

University of Wales, Trinity St David
BMPF7010 : Module 6

The research questions :

Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence?

and.....

Can it enhance a relationship with literature for children age 5 to14?



What did I do?

An overview :

- I delivered a course on reading aloud with vocal tuition
- with the aim of increasing confidence in children age 5 to 14
- in various settings
- over four x thirty-minute sessions
- also to discover if this process could connect children with literature
- to enhance the pleasure of reading



Background : relating to vocal coaching

- ▶ Voice over since 1999
- ▶ Worked at a university counselling service (2000-2003)
- ▶ Coached adults in voice over work – since 2017
- ▶ Taught drama to adults and children – 2019/2020

- ▶ Started vocal coaching in adult drama lessons to increase confidence.
 - ▶ This included relaxation, breathing techniques, projection, explaining intonation and enunciation.
 - ▶ One person gave up smoking and overcame their fear of public speaking, another got a new job. Another felt confident about auditioning and secured a part in an independent film.

- ▶ Introducing vocal coaching into children's drama groups
 - ▶ The parent of a particularly shy child thanked me for increasing her child's confidence at school.

Background – relating to reading with children

- It appears there is no practice of vocal coaching during RA. Despite many RA charities/services including :
 - Coram Beanstalk (Coram Beanstalk, 2019)
 - Book Trust (Book Trust, 2025)
 - The Reader (The Reader, 2025)
- I have always read with my children as my mother did with me and we have all been recognised as advanced readers in primary school (Parris, 2024)
- I was a volunteer reader in a primary school
- I completed the Coram Beanstalk volunteer reader training for research (Parris, 2024).

I hypothesise that vocal coaching whilst children read aloud may instil confidence and connect them with literature.

Justification – Personal Motivation

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- At school I found it easy, as an early reader, to read from the bible in front of the whole school.
 - I have always been curious as to why others are not able to do this.....if I can, they can....
 - Therefore, it was rewarding to see adults' and childrens' confidence levels rise with vocal tuition in my classes.
- Whilst volunteer reading at a local primary school in my 40s I noted children's reading aloud skills overall were surprisingly poor.

During research for the Masters, I came to understand that reading aloud is the best start to child's education.

- As a voice over artist, it seemed natural to me to put vocal tuition and reading aloud together.

Justification – backed by literature

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- A fifth of pupils leaving school lack basic English skills (Schools Vacancy, 2025).
- Hundreds of thousands of children leave school without basic literacy skills for employment (Children's Commissioner, 2023).
- Teachers feedback from the Lost for Word report (Assessment, 2025)

: since the Covid 19 pandemic suggest children's communication skills have worsened.

Broken down as :

- 89% of primary school teachers
- 78% of secondary school teachers

Aims of project

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

➤ Connect children with their voice to increase :

- Confidence
- Assertiveness
- Communication skills

- FURTHER TO : previous positive research results (Parris, 2023) using the Power Source Filter Theory (Fernandes, 2022) which was using literature to coach.
- From my 2023 project, reading became a more intrinsic part of future research as I realised the importance of RA for success in education.



Objectives

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- Increased confident public speaking skills
- Develop communication
- Encourage assertiveness skills including boundary assertion
 - By posture and breath
 - By using relevant literature eg, 'Sam I Am' (Ruiz & Seuss 2001)
- Decrease public speaking anxiety with RA becoming a skill
- Acquire extended vocabulary
- Students recognise the importance of reading regards education and communication

Literature Review

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

Findings

- It was a **challenge** to find peer reviewed literature on reading aloud with vocal coaching. From previous research (Parris, 2022. Parris, 2023, Parris, 2024) there is an abundance of public speaking data but thus far, I have not found research on combining reading aloud with vocal coaching for public speaking confidence.
- There were **limitations** on **peer reviewed** research of **confidence building** in children **as opposed to grey literature** on the subject ie, people who are in the business of trying to increase confidence via drama, singing, art therapy and other non reading related activities.
- Confidence** is the key to achieving goals, reaching potential and recognising success (PT Staff, 2025, NHS, 2025, Fong & Krause, 2014, Kids Health, 2025).
- Academics** appear to **research** confidence, reading abilities and public speaking which provides data, but **practitioners** with life experience appear to lead the way in actioning activities that **assist people in the real world** (Giang, 2025, Sinek, 2025).
- There is data on public speaking and data on reading aloud – there appears to be no data on combining reading aloud whilst coaching public speaking skills.

Literature Review

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

Professional Context

- 84% of children in London were school ready compared to 59% in Manchester (Leeds University, 2024). I was a child in the South and moved to the North in 1989. Rochdale has much children poverty according to the Bookmark Reading Charity (BRC, 2025).
- There appears no real cause and effect' incentive for children to read.
- BRC have downloadable activities and a one-to-one reading programme for primary school children reading stories and playing games (Bookmark, 2025). I would suggest that no firm skill is acquired such as public speaking skills whilst connecting to the literature despite RA being within their scope.
- Comparative business model – Commando Joe's (Joe's 2024) – provides military style training in primary schools by veterans. Ethos questioned and veterans are trained in soft skills (Hayes & Hogan, 2021): RA and vocal coaching by veterans could be cheaper, build good community relations and be a better start in education for children. Simply providing a nation of readers could cut costs on the £8.2 million spent on these projects (DfE, 2014).

Ethical considerations : inside researcher

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- Exclusions
 - Special Education needs and disabilities (SEND) - I am untrained for SEND, no time for inclusion of SEND professional.
 - Two children from a home environment that was distracting, and they were too far apart in age.
 - Theatre group children I used in previous research.
- Dyslexia : mild or undiagnosed.
 - Prepared for this with Sam I Am book (Ruiz & Seuss, 2021) as this would be easier to read if children were challenged by other literature.
- Bias
 - Possible bias from children that know me.
 - from parents who know me ie, the childminder whose children did not really want to take part.
 - I had to use children from the local primary school my children went to. No other schools were interested.
 - Known in the community but not as a professional – being in a research position was possibly misinterpreted.
- Participants can stop at any time – even if parents have signed a consent form – the child may stop with the assurance that this is in line with UWTSD guidelines and all information for all participants is coded and no personal information is kept.

Methods – settings and participants

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- Settings used to conduct research :
 - 1. A childminder's business which has CCTV.
 - 2. A studio for musicians.
 - 3. My local library.
 - 4. My home (I have public liability insurance).
- Sourcing participants – word of mouth, email to every local primary school, library advertisement, local Facebook page, local music service.
 - Age range sought : 5 to 14
 - Age range of participants available for research were 8 to 14
 - Possible reasons for not gaining participants age 5-8.
 - Perhaps due to a lack of understanding of the research relating to children who are less likely to practice independent reading (Spear-Swerling, 2025).
 - I no longer know adults with children age 5-8 as my children are older now.
 - Excluded home educated children as they may get more time to RA (McDonald, 2024).



Outline of the research project.

Based on literature and prior experience :

1. Design a course in vocal coaching whilst children read aloud
2. Run the course in my local community
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of this course
4. Evaluate the findings alongside a parent/carer survey of attitudes towards reading at home and school.

Methodology – Scaffolding :

As a pragmatist researcher (Kapur, 2020), I take a pragmatic stance with abductive reasoning (Nottingham, 2025, Stewart, 2025) as I start with an observance – the observance being – clients who were challenged by voice over scripts whilst having vocal coaching enjoyed the process and reported increased confidence having done so.

Combining two acts together :

- reading out loud and vocal tuition
- with the intent of extended vocabulary learning and reading for pleasure.

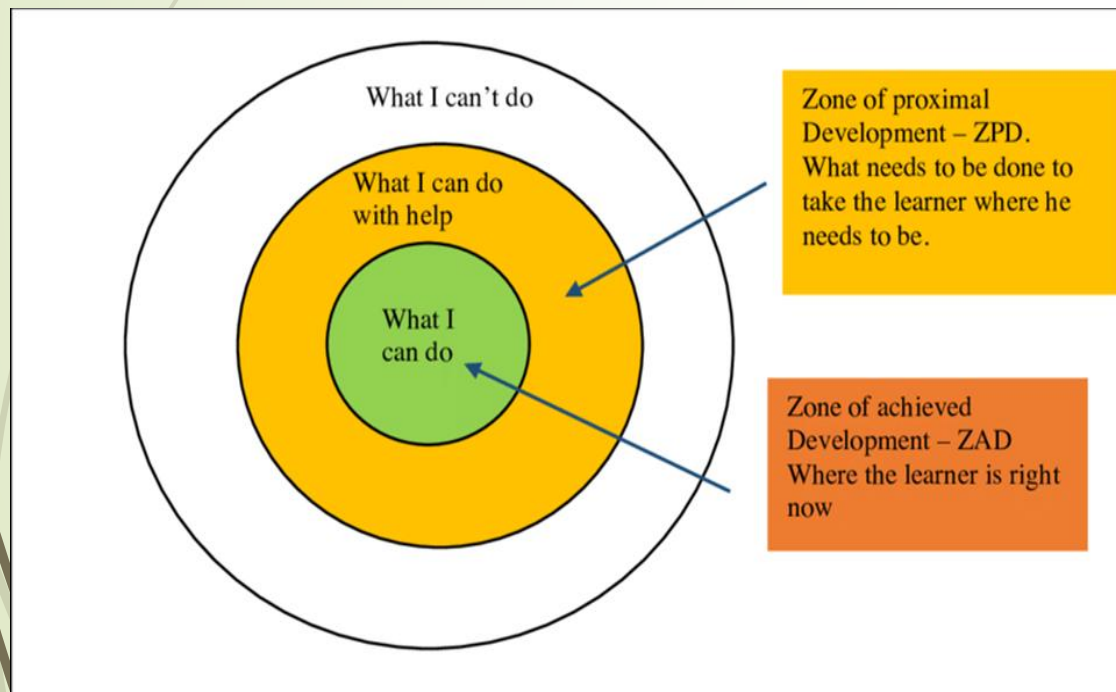


Figure 2. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and scaffolding (Kurt, 2020).

BEST PRACTICES FOR APPLYING DEWEY'S THEORY OF LEARNING

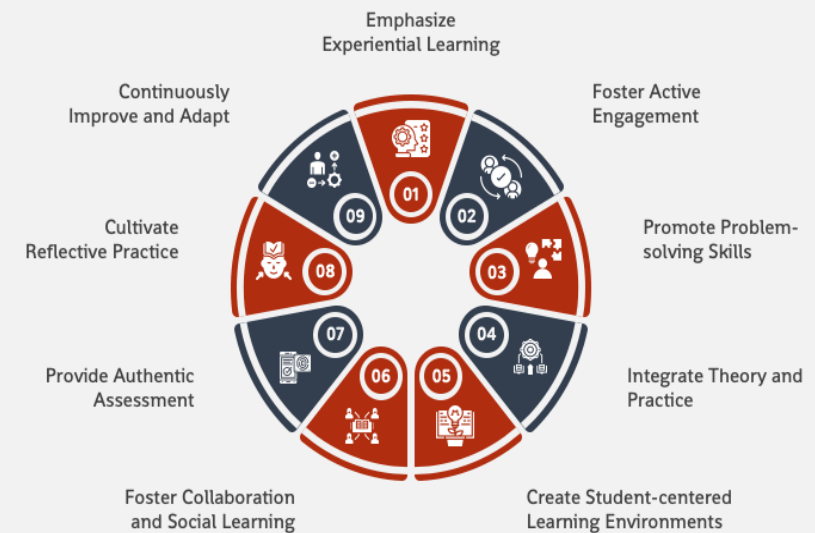


Figure 3. John Dewey theory of learning template (Collidu, 2025).

Methodology

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

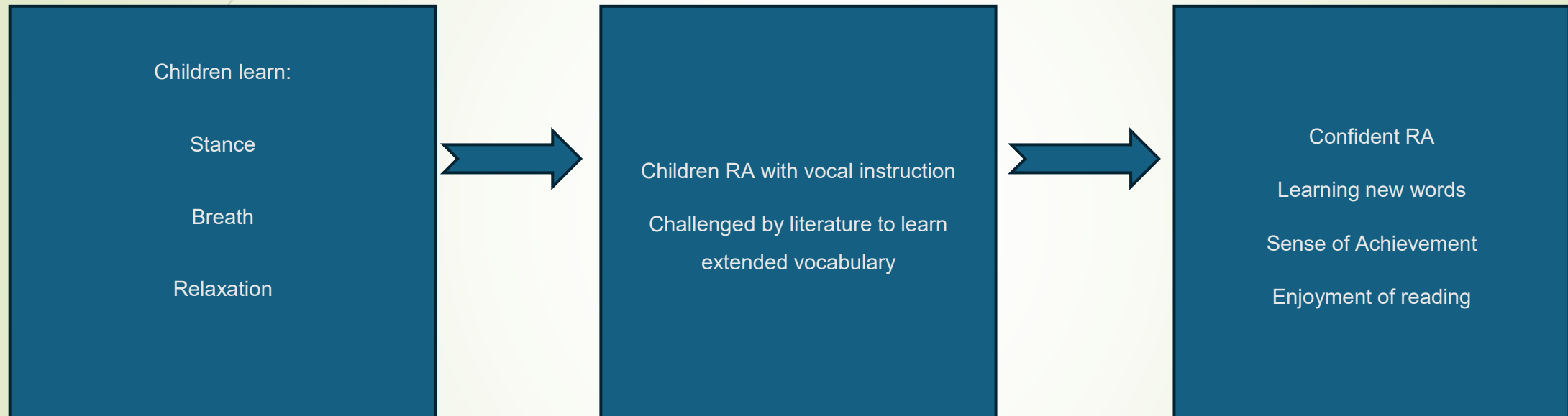


Figure 1. G. Parris, 2025

Student centred approach with scaffolding = pragmatist and constructionist : empathic, supportive and inclusive approach to how an individual can learn through doing whilst having an adjusted amount of support by their educator to get them through the learning experience (Prospero, 2025).

Methods : vocal coaching whilst reading aloud sessions

Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- 4 x thirty-minute sessions of vocal coaching whilst children RA. Designed so that two can run consecutively,
- **Session 1** : Limited RA due to questionnaire and interview.
 - **Consent forms, LSQs with questions on how children enjoy reading and how they feel about having to RA in class, Interviews.** Demonstrating components that make up the voice including **teeth and tongue model**. Explaining everyone's voice is **unique**. Auditory feedback loop explained in relation to **how we perceive our voices**. Humming with hands on and off ears and vocal exercise 'ooh' 'eee' 'aaaah'. Voice as an instrument. Blocking nostrils and saying own name and G. D. HUH. Warm up of 'Bob's Got a Head like a Ping Pong Ball'.

Methods : vocal coaching whilst reading aloud sessions

Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- 4 x thirty-minute sessions of vocal coaching whilst children RA. Designed so that two can run consecutively,
- Session 2 : **Recap** on Session 1. **Warm up with stance/posture for RA instructed** (feet hip distance apart, knees soft, back straight, stretch up, head facing forwards) Explain **why reading is so important**. Explain public speaking and participants are learning a skill. Explain **diaphragm, projection and perform blow up balloon exercise** to demonstrate lung function. Let out air from balloon and explain '**diction diminishes with distance**'. How to **project and speak by exhaling slowly as we talk**. Say **vowel sound** as if **to hit a distant object**. **Project the name 'Steve'** as if calling for him for the difference between shouting and projection. Participants read aloud.

Methods : vocal coaching whilst reading aloud sessions

Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- 4 x thirty-minute sessions of vocal coaching whilst children RA. Designed so that two can run consecutively,
- Session 3 : **Recap** on previous sessions. Instruct whilst participants RA. **Relaxation and breath exercises** and repeat RA with recap on stance/posture. Researcher reads paragraph about imagining being in a book whilst participants close eyes, relax and breathe. **Tongue Twisters**. Researcher explains **Articulation, Pronunciation, Intonation and Enunciation** which means they have '**A PIE**'. Participants **mouth various words** eg, sock, fox, shed, sham, fad. Participants RA with vocal instruction.

Methods : vocal coaching whilst reading aloud sessions

Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- 4 x thirty-minute sessions of vocal coaching whilst children RA. Designed so that two can run consecutively,
- Session 4 : **Recap** on stance/posture. **A PIE reiterated**. Participants RA. Participants end with each reading a character's part from **Sam I Am** (Ruiz & Seuss, 2021) with vocal instruction and praise. LSQ questionnaire and interview. Thanks to participants.

Methods – quantitative and qualitative data gathering

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- **5 point Likert scale questionnaire : before and duplicated after research.**
 - a) I enjoy reading
 - b) I feel confident about reading out loud
 - c) I am comfortable with how much voice sounds to me.
 - d) I am comfortable with how my voice may sound to other people.
 - e) I think I would feel nervous about having to speak on a topic in front of my class at school.
 - f) I would be fearful of making mistakes when asked to read out loud in public.
 - g) I would worry about what people will think of me if I were to read out loud in public.
 - h) I would feel anxious about being laughed at when I am speaking in public.

All these questions are in line with research on how people feel about public speaking (Parris, 2023) . I enjoy reading is a question that might be comparable with how parents/carers feel about reading aloud with children from the parent/carer survey.

Methods – quantitative and qualitative data gathering

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

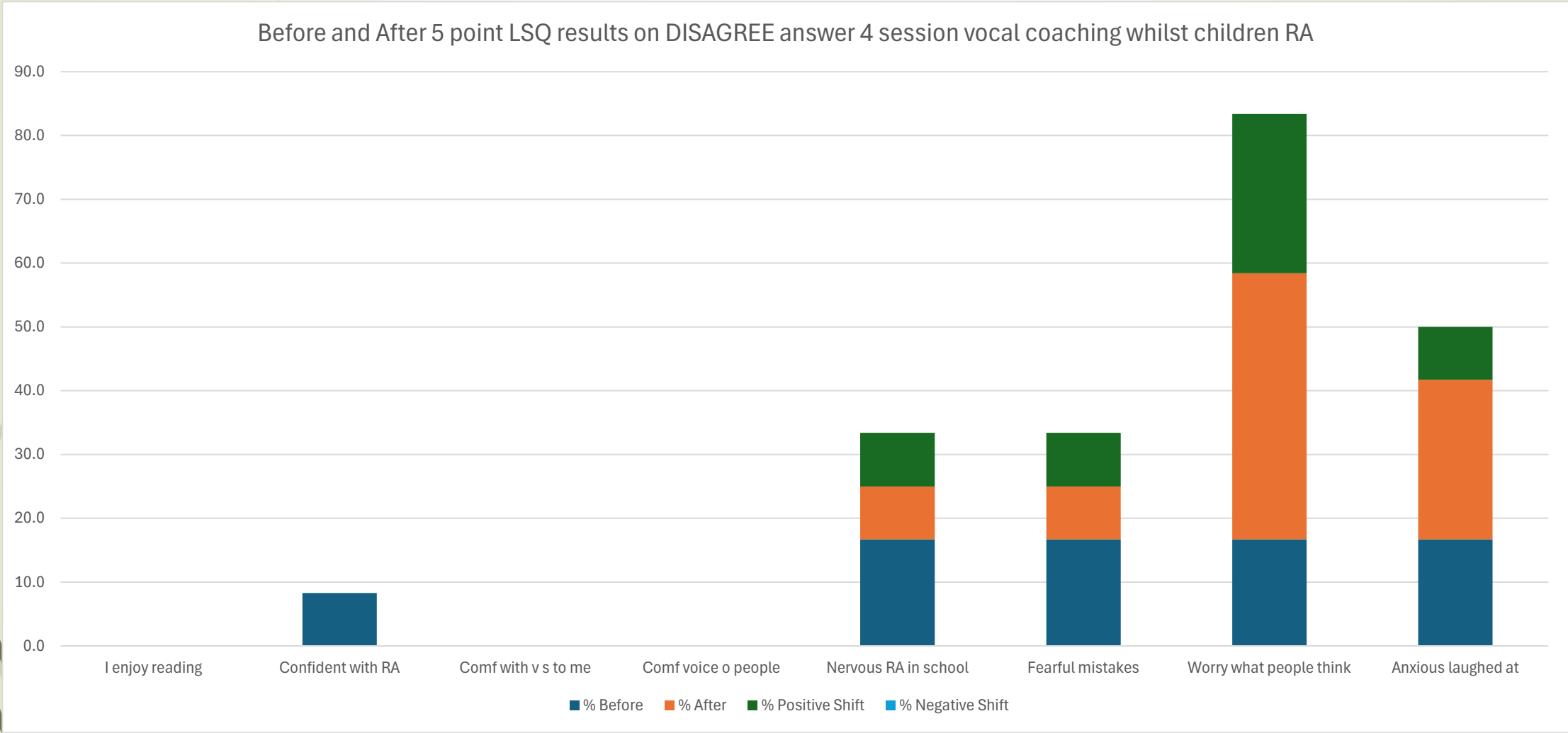
- Interview before research started:
 - 1. How do you feel about speaking in public?
 - 2. How many times a day do you think you are reading?
 - 3. If you were asked to read something out loud, but you realised you could not understand the words you need to say out loud, how would you feel?
 - 4. If you knew you could read the words because you know a lot of words, then how would you feel about reading something out loud in public?
- Interview after research started:
 - 1. How much would you score this course out of ten with ten being enjoyable and one not enjoyable ?
 - 2. Do you think this course should be taught in schools?
- Online survey for parents/carers to cross reference data that may indicate children are not reading for pleasure at home and parents' attitudes towards reading at home and reading at school.

Findings : overall result for confidence in reading out loud.

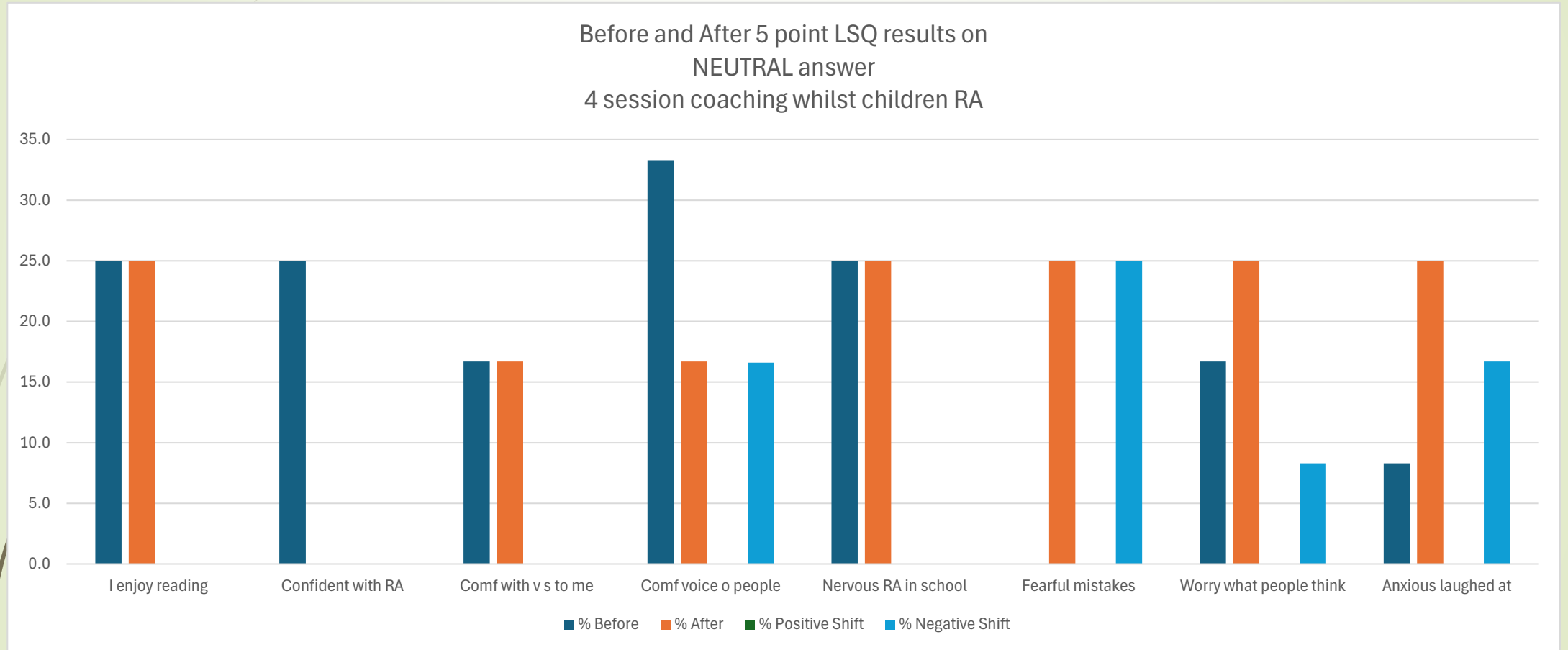
Q2	I feel confident about reading out loud. A = agree, SA = slightly agree, N= neutral, SD = slightly disagree, D = disagree YELLOW is BEFORE. BLUE IS AFTER. GREEN is NO CHANGE					
	A	SA	N	SD	D	Positive shift
BOB1	GREEN					0
BOB2	GREEN					0
BOB3	BLUE		YELLOW			2
BOB4				BLUE	YELLOW	1
BOB5	BLUE		YELLOW			2
BOB6	GREEN					0
BOB7	BLUE			YELLOW		3
BOB8		GREEN				0
BOB9		BLUE	YELLOW			1
BOB10	GREEN					0
BOB11		GREEN				0
BOB12	BLUE			YELLOW		3

Findings : Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

Positive outcomes on negative emotions around reading aloud in front of people.

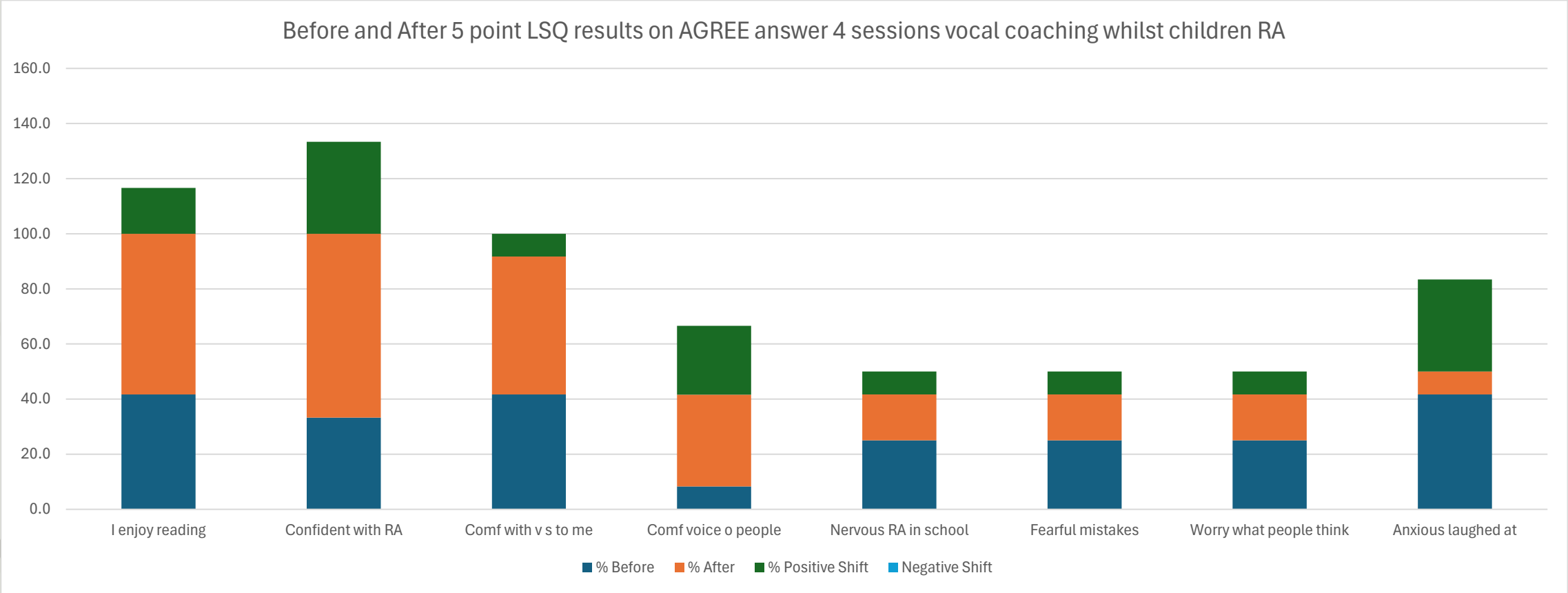


Findings – neutral positions on Likert scale questionnaire.



Findings: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

Positive shift shown in green for each question asked on the Likert Scale Questionnaire.



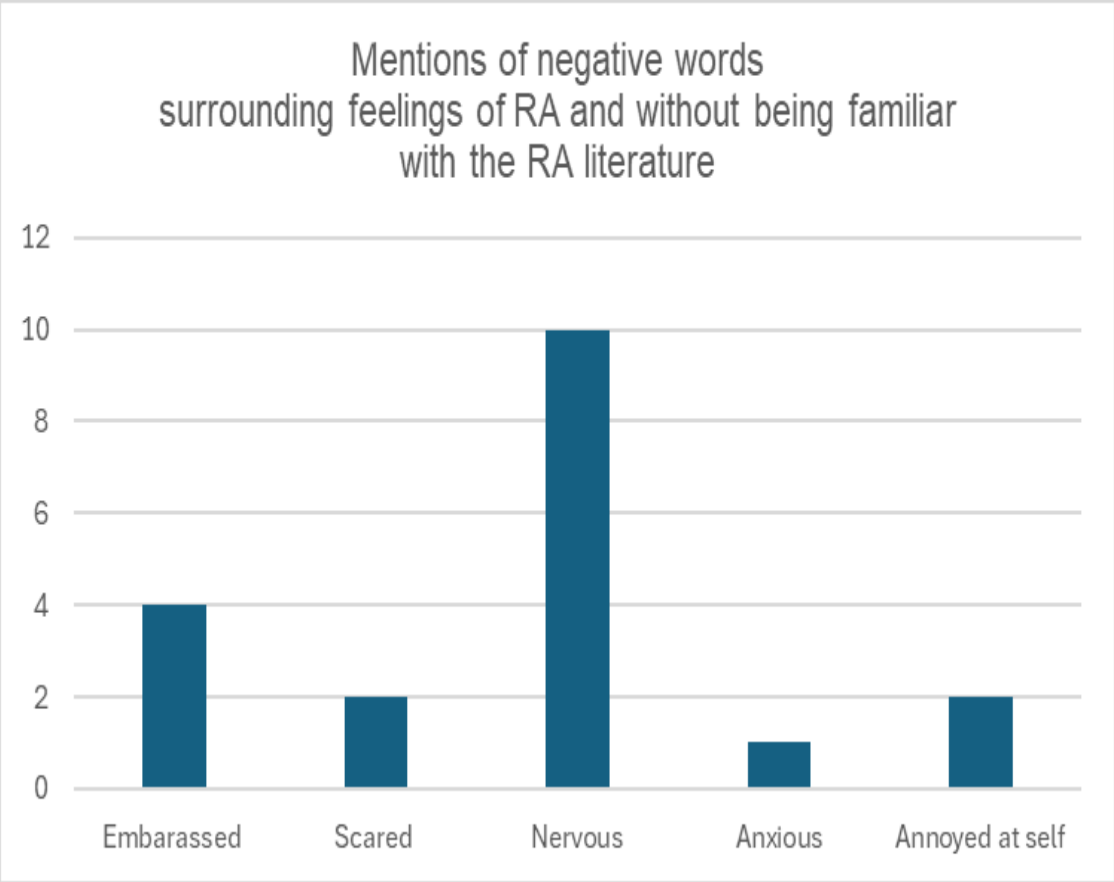
Findings : I enjoy reading

Green = no change
Yellow = before
Blue = after

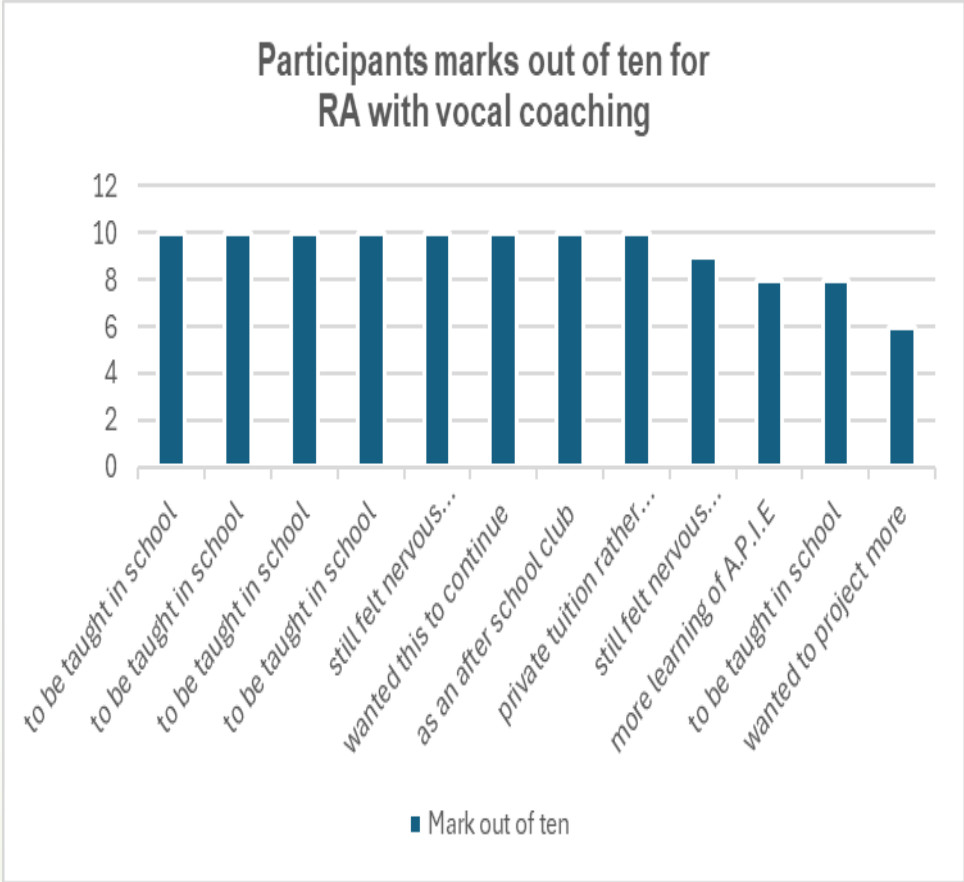
Q1	I enjoy reading	Average positive shift of 0.3333				
		A=agree, S=slightly agree, N=Neutral, SD=slightly disagree, D=disagree				
	A	SA	N	SD	D	Neg/Pos shift
BOB1						0
BOB2						0
BOB3						1
BOB4						0
BOB5						2
BOB6						0
BOB7						0
BOB8						0
BOB9						1
BOB10						0
BOB11						0
BOB12						0

Findings : Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

How participants felt about reading unfamiliar literature from the interview before research started



How participants felt about the course of four sessions of vocal coaching whilst reading aloud



Findings :

Asking participants :

How many times a day do you think you are reading something?

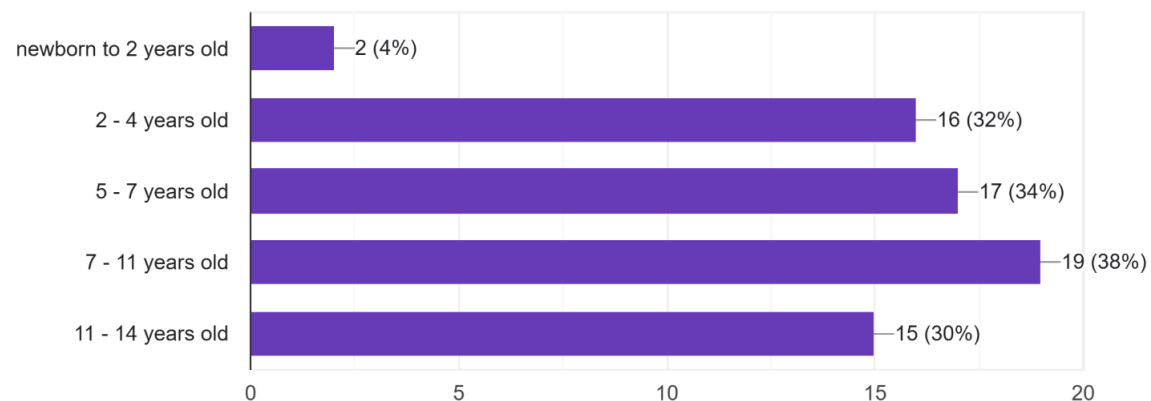
Q	How many times a day do you think you are reading something?	
		Notes/observations
BOB 1	Once or twice	Attends a local youth theatre group
BOB 2	Three to five	Attends a local youth theatre group
BOB 3	A lot – I like to read	Introverted character
BOB 4	Three chapters a day	Introverted character
BOB 5	One or two	Could mean chapters?
BOB 6	Eight chapters of my football book	Extroverted character
BOB 7	Quite a lot	Introverted and sometimes stutters
BOB 8	100	Son of the researcher
BOB 9	One	A musician
BOB 10	200 – if I see something I read it	Son of a literacy lead
BOB 11	Once at school	Reads when told to by teacher
BOB 11	Four times at home	Only silent reading
BOB 12	Once	Parents tell BOB12 to read. Prefers to read at home.

Findings : Parent / Carer online questionnaire

50 responses on Google Forms.

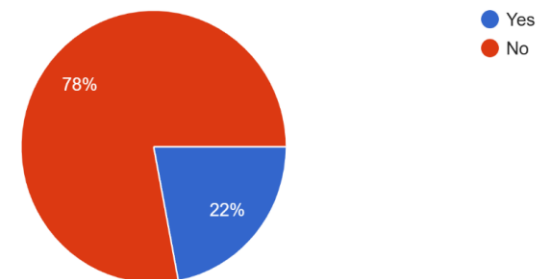
The ages of my child/children are - please tick all that apply

50 responses



I have been offered relevant training by school or an associated provider in why reading with children is important to their education.

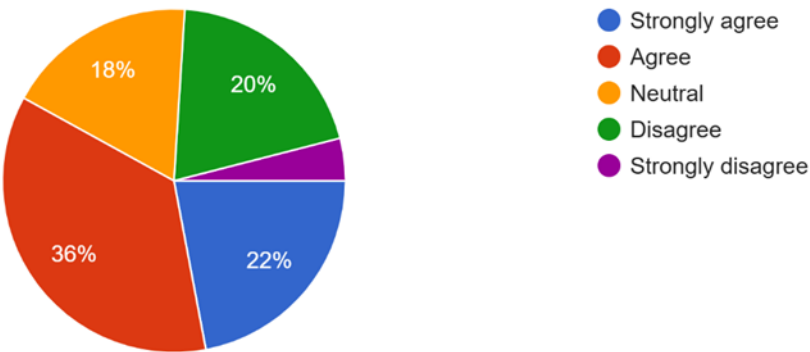
50 responses



Findings : Parent/Carer online survey

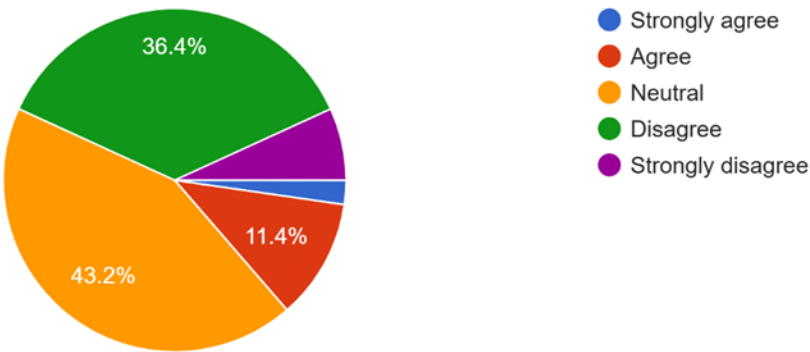
Consider the following statement : "schools should be responsible for teaching children to read and communicate effectively in doing so". Do you....

50 responses



I would be interested in a short 1-2 hour course in the importance of reading with children for their future success including tips on how to read with ch.../children enjoying the stories. Optional question.

44 responses



Conclusion and recommendations

: Can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

➤ Limitations regarding the research :

- time for the study and number of participants means real results could be better with more time and more participants.
- There were no negative shifts overall
- Children enjoyed the research.
- Extended vocabulary was achieved from the literature provided.
- Children enjoyed being challenged by new books and requested books to read again.
- One child used the techniques immediately at a concert and felt really pleased to have learnt from the research.
- I would suggest that reading out loud with vocal coaching has been a success in this instance and with eight sessions the research would have yielded more positive results.

Recommendations

A greater population of participants for research would benefit results in vocal coaching whilst children read aloud.

And a longitudinal approach to this to reflect on bias and progress of children in education.

That vocal coaching would underpin education in oracy.

Personal & professional reflections

:can vocal coaching whilst reading out loud improve confidence and enhance a relationship with literature with children age 5-14?

- I would seek to start local practice in my community to see if further positive results can be achieved. I could then gain testimonies as proof of the research's worth and hone my skills to develop this as a programme to take to my local education authority.
- I may go back to the primary school where I carried out research and offer the course as a volunteer for a weekly school club.
- The recent news regarding teaching oracy in schools (Guardian, 2025, Labour, 2023) is an area I am keen to explore. I believe that beginning with a course in reading aloud with vocal coaching would be a good foundation to then exploring skills in oracy.
- I will research oracy to see if there is a possible consultancy role I could make for myself.
- It is my intention to offer a free event in my local community – perhaps in libraries or community centres – to run an event on why reading aloud with children is so important. I realise this may be a challenge as parents and carers are continually busy, however, I will continue to think about ideas surrounding this and perhaps a pre-recorded online event might be a way forward so that parents/carers can access this at a convenient time.

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