the text | • Unstated relations between things within the text<br>• Relations between the text and what the reader knows and believes about the world |
| Too particularity based | Case text | Made primarily in relation to the "unique" features of the student(s), the teacher, or the setting | • Relations among or interactions between participants and how these figure in the construction of the context<br>• Relations between the particularity in the event and the reader's sense of pedagogical norms |

At this point, I stepped in to explicitly acknowledge Hilary's position. But, like Joey and Hilary, I was no longer focused on suggesting any kind of an analysis about Trish's pedagogical decision making: "I'm hearing a couple people say, My kid couldn't do that. Basically that's what I'm hearing a couple people in this conversation say—My kid probably couldn't do that." As a result, any analysis of the pedagogical decision making was closed down; after the claim was made that the situation presented was unique, it no longer functioned as pedagogical decision making to be analyzed. The next teacher who spoke, Jo, spoke of her own student, positing, "My kid, I just want to say that maybe she hasn't learned the dialogue style, you know."

Trish interrupted Jo's comment with an attempt to bring things back to specific aspects of her work with Roberto, but both Joey and I moved in to guide things toward what Jo was about to say about her student:

> *RESEARCHER, to Trish*: Let's come back to that.
>
> *JOEY*: Let's take a look at Jo's comment.

The professional developers asked Trish to table her example in part because she had interrupted Jo but also, at least in part, because we did not want to return to the specificities of her enactment of pedagogical decision making. This became even more apparent when Trish persevered directly inviting analysis of the pedagogical decision she had described (letting Roberto self-select a text that was relatively easy for him):

> *TRISH*: So I was curious about whether or not this level situation, enhanced, like you say, working from your knowns, if this gave him the power to feel like his own boss, because it was such comfortable reading.
>
> *RESEARCHER*: I think there can be a relationship. It totally depends on the student for that. I think the issue that was mentioned by a couple people over here is, you know, I don't know if my student has the tools at their disposal to be able, to be able to pull something like this off.

My response to Trish was a refusal to analyze her decision to let Roberto pick his own books at a relatively easy reading level for him; I instead made a generalized, vague claim that it "depends on the student." Just as Hilary's comment had done, the general language that I chose foreclosed the possibility of further conversation on the particular decision making that Trish had asked that we explore. Trish did not speak up again in the remaining 8 minutes of class. When RTA teachers—and instructors—invoked particularity-based reasoning, the result was that Trish's pedagogical decision making no longer remained the focus of the discussion.

### *Norm-Based Reading in the Teacher Expressing Confusion Case*

Just as the first case started out indexing particular pedagogical decisions,

things started that way in the case-text discussion of Seth's lesson with Alfredo. The teachers noted instances where Seth expressed confusion to Alfredo about what was going on in the text. Eliza was the first to do so:

> I like the way, um, Seth said, "I'm mixed up with what he's [the author of the text being read is] saying." Because I sort of sense that Alfredo was mixed up. He stopped several times. It seemed like he was trying to catch up with what the words might say and having trouble keeping track at this point in the story. But I felt like Seth gave him the chance to clarify for himself.

Eliza noted what Seth had done and interpreted it as a powerful pedagogical decision, supporting this conclusion with direct evidence from the observed interaction: that Alfredo appeared to have been "mixed up" and that he stopped several times as he was reading. At a later point in our conversation, though, when I asked if there were instances when Seth's language might have been unnecessarily "leading," Eliza wondered whether Seth might have done well to invite Alfredo to address *Alfredo's* possible confusion as well as putting forward his own confusion: "Well, the way that I see it [Seth's language] as leading is that Seth is continually referring to his own confusion. And he hasn't asked Alfredo where *his* confusion is." This led into a lengthy discussion (roughly 100 transcript lines) of how Seth might have gotten Alfredo to talk from his own vantage point about things that he found confusing. We explored an approach where Seth would have followed up his comment about his own confusion with a question asking Alfredo if he was also confused. The following comment by Trish gives a sense of this line of argument:

> Jo is saying that Seth could say, "Gosh, I'm so confused, are you confused?" Like, and then if he says no, well then you can so give this young man all this power. "Oh my gosh, that's so cool, you're not confused. Can you please help me?"

**Reader-based and norm-based readings**. After Trish had spoken, Pam called into question the notion that a teacher should refer to being confused:

> *PAM*: I personally am unwilling to play the role of "I'm confused" when I am not confused. I want to keep my credibility with my student across the board. [Hilary nods.] And if I play that game, I think that it's not, personally, comfortable for me.
>
> *HILARY*: It's not authentic.
>
> *PAM*: Because there are times, regularly, in our tutorials, when I truly am confused. And at those times, I say, "Let's go back over that," because I'm not following it or something. And it's, at that moment where I truly am confused, and I do want to have the option to admit that. But I'm not willing to say I am confused when I'm not, so I'd like some other prompts.

Pam's argument was based on an outcome that she presumed would follow from the kind of teaching Seth was undertaking: She felt that, if she played the part of being confused about the text during her teaching, this would cause her to

lose credibility with her student "across the board." But, in Pam's statement, not only was the outcome of such teaching hypothetical; the teaching situation was hypothetical as well. She did not refer either to Seth or to Alfredo, nor to a presumed outcome in *their* case. The case itself, and the discussion thereof, had indubitably triggered this strong response from Pam, but in her response to it, the local details of the case disappeared.

Again, Tierney and Pearson's (1981) ideas are helpful in thinking through Pam's analysis. They argue that readers who are *reader based* rely so much on what they already know (or believe they know) about the subject matter that they "assume that they know what is written. As a result, they often fail to recognize subtle but important text signals" (p. 508). The related phenomena in case-based readings are analyses that are too *norm based* for the purposes at hand. (Table 3 provides a comparison of readings that are too reader based or too norm based for a given set of purposes.) Pam was reading Seth's "playing the role of 'acting confused'" in a way that fully engaged her sense of pedagogical norms. Notably, she did not explore possible evidence that Seth might have been losing credibility with Alfredo, and so the pedagogical norms themselves, not the case particulars, became the text she "read" from the situation. I do not believe Pam's reading to be an invalid one. But it did shift attention away from the particularity of the pedagogical decision making observed.

**The shift away from the case particulars**. When Pam asked for "some other prompts" that she could use that would align better with her pedagogical norms, I followed her to a position that was also norm based: "I was going to say, what would be an alternative?"

**Table 3**
***Readings That Are Too Reader Based or Too Norm Based***

| *Approach to reading* | *Type of text* | *How are textual claims made?* | *What is not laid open for analysis or discussion?* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Too reader based | Print-based text | Made primarily in relation to what the reader would expect to find or have happen, in his or her frame of reference and background knowledge | Particularity of this individual text, especially where it might challenge or be inconsistent with expectations based on background knowledge |
| Too norm based | Case text | Made primarily in relation to what the teacher-reader would expect to find or have happen, on the basis of his or her frame of reference and sense of pedagogical norms | Particularity of the local pedagogical context, especially where it might challenge or be inconsistent with expectations based on pedagogical norms |

I posed a question related to what an alternative would be to the "role of playing 'I'm confused'"—not for Seth, but for Pam. I wanted to be respectful of Pam's concern. (In retrospect, I wonder if I might have invited Pam to use her pedagogical norms in the service of thinking through, closely, what had happened in *this* case.)

**Failed attempts to bring things back to the case**. In any event, Pam did not respond to my question but instead further articulated situations in which she felt it would be appropriate for her to tell the child she was confused, that is, when she genuinely *was*. Nor did Yolanda, the next teacher who spoke, address alternatives. But Yolanda did a much better job of bringing things back to Seth and Alfredo than I had done:

> If he [Seth] is in a modeling kind of mode, possibly he's challenging him [Alfredo] to think. Because he's modeling, I mean, he's talking about it, because Alfredo hasn't given him too much yet, and he [Seth] can't change it, I don't know whatever Seth said, if it really was true or not true, but, um, kind of, because he's trying in this partnership anyway, and then like, "These are my thoughts," and then maybe he may get into, when Alfredo is feeling a little more comfortable, to maybe try the idea [of asking Alfredo about his confusion]. Because Alfredo, right, he would kind of regurgitate something, okay, "It's right here, it says it right here." Maybe Alfredo is in a mode of, I'm just sort of supposed to answer.

Yolanda's statement drew on specific interactional evidence from what had taken place in the lesson in support of Seth making the pedagogical decision that he did. She argued that Seth was modeling a way of thinking about the text that would enable Alfredo to move beyond what Alfredo was currently doing. Yolanda felt that, through Seth positioning himself as a fellow reader confused by the text, he might be working up to a point where he could ask Alfredo to talk about his own confusions.

Yolanda's comment evoked the only claim that Pam made *about Seth* during the exchange: "If it was presented that he was modeling a strategy, then that would be different. 'I'm role-playing what a good reader does,' or something like that." Pam proposed that it would have been "different"—better—if Seth had said he was "role-playing" what readers do when they are confused instead of simply playing that role without saying so. Yolanda's position appeared to have invited Pam to return to the specific case of Seth. But Pam cited no evidence within her reply to Yolanda for her counterclaim. Again, this was an opportunity missed, by the program leadership—when Joey spoke, he restated Pam's case, but he did not ask her to elaborate on her reasons:

> *JOEY*: Seth chooses not to be specific. . . . You're thinking, what I'm hearing is that it's a bit of a contrivance. And that you, for example, wouldn't be comfortable doing that, because on some level it's not true. I mean, Seth really isn't confused in that particular case. It's a device.
>
> *PAM*: Um hm.

Despite this brief segment, in which Yolanda, Pam, and Joey all focused their attention on Seth's decision making, this emphasis on the case details did not last. Shelley, who spoke next, put forward a claim that not only supported the one Pam had made but also was similarly general:

> *SHELLEY*: Well, in response to what Pam was saying, I agree and I would like to add to that that I think that older kids, too, they are much less likely to believe that you are truly confused.
>
> *JOEY*: Buy into your shtick.
>
> *SHELLEY*: And will that come across as, you know, you actually trying to demean them, in a way. As a middle school student they may think that, and go, like, well, "Tshh, dumbass," you know.
>
> *JOEY*: "Dumbass, get it together."
>
> *SHELLEY*: But I was thinking about what Pam brought up, you know, what else could we say, and why couldn't you say, be very honest, you know, "I could see how this could be very confusing to someone," you know. Put it out there, just to see what the response would be, and you might get the response of, "Yeah, I'm kind of confused," if the student was. Or, "No, I don't think so," maybe, you know, they would work at it like this. And maybe that would bring out some answers. Because you get it, and you don't know if the kid is totally getting it, or you know that they're not, and you don't want to say, "You're not getting it."

Shelley's comment incorporated quite specific language, but it was not clear from her commentary that she was extrapolating what Alfredo would have done with these prompts, or if she was putting the hypothetical interaction out there in a more general way. Joey subsequently responded to Shelley with what I find the most instructionally deft move (on the part of an instructor) of the entire discussion, from the perspective of bringing things back to the case. Unfortunately, I promptly torpedoed the move:

> *JOEY*: Well I think that what we want to also look at is, all that said, is this particular approach working with this particular student at this particular time. As a general rule of thumb, you know, some great observations. And then, pulling back, and looking at this. Let's take a look at Seth's session through that lens.
>
> *RESEARCHER*: Just to piggyback on that for a moment. Um, I mean, it's certainly a ruse, and it's not necessarily the ruse to use with every child. I mean, different children you use different ruses with. And I think all of us have used ruses with kids before. I mean, when we get to the point and we say, "You know, something I do when I get to a tricky word is I slide my finger under it." I mean, come on!
>
> *JOEY*: When's the last time we did that? [Laughter]

Joey explicitly asked the group to focus directly on the events in the case. I did say I wanted to "piggyback" on that and began with a promising emphasis on not assuming that what was done in this case was "*the* ruse to use with every child."

Had I left things there, Joey's directive would have remained on the table. But I wanted to make a further point, arguing against Pam's claim that one should not use a ruse with children by positing that "all of us have used ruses with children before" (a rather facile generalization on my part). Of course, not only did my statement move in the opposite direction from Joey's, back into broad normative territory; it also did not address the presumed outcome with which Pam was concerned, of undermining credibility. Even when I wrapped up my argument, a few lines later, I did not address the issue of what happened within this lesson:

> What kind of credibility do we want? And that, I think, directly speaks to what you were talking about, Pam. Because, in terms of, if the kind of credibility that we want is, we want the kid to look at us as the expert, then this process ain't going to work. And that's fundamentally why Seth is, I think, taking the tack he's taking.

I was getting at the issue that I considered to be central: The approach Seth took by acting confused was a way of moving him out of the role of the "expert." But even though I was referencing Seth's reasoning, my position here was just as norm based as the one Pam had been putting forward: it was just coming from another direction. Pam was most concerned about maintaining credibility as a teacher; I was most concerned with displacing the teacher as primary textual authority. My statement was a direct attempt at exposing a difference in pedagogical norms that I believed existed between us: I thought that Pam's notion of teacher credibility might well have been in tension with the abdication of authority I thought of as central to the process we were advocating.

**Unrevealed pedagogical norms**. But my move to expose these perceived differences failed. Pam followed my comment by endorsing my stated pedagogical norm but suggesting other ways to get there:

> *PAM*: But is the only way to not establish ourselves as the expert is by, um . . .
>
> *RESEARCHER*: There may be other ways.
>
> *PAM*: I prefer straight communication. And I don't mean, straight doesn't necessarily mean me up, you down. But just a direct request, or something.

Pam suggested that she agreed that not establishing "ourselves as the expert" was something to work toward, just that it should be accomplished by using "a direct request, or something." This statement was her final contribution on the topic during this conversation; it indicated no shift in her position or her reasoning from where she started and no move toward analyzing anything specific to Seth's teaching.

Melanie, though, did subsequently move the conversation back to Seth's teaching, linking Pam's question to Seth's actual instructional decisions:

> *MELANIE*: I'm going to jump in here before we lose sight of the actual *question* that Pam was asking. Alternatives to saying, I'm confused. Now some of the ones that I have been writing down that Seth has been using. "I was wondering, could

> you explain that to me?" And he did, "I was wondering about." And I didn't write down what it was that Seth was wondering about. He also said, "I would have thought that the goldfish would swim away. It didn't. Can you show me what the goldfish did do." Another term was, um, "Where is this thing?" And the student said, "I'm not really sure." And Seth said, "Well, can you read on to help figure it out?" And then there was, Seth said, "I'm not really sure what that means." And Alfredo explained it. And that was right at the beginning. And Seth said, "Oh. I see." And, from my perspective, any of those suggestions are not me telling the student that I don't get it. It's more me asking the student to verify, "Well, this is what I think. Can you find that in the story for me?" So I don't necessarily feel that everything that Seth is doing is making the student think that Seth doesn't have a clue.
>
> *JOEY*: It's not such a shtick after all.
>
> *MELANIE*: Not from what I wrote down for the things that Seth has been saying.

Although Pam had asked for "some prompts that I [Pam] can use," Melanie interpreted the question differently and pulled up no less than seven specific examples of things that *Seth* had said to Alfredo. And she proposed a presumed outcome that stood in stark opposition to Pam's and was unambiguously specific to the case at hand: "So I don't necessarily feel that everything that Seth is doing is, is making the student think that Seth doesn't have a clue." Melanie (like Yolanda at an earlier point) did a far better job of rescuing the focus on the pedagogical decision making in the actual case text.

## Discussion

This study suggests two different ways in which case-text discussions might remain unfulfilled, at least in terms of their potential promise as a site for examining pedagogical decision making. On one hand, case-text discussions may remain unfulfilled when the reading of the case text is particularity based, that is, where those discussing it see the student, teacher, or situation as so unique that an analysis of the decision making is fruitless. Success or failure in terms of pedagogical objective is thus attributed not to the decision making displayed in the case text but to the particularities of the case text. A child who grasps a concept does so because he is smart, not because the teacher took steps to support him in grasping the concept. On the other hand, case-text discussions may also remain unfulfilled when the reading of the case text is norm based, that is, where overarching beliefs about teaching (goals, values, epistemologies) lead someone to accept or reject the pedagogical decision making within a case text without specific consideration of what actually happened within a case text.

Both of these kinds of readings are valid readings of case texts, and both may serve the larger goal of teacher learning. Indeed, it may be an important task of professional developers to honor the fact that the teachers with whom they work

have different preferred ways of reading—and of learning from what they read—in case texts. It may be that a broadening of what counts as fulfilled case discussion may be called for in some professional development settings, because surely the reading of the specifics of pedagogical decision making is not all that teachers might discuss and learn from, in a given case text.

That said, if case-text readings are consistently particularity based or norm based, there will likely be less attention to the specifics of pedagogical decision making; whatever teachers may learn under those circumstances, they may not be invited to think closely about the relationship between teacher decision making and what subsequently happens with students. In the cases described earlier, the professional developers often followed the teachers into dialogue about case particularities or pedagogical norms without explicitly acknowledging or signaling a shift, and frequently without appearing aware of that shift themselves.

I propose that, for professional developers interested in sharpening teachers' focus on pedagogical decision making, it might be important, first, to understand and be able to place teachers' case-text readings as representative of *particularity-based*, *observation-based*, or *norm-based* readings. Such recognition may enable professional developers to (a) decide whether particular case texts under discussion are appropriate for observation-based discussion, (b) overtly teach (New London Group, 1996) the differences between these kinds of readings and discuss with teachers the affordances of each, and (c) identify how and where their own language might model, participate in, or invite different kinds of readings as well as whether and to what extent such moves are productive.

Furthermore, I argue that the two ways described in this study in which a case-text conversation may remain unfulfilled each calls for different courses of action if the professional developer does wish to explore the pedagogical decision making in the case text with the teachers. Where a case-text discussion moves into particularity-based territory, drawing on specific evidence from the case or redirecting teachers' attention to what they are observing may accomplish little, because teachers voicing particularity-based concerns are attributing what is observed in the case text as contingent on factors *other* than the teacher's pedagogical decision making. Hilary, for example, was uninterested in examining the specific pedagogical decision making in the meaning of snorkeling example because she attributed the outcome *not* to Trish's pedagogical decision making but to immutable factors unlikely (in her view) to be found when she was working with her own students. Indeed, polished, edited cases often leave a sense that the teaching represented in a case text is unattainable (Le Fevre, 2004).

To address this concern meaningfully, it may be helpful to reframe the initial reading task of the case text. If the readers of the case text are only invited to read the case as something exemplary, then teachers who cannot relate to the specifics of the situation in the case may see it as irrelevant to their own situations. Even

when using teaching cases where the professional developers identify pedagogically powerful teaching, I propose that the purpose be framed as an analytic task of considering what *this* teacher did, given a situation that may *not* be analogous to the teaching contexts of those reading the case. The framing questions, then, are not, What can I learn from this teacher? How does this teacher exemplify good decision making? Could I do this? Rather, they could be, Based on evidence from the case, what do I know about how this child/group of children learned from this teacher, in this situation? What do I know about how this teacher dealt with these challenges, and what happened as the teacher made these decisions? This entails moving away from an exemplary practice model of case-based learning, something that several other researchers have proposed as well (Seago, 2004; Sheard et al., 2004).

However, to invite teachers who are focused on norm-based readings into a discussion that closely analyzes pedagogical decision making, the focus of the professional developer might well be somewhat different. In such cases, it may be useful to draw attention to case specifics, in particular to what students in the case text do during or after a teacher's pedagogical decision. For example, my own thinking could have been interrupted if Pam had been able to point me toward evidence from the case that Seth's "I'm confused" ruse was undermining his relationship with Alfredo. Credible evidence of this sort probably would not have caused me, or others present who agreed with Seth's decision, to reject the "role of playing 'I'm confused'" outright; but it may well have tipped us off to some limitations, demanding that we rethink our normative stance. Conversely, had those of us who explicitly supported Seth's approach emphasized *observations* of Seth and Alfredo that we found salient, we might have drawn the teachers' attention to the pedagogical possibilities of what he had done. While such an approach would likely have had little effect on a teacher engaging in a particularity-based reading (for whom the observed specifics of the case are trumped by other, nonobserved specifics), for a teacher engaged in a norm-based reading, an invitation to recenter on observed specifics might very well serve a meaningful purpose.

Understanding the nature of teachers' readings of case texts—and the fact that the nature of these readings can function in distinct ways—may allow professional developers to tailor plans and responses that respect teacher's existing purposes and priorities but also potentially invite new ones. While this study is exploratory, I hope that further research will continue to explore how different ways of reading case texts might call for different kinds of responses from professional developers as they facilitate dialogue with teachers.

## References

Anderson, R., & Pearson, P. D. (1984). A schema-theoretic view of basic processes in reading comprehension. In P. D. Pearson, R. Barr, M. Kamil, & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *The handbook of reading research* (Vol. 1, pp. 255–291). New York, NY: Longman.

Aukerman, M. (2013). Rereading comprehension pedagogies: Toward a dialogic teaching ethic that honors student sensemaking. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal, 1*(1), A1–A30.

Ballenger, C. (1992). Because you like us: The language of control. *Harvard Education Review, 62*(2), 199–208.

Bliss, T., & Reynolds, A. (2004) Quality visions and focused imagination. In J. Brophy (Ed.), *Using video in teacher education* (pp. 29–52). Oxford, England: Elsevier.

Christensen, C. R., & Hansen, A. J. (1987). *Teaching and the case method*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School.

Duke, N., & Pearson, P. D. (2002). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. In A. Farstrup & S. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (pp. 205–242). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Fecho, B., Commeyras, M., Bauer, E. B., & Font, G. (2000). In rehearsal: Complicating authority in undergraduate critical-inquiry classrooms. *Journal of Literacy Research, 32*(4), 471–504.

Hess, D. (2004). Using video to create a vision for powerful discussion teaching in secondary social studies. In J. Brophy (Ed.), *Using video in teacher education* (pp. 53–72). Oxford, England: Elsevier.

Hughes, J. E., Packard, B. W., & Pearson, P. D. (2000). Preservice teachers' perceptions of using hypermedia and video to examine the nature of literacy instruction. *Journal of Literacy Research, 32*(4), 599–629.

Hull, G., & Rose, M. (1990). "This Wooden Shack Place": The logic of an unconventional reading. *College Composition and Communication, 41*(3), 287–298.

Kinzer, C. K., & Risko, V. (1998). Multimedia and enhanced learning: Transforming preservice education. In D. Reinking, M. C. McKenna, L. D. Labbo, & R. D. Kiefer (Eds.), *Handbook of literacy and technology: Transformations in a post-typographic world* (pp. 185–202). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Koehler, M. J. (2002). Designing case-based hypermedia for developing understanding of children's mathematical reasoning. *Cognition and Instruction, 20*(2), 151–195.

Kress, G. (1997). *Before writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. London, England: Routledge.

Le Fevre. (2004). Designing for teacher learning: Video-based curriculum design. In J. Brophy (Ed.), *Using video in teacher education* (pp. 235–258). Oxford, England: Elvesier.

Leslie, L., & Caldwell, J. (1995). *Qualitative reading inventory–II*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Lewis, C. (1993). "Give people a chance": Acknowledging social differences in reading. *Language Arts, 70*, 454–461.

Little, J. W. (2001). Professional development in pursuit of school reform. In A. Lieberman & L. Miller (Eds.), *Teachers caught in the action: Professional development that matters* (pp. 23–44). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Merseth, K. K. (1996). Cases and case methods in teacher education. In J. Sikula, T. Buttery, & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (Vol. 2, pp. 722–744). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Moje, E., Remillard, J., Southerland, S., & Wade, S. (1999). Researching case pedagogies to inform our teaching. In M. Lundeberg, B. Levin, & H. Harrington (Eds.), *Who learns what from cases and how? The research base for teaching and learning with cases* (pp. 73–94). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Olson, D. (1977). From utterance to text: The bias of language in speech and writing. *Harvard Education Review, 47*, 257–281.

Pinnell, G. S. (1991). Teachers and children learning. In D. DeFord, C. Lyons, & G. S. Pinnell (Eds.), *Bridges to literacy: Learning from reading recovery* (pp. 171–187). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rosenblatt, L. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Rumelhart, D. E. (1981). Schemata: The building blocks of cognition. In J. T. Guthrie (Ed.), *Comprehension and teaching: Research reviews* (pp. 3–26). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Seago, N. (2004). Using video as an object of inquiry for mathematics teaching and learning. In J. Brophy (Ed.), *Using video in teacher education* (pp. 259–286). Oxford, England: Elvesier.

Sheard, M., Harrison, C., & Pead, D. (2004, December 1–4). *"P, not-P, and perhaps Q": How the Interactive Classroom Explorer (ICE) interface can support teacher professional development*. Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Shrader, P. G., Leu, D. J., Kinzer, C. K., Ataya, R., Teal, W., Labbo, L. D., & Cammack, D. (2003). Using Internet delivered video cases to support pre-service teachers' understanding of effective early literacy instruction: An exploratory study. *Instructional Science, 3*(4–5), 317–340.

Smagorinsky, P. (2001). If meaning is constructed, what's it made from? *Review of Educational Research, 71*(1), 133–169.

Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Teale, W., Leu, D., Labbo, L. D., & Kinzer, C. K. (2002). *The ctell project: New ways technology can help educate tomorrow's reading teachers*. Retrieved from http://www.readingonline.org/electronic/RT/4-02_Column/index.html

Tierney, R. J., & Pearson, P. D. (1981) Learning to learn from text: A framework for improving classroom practice. In E. K. Dishner, J. E. Readence, & T. W. Bean (Eds.), *Reading in the content areas: Improving classroom instruction* (pp. 496–513). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.