



The Reading Aloud in Britain Today (RABiT) Symposium, Saturday 17 November 2018

Everyday Reading: Explorations of Literacy and Oracy

Presenters and abstracts

Catherine Sadler, PhD Creative Writing candidate at the University of Hull, writing on poetics of loss and the archive

Reading/thinking/making a poem

This talk will unpick some of the way in which reading aloud can be useful to thinking and writing poetry. It will look at ideas of making, correspondence, the relationship between the reader and the listener and consider the space between the two.

Gordon Wells, Project Manager of the Soillse inter-university Gaelic research network, and Co-ordinator of the Island Voices/Guthan nan Eilean online community project

Reading Island Voices: Issues around the primacy of speech and the privileging of literacy, from a Hebridean viewpoint

Divergent views on the relative value or status of spoken and written language skills may lead to a disconnect between lay community members and language professionals, activists, or academics, and conflicted approaches to language support, teaching and/or revitalisation. Taking the bilingual Outer Hebrides as a case study, an online language capture and curation project is described which attempts to engage with these issues, acknowledging an important place for Reading Aloud in the range of strategies employed.

Jenny Hartley, Emeritus Professor Roehampton University and co-founder of Prison Reading Groups

Twenty Years Behind Bars: Reading Aloud in Prison Reading Groups

For the last twenty years Prison Reading Groups (PRG) has been helping to set up and run reading groups in prisons across the UK. There are now more than 45 groups, and what characterises them is their variety. We think it is vital that group members choose what and how they read. This presentation opens the door on the variety, the challenges, and the pleasures to be found in reading together behind bars. It focuses on reading aloud with an analysis of the current progress of *Macbeth* on the mental health wing at HMP Wormwood Scrubs.

Jo Westbrook, Julia Sutherland & Jane Oakhill, University of Sussex

'Just reading': the impact of reading narratives aloud at a faster pace of on the comprehension of poorer adolescent readers in English classrooms

This paper reports on a mixed methods study conducted in spring 2015 with 20 teachers and 365 students in Year 8 (12-13 years) in ten schools in the South of England with 44% of pupils being assessed as 'poor

readers'. All 20 classes read two whole, challenging novels consecutively over 12 weeks as part of their formal English lessons, not as volitional independent reading. Ten teachers, one from each school pair, received additional theorised pedagogic training which included how to move students through the text through reading aloud. Standardised test results showed that students in both groups increased their comprehension but, somewhat to the surprise of the research team, poorer readers made significantly more progress than their better or average+ peers. Equally surprising was that there was no direct effect of the training programme: however, the qualitative data showed that students in these classes experienced a faster, more engaged and coherent reading of the two texts. In the trained classes, a key feature that appeared to directly support attainment was the reading aloud of the text in large chunks in every lesson, either by the teacher or by a capable peer in stable reading groups. However, this pattern of moving through the text was also seen in some of the untrained teachers' classes as they found the best way to move rapidly through the text, providing a contrast to their customary slower and more fragmented ways in which teachers got students to read a text. This paper explores how this faster reading aloud was undertaken, and what benefits were apparent in doing so. Some of these benefits were: increase of fluency and automaticity in readers, scaffolding less confident or able readers in reading faster and getting through two whole texts, often for the first time in their lives, supporting different forms of inference needed for longer novels, and increasing engagement and motivation to read.

Kevin Harvey, School of English, the University of Nottingham & **Susan Jones**, School of Education, the University of Nottingham

Whose meaning is it anyway? The communal construction of meaning in shared reading groups

Shared reading involves reading short stories, poems, novels and plays aloud with groups of people who meet in a range of settings. Readings are conducted by a facilitator, after which the group members share their responses to the texts. The social and therapeutic benefits of shared reading have been well-documented, often with an emphasis on the role of literature in improving the well-being of individuals. We bring together our backgrounds in the study of sociolinguistics and literacy education to discuss the work of an inner city shared reading group with which we are both involved. The emphasis in the shared reading we present is on the members' active and agentive participation in the co-construction of meaning through shared reading and the discussion of texts. We argue that a focus on the collaborative aspect of shared reading contributes to understanding of the role it can play in supporting inclusive, participatory arts practice in communities.

Lionel Warner, University of Reading

Reading Aloud in the high school: why do they keep doing it?

The presentation considers reading aloud practices in high school classrooms, from the perspective of teachers and students.

Maxine Burton, freelance scholar

Reading Aloud in 19th century England: some evidence from Victorian fiction

In my doctoral and subsequent research, I have been keen to promote the use of fiction as a valid and useful documentary source. I have found that novels can offer not only valuable insights into the presence of literacy and illiteracy but also deeper truths about society – 'the thoughts, feelings and intentions that lie forever concealed from the reporter and the historian', as playwright and novelist, Michael Frayn expresses it. In this paper I analyze a selection of novels by Dickens, Gaskell, Trollope and Hardy to find out what they can tell us about the practice of reading aloud by adults in Victorian England, and the attitudes surrounding this practice.

Russell Aldersson, City Literary Institute

Re-thinking "aloud" in the context of sign language users

This short presentation considers how reading aloud might manifest in the context of individuals who have a signed language as a first or preferred language. What similarities and differences might there be when deaf adults read and "vocalise" in a signed language and what are the functions and benefits of such an activity?

Sue Walters, UCL Institute of Education,

Reading as recitation in faith school settings: Issues for learning and teaching

My recent research has focused on children learning to read their religious texts at the heart of their faith in community school settings: in Mosque schools and more recently in a Jewish Sunday school in a large Reform Synagogue. This research was conducted in order to contribute to research that has considered children's literacy learning in community schools and other sites of learning and to focus more deeply on learning to read a liturgical literacy: that is on learning to read 'out loud' a sacred text (Rosowsky 2008, 2013a). This is a neglected area of research. My presentation will focus on what counts as reading in such faith settings, how this involves broadening our conceptions of reading and some of the learning and teaching issues that arise for learners and teachers.

Victoria Watkins, UCL Institute of Education

Reading Year 7 and Year 12 Reading Partnerships

This is an investigation into the Reading Partners scheme at a large inner London comprehensive school. Reading Partners is a project whereby Year 7 students who are deemed 'weak' readers are paired with Year 12 students; they then read together in the library each week over the course of a school year. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between these readers and to further understand what is gained from shared reading. The research focuses on three pairs of students involved in the project in order to understand what is significant about individual pairings and interpret common threads amongst the different partnerships. The three 'case studies' are analysed in detail in order to understand the different relationships more closely and comparisons are made across the three partnerships in the body of the analysis. A variety of types of evidence such as student and teacher journals, observational notes, conversations/interviews and students' collages have been generated from Reading Partners sessions. I argue that collaborative and 'social' reading provides fertile ground for the students' development and that the sessions go beyond 'just' reading. The significance of the personal relationship and all that happens 'beyond' reading texts together should not be underestimated.

Sam Duncan and **Mark Freeman**, both of the UCL Institute of Education, will also report on the RABiT project.