Reading for 'pleasure'?
An insight into pupils' perspectives on reading

Elsa Cullen

(PGCE General Primary, 2020-2021)

email: cullenelsa@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Though 'Reading for Pleasure' (RfP) is an extensively researched and promoted topic within education due to its wealth of established benefits, it is, nonetheless, declining in popularity. The advantages which accompany RfP remain undisputable, but research vastly centers around the neurotypical learner: a crucial problem. This research proposal argues that those who are perhaps in most need of the associated benefits which RfP brings – namely, the non-neurotypical – are being largely overlooked within research and, consequently, deprived from accessing the pleasure and enjoyment of reading along with its countless benefits. By first addressing and exploring the perceived barriers which inhibit pleasure within reading from children themselves, it is suggested that this may be the way forward for once more eliciting the bountiful benefits fostered within RfP, but in a more inclusive and fruitful manner.

Note

In 2020-2021 the COVID-19 crisis disrupted the second assignment for Primary PGCEs meaning that they were unable to undertake research in classrooms. As a result the assignment was changed to make it a research proposal instead. Therefore, the articles included from the Primary PGCEs do not include results and discussions, but do provide detailed proposals for researching pupil perspectives about different aspects to school and learning.

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Introduction

'Reading for pleasure' (RfP) has captured the interest of many researchers and practitioners, particularly over the last decade, and continues to be an extensively researched topic. The array of benefits which accompany it have been strongly evidenced through numerous studies (e.g. Baumann & Duffy, 1997; Clark & Rumbold, 2006; DfE, 2012; Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell & Safford, 2014; Garces-Bacsal, Tupas, Kaur, Paculdar & Baja, 2018; Mak & Fancourt, 2020), ranging from increased educational attainment to improved physical health. Since the benefits of RfP seem to be continually expanding, literature therefore devotes itself to exploring ways of which to promote RfP amongst children and young people; especially as research evidence suggests this has been declining over recent years (Clark, 2019).

It appears, however, those who might perhaps be most in need of these benefits have not been accounted for, with literature and research rarely deviating away from using the neurotypical child as a point of reference. Those who do not get enjoyment from reading are generally regarded as nothing more than 'reluctant readers' who harness poor attitudes towards reading (Lockwood, 2008). These individuals are sadly often deemed as somewhat of a lost cause, who are subsequently unable to benefit from the advantages RfP brings; thus, the cyclical nature continues.

This study, therefore, suggests that perhaps the decline in RfP is a consequence of the diverse needs of the range of children present in schools today not being appropriately catered for. Instead, the benefits of RfP are so desperately trying to be promoted, but this is in the absence of enjoyment. By first addressing the barriers to the imperative component of RfP which is 'pleasure', the so strongly advocated benefits will unquestionably follow. This research proposal, consequently, suggests and actively plans for further exploration into the barriers which stand in the way of pleasure – questions of which will be stated at the end of the literature review – by first investigating the perspectives of the very people literature seems to speak on behalf of, yet rarely consult children, as experts of themselves.

Literature Review

Reading

The complex art of reading and writing dates back to primitive times, with both mnemonics (memory aids) and graphics (pictorial displays) being decoded from written representations by our ancestors (Fischer, 2003). What scholars agree started as a means of communication (Senner, 1989; Schmandt-Besserat & Erard, 2008; Crowley & Heyer, 2016) evolved into a way of information storage far superior to human memory. Although this was indeed on a more simplistic level, the principles of this nonetheless sophisticated process, still, translates into 'modern-day' reading as we know it today. An example of this is explicitly evident within educational settings in England today, with the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) outlining 'decoding' as fundamental for reading, enabling comprehension to follow. Reading remains an exceptionally intricate skill which is often inadvertently overlooked. We are reminded of the 'multifaceted nature' of reading by Scarborough (2009, p.24): as illustrated by "The Many Strands That are Woven Into Skilled Reading" (Figure 1).
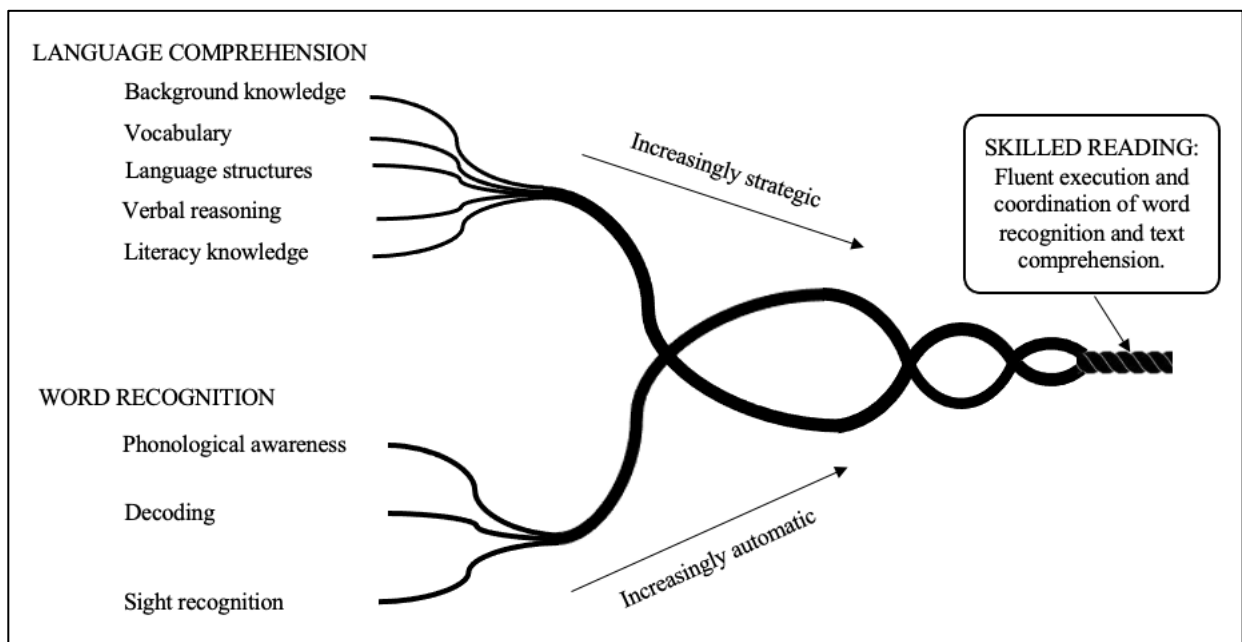

Figure 1: The Many Strands That are Woven Into Skilled Reading

Redrawn from Scarborough (2009) p.24

Though this historic medium for information transmission serves a practical purpose, what simultaneously emerged is a consideration which must not be neglected: a vehicle for storytelling.

Humans have long been engaged and fascinated by the telling of stories (Boyd, 2009), which, over the years, have evolved into a written format. Therefore, reading became more than just a practical activity, but something done to entertain or for pleasure. Nonetheless, storytelling can be a vehicle for more: "stories provide the possibility of educating the feelings and can offer their readers potential growth points for the development of a more subtle awareness of human behaviour." (Benton & Fox, 1985, p.15). Further cognitive benefits of reading are outlined within multiple publications since, echoing the importance of reading (Baumann & Duffy, 1997; Clark & Rumbold, 2006; DfE, 2012; Cremin et al., 2014; Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018). One recent longitudinal study even found reading for pleasure promoted physically healthy behaviours (Mak & Fancourt, 2020). Hence, it is actively promoted for the developing minds of young people in schools today.

Reading for Pleasure (RfP)

The proposed advantages defined within the ever-expanding pool of literature surrounding RfP are vast, however, one particular research overview from the National Literacy Trust (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 9-10) encapsulates these in several points, including:

- Improved reading attainment and writing ability;
- Improved text comprehension and grammar;
- Breadth of vocabulary;
- Positive reading attitudes;
- Greater self-confidence;
- Pleasure reading in later life;
- Improved general knowledge;
- A better understanding of other cultures;
- Increased community participation; and
- A greater insight into human nature and decision-making.

Due to the overwhelmingly positive and strongly evidenced outcomes research finds on RfP, it is difficult to argue that these benefits will not put children at an advantage academically and developmentally, but for this to happen, children must be sufficient readers. It is assumed by such studies that children can readily access appropriately challenging reading material, when recent statistics tell us that 15.4% of all school children in England have SEN (Special Educational Needs – GOV, 2020), which affects their learning. Out of this proportion, 24% identified speech, language

and communication needs as their primary need (GOV, 2020), which are fundamental components of literacy learning. Further to this, and in the context of primary schools, Ofsted (2020) have specified that 70% of Key Stage 1 and 78% of Key Stage 2 pupils with SEN did not perform at age-related standards in reading, confirming that these additional needs are indeed a barrier to reading.

Since this evidence dictates that children with SEN are likely to underachieve academically, it may be easy to assume such children are somewhat unlikely to fully engage with reading and, therefore, not be provided with an adequate means of accessing this information and the many advantages it brings. The literature possibly inadvertently promotes this, due to SEN being a particularly scarce topic within the pool of RfP research; it is seemingly directed at the neurotypical child. It has been argued that reading "ought to be the most universal and easily accessible of pleasures" (Hattersley, 1998, p.50), yet through its inaccessibility to those most in need of its advantages, achieves precisely the opposite by excluding the very pupils it should appeal to. Considering the plentiful benefits listed above, it is essential that these children have an effective means of accessing these advantages in order to thoroughly benefit from them.

Though it is needless to say that these benefits do not exclusively result from RfP, studies fail to acknowledge that these can certainly be obtained through other means. In essence, the literature seems to imply that RfP (being the physical act of reading words) is the only way of achieving such outcomes, not accounting for the vast mediums for reading available in our society today. Considering Clark & Rumbold's review (2006) for example, there is no mention of alternative methods of accessing reading, such as audiobooks or being read a story, which would not only provide a more accessible means of accessing reading to a variety of pupils, appealing to more, but would also aid with children exercising their listening skills whilst observing good spoken language – a requirement within the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013). This remains largely unconsidered amongst RfP research, and it is, therefore, unclear as to how children would benefit from such resources, raising questions as to whether these same outlined benefits can be accessed via alternative means.

Components of Reading for Pleasure

Arguably, it is not so much the process of reading marks on a page that enables us to gain the benefits of reading, but the sense we make of these. The fundamental role of reading is to make meaning of the words; without the ability to comprehend, reading becomes fruitless. It is for this reason that teaching the mechanics of reading are undeniably important when learning to read, but with such a

large emphasis placed on this by schools and policy, we risk the danger of children seeing reading as nothing more than a compulsory school activity, not something to be indulged in, by choice, for enjoyment. It is not surprising, therefore, that RfP continually declines (Clark, 2019) – a theme which will later be explored – but if the benefits of reading are attained through what we make of the given information (not merely the marks on the page), these benefits can surely be achieved in various ways. The National Curriculum's (DfE, 2013, p.14) 'dimensions' of reading, including 'word reading' and 'comprehension', do not need to be considered conjunctively: they are separate skills of which maybe disconnect enjoyment from reading. The key, questionably, lies within the latter of the two.

Choice

Even considering those children who do not have any particular difficulty accessing reading material, it has been well established and largely agreed amongst literature that an important element for promoting RfP is choice (Schraw, Flowerday & Reisetter, 1998; Clark & Rumbold, 2006; Pennac, 2006; Clark & Phythian-Sence, 2008; DfE, 2012; Cremin et al., 2014; Hempel-Jorgensen, Cremin, Harris & Chamberlain, 2018), meaning offering access to books in various ways can only provide positive outcomes in terms of RfP. Yet, so many schools, although often claiming to provide a wealth of book choices, not only seem to only offer physical books, but also limit children's choice to within their 'band' (e.g. Oxford book levels – Oxford University Press, 2019). Questions could be raised here as to, firstly, how RfP can truly be promoted within schools if a child's reading options are confined to such boundaries and, secondly, in such an instance, whose 'choice' it actually is. If full and genuine reading choice is not made by children, it again seems that this may perhaps divorce pleasure from reading, not promote it.

Motivation

It is with 'choice' in mind as an imperative component of RfP that we must consider a strongly correlated factor: motivation. Unsurprisingly, a lack of motivation for learning has a direct impact on achievement (Salili & Hoosain, 2007), but to read, we must have a purpose for doing so (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999). Indeed, considering Scarborough's (2009) model (see Figure 1 earlier) alongside Guthrie & Wigfield's (1999) 'Motivational-Cognitive Model of Reading' (Figure 2 below), we can

begin to consider the motivational aspects which must coincide with the cognitive process of reading of which Scarborough (2009) details further:
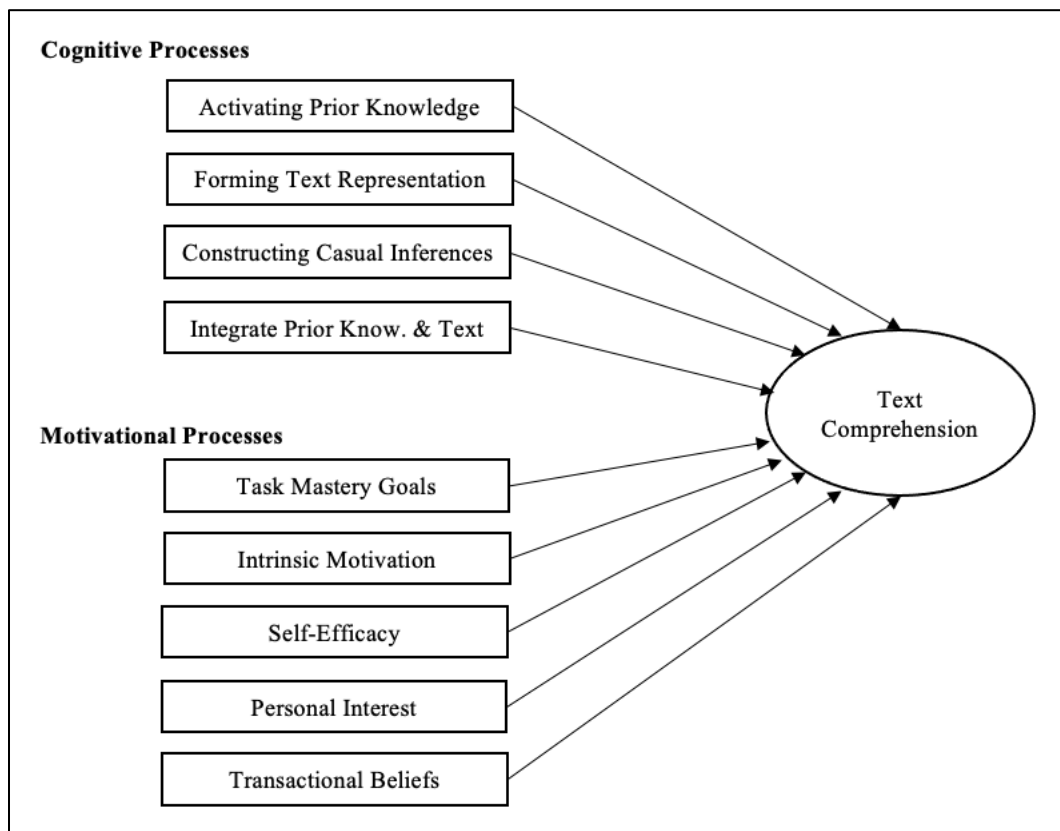

Figure 2: Motivational-Cognitive Model of Reading

Redrawn from Guthrie & Wigfield (1999) p.200

It is clearly illustrated here that there are a multitude of factors which feed into motivation for reading, which we cannot ignore if children are to become genuinely interested and motivated to read. This is particularly relevant within literature, which dictates that motivation for RfP decreases as children age and progress through school (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). Hence, if levels of motivation for RfP are to be changed, we must look beyond this to unveil what it is that may be contributing to the low motivation levels and address these first. Moreover, "If the perceived decline in enjoyment of reading among this age of primary school pupil is addressed effectively, it may be hoped that pupils will progress through the education system as both competent and willing readers." (Dungworth, Grimshaw, McKnight & Morris, 2004, p.181), increasing the likelihood of more children reaping the benefits of RfP.

The decline of Reading for Pleasure

Unfortunately, RfP amongst young people, and therefore motivation to read for pleasure, continues to decline. The latest findings on RfP find that only 56.6% of children and young people said they mostly enjoyed reading, meaning nearly half only partly, or do not at all enjoy reading (Clark, 2019). This study was carried out on 49,049 children and young people in the UK, aged eight to 18, but it is unclear as to how this sample was selected; the generalisability could be questioned if this is not a nationally representative sample. Further to this, though this is already an exceptionally high proportion of children who claim to not or only partially enjoy reading, there is a high possibility that out of this sample, those who claim to largely enjoy reading may have been influenced by the 'Hawthorne Effect'; the behaviour or responses of participants being modified, due to an awareness of the research that is taking place (Jones, 1992). The reliability of this study, therefore, remains questionable, though these findings should not go unnoticed as the benefits of reading continue to be tremendously advantageous within education and cognitive development.

Gaps in literature & Implications for further research

With this ongoing decline in mind, it seems utterly imperative, perhaps more than ever, to consider the influences on RfP motivation in order to foster it. Though there are copious amounts of research on RfP, the focus tends to be concerned with why children may choose to read, not why they do not. One example of this disproportionate balance is evident within Clark & Rumbold's review (2006, p.14), which has a section titled 'Reasons for reading' but does not address reasons for not. This is only briefly recognised within the statistical section (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p.10-12), and where other potential reasons are addressed elsewhere, it appears to be things that are outside the child's direct control, such as school/curriculum, exposure to screen time and parents influence (Egmont, 2019). Debatably then, children's personal reasoning for not RfP stands as the larger issue: one of which has not been thoroughly investigated. Perhaps a wider focus is needed predominantly on the obstructing reasons for children not reading; thus, providing a more informed audience who can actively address such barriers and, ultimately, raise the lowering levels of RfP.

Although research into children's reasons for not reading for pleasure remains limited, the briefly addressed reasons for this within Clark & Rumbold's review (2006), as mentioned, can be summarised as follows:

- Reading is viewed as boring;
- There is a lack of interesting books;
- A preference to do something else;
- Reading is viewed as a waste of time; and
- Low confidence in reading ability.

Though it is by no means assumed that these are the cumulative and solitary contributors, we can possibly view these five points as a point of reference when promoting RfP in those most reluctant.

The first four points here, although valid in their own right, can be considered collectively as they are interrelated and, moreover, link explicitly to the earlier discussed theme of 'choice'. Since effective teaching relies on the foundation of a trustful and respectful relationship with pupils (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004), knowing pupils well enough to recognise their individual interests should not be uncommon within educational settings. In fact, it is actively encouraged and expected amongst teaching professionals (DfE, 2011). Assuming that these relationships are being formed between pupil and teacher, it is expected that teachers are able to engage in conversations with their pupils to discover what types of books they may find interesting to read. This not only helps reduce the likelihood of the first three points here, but also provides the child with a purpose for reading, furtherly addressing the fourth point.

However, 'low confidence in reading ability', the fifth and final point, stands separately. As evidence suggests that low reading ability has a direct correlation with RfP (Malanchini, Wang, Voronin, Schenker, Plomin, Petrill & Kovas, 2017), this perhaps deserves more attention than literature seems to have given it. Considering Guthrie & Wigfield (1999 – see figure 1.1), this is indeed relevant within the 'motivational' aspect of reading, under the term 'self-efficacy'. This term concerns a person's beliefs of their own capabilities (Gosselin & Maddux, 2003), which has clear implications for RfP: if a child is to believe they have poor reading ability, it is inevitable that they will not get enjoyment from reading and, therefore, make the decision to not engage in RfP.

Whilst studies have been said to have challenges "unpacking the reciprocal relationship between ability and participation in reading" (Sullivan & Brown, 2015, p.972), where research does address

the link between RfP and ability, it seems to be suggested that children who do not read for pleasure simply have no desire to find out new information from reading or enjoy engaging in stories of any form. They are merely regarded as 'reluctant readers' with poor attitudes (Lockwood, 2008). Arguably, this is potentially damaging: to make this assumption about a child based on the judgement that they do not read for pleasure could be overlooking contributing factors, such as barriers to reading, including children with SEN, EAL (English as an Additional Language), or dyslexia (just to name a few). Surely, it seems not only wise but of crucial importance that if RfP is to increase amongst children and young people, reading is presented in a diversely accessible format, so to make it as appealing as possible.

Taking perhaps a more controversial stance on RfP, this review has alluded to the argument that the benefits of RfP could be achieved through alternative resources. Though this would be undoubtably disputed by researchers, some studies would support this claim. It has, for example, been found that offering children an audible means of reading in accompaniment to a physical copy can indeed aid with semantic extraction, vocabulary development and word inference (Lwin, 2016; Valentini, Ricketts, Pye & Houston-Price, 2018). Moreover, presenting information multimodally appeals not only to children with barriers to reading, but also to the essential element of 'choice' in what is perhaps a broader sense: children may prefer accessing 'reading' in this form, so providing the option to access it in this way would only promote it.

Anyone who has experienced life inside a primary classroom would struggle to deny the magic that story time so often brings. Though research into children's perspectives on story time is minimal, it could be strongly argued that the silence and awe which seemingly captivates a class of children whilst being read to speaks for itself. One study carried out in Western Australia – notably, the only accessible one of its kind – does consult children's attitudes towards being read to (Ledger & Mergo, 2018). This study, importantly, found that 74-79% of children, aged 6-12, enjoyed being read to, reporting feelings of happiness, relaxation and generally feeling 'good inside' (Ledger & Mergo, 2018, p.130). This, compared with the 56.6% of children who reported enjoying RfP (Clark, 2019), as earlier drawn upon, perhaps suggests that more children enjoy literature when they can access it audibly, raising further questions as to why RfP is not promoted multimodally in order to engage more children.

Though this research does demonstrate some consideration of pupil's perspectives into being read to,

limited research is yet to exist on children's own perspectives into how they would like to engage in literature. It appears that 'choice' within reading is usually first facilitated through the lens of the teacher with children being either consulted last or not at all about their own decisions for reading. Considering this, the small sample of research explored within this review and the impactful statement of which still resonates in educational policy and literature today – "At the heart of the educational process lies the child" (Department of Education and Science, 1967, p.7) – it seems only sensible that a clearer, more thorough understanding of children's own perspectives on reading should be investigated, in order to truly achieve the benefits of RfP to all pupils, by first turning to the experts themselves: the children.

With this in mind, the following three research questions have been proposed for investigation:

1) What are pupils' views on reading in general?
2) Is there a link between reading enjoyment and ability?
3) Are pupils with reading difficulties able to identify what may help them with reading?

With a consideration of both the perspectives explored through the sample of literature and these research questions, an extensive consideration to research design will now follow, ensuring proposed methods are fit for purpose.

Research Design

As this research aims to explore the questions outlined at the end of the previous chapter, meticulous thought has been given to the methodology implemented for best obtaining answers to these. The methods selected, therefore, have been deemed as most suited for this specific study, but have been done so in a way which reflects the researcher's paradigmatic beliefs and ontological perspective. Therefore, it is worth noting that each method employed has been done so through the lens of both interpretivism and relativism. Such stances have been critiqued to embody elements of bias (Lin, 1998); hence, with this acknowledgement, mixed methods will be used "to uncover information and perspective, increase corroboration of the data, and render less bias and more accurate conclusions" (Reams & Twale, 2008, p.133). Correspondingly, both qualitative and quantitative data will be produced, enriching understanding of the issues explored (Molina-Azorin, 2016) and, therefore, counterbalancing the risk of bias and improving the reliability and validity of this research.

With this in mind, the rationale for each method will now be explored, alongside careful review of

their critiques. This, furthermore, will allow for limitations of this study to be reflectively addressed throughout. Ethical aspects are additionally considered during this section, in regard to specific methods, but a further statement of ethical considerations will be explored in greater depth at a later point.

Convenience sampling

Though it is recognised fully that the generalisability of such an approach can be scrutinised, non-probability sampling will be utilised for this study; namely, convenience sampling. This method has been deemed as wholly appropriate for this study for multiple reasons, some of which are out of the researcher's direct control. Firstly, and perhaps above all, COVID-19 restrictions limit movement within the school setting hugely, meaning the researcher is confined to the boundaries of one class 'bubble'. Without this limitation, it would possibly increase research reliability to replicate a sample from across the school. However, as convenience sampling is based on accessibility of participants to the researcher at the time (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011), this sampling technique is not only applicable, but also practical in the current circumstances.

The critiques around convenience sampling commonly concern generalisability; that is, it is not representative of a population due to its perhaps indiscriminate nature (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena & Nigam, 2013; Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Nevertheless, as this research is a case study – an intensive and specific study (Thomas, 2021) – this type of sampling is particularly useful, as it is investigating one group of children and does not aim to generate results that are representative of the population. If this were the case, time would be taken to select and produce a sample of which embodies the current population, employing probability sampling techniques, such as systematic or random sampling.

It is, however, firstly beyond the scope of this research to symbolise the entire population, but secondly, with thorough consideration that it aims to investigate a small group of children's perspectives that this sampling technique has been selected. This research explores opinion: something which is highly subjective, and therefore even if this was carried out on a larger, more representative scale, cannot be generalised due to its idiosyncratic nature. The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of this specific group of children, not all children. Convenience sampling, subsequently, remains fully suitable for producing the initial sample for this research.

Questionnaires

From this wider group, purposive sampling (momentarily explored) will be applied to generate a more confined sample to participate in an interview/focus group. This smaller sample, however, will depend on the quantitative results of questionnaires, which will be presented to the whole class (convenience sample). Doing this questionnaire prior to any further interviewing/focus group will allow children to identify where they sit with their viewpoints without being influenced. Therefore, the risk of the 'Hawthorne Effect' (Jones, 1992), whereby behaviour of the participants is modified due to an awareness of observation taking place, is greatly reduced. In addition, and with further reflection, questionnaires have been criticised to be an "intrusion into the life of the respondent" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.377). The researcher, therefore, will not be present at the time of which the questionnaires are being completed, in order to reflect ethical concerns by respecting the participants' privacy, but also, to increase validity of results.

Due to participants of this study still developing emotionally, they may be somewhat indecisive (Keenan, Evans & Crowley, 2016) and therefore struggle to answer questionnaire questions. With an appreciation of this, and again reflecting ethical consideration, a mixture of question types will be offered within the questionnaire provided to the children, so to, firstly, reduce the likelihood of provoking anxiety (Staphorst, Hunfeld, van de Vathorst, Passchier & van Goudoever, 2015), but secondly, generate relevant answers, due to the awareness that children can misinterpret what is being asked (Quas, Malloy, Melinder, Goodman, D'Mello & Schaaf, 2007). Namely, these question types will include 'rating scales', where participants identify the intensity of their response on a scale (Cohen et al., 2011), closed questions (i.e. multiple choice) and, finally, open-ended questions. Using such mixtures will enable me to elicit both genuine child perspectives without assuming whilst also generating statistical data to draw on within the analysis. Appropriate information will subsequently be provided in order for the further sample to be selected.

Purposive sampling

From the larger convenience sample that is the whole class, another sampling technique will be employed in order to generate a further, more confined sample, of which is more appropriate for the next stages of the research. Purposive sampling can be utilised to produce a sample of which the participants possess particular characteristics (Cohen et al., 2011). Though this study aims to explore pupils' perspectives and therefore does not aim to be generalisable, the subjective and diverse nature

of 'opinion' – as earlier highlighted – means a range of perspectives need to be explored. Hence, by purposefully selecting participants who self-reportedly possess a variety of qualities and opinion (i.e. dyslexia, particular reading enjoyment/difficulties), a variety of pupils and their perspectives will be explored. If care is not taken to select a sample in such a way, it could be strongly argued that pupils' perspectives are not being thoroughly explored and would consequently render this study not only unreliable, but also insignificant.

Semi-structured group interviews/focus group

This purposive sample, as selected based on questionnaire results, will then be involved in a semi-structured group interview/focus group. By incorporating elements of both semi-structured interviews and focus groups, it is hoped that authentic perspectives of the child participants will emerge, due to this method's more casual and collaborative manner. Within focus groups, the researcher typically takes an impartial stance and, therefore, allows the participants to predominate rather than the researcher (Cohen et al., 2011). Considering the child participants involved in the study may be particularly developmentally vulnerable and impressionable, the employment of this method has been deliberated with particular vigilance. With a reminder that trust is a crucial element of effective teaching (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004), it is of paramount importance to consider this element when probing into the minds of children, as this research intends to do. Indeed, Arksey & Knight (1999, p.116-118) remind us of the importance of establishing trust within research with children – points of which can be summarised as follows:

- To put children at ease;
- aid with confidence;
- avoid overreacting;
- provide a non-threatening environment; and
- make the experience enjoyable.

As such, it is hoped that a 'horizontal relationship' – whereby relationships are equal as opposed to asymmetrical (Keenan et al., 2016, p.279) will be established between participants and researcher – something of which would perhaps be compromised in individual interviews due to the risk of children feeling intimidated (Greig & Taylor, 1999). Moreover, constructivist theorists, such as Piaget (1952), consider this type of relationship to be essential in enabling children to explore differing perspectives, which is precisely what this study strives to elicit.

Although data collection has been structured by these particular methods in order to achieve the important aspects identified by Arksey & Knight (1999), as listed above, it is fully anticipated that the child participants of the focus group may still harness feelings of discomfort. With this in mind, the focus group activity will entail a drawing exercise to offer broader insights that may otherwise not be articulated (Krueger, 2015), due to the barrier of anxiety or shyness. Also considering children are still developing a rich lexicon – that is, vocabulary knowledge (Brooks & Kempe, 2012) – they may have difficulty expressing and articulating their thoughts, feelings and views. Therefore, providing children with a different means of expressing themselves (in the form of drawing) may prove to be exceptionally insightful. As such, participants in the focus group will be asked to independently draw themselves reading:

1) In a way they enjoy (for pleasure)

2) In a way that they do not enjoy as much

Qualitative methods of data collection have been critiqued to disregard children's limited linguistic ability (Noonan, Boddy, Fairclough & Knowles, 2016), so it is hoped that the results of employing such a method will represent the child's voice in a perhaps respectful way which is not obstructed by language. This is, of course, especially relevant to this study, as this focus group aims to involve children who may not have reaped the advantages of RfP – one of which was a breadth of vocabulary (Clark & Rumbold, 2006).

The questions of which will be discreetly implemented into the focus group activity will be of a semi-structured nature. This is in order to gain further insights into why children have drawn what they have, for example. Although it has been argued that participant perspectives can be explored in greater depth via the employment of more unstructured interview questions (Zhand & Wildemuth, 2017), teaching experience dictates that children often need support with provoking and articulating thought (again, perhaps due to their unsophisticated linguistic abilities - Brooks & Kempe, 2012). The nature of semi-structured interview questions, then, allow for participants to be prompted, questions to be rephrased and any necessary changes to be made, enabling the researcher to become more of an 'instrument' in the process (Galletta, 2013, p.75). Furthermore, this is something of which structured interviews would not permit: the rigidity of structured interviews does not cater for the subjective nature of 'perspective' to be fully explored, and since children have been said to be "the best sources of information about themselves" (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999, p.177), this risks vastly restricting children's responses and, therefore, research results.

Analysis

As a result of utilising such methods to gather data for this study, analysis will then need to take place in order to deduce meaning, which will inform the basis of the discussion in order to reach a conclusion. These subsequent sections will draw on findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data produced as a result of employing mixed methods within this study. The quantitative data produced from questionnaires, though initially used to select the purposive sample, will also be used for comparison to literature findings. This will require numerical statistics and, therefore, be generated into graphs. However, due to the nature of this research, and furtherly reflecting the interpretivist paradigmatic beliefs of the researcher, a large amount of the data produced will be qualitative; analysis will be done with caution, due to the consideration that "there are frequently multiple interpretations to be made of qualitative data" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.537).

To exhaustively examine the qualitative findings generated from the interview/focus group, thematic coding will be applied to extract key themes of which are depicted by participants (Hartas, 2010). In order to do this, a 'conceptual tool' is needed to fully examine data (Joffe, 2012), which will take the form of a 'coding frame'. This will be achieved through repeatedly analysing transcripts and notes made from the interview/focus group, which will have been audio recorded to ensure the data is correctly reproduced (Berazneva, 2013). Based on the predominating, previously recognised themes within the literature explored, but also with a consideration that this research aims to elicit wider perspective without confining these to selected themes and/or the influence of bias, the following themes will be reflected on and used as a systematic frame for coding:

- confidence;
- attitudes;
- ability; and, perhaps most importantly
- other.

From identifying these themes, an attempt to draw parallels to the themes analysed within the literature review will then be made to reflect on any correlations, perhaps though replicated themes. Though approaching data with these preconceived themes perhaps risks confirmation bias – that is, seeking evidence which confirms expectations (Wilgenburn & Elgar, 2013), this would require a hypothesis. As this study does not seek to prove or disprove a hypothesis, instead purely exploring the unpredictable and personal nature of perspective, this risk does not stand as an issue.

After the data has been analysed, this will be used to inform the discussion which will follow, enabling significance of these findings to be scrutinised. This will permit for implications for personal practice and professional development to accordingly be reflected upon, in light of the discussed findings. As such, ethical considerations will now be addressed – an essential component of all research.

Ethical considerations

Safety provision within all educational settings is undeniably of utmost importance: "Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility" (DfE, 2021, p.5). Moreover, educational research is no exception; if anything, it is even more crucial due to the particular vulnerability of young participants and the exceptionally sensitive and complex nature of educational research (Cohen et al., 2011; Wilson, 2017). The duty of the researcher, therefore, is to conduct research in a respectful and considerate manner, which adheres rigorously to ethical concerns at each and every step during the research process. It is with this utterly imperative consideration in mind that all elements of this research have been considered in conjunction with the ethical guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018), thus ensuring the proposed research is carried out in both a professional and reflective manner, but also with rigour and integrity.

Participant selection can be considered to be an 'obvious ethical issue' (Wilson, 2017). However, as this research utilises a whole-class convenience sample initially, to inform the selection of the purposive sample, this reduces the ethical dilemma of any child feeling undervalued (Wilson, 2017), as each child will have some involvement in the study, providing they give consent. Further ethical concerns regarding methodology have been reflected upon throughout the previous section of this proposal.

Informed consent will be sought from all participants involved in the study, including the headteacher of the school and caregivers as well as children themselves. This is due to the fact that age is a 'vulnerable circumstance' of which "may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily to participate" (BERA, 2018, p.15). This will be obtained through a written means, whereby all details of the research will be explicitly outlined to ensure full transparency of what the research entails is thoroughly understood. For children, this will also be sought through a written format, which will be presented in a more child-friendly way, including pictures, simpler

language and a tick-box to opt in or out. It will be made clear to participants at this stage that they have the right to withdraw whenever they wish, with no reason (BERA, 2018).

Seeking consent in such a way will also enable details of confidentiality and data storage to be offered. All data will be anonymised when reporting on findings, including that of the school and participants. Though it will be made clear that audio recording will be made for transcription from the focus group to guarantee data is accurately reproduced (Berazneva, 2013), these will be used for this purpose only, to ensure confidentiality and privacy of all involved is fully respected. In line with the Data Protection Act (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport & Home Office, 2018), this data will be kept on a secure device and destroyed upon completion and submission of the research.

Implications for personal professional development

Undeniably, carrying out this research will enable the raised issues and themes to be explored in much greater depth and, consequently, lead to conclusions that are unpredictable at this stage. In turn, these will greatly inform personal practice and professional development. Notwithstanding, through preliminarily exploring these matters prior to completing the study, value can indeed still be obtained in the interest of both personal practice and professional development. This final section, therefore, explores what these are, and how, moving forward, these can and will be used in an informative way to aid and enhance best practice.

Based on the literature which has been explored and analysed for this research, it stands clear that pupil perspective is an area that significantly lacks amongst all corners of educational research, but specifically in regard to their own learning. Though research often provides a wealth of well-supported evidence into how best to promote and facilitate children's learning, it perhaps overlooks and, consequently, neglects children's insights into their own learning. Whilst educational research inevitably continues to evolve and develops broadly, it remains true that children are "the best sources of information about themselves" (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999, p.177), highlighting the importance of teacher and learner establishing a 'horizontal relationship' (Keenan et al., 2016, p.279), deeply rooted in mutual respect and trust. This, therefore, is something which will be largely considered and reflected within personal practice, forming the foundations of it.

Arguably, it is possible that indulging in pupils' perspectives lies as key in, firstly, empowering children to play a role in teaching as well as learning, but secondly, in identifying why RfP is

continually declining and, therefore, actively fostering it in occurring consistently, perhaps even habitually, amongst children and young people. It is hoped that this, in turn, will not only enrich learning beyond the classroom, but quality of life, since evidence dictates RfP can enhance this (Baumann & Duffy, 1997; Clark & Rumbold, 2006; DfE, 2012; Cremin et al., 2014; Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018; Mak & Fancourt, 2020).

The benefits of RfP, as clearly demonstrated, remain strongly evidenced and are therefore difficult to argue against. With this in mind, it is imperative to reflect upon this within personal practice; thereby ensuring 'reading' is offered to all children multimodally, employing minimal rules for enjoying these (Pennac, 2006). With this, it is assured that reading is actually being promoted for the 'pleasure' of the children and categorically not for satisfaction of the practitioner. Furthermore, and to conclude, by personally consulting all children about every aspect of their own learning, it is with extremely optimistic anticipation that versatile, receptive and, above all, happy learners who harness a love of learning, will emerge.

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