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‘Lend me your ears’: An exploration of Year 5 pupils’ perspectives on being read aloud to across the curriculum

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Abstract

Despite the long-standing tradition of reading aloud in educational contexts, existing literature primarily considers the practice as one with its foundation in fiction texts and its audience as younger children. This notion of reading aloud overlooks the potential for shared reading across the curriculum, as well as older readers who are more likely to be able to access texts independently. Using a mixed-methods case study, my proposed research seeks to investigate upper Key Stage Two pupils’ attitudes towards being read aloud to, and their perceptions of its educational impact in subjects across the primary curriculum. This paper proposes a broader understanding of reading aloud, in which the practice is not reserved only for shared story time but is seen by teachers as a cross-curricular tool to be used with both beginning and independent readers throughout their primary education.

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Introduction

There is a long-standing tradition of reading aloud in educational contexts (Frager, 2010; Raskinski & Hoffman, 2003). When thinking about teachers reading aloud in the primary classroom, what often springs to mind is the class immersed in a story. Children who are given these opportunities to listen to fiction in school are exposed to rich vocabulary and language; learn from the way the teacher models spoken language elements such as expression, intonation, and prosody; and hear texts which spark their imagination (Cremin et al., 2014). This vision of classroom reading links to the concept of Reading for Pleasure, with teachers striving to foster a love of reading in their pupils.

I believe that the principles of Reading for Pleasure can be seen alongside what I call *reading aloud for learning*. Seeing a teacher in my placement school begin her science club sessions by reading a science-themed story or non-fiction science text prompted me to reconsider how I viewed reading aloud. Indeed, reading aloud is practice which can, and I argue should, be implemented across the curriculum. Being read to is fundamentally inclusive; it makes texts accessible to pupils who struggle to read independently. Teachers can read texts aloud from different disciplines – whether it is reading a maths story like *Tangram Cat* (Rink & van der Linden, 2017) as a hook to introduce a lesson on shape and develop spatial awareness or engaging children in debates about art using *Why is Art Full of Naked People?* (Hodge, 2016). In this way, being read to becomes a powerful, inclusive learning tool.

While being read to is often associated with younger children, I believe it is worth exploring the practice of cross-curricular read alouds from the perspective of older pupils, who are more likely to be able to read independently. I hope to find out how pupils view being read to, which will allow me to reflect upon and adapt my own practice to ensure it serves learners' needs. My proposed study thus

seeks to investigate upper Key Stage Two pupils' attitudes towards being read aloud to, and their perceptions of its impact upon learning in subjects across the primary curriculum.

My research aims to address these three Research Questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are children's perspectives on being read aloud to?

RQ2: How do children believe being read to impacts their learning?

RQ3: Is there a difference in perspectives between those who enjoy independent reading, and those who do not?

Literature Review

The Importance of Children's Perspectives in Educational Research

In researching issues related to children's experiences in education, it seems imperative that we as researchers foreground the perspectives of children themselves. Historically, this has not always been the case (Harcourt et al., 2011; Ledger & Merga, 2018b). The dominant approach has taken a primarily adult perspective, in which children's experiences are interpreted through an adult lens, and children are seen as the objects of, rather than active participants in, research (Harcourt & Einarsdottir, 2011). In contrast, a pupil perspective approach, as described by Fisher (2014), shifts focus away from research on children, to research which listens to and is carried out with them.

Pupil perspectives are comparable to but distinct from pupil voice. Warwick and Chaplain (2017) state that pupil voice aims for "increased democratisation in schools" (p.157) by consulting pupils on educational processes and implementing change as a result; however, considering pupil perspectives relates instead to the critical effort to understand pupils' opinions on issues affecting them. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) underlines the importance of pupil perspectives, with Article 12 setting out every child's right to "form" and "express […] views freely in all matters affecting the child" (p.6). As Harcourt and Einarsdottir (2011) argue, including the perspectives of children in educational research is essential "if we are to understand their life worlds" (p.301). Although I take issue with the notion that adult researchers can fully comprehend the complex, variant and individual "life worlds" of children, Harcourt and Einarsdottir's (2011) belief

in children's agency, and in the importance of consulting children's perspectives, is one which educational researchers should heed.

Definitions: What is Reading Aloud, and what is it not?

Smith et al. (2022) argue that reading aloud is "one of the most important practices" (p.383) in primary education, yet the practice is a contentious topic. I believe that this is due, at least in part, to the differing instructional practices to which the term can refer. It is important to clarify what I mean by reading aloud, and perhaps more importantly, what falls outside that definition. To begin with, it is interesting to consider Ledger and Merga's (2018b) definition in their mixed methods study of children's attitudes to being read to. Their "simpl[e], unproblematized definition" (p.126) conceptualised reading aloud as "reading text orally and audibly for self and others". However, this explanation is less straightforward than it may initially appear. Their definition is one which calls to mind 'Round Robin' or 'Popcorn' reading. This practice, in which students are called upon by the teacher at random to read unprepared sections of text to the class, is widely recognised in the literature as ineffective (Ash et al., 2009; Frager, 2010). Instead of being a useful comprehension activity, pupil passivity becomes an issue, with children overly focusing on reading their own section and disengaging from the reading done by others.

The Round Robin style is an example of pupils reading to other pupils, but I take reading aloud to mean the teacher reading to pupils. This conceptualisation of reading aloud aligns with the description by Miller-Goldwater et al. (2023) of shared book reading, which they explain as the "practice of reading books with a knowledgeable other" (p.391). In a classroom context, the teacher assumes Vygotsky's (1978) role of the "more knowledgeable other" (p.71), and facilitates an interactive, collective reading experience for the pupils.

The Interactive Nature of Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is a more involved process than the simple act of the teacher audibly reading words from a text. Instead, pupils must be actively involved in the meaning making process. A relatively recent development in the literature has been researchers foregrounding interactive reading aloud (Çetinkaya et al., 2023; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Santoro et al., 2016; Wright, 2019). In the work of Çetinkaya et al. (2023), the premise of interactive reading aloud is that "the reader and the listener are actively involved in thinking about the text" (p.49). The strength of this practice comes from the

emphasis on the more balanced partnership, an active collaboration between reader and listener. However, Wright's (2019) conception of interactive reading aloud moves beyond merely thinking about texts to discussing them. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, the discussion element takes place through interaction between the teacher, their peers, and the text itself. The teacher scaffolds the textual discussion, prompts engagement, and models strategies for interpretation and comprehension. It appears, then, that integral to effective reading aloud is the act of collective thinking aloud.

Research has uncovered a range of impacts of effective interactive reading aloud on learning. It exposes pupils to subject-specific terminology, develops expressive vocabulary (Santoro et al., 2016), enhances knowledge of the world (Cremin, 2022), inspires curiosity (Hempel-Jorgensen et al., 2022), and facilitates concept learning across subjects (Çetinkaya et al., 2023). Çetinkaya et al. (2023) conducted a quasi-experimental trial investigating the effectiveness of a five-week read aloud intervention on two classes (one treatment group and one control) of Turkish pupils' financial literacy. Both classes had similar characteristics, including pre-test score and gender balance, lessening the variation between groups. The treatment group engaged in interactive read aloud sessions, while the control class' teacher read texts without initiating any interactive elements. The study compared the children's scores on the Marmara Financial Literacy Attitude and Behaviour test before and after the research period and found a significant statistical increase in the financial literacy of the treatment group. The difference between the mean post-test scores in the groups was 0.21, an estimated effect which the researchers identified as medium.

Unlike the whole-class approach of Çetinkaya et al. (2023), Fien et al. (2011) evaluated the effect of small group interventions on the reading skills of children identified as having low language and vocabulary levels. The study considered the effect of scientific texts on participants' vocabulary and content understanding. The choice of non-fiction goes against the trend of primarily using fictional narratives for reading aloud (Alexander & Jarman, 2018; Ledger & Merga, 2018c; Smith et al., 2022). In the randomised control trial of Fien et al. (2011), 18 classes received eight weeks of whole class read aloud sessions, and half of the students took part in additional twice weekly read aloud interventions. The intervention group pupils outperformed the control group on both the vocabulary test and the expository retell test following the intervention period. However, it is important to consider how much the small group size of two to five pupils enabled the pupils to progress.

In terms of consistency, in the study by Fien et al. (2011) each intervention group used the same comprehension framework to enable discussion, and each session lasted 20 minutes. In comparison, Çetinkaya's study did not state a specific reading approach or impose set timings. As a result, the duration of sessions varied substantially between the control and treatment groups: 25 minutes for the control group compared to 40 minutes for the interactive sessions. The treatment group's longer sessions may have contributed to the higher post-test scores.

In both studies it would have been valuable to have sought the pupils' perspectives on the interventions. As well as giving pupils more agency, this would have enabled the researchers to explore the children's metacognitive awareness – whether they recognised the learning potential of interactive reading aloud.

The Dominance of Fiction

The National Curriculum for English (2013) mandates that "all pupils must be encouraged to read widely across both fiction and non-fiction" (Department for Education, 2013, p.4). One of the reasons for this is to "gain knowledge *across the curriculum"* [italics mine] (p.4). By the end of primary, pupils should be equipped with the skills to read in "any subject" (p.4) encountered during secondary education. It is significant that despite being the English programmes of study, the National Curriculum points out the need to read across the subjects. Supporting this, McClure and Fullerton (2017) assert that reading non-fiction, informational texts sparks curiosity through creating engaging yet "challenging learning opportunities" (p.57).

However, research by Ledger and Merga (2018c) in Australia, and Smith et al. (2022) in the United States into primary teachers' attitudes towards and book choices for read aloud sessions has revealed that texts chosen tend to be fiction. Ledger and Merga's 2018 study, which used a questionnaire to investigate teachers' attitudes towards read aloud sessions, found that the majority (68.7 per cent) predominantly chose fiction, 29.3 per cent stated that they read equally from both genres, and 2 per cent only read non-fiction. It is important to note that Ledger and Merga's three papers discussed (2018a, 2018b, 2018c) all draw upon the same data corpus, which lessens the impact of the findings in the individual articles. The mixed-methods study by Smith et al. (2022), looked at the reported read aloud titles of over 1100 teachers, a significantly larger sample size than Ledger and Merga's (2018c) 101 teachers. They then conducted 14 individual interviews with teachers to understand the rationale behind text selections. Similarly, to Ledger and Merga (2018c), the content analysis in this

study revealed a dominance of fiction, with just over 6 per cent of chosen texts being non-fiction. Of these, the majority were scientific books. The limitations of the study by Smith et al. (2022) were that the researchers used opportunity sampling for the interviews, with teachers volunteering themselves, leading to self-selection bias and rendering the results not representative. Furthermore, the majority of the participants in both the survey and the interviews identified as white and had more teaching experience than the actual demographic of teachers in the United States. A different sample, the researchers acknowledge, may have led to "very different results" (p. 396).

The work of Alexander and Jarman (2018) supports the inclusion of non-fiction and specifically scientific texts in the primary classroom. Their study explored the perspectives of 309 pupils aged 8-14 on a science reading challenge, although this was about independent reading rather than reading aloud. In a post-project questionnaire, almost 90 per cent of pupils stated that they found the challenge "enjoyable" or "very enjoyable" (p.81). Yet the reliability of this largely positive response can be questioned, as the researchers concede. As the project used an extrinsic reward system including reading passports and stickers, how much the children assigned their enjoyment to the actual reading of the science books themselves remains uncertain.

Whereas Alexander and Jarman's 2018 research is from a Reading for Pleasure perspective, the research by Miller-Goldwater et al. (2023) attests to the cognitive benefits of reading aloud beyond fiction. Their study considered whether reading science texts aloud developed pupils' scientific understanding and found that it has a positive impact on learning. However, this is most effective when coupled with the book's textual features (including embedded questions), and the caregiver's elaborative talk. The interactive nature of the book itself and the extratextual talk supports the idea that reading aloud must be interactive to have an impact on children's learning.

In the studies by Alexander and Jarman (2018), Miller-Goldwater et al. (2023), and Smith et al. (2022), the focus was on non-fiction science books. I argue that classroom read alouds should incorporate a broader range of texts relating to subjects across the primary curriculum. This would then allow for the expansion of the Reading for Pleasure concept into my broader, cross-curricular idea of Reading Aloud for Learning.

Reading Aloud to Independent Readers

Existing literature primarily considers shared reading aloud in relation to children who struggle to decode and access texts independently, either due to young age (Kalb & van Ours, 2014; Miller-Goldwater et al., 2023; Wright, 2019), or difficulty with reading (Fien et al., 2011; Santoro et al., 2016). There is an assumption that older readers, who are more likely to have acquired the skill of independent reading, do not need to be read to. As one pupil from the older age group in the pupil perspectives study by Ledger and Merga (2018b) explained about this cessation of being read to at home, "I can already read, so no one reads to me" (p.132). Despite this, Ledger and Merga (2018b) found that 74.4 per cent of older children (aged 9-12) reported that they enjoyed being read to at school.

It is important, however, to examine the reasons why children value the read aloud experience, and whether they see its learning potential. Upon consulting sixth grade pupils on their attitudes to read aloud sessions, Andreasen and Clark (2014) found that reasons for enjoyment were often due to the relaxed classroom environment, rather than the reading experience itself. Semi-structured interviews revealed that some pupils, especially those with lower reading attitude scores, saw it as a break from work, and a time in which there was a perceived lower expectation of pupil engagement. From their findings, Andreasen and Clark (2014) suggested that teachers should ensure pupils are "not just […] passively listening" (p.174), and instead engage them through collaborative extratextual discussion. Their critique of a passive model of reading aloud is reminiscent of the criticism of Round Robin reading, and demonstrates the need for a specifically *interactive* approach to reading aloud.

Methodology

Case Study

As discussed in the Literature Review, research focuses primarily on reading aloud to preschool and early primary children. In light of this, I have chosen to investigate older pupils' perspectives, and to compare the attitudes towards reading aloud of those who enjoy reading independently and those who do not. I propose to undertake a small-scale case study with a Cambridgeshire school's Year Five class.

Case study, as Yazan (2015) puts it, is a "contested terrain" (p.375) and has long been a site of debate. In 1985, Lincoln and Guba contended that despite the frequency with which the term appeared in research literature, there was a lack of consensus as to its definition. This concern has been echoed by researchers including Bassey (1999), who writes that the question, "what is a case study?", is one "easy to ask and difficult to answer" (p.22). I lean towards Robson and McCartan's (2015) description of case study as an in-depth exploration into a "real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (p.150).

I argue that three foundational elements of case study are its particular context, multiple data collection methods, and multiple perspectives. Conducting a case study will enable me to attend to and explore a range of perspectives of children who have experienced being read aloud to in a particular classroom context.

It is useful here to repeat my research questions:

RQ1: What are children's perspectives on being read aloud to?

RQ2: How do children believe being read to impacts their learning?

RQ3: Is there a difference in perspectives between those who enjoy independent reading, and those who do not?

I will use a mixed-methods, sequential explanatory design. The theoretical foundation for this is the pragmatic approach, in which researchers decide upon the most appropriate approaches for their context. This allows me to use a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, which will then enable triangulation of data for greater reliability. Before using my research instruments, I will do a pilot study on a representative sample of pupils to enable me to reflectively revise and refine my questionnaire and interview schedule before beginning the study itself.

Questionnaire

The whole class will be invited to participate in a brief questionnaire. The ease and speed of questionnaires which collect information directly from participants renders this method useful for eliciting pupil perspectives efficiently. In creating my questionnaire (see Appendix 1), I took inspiration from McKenna and Kear's 'Elementary Reading Attitude Survey' (1990), and the Open University's 'KS2 Children's Reading for Pleasure Survey' (2023). I created a pictorial Likert scale

to allow participants to indicate their attitudes towards each statement. Initially, I thought children could indicate the extent to which they agreed with a list of statements, for example with "I think it is important for the teacher to read aloud", or "I like it when my teacher reads aloud". On consideration, I decided that these statements were potentially leading, phrased in a way which encouraged a favourable answer. To avoid biasing pupils' responses, I rephrased my questions using "how do you feel" and "do you think" prompts, as in "how do you feel when your teacher reads aloud to the class?".

My Likert scale includes a middle option with an undecided emoticon and "I don't know" statement. Removing this undecided option would mean participants must take a position, thereby limiting the potential for satisficing. However, Cohen et al. (2017) caution that forcing pupils to make a choice prevents respondents from "say[ing] what is in their minds" up (p.481), even if their minds are not made up. Therefore, I have chosen to use the 5-point Likert scale for all questions except "how do you feel when you read to yourself?" as I need the participants to state their opinion on this so that I can subsequently group them into those who like and dislike independent reading.

Various researchers, including Warwick & Chaplain (2017), highlight the need for an appealing, easily understood questionnaire format. One example of effective use of a Likert scale questionnaire is the aforementioned McKenna and Kear's (1990) 'Elementary Reading Attitude Survey'. This uses a child-friendly Likert scale with images of Garfield in varying emotional states. For pupils of today, I felt that Garfield would have less relevance than in 1990, and that the character's expressions might be challenging for some children to interpret. I have therefore chosen to use familiar, easily understandable coloured emoticons in my own Likert scale. Furthermore, by asking only five questions I aim to reduce the potential for pupils to experience questionnaire fatigue.

Although the focused nature of questionnaires enables pupils to answer easily, a limitation Cohen et al. (2017) point out is the narrowness of response options. This can, as Denscombe (2017) describes, lead to participant frustration at not being able to fully explain their responses. However, in line with Oppenheim's (1992) suggestion, I will attempt to mitigate this by including an open question in a sentence completion format. Additionally, during the semi-structured interviews, I will use the participant's questionnaire responses as a starting point to allow pupils to clarify and expand orally upon their written responses. To be able to ask children about their questionnaire responses during

the interview, the questionnaire, while confidential, will not be anonymised as children will be asked to write their initials on the sheet to allow for interview selection.

Following the recommendations of Cohen et al. (2017) for helping participants understand what is required, I will provide clear written instructions at the top of each questionnaire, verbally explain that participants should circle the smiley face best representing how they feel about the statement, state roughly how long completion will take, and emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers. In explaining the questionnaire and the subsequent interview procedures to participants, I will, in accordance with the British Educational Research Association (henceforth BERA, 2024) guidelines, emphasise that pupils are free to withdraw from the study whenever they wish, "for any reason and at any time" (p.13), without providing explanation.

Semi-structured Interview

After the class have completed the questionnaire, I will use random stratified sampling to divide participants into two subgroups according to their self-reported attitude (either negative or positive) towards independent reading. I will then randomly select six pupils, with proportionate numbers of pupils from each group, for direct consultation. This will be in the form of an audio-recorded, semi-structured interview. Rather than producing statistically representative, or generalisable data, the small number of semi-structured interviews will allow insight into what Brinkmann (2022) calls "individual lived experience" (p.37), thus aligning with the purpose of case study.

A theory that I intend to base my interviews on is Galletta's (2013) concept of "researcher-participant reciprocity" (p.77). In contrast to the uneven researcher-interviewee power dynamic, Galletta (2013) emphasises co-construction of understanding. This framework fits well with pupil perspective research, as it allows pupils to be viewed as partners in, rather than objects of, research. The concept of reciprocity can be seen in how semi-structured interviews, unlike structured interviews, allow for interviewer flexibility and responsiveness to the participant's answers.

A potential weakness of the interview method is that children may regard it as an uncomfortable interrogation (McWilliam et al., 2009), especially when held in a school context associated with adult authority (Spyrou, 2011). One way to lessen this is to hold group interviews. However, due to the limitations of this method, such as the effects of social desirability bias, peer conformity, and the potential for varying amounts of input from each participant (Daley, 2013; Warwick & Chaplain,

2017), I have instead decided upon individual interviews. This removes the social pressure of expressing opinions in front of peers. To address the issue that interviews may seem like interrogations, with an uneven interview-interviewee dynamic, I will help put the participant at ease by allowing them to choose a familiar school location in which the interview will take place. In addition, while in Clark and Andreasen's study (2014) of attitudes to teachers reading aloud, interviewers had not met the pupils prior to the interview, I will spend time in the school prior to the interviews to build rapport with the children.

In my interview schedule (see Appendix 2), I have created a short number of questions derived from my research questions, questionnaire, and the interview schedule from a similar study by Andreasen and Clark (2014). To mitigate acquiescence response bias, in which the children may attempt to respond with what they believe the interviewer wants (Warwick & Chaplain, 2017), I have avoided closed, dichotomous questions which might seem to anticipate a right or wrong answer. There is room for flexibility within the interview schedule, as I will adapt and create additional questions in response to children's questionnaire responses. I will also use clearly worded prompts and probes for elaboration and clarification in order to gain a more accurate understanding of pupils' perspective. Lastly, to maintain pupil motivation, I will keep the interviews fairly brief (around 15 to 20 minutes).

Data Analysis

To help answer my research question, "is there a difference in perspectives between those who enjoy independent reading, and those who do not?", I will use quantitative data from the questionnaire. I will create tables for each question to enable me to see whether perspectives towards being read aloud to differ (or not) between pupils who have different attitudes towards independent reading. In each table, participants will be grouped according to either their positive or negative independent reading attitude (nominal data), and I will present the frequencies and percentages of participants who chose each value on the Likert scale.

To analyse the qualitative data from both the open-ended questionnaire responses and interviews, I will use thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) conceptualise thematic analysis as the process of searching qualitative data to identify significant, "repeated patterns of meaning" (p.86). To do this, I will follow Braun and Clarke's systematic six step procedure, beginning by familiarising myself with the data. Transcription of the audio-recorded interviews is integral to this process of familiarisation, as it requires the researcher to read, reread, and pay close attention to the data.

Transcription provides ample opportunity to look for patterns, and I will take notes of my initial impressions at this early stage.

I will be conducting a top-down, theoretical thematic analysis. Whereas an inductive analysis is driven by the data, a theoretical approach is driven by research questions and research interests (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). A limitation of choosing this approach is that it could potentially lead to confirmation bias, with the researcher attempting to fit data to preconceived codes. To prevent this, I will not create set codes beforehand, but will develop codes which link to research interests during the coding process. I will have an awareness of codes and themes which have previously been identified in the literature, for example textual engagement, instructional benefits, and enjoyment, but I will pay close attention to patterns in the data which may differ from those in prior research. Once I have coded the interview transcripts, I will organise the codes into significant overarching themes, before reviewing and refining these to ensure each theme is both coherent and distinct (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Ethical Considerations

A central tenet when working with children, in accordance with both BERA (2024) and Keeping Children Safe in Education guidelines (Department for Education, 2023), is to prioritise the child's best interests. Throughout my case study, I will adhere to BERA's (2024) "ethic of respect" (p.9) for all individuals involved in or affected by the research. Fundamental to this is the creation of trust between myself as the researcher and the participants. To do this, I will spend time in the classroom prior to the case study so the children become more familiar with me.

As BERA (2024) guidelines emphasise, it is imperative for researchers to obtain "voluntary informed and ongoing consent" (p.13) from participants. As I will be working with children, active consent must be gained from their parents or guardians. After receiving approval from the school's Headteacher, I will send a letter home to guardians explaining the purpose of the research, what it involves, and seeking consent for their child's participation. In addition to consent from guardians, it is important that the child themselves provides their informed assent. In order for a child to assent, they must understand what it is they are agreeing to take part in. Prior to, and at each stage during my research, I will explain to the children in clear, age-appropriate language about the purpose and procedure of research and what their role in this is.

I will strive to put participants at ease during the research. As the interview process may potentially be a daunting and unfamiliar experience, it might be helpful for children to watch short clips of educational research interviews involving other pupils beforehand to help them feel more prepared. Before the interviews, I will have received consent from parents and informed assent from children for interviews to be audio-recorded. Throughout the research process, I will remind and reassure children that they are free to withdraw at any point. This also applies to answering interview questions – as Wilson and Powell (2001) suggest, I will make sure that children know that they are free to not respond to questions, or to give "I don't know" as a response.

Rather than children perceiving themselves as objects to be studied, I want them to recognise that their perspectives are valued. To do this, I will explain the concept of pupil perspectives research, as well as saying and showing that I am interested in their views and attitudes. In order to ensure that pupils feel involved, at the end of the research I will share my findings and outcomes in an accessible, clear manner with the pupils so that they understand how their participation contributed to the larger research project.

Implications for Future Practice

My proposed study seeks to investigate upper Key Stage Two pupils' attitudes towards being read aloud to, and their perceptions of its impact upon learning in subjects across the primary curriculum. My research has led me to recognise the vital nature of gaining pupil perspectives in research contexts, as well as through classroom conversations more generally. Speaking to children and listening to their feedback is empowering, as it shows pupils that their voices are valued, and gives them the opportunity to take a more active role in their education. This contributes to positive relationship building, as it reduces the teacher-pupil power difference. Actively seeking and attending to pupil perspectives not only acknowledges the importance of these key educational stakeholders, but is an integral part of being a reflective teacher. I will use children's attitudes and feedback to adapt, revise, and reflect upon my practice. By doing this, I hope to create a learning environment which serves the needs of the pupils in my class.

As a teacher, I will dedicate time to reading aloud from a range of both fiction and non-fiction texts. I will combine my knowledge of the value of listening to pupils' perspectives on educational matters with my passion for reading aloud by consulting children's preferences and including an element of

choice. Children will be able to use counters to vote for the text they want to be read aloud. By providing children this agency, I am demonstrating (albeit on a small scale) my dedication to listening to children's opinions. Furthermore, I believe pupils will be more engaged in texts which they have had a say in choosing.

In contrast to the passivity of more traditional oral reading methods, the literature emphasises that effective read aloud practices are defined by their interactive, dialogic nature (Çetinkaya et al., 2023; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Santoro et al., 2016; Wright, 2019). To make my read aloud sessions interactive, I will prepare by considering the class' background knowledge on the topic, and carefully planning questions to stimulate thoughtful and engaging discussion, in order for the pupils to interact with me, each other, and the text itself.

This project has highlighted the need to rely not on my intuition or implicit theories about learning, but rather to teach in an evidence-informed manner. At the start of my research, my conception of reading aloud was narrow. Reading aloud conjured images of teachers reading in English lessons or guided reading sessions, and it brought back memories of story time at the end of the school day. For me, reading aloud was very much connected to a notion of Reading for Pleasure, and it was focused solely upon fiction texts. Research concurs that fiction dominates in read aloud practices (Ledger & Merga, 2018c; Smith et al., 2022), and the few non-fiction texts tend to be science-based. Yet as I have found, reading aloud can have much broader uses. In my classroom, I will use reading aloud as a pedagogical tool across the curriculum, harnessing the concept of Reading for Pleasure to engage pupils in fiction and non-fiction texts: what I call Reading Aloud for Learning. I will choose exciting, informative texts as hooks for lessons, to spark interest in topics, and encourage discussion for pupils from different age groups and with different reading levels.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Teacher Read Aloud Questionnaire

Your initials: _____

I am interested in what **you** think about being read aloud to. This is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Reading aloud is where the teacher reads out loud to the whole class.

1. How do you feel when you read to yourself?

I love it	I like it	I don't like it	I hate it
			

2. How do you feel when your teacher reads aloud to the class?

I love it	I like it	I don't know	I don't like it	I hate it
				

3. Do you think it is important for the teacher to read aloud?

Very important	Important	I don't know	Not important	Not important at all
				

4. Do you think that the teacher reading aloud helps you to learn?

Yes definitely	Yes	I don't know	No	Definitely not
				

5. Fill in the sentence: I think reading aloud sessions are…

_____

_____

_____

Thank you so much for your help.

Appendix 2

Interview Schedule

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Introduction

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part.

I am interested in finding out more about what you think about teachers reading aloud to the class.

Please ask me if you want me to explain something you do not understand. It is okay to say "I don't know" to questions, or to say pass if you do not want to answer.

You are free to stop the interview at any point.

- In the questionnaire, you told me that you like/dislike reading by yourself. Why is that?
- How do you feel when the teacher reads aloud to the class?
- You described reading aloud as [insert their sentence]. Can you tell me a bit more about this now?
- What do you usually do when the teacher reads aloud?
- Why do you think teachers read aloud to the class?
- You wrote on the questionnaire that it is/is not important for the teacher to read aloud. Why do you think this is?
- You told me in the questionnaire that reading aloud does/does not help you learn. Why do you think that is?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about being read to?

Possible Prompts

- Why is that?
- Can you give me an example?
- Can you tell me more?