

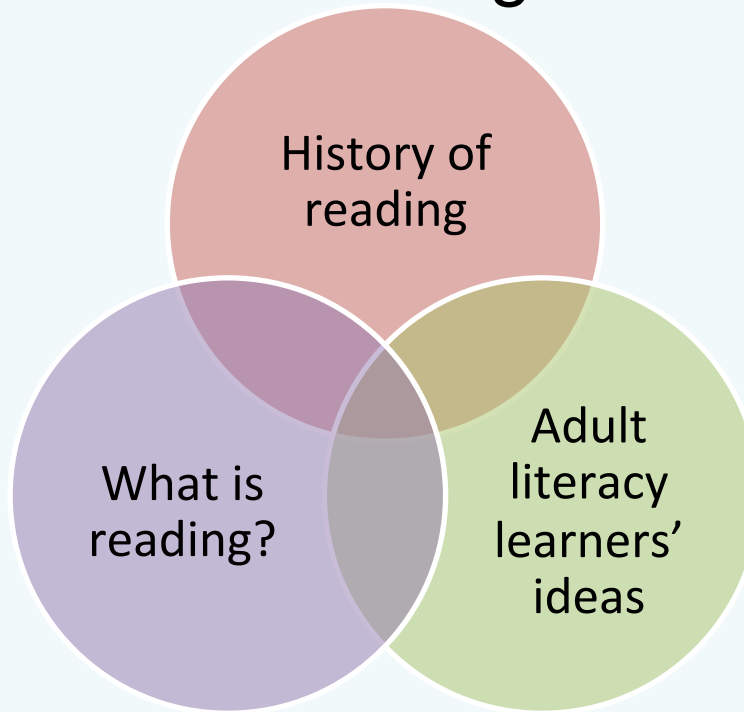
Reading Aloud in Britain Today (RABiT)

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Why study real life adult reading aloud practices?



Led by a view of literacy and of literacy teaching that says we need to take a close look at what people actually do with reading and writing and why (what we could call a social practice approach), and use this to not only motivate learners, but keep challenging and expanding our very conceptualizations of what reading (and writing) is in the first place.

The Pilot Study: Reading Aloud in Lewisham

- January-June 2014
- *Why Lewisham?*
- 16 interviews
- 8 men and 9 women
- 20s-80s
- 25-40 min each
- Semi-structured
- *Do you read aloud? Listen to others read? Present? Past?*

Duncan, S. (2015), Reading aloud in Lewisham: an exploration of adult reading-aloud practices. Literacy, 49: 84–90. doi: [10.1111/lit.12046](https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12046).

Pilot study findings: practices across 4 life domains

- RA and faith/spiritual life
- RA and family life
- RA and work
- RA and study/education

And for different purposes....

Purposes: RA to remember

“it tends to stay in my mind that way”

“it helps me remember words and phrases, to memorize” (learning French)

“to feel it in my mouth” (learning Spanish)

“when I read aloud that makes me memorize”

“it’s quite hard to remember a word unless you say it”

“it focuses you”

Purposes: RA to understand

“if it’s really dense language it kind of helps to say it out loud...when the voice in your head can’t seem to quite- the words are knocking together without making any sense and sometimes you just need to hear it [...]where its just a bit jarred or jammed, the language.”

“I suppose you are hearing it like someone else saying it [...] it’s coming out of your mouth and back into your ear again, isn’t it? Makes it clearer?”

Purposes: RA to compose

“when you are writing something, and as you’re reading it [aloud], there is a different word that comes into this place that is better [...] it’s like someone else presenting it because you have a double facet kind of thing, double position, you are the writer and at the same time also the listener so you are reading and listening and you are hearing it [...] I change it because it fits better than what I had written previously.”

Purposes: RA to share, for communion, intimacy

“it feels as if you are being given a bit of a gift I think when somebody reads to you. They are giving you time, they’re acknowledging you and giving you something quite special really”

“everyone saying the same thing [...] a kind of community [...] we are here as a community, not just myself”

“I think it’s about sharing [...] it’s a shared event.”

“It’s to help them along with their reading, but it’s not just that, it’s the fact they are talked to, listened to”

RA and the voice

“it’s like shouting at the wind [...] it’s a feeling of power and it’s expressing myself and if I could never read aloud again I’d feel a bit lost.”

“I’m in that state, I’m relating to that mother, I’m feeling the situation, I’m saying her words, I’m actually getting that feeling.”

“it feels different [...] the voice, the voice, the voice”

“It was more absorbing, it was more internalized [...] it reached further [...] the voice [...] it brings things to life.”

3 groups of practices?

- Group 1: for individual (cognitive ?) purposes- remembering, learning, understanding, writing. RA serves as *a tool* for these.
- Group 2: one person to other(s) for information, entertainment, sharing. RA is *one person serving another*.
- Group 3: individual or communal, *experience of RA*, for spiritual, religious, aesthetic purposes. RA as *the end in itself (or the beginning...)*

Reading Aloud in Britain Today (RABiT)

- Funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as a Research Fellowship.
- A two-year study of contemporary adult reading aloud practices, to find out whether, what, where, how and why adults read aloud, or listen to others reading.

Reading Aloud in Britain Today (RABiT)

Year one (June 2017-May 2018) data collection and analysis:

- a Mass Observation Directive (142 responses)
- a questionnaire (520 completed)
- semi-structured interviews and audio recordings of people reading aloud (just begun, aiming for 30-35 of each)

Year two (June 2018- May 2019) exploring and sharing the findings in the form of:

- four regional community events
- the development of 'next steps guides'
- an academic symposium leading to a special issue of the journal *Changing English*
- writing articles for different audiences
- depositing the interviews and audio recordings in the British Library Sound Archive

Current thoughts....

- The idea of RA and that 'in-between' space, of correspondence, of creating something that is between and throughout the readers
- 'Intermediate' practices
- Practices changing over time
- The idea of frequent practices vs important practices (and I'm also thinking of expanding my data collection)