

A multiple-case study of reading
comprehension: How do
teachers understand and teach
reading comprehension?

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is essential to the experience of becoming a reader (DfE, 2013; DfE, 2023) but reading comprehension remains a complex construct (Oakhill, 2020). Much has been written about the process of learning to read and what pupils need to be taught, culminating in a current focus on the science of reading (Shanahan, 2020). Yet little is known about what teachers are actually doing when teaching reading comprehension. This thesis develops understanding about how teachers teach reading comprehension, analyses how they understand these practices, and identifies what influences teachers' practices.

The methodology used to capture reading comprehension teaching practices was a multiple-case study (Yin, 2014) that utilised observations and interviews to produce a rich description of current practice in this area. Three layers of analysis were utilised to address the inquiry. The first drew on observations of eleven teachers' reading comprehension practices. The second utilised reflexive thematic analysis of the observations and interviews of participants to identify patterns and themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2022). The third layer applied the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis and Grootenboer, 2008) to analyse themes in greater depth and unravel how the arrangements of reading comprehension are enmeshed with other factors (Kemmis, 2012). This innovative analytical approach is one of its contributions to scholarship.

This research presents a range of findings that reveal the complexities of teaching reading comprehension and so adds to understanding of these practices. Key contributions of this study include a broadened understanding of how reading comprehension is being taught and why it is taught in this way. It exemplifies the supportive impact of a strong organisational model when teaching reading comprehension. In addition, it affirms the affective nature of reading comprehension instruction and reorientates the teaching of reading comprehension as a social interaction.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
List of Tables and Figures	8
Chapter 1: Setting the scene	9
Introduction	9
Motivation and influence for this research	9
Context of the Research	10
Aims	12
Research Design	15
What is meant by practices?	17
Structure of the thesis	17
Chapter 2: The context for teaching reading comprehension: Models and theories of teaching reading comprehension	19
Introduction	19
What is reading comprehension?	20
Models of teaching reading	23
Reading takes place in a social and cultural context	25
Relationship with text	26
How models of teaching reading respond to policies and expected practices	28
What the curriculum communicates about the teaching of reading comprehension	32
Fluency in reading	35
How theory informs the understanding of reading comprehension	36
The processes in reading comprehension	38
Vocabulary and linguistic knowledge	40
Inference	44
Background knowledge	47
Memory	49
Metacognition and monitoring comprehension	50
Summary of chapter 2	51
Chapter 3: Reading comprehension instruction: What is understood about teachers' practices?	52
Introduction	52
Opportunities to teach reading comprehension in classrooms	53
Teaching reading comprehension strategies	57
Other approaches to reading comprehension teaching	61
Teaching reading comprehension to multilingual pupils	62

Reading for pleasure	65
What is known about reading comprehension teaching practices?	69
Influence of beliefs on reading comprehension teaching practices	76
Summary of the wider contextualisation for this study	79
Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology	83
Introduction	83
Case study design	84
Case Study as a Research Strategy	86
Important components of case study	91
Multiple-Case Study	94
Recruiting sites	94
The cases	97
Data Collection	99
Observations	102
Interviews	104
Evolution of design for schools B, C, and D	109
Interviews of Additional Participants	112
Ethics	113
Approach to data analysis	115
Data analysis journey	117
How do teachers teach reading comprehension? – observations	118
Thematic Analysis – observations and interviews	119
Analysis using the theory of practice architectures	123
The theory of practice architectures	123
How the theory of practice architectures has been utilised in research	128
How the theory of practice architectures was useful for theorising this research	130
How the theory of practice architectures was used to analyse data	132
Chapter 5: Analysis 1: The Observations	139
Introduction	139
Practice Context of School A	140
Steve’s Practice	142
Dave’s Practice	146
Sarah’s Practice	148
Val’s Practice	152
Practice Context of School B	155
Lorraine’s Practice	156
Sakina’s Practice	160
Practice Context of School C	166

Liz’s Practice	168
Pete’s Practice	172
Asma’s Practice	176
Practice Context of School D	180
Ellie’s Practice	181
Martha’s Practice	185
Summary: How do teachers teach reading comprehension?	190
Chapter 6: Analysis 2: Thematic Analysis of Interviews and Observations	193
Introduction	193
How do teachers teach reading comprehension?	196
Organisational models	196
General teaching methods	198
Teaching comprehension strategies	201
How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?	205
The teacher’s role in teaching reading comprehension	205
Importance of questioning and discussion	208
Reading comprehension is complex and multifaceted	211
Entanglement with reading for pleasure	214
Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?	219
Influence of the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs)	219
Influence of school contexts	221
Knowledge and experience	223
Values and beliefs	227
Summary	228
Chapter 7: Analysis 3: Using the Theoretical Framework of Practice Architectures	230
Introduction	230
Material-Economic Arrangements that Enabled and Constrained Reading Comprehension	
Teaching Practices	234
Enabling and constraining models of teaching reading comprehension	234
Prioritisation of resources to teach reading comprehension	237
Professional development	240
Cultural-Discursive Arrangements that Enabled and Constrained Reading Comprehension	
Teaching Practices	243
Shared language about reading comprehension	244
Speaking confidently about pedagogical approach	248
Language of managing testing arrangements	251
Social-Political Arrangements that Enabled and Constrained Reading Comprehension Teaching	
Practices	254
Relationships with pupils when teaching reading comprehension	255
Relationships between colleagues teaching reading comprehension	257
Opportunities to enact values and beliefs	259
Summary	262
Chapter 8: Synthesis, contributions, and implications	264
Introduction	264

Summary of answers to the research questions	265
Contribution to knowledge	268
Limitations of the research	271
Future directions and implications for research	272
<i>References</i>	274
<i>Appendices</i>	310
Appendix 1 Participant Information Sheet	311
Appendix 2 Consent form	313
Appendix 3 Letter to parents	314
Appendix 4 Working table collating themes for each research question	315
Appendix 5 Significant elements of the data in relation to research question 'How is reading comprehension understood by teachers?'	336
Appendix 6 Example of table of invention	345

List of Tables and Figures

<i>Table 1: A summary of each school context</i>	96
<i>Table 2: Observations and interviews of main participants</i>	100
<i>Table 3: Observations and interviews of additional participants</i>	101
<i>Table 4: Questions for interview 1</i>	106
<i>Table 5: Questions for interview 2</i>	107
<i>Table 6: Additions to interview 1 (schools B, C, D)</i>	111
<i>Table 7: Changes to interview 2 (schools B, C, D)</i>	112
<i>Table 8: Interview questions for reading coordinators</i>	112
<i>Table 9: Summary of the 6 phases of thematic analysis taken in layer 2 of the data analysis</i>	120
<i>Table 10: Table of invention for reading comprehension</i>	133
<i>Table 11: Summary of the phases used for analysis with practice architectures in this research</i>	136
<i>Table 12: Participants and their associated schools</i>	194
<i>Table 13: A simplified summary of analysis using practice architectures</i>	231
<i>Table 14: A summary of findings for ‘How do teachers teach reading comprehension?’</i>	265
<i>Table 15: A summary of findings for ‘How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?’</i>	266
<i>Table 16: A summary of findings for ‘Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?’</i>	267
<i>Figure 1: Multiple-case study with schools and main participants</i>	98
<i>Figure 2: Multiple-case study with schools and additional participants</i>	99
<i>Figure 3: Pattern of data collection in school A and schools B, C, and D</i>	110
<i>Figure 4: Theory of Practice Architectures in diagrammatic form</i>	126
<i>Figure 5: Themes for each research question</i>	195
<i>Figure 6: Summary of the material-economic, cultural-discursive and social-political arrangements</i>	233

Chapter 1: Setting the scene

Introduction

The focus of this study is understanding reading comprehension teaching practices and contributing to knowledge about what these comprise of and what informs and influences them. This chapter sets the scene for this inquiry. It explains the motivation and influences behind the research, examines the broader context for the research, establishes its aims, and presents a summary of the research design. Following that, it clarifies what is meant by the term practices, a term central to this inquiry, and concludes with an outline of how the thesis is structured.

Motivation and influence for this research

The teaching of reading has been a career-long interest of mine. This began as I started my career as a newly-qualified teacher, developed further in my role as a literacy coordinator of a large inner-city primary school, and continued in my current profession as a teacher educator working in a university. Over my professional experience, covering three decades, my fascination with the teaching of reading has continued. During that time, I experienced changes in curriculum and policy, diversities in practices, and shifts in how the teaching of reading is organised. Since Rose's report on early reading (2006) and the phonics screening check (2014), I have noted an increased focus on phonics teaching and became curious about the impact of this on the teaching of reading comprehension. Working as a teacher educator has amplified the dual importance of knowledge about the theories of learning to read alongside classroom practices that respond to these. I became aware that there was little research about the latter.

A further influence on this study was my experience of working as a Reading Recovery teacher. Clay's (1993) programme recognised the importance of social interaction in early reading experiences and shifted my understanding of teaching reading to orientate around decisions about teaching interactions. In addition, working as a Reading Recovery teacher altered my focus to consider the competencies and knowledge that children applied when

reading and not just to focus on what pupils were not doing. Similarly, when researching reading comprehension teaching practices, I wanted to explore what teachers were doing and the knowledge they utilised in these teaching interactions, that is to focus on what was happening rather than a deficit model that picked out what was not happening. These factors motivated the direction of this research, which is a study of how primary school teachers teach reading comprehension in English schools and of understanding and theorising what shapes teachers' decision-making and perceptions of reading comprehension.

Context of the Research

Reading comprehension is an essential outcome of reading whether a reader is reading to learn, participating in everyday reading, or reading for pleasure (Mullis and Martin, 2019). Teaching for reading comprehension in English schools is influenced by the simple view of reading (Gough and Tunmer, 1986) and the conceptual framework advocated in Rose's review of early reading (2006). This model understands reading as comprising of two aspects: word recognition and language comprehension skills. It has been incorporated into curriculum expectations (Department for Education (DfE), 2013) and continues to feature in policy documents such as the reading framework (DfE, 2023). In England, there has been a tendency to emphasise the word recognition strand of reading (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022), as evidenced by the priority given to the systematic teaching of synthetic phonics (DfE: 2011; The Office of Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), 2022; DfE, 2023). The introduction of a phonics screening check for 6-year-olds increased the prominence of phonics and further influenced classroom practice (Clark, 2014). In contrast to word recognition, reading comprehension is a more complex and indeterminate process which may account for why it is less well understood. As Oakhill and Cain (2011: 92) have argued:

[Compared] to our knowledge about the skills that foster word reading development, we know far less about the different component skills that independently predict the development of reading comprehension.

The complexity of reading comprehension makes it difficult to pin down, and hard to define. For this research, this working definition (that is explored in more detail in the next chapter) was adopted:

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that constructs meaning and makes sense of text drawing on a range of sources. It is characterised by an active interaction between reader and text and refers to both the product and process of reading.

When comprehension is understood as a dynamic process between reader and text, the role of teachers in developing pupils' reading comprehension can become unclear. Snowling and Hulme (2005) affirm that reading is 'culturally determined' (2005: 499) and needs to be directly taught. However, as Harrison (2004) notes, its complexity and indeterminacy mean it is much easier for teachers to 'get to' the products rather than the processes of reading comprehension. Teaching for reading comprehension is complicated, partly because aspects of meaning are experienced individually. Tennent (2015: 18, italics in original) captures this, when explaining that whilst teachers

... can show children *how* to comprehend text ..., *what* each child makes of the text they read will be dependent on their experience of the world.

This research is concerned with the intricacies and subtleties of practice around teaching reading comprehension and what influences these. As such, the discussion including the application of practice architectures acknowledges the ambiguities and contradictions that reflect social experience and relations.

In an influential study of reading comprehension instruction, Durkin (1978: 523) concluded that there was very little teacher instruction of reading comprehension, rather teachers acted in the classroom as "mentioners," assignment givers and checkers, and interrogators'. More than four decades later, classroom practices around reading comprehension will have evolved. However subsequent studies in different countries have continued to note a concern for the lack of comprehension instruction (Pressley, 2002; Fisher, 2008; Duke et al., 2011; Byers et al., 2012; Concannon- Gibney and Murphy, 2012; Klapwijk, 2015). In this study, criticism that reading comprehension teaching is focused on

checking rather than teaching was echoed by one of the participants. Her concern was that teachers were, 'assessing, assessing, assessing rather than teaching' (LEA consultant). Moreover, Wyse and Bradbury (2022) argue that the current focus on the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics in English classrooms may result in a detrimental effect on reading comprehension teaching.

When reviewing the role of teaching in developing reading comprehension, Klapwijk (2015) raises the quandary, previously noted by Durkin (1978), that good readers nevertheless occur in schools where there is a lack of reading comprehension instruction. This questions the necessity for direct teaching of reading comprehension for readers to comprehend texts. Yet numerous studies focussing on what helps readers with reading comprehension have stressed the importance of reading comprehension instruction (Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Block and Duffy, 2008; Pressley and Allington, 2014). There is concern that comprehension frameworks developed from research have not been successfully integrated into classroom practice (Concannon- Gibney and Murphy, 2012; Klapwijk, 2015). Seidenberg et al. (2020) make a case for additional translational research being required between reading science and classroom practices, as these are two different things. Similarly, Shanahan (2020) argues that research needs to be applied cautiously by testing it out in practices if the benefits of reading research are to translate into teachers' decision-making in classrooms. Despite the importance of reading comprehension in the primary curriculum, no recent research about the practices of teachers within England was found that informs how reading comprehension is being taught and how it is understood by teachers. This PhD study aims to build knowledge in this area.

Aims

This thesis aims to understand more fully reading comprehension teaching practices including some of their less visible dimensions. The research focus developed from my experiences, both as a longstanding reading coordinator in a primary school and as a current teacher educator, that reading comprehension instruction can be puzzling, vague, and not always in tune with research and policy recommendations. A similar impression was captured by a teacher participant in this study, who commented that reading

comprehension was ‘a rather woolly area’ (Sarah). This study aspires to establish a multidimensional view of reading comprehension teaching practices by exploring how teachers understand their practices and what informs their practice decisions. With this focus in mind, future references in this thesis to ‘reading comprehension practices’ are concerned with the practices of teaching reading comprehension.

The research questions of the study are:

1. How do teachers teach reading comprehension?
2. How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?
3. Why do they teach reading comprehension in this way?

This inquiry is concerned with establishing more than a description of the current practices of teaching reading comprehension; its purpose is to better understand and theorise what shapes teachers’ decision-making and perceptions of reading comprehension. In posing the question, how do teachers teach and understand reading comprehension, I am in part asking how teachers are responding to the current conditions of reading comprehension teaching practices.

From the contextual summary above, tensions that teachers face when making decisions about their teaching of reading comprehension have begun to be raised and will be further discussed in the literature review and analysis chapters. There have been a number of shifts in emphasis of how reading should be taught in schools, for example the recent reading framework (DfE, 2023) has been substantially revised after just 2 years. The continued emphasis on phonics in the teaching of reading has become part of an ideological argument that seems to diminish the importance of reading comprehension (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). Guided reading was established as a model for teaching reading comprehension. This research illustrates how some participants expressed their difficulties of putting the guided reading model into practice (Sarah; Val), whilst some schools have found greater success by moving to a different model of teaching the whole class (school C). A further tension of teaching reading comprehension was the inclination expressed by teachers to use ‘book talk’ and discussion to develop reading comprehension with the dissatisfaction that assessment of reading comprehension in SATs were silent, written answers (Steve; Sarah). Such tensions look set to continue with the recent example of advice that teaching reading

comprehension strategies, which has previously been prioritised, is time-limited and should not be the emphasis of reading comprehension instruction (Ofsted, 2022).

Important to the stance of this inquiry is the voice of teacher practitioners being present in the discussion alongside an assumed appreciation that in their practice teachers do the best that they can within the circumstances they find themselves in. Kemmis and Smith (2008: 3, italics in original) argue that when responding in the best way according to circumstances, '[e]ducators should consider in relation to our practice "*what should we do?*" and "*in whose interests are we acting?*"'. When teachers deliberate social and moral responsibility in their practices by reflecting on the long-term interests of individual pupils, and the long-term interests of society they are 'engaging in praxis' (Kemmis and Smith, 2008: 4). Kemmis and Smith (2008: 4) explain their interpretation of praxis, which is the view taken in this study:

Praxis is a particular kind of action. It is action that is morally-committed, and oriented and informed by traditions in a field.

At a time when general education practices are becoming de-professionalised and teachers experience unreasonable burdens, teachers continue to strive to meet their moral and social commitments (Kemmis et al., 2014). However, their moral agency is being undermined by increasingly prescribed systems of teaching (Kemmis and Smith, 2008; Biesta, 2010). Performative cultures in schools have demanded that individual teachers exercise agency to be effective teachers whilst 'ignoring or subverting the cultural and structural conditions which play an important role in enabling this to happen' (Priestley et al., 2015: 135).

In my own practices, I have been influenced by the argument that literacy and more specifically reading is a social practice. When learning to read, participating in literate communities influences children's understanding and knowledge (Hall, 2010). Teachers can build on pupils' everyday literacy practices which they bring from their homes and communities (Street, 2012). For Street (1984) literacy viewed as a social practice is not a universally applied phenomenon but develops from the practices, traditions and purposes of the people using it. This understanding of literacy as social practice aligns with many

wider theories including Vygotsky (1978) who recognised the importance of the social context in which learning took place and Bakhtin (1981) who argued that social interaction promotes and shape ideas. However, much writing from an educational perspective has been influenced by the cognitive psychologists' view that considers comprehension as a 'cognitive reading activity that bypasses the social' (Smith, 2010: 63). In response to Smith's (2010: 64) criticism that 'the cognitive approach is of limited use to teachers', I recognise that my everyday practices were influenced by the cognitive approach, such as asking questions about a text that assumed a shared meaning and not recognising the significance of readers' moods, motivations and histories. This is a helpful reminder that practices are continually negotiated and where aspirations can be eroded by dominant discourse and pragmatic utilitarianism.

This inquiry seeks to understand and thereby inform future practices, but it does not aim to do so by identifying deficit models of reading comprehension teaching; that is not to critique how teachers are 'failing' (Husbands et al., 2003: 144). Rather, it seeks to recognise how teachers apply their professional skills and knowledge. It recognises that in their practices, teachers make in-the-moment decisions which are complex, and that this day-to-day decision making can be messy (Kemmis and Smith, 2008) and influenced by various and sometimes conflicting approaches. Understanding gained from this study will inform both my role as teacher educator and add to the current debate in this field. In addition, it may open opportunities to work in partnership with teachers in reviewing their reading comprehension instruction and identify meaningful development.

Research Design

This inquiry focuses on how teachers teach and understand their teaching of reading comprehension. In particular, it explores how eleven teachers in North-West England plan, teach and understand reading comprehension in four primary schools focusing on lower Key Stage 2 (KS2) classes. The research questions in this study are about the behaviours, thoughts, and decisions of reading comprehension teaching. Consequently, a naturalistic approach guided by social constructivism, which values experiences and interpretations and the realities that they help to construct has been adopted. This informed the design and

approach of the chosen research methods. A multiple-case study (Yin, 2014) was used to provide an 'explicit focus on context and dynamic interactions' (Marshall and Rossman, 2016: 19). This research design supported a detailed understanding of what a small number of teachers did when teaching reading comprehension incorporating the perspective of the participants (Flyvbjerg, 2006a).

Qualitative data were collected, to understand more fully what shapes teachers' decision-making and perceptions of reading comprehension instruction. Non-participant observations of eleven teachers teaching reading comprehension were conducted to gain understanding of strategies and practices employed. In addition, semi-structured interviews with participants were conducted to gather evidence of how the teaching of reading comprehension is understood by teachers. This data supported the inquiry into the socially constructed phenomenon of reading comprehension. As Biesta et al. (2011: 229) argue:

... education exists in and through people's interpretations, meanings and actions, which means that in order to study education as a social phenomenon it has to gain access to these interpretations and meanings.

The observations helped build narrative accounts of the actions and social worlds of reading comprehension teaching practices. The semi-structured interviews helped gain access to teachers' interpretations and meanings of how reading comprehension instruction is understood by teachers. Data from interviews were viewed 'as insights into the cultural frames people use to make sense of these experiences and their social worlds' (Miller and Glassner, 2011: 131). As the data derives from what the teachers said about their practices in interviews, this study interprets the teachers' interpretation of practice. However, interviews remain the most effective way to reveal how they understood their own practice. This methodological stance values what teachers said in interviews which was augmented by lesson observations. But this is a potential limitation of this research which I recognise in my analysis. Case study data were scrutinised and interpreted as an iterative process which involved three layers of analysis which pivoted around the three research questions.

What is meant by practices?

One of the difficulties in discussing reading comprehension teaching practices is the fluidity of meaning for the word 'practice' (Green, 2009). Schatzki (2018: 154) argues practices are 'organized activities' and to understand them means looking at the actions and their organisation. Kemmis (2005: 25) explains practices are 'what people do, in a particular place and time'. Practices are part of social life, but underlying practice decisions are complex arrangements of influences such as knowledge, resources, relationships, and values. These complex connections according to Schatzki (2018: 153) 'cannot be formulated'. A further complication is that whilst clues of intentions in practices can be identified, much of the happenings of practice occur 'behind the scenes' (Shulman, 1987). Shulman (1987, 2005) has been influential in focusing on the combined influence of subject knowledge and pedagogy on practices. A critique of this perspective is that the significance of context is omitted (Sockett, 1987). Kemmis and Smith (2008) assert the importance of context in practices: teaching practices can involve complex decisions made 'in the moment', they are more than ideas, they are responses to the specific context, in which teachers act in the best way they can. Rather than focusing solely on the knowledge in teachers' heads, this inquiry aims to elucidate the wider social and discursive features that support and influence that knowledge (Kemmis, 2005).

Structure of the thesis

Following on from this introductory chapter, chapters two and three comprise the literature review which discuss significant issues connected to this inquiry situating it within the pre-existing conversation (Timmermans and Tavory, 2022). The first of these chapters establishes the wider context around reading comprehension. It identifies key understandings about reading comprehension and how curricula and theory have informed these. The next chapter continues the literature review, focusing on reading comprehension practices. It considers the opportunities for teaching reading comprehension and summarises what is known about reading comprehension instruction.

Chapter four provides a comprehensive account of the methodology. It explains and justifies the multiple-case study approach, the collection of data and the ethical considerations. It

outlines the three different layers of analysis used: case study description, reflexive thematic analysis, and utilising the theoretical framework of practice architectures. The chapter also explains and situates the theory of practice architectures.

Chapters five, six, and seven contain the three layers of analysis. Discussions orientate around the research questions and make links with wider academic literature. Connections and meanings are sought throughout with knowledge developed through an iterative interplay between literature and data scaffolded by concepts and theories. Firstly, in chapter 5, case study presents a rich description through summative accounts of reading comprehension practices. Next the use of reflexive thematic analysis in chapter 6 allows accounts to be crafted to 'make an argument', as identified by Braun as significant for analysis (Braun et al., 2022: 434). The final analysis chapter applies the theory of practice architectures. This generates additional understandings around reading comprehension practices by offering a framework for further thinking about and interpreting reading comprehension practices through an examination into 'what practices are; how practices happen; how they are shaped, constrained and enabled; and what practices do' (Mahon et al., 2017: 17).

Chapter eight concludes the thesis. It summarises the key findings of the study in respect to the aims of the research. It highlights the practical and theoretical contributions and considers limitations of the research. Finally, it discusses the implications of, and considers future directions for, the research.

Chapter 2: The context for teaching reading comprehension: Models and theories of teaching reading comprehension

Introduction

This chapter is the first part of a literature review which situates this research project within the wider context of reading comprehension knowledge. An examination of what is known about reading comprehension and how this might influence practices is necessary for this inquiry. In this chapter, significant aspects of the backdrop to this research about reading comprehension practices are established. It particularly informs the third research question, which is concerned with understanding why teachers teach reading comprehension as they do. Additionally, it gives some assistance to the second research question, which asks how reading comprehension is understood by teachers. The two literature review chapters include more recent literature, but influential writers in the field, including older seminal work, and important policy documents were also of interest. The rationale for this stems from the research's interest in what informs and influences teachers' reading comprehension practices. As Nicolini (2012: 167) argues, to understand a current practice, 'requires a considerable grasp of its past'.

This chapter begins with a discussion of what is understood by reading comprehension. Then different models of reading are summarised and how these have influenced policies and practices in primary schools is reviewed. The impact of current and recent curricula on reading comprehension instruction is briefly discussed. Following that there is an exploration of how theories of reading comprehension inform understandings and in turn practices. This background was judged to be an essential contextual backdrop to a full analysis of practices. Oakhill (2020: 402) similarly argues that to examine reading comprehension instruction entails 'giving attention to the processes and skills that need to be orchestrated during the comprehension process'. The discussion subsequently continues

in a second literature review chapter which focuses on teachers' practices of teaching reading comprehension.

What is reading comprehension?

In the broadest sense, reading comprehension is concerned with the understanding of text. It is interlinked with language comprehension (Pearson et al., 2020) and can be understood as 'learning to understand writing as well as one understands spoken language' (Perfetti et al., 2005: 227).

The working definition constructed for this research maintains:

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that constructs meaning and makes sense of text drawing on a range of sources. It is characterised by an active interaction between reader and text and refers to both the product and process of reading.

Whilst reading comprehension at some level is within the experience of all readers, it is a complex and multifaceted process (Perfetti et al., 2005; Oakhill et al., 2015; Elleman and Oslund, 2019; Oakhill 2020). Through extended and meaningful reading opportunities to develop comprehension, reading skills can emerge from both explicit and implicit learning (Grabe, 2010). Rather than see reading comprehension as something that simply happens, successful comprehension in this research is viewed as a cognitive process in which the reader is actively interpreting text involving a complexity of skills. Thus, comprehension is what the reader does; it does not simply occur but is a dynamic interaction with text. As expressed by Freire (1985a: 19), '[r]eading is not walking on the words; it's grasping the soul of them'.

To elucidate the complexity of reading comprehension further, it is helpful to establish what a reader does to gain comprehension. To comprehend a text, a reader constructs meaning by drawing on knowledge, experiences, and wider thinking skills until they can make sense of a text, where 'several reading subskills and cognitive processes act in concert' (Meixner et al., 2018: 62). Reading comprehension involves a simultaneous process of, 'extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language' (Snow, 2002: xiii). A reader needs to understand the words and phrases in a text and so knowledge

of vocabulary is significant for comprehension (DfE, 2023). When reading, words and sentences are integrated into a meaningful whole by actively constructing a mental model that represents text beyond the literal (Oakhill et al., 2015). To build an effective mental model, a reader combines information from general knowledge, the language system and vocabulary (Rose, 2006, adapted from Perfetti, 1999). Memory is also involved in comprehension (Harrison, 2004), for example, representations of mental models are stored there (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). Thus, reading comprehension can be characterised as a complex cognitive process.

The intention of reading comprehension is for the reader to understand a text and to gain a full understanding, a reader draws on a range of sources. They use 'their previous knowledge, and knowledge of the world' (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016: 123). A reader brings knowledge to a text which informs their understanding; from this comprehension of a text, new understandings are built which affect knowledge in a virtuous cycle (Duke et al., 2011). Kintsch (1998, 2004) identified reading as a process of construction and integration; that is constructing a mental model of meaning from the text and integrating this with stored knowledge. In addition, readers need to make inferences to understand a text beyond the literal words: for example, reasoning about unspoken connections supports comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2003; Muter et al., 2004). Mental models are assisted by knowledge of story structure and patterns of story language. For example, story structure supports readers 'to anticipate and understand the ongoing events in stories' (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016: 126). To build a range of mental models, readers need experience of a wide range of texts and genres (Duke et al., 2011). Whilst reading comprehension is linked with the subject of English in the English primary curriculum, it is utilised in all subject areas using texts where pupils can develop their knowledge through reading.

Another key characteristic of reading comprehension identified by the working definition above is that the reader is active in this process. Success in reading comprehension can vary widely and the significance of the reader being active has been widely acknowledged (Durkin, 1978; Yopp Nolte and Singer, 1985; Harrison, 2004; Duke et al., 2011). Just because a reader can read does not mean they will do so and do so actively. For example, Miller (2009) refers to those that can read but choose not to read as 'dormant readers'. A reader

may not be actively involved in gaining a full understanding, referred to by Stuart and Stainthorp (2016: 30) as 'the drive for coherence'. Part of an active approach to comprehension entails a reader monitoring their understanding as they read and checking their mental models do not have any inconsistencies (Joseph et al., 2015). Whether readers carefully attend to or monitor their comprehension can vary according to intentions and expectation, for example, experiences in life, knowledge of how texts work and a knowledge of language can differ between social groups (Perkins, 2015).

The range of elements involved in reading comprehension entails the reader being engaged in a multi-layered and multifaceted relationship between the writer, the text and themselves (Washtell, 2008). Reading, as Freire (1983: 5) explains, is more than decoding text but extends into 'knowledge of the world':

Reading the world precedes reading the word, and the subsequent reading of the word cannot dispense with continually reading the world.

Understanding of text can operate on multiple levels; the reader can read the lines, read between the lines, and read beyond the lines (Guppy and Hughes, 1999). That is, they can gain meaning explicitly from the text, infer meaning from what the author implies, and evaluate the text from the connections the author has made with the reader.

Comprehension becomes more than understanding what the writer intended being shaped also by a reader's interpretation, which is influenced by prior knowledge and previous experience 'and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text' (Pardo, 2004: 72). Thereby understandings of text are unique as they are influenced by experiences from life, language, and reading, so that the same reader at various points in their life may comprehend the same text differently (Tennent, 2015).

For understanding to occur, reading comprehension is happening as we read; it is part of the reading process. A further complexity of comprehension is that understanding happens inside someone's head, which means that the processes involved in reading comprehension are 'elusive' (Harrison, 2004). Comprehension can be viewed 'as thinking... a dynamic and continuous process of thought' (Smith, 2010: 66). Harrison (2004: 53) argues that

comprehension is 'context-specific as well as text-specific'. In classroom interactions, as teachers cannot see comprehension as it occurs, their focus is largely on the product of reading comprehension. There may be indications, such as smiling in response to a text; but it is generally not clear from the teacher's perspective if a reader has understanding until a question, either verbal or written, is answered or dialogue occurs. However, the process of questioning can affect the response as the reader is then responding to the text *and* the question (Harrison, 2004). Harrison (2004) likens this aspect of reading comprehension to the concept of indeterminacy in quantum mechanics where you cannot simultaneously measure an electron's momentum and position. The indeterminacy within reading comprehension is that the more understanding is probed, the more understanding is developed, resulting in different understanding; that is, the process of assessing comprehension alters comprehension. Whilst reading comprehension may be considered a process for the reader, teachers may be more likely to focus on reading comprehension as a product that can be evaluated and assessed which will in turn influence their practices.

Models of teaching reading

Awareness of the various processes involved in reading comprehension and knowledge of teaching these skills and strategies may be helpful for teachers to inform their practices. This is not straightforward as understandings of reading comprehension depend upon how reading is conceptualised. This has varied over the years with contrasting models influencing pedagogy and curriculum. Approaches to teaching reading continue to be widely debated and will be summarised here to inform a full evaluation of reading comprehension practices. Following Chall's (1983) 'great debate' about the teaching of reading, models of reading have often been characterised as 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' models. These categories relate to whether significance is given to processing text from the whole to the part (top-down) or from individual phonemes to build words (bottom-up). Reading has been explained through various disciplines. 'Top-down' models are usually associated with psycholinguistic approaches, and 'bottom-up' models with cognitive psychology. These contrasting models of reading have been contested for decades, at times fiercely, in what has been known as the 'reading wars'.

The psycholinguistic approach (Goodman, 1967; Smith, 1973) has been influential in recognising the value of meaningful literacy experiences when reading. This 'top-down' model drew on a whole language approach that focussed on whole texts and real books. It emphasised communication, which includes reading as part of life, and theorised that people are predisposed to make meaning. Goodman (1969) analysed children's reading errors to understand how readers think about text and concluded that reading is an interaction between language and thought, which he summed up as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' (Goodman, 1967: 127).

In this model, the reader constructs sense by drawing on their semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic knowledge. It links with Piaget's theory (1950), perceiving learners as problem solvers, and was influenced by 'Deweyian-inspired, child-centered pedagogy and the integrated curriculum movements' (Pearson, 2004: 217). The teacher's role according to the psycholinguistic model, is to enable reading through facilitating meaningful reading experiences. Smith (1973) argued that readers learn to read through their membership of a literate society rather than being taught to read. For this model, a reader required interesting texts that made sense to them and an adult to guide them through the process. In England, this approach to reading was called 'the real book approach'. Meek (1988) was influential in emphasising the importance of engaging readers through an emphasis on high quality children's literature where, informed by assessments, reading skills were taught as needed.

A second discipline in understanding reading is the cognitive psychologist approach, which stresses readers' use of graphophonic cues in the early years of reading. This is a 'bottom-up' approach where readers are taught letter-sound correspondences so that new words can be decoded (Oakhill, 1993). Readers are encouraged to apply the sound symbols to individual words before sentences and texts. Technology was developed that analysed a reader's eye movements and demonstrated that most of the time a reader uses very fast visual processing of a word, working letter-by-letter (Perfetti, 1995). This supported a model of reading where readers relate individual letters to sounds in speech and blend these to get words and thereby meaning. More recently, this approach to teaching reading has emphasised the importance of systematic synthetic phonics where the teaching of phonics

is separated from whole texts. According to this view, reading 'decodable books' which contain the phonemes they have learnt supports early-stage readers to build their reading skills and their independence (DfE, 2023).

In response, Smith (2010: 63) argues the 'bottom-up' outlook views 'comprehension as a function of individual mind' rather than a 'social act' and this way of working restricts understandings of comprehension. For Smith, (2010: 64) 'the cognitive approach is of limited use to teachers', as this tends to use artificial texts to isolate features, adopts a position that text has a retrievable and stable meaning and evades the emotions, motivation, and context of readers. Whilst cognitive psychologists might explain what readers do when they comprehend, this does not explain how readers learned to do this, which is a key concern for teachers when considering reading comprehension instruction.

Reading takes place in a social and cultural context

Pearson et al. (2020: 3) affirm that '[r]eading is an inherently cultural activity'. Significantly for teaching practices, reading comprehension is happening in a social setting, where language constructs and shapes meaning (Vygotsky, 1978) and where cultures shape mind and thought (Bruner, 1996). A sociocultural perspective of reading widens understanding beyond word and text to the community where interactions are key (Street, 1984; Smith, 2010). Rather than 'an autonomous set of technical skills', literacy is a 'social practice that is integrally linked with ideology, culture, knowledge and power' (Rassool, 2009: 7). Consequently, when learning to read, readers respond to the reading behaviours and attitudes of the people around them, as reading incorporates a 'process of acculturation' (Perkins, 2015: 15). Sense-making in reading is understood as a social and cultural process where readers bring language, behaviours, and understandings from their own contexts. Readers learn habits about texts by being part of a reading community; that is, they learn about manipulating text into a meaningful shape partly through socially learned behaviour (Bandura, 1997).

Viewing reading comprehension 'as a complex social act' (Smith, 2010: 61), where readers pull and push text into a meaningful shape as socially learned behaviour, is a helpful

reminder that learning to read is more than learning a set of skills. Instead, literacy is a sociocultural event, where technical instruction is supported by the sociocultural environment. Identifying comprehension as a social practice conceptualises reading comprehension as ‘a dynamic and continuous process of thought, rather than as a series of pre-packaged skills’ (Smith, 2010: 66). Thus, reading is supported by the teacher as expert welcoming the child into a literary club (Smith, 1987) and children learn how reading can be useful, transporting, and transformative (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). In their practices, teachers can influence the social environment of the classroom, for example, through their ethos and the value given to reading (Perkins, 2015). Later in this study, this is recognised by the significance that teachers place on affecting reading behaviours, particularly through their encouragement of ‘reading for pleasure’.

A sociocultural perspective further informs how the teacher interacts with the pupils in the reading process. Texts are chosen carefully to respond to pupils’ interests and the developing readers have the purpose and relevance of reading explained to them (Perkins, 2015). To support the social aspect of reading, teachers facilitate opportunities for pupils to behave as readers alongside more experienced readers and to talk and reflect on their reading (Smith, 2010). Teachers ask authentic questions to find out ideas that pupils have about a text rather than questions to check specific knowledge (Nystrand, 1997). They read aloud as pupils listen actively, an interaction that Cliff Hodges (2016: 87) describes as ‘inherently social’. Teachers think about the emotional environment they create for their pupils around reading experiences by encouraging positive emotional responses to reading, which includes supporting gaps between school reading and home reading (Levy, 2011).

Relationship with text

Reading comprehension has been described as the ‘product of the interaction between factors at both the level of the reader and the text’ (Bruggink et al., 2022: 4). Different models of reading comprehension place varying emphases on the relationships between ‘reader and text’, ‘reader and teacher’ and ‘teacher and text’, which may influence teachers’ pedagogical decisions. For the psycholinguist, the text is crucial and contains meaning that is fluid. From this perspective, ‘real books’ using natural story language that support the

meaning-making process are preferable to language that is restricted by simple and phonetically decodable words. In contrast, for the cognitive psychologist the text is more static; the reader accesses the text by decoding and understanding each word and then combining these words to read a text. In contrast, a sociopolitical perspective on reading argues that texts are not neutral as the choice of words can influence how we respond and think about something (Perkins, 2015). Where reading comprehension is fundamentally about meaning, perspectives are further informed by understandings of where meaning is contained (Richardson et al., 1991). Whether meaning is contained in the text or further develops from a reader's response to and interaction with the text influences understanding of how passive or active the reader is in the comprehension process.

In their reading comprehension practices, teachers make choices about the texts they use with pupils; for example, considering the structure, vocabulary used, and length of text. Over time, teachers choose 'increasingly complex texts' (DfE, 2023: 19). By teaching about text genre and differing text structures and conventions this supports pupils' comprehension as they can use this to build their situation model of the text (Shanahan, 2019). However, text choices may be restricted by the availability of resources in schools. For example, many schools have purchased comprehension textbooks as part of reading schemes, where extracts and questions have been prepared for reading lessons. (This was the case in two of the participant schools). At variance with this practice, Bruggink et al. (2022) support the use of authentic texts rather than those designed to meet a specific educational purpose as the latter can result in unnatural language use. Similarly, comprehension tests written to check what a reader can do rather than to communicate can result in texts which are experienced as artificial (Smith, 2010).

In addition to sharing a wide range of texts with pupils, teachers are expected to discuss how these texts comment on the world as seen by the writer and teach pupils how to interrogate the text (DfE, 2023). Developing children's literacy skills in the broadest sense can encourage children to develop a knowledge of the world that is wider than their own experience. Part of the year 3 and 4 programme of study (national curriculum, England) includes developing positive attitudes of reading through 'identifying themes and conventions in a wide range of books' (DfE, 2013: 25). As children become more proficient

readers, they will increasingly be expected to identify themes and use texts for their own independent learning; this assists them in becoming critically literate. More than reading for meaning, critical literacy encourages readers to question and explore the range of influences on texts (Norris et al., 2012). By appreciating that language choice is not neutral, readers can notice the biases and assumptions made in a text and make a knowing choice about how to respond. This links with Freire's (1985a) pedagogical argument that literacy relates to the relationships people have with the world.

How models of teaching reading respond to policies and expected practices

Whilst models of reading can become polarised, practices of teaching reading generally combine elements of letter-sound correspondence with some focus on broader language and text experiences. Wyse and Bradbury (2022: 4) explain:

... almost no approach to teaching reading described as synthetic phonics first and foremost completely excludes a focus on whole texts, at least as part of all the reading teaching activities in a classroom. Equally, no approach described as whole language completely excludes attention to letters and phonemes.

Over time, the emphasis of reading approach suggested by curriculum policy has fluctuated. Whilst '[t]he ultimate goal of learning to read is comprehension' (Rose, 2006: 28), the teaching of synthetic phonics has become increasingly the focus of early reading. This specific approach to teaching phonics is a statutory requirement in the national curriculum (DfE, 2013) in English state schools. It is further identified in the teachers' standards that teachers must 'demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics' (DfE, 2011: 11) and this approach continues to be emphasised in advisory documents (Ofsted, 2022; DfE, 2023).

The emphasis on systematic synthetic phonics contrasts with earlier views that there was, 'no one method, medium, approach, device or philosophy that holds the key to the process of learning to read' (DES, 1975: 77), a view which was further reiterated by the Cox report

(DES, 1989). The 'whole language approach' was influential in informing classroom pedagogy during the 1980s and 1990s (Pearson, 2004), but was later attributed to a fall in reading standards (Ofsted, 1996). The combining of cues from the 'searchlights model' as advised in the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1997) was criticised as an approach that supported fluent readers but not the developing reader (Ofsted, 2002). Rose's review of reading (2006) was a pivotal point in an increased focus on high quality synthetic phonics teaching from which teachers were instructed to abandon the 'searchlights model' in favour of the 'simple view of reading model' (Gough and Tunmer, 1986). Headteachers and leaders were expected to implement changes in reading practices to reflect the recommendations from the Rose review (2006).

In English education policy, the required knowledge to be able to read has been simplified into two broad aspects of reading: decoding and language comprehension, drawing on the 'simple view of reading' (Gough and Tunmer, 1986). This is a model of reading development that argues that $\text{Reading} = \text{Decoding} \times \text{Language Comprehension}$ ($R = D \times LC$). Gough and Tunmer's model does not suggest that the reading process is simple; in fact, they recognised the complexity of the linked processes (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). Nevertheless, Pressley et al. (2009) argue that the simple view does not fully represent the complexities of reading because important factors such as background knowledge, memory capacity, fluency and speed, vocabulary and inference are not acknowledged. Despite these limitations, the 'simple view of reading' has been adopted into school practices mediated by the Rose review (2006), the national curriculum (DfE, 2013) and the reading framework (DfE, 2023). This interpretation proposes that a combination of decoding (including word recognition), and language comprehension is needed for reading to be successful. According to this model, as readers develop, their word-reading becomes efficient and automatic and their control over the word reading process improves; this means that as readers mature, the balance shifts away from decoding and more focus can be given to reading comprehension (Rose, 2006).

Although 'the reading wars' may appear resolved with the current expected emphasis on systematic, synthetic phonics as the initial approach to the teaching of reading (DfE, 2013; DfE, 2023) in English schools, there continues to be concern about the impact of policy

decisions on reading practices (Davis, 2013; Clark, 2014; Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). A significant intensification of phonics teaching for 5- and 6-year-olds accompanied the introduction of the phonics screening check in 2012 for children at the end of year 1 (6 years old). With this came a conceptual separation of decoding and reading for and with understanding (Walker et al., 2014). In addition, there are associated pressures linked with Ofsted judgements on school effectiveness and expectations that systematic synthetic phonics must be the prime approach to teaching reading (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022).

Whilst phonemic awareness (Adams, 1990; Snow et al., 1998) and phonics teaching are recognised as an important aspect of teaching reading (Harrison, 2004; Wyse and Bradbury, 2022), a broader approach to phonics and reading instruction is taken by other English-speaking countries (Canada, US, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand) with England's national curriculum placing the most emphasis on phonics (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). In their conclusions to an extensive study, Wyse, and Bradbury (2022: 156) called for a change to the national curriculum with regards to the teaching of reading; they argue that evidence points to 'contextualised teaching of reading, or balanced instruction' is more effective than synthetic phonics. This entails teaching pupils about the alphabetic code and other linguistic features using whole texts. This is significant for this research, as their argument about a more balanced approach to teaching early reading reasserts the central importance of reading comprehension instruction.

A range of scholars have called for an end to the paradigm wars around reading (Stanovich, 1990; Beard, 1993; Wray and Medwell, 1994; Wyse and Jones, 2001; Hall, 2003; Castles et al., 2018). Across this debate, a balanced approach to the teaching of reading has been widely recommended. Pearson (2004: 247) argued for an 'ecologically balanced approach' that combined the 'symbiotic potential of authentic activity and explicit instruction'. Efforts for reconciliation across factions argue for a mix of whole text opportunities with teaching about the alphabetic code (Pearson, 2004; Pressley and Allington 2014; Wyse, and Bradbury, 2022). However, Harrison (2004) argued that disagreements continue because at their core, the approaches represent different ontological, epistemological, methodological, and causal understandings about reading. This is fundamentally an 'epistemological dispute'

about 'which kinds of knowledge about reading are most important and how children acquire that knowledge' (Fitzgerald and Cunningham, 2002: 361).

Part of the epistemological view of bottom-up approaches stresses the evidence that supports a focus on synthetic phonics and decoding for teaching reading (Pearson, 2004). This has been influential in recent educational policy and sits alongside wider arguments about 'what works' and an emphasis on evidence-based research (Ofsted, 2022). Whilst such influences on practice might appear desirable, these can still be questioned (Wrigley, 2016; Biesta et al., 2010; Alexander, 2004). As Harrison (2004) acknowledges, 'knowledge', 'evidence' and 'science' are all contested terms and operate within a belief system. Moreover, Pearson (2004: 240, italics in original) concludes: '*Research is often used in a selective, uneven, and opportunistic manner by policy makers*' where '*[s]ome science is more important than other science*'.

There is much more that could be discussed around the 'knowledge', 'evidence' and 'science' of reading but in relation to this research, it is noteworthy that within the curriculum, ITE courses, and wider discussion in England there is an emphasis on teaching systematic, synthetic phonics for the teaching of reading. This has resulted in a 'relative absence of discussion of processes beyond phonics' (Castles et al., 2008: 6), which has in turn contributed to the lack of focus and research on reading comprehension (Smith, 2010). It is significant for this research that with the main focus of reading teaching in England on systematic synthetic phonics, there is a lesser focus on the teaching of reading comprehension. 'Phonics-first teaching' has contributed to a misconception that reading comprehension is not an aim for early years and year 1 classrooms, which assumes that comprehension can only become the focus once phonics has been mastered (Walker et al., 2014; Oakhill 2020). For teachers that recognise the significance of reading comprehension for younger children, the phonics screening check makes additional demands on early reading instruction, and further complicates their teaching choices (Wyse and Bradbury 2022). The implication of these emphases in English primary schools is that teachers may find it easier to focus on comprehension instruction only after they have taught the tools of decoding. If there is less concern given to the teaching of reading comprehension for 5- and

6-year-olds, this is likely to have consequences for teachers' practices with older pupils, which this study focuses on.

What the curriculum communicates about the teaching of reading comprehension

To explore what affects the teaching of reading comprehension, it is important to consider structures such as the curriculum. In previous decades, reading comprehension was conceived in classrooms as a set of exercises where after a passage was read, pupils had to answer set questions with written answers (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). This was a silent and solitary activity. Many of the questions were literal questions where responses could be modelled around predictable grammatical structures that did not develop or explore understanding (for example, see Perkins, 2015: 136).

There was a shift in emphasis in England with the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1997) and later the Primary Strategy (DfES, 2003a), where reading comprehension was expected to be taught and discourse about text was encouraged. This teaching largely took place during shared and guided reading and included teaching about reading comprehension strategies, teacher modelling, guided practice, and opportunities for pupils to reflect on and talk about their understanding and learning. The theoretical basis for shared and guided reading is Vygotskian, using scaffolding and discussion to support independence (Perkins, 2015). Over time, the intention was for a gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the student (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983; Duke and Pearson, 2002). Guided reading aimed to encourage a discourse where the teacher facilitated dialogue and nudged forward the discussion (Reedy, 2011). To support a more interactive approach, pupils could be encouraged to ask their own questions and rely on each other rather than always going through the teacher. However, despite the curriculum expectations, there was a lack of theoretical input to teach guided reading and therefore lessons were less effective (Fisher, 2008). Ofsted reported that '[t]oo many teachers did not understand its principles and struggled to teach it successfully' (Ofsted, 2004: 4).

In 2005, three short guidance documents about reading comprehension were circulated to schools, giving practical suggestions for teachers to use in classrooms and were used as professional development documents. The first leaflet (DfES, 2005a) identified reading comprehension as an active process. Supported by Pressley (2000), it set out that vocabulary should be taught and that pupils could explore texts alongside their peers and teachers, ask questions and monitor their understanding. It drew on the US National Reading Panel (NRP) report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2000), which identified three key factors for developing comprehension: learning about words, actively interacting with the text, and making the reading process visible by explicitly modelling and teaching a range of strategies for comprehension. However, this guidance did not have much time to become embedded into practices before the Rose review (2006) established the 'simple view of reading' (Gough and Tunmer, 1986) as the model of teaching reading which shifted the emphasis of instruction to the teaching of phonics.

The English primary national curriculum (DfE, 2013) similarly reflects the 'simple view' model with comprehension (both listening and reading) alongside word recognition being the two components of successful reading. As regards comprehension, the national curriculum sets out that '[g]ood comprehension draws from linguistic knowledge (in particular, of vocabulary and grammar) and on knowledge of the world' (DfE, 2013: 4). Teachers are expected to have 'high-quality discussion' with pupils, to encourage pupils to read widely for pleasure and understanding, and to develop a love of reading. By the beginning of year 3 (aged 7), pupils are expected to be reading fluently and accurately so that they can 'focus on understanding' in key stage (KS) 2 (DfE, 2013: 23). In addition to developing their understanding and enjoyment of a range of genres, pupils are expected to learn to 'justify their views about what they have read' (DfE, 2013: 23). Reading for pleasure or enjoyment is significantly emphasised. For example, in the comprehension section of the years 3 and 4 programme of study, the first statutory requirement is to, 'develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read' (DfE, 2013: 25). This followed on from arguments presented within the reports, 'Excellence in English' (Ofsted, 2011) and 'Research evidence on reading for pleasure' (DfE, 2012), which highlighted the significance of reading for pleasure on reading outcomes.

Since the collection of data for this thesis, there have been some further policy guidance documents that continue to inform expectations about the teaching of reading such as the reading framework (DfE, 2023) and Ofsted's subject review on teaching English (Ofsted, 2022). These are likely to be significant in informing current practices. For the purposes of this research inquiry however, these documents could not have informed the practices of the teachers in this study, although they have been referenced in other relevant parts of the discussion.

A significant influence on how reading comprehension is taught in primary schools is linked with how this aspect of the curriculum is assessed. Comprehension standardised achievement tests (SATs) at the end of KS1 (from 1991) and KS2 (from 1995) have influenced teaching approaches to reading comprehension. More recently, the content domains indicate areas of comprehension which can be included in the test, and these are itemised in the KS2 English reading test framework (Standards and Testing Agency (STA), 2015: 7). They include:

- a) give / explain the meaning of words in context
- b) retrieve and record information / identify key details from fiction and non-fiction
- c) summarise main ideas from more than one paragraph
- d) make inferences from the text / explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text
- e) predict what might happen from details stated and implied
- f) identify / explain how information / narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole
- g) identify / explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases
- h) make comparisons within the text

However, as the mark scheme acknowledges, not all aspects are tested as some aspects do not 'lend themselves to a paper test' (STA, 2019: 3).

A concern is that 'high stakes assessments' such as the reading comprehension tests impact on the delivery of the curriculum to the point where 'teaching to the test' becomes the norm (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2017). This phenomenon of testing

affecting how we teach is referred to as the ‘backwash effect’ (Prodromou, 1995). Standardised tests can lead to standardisation of practice, whereby in an atmosphere where teachers feel pressurised, they focus on the aspects of comprehension that represent the main components of the mark scheme (Williams, 2021). The impact of this on practices is that teachers may not focus much teaching time on domain areas, which are less frequently tested but which may be influential in overall language comprehension. It might influence comprehension being perceived as pupils correctly answering written questions about fragments of text and missing out on opportunities to develop understanding through interactions with texts (Tennent, 2021). This links with Ball’s (2003) wider argument about the impact of performativity on suppressing a teacher’s individual values as they feel compelled to respond to targets and assessments. Significantly, the tension that can be created between ‘metric performances and authentic and purposeful relationships’ (Ball, 2003: 223) impacts on practices and was significant for some of the participants in this study.

Fluency in reading

The KS2 comprehension SATs test is timed, which serves as a restraint aimed to indicate reading fluency. Fluency was identified as a key aspect of reading by the US NRP (NICHHD, 2000). In contrast, this was not highlighted in the equivalent English report on reading (Rose, 2006). But it has been subsequently emphasised in the reading framework (DfE, 2023), where fluency as a combination of speed and accuracy when decoding is identified as important for successful reading. Previously schools may have responded to the guidance report from the Education Endowment Foundation (Higgins et al., 2017), which may in turn have influenced practices. This report guided schools to ‘support pupils to develop fluent reading capabilities’ through speed, accuracy, and expression as one of seven ways to improve literacy in KS2 (Higgins et al., 2017: 10).

Whereas fluent reading involves the coordination of automaticity in decoding skills, which frees up cognition for comprehension (Higgins et al., 2017; DfE, 2023), it also indicates comprehension happening whilst reading, as understanding text is required for successful prosody. This wider interpretation of fluency aims for decoding and comprehension

happening simultaneously. As such, fluency has been referred to as a bridge between phonics and reading comprehension (Pikulski and Chard, 2005; Rasinski, 2022) and may inform teachers' reading comprehension practices. Teachers can develop their pupils' fluency by promoting oral reading, for example, by modelling fluent reading and regularly reading aloud (Rasinski, 2004; Higgins et al., 2017). In addition, they can incorporate opportunities for repeated readings of the same text (Higgins et al., 2017), assisted readings, and choral reading with fluent reading models (Rasinski and Padak, 2007).

How theory informs the understanding of reading comprehension

Drawing on theory, reading can be viewed from varying perspectives, for example, neural, cognitive, and educational accounts (Al Dahhan et al., 2016). Reading can be approached through the connected brain processes as in neurophysiology; through identifying the different processes involved in reading for the cognitive psychologist; and through identifying how social structures influence reading for the social constructivist (Stanovich, 1999). These understandings may have different emphases, but as teachers' understandings may be influenced by any of these perspectives in varying combinations it is necessary for this study to acknowledge that knowledge of reading comprehension can develop from diverse disciplines or a mixture of disciplines.

Most research aimed at understanding reading comprehension has been carried out by psychologists and tends to focus on cognitive functions (Tennent, 2015). This approach can be limiting for teachers as it separates reading comprehension from the interactions of the classroom (Smith, 2010). Nevertheless, aspects of this research in this area are likely to influence policies and curricula and thereby practices. For Kintsch and Rawson, comprehension can refer 'to both a set of empirical phenomena and a theoretical construct' (2005: 209). To make sense of this inquiry, and the empirical data collected, further consideration of comprehension as a theoretical construct is explored.

As reflected in the national curriculum (DfE, 2013), it is broadly agreed across models of reading that gaining meaning is the aim of reading (Pearson, 2004). Stanovich (1995) identified reading comprehension as the main purpose of reading whilst arguing that it is

the second process. For reading comprehension to take place, words in texts need to be identified and meanings retrieved (Perfetti et al., 2005). The first process involves a word activating the lexical memory with comprehension following on from this. Stanovich (1980) influentially argued that reading is an 'interactive compensatory' process, where time that a reader spends on word recognition and comprehension is variable and where good readers have rapid and automatic word recognition, which frees up cognitive resources for comprehension. Reading comprehension involves a 'constrained reasoning' (Stanovich and Cunningham, 1991) because for any reasoning or problem-solving to take place to elicit understanding, this is initially influenced by how quickly a word is recognised. The significance of this for teachers is that for pupils to comprehend text efficiently, they also need to be able to decode efficiently (Duke et al., 2021).

Reading comprehension is not a 'unitary construct' (Duke, 2005: 93). Different types of comprehension can be referred to, for example as literal and gained at the surface level, or inferential requiring engaging with the text at a deeper level (Wyse et al., 2013). A further level of evaluative comprehension (being able to offer an opinion about the text) had been included in the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1997) and later in the Primary Strategy comprehension leaflet (DfES, 2005b). Literal comprehension of a text rests on efficient decoding of the text and fluent word recognition skills (Adams, 1990; Snow et al., 1998). Adams recognised the significance of letters and sounds building up a network of relationships for young readers but identified this was best developed alongside 'real reading and real writing and with deliberate reflection on the forms, functions, and meanings of texts' (Adams, 1990: 422). Rose (2006) echoed this by proposing the teaching of systematic, synthetic phonics is complemented by a language-rich environment. Similarly, the reading framework (DfE, 2023) outlines that teaching early reading involves teachers and pupils talking about stories and texts and developing children's language skills in addition to teaching decoding. Reading comprehension occurs beyond the word level also drawing on information at sentence and text level (Perfetti et al., 2005).

Combined with word reading, language comprehension is essential for reading according to the simple view of reading (Gough and Tunmer, 1986). Comprehension of written language is similar to comprehension of oral language and involves the language systems of

‘vocabulary, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, and semantics’ (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016: 99). In discussions of reading comprehension, it is often assumed that it shares the same processes as language comprehension and becomes approximated with the comprehension of spoken language (Perfetti et al., 2005). However, the discourses vary as comprehension of written language often involves more complex structures and more varied vocabulary than comprehension of spoken language (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). Paralinguistic cues are not apparent when reading, so readers must gather information from elsewhere, for example utilising punctuation to inform intonation. Readers additionally utilise graphic devices such as headings, changes of font, underlining etc. in a text to support their construction of meaning. Consequently, for competent reading comprehension, teaching instruction supports good language skills and access to an extensive experience of text (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016).

The processes in reading comprehension

There are varied explanations of what reading comprehension involves that might influence teaching. According to the Progress in International Literacy Reading Study (PIRLS) assessment framework (Mullis and Martin, 2021), a reader understands a text using four processes:

1. focusing on and retrieving information explicitly stated in the text
2. making straightforward inferences
3. interpreting and integrating ideas and information
4. evaluating and critiquing content and textual elements (Bruggink et al., 2022: 14).

Yet how such processes interlink would seem significant for teaching practices. Theories of comprehension contain complexity as they recognise that reading comprehension involves processing at multiple levels. Kintsch and Rawson (2005) offer a detailed and influential theory of reading comprehension (Snowling and Hulme, 2005), that is outlined here as one example of how the processes of reading comprehension can be understood. According to this model, language comprehension when reading involves a text base representation and a situation model (Kintsch and Rawson, 2005). The first involves the linguistic structure and

meaning of the text and the second builds a mental model of the text that combines this information and utilises working memory.

To build a text base representation, word meanings and how these interrelate are deliberated by the reader to construct meaning and gain literal comprehension (Kintsch and Rawson, 2005). Word meanings are combined to form propositions and the reader establishes how these interrelate, for example the use of pronouns. In addition to the microstructure, there are connections between propositions at the macrostructure, where larger sections of text or the whole text are represented. Readers draw on pragmatic plausibility and on signalling devices such as chapter titles or subheadings to assist comprehension. In addition, a reader's prior knowledge such as knowledge of structure and the interrelationship with genre can influence comprehension. In response to the idea of a text base structure, teachers need to make informed judgements about the difficulties of a text, for example the vocabulary and concepts it contains to support their pupils' accessibility to the text.

For deeper understanding, a reader constructs a situation model from the text (Kintsch and Rawson, 2005). This mental model operates beyond the verbal domain and draws on imagery, emotions, and personal experiences to integrate the information from the text alongside prior knowledge and the intentions of the reader. Inference plays a significant role in this process, where the reader needs to fill in gaps to establish meaning. Comprehension for the younger reader though, is not automated, and the decision for the educational professional is how to support the development of these skills. Kintsch and Rawson (2005: 225) acknowledge:

A major difficulty for comprehension instruction therefore is to engage novice comprehension in the kind of active, strategic processing that is necessary to build good situation models.

Constructing a situation model can take significant effort and young readers can settle for establishing a reasonably accurate text base, which results in shallow comprehension that is inadequate for learning (Kintsch and Rawson, 2005).

The significance of the reader building a mental model of the text is likewise acknowledged by Perfetti et al. (2005). This mental representation occurs across lexical (word), syntactic (sentence) and text level units of language. Identification of words underpins retrieval of meaning followed by a layered framework as explained by Perfetti et al. (2005: 230):

The atoms of meaning are extracted from sentences, aggregated through the reading of other sentences of the text and supplemented by inferences necessary to make the text coherent.

Thus the comprehension process can become layered, starting from literal understandings and then more critical understandings of language choices, which may draw on inference to establish text coherence. Teachers may reflect aspects of the comprehension process in their practices, such as drawing their pupils' attention to word meanings, using prior knowledge, developing a deeper understanding at sentence and text levels, and applying inference (DfES, 2005b). Some important components of reading comprehension are considered discretely in further detail below, starting with vocabulary and linguistic knowledge. Each in turn comments on how their focus might influence teacher practices.

Vocabulary and linguistic knowledge

'Pearson et al. argue '[l]anguage drives every facet of reading comprehension' (2020: 3). Knowledge of word meaning impacts on comprehension (Perfetti et al., 2005; Oakhill et al., 2015; Cain and Oakhill, 2018). The DfE (2023: 7) acknowledges that vocabulary is 'vital for comprehension' as children need to understand the meanings of words they read. Consequently, some teaching of vocabulary is likely to be an aspect of reading comprehension instruction. Butler et al. (2010: 7) argue that '[v]ocabulary instruction is a crucial component of reading instruction'. Stuart and Stainthorp (2016: 104) explain the significance of vocabulary for comprehension:

When a person's vocabulary is embedded in a rich network of semantic connections, there is a fluency which supports comprehension. Knowing the meaning of one word may support the understanding and acquisition of a new word.

Having a wide vocabulary helps readers to read and understand text fluently, whilst also supporting comprehension when an unknown word is encountered. The causal relationship between vocabulary-to-comprehension and comprehension-to-vocabulary can be reciprocal (Perfetti et al., 2005). That is, in addition to vocabulary assisting comprehension, a reader can influence and extend their vocabulary knowledge through reading (Baumann, 2009). Readers are likely to need multiple exposures to new vocabulary for this gain (Cain et al., 2004) and so reading volume can support comprehension.

Vocabulary knowledge has been identified as an important predictor of successful reading comprehension (Biemiller, 2003; Muter et al., 2004) with the depth and breadth of a reader's vocabulary having an impact on their ability to comprehend text (Cain and Oakhill, 2014). The breadth of vocabulary is the number of words a reader knows the meaning of, which is important for comprehension (Tannenbaum et al., 2006). The depth of vocabulary refers to how much detail is known about a word, for example, knowing about different meanings and usages for a word. Ouellette (2006) and Tannenbaum et al. (2006) suggest vocabulary depth is more important than breadth for supporting reading comprehension. Vocabulary depth such as knowledge about words and relationships between words links with what can be more generally referred to as linguistic knowledge. Although Li and Kirby (2015) argue that breadth and depth of vocabulary are not necessarily two separate constructs and can be understood as interrelated and influencing each other.

Vocabulary instruction can be incorporated into all parts of the reading lesson to increase, refine, and add to pupils' current knowledge thereby enhancing comprehension (Rupley et al., 2012). Developing morphological knowledge and awareness, for example, understanding of root words and connected prefixes and suffixes, supports expansion of vocabulary, and thereby reading comprehension (Kieffer and Lesaux, 2007; Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). Being able to manipulate the grammatical structures in a text using syntactic awareness supports reading comprehension (Nation and Snowling, 2000). In the national curriculum

(DfE, 2013), these aspects are more typically taught in spelling and grammar but ‘linguistic knowledge (in particular, for vocabulary and grammar)’ is acknowledged as important for reading comprehension (DfE, 2013: 14).

In written text, readers encounter many more complex sentence forms than in spoken language. Knowledge of syntax and learning names of language forms such as nouns, pronouns, verbs etc. may be taught in grammar lessons, but when applied in discussions of texts, support reading comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2015; Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). A further aspect of linguistic knowledge that influences reading comprehension is pragmatics: how context and social interactions within texts affect meaning. Pragmatics supports understanding of texts as it helps with understanding beyond the words, for example to look at a character’s intentions without the help of non-verbal cues (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016).

Vocabulary knowledge can vary widely between readers, even at primary school. Concern has been expressed about the language word gap in English schools (Harley, 2018) as having a small disadvantage in vocabulary knowledge quickly grows into a significant disadvantage (Hirsch, 2003). Quigley (2018) argued that ‘word poverty’ impacts attainment and has been correlated with lower socio-economic backgrounds. Whilst pupils who speak English as an additional language are more likely to have a smaller English vocabulary (Bialystok et al., 2010). Though it is recognised that vocabulary impacts reading comprehension, it is not evident how successful vocabulary instruction can be in expanding and deepening pupils’ vocabulary (Oakhill et al., 2015). Despite the strong connection between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension, Wright and Cervetti (2017) argued that there is limited evidence that directly teaching word meanings can affect a pupil’s vocabulary development. Since the data in this study was collected, there has been a clearer expectation for teachers to develop pupils’ vocabulary knowledge, for example with the increased focus on vocabulary teaching in the reading framework (DfE, 2023).

In their practices, teachers can develop vocabulary by reading aloud to pupils, talking about stories, and answering questions about them (Duke et al., 2011; Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). Pupils can be taught figurative language explicitly using idioms, jokes, riddles, simile,

and metaphor as understanding figurative language supports the development of children's wider oral language and in turn their reading comprehension skills (Oakhill et al., 2015). Through engaging talking and reading experiences, teachers can develop, what Cremin refers to as, 'children's ears for language' (2018: 15). For texts that pupils read, teachers are advised to consider the complexity of the text choice and whether pupils can decode it (Cain and Oakhill, 2018). The number of concepts and characters makes a difference to how many links a reader needs to activate to build coherence and make efficient meaning (Tennent, 2015). This in turn means that teachers are recommended to know well the texts they use with pupils. For example, noting the readability of the text, aspects such as average length of sentences, the number of difficult words, as well as children's own interests (Harrison, 2004).

Teachers can assist vocabulary knowledge and thereby comprehension success through vocabulary instruction. According to Duke et al. (2011: 74) this could 'relate new words to known words, embed instruction in relevant contexts, and include experiences surrounded with meaningful talk'. The English national curriculum expects teachers to support pupils to 'distinguish shades of meaning' between words (DfES, 2013: 23). Before reading a text, teachers can explain to pupils the meanings of key words, build banks of new words and make dictionaries and glossaries (DfES, 2005c). Words can be displayed in the classroom on 'working walls' (DCSF, 2008), which Ofsted (2011) acknowledged helped pupils. Learning words through songs, games and wordplay effectively builds 'word consciousness' (Duke and Moses, 2003). Teachers can teach new words using drama (DCSF, 2008), pictures and photographs, graphic organisers like mind maps and visual mnemonics to remember words (Oakhill et al., 2015). They can carefully select which word to focus on based on how useful the word will be in the future and how it relates to other words already known (Duke and Moses, 2003).

In addition to teaching pupils the meanings of words, pupils can be shown how to figure out words drawing on their wider knowledge (DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2013). These 'generative word learning strategies' could include deriving word meanings from context and analysing morphology (Elleman and Oslund, 2019: 6). Teachers may choose to focus on teaching tier 2 words (Beck, et al., 2013); these are higher level words which mature readers encounter

frequently. Teaching that focuses on activities that go beyond word definitions and encourage semantic networks are preferred, because associations between words can provide ‘the “glue” that makes a text cohere’ (Oakhill and Cain, 2018a: 18). Questioning and dialogue about words can support vocabulary development, as can work on morphology (Bowers et al., 2010). Teachers can encourage pupils to read ‘widely and often’ as this develops vocabulary (DfES, 2013: 4). In an illustration of the Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986), the amount of reading improves overall reading attainment and vocabulary knowledge (Duff et al., 2015).

Inference

As language is not completely explicit, readers need to understand beyond the individual words and sentences in a written text. Consequently, readers generate inferences by gathering implicit information to gain further meaning from a text, which supports coherence (Perfetti et al., 2005). Inference can be viewed as the conduit beyond meaning to interpretation (Perfetti and Stafura, 2015). Readers will make inferences even when accessing the literal meaning (Tennent, 2015). They may make inferences at the ‘local level’ of sentences and paragraphs or at the ‘global level’ of the whole text (Kispal, 2008). The ability to draw inferences is one important predictor of reading comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2003); thus, poor inference skills will result in poor reading comprehension (Kispal, 2008). Inference making and vocabulary skills have been identified as influencing each other in a reciprocal relationship (Oakhill and Cain, 2018b). By using contextual cues, readers can infer meanings of unknown words; conversely, using deep vocabulary knowledge, readers can make further inferences.

Inferences may be text-based or knowledge-based, the former drawing on depth of vocabulary and the latter on background knowledge (Kispal, 2008). Again, the multi-layered complexity of reading comprehension is revealed through the interconnectivity of its different aspects. Kintsch and Rawson (2005: 221) comment that ‘comprehension requires inferences, and inferences require knowledge’. Additional to general and vocabulary knowledge, two further factors that influence success in inference making are knowing when to make inferences and having processing limitations that slow down the integration

of inferred information (Yuill and Oakhill, 1991). Readers that are good at inferencing, actively make sense of text, and they monitor and repair their understanding (Kispaal, 2008).

Inference is a broad skill and has been subdivided in various ways, for example as text connecting or gap-filling inferences (Cain and Oakhill, 1999). Kintsch and Rawson (2005) identified that inferences can be made as a continuum from automatic 'on-line' inferences', which occur as the text is read, to controlled 'off-line inferences', that occur after the text has been read. Oakhill and Cain (2018b) identify two types of inference, 'necessary inferences' (also known as text-connecting) needed for a coherent model, and 'elaborative inferences' (also known as gap-filling), which elaborate meaning but are not required for understanding, and inform our understanding of inference making. Text-connecting inferences are more likely to be made than inferences for elaboration (Perfetti et al., 2005). It has been found that younger children are less likely to make inferences spontaneously; rather they make inferences when prompted or questioned (Casteel and Simpson, 1991). Pupils may need encouragement to develop high standards of coherence and when teachers make coherence a goal, inferences are more successful (Perfetti et al., 2005).

Inference informs the building of a mental model of a text (Oakhill, 2020). A skilled reader makes inferences 'that bridge elements in the text or otherwise support the coherence necessary for comprehension' (Perfetti et al., 2005: 231). Less skilled comprehenders may have different goals when they are reading text and rather than striving for text coherence, they focus on reading individual words (Cain and Oakhill, 1999). As a result, the relationship between comprehension and inference is influenced by the reader's 'standard for coherence' (Oakhill, 2020: 410). This does not exclude the significance of differences in processing resources such as working memory. The implication for teachers is an awareness that inference is necessary for coherence but that developing readers may not view this as a priority. Yet, there is limited evidence of which strategies are effective for teachers to teach inference (Kispaal, 2008).

The English national curriculum expects pupils in years 3 and 4 to be 'drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence' (DfE, 2013: 26). Suggestions for teaching inference include

teachers choosing suitable texts (i.e., where some inference is needed), activating prior knowledge, sharing predictions, and talking about the possibility of multiple interpretations (Kispal, 2008). In addition, inference is supported by teachers modelling inference through ‘thinking aloud’, talking about how they go about making inferences and questioning pupils (Kispal, 2008). Whilst, pupils’ inferences can be encouraged and assessed through questioning, Oakhill et al. (2015) distinguished between the potential to make inferences, which might be surmised through teacher questioning, and spontaneously making inferences whilst reading, which is the goal for readers. Moreover, as inference is difficult to measure, it is difficult to isolate when teaching (Tennent, 2015) and there is no clear understanding of when inference skills could be taught (Tennent, 2015; Cain and Oakhill, 2004). Consequently, it is challenging for teachers to ‘know how to sequence the learning and teaching to develop inference making skill’ (Tennent, 2015: 78).

Tennent (2015: 75) identified ‘many types of inference highlighted in the literature’. His table identified thirty-one types of inference named beyond the text connecting and gap-filling inferences mentioned above, which illustrates how the theory around inference is difficult for teachers or school leaders to process, synthesise and put into practice. A further difficulty for teaching inference is that whilst the curriculum and consequent assessments are expected to inform teaching, for inference these do not fully represent the full scope of inferential skills identified within the research (Tennent, 2015). Of the two main categories of inference, necessary inferences for textual coherence and elaborative understandings that enrich our understandings (Cain, 2010), it is the latter that is focused on within the national curriculum. The emphasis is on controlled inferences, exploring aspects such as characters and their motivations, rather than automatic inferences that support a coherent understanding of a text. Consequently, there is a divide between research and practice:

It becomes difficult for research to inform classroom practice; or indeed for practitioners to expect research to be informative, because the curriculum mediates a separation between research and practice (Tennent, 2015: 80).

Whilst there are complexities around teaching inference, both vocabulary knowledge (discussed above) (Currie and Cain, 2015; Oakhill et al., 2015) and background knowledge

(discussed below) have been identified as being influential in supporting inference making (Oakhill, 2020).

Background knowledge

In addition to knowledge of vocabulary, and knowledge of language structures at word and sentence level, the language comprehension system involves applying background knowledge (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). Thus, comprehension is 'intimately connected to our knowledge of the world' (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016: 29). This may be general knowledge about the world which is utilised in reading to speed and strengthen comprehension (Willingham, 2006). In their review of the impact of background knowledge on reading, Smith et al. (2021: 226) argued they 'consistently found that higher levels of background knowledge enable children to better comprehend a text'.

An example of knowledge necessary for comprehension is domain knowledge (Nation, 2005). This is specific knowledge about a subject which supports a fuller understanding of a text. If a reader knows a lot about horses and related words, they draw on this when reading a text, both non-fiction and fiction, that includes this specific language. Thus, they can read more fluently, easing understanding, and enabling deeper comprehension (Hirsch, 2003). Another aspect of background knowledge is book or text knowledge (Oakhill et al., 2015) including story structure (Ofsted, 2022). For comprehension this helps a reader get the main idea of a text and supports a mental model. Knowledge of story structures is a significant predictor of successful reading comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2003). Consequently, skilled comprehenders are stronger at using structure and integrating a story to support understanding (Yuill and Oakhill, 1991).

The interconnectivity between different aspects of the comprehension process can be glimpsed by how background knowledge draws on vocabulary and informs inference (Smith et al., 2021). In addition, readers utilise social and cultural knowledge for comprehension (Graesser et al., 1996). Background knowledge may be influenced by wider structures such as socio-economic group and thus perceived as beyond the impact of teaching alone. That said, teaching practices widely acknowledge the significance of building learning on prior

knowledge (Howard et al., 2018). Cultural capital has been linked with background knowledge; children who have knowledge of dominant cultural codes are likely to be more successful in the educational system and more likely to come from a higher socioeconomic status (Bourdieu, 1986).

In their practices, educationalists are advised not to presume there is one homogenous literary culture (Goouch and Lambirth, 2011). Instead, schools can take steps to reflect home cultures from varying socio and economic cultures and thereby develop a culturally responsive pedagogy (Rychly and Graves, 2012). For example, if some children are not to be disadvantaged in the classroom, schools can create spaces where differing perspectives can be valued (Levy, 2011). Accordingly, teachers can find out about children's understandings of reading and ensure their home experiences are reflected within the classroom (Cole, 1990). In this approach, texts are not restricted to written texts within the literary canon and might include multimodal texts alongside comics and texts from social media (Clark and Teravainen-Goff, 2020).

When teaching reading comprehension, teachers are likely to reflect on pupils' background knowledge and how this supports or limits reading comprehension. Through a range of texts and opportunities for reading experience chosen by teachers, knowledge of genre, text layout and linguistic style can be developed alongside knowledge of story structure (Perfetti et al., 2005). The choice of text is significant as the cohesion and coherence of the text affects how readily pupils can apply their background knowledge (Smith et al., 2021). Teachers may also consider that knowledge is constructed within a social and cultural context, which informs readers' interpretations (Tennent, 2015). As knowledge bases vary, then so mental models will vary. This is significant as it suggests there can be multiple interpretations of a text, although those that fit dominant cultural codes may be more highly valued (Bourdieu, 1986).

Once background knowledge is recognised as a requirement for successful reading comprehension, how teachers can impact on pupils' background knowledge is of interest to practices. Teaching reading incorporates knowledge building more broadly, for example supporting opportunities for widespread reading of informative (likely to be non-fiction)

texts (Bruggink et al., 2022). This argument can be linked with teaching a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’ which has been an area of concern in English primary schools (DfE, 2021). However, how to teach background knowledge has not been widely acknowledged in schools and is ‘an under-addressed aspect of reading instruction for teachers’ (Smith et al., 2021: 234). Indeed, it is only in a recent Ofsted (2022) review that the explicit teaching of background knowledge to support reading has been identified in the English mainstream context. Hirsch (2003) identified that domain knowledge and vocabulary knowledge accounted for the ‘fourth grade slump’ in the US, where attainment in reading comprehension slowed for children aged 9-10. The conclusion drawn is that background knowledge should be taught explicitly and in a sequenced way (Smith et al., 2021). But the details of how this is implemented within practices has yet to be established.

Memory

Another component of successful reading comprehension is memory (Oakhill et al., 2015). Long-term memory stores the meanings of words and information about different text genres and effective reading involves accessing this information quickly (Oakhill et al., 2015). Working memory is a factor that influences reading comprehension success (Daneman and Carpenter, 1980; Shanahan, 2020) and is a significant factor in supporting inference making (Oakhill, 2020). Working memory as defined by Perfetti et al., (2005: 238) is ‘one or more systems of limited capacity that both store and manipulate information’. To comprehend text, working memory is used to process language and create links (Tennent, 2015).

Readers utilise working memory to store and handle information, such as manipulating phonological information, remembering words within a sentence, linking this with the preceding text and activating and incorporating background knowledge. This integration of processes means that working memory resources are drawn on extensively for reading comprehension (Nation, 2005). Cognitive load theory explains that working memory is limited and can be overloaded (DFE, 2019). A lack of background knowledge can strain working memory (Kintsch, 2009). When teaching comprehension, teachers are encouraged to evaluate the burden to their pupils on working memory as this may impinge on successful

comprehension (Smith et al., 2021). However, Shanahan (2020: S241) cautions that although we have gained 'insights from cognitive science', this understanding is 'disconnected from the instructional enterprise' as it has yet to be established how to teach working memory and other executive functions to improve reading comprehension.

Metacognition and monitoring comprehension

The process of metacognition, whereby a reader thinks about their own understanding and makes adjustments accordingly, has been identified as a significant component of successful reading comprehension (Irwin, 1991; Afflerbach et al.; 2013, Quigley et al., 2018). A reader might for example reread, slow down, or look up a word in the dictionary. These strategies are often referred to as comprehension monitoring. How well readers monitor their own comprehension has been identified as an important predictor of reading comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2003). Readers who aim for coherence in their understanding of a text will monitor their comprehension and make repair whilst less skilled readers are less likely to activate this skill (Perfetti et al., 2005). Poorer comprehenders can find it more difficult to notice internal inconsistencies, particularly when they are required to integrate information that is separated by further sentences (Oakhill et al., 2005). In comparison, successful readers are actively engaged in their reading and aware of their metacognition so that they can independently monitor, and repair anomalies (Nation, 2005). There is recent interest in peer support to improve reading comprehension and reading fluency with a research trial investigating how effectively monitoring skills are improved when pupils work through structured activities in pairs with their peers (EEF, 2023).

One technique that can support readers to self-monitor and detect inconsistencies is encouraging them to visualise a story as a set of images (Gambrell and Bales, 1986). Similarly, asking pupils to summarise texts helps to highlight if they have understood the main parts of a text (De Sousa and Oakhill, 1996). As reading comprehension is cumulative, how flexible readers are to change their interpretation can be significant or if they have a fixed pathway through the text and do not revise their interpretation when new information does not fit (Cartwright, 2008). Teachers can encourage self-monitoring by voicing their thought processes and speculating about the text, thereby making the process of

integrating across the text explicit (DfES, 2005c). This in turn, supports inference (Kispaal, 2008). Thinking aloud in comprehension instruction can improve attainment (Fisher et al., 2011; Sönmez and Sulak, 2018) and consequently is incorporated into some interventions (Oakhill et al., 2015). Talking about thinking in comprehension can also model to pupils how readers combine aspects such as vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of text structure and inference for comprehension. The longer-term aim of teaching self-monitoring is for pupils to review meaning for themselves as they read rather than it being something they do afterwards and for someone else.

Summary of chapter 2

This chapter has identified and discussed the main models and theories of teaching reading comprehension and how they have been reflected in policies and other advisory documents for English schools. This is significant for this study as it has established the complexities of reading comprehension and informs subsequent discussions about how these shape teaching practices. In particular, it supports an informed contextualisation for the third research question, 'Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?' Class teachers are tasked with making judgements and decisions about how to teach reading comprehension according to their professional knowledge and experience and the needs of their current group of children in addition to the requirements of local and national policy and expectations. Whilst teachers may appreciate that skilled comprehenders use a complex orchestration of strategies and skills to make sense of a text, they are unlikely to have the level of explicit knowledge of the comprehension process covered here. The next chapter continues to establish the context for this study but with a focus on teachers' practices.

Chapter 3: Reading comprehension instruction: What is understood about teachers' practices?

Introduction

This chapter is the second part of the literature review. Following on from a discussion of the wider context concerning reading comprehension this part focuses on reading comprehension teaching practices. In relation to the research questions, this chapter links mainly with the first question which is concerned with how teachers teach reading comprehension. There are some tentative connections with the other questions which ask how reading comprehension is understood by teachers and why that might be the case. In the previous chapter the complex and multifaceted nature of reading comprehension was illustrated. Shanahan (2019: 32) argues that similarly, '[e]ffective reading comprehension instruction is also complex and requires attention to multiple aspects of learning and development.'

In capturing how teachers teach reading comprehension, this chapter examines how pedagogies of teaching reading comprehension are applied. It identifies opportunities for and approaches to teaching reading comprehension and the prominence of explicit reading comprehension strategies in practices. Then it explores how practices might be influenced when teaching multilingual pupils and how the focus on reading for pleasure interacts with reading comprehension teaching practices. A summary of what is known about reading comprehension instruction is presented and any evidence about how teachers conceptualise their role in the process. Following that, the influence of beliefs on teachers' pedagogical decisions are discussed. Finally, there is a summative section which draws together key points from both literature review chapters in response to the three research questions. The discussion that follows aims to generate a scholarly discussion around different aspects from the wider field and indicate this project's place within it.

Opportunities to teach reading comprehension in classrooms

Teaching pupils to read is an important aspect of teaching in primary schools (DfE, 2013), as such comprehension is expected to be taught, and ‘cannot be left to chance’ (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016: 127). Wyse and Bradbury (2022: 41) identify the outcome of reading instruction as pupils being ‘able to comprehend texts, ultimately in ways that include sophisticated understanding of texts and well-justified views about texts’.

To achieve this, reading lessons include explicit instruction, where teachers model and teach skills and strategies of fluent reading and support pupils’ independent reading attempts (Perkins, 2015). In addition to teaching comprehension strategies, ‘balanced comprehension instruction’ includes a ‘a supportive classroom context’ where readers have lots of time to read and where they experience reading a range of texts including real texts and high-quality discussion (Duke and Pearson, 2002: 207). Thus, teachers have a role in explicit instruction and developing implicit learning opportunities through establishing supportive classroom environments and routines; for example, where pupils can practise applying their comprehension skills in independent reading activities using accessible and engaging texts.

Starting with these expectations of teaching reading comprehension, shared reading offers some opportunities to teach reading comprehension through modelling and demonstration. Introduced with the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (DfEE, 1997), this involves a text being shared multiple times. Led by the teacher, it includes collaborative and interactive reading opportunities for pupils. The teacher makes the reading process explicit and enjoyable by scaffolding understanding of an engaging text that pupils cannot currently access without support (DfES, 2003b). An aspect of modelling reading is the teacher talking about their thinking, also referred to as ‘thinking aloud’ (Duke and Pearson, 2002). This in turn supports children to articulate their thinking and supports development of metacognition (Quigley, 2018).

More specific reading instruction can be taught in guided reading (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996), also introduced with the NLS (DfEE, 1997). Although guided reading practices in schools were identified as a ‘longstanding weakness’ in schools (Ofsted, 2002: 8) they were

further promoted by the Primary National Strategy (PNS) (DfES, 2003a). Guided reading has been described by Nicholas et al., (2021: 2) as ‘a teaching approach that is purposefully designed to enmesh the what with the how when teaching children to read’. This was a pedagogical shift from the deeply embedded pedagogical practice of ‘listening to children read’ (Fisher, 2008: 19). In guided reading, teachers use questioning and promote discussion to confirm understanding and facilitate deeper thinking around texts (Blything et al., 2019) whilst pupils are encouraged to apply reading strategies to new texts (Ford and Opitz, 2008). In addition, pupils ask questions while teachers model and instruct explicitly (Fountas and Pinnell, 2017). During guided reading, the teacher works with one small group whilst the remaining children work independently on reading or literacy activities (Fountas and Pinnell, 2012). Lessons are often organised in a carousel style with a rolling programme of independent reading activities for groups not working with the teacher (Burton, 2018). These independent groups work with a suite of activities such as, sequencing cards, listening to a text, and using graphic organisers such as story maps and charts to respond to texts.

Guided reading draws on the ‘gradual release of responsibility’ model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983), where readers have short, focused interactions with the teacher which guides them to apply strategies to the text with increasing independence (Fountas and Pinnell, 2009). There are opportunities to respond collaboratively to texts, for example, underlining, summarising in the margin, and noting key points (Lemov et al., 2016). Books are often organised into book bands, which measure the level of difficulty of the text (DfES, 2003b) and assist selection. Guided reading lessons were encouraged to follow a structure of book introduction, strategy check, independent reading and returning to the text (DfES, 2003b). Iaquinta (2006: 414) summarised the goal of guided reading being:

to develop a self-extending system of reading that enables the reader to discover more about the process of reading while reading.

This model allows teachers to plan specific teaching of reading to a small group and to notice and assess their reading (Fountas and Pinnell, 2012). Avalos et al., (2007) argue that all students benefit from the structured format, systematic evaluation, individualised instruction, and opportunities to make meaning.

To facilitate guided reading, schools have trained teachers and invested in buying and storing multiple copies of texts (Fountas and Pinnell, 2012). According to Bryk et al. (2007), the most challenging part of guided reading expertise is managing explicit teaching points through a rich discussion and in response to observations of student reading. Therefore, developing expertise in guided reading requires ongoing professional development. Fountas and Pinnell (2012: 281) acknowledge some of the challenges in guided reading:

We realize that achieving a high level of expertise in guided reading is not easy. It takes time and usually the support of a coach or staff developer. Research indicates that it is fairly easy to take on the basic structure of guided reading, for example, the steps of the lesson. However, that is only the beginning of teacher expertise. Teaching for strategic actions and “on your feet” interaction with students is much more challenging.

This thesis builds on Fountas and Pinnell’s (2012) understanding of reading comprehension practices finding that whilst teachers may draw upon similar resources their use differs in subtle but significant ways. It aims to understand further what influences the decisions and interactions that constitute reading comprehension teaching practices.

Guided reading is Vygotskian in its model, where the teacher as the more experienced reader uses scaffolding and talk to guide the less experienced reader and support their reading development (Perkins, 2015). This approach requires teachers to know a text well in addition to the processes involved with learning to read (Hobsbaum et al., 2006). Fountas and Pinnell (2012) argue that comprehension is expanded through discussion and encourage teachers to, ‘use facilitative language that promotes dialogue’ (2012: 279). Dialogic talk has been identified as a key factor in a successful guided reading session (Reedy, 2011), where teachers and children work together to co-construct meaning within a supportive framework (Alexander, 2008). Teachers can shape the dialogic interactions through exploring and expanding on the text whilst allowing for different understandings (Tennent, 2015). They can use approaches such as allowing children to respond first, using paired talk, children asking their own questions, and replying to each other instead of going

through the teacher (Reedy, 2011). Regular and structured opportunities to work collaboratively with reading comprehension encouraging oral and written communication has led to improved understanding and confidence with texts (Rojas-Drummond et al., 2014; Pearson et al., 2020). In classrooms where teachers guide understanding and children can ask questions to reflect, reason, and extend their thinking, children were more successful in comprehension tests (Mercer and Littleton, 2007).

There is much for teachers to think about when planning and teaching a guided reading lesson. A text is chosen to support the teaching, be interesting to the group, and be a suitable level of difficulty (Perkins, 2015). Although, the practice of simplifying texts for weaker readers can be problematic as this can result in 'poor, meaningless texts' (Bruggink et al., 2022: 34). The background knowledge needed for texts is considered, as coherent texts with clear structure benefit pupils with weaker background knowledge (Kamalski, 2007). Publishers have created a range of resources to support guided reading which include pre-planned questions to ease the organisational burden of planning in detail. This has the drawback that questions are not planned to precisely meet the needs and contexts of pupils. In addition, teachers may follow a script rather than adapt their discussion and questioning according to the children's responses. This has been criticised, arguing that it is preferable for teachers to use their knowledge of reading development and processes to respond to the reading needs of the pupils and remain independent of commercially produced materials (Iaquinta, 2006).

Some practices incorporate oral storytelling as part of the repertoire of developing comprehension. When listening to stories, children appreciate the links and structure, and are encouraged to use their visual imagination to create pictures in their heads. Storytelling combined with effective questioning supports reading comprehension (Isbell et al., 2004). Similarly, drama can be used by teachers to further respond to and explore texts, moving readers from basic to more complex understandings through fostering their imagination and encouraging them to question and explore the text (McDonald, 2017). By incorporating aspects of exploratory talk and class discussion through drama, pupils can work with a three-dimensional interpretation of aspects of the text, which engages them and develops their understanding and analytical skills (Beattie and Highfield, 2007). Film has featured in

comprehension teaching, where films are viewed as texts which may be more accessible for some pupils and affirm their literacy experiences (Maine, 2016). This concludes a brief overview of opportunities for teachers to teach reading comprehension in primary classrooms.

Teaching reading comprehension strategies

The US reading panel was influential in the development of reading comprehension teaching by advising teachers to model and explicitly teach pupils reading strategies (NICHD, 2000). A variety of comprehension instruction methods were suggested such as using tools like graphic and semantic organisers, applying skills such as summarisation and knowledge of story structure, encouraging active reading through self-monitoring and question generation, and the more general pedagogical approach of asking questions (NICHD, 2000). Practices of teaching reading comprehension strategies were promoted in England through teacher guides such as guided reading materials (DfES, 2003b) and in some detail in three Understanding Reading Comprehension leaflets (DfES 2005a, DfES 2005b, DfES 2005c). The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), whose guidance reports are commonly utilised by schools, concluded that teaching reading strategies has ‘very high impact for very low cost based on extensive evidence’ (EEF, 2021a: online).

Similarly, Bruggink et al. (2022) acknowledge there is significant evidence that reading strategy interventions impact reading comprehension, but they note this is lessened when carried out by regular teachers. An earlier study found that teachers were less skilled than researchers at teaching reading strategies, suggesting that ‘teachers require deeper understanding of reading comprehension itself and effective comprehension strategies’ (O’Hare et al., 2019: 8). Duke et al. (2011: 67) caution against comprehension strategies being ‘implemented in a heavily scripted fashion’. The long-term aim of teaching strategies is for readers to self-regulate the use of these strategies to inform their independent comprehension (Pressley et al., 1992). Bruggink et al. (2022) warn that there is a danger that strategy instruction rather than understanding of a text becomes identified as the goal and so it is important that strategies are taught in meaningful ways.

With reference to how teachers apply this to their practices, strategy instruction has been criticised for lacking guidance on which ones to teach and how to do so (McKeown et al., 2009). Although there may be benefits to strategy instruction, according to Hirsch (2003) and Willingham and Lovette (2014) these gains are time limited. Focusing on key ideas, concepts, and connected vocabulary may be more significant for successful comprehension than focusing on strategies (Willingham and Lovette, 2014). Hirsch (2003) maintains that a broad depth of knowledge is preferable as the focus of the curriculum; consequently, schools should follow a knowledge-based curriculum rather than a skills-based curriculum (Hirsch, 2019). However, strategy instruction has been given consideration in this study because of the widespread use of strategies in practices, where they 'have a dominant position in classroom instruction' (Smith et al., 2021: 220).

When teaching reading strategies, teachers disassemble the parts of reading to support readers and identify which aspect of reading they are finding difficult by explaining, modelling, and using different strategies (Afflerbach et al., 2008). Teachers provide opportunities for readers to practise the strategies so that these 'transform themselves into skills' (Afflerbach et al., 2008: 372). It may be useful for teachers to make a distinction between the skills that a reader needs to comprehend and the strategies they may employ. This distinction is important for 'instructional clarity' as these terms have been used inconsistently and interchangeably (Afflerbach et al., 2008; Manoli and Papadopoulou, 2012). Strategies are intentional, show awareness and are goal-orientated; a reader monitors if their reading is successful and modifies it if they are not effective. In contrast, skills are habitual and automated and consequently done at speed and do not require working memory (Afflerbach et al., 2008).

The aim with strategy instruction, is that over time and with reading practice, pupils' strategies become transformed into skills. In addition, teachers cannot assume that using strategies ensures success. For example, a reader may choose an inappropriate goal or mistakenly think that guessing a word is a good strategy. Equally a reader never outgrows their strategy repertoire as a challenging text can be encountered at any stage (Afflerbach et al., 2008). Several studies have examined what reading comprehension strategies involve and lists do vary (Pressley 2000; Pardo 2004; Lewis and Tergenza, 2007; Warner, 2013).

Warner (2013: 56) synthesised a range of studies to derive the following elements: activating prior knowledge, prediction, questioning and clarifying, visualisation and imagination, summarising, drawing inferences, and monitoring understanding. In response to this list, both inference and monitoring understanding have been referred to in the previous chapter. (It might be interesting to note that Shanahan (2019) argues that inference is a skill not a strategy.) The remaining strategies will be briefly discussed below to establish how they might be enacted in teaching practices.

Activating prior knowledge is a well-established teaching tool linking back to Bartlett's schema theory (1932). In a reading comprehension lesson, this might include talking about what is known about the genre or the setting which could assist with making sense of the text. For example, teachers might draw attention to the title or key words in the texts and ask pupils what they associate with these (DfES, 2005b). As well as drawing on factual information, readers can draw on experiences where they might connect and empathise with the characters and the emotion of the text. Teachers can support this skill through questioning, explaining links they make, and encouraging dialogue.

Prediction is something that readers often do as they read by wondering what will happen next. This links with the notion of readers as problem solvers of text (Pearson and Cervetti, 2017). As the reader does not know what the author is thinking, they hypothesise using clues from the text alongside wider knowledge. Teachers can support this skill through questioning, describing their predictions and modelling how they have used clues from the text alongside their background knowledge to predict, whilst encouraging dialogue about prediction (DfES, 2005b).

Questioning is a tool widely used by teachers to explore and develop reading comprehension (Fisher, 2008). To support reading comprehension, teachers can design questions to encourage the reader to make meaning through looking more closely at a text and seeing beyond the written words. Questions might focus on literal comprehension, inference, or evaluation (DfES, 2005b). In addition to questioning being modelled by a teacher, it is a favoured tool in assessment (NFER, 2007), but ultimately self-questioning is a skill that readers are encouraged to do independently (NICHHD, 2000; DfES, 2005b;

Shanahan, 2019). This could involve pupils being encouraged to ask their own questions to characters, or to the author, or to ask each other about sections of the text, and challenge their peers.

In their teaching preparation, teachers give thought to the wording of their questions. Questioning in classrooms may be influenced by Bloom's (1956) taxonomy which can be drawn on to structure learning from simpler to more complex concepts (DfES, 2005b). Alternatively, Barrett's (1976) more specific taxonomy on reading comprehension, which highlights literal, inferential, evaluative, and appreciative questioning, can be used. A further aim is for pupils to generate questions, supporting metacognition and motivation (Bruggink et al., 2022). One example of this is Kagan's cooperative learning structures (2005). Instead of a question being answered by individuals, the teacher facilitates paired and group discussions in structured routines (Kagan and Kagan, 2009). Similarly, Alexander (2008) encouraged classroom interactions where pupils have more opportunities to talk. Concerned with most exchanges in the classroom following a basic 'initiation-response-feedback' (IRF) type (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1992), Alexander (2008) argued for teachers to seek out opportunities for dialogue and plan for different qualities of talk in their teaching.

Clarification links with self-monitoring (considered below), as the focus for this strategy is on pupils identifying problem areas of the text and then working with repair strategies to fix these. Through teacher modelling, pupils are encouraged to identify words or concepts that are unfamiliar or difficult to understand; they then use repair strategies such as rereading, reflecting back over the text, reading on in the text, looking up a word in a dictionary etc. It is one of the four strategies focused on in reciprocal reading (Palincsar and Brown, 1984), which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Lubliner (2002) found that instruction on the strategy of clarification had a positive effect on pupils' comprehension and newly met vocabulary when part of a collaborative text-based dialogue.

Visualisation involves a reader building a mental picture as they read which represents what they understand from the text. This complements the view that comprehension involves building a mental model of the text (Oakhill et al., 2015). Using visualisation supports readers to make appropriate inferences as they more readily connect with prior knowledge

and life experiences (Woolley, 2014). Teachers can encourage visualisation through using wordless picture books as well as vivid texts to support comprehension effectively (Harvey and Goudvis, 2007). By asking students to draw a scene or create a story board, readers can be encouraged to appreciate details in text and understand it at a deeper level (DfES, 2005b). By imagining themselves in the story, they can become more engaged and enjoy reading more (Woolley, 2014).

Summarisation involves a reader being able to identify the central ideas of a text for more concise understanding. To be successful, readers need to gather the important parts of the text and leave out the peripheral information (Oakhill et al., 2015). Summarising helps to see the big picture by integrating the key parts in a meaningful way. Teachers might teach pupils to skim a text, marking the main ideas, or crossing out the less important details. In addition, teachers can model summarising, prompt pupils with summary questions and ask pupils to say a summary sentence or draw a summary wheel (DfES, 2005b). Pupils need to have practised recount, retelling and sequencing skills to support their later development of summary skills. It is one of the four strategies focused on in reciprocal reading (Palincsar and Brown, 1984) which is considered in more detail below.

Other approaches to reading comprehension teaching

Teachers might adopt a less instructional and more collaborative style to teaching strategies. An example of this is reciprocal reading, an instructional framework for teaching comprehension introduced by Palincsar and Brown (1984). As a dialogue-based interaction about text, it follows a Vygotskian approach (Lubliner, 2002) whilst teaching the four key strategies of: summarising (most important information); questioning (purposeful); clarifying (self-monitoring understanding) and predicting (thoughtful, strategic reading). In reciprocal reading, pupils are actively encouraged to construct meaning and consciously use comprehension strategies. Following teacher modelling, pupils work collaboratively to take on the role of teacher in peer led discussions.

Reciprocal reading has been used widely, particularly in the US with both whole class and targeted interventions. Although it has not been implemented widely in the UK until more

recently (O’Hare et al., 2019), it was promoted by a reading comprehension leaflet circulated to schools (DfES, 2005b). In a meta-analysis of the impact of reciprocal reading, Okkinga et al., (2018) reported that interventions using this approach are beneficial, particularly for pupils aged 8 to 14 even in a whole class setting where it can be more difficult to maintain the impact. A reciprocal reading intervention programme designed by the Fischer Family Trust has been recommended by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) toolkit (EEF, 2019) as supporting reading comprehension.

A further approach to teaching reading comprehension included in one of the reading comprehension leaflets (DfES, 2005b) circulated to schools was Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs). These were structured activities to build reading comprehension skills developed by Lunzer and Gardner (1984). In addition to prediction and sequencing, these promoted text analysis through text marking and cloze activities where readers considered missing words using their knowledge of contextual and syntactic cues. DARTs used texts which are modified (by, for example, taking out words) or unmodified texts to analyse or reconstruct texts using a suite of activities that could be done in collaborative groups or in pairs. These were promoted in more detail in a guidance leaflet about active engagement techniques in secondary schools with DARTs offering opportunity for pupils to review texts more deeply by looking beyond the literal (DfES, 2004). The Bell Foundation (no date) likewise promotes the use of DARTs. They argue that activities like DARTs are particularly useful for pupils who speak English as an additional language and are at the early acquisition and developing competence language stages of proficiency in English. The next section continues discussing teaching reading comprehension to pupils who speak English as an additional language and who are thus learning across and utilising two or more languages (referred to as multilingual). Within this study, this was a consideration for the practices in the participant schools, especially in schools B and C.

Teaching reading comprehension to multilingual pupils

Learning to read where English is an additional language is more complex because a pupil will be learning to read and write in English whilst ‘simultaneously learning to speak and understand it’ (Goldenberg, 2020: S131). Multilingual developing readers tend to have good

decoding skills and greater phonological skills but score less well in comprehension (Murphy and Franco, 2016). Bruggink et al. (2022: 80) argue that 'teaching reading comprehension to multilingual students is no different from teaching monolingual students'; yet there are considerations for practices despite developmental paths being similar.

As do their monolingual peers, multilingual learners develop their phonemic awareness, thereby building their knowledge of the alphabetic code and developing their vocabulary and language skills for comprehension. Pupils learning to read in a second (or possibly third) language (L2) often have a lower performance in reading comprehension (Melby-Lervåg and Lervåg, 2014). These differences become more apparent with older readers as comprehension becomes the focus (Raudszus et al., 2019). The transition for L2 readers to more automatic linguistic processing recognised in fluent reading can take longer (Goldenberg, 2020). This difference has been further explained by their lesser L2 vocabulary (Burgoyne et al., 2009) and a smaller network of connections within the additional language available to tackle more complex texts (Lervåg and Aukrust, 2010). Therefore, they are likely to need additional support to develop their English proficiency and their knowledge of academic language to accelerate their progress (Goldenberg, 2020).

Different pupils will have varied literacy experiences in their first language (L1). Although L2 readers can apply their knowledge of language and grammar between languages (Conteh, 2015), their syntactic and semantic knowledge in English will be weaker than their peers, which will make it harder for them to predict words and text (Gregory, 2008). When reading in English, multilingual readers may have confusions with their first (or other) language and confusions between working within 2 or more languages (Grabe and Stoller, 2011). Whilst it is preferential for first language opportunities to be sought in school settings, it is likely that pupils for whom English is not their first language will be carrying out most or all their learning in an unfamiliar language. Learning to comprehend in an additional language (L2) is a more complex process than learning to comprehend in a first language (L1). The layers of thinking involved are captured here by Grabe and Stoller (2011: 35):

L2 learners, while learning to read, must broaden their linguistic knowledge at the same time, deal with transfer effect, and learn to use L2-specific resources (eg.

translation, glosses, bilingual dictionaries), among other factors. If this was not enough, the L2 reader learns to read in the L2 with a two-language processing system (L1 and L2 together) rather than just an L2 system. (The L1 never completely turns off.) All of these factors suggest that L2 reading can be quite different from L1 reading.

If reading remains effortful and inefficient, it is 'likely to have mutually reinforcing negative effects on achievement and motivation' (Goldenberg, 2020: S136). To minimise this, when teaching multilingual pupils, teachers will plan meaningful reading experiences that promote language whilst teaching wider content (Conteh, 2015) in 'a supportive classroom context' (Brevik, 2019: 2282). Vocabulary knowledge is key to becoming a successful L2 reader (Lervåg and Aukrust, 2010; Bruggink et al., 2022). In addition to teaching vocabulary, teachers need to teach about words, for example by paying attention 'not only to the meaning of a word, but also to its form, for example, how a word is pronounced and how it is spelled' (Bruggink et al., 2022: 85). Whilst multilingual pupils are being supported to develop their English proficiency, teachers need to be mindful of using accessible language so that pupils can access and benefit from the wider comprehension instruction, questioning and dialogue (O'Day, 2009).

Avalos et al. (2007) suggest a modified guiding reading lesson could be used which involves additional language learning opportunities such as in-depth vocabulary instruction, a focus on semantics, syntax, and morphology to understand English text structure, and cultural relevance. Teachers can support the development of pupils' cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979) by developing awareness of the lexicon used for more literate and academic contexts (Conteh, 2015). In addition, to lessen marginalisation of these pupils, programmes could be developed that acknowledge the rich language experiences of emergent bilingual learners and build on pupils' translinguaging and interlingual knowledge (Cervetti et al., 2020). Teachers' awareness of the dominance of a 'monolingual mindset' and how this can be ideologically constraining in discourses and practices can be significant in shaping practices (Lytra, 2023: 6).

Multilingual pupils may take several years before they can meet their reading potential in English. In addition to the technical difficulties, readers are likely to have diverse background knowledge, and texts may seem less relevant (Grabe and Stoller, 2011). Goldenberg (2020) advises that reading practices consider pupils' cultural resources and the challenges and opportunities these offer. He argues for a reconceptualisation of the term 'culture' to encompass the 'lived experience of students' (Goldenberg, 2020: S140), which includes experiences that,

... originate in students' neighborhoods, the television and streaming they watch, the Twitter feeds and TikTok accounts they follow, or cultural customs and modes of interaction from their or their parents' and grandparents' countries of origin.

A significant factor in the reading comprehension of L2 learners is the linguistic support they experience in their home environment (Van den Bosch et al., 2020). Cultural and family attitudes to reading may be different, because 'how this literacy is valued, used and displayed will vary from culture to culture' (Alderson 2000: 25). This may in turn affect pupils' reading motivation and purpose. In addition to vocabulary and language instruction, teachers can find out about home literacy practices (Bower, 2014). Knowing about individuals will assist teachers to make links between pupils' L1 and L2, find books that are relevant and connect with pupils' background knowledge (Grabe and Stoller, 2011).

Reading for pleasure

Cremin (2020: 92) describes reading for pleasure as 'essentially volitional, choice-led reading of any kind of text'. It is highlighted in English schools as it is understood to have 'real emotional and social consequences', positively impacting on reading attainment and personal development (DfE, 2012: 13). Reading for pleasure is embedded within the national curriculum (DfE, 2013) and further promoted in the reading framework (DfE, 2023). Motivation and interest level have long been considered important aspects of reader response (Harrison, 2004). The relation between comprehension skills and motivation have

been found to be bidirectional, boosting frequency of reading; with motivation impacting on comprehension and successful comprehension impacting on motivation (Toste et al., 2020).

The OECD (2019) acknowledge an expanded definition of reading which recognises motivational and social features in addition to cognitive features. This is significant as Shanahan (2019: 30) argues that pupils 'will become better readers if they are taught reading comprehension in an engaging, motivating context'. Being motivated to read maintains reading attainment alongside expectations of reading success; it supports resilience when reading becomes challenging, and strengthens self-efficacy (Duke et al., 2011). 'Motivated readers choose to invest time and effort in the reading process' (Afflerbach et al., 2013: 443); therefore, teachers are advised to attend to affective factors in their reading practices. Duke et al. (2011: 61) conclude that 'we must be concerned with the will and thrill, not just the skill, of comprehension'.

Engagement in reading is recognised as impacting on reading attainment (OECD, 2021). The benefits of reading for pleasure include supporting comprehension attainment, increasing breadth of vocabulary, wider general knowledge, and greater self-confidence as a reader (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Teachers have a responsibility to teach reading skills such as decoding, fluency and knowledge for comprehension (Ofsted, 2022), as not being able to understand what they read makes readers more likely to become disengaged from reading and consequently read less and achieve less in a spiral of negative outcomes (Clark and Teravainen, 2017). The converse also applies with an upward spiral of positive outcomes with more proficient readers being more motivated and reading more, which further develops their comprehension skills (Mol and Bus, 2011). In addition to reading skills, teachers teach children how to become readers and support their identities as readers (Cremin, 2020). Reading stories and texts aloud develops pupils' knowledge of vocabulary and prosody; it engages pupils in the written word (International Literacy Association, 2018). Talking about books also supports pupils to become readers with interactions about text as central to a 'social practice model' of literacy (Smith, 2010: 71).

Teachers can further support the aim of pupils reading for pleasure by giving pupils access to texts they want to read (Cremin, 2020) and encouraging families to read at home and use

books from the library (DfE, 2012). Children with access to books not only enjoy reading more, but they read more too (Clark and Poulton, 2011). This is significant, as there is a correlation between reading volume (time spent reading) and reading attainment (Anderson et al., 1988, Allington and McGill-Franzen, 2021), as well as general academic success (Atwell, 2007). To support this, teachers can create the time-space and expectation for pupils to engage in independent reading in and outside of school. An example of this in schools is sustained silent reading (SSR) which might include whole school initiatives such as ERIC (everyone reading in class) and DEAR (drop everything and read). However, finding the time to nurture reading for pleasure in schools can be challenging and schools may be 'performing' reading for pleasure rather than developing enriched reading practices (Cremin, 2020).

The aim of reading for pleasure can be problematic for children when school literacies do not reflect home literacies and where the value or pleasure of reading books is less likely to be seen by children of lower socio-economic groups (Cole, 1990). This likewise can be associated with cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) when reading is perceived as a social asset in English schools. Schools widely encourage pupils to read regularly and invite parents to support this aim as reading for pleasure is an important way to improve life chances across socio-economic groups (DfE, 2023). This is more widely supported by the Department for Education, for example in their promotional material '10 top tips for parents to support children to read' (DfE, 2022a), which encourages families to read together and parents to read aloud to their children and talk about books.

Teachers can influence the social environment of their classroom through their ethos around reading and the value given to talking about texts (Perkins, 2015). They can develop a classroom environment of 'high quality discussion' (DfE, 2013: 4) where conversations about books are valued and encouraged and where personal responses to texts between teacher and pupil and between pupils is permitted (Rosenblatt, 1956). Developing text talk and building communities of readers were aspects of Cremin et al.'s (2009) work with teachers focusing on reading for pleasure. Their practice-focused work led to tangible changes in participants' practices such as:

marked improvements in reading environments, read aloud provision, book talk and text recommendations, as well as quality time for independent reading (Cremin et al., 2009: 18).

They found that increasing subject knowledge and developing a pedagogy of becoming reading teachers made significant differences to reading attainment as well as to teachers' dispositions. In addition, informal book talk about recommendations and differing views were part of developing a shared understanding that reading is worthy of discussion (Cremin et al., 2014).

In terms of affecting reading behaviours, teachers can foster positive and enthusiastic reading habits. They have a role of promoting books through their influence (DfE, 2023). But this takes focus, such as knowing about pupils' reading lives and having a deep understanding and appreciation of children's texts, to be able to do this well (Cremin et al., 2014). The teacher is the 'enabling adult' (Chambers, 1991) who determines an interesting selection of texts, makes time for reading in the school day and encourages children's responses. In contrast, a limited knowledge of children's books will lead to a limited offering of experiences (Perkins, 2015). As successful comprehension is predicated on the reader having the goal of comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2015), teachers need to give reasons for pupils to develop their drive for coherence (as mentioned in the previous chapter) (Perfetti et al., 2005). Consequently, teachers have an important role to play in choosing powerful texts for pupils that engage them on cognitive, social, and emotional levels whilst supporting them in actively making meaning.

Applying this to their teaching interactions, teachers may be cautious that pupils do not respond in ways that 'please the teacher' but seek to create opportunities for pupils' undirected responses. Through discussion, pupils can create a shared understanding of a text so it can be both personal and social and achieve a greater understanding through working with each other than through working alone (Vygotsky, 1978). In applying Alexander's (2008) dialogic approach to book talk, teachers might respond to the pupils' answers and comments through clarification, summary and prediction which could serve as a model to support the children in justifying and challenging their thinking. To develop

listening comprehension and enable children to share, justify and explain their ideas about texts, teachers can establish strategies such as ground rules for discussion, language for tentative proposals, reasoning and responding to alternative viewpoints (Warner, 2013). Although this summarises a strong case for reading for pleasure, encouraging an ethos that builds a community of readers can be a challenging agenda within the current climate 'of performativity where conceptions of reading are framed by limited notions of proficiency and national assessment rubrics' (Cremin, 2020: 99).

What is known about reading comprehension teaching practices?

Durkin's (1978) influential study on reading comprehension practices in the US documented a paucity of explicit comprehension instruction with a focus on assessing rather than teaching. She found that rather than actively teaching reading comprehension teachers' attention focussed on assessment whilst children did 'busy work' (1978: 524). Twenty years later Pressley (1998) reached similar conclusions, with subsequent findings that reading comprehension was largely untaught in US primary schools (Pressley, 2002; Duke et al., 2021). Comparable findings have been made in other countries such as South Africa (Klapwijk, 2015), Australia (Byers et al., 2012), Ireland (Concannon- Gibney and Murphy, 2012) and England (Fisher, 2008). Traditional comprehension activities of reading a passage and answering questions have been criticised as checking understanding rather than teaching comprehension:

Even oral question and answer sessions tend to focus on drawing out what children know rather than involving explicit teaching (Warner, 2013: 55).

Parker and Hurry (2007) found that whilst teachers in England modelled strategies of skilled comprehenders, they did not explicitly teach comprehension so the pupils could not knowingly develop comprehension strategies. Whilst the number of studies about comprehension teaching practices is minimal compared to research about how readers comprehend and how reading comprehension should be taught (Brevik, 2019), there is a trend in the academic literature of comprehension that teaching practices are not meeting the level of explicit instruction that researchers have argued for.

Duke and Pearson (2002) concluded that although there was research to inform practices, this knowledge had not become embedded into the curriculum. Whilst the contextual emphasis for reading teaching has been on decoding and reading for pleasure, this may have led to less focus on comprehension teaching (Concannon-Gibney and Murphy, 2012; Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). There may also be 'an enduring reading pedagogy' of retaining previous familiar approaches to teaching reading comprehension and a legacy of the conceptualisation that comprehension was 'caught, not taught' (Concannon-Gibney and Murphy, 2012: 445). More generally, teachers have been shown to be resistant to changing their practices and that genuine change needs sufficient staff training and the change process to be managed effectively (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1993). An example of a more lasting change would be teachers reflecting on practice with colleagues over time leading to improved practices (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996).

Criticisms of comprehension practices suggest that guided reading was not taught as intended and the research that informed understanding was not translated fully into practices (Ford and Opitz, 2008). It appears that policy and curriculum publications that described practice were insufficient to implement change (Fisher, 2008). Mroz et al. (2000) noted a focus on subject knowledge at the expense of pedagogy in the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) training materials, which weakened implementation. In a sample of English primary teachers, Fisher (2008) found the teachers thought they were following the guidelines of guided reading set out in the NLS (DfEE, 1997) but instead their practices revolved around hearing each child read. A mismatch between guided reading practices described and practices observed were likewise reported by Phillips (2013). Fisher (2008) noted that little time was spent on comprehension strategies and dialogue was controlled by the teacher with specific answers expected and limited encouragement of critical literacy and evaluative comprehension. She found that lessons were not always planned and likened them to sporadic events. The widespread nature of the mismatch between practices expected and practices observed suggests a systemic problem. It may be that practices promoted by researchers were unreasonable or unworkable within a busy primary curriculum which has multiple priorities. This may have been further complicated by school

systems which are 'historically and continuously under financed and under resourced' (Concannon-Gibney and Murphy, 2012: 445).

Questioning has been identified as a key approach of reading comprehension teaching practices. For example, nineteen out of 20 teachers in a questionnaire reported using questioning for both literal and higher-level understanding (Blything et al., 2019). In a sample of 280 Irish primary school teachers, 81% identified that questioning was seen as the main form of teaching comprehension (Concannon-Gibney and Murphy, 2012). But the quality of teachers' questioning has been criticised. Parker and Hurry, (2007) found that 70% of observed interactions were direct questions and the largest group of questions from teachers, whilst 40%, were questions with a simple response such as 'yes'. When Hargreaves et al. (2003) evaluated interactions, they were critical of the rapid exchange of questions and answers, where interactions were happening at a surface rather than deep level. Biddulph (2002: 2) claimed that 'many teachers unwittingly assume the role of interrogators because they tend to confuse assessment with direct teaching' with intense questioning being cautioned as restricting the construction of deep comprehension (King 2001; Burkins and Croft, 2008).

In essence, these practices did not reflect the skilled questioning advised by the DfES (2005b) nor the 'conversational format' of the intended guiding reading model (Phillips, 2013: 17). Instead, teachers were dominating the dialogue and pupils assenting to the teachers' interpretations (Skidmore et al., 2003), placing pupils in a passive role (Parker and Hurry, 2007). Degener and Berne (2016) observed that teachers were less likely to ask questions that encouraged deep thinking and more likely to focus on word-level or sentence-level concerns than more thought-provoking text-level questions. They argued that the depth of intellectual engagement for pupils is not held within the text but the demands that a teacher's questions have on the reader. To improve questioning practices, they advised an increased focus on cumulative comprehension across a text, on developing critical understanding of a text (for example by evaluating an argument) and on discerning greater meaning (for example by discussing how the text fits in with world knowledge) which would elevate the quality of the text talk (Degener and Berne, 2016).

In any evaluation of comprehension practices, it is worth remembering the complex and difficult nature of teaching reading comprehension (Beard El-Dinary, 2002; Elleman and Oslund, 2019;). Degener and Berne (2016: 595) found that teachers could develop their reading instruction but that they needed 'time, administrative support, peer discussions, and coaching' to achieve an improvement in the quality of their interactions. An example respondent from Wyse and Bradbury's recent research report, itemised the balanced approach to reading instruction taken in their practices:

We consider the teaching of reading to have 3 *distinct* and equally important strands: phonics, comprehension and reading for pleasure. We teach phonics systematically and *discretely* but we also *separately* teach comprehension and develop an environment which engenders a love of reading (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022: 37, italics in original).

This indicates that for some teachers at least, the intentionality of teaching reading comprehension is recognised as having key significance. Wall (2014) shared concerns that guided reading was not working effectively. She worked with colleagues using a coaching approach to review their comprehension practices because they evaluated that some pupils were not making progress. They made adaptations to their teaching and concluded they needed to 'focus more on changing student behaviors' whilst 'subtle changes in language' which gave responsibility to the students had a significant effect (Wall, 2014: 136).

Teachers have written about their concerns with reading comprehension practices in non-academic sources. Some examples are included below as they add to the contextual backdrop of reading comprehension practices. Hookway (2017: 166) justifies the use of blogs in research as they 'provide qualitative researchers with unique access to first-person textual accounts of everyday life'. The significance of these informal sources is that around the time the data for this inquiry was collected (2017-18) there was a wider discussion within the teaching community about how to teach reading comprehension which some participants referred to. In the Times Educational Supplement, Gaffney (2017) raised the debate of whether comprehension in KS2 should be taught in groups or as a whole class. One concern about guided reading was for teachers trying to keep quality literature at the

heart of the curriculum, teaching and knowing 5 novels for each guided group (estimated around 15 novels a year for a class) was too difficult to manage. Arguments in favour of a whole class approach for reading instruction included pupils hearing prosody modelled by the teacher reading aloud, and all children in a class experiencing challenging texts. Conversely, benefits to working in smaller groups included teachers knowing more fully how their pupils were interpreting text and being able to deepen their sense making more readily through conversations (Gaffney 2017).

Reservations about guided reading being the best approach to teaching reading comprehension have also been expressed online. Through blogs, some teachers, and sometimes schools, have shared that they have moved to whole class reading in KS2; for example, Payne, a year 4 teacher who found this approach was easier to plan and resource than guided reading and where the lessons were more enjoyable for her and her pupils (Payne, 2014a). Another blogger in the same school outlines concerns with guided reading: the difficulty in finding meaningful, independent activities for the groups that were not working with the teacher, the tendency to focus on assessment rather than teaching, group work not being focussed enough, that written outcomes are what is assessed in SATs not discussion, and that difficult aspects for reading need teaching and tend to be glossed over (Wilson, 2016 reposted from Payne, 2014b). Since these posts the teachers have further developed their whole class approach to include wider teaching of vocabulary and selecting texts for what they offered to the teaching of reading, rather than because they fitted with topics and themes (Payne, 2017).

A similar shift from guided reading to whole class teaching of reading comprehension and then making further adaptations to the model has been shared by another blogger (Anderton, 2017, 2018). Anderton (2017) argued on their blog that guided reading was outdated and inefficient, so they switched to a daily reading session which followed a weekly cycle looking at the same text over five days. This consisted of a vocabulary focus, teacher reading aloud, pupils writing a summary and comprehension questions including some challenge. This was later tweaked to develop the vocabulary input and to vary the writing summary by using just 50 words or writing from the perspective of one of the

characters (Anderton, 2018). They argued the outcome was increased attainment and engagement with reading.

Another blog outlined how their school had changed from group to whole class teaching of reading because the carousel model of guided reading was becoming an obstacle to reading progress (Kingsnorth, 2017). They identified three problems with their initial whole class model: lack of instruction whilst relying on generic questioning, not enough focus on teaching background knowledge and vocabulary, and that past comprehension lessons were not informing current ones (Kingsnorth, 2018). In their revised model, they aimed to focus on building mental models by building background knowledge, explicitly explaining things about the text, and asking fewer questions. Kingsnorth (2019), in agreement with Hirsch (2003), argued that inflated claims have been made about teaching reading comprehension strategies (RCS) and this has distracted teachers from focusing on background knowledge and vocabulary:

[T]he intense focus on RCS has completely distorted the teaching of reading and has minimised understanding of the greater role of background knowledge and vocabulary in reading comprehension — something which is only just becoming part of the mainstream discourse amongst primary teachers (Kingsnorth, 2019: online).

Some teacher blogs argue a contrasting view that continuing with groups for guided reading is the best model as it allows for sustained independent reading for fluency (Hawkins, 2017). Whilst Gamble (2022) blogs that choosing between whole class or groups is asking the wrong question and that both are needed to develop the full range of reading skills. Another blogger identified that in the county of Kent there had been ‘a clear shift away from guided reading towards a whole-class approach – particularly in key stage 2’ (Bill, 2022: online). This post similarly concludes that combining the strengths of both approaches may be the way forward.

A common reservation in relation to guided reading articulated in the teacher blogs was the logistical organisation involved, such as, the amount of time it takes to prepare and plan for five or more guided reading lessons in each class each week. Whilst this was more

manageable in the Early Years and in Key Stage 1 where texts are shorter, this becomes increasingly taxing as children read longer and more complex texts. Of contextual significance is that workload was being discussed and reviewed as a factor in teacher retention (DfE/Cooper Gibson Research, 2018). Reducing teacher workload was (and continues to be) a serious concern at both individual, school, and national level. Part of the response from many schools was to buy in resources such as comprehension schemes with textbooks which chose the texts and the questions on behalf of the teacher. Alternatively, teachers could access text and planning resources from websites and teacher forums. In a survey of 2,326 teachers about literacy in 2015, 45.1% of teachers found resources most commonly via an internet search with the TES being the most used resource (51.3%) (Clark and Teravainen, 2015).

Although longer novels and real books might be preferable to base any discussions and teaching around, this model carries with it a high investment of time by the teacher. The shortfall of using textbook and online resources is that the questions are written and planned rather than developing through a genuine discussion, and teachers do not necessarily invest in reading and interacting with the texts. These concerns were echoed by some of the participants in this study. Lessons from textbooks usually orientate around text extracts including some simplified versions. In contrast, Westbrook et al. (2019) found that teachers reading whole challenging novels at a fast pace led to significant attainment which was amplified for poorer readers. They understood this was partly due to the opportunities offered by the longer texts for an 'engaged uninterrupted reading experience over a sustained period' (Westbrook et al., 2019: 60).

The increasing pattern of using scripts for planning lessons is of wider concern than reading comprehension instruction as it has implications for understandings of the role of the teacher in the learning process. It has been argued that using scripted curriculum 'constrains the intellectual participation of both teachers and students in the classroom' (Fitz and Nikolaidis, 2020: 195). The claim is that scripting teaching interactions deprofessionalises teachers over time by taking away details of their decision making (Snow and Juel, 2005). As teachers remove themselves from choices about texts and what to focus on through discussion and questioning, they act more in keeping with a model of teacher as

‘transmitter of knowledge’, using lessons determined by others which can leave them feeling ‘powerless and overwhelmed’ (Dresser, 2012: 71). Becoming detached from practices could tend towards an approach where comprehension is checked or assessed rather than taught, although some teachers may choose to encourage dialogue using these resources.

The preceding blogs demonstrate that some teachers are engaged with reviewing practices and discussing their practice dilemmas in relation to teaching reading comprehension. Whilst there is informal evidence from such sources about the tensions within classrooms, there is a need for a more systematic inquiry into how teachers are navigating reading comprehension practices. This thesis aims to add to this discussion. When exploring the research question ‘how do teachers understand the reading comprehension process?’, some consideration will be given to teachers’ awareness of practices and how successfully they can articulate these. Shulman (1986, 1987) stressed that teachers find it difficult to articulate their practices as some of their knowledge may be implicit. In research about Norwegian secondary teachers’ comprehension teaching, Brevik (2014) found they had implicit knowledge about reading comprehension instruction. In addition, once they had received professional development on strategies, the teachers recognised these in their practices, concluding that ‘teachers know and do more than they articulate’ (Brevik, 2014: 61). The next section considers the influence of beliefs on reading comprehension practices.

Influence of beliefs on reading comprehension teaching practices

Part of the focus of this research is evaluating why teachers teach reading comprehension in the ways that they do. Considering the thinking behind practices is central to understanding teaching (Borg, 2006). Schoenfeld (2011: 457) argued that teachers’ decision making:

... can be modeled and explained as a function of the following: their knowledge and other intellectual, social, and material resources; their goals; and their orientations (their beliefs, values, and preferences).

This section discusses teachers' beliefs, which have been used to help explain practice decisions (Wallace and Priestley, 2011). Richardson et al. (1991) found that beliefs and descriptions of reading comprehension largely coincided with practices. Where they did not, a teacher was in the process of change, thus they concluded that changes in belief preceded changes in practices (Richardson et al., 1991). Although, this contrasts with Fullan (1995) who argued that changes in belief can follow changes in practices. More generally, approaches to teaching reading comprehension may be inconsistent or purposefully eclectic as teachers may have a mixed approach combining 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' models (Levy, 2011).

For Olson and Bruner (1996: 10), teaching and learning interactions in the classroom are 'affected by our everyday intuitive theories', and educational decisions are influenced by human tendencies and cultural beliefs which they refer to as 'folk psychology'. This suggests that in addition to knowledge about comprehension instruction, pedagogical choices are influenced by the conception the teacher has about the reader and the process of reading comprehension. These in turn, reflect wider beliefs of teaching and learning such as 'the dominant folk culture of the specific school and town they work in' (Ilić and Bojović, 2016: 43). Significantly, teachers integrate this folk culture into their folk pedagogies in a tacit way and so may lack clarity about their pedagogical influences (Ilić and Bojović, 2016).

Ilić and Bojović (2016) concluded that folk pedagogies involve implicit, intuitive knowledge of generally stable beliefs which resist change but also influence practices that teachers might change after reflection. Perkins (2015) gives the example of teachers reading aloud to pupils because it is a pleasant, calming, and collective experience as a 'folk tradition'. Whilst this may be how it is experienced, she argues the view is limiting as it neglects to identify the full impact of the practice: how reading aloud develops reading through a stimulation of memory, learning about the structure of a story, hearing, learning, and understanding new words, and developing empathy (Booth, 2006). Consequently, teachers' professional development to improve practice involves them reflecting on their folk pedagogies in relation to theories of teaching and learning so that their understandings become explicit. When unconscious folk pedagogies clash with formal theories, this can account for a

mismatch between teachers' practices and how they think or represent their practices (Pešić, 1998 cited in Ilić and Bojović, 2016).

Teachers' behaviours may generally occur 'not from higher-level thinking processes, but from habit and beliefs' (Abernathy-Dyer et al., 2013: 10). Their sense of self-belief in their ability to cope and succeed in their professional role, more particularly their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993), is also of interest. Armor et al. (1976) found that teachers who believed they could influence their pupils' motivation and learning tended to achieve higher reading attainment. Beliefs about self-efficacy can become reinforced, for example, a teacher who has less belief in their reading instruction may put less effort into the planning and delivery of the lesson, which may lessen success (Tschannen-Moran and Johnson, 2011).

Instructional changes such as that experienced by teachers moving from the primary national strategy (DfES, 2003a) to the national curriculum (DfE, 2013) can be viewed as a threat or a challenge to teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran and Johnson, 2011). In addition, resources and other contextual factors were found to affect the self-efficacy of newly qualified teachers more than experienced teachers (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Cunningham et al. (2004: 140) found that teachers' perceptions of their knowledge of phonics were not very accurate as they 'overestimated their reading related subject matter'. Although Bandura (1997) argued that over-evaluating skills might lead to greater focus and success. Moreover, Wheatley (2002) argued that doubts can be beneficial as uncertainty can lead to reflections and insights. In relation to this research, self-efficacy is likely to influence in some way the practice choices that teachers make when teaching reading comprehension or how they articulate these.

When reviewing teaching practices, it cannot be assumed that teachers are always able to enact their beliefs. Biesta et al. (2015: 624) raised concern about the lack of control or agency that teachers have 'to exert judgement and control over their own work'. Biesta (2010) argues that a prescriptive curriculum and the oppressive emphasis on testing and inspection has led to teachers having a lack of agency. Biesta et al. (2015) focused on teachers' beliefs and questioned how beliefs influenced teachers' acts. Their model of agency recognised that actions are informed by past experience, are orientated to the

future, and are enacted in the present. These enactments are further influenced by 'cultural, material, and structural resources' (Biesta et al., 2015: 627). They noted that teachers' discourse about beliefs was expressed using confused and contradictory language about the role of the learner and the teacher. Furthermore, the discourse which framed their practices originated with and were limited by the language of policy. Biesta et al. (2015) concluded that beliefs did inform understanding of the discourses about practices but were limited by the ecologies that they work in. In particular, they noted the lack of 'a robust professional discourse about teaching and the wider purposes of education' from which teachers could make more sense of their practices and increase their agency (Biesta et al., 2015: 636).

Whilst research may advise how teachers teach reading comprehension, Glickman, (1991: 6) argues that '[e]ffective teaching is not a set of generic practices, but instead is a set of context-driven decisions about teaching'. From this perspective, teaching revolves around interactions between teacher and pupils, it is more than a knowledge exchange; instead, teachers respond to the needs and interests of pupils. As Farstrup (2002: 1) argues:

Teaching is more than a technical process: it is a complex human process in which the teacher's knowledge of the reading and learning processes intersects with the needs, interests, and individual characteristics of learners.

Consequently, theory about reading comprehension may inform practices but through their teaching interactions, teachers notice if children are learning, reflect on their lessons and adjust their practices accordingly. Moreover, Williams concluded that 'reading comprehension instruction cannot be routinized' (Williams, 2002: 255).

Summary of the wider contextualisation for this study

The discussion over the previous two chapters serves to illustrate some of the complexities of understanding reading comprehension teaching practices. Some key points are summarised here in connection with this inquiry's three research questions.

- How do teachers teach reading comprehension?

There has been widespread concern that reading comprehension is monitored, checked, and assessed by teachers rather than taught (Durkin, 1978; Parker and Hurry, 2007; Fisher, 2008; Warner, 2017). Whilst guided reading is an established common structure for organising the teaching of reading comprehension, informal sources indicate that some schools have rejected this as unworkable in the classroom and so have opted to teach whole class lessons (Gaffney, 2017; Payne, 2017). Questioning has been identified as central to reading comprehension instruction (Concannon-Gibney and Murphy, 2012; Blything et al., 2019). Also, teaching comprehension strategies have been a dominant influence on practices influenced by research and curriculum guidance (Smith et al., 2021). A fuller and more recent analysis of reading comprehension teaching practices is required to answer this question and develop understanding.

- How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?

There has been little research that examines how reading comprehension is understood by teachers, which is a further lack in knowledge this thesis aims to rectify. Fisher (2008) and Ford and Opitz (2008) argued that guided reading was not fully understood by teachers or implemented well. The backdrop for this research question included a discussion of how reading comprehension is understood in academic literature. It was established that reading comprehension is complex and integrates a range of cognitive processes (Oakhill 2020) that can be understood differently according to the model of reading held (Al Dahhan et al., 2016). A teacher of reading comprehension supports pupils' attempts at reading until they are fluent and confident readers; as such they are responsible for modelling, demonstrating, and teaching skills and strategies that support fluent reading (Perkins, 2015). But teachers cannot be expected to understand reading comprehension as subject specialists and lifelong researchers, so they are reliant on working alongside other practitioners and responding to the interpretations of policy makers to try out models and theories through their practices (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022).

- Why do they teach reading comprehension in this way?

A wide array of possible influences on teachers' practices have been discussed. Suggestions include responses to how reading comprehension is understood, which could be from

different models of reading interpreted by a school or through wider curriculum and policy expectations. The dominance of phonics in discussions about reading (Castles et al., 2008) and the 'backwash effect' (Prodromou, 1995), where testing affects teaching (Williams, 2021; Tennent, 2021) were raised as further influences. Practices could also be shaped by the needs of more complex scenarios such as teaching multilingual pupils (Goldenberg, 2020) and combining reading for pleasure into the reading curriculum (Shanahan, 2019). In addition, teachers' beliefs can help to explain teachers' pedagogical decisions (Wallace and Priestley, 2011) but these may be inconsistent (Levy, 2011) or restricted by the ecologies of their practices (Biesta et al., 2015).

Reading comprehension instruction is also affected by the teaching interactions between pupils and teacher (Farstrup, 2002), where a teacher's complex mix of knowledge, experience, and values are enacted. For example, a teacher's practices may be influenced by the model of reading adopted by a school, the chosen assessment practices, by the coordinator responsible for purchasing texts and resources and introducing initiatives, and by their sense of purpose. In turn, these systems are likely to impact on children's experiences of reading and their experiences of texts. The social environment and classroom ethos developed in individual classrooms will communicate some aspects of how teachers and settings understand reading comprehension. The emotional environment in which reading takes place may be evident in how much a teacher builds and validates the experiences and knowledge that pupils bring to school. The physical environment is further defined by how reading is valued, and which texts and resources are made available. Everyday decisions and interactions that a teacher makes such as which text they choose, and how they might skilfully read that text, and in which ways they encourage and give permissions for pupils to engage with the text and with each other, can also be viewed as comments on their understanding of the reading process.

This study aims to build a fuller understanding of why teachers teach reading comprehension as they do. To add to knowledge in this area, a systematic analysis of data is required to assist in answering this research question fully. The literature review chapters have identified that the teaching of reading comprehension can be varied and value laden with the understanding that school environments are not neutral but based on an

ideological position which reflect social and cultural practices. It is likely that teachers may have 'confused discourses' (Biesta et al., 2015: 636) where practices are influenced by contrasting theoretical perspectives of reading at the same time. The national curriculum (DfE, 2013) could itself be argued to have a confused discourse. It advocates a strong emphasis on teaching phonics which aligns with a cognitive psychological approach to reading. At the same time, it promotes the importance of reading for pleasure which associates more readily with a sociocultural perspective (Smith, 1987) and where the teacher is responsible for encouraging positive emotional responses to reading which includes supporting gaps between school reading and home reading (Levy, 2011). Although translating theory into workable practice may be difficult, this is part of what a teacher does when they act in a way that they judge to be the 'best' way (Kemmis and Smith 2008; Kemmis et al. 2014). This research sets out to further understand reading comprehension teaching practices and the research design used is explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explains and justifies the research design used for this thesis by communicating what has informed the methodological choices and sets out the perspectives taken. In so doing, it also aims to demonstrate the methodological rigour of the research. The important decisions associated with the ethics of this study are set out. A qualitative, interpretative approach was chosen to provide fuller understanding of the social phenomena of reading comprehension teaching practices and how these social realities are perceived and constructed. A strength of this kind of qualitative research is using ‘naturally occurring data to find the sequences (‘how’) in which participants’ meanings and practices (‘what’) are deployed’ (Silverman, 2014: 18).

The broadly interpretivist philosophical stance taken in this social science research assumes that truth is relative and can be problematic. In considering reading comprehension teaching practices, whilst these are based on real events, decisions involved in these practices might be affected by a wide range of influences, such as relationships with text, relationships in the classroom and wider societal structures. These are not all observable and therefore an approach that recognised experiences and interpretations was required, so case study was deemed appropriate. In line with the view taken by this research, the subjective interpretation of the researcher is acknowledged as an inevitable element of qualitative research. That subjectivity is ‘at play’ in shaping this study and in discussions of the findings does not preclude the possibility of meaningful insights. Indeed, subjectivity can be conceived as an aspect of human agency that is creative (Sayer, 1992) and a source for analysis (Gough and Madill, 2012).

Alongside an awareness of the role of subjectivity in this thesis, was a commitment to reflexivity (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This entailed wider reflections and evaluations of knowledge production such as personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual

choices throughout the research process (Olmos-Vega et al. 2023). Being reflexive involved an ongoing awareness of myself within the research (Berger, 2015) through journaling, field notes and discussions. For example, during the initial stages of this project, I examined assumptions about reading comprehension from my experiences of being a teacher coordinator. This meant leaving behind the trappings around expectations of 'best practice' and what 'a good lesson' should look like. I continued to check the direction of the study against the value of avoiding judgements of the participants' practices, setting aside any initial evaluation to enable recognition of their unique contributions, and being wary of power dynamics through interpersonal reflexivity. The unique methodological approach, which I go on to describe below, developed from an ongoing reflexive dialogue which sought to explore possible routes and establish limitations in combination with the aims and values of the research. In addition, the cohesive literature review responded to a commitment to contextual reflexivity by locating the significant arguments in the field.

There has been much debate about whether case study is a method, a methodology or a research design (Ylikoski and Zahle, 2019). For the purpose of this inquiry, case study will be referred to as a research strategy. This research strategy informed the design and the methods chosen. The rationale that underpinned the key decisions of the research and the frameworks used are communicated in this chapter to articulate the systematic approach taken. The first section justifies the choice and appropriateness of the case study design. The second part argues the strengths and criticisms of case study as a research strategy to situate the chosen methodological framework within a broader context. The following section identifies the important components of case study in relation to the specifics of this study. The next sections document the specifics of this case study research including data collection and ethics. This is followed by a section that introduces the data analysis design and subsequent sections that outline each of these three layers of analysis.

Case study design

For this research, case study was utilised as a suitable means to explore and improve understanding of reading comprehension teaching practices. Case study complements the paradigmatic underpinnings of qualitative research which Starman (2013: 30) characterizes

as ‘an interpretative paradigm, which emphasizes subjective experiences and the meanings they have for an individual’. A case study approach suited the exploration of reading comprehension practices through the illustration of specific examples (Creswell and Poth, 2018). It was chosen as a route to open-up new understandings through drawing on comprehensive descriptions and interpretations of the phenomenon (reading comprehension) from the perspective of participants and the researcher (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

The aim of this research is to explore how teachers teach and understand their teaching of reading comprehension. It is broadly concerned with how people (teachers) understand their world and how they interpret their experiences in relation to their practices (teaching comprehension). It is interested in the decisions teachers make around the reading comprehension teaching and learning experience. This is suitable for a case study approach as according to Schramm (1971: 1), ‘[t]he objective of a case study is to illuminate a decision or set of decisions’. The impetus for the inquiry is asking, “What is going on here?” in relation to reading comprehension teaching practices. The research sets out to reveal layers of influence on reading comprehension instruction; contained within this approach is a recognition that ‘things may not be as they seem’ (Chadderton and Torrance, 2011: 53). Understanding more fully what is informing and shaping teachers’ decision making through a thorough investigation of the practice cases also fitted with a case study approach.

Case study research is an empirical research strategy widely used in social science research that focuses on context (Starman, 2013; Yin, 2014). This research is concerned with the context of reading comprehension teaching practices and how teachers understand these practices. A case study approach was chosen as it supported ‘an in-depth study of a phenomenon in its real-world context’ (Yin, 2018: 127). Case study complements this study as it allows for:

... an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program, or system in ‘real life’ (Simons, 2009: 21).

In this inquiry, case study enabled a detailed exploration of the contemporary circumstances of how a small number of teachers taught and understood reading comprehension in their primary school setting. The focus on the particular (Merriam, 2009), of a relatively small number of participants in a context is intended; it supports the aim of exploring a complex social phenomenon through the detail offered by case study (Yin, 2018).

Case Study as a Research Strategy

The position of case study in research is a paradox: it is used widely, yet held in low regard (Flyvbjerg, 2011). One explanation for this is that case study as research is poorly understood (Gerring, 2004; Starman, 2013). Case studies as everyday exposition exist widely outside of case study research where they are used to exemplify scenarios or give practical examples and present information in a way that develops professional understandings (Yin, 2018). These more prevalent and visible case studies might influence impressions of what case study research entails, thereby obscuring an understanding of case studies as 'an explicit endeavour within social research' (Yin, 2018: xxi). Case study as referred to in this study means as a formal research strategy.

One strength of case study research is that it supports a comprehensive study of a phenomenon (Starman, 1997) connected to every-day life (Flyvbjerg, 2006a). Within the rich detail, there are opportunities for new understandings, but research needs to do more than report occurrences. Being aware of this possible pitfall, the aim of this research is to do more than describe how teachers teach reading comprehension. Instead, the intention is to gain a fuller understanding of reading comprehension practices through analysing how teachers understand their practices and the variables that inform and influence these.

Flyvbjerg (2011) argues that case study has produced much of what we know about the empirical world. In his defence of case study (2001, 2006a, 2011), he characterises and rebuts five misunderstandings of case study research. This has supported researchers in becoming less defensive about case study (Silverman, 2014) and helped to reposition case study as generating valuable knowledge in social science research (VanWynsberghe and Khan, 2007). His first rebuttal tackles the view that concrete case knowledge is less valued

than general, theoretical knowledge. He argues that context-dependent knowledge has a significant role in human learning and has been central to developing expertise. Moreover, concrete case knowledge is valuable and fundamental to social science knowledge.

For Flyvbjerg (2011) the closeness to real-life situations that case study allows offers two significant assets. The first is that human behaviour is complex and in response case study supports 'a nuanced view of reality' (Flyvbjerg, 2011: 303). The second is that cases are important for researchers to develop their skills through the proximity of the concrete context. Flyvbjerg (2011) argues that for social science there have been no context-independent theory or predictive theories; therefore, context-dependent knowledge remains significant and valuable for the social sciences. A case study research design in this inquiry supported an exploration of complex real-life behaviours of reading comprehension practices through the concrete context of cases.

A common criticism of case study questions the significance of the case(s), in relation to developing knowledge (Chadderton and Torrance, 2011). In particular, the challenge is 'how are findings generalisable?' The questioning of whether case study findings are generalisable is a concern over the external validity of case study as a research approach (Yin, 2018). This is the second misunderstanding that Flyvbjerg tackles: that you cannot generalise from an individual case and therefore case study cannot contribute to scientific development. The assumption that there is a need for generalisation of findings in a positivist sense is challenged; instead, case study researchers can generalise by comparing the case to previous knowledge, experience, another case, or another theory (Lincoln and Guba, 2002). According to Flyvbjerg (2011), sampling is not necessary to theorise. In case study, the cases are not claimed or considered to be sampling units that become generalised, and the findings are not linked with probabilities (Yin, 2018).

Stake, (1995) argues that certain generalisations can be made through recurring themes identified through analysis and that 'the real business of case study is particularization not generalization' (1995: 8). Yin (2018: 20) observes that, cases studies 'are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes'. Consequently, there is still the impetus for new understandings, but the significance and value of case study research is in

expanding and refining theories. These can be characterised as analytic generalizations rather than statistical generalizations (Yin, 2018). Moreover, analytic generalizations are supported by orientating the research around a 'why' or a 'how' question (Yin, 2018), which is the situation with this research.

Flyvbjerg (2011) asserts that discoveries have been made from intense observations and that it is a falsehood to conclude that you cannot generalise from a single case. He further argues that generalisation is overrated and is not required to gain knowledge. Even where knowledge cannot be formally generalised, an example can influence knowledge accumulation in a field concluding that, '[k]nowledge may be transferable even where it is not formally generalizable' (Flyvbjerg, 2011: 305). Hence, whilst there may be no generalisation from the cases in this study, analysis scaffolded by theory has provoked findings that are transferable.

The third misunderstanding about case study argues that case study is useful for generating hypotheses but is not suitable for testing or theory building (Flyvbjerg, 2006a, 2011). For Flyvbjerg this argument stemmed from the previous one that you cannot generalise from individual cases. Accordingly, he revised this misunderstanding to claim that whilst case study can be useful to test and generate hypotheses, it is not limited to these areas of research. Yin (2018) argues that the idea that case study is suitable for preliminary studies is reinforced by a hierarchical view that researchers do not need to accept. George and Bennett (2005) argue that case study lends itself to theory development. For example, case study can explore the links between causes and outcomes, and deviant cases can be a stimulus for new hypotheses. This study found that case study was a suitable approach to build theory around reading comprehension practices.

The next misunderstanding about case study according to Flyvbjerg (2011) is that 'case study contains a bias towards verification, that is a tendency to confirm the researcher's pre-conceived notions' (Flyvbjerg, 2011: 309). Bias towards verification is general but the concern is that case study allows more scope for subjective judgement than other methods. Flyvbjerg (2011) argues this concern about increased bias stems from a lack of knowledge about case study research and sets out a series of examples where researchers have revised

their hypotheses, views, and assumptions. He concludes that, '[t]he case study contains no greater bias towards verification of the researcher's preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry' (Flyvbjerg, 2011: 311).

Yin (2018) tackles the challenge of construct validity for case study research and suggests having multiple sources of evidence and establishing transparent handling of data as tactics to minimise this. Both these aspects were incorporated into this research design. Also, protocols were applied to minimise misperception, and previous research was drawn on systematically. In presenting the research, language choices were selected to communicate with transparency the evidence used, and assertions derived. Yet it is important to recognise that the stance of this research is interpretivist and that the findings and conclusions are subjective. It positions itself with Stake (1998: 45), who argues that 'subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding'.

Flyvbjerg (2011) refutes a fifth misunderstanding of case study that it is difficult to summarise and theorise from specific case studies. He turns this on its head and questions the significance of summary claiming it can interrupt the value of case study and may be counterproductive. Flyvbjerg (2011) claims that it may be difficult to summarise in case study, but this is less because of case study as a research method than due to the reality of the diverse phenomena under question. As such, summarising case studies is not always necessary. Similarly, Bourdieu (1977) argued that social acts cannot be simplified into theoretical explanations. Yet, managing the quantity of data in this multiple-case study and analysing this to establish understanding was found to be challenging. The process was directed by a cyclical and reflexive review of understandings in relation to the research questions (Merriam, 2009) which allowed opportunities for summarising and theorising.

In response to the validity of case study research being widely questioned (Cresswell, 2014), Yin (2018) reviews case study against four characteristics of good empirical research. These include construct validity and external validity (generalisation) which have been considered above. The two further tests are for internal validity and reliability. Concerning internal validity, this research does not make any definitive claims about causal relationships, but it

does explore interpretations of reading comprehension practices and interrelationships between factors. The conclusions are not claimed to be unaffected by bias as a neutral position is not adopted. In this research, this is understood as part of the wider epistemological and ontological stance as outlined previously.

Yin's (2018) fourth test of research quality - that an understanding of reliability is dependent on the notion that if the same research was conducted by another researcher, the same findings and conclusions would be drawn - is problematic for case study. The context of case study is significant for this approach and part of that context is the time in which the study took place and so there can be no opportunity to repeat this same study. Furthermore, there is no claim that I am a neutral actor within the research; my experiences, thinking and interactions with the research also form part of the context of the research. Specifically, I am aware that my positionality as a teacher educator may tend to focus my attention on the evaluation of practice rather than what I have sought to do as a researcher which is to understand the rationale for that practice. The pursuit of the question, the directions taken within this qualitative study and decisions made have all been informed by a philosophical stance. Therefore, another researcher would not be expected to replicate these findings and conclusions. A more useful approach to reliability for qualitative research focuses instead on a transparency of the research process and transparency of theoretical stance from which understandings are made (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). To support the credibility of this research, concerns about reliability were considered by explicitly documenting procedures, acknowledging theoretical viewpoints and questioning understandings for co-existing assumptions through enhanced reflexive awareness.

A common critique of case study is that it has methodological weakness and lacks rigour (Cresswell, 2014). Yin (2018) argues this may be due to a weakness in how some case studies are presented. To minimise this criticism, this inquiry aims to set out a transparent account of the research, to make the procedures of the case study design explicit and to signify the application of methodological awareness within the research. Yin (2018) argues that there are five important components that are particularly important in case study research design: a case study's questions, its propositions, its cases, the logic linking the

data to the proposition and the criteria for interpreting the findings. Each of these areas of research design are briefly considered below in relation to this study.

Important components of case study

The first significant component is the case study's questions. Reflections on the main research question of how teachers teach and understand reading comprehension led to the identification of three separate research questions:

- How do teachers teach reading comprehension?
- How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?
- Why do they teach reading comprehension in this way?

The aim of this research is to understand more fully the processes and practices of how reading comprehension is being taught in schools and how teachers conceptualise their role in this process. Yin (2018) argued that 'how' and 'why' type questions complement a case study approach as they aim to explain a phenomenon, and these are reflected in this study's research questions. The first question is concerned with the contemporary approaches and practices teachers use to teach reading comprehension, or 'what is it that they do?'. The second question is concerned with the ways in which teachers understand their teaching interactions when the focus is reading comprehension, or 'how do they understand what they do?'. This links with exploring what teachers communicate about reading comprehension and how they relate to pupils and colleagues in their practices. The third question aims to understand in greater depth what influences and informs the teaching decisions that teachers make when teaching reading comprehension, or 'why do they do it like this?'.

The second component of the case study research design is to identify the propositions within the research questions that direct attention to the scope of the study (Yin, 2018). This process of uncovering elements that are factors of the phenomena can be known as the 'exploratory phase' (VanWynsberghe and Khan, 2007: 4). Propositions can be likened to informed arguments that affect decisions such as who to observe, who to interview, which questions to ask and so forth. They are not as precise as hypotheses, but they acknowledge that the research design is shaped by thinking. In this study propositions were informed by

the comprehensive literature review in the previous two chapters alongside experiences as an English coordinator in a primary school and as an initial teacher educator.

By considering how multiple teachers teach reading comprehension, there is a proposition that teachers are likely to be doing this in different ways. Yet there might still be some shared general approaches to teaching reading comprehension that deepen our understandings. For example, prior to the time of data collection there had been an emphasis from curriculum documents on teaching reading strategies (DfES, 2003a; DfES, 2005a; DfES, 2005b; DfES, 2005c) so these were likely to be a feature of some reading comprehension instruction. The second research question proposes that teachers have some knowledge and understanding of reading comprehension, but it does not assume that this is linear or consistent with practices. Teachers may have varying awareness of their teaching practices and variable metalanguage to communicate this (Shulman, 1986; Brevik, 2014). The third research question recognises that reading comprehension teaching contains complex decisions which may have multiple influences. Factors that inform priorities and shape decisions about reading comprehension teaching practices might include policy and curriculum (DfE, 2013), adapting to pupil needs (DfE, 2011) and teachers' beliefs (Wallace and Priestley, 2011).

The third component of the research design is constituted by the cases of the research which are defined and bounded during the case study process (Yin, 2018). As the focus of this inquiry is teachers' practices, the cases in this study are the main participants. These were the eleven primary teachers who taught reading comprehension and spoke about their practices. These teachers were observed teaching reading comprehension and interviewed about their reading comprehension teaching and their wider understandings of the phenomenon. There were other participants in the study that brought supplementary data such as the reading coordinator in each school who were interviewed. Their data added to that of the main participants especially for the second and third research questions ('How do teachers understand the reading comprehension process?' and 'Why do they teach reading comprehension in this way?') In this study, these have been referred to as additional cases. (A fuller account of the cases is presented in a later section.) The

research is also bounded by the time in which the data were collected which was during 2017 and 2018.

The fourth component of the research design is the logic linking the data to the proposition which means being aware of analytic choices at the design stage. As a novice researcher, I did not clearly identify likely analytic techniques at an early stage. Although possible analytic choices were investigated during the research design, a decision was made in this study to further explore possible routes for analysis after the data were collected. Also influential was Yin's (2011) cautionary words about having false expectations that data would 'speak for itself' or that a simple tallying procedure would be sufficient to produce main findings.

The fifth component of the research design is concerned with anticipating the case study analysis and focuses on the criteria for interpreting the findings. In actuality, whilst the literature around reading comprehension informed my thinking, the criteria for interpreting findings were not anticipated in this study. Whilst the first three components above identified by Yin (2018) were influential in my research design, the latter two were not found to be beneficial. This divergence from Yin's components is explained by a difference in epistemic stance. Fundamentally Yin has positivist leanings, even a positivist epistemic viewpoint (Mishra, 2021a) whilst the view taken in this study is aligned with interpretivism. As such a more open and iterative route to analysis was chosen. This is explained in a later section of this chapter (Analysis of data).

The position taken in this research is that understanding is constructed and would develop through the researcher building meaning after examining multidimensional perspectives and that inquiry involves a protracted process of engaging with the data and the research questions. As a qualitative, interpretivist study, this case study aligns with the epistemic stance of Stake (1995, 2008) and Merriam (2009) as identified by Yazan (2015) and Mishra (2021b). The research design was not expected to be sequential and linear but iterative and recurrent. Maxwell (2005: 3) explains this aspect of qualitative research design involves:

... "tacking" back and forth between the different components of the design, assessing their implications for one another. It does not begin from a predetermined

starting point or proceed through a fixed sequence of steps but involves interconnection and interaction among the different design components.

In this qualitative case study research, I aimed to construct a holistic understanding of what is going on with reading comprehension instruction across the cases whilst recognising the complex entanglements of the phenomena (Stake, 1995).

Multiple-Case Study

For this inquiry, a multiple-case study (Yin, 2014) was chosen to enrich data with comparative opportunities. This is alternatively known as a collective case study (Stake, 2008). The intent of the inquiry was to look at a collection of cases in depth to understand the phenomenon of reading comprehension teaching practices. This typified it as a collective, instrumental case study (Stake, 1995). This research was a multisite study and data were collected from four inner-city primary schools in the North-West of England in 2017 and 2018.

Recruiting sites

The recruitment of the sites to carry out this multiple-case study was made by communicating the research interest to contacts from schools in partnership with the higher education establishment in which I am based. Initially cases in a single school were sought to participate with the first stage of the study. This was decided as a preliminary step to establish if this approach helped to answer the research questions. One school responded to the inquiry and the headteacher as gatekeeper to the school approved the research with the staff in their school. Further details of the research were shared with the relevant teachers in the focus year groups of years 3 and 4 (aged 8 and 9). These years were chosen because they are identified as the years in which pupils' reading becomes more fluent and there is an increased focus on reading comprehension (DfE, 2013). The invited participants (2 teachers in year 3, and 2 teachers in year 4) were sent information about the project via a participant information sheet (appendix 1). In addition, a meeting was arranged to give an opportunity to ask questions about the research and to clarify any queries they had about what was being asked of them as participants. Subsequently, all four teachers confirmed

their informed consent to participate in the inquiry by signing the consent form (appendix 2). Although the children were not participants as such, the corresponding parents and children were informed about the research by letter (appendix 3) and given the opportunity to ask about the research and to opt out if they chose. This school is referred to as school A in this inquiry. Data were collected from the four teachers in school A in the spring and summer term of 2017.

Access to further schools was sought in a similar way to school A. At first, there was no response to a communication via the university partnership links inviting schools to take part. Therefore, another approach to recruiting participants was taken. This involved contacting some reading/literacy coordinators in partnership schools which I had visited as an Initial Teacher Education tutor, with the view that they may share an interest in the research and respond to a more personal invitation. Three coordinators responded and became enthusiastic gatekeepers for their schools; they assisted in gaining access to the headteachers to attain their agreement and they supported contact with the relevant teachers. These three schools and teachers from years 3 and/or 4 (as chosen by the school), all agreed to participate in this research. The parents and children connected with these classes were also informed about the research and given the opportunity to ask about the research and to opt out if they chose. These schools became school B, school C, and school D in this inquiry. Data were collected from the teachers in school B, C, and D in the academic year 2017-2018. This process was broadly a replication of the process taken in school A (adaptations are explained in a later section).

The varying contexts gained from this approach were subsequently found to enrich the data and ensuing discussions. A brief description of each school context is given in the table below to aid clarity. (These are expanded upon in the next chapter.) This summary was constructed after data had been collected, using for example, accounts gained from the reading coordinators in each school, field notes from visits and participant responses to questions.

Setting	Context Summary
School A	<p>The school was reviewing teaching of reading comprehension. The staff were trying out their own approaches, sometimes teaching guided reading to groups and sometimes to the whole class. Their approach was not resolved, and the staff were seeking a shared understanding and clearer guide to reading comprehension practices. The reading coordinator explained that some children had limited language which made teaching reading comprehension more challenging.</p>
School B	<p>The school was following guided reading practices based on the guided reading model from the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1997). This was complemented by resourcing including knowledge of Reading Recovery and a shared ideology of reading as central to learning. Reading was given a high profile in the school; they had developed their teaching of reading and gained recognition as a teaching school for reading. The reading coordinator explained that some children had what she perceived to be limited language and life experiences and many pupils spoke English as an additional language which made teaching reading comprehension more challenging.</p>
School C	<p>The school was developing a whole class approach to the teaching of reading comprehension in Key Stage 2 initiated by some staff colleagues. They were committed to teachers developing teaching through an action research model. Their approach used competences from reciprocal reading alongside knowledge of Reading Recovery. They had found this approach had a positive impact on learning outcomes. The reading coordinator explained that most of their children spoke English as an additional language (98%). They perceived this meant the children in their school had less vocabulary than in other settings and they also thought they had limited life experiences which brought challenges to teaching reading comprehension.</p>
School D	<p>The school viewed reading comprehension as part of the curriculum that is wholly underpinned by a strong conceptual framework of education being</p>

	<p>learner led. In addition, the school organised its curriculum around key skills in six broad areas. These in turn informed any decision regarding the teaching of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension was taught as part of English and this was taught in cycles with one week as a reading focus followed by a week (or longer as needed) on grammar and writing. The reading coordinator did not think their success was accounted for by the catchment area but by the organisation of the curriculum and teaching at the school which engaged and motivated pupils.</p>
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Table 1: A summary of each school context

All schools that responded to my general invitation to take part in the research were included in this study. There was no process of selection or rejection of sites which offered gatekeeper approval. But that does not lay claim to an absence of bias. It is recognised that in all examples, access to the school was gained through the schools' interests in reading comprehension. This interest varied from schools that were confident in their reading comprehension teaching, to those innovating their reading comprehension teaching to those reviewing and questioning their reading comprehension teaching. Schools willing to engage with research may not have been typical and the teachers in the schools that became participants are not assumed to be typical cases in this study.

The cases

A case study is a bounded system (Stake, 2008) whereby the edges of a case are bound by time and place. The main units of analysis in this case study were the teachers who were observed teaching reading comprehension and interviewed about their practices. In the study these are referred to as the main participants. They were essential to the rich data sought to answer the research questions. The context of each school in which the participants taught reading comprehension was deemed significant (Stake, 1995). This multiple-case study has four school contexts within which are contained 11 main cases or units of study. This is represented in Figure 1 below.

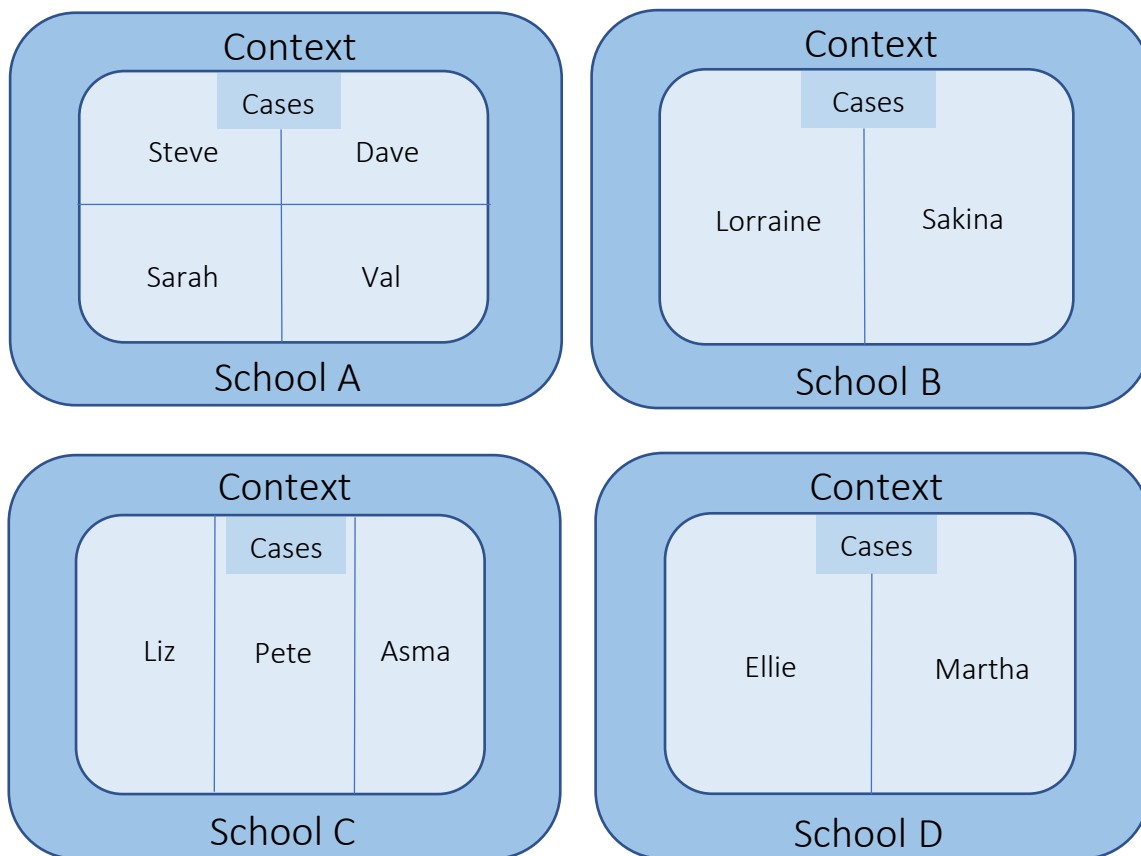


Figure 1: Multiple-case study with schools and main participants

Additional data such as interviews with reading coordinators in each site were collected to further inform the influences of reading comprehension practices (Somech and Naamneh, 2019). As part of the interview, the main participants were asked who had influenced their teaching of reading comprehension. In addition to the reading coordinators in each school, others that were mentioned by the main participants were approached to participate in the study by being interviewed. These included a Local Education Authority (LEA) consultant in school A, a reading consultant and a teaching assistant that taught an intervention called Inference Training in school B, and a teacher who was referred to as the EMAS teacher in school C (representing Ethnic Minority Achievement Service which although no longer current was a legacy term used in this school for a teacher working with children with English as an additional language (EAL)). These additional cases are referred to as additional participants in the study. This multiple-case study has four school contexts within which are contained 8 additional cases. This is represented in Figure 2 below.

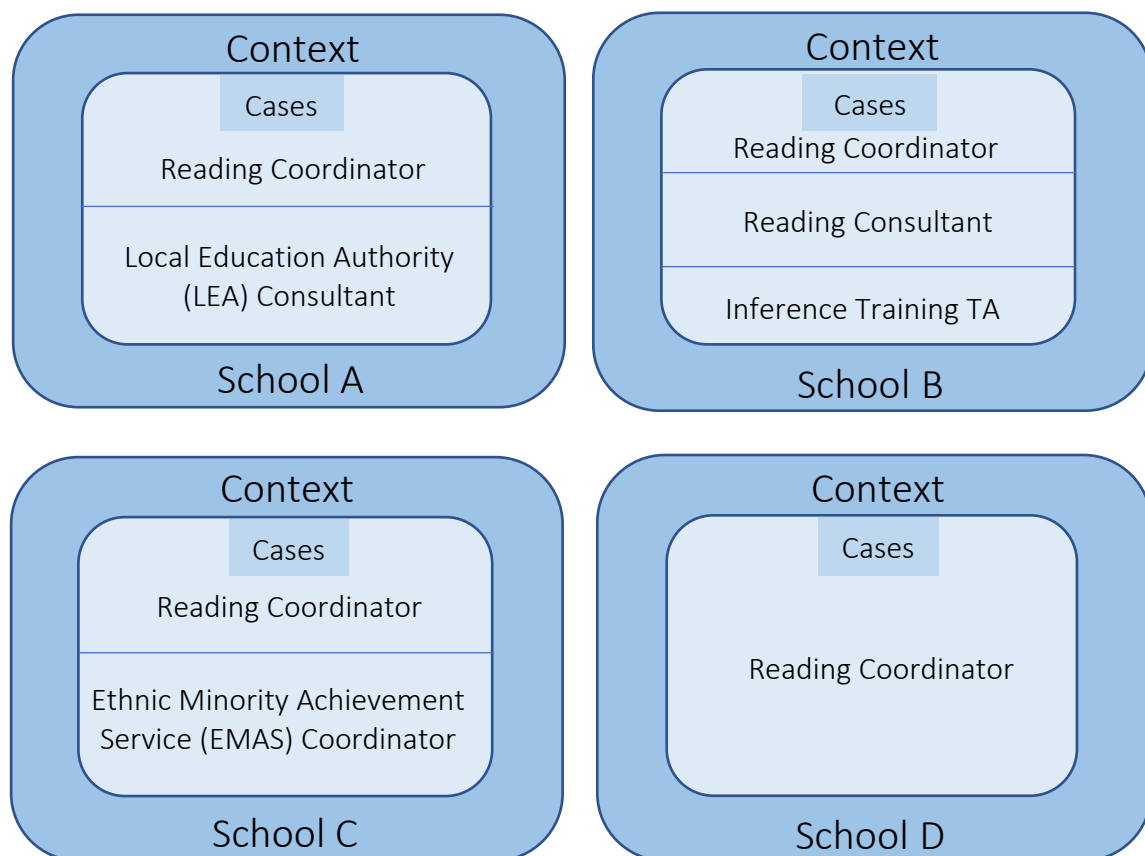


Figure 2: Multiple-case study with schools and additional participants

Data Collection

In this study about reading comprehension teaching practices, qualitative data were collected from non-participant observations and semi-structured interviews from four schools in the North-West of England. Data collected were not viewed as sampling units. Rather they were utilised to ‘shed empirical light about some theoretical concepts or principles’ (Yin, 2014: 40). Observations and interviews are often included in case study research (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018) and their relevance for this study is discussed in subsequent sections. In the first instance, data were collected in 2017 (spring and summer terms) from 4 teachers in school A. After positively reviewing this data in relation to the research questions, data collection was continued during the academic year 2017-18 with a further 7 teachers from 3 further schools (schools B, C, and D). All the teachers from all four schools were teaching in years 3 or 4 of primary school (children are aged 7-9). These school years were chosen as the focus of the data because it is at this stage in their reading

development that readers increasingly focus on comprehension as word recognition becomes automatized (DfE, 2013). Table 2 below lists the observations and interviews of main participants.

Observations of reading comprehension teaching of main participants	
(These took 30-60 minutes depending on the length of the participant’s reading lesson)	
School A Dave Year 3 teacher x2 Steve Year 3 teacher x2 Sarah Year 4 teacher x2 Val Year 4 teacher x2	School B Lorraine Year 3 teacher x3 Sakina Year 3/4 teacher x3
School C Liz Year 4 teacher x3 Pete Year 4 teacher x3 Asma Year 4 teacher x2	School D Ellie Year 3 teacher x3 Martha Year 3 teacher x3
Interviews with teachers about reading comprehension of main participants	
(These took about 30 minutes)	
School A Dave Year 3 teacher x2 Steve Year 3 teacher x2 Sarah Year 4 teacher x2 Val Year 4 teacher x2	School B Lorraine Year 3 teacher x2 Sakina year 3/4 teacher x2
School C Liz Year 4 teacher x2 Pete Year 4 teacher x2 Asma Year 4 teacher x2	School D Ellie Year 3 teacher x2 Martha Year 3 teacher x2

Table 2: Observations and interviews of main participants (names are pseudonyms)

The additional participants as described above were interviewed. Also, one observation of a Teaching Assistant (TA) teaching an Inference Training intervention in school B took place

because they asked to be observed. They wanted to show me what they did and then talk about this in the interview. For a list of observations and interviews of additional participants that informed this multiple-case study see Table 3 below.

Observations of reading comprehension teaching of additional participants	
	School B Inference Training Teaching Assistant (TA)
Interviews with teachers about reading comprehension of additional participants	
School A Reading Coordinator x1 Local Education Authority (LEA) consultant x1	School B Reading Coordinator x1 Reading Consultant x1 Inference Training Teaching Assistant (TA)
School C Reading Coordinator x1 Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) Coordinator x1	School D Reading Coordinator x1

Table 3: Observations and interviews of additional participants

In addition to observations and interviews, further documentary information was sought from the schools such as reading policies and staff training notes which could further inform how context and expectations of practice might influence practices (Stake, 1995). However, this additional material was not readily accessed which is acknowledged as a weakness of documentation as evidence (Yin, 2018). The decision not to press for documents was guided by ethical considerations of minimising disruption to teachers and remaining grateful for what they were able to contribute to the study. In addition, some data were not available, for example, none of the four schools in the study had updated reading policies. Whilst documentary evidence was sparse, in each of the schools, staff were open and amenable to talking about and showing me examples of their teaching of reading. Field notes were taken whilst on visits which were used to summarise each of the schools’

contexts and explore propositions and lines of thinking about reading comprehension teaching. A decision was made not to collect statistical data of reading attainment from Key Stage (KS) 1 and KS2 Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) as this did not fit with the focus of the study which was concerned with the process of teaching reading comprehension rather than the outcome of reading comprehension assessments and tests.

Observations

Data were collected from two or three non-participant observations of each of the eleven year 3 or year 4 teachers teaching reading comprehension in four schools. This linked to the research question: 'How do teachers teach reading comprehension?' These observations allowed watching and listening to the routines of reading comprehension instruction (Silverman, 2010). They supported an understanding of strategies and practices enacted by teachers in their naturally occurring context, characterised as 'those moments when belief and action come together' (Luker, 2008: 158).

These lessons were audio-recorded, and transcriptions completed, which formed part of the data that were later analysed. In addition, brief field notes were made during the observations. These notes focussed on capturing the non-verbal aspects of the lesson that would not be captured by the audio- recording such as gestures and the organization of the room. A few notes about the context of each of the lessons were added to the transcriptions which helped with recalling the observation more readily during analysis. Drawbacks of observations include the amount of time they take and the subsequent selectivity of observing a few lessons for each teacher. In addition, teaching practices are likely to vary if teachers are aware of being observed (Yin, 2018). Despite these limitations, observations were judged essential for answering the research question, 'How do teachers teach reading comprehension?'. They contributed to understandings about reading comprehension teaching practices by providing 'a relatively incontestable description for further analysis' which 'lets the occasion tell its story' (Stake, 1995: 62).

Non-participant observations were included in this study as they offered opportunities to view teachers involved in reading comprehension teaching and learning episodes. When

designing the research, care was given to the impact on teachers. Personal experience of being a primary school teacher informed the consideration around the sensitivities of excessive workload and feeling scrutinised. When introducing the research to the teachers, it was explained that the observations were to view what usually happens for teaching reading comprehension in their classroom. To allay concerns about a potential increase in workload, teachers were reassured that they were not expected to do anything extra for the observations. There is an acknowledgement though, that teachers may have decided to think a little more and spend a little longer preparing for the lessons because they were being observed. It was explained that there was no set formula of expectations that their teaching was being judged against, just a curiosity about how teachers were teaching reading comprehension. This was important because as a profession, teachers have reported that they feel scrutinised, and this alongside heavy workloads are significant factors in teachers leaving the profession (DfE/Cooper Gibson Research, 2018).

The opportunity for two observations in school A and 3 observations in schools B, C (except Asma) and D allowed for a wider collection of data than just doing one observation per teacher. This meant that there was less emphasis upon a single lesson from the teachers' perspective. It allowed the teachers further opportunities to illustrate their reading comprehension practices and to show various approaches they might use in different lessons or at contrasting points in the academic year. In all the schools, teachers and children were familiar with lessons being observed. However, the teachers clearly understood the difference in use and purpose between the research observations and other observations that took place in their school contexts. They were aware that as participants in the research, they could withdraw from the study at any point during the data collection. The times and dates of observations were negotiated at intervals a few months apart that suited teachers and fitted with their contexts. The teachers were left to decide what they wanted to show me in the lessons observed. Some chose to show me a range of reading comprehension opportunities with various groups and contrasting genres. One teacher chose to show me the same group whilst one school chose to show me different points of their teaching cycle.

Interviews

In addition to observations, data were collected from two semi-structured interviews with each main participant teacher. Interviews were chosen to gather data about how teachers talked about reading comprehension and their teaching choices, how they made sense of their practices, and how their contexts and situations influenced their shared understandings. This linked to the research questions: 'How do teachers understand the reading comprehension process?' and 'Why do they teach reading comprehension in this way?' Barbour and Schostak (2011: 65) argue that interviews lend themselves to 'generating the intersubjective features of the public and private spaces of social life'. A strength of interviews is that they can encourage a dialogue of shared understandings, they can serve to establish an intersection of cognitive perspectives between people and between public and private spaces in which we interact.

The interviews were designed to find out ways that teachers articulated their understandings of reading comprehension and how they chose to talk about their practices when teaching reading comprehension. Through the interviews, participants could discuss their practices which informed a discussion about their understandings of 'why things have come to be what they are' (Chadderton and Torrance, 2011: 54). Using a semi-structured approach allowed for flexibility for participants to talk about their unique experiences, which Stake (1995: 65) refers to as their 'special stories to tell'. The interviews were audio-recorded, and transcriptions completed, which formed part of the data that was later analysed. The aim was to deepen understanding about influences on the choices teachers make about the teaching of reading comprehension instruction, including problems or hindrances. In this research interviews were viewed as actively constructed narratives as opposed to claiming access to an external reality (Silverman, 2010). They were understood as plausible accounts of internal experiences as interpreted through participants' perceptions of how they describe the world and how these are understood by the interviewer.

The drawbacks of interviews are that they are subject to the messiness of social encounters, where language used may be interpreted in alternate ways. Interviews are reliant on the willing and open responses of the interviewees but there are many influences that may

impact on responses such as suspicion about hidden agendas, concepts of power and commitment to the topic of the interview (Anyan, 2013; Barbour and Schostak, 2011). The information from interviews was not viewed as the truth but as plausible, narrative accounts which offered relevant and legitimate data about the 'shared cultural understandings and enactments of the social world' (Atkinson and Coffey, 2002: 811). When participants were asked about their reading comprehension practices, their answers may have tumbled out, been approached with strategic calculation, or answering may have encouraged them to link their understandings in new ways; yet despite this variance, they can still offer valuable content to the discussion. As Charmaz and Bryant (2011: 299) argue, even though they are a performance, 'that does not disqualify interviews from providing rich data and sparkling analytic insights'.

In designing a framework for the interviews, consideration was given to the content and phrasing of the questioning, regarding both the research aim and the comfort and ease of the interviewee, thereby meeting the needs of the inquiry whilst checking that questions were nonthreatening (Yin, 2014). Qualitative interviewing requires intense listening to hear the meaning of what is being shared (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Before conducting the interviews, thought was given to the importance of anticipating my role as a listener and establishing a protocol for the interviews that would support the collection of data. From my first meeting with the teachers in the school the importance of developing a positive, trusting relationship was considered. The aim was to show respect for and curiosity towards the experiences and perspectives of others, to develop a relationship where interviewees became 'conversational partners' (Rubin and Rubin, 2012) rather than objects of research. The relationship between the interviewee and the researcher has ethical significance and thought was given to establishing a respectful interaction.

In keeping with a semi-structured approach to interviews, a series of questions were planned as a framework that could then be deviated from. Three types of questions were planned: the main questions, then possible probes, and follow-up questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Probe questions, affirmational phrases and gestures were utilized to manage and encourage talk, and to clarify and elicit detail. Follow-up questions were drawn upon to explore and clarify ideas. Husbands et al. (2003: 75) recognised that for teachers, some

influences on practice are 'so embedded in their practice that they do not articulate it unless specifically probed'. An outline was used to support the structure of the interview and support the interviewer through the stages of the interview. At the start of the interview, a connection with the interviewee was sought and a reminder of the purpose of the interview. Then questions moved from easier to tougher ones before winding down and closing with 'chat' that left an opening for further follow-up. Overall, the design moved from more general to more specific questions, building up trust before asking more emotionally challenging questions and then cooling down at the end (Luker, 2008).

At the first interviews to collect data, teachers were asked about their decisions and opinions regarding reading comprehension practices. The framework for these is presented in the table below which itemises the questions used in the first interviews.

Interview Questions for Interview 1

RC: abbreviation for reading comprehension

(Signed consent form)

Intro: How long have you been teaching?

1. Was that a typical reading lesson that I observed?
2. Could you talk me through how you go about planning for teaching reading comprehension (in terms of what informs your choices and how you decide what to do)
3. What principles or ideas guide your teaching of reading comprehension?
4. To what extent do you think RC can be taught?
5. What do you think is the place (significance, importance) of RC in the classroom? Where else do you teach RC?
6. What influences your teaching of reading comprehension?
Any key training or key people or experiences? (National Curriculum)
7. Is there anything challenging about teaching RC?
8. Is there a way in which you would like to develop RC further?

9. What do you think is the single most important thing about reading comprehension?

10. Now that you know more about my research, is there anything I should have asked you but didn't?

Finishing off: I may have a question when I look over my notes, would it be okay if I email you?

Thank you

Table 4: Questions for interview 1

The second interviews picked out some themes from literature around reading comprehension to allow for some fuller exploration. These latter interviews started with the question about roles in the reading comprehension exchange. After that they were less scripted, identifying key themes to explore in the interview in an order that fitted with the conversation. This encouraged fuller answers from the participants and a more conversational exchange. The table below sets out the framework for the second interviews with the main participants.

Interview questions/ areas for Interview 2

Role of teacher

What do you think is the role of the teacher and the pupil in RC? (How do you understand what the teacher is doing and what the child is doing in that process? active or passive?)

Self-monitoring

Do you think that you teach or set an expectation that the children self-monitor their reading?

Inference – if not mentioned

Do you teach inference skills/ How have you have developed inference skills?

Making links

One aspect of RC that I was wondering about was making links, is that something that you teach specifically? (between books, different sections of a story etc.)

Questioning

Do you think that questioning is your main tool for the teaching of reading comprehension? Can you say more about this.

Reading Comprehension Process

Do you think RC is something that is occurring as you read or after you read?

Finishing Off: Have you thought about how you might want to develop the teaching of reading comprehension next year?

Thank you

Table 5: Questions for interview 2

The semi-structured interviews occurred around the time of the first observation and around the time of the final observation as suited the teachers in each of the schools. The interviews offered the opportunity to collect accounts of the thoughts, actions, and opinions of teachers and their reading comprehension practice as they can:

... let us see that which is not ordinarily on view and examine that which is often looked at but seldom seen (Rubin and Rubin, 2012: xv).

The interview information was not viewed as a simple filter towards truth or 'the facts' which Silverman (2014) warns can be an assumption of qualitative research. Rather, interview data became understood as a representation of experiences of practice which were influenced by how both the interviewer and interviewee constructed meaning.

Evolution of design for schools B, C, and D

As mentioned previously, the design decision to initially collect data from just one school was developed as a cautionary approach to ascertain if the chosen methods communicated something significant to the research questions. The initial case helped to develop a fuller appreciation of the process of conducting research whilst taking responsibility for a positive relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Anyan, 2013). The concrete, context dependent experiences that case studies provide have been argued to contribute to the professional development of the researcher (Flyvbjerg, 2006a).

Before embarking on the interviews, I had appreciated that understandings may overlap and appear contradictory but the experience of interacting with another professional in an interview proved to be much more nuanced than anticipated. Some planning such as encouraging the interviewee to share details in response to questions by rehearsing starters such as, 'what influenced, what caused, what contributed to, what shaped or how did you do that' (Rubin and Rubin, 2012) proved useful. Careful listening was required to respond to what the interviewee had said. Although my skill in following up points to elicit more detail developed with experience, the design of planning a second interview with each teacher was useful as this allowed for follow-up questions after some analysis and reflection. An established relationship also supported the follow-up opportunities to hear more about teachers' practices.

After reviewing the fieldnotes and transcriptions of observations and interviews in school A, I made the judgement that the research design complemented the focus of the inquiry and would be used in the three subsequent schools. This data collection for school B, school C and school D took place in 2017-18 (academic year) with a few minor adjustments. One of these was to observe each teacher three times rather than two. I decided to gather data over a longer timeframe to reflect the rhythms of the academic year and to maintain a relationship with the interviewee by spacing the observations a few months apart. Working with a preliminary case offered the opportunity to practise and develop practical research skills in gaining access to a school, carrying out observations and conducting interviewing. This supported the organisational aspects of the fieldwork running more smoothly in the

next phase of the research project. The pattern of data collection in school A and schools B, C, and D is summarised in Figure 3 below.

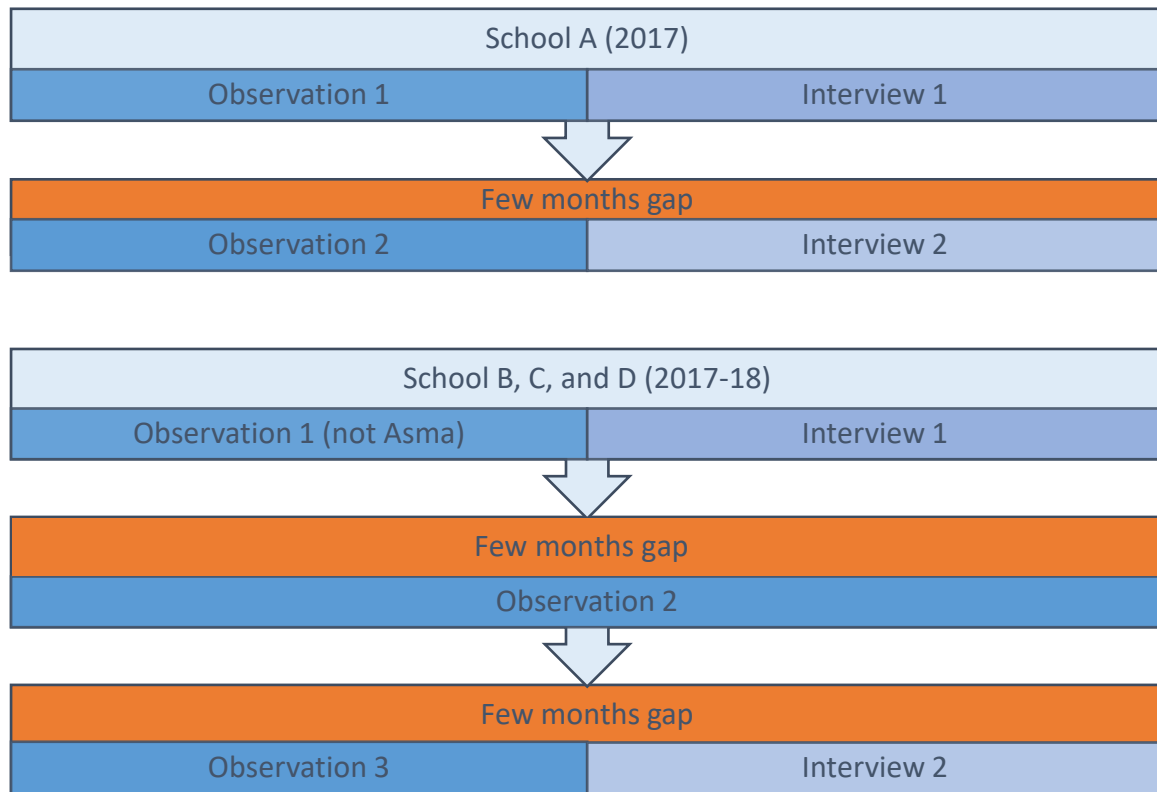


Figure 3: Pattern of data collection in school A and schools B, C, and D

Following a review of the interview questions used in school, a few minor changes were made before conducting the interviews in schools B, C, and D. An additional activity was added to interview 1 which is captured in the table below. Having established in the literature that to comprehend text readers build a mental model (Oakhill, et al., 2015; Willingham, 2017), I decided that some use of concept mapping might complement the study. The proposition was that it allowed an alternative way for participants to widen their thinking about reading comprehension. In the development of the research inquiry, I had found the use of diagrams such as mind maps and flowcharts helpful in clarifying my thinking and wanted to offer this opportunity to participants. It proved to be a useful warm-up to exploring ideas about the complexities of reading comprehension interactions.

Additional Interview Activity for Interview 1 (School B, C, D)

- Could you draw on here a map or diagram that represents how you understand reading comprehension
- (Later on) Is there anything you would like to add to your diagram/map of RC?

Table 6: Additions to interview 1 (schools B, C, D)

Three changes were made to the second interview from that used in school A (above in Table 6). These were made after reviewing the data collection from school A and subsequently after the first interviews in schools B, C, and D. A noteworthy impression from reading through the transcripts was the significance of the relationship between teachers and pupils in reading comprehension instruction and the significance or insignificance given to the text as part of this interaction. In response to thinking about the significance of the 'instructional dynamic' (Ball and Forzani, 2007), teachers were again asked to use concept mapping to represent the roles of teacher, pupil, and text in reading comprehension. The second change was from the question 'Do you think that questioning is your main tool for the teaching of reading comprehension? Can you say more about this?' This was modified to learn more about the details of approaches to questioning and influences on decision making. This was changed to 'How have you developed your questioning for teaching reading comprehension?' The third change involved an additional question. Being able to read independently is the big goal of reading acquisition (DfE, 2013) and pupils applying what has been taught is the hope of the profession. Reading independently also increases the volume of reading, the fluency, the ease of comprehension, and the acquisition of knowledge (Allington, 2014). Consequently, this question, 'How do you encourage your children to be independent comprehenders?' was added to include this in the dialogue. All the changes to interview 2 are listed in Table 7 below.

Changes to Interview 2 (School, B, C, D)

Role of teacher

- This developed from just a question to a visual representation:
Can you represent the roles of teacher, pupil and text in reading comprehension?

Questioning – developed question

- How have you developed your questioning for teaching reading comprehension?

Added Question

- How do you encourage your children to be independent comprehenders?

Table 7: Changes to interview 2 (schools B, C, D)

Interviews of Additional Participants

In each of the four schools in the study, the reading coordinator was interviewed. The questions for the interview were devised from the perspective of their role as coordinator; they drew on questions used in the two main participant interviews. The other four additional interviews were modified as appropriate to reflect the specific role the additional participant had in relation to teaching and informing reading comprehension instruction. The questions for the reading coordinators are listed in the table below as an example.

Interview Questions for Reading Coordinators

RC: abbreviation for reading comprehension

(Signed consent form)

Intro: How long have you been teaching? Been reading coordinator?

1. What is your role regarding reading? (responsibility, policy)
2. How do you expect reading comprehension to be taught?

3. Could you draw on here a map or diagram that represents how you understand reading comprehension? (Not school A)
4. What has influenced and informed your understanding and teaching of reading comprehension? (training, CPD)
5. What do you think is the place (significance, importance) of RC in the classroom?
6. Is there anything challenging about teaching RC?
7. What is the role of the teacher in teaching reading comprehension? (the text, the reader) (Can all aspects be taught?)
8. How would you like to develop reading comprehension in the school?
9. What do you think is the single most important thing about reading comprehension?
10. Is there anything you would like to add or expected me to ask about?

Finishing off: I may have a question when I look over my notes, would it be okay if I email you?

Thank you

Table 8: Interview questions for reading coordinators

Ethics

Throughout the research process, ethical issues were considered to ensure the integrity of the research. As recommended by Merriam (2009), Patton's (2002: 408-409), ten-pointer ethical checklist was a useful guide to reflect on ethical matters and as Starman (2013) advises to monitor my own performance. Ethical approval was gained through a detailed application submitted to the faculty ethics committee at Manchester Metropolitan University to carry out this research. In addition, the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) guidelines were noted, for example, when developing trust, gaining informed consent, and protecting privacy and confidentiality. The observations of reading lessons and interviews with teachers were recorded with the consent of the

participants and the assent of the pupils. Two devices were used to ensure recording and avoid any loss of data.

As the data collection took place in schools, consideration was given to children as a vulnerable group. Although the pupils were not participants in the study (as the focus of the study was on teachers' practices) they were present during the reading lessons observed. Before the observations, parents were informed of the research (appendix 3), and I introduced myself to the pupils and explained what I was doing in their classroom and school. The children were familiar with visitors observing lessons, but I remained vigilant to signs of stress or upset from the children. They were aware that the reading lessons were being audio-recorded and for what purpose. Procedures for protecting privacy and confidentiality such as the anonymity of the participants and secure storage of data were carefully followed. To protect anonymity schools were entitled school A, school B, school C, and school D. In addition, all participants were given pseudonyms or a generic title such as reading coordinator. The research participants, who are all adults, gave their signed consent.

The significance of the ethical commitment to the participants has remained important throughout the study. Consideration was given to building a trusting and respectful relationship. As mentioned previously, this involved explaining the research to participants, being mindful of their time and their wider responsibilities and thinking carefully about the structure and wording of the interview questions to avoid any feeling of 'being interrogated'. During the collection of data, I was vigilant to look out for any indications of discomfort from the participants. Attention was given to the experience of participants in more subtle ways such as being mindful of power relationships, listening to what they had to say about reading comprehension and allowing them to show their examples of teaching reading comprehension in a safe environment. Whilst all the participants agreed to participate in the research, they may have felt obligated to do so because their colleagues had agreed, so being alert to signs of stress from the research was ongoing. Also being aware of any questioning from headteachers about impressions from observations and interviews which might be utilised for different purposes. Once the transcripts were completed, these were sent to the participants to show transparency of the data collected.

Participants were given the opportunity to add to their points or change their mind about something they had said, but none chose to do so.

The broader ethical obligation of carrying out research that is worthwhile for practitioners and the wider field informed the design, analysis, and conclusions of this work (Biesta, 2020). Striving for high ethical standards during this research included a responsibility to scholarship (Yin, 2018), which incorporates a commitment to honesty and avoiding deception. Researchers must take full responsibility for their work and commit to academic integrity. This research aims to communicate with clarity and systematically acknowledge the work of others. The purpose of 'maintaining a strong professional competence' (Yin, 2018: 87) has included an ongoing review of related literature, a transparency about the research and an acknowledgement of the limitations of the work including an awareness of the wider criticisms of using case study for research.

Approach to data analysis

Analysis is referred to by Rinehart (2021) as an active, interpretative process that leads to assigning meaning and presenting new understanding. There is a pleasing parallel between reading comprehension and analysis in that they are both fundamentally about making meaning. Like reading comprehension, analysis is understood here as an active process, where meaning is derived through a complex interpretative process. As a text can be interpreted in multiple ways, the data, or the text of this research can be understood in various ways. Just as meaning from a text can be enhanced by intertextuality, analysis is similarly informed by engaging with theories and academic texts.

In an account of research, it is important to clearly communicate how the analysis was undertaken (Attride-Stirling, 2001), both so that the reader can comprehend the process and to establish an accountable process. This section sets out to explain the analytic design of this study. Gibson and Brown (2009: 129) argue that 'analysis is, in many respects, about storytelling'. The story of this research's analysis is told below but in so doing it is acknowledged that this version is a neatened one. Law (2007: 596) warns that approaches to methods of research can 'repress the possibility of mess', by tidying up the confusion and

imprecision of research. Consequently, a preamble is beneficial in recognising a fuller account of the approach taken.

In this qualitative research, a heuristic approach to analysis was taken. The analytic course taken was not linear but was a recursive route (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It was an iterative process, which throughout the research project involved a repeated engagement of thinking back and forth with the data set, coded extracts, and writings (Gibson and Brown, 2009).

The view taken concurs with Atkinson (2018: 415) that:

... data should be things to think with and to think through; there is, or should be, a constant shuttling between ideas and data, data and ideas.

This pragmatic attitude drew on abductive inference (Tavory and Timmermans, 2009). It asked, “what might this be a case of?” thereby considering associations between instances and frameworks that identify and account for what was noticed. This meant the analysis moved between being inductive and starting with the data and being deductive and directed by theory. The overall approach taken was to theorise around the data without being locked into one way of thinking; it is abductive in spirit without any adherence to one method (Atkinson, 2018).

The influences from an abductive style used in the analysis need further explanation. Josephson and Josephson (1994: 5) understand abduction as ‘inference to the best explanation’, where interpretive inference of data can form a theory of explanation. Abductive analysis is viewed by Tavory and Timmermans (2014) as a conversation between observations of the social world and theoretical propositions. It is an iterative process of zooming in to look closely and zooming out to view from a distance, moving back and forth between observations and theorisations. They warn that qualitative researchers are caught between the dangers of an overly descriptive account and fitting ideas into a predetermined theoretical account. An alternative according to Tavory and Timmermans (2014) is to use a back-and-forth process to combine evidence from the research with reflexions on theory. They explain that when using an abductive approach, a researcher can,

...develop a double story: one-part empirical observations of a social world, the other part a set of theoretical propositions... [T]hese two parts of the story not only intertwine but amplify each other (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014: 2).

Brinkmann (2014: 722) likens the 'abductive tool-user' to a craftsperson or bricoleur, which emphasises that researchers respond to the materials that are available to them. In abduction, speculation is invited as the researcher explores what might account for what has been observed (Atkinson, 2018). Tavory and Timmermans' (2014: 5) notion of abductive analysis builds on pragmatism, utilising an inner conversation, involving 'a continuous movement between potentials, actualizations and generalizations'. Abductive reasoning encourages thinking about phenomena as if they are unfamiliar, which can be encouraged with repeated readings of data alongside deliberation and reflection (Rinehart, 2021). It looks for the surprising and responds to 'astonishment, mystery, and breakdowns in one's understanding' (Brinkmann, 2014: 720); thus, whilst acknowledging the influence of previous understandings from academic writing, it allows for unexpected findings.

Data analysis journey

Analysis can be seen to begin during data collection (Stake, 1995) or even before that as informed by the framing of the query or the literature review (Rinehart, 2021). In this study, patterns began to be identified and notes taken of broad analytic categories about reading comprehension practices during transcription of the observations and interviews. At this stage, the approach was largely intuitive; I examined my hunches (Silverman, 2010) and alternatives were explored until 'a settled theoretical orientation' (Silverman, 2010: 39) was developed. Data were reviewed from different viewpoints and three distinct, but complementary paths of analysis were taken, which are recounted below. These three interpretative paths equate to the three analysis and discussion chapters that follow this chapter. To maintain the study's focus, the three research questions remained at the core of the analytical framework.

The first approach used the rich descriptive properties of case study to communicate findings about how teachers teach reading comprehension using the observation data. The second route used reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2022) to identify patterns of interest synthesising data from all participants and all settings in relation to each of the three research questions. The third pathway utilised the theoretical framework of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014), which resulted in alternative focuses for analysis and accompanying discussion. Each of these layers of analysis is explained in more detail below.

How do teachers teach reading comprehension? – observations

As argued previously, description which allows for multiple and complex perspectives is a strength of case study (Simons, 2009). This first part of the analysis presents a rich description of reading comprehension practices, opening discussions and interpretations that are further explored in subsequent layers of analysis. The detail from case study created space ‘to deal with the subtleties and intricacies of complex social situations’ (Denscombe: 1998: 35). Context has been previously identified as central to case study research (Starman, 2013; Yin, 2014; Yin, 2018), thus a descriptive summary of schools and excerpts of teaching were utilised to contextualise findings. This approach responded fittingly with the first research question, ‘how do teachers teach reading comprehension?’ and served to ground the research in practices which are at the core of this inquiry.

The next section explains the thematic analysis undertaken. One critique of thematic analysis from Van Manen’s (1998) perspective is that themes become decontextualised from the participants’ lived experiences. The descriptive chapter about how teachers taught reading comprehension establishes the characters (participants) and the setting (context) from which further analysis can develop. It adds to the overall findings, but arguably more importantly, the first chapter asserts the centrality of the participants; it reminds us that reading comprehension practices are social acts and recognises their generosity in sharing their lived experiences.

Thematic Analysis – observations and interviews

In the broadest sense, analysis involves looking for patterns within data (Stake, 1995). In the second layer of analysis, a thematic examination was used to identify and report patterns about how reading is taught, how it is understood and what shapes this. The thematic analysis was guided by the influential work of Braun and Clarke (2006) who argue:

... thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 78).

This method was chosen because it can support an unravelling of the surface of 'reality' (Braun and Clarke, 2006) through identification, organisation, and interpretation of data. In addition, a reflexive attitude to thematic analysis was sought by taking a 'reflective and thoughtful engagement' with both the data and analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 594). This approach orientated by 'qualitative sensibility' (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 7) resonated with my stance. From this perspective 'knowledge generation is inherently subjective and situated' (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 8) and the subjectivity of the researcher is not viewed as a problem but as a key instrument.

Fitting with Gibson and Brown (2009), finding a 'patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 82) involved noticing commonality, differences, and their potential relevance, and noticing relationships between elements and across cases. In addition to common occurrences, the unusual or outliers were also of interest (Gibbs, 2007). Themes were sought across the data set, which was largely made up of observations and interviews of participants. Both semantic (explicit) themes and latent (implicit) themes that drew on inductive or deductive elements were considered (Braun et al., 2016). Braun and Clarke (2022: 8) argue there is a 'dual process' for developing codes which involves '(a) immersion and depth of engagement; and (b) giving the developing analysis some distance'. This gives a sense of the multiple readings that were required and the time to reflect on developing analysis and theoretical assumptions.

As mentioned previously, abductive inference (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014), which involved a back-and-forth process between observations of the social world and theoretical propositions regarding reading comprehension practices, was utilised to identify themes. Whilst a priori themes were not sought, the literature review which contextualised theory and policy around reading comprehension, informed what was noticed. The research questions maintained a pivotal focus for the thematic analysis process. The ‘keyness’ of a theme was chosen in relation to the research questions where a ‘theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 82). For the first research question, ‘How do teachers teach reading comprehension?’, attention was focussed on the lessons observed and how teacher spoke about what they did. For the second and third research questions ‘How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?’ and ‘Why do they teach reading comprehension in this way?’ the emphasis moved from description to interpretation.

Through careful reading of the observation and interview transcripts, commonality or intensity in the data were categorised as codes (Gibbs, 2007) where codes are understood as ‘categories of data that represent a thematic concern’ (Gibson and Brown, 2009: 133). Immersion in the data allowed for hunches to be studied which Gibson and Brown (2009) identify as an important aspect of qualitative research. According to Henn et al., ‘coding is a process for which there are no rules, merely guidelines’ (2006: 202). Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phase guide to thematic analysis was used to structure the analytic process alongside some of their more recent writing (Braun et al., 2016, 2022). Each of these phases in this study is laid out in Table 9 below. This structure served to demarcate the method to allay critical concerns that ‘anything goes’ in qualitative research (Antaki et al., 2002).

Phase	Based on Braun and Clarke (2006)	Process followed for the second layer of analysis
1	Data became familiar	Transcripts of all observations and interviews were written. After repeatedly listening to and reading through data, ideas were marked for coding. More

		reading of the literature informed a confirmation of the research questions.
2	Initial codes were generated	The three research questions informed the focus for the coding. The whole data set was worked through systematically. This was done manually using different coloured highlighters and comment boxes on copies of the transcriptions.
3	Themes were generated	The codes were gathered against what was meaningful to answer the three research questions across the data set. These were interpreted from the data (Byrne, 2022) and then sorted into themes and collated with relevant data extracts as working tables (one for each research question, (appendix 4). These were worked through to gain overarching themes and sub-themes.
4	Themes were reviewed	The coded data extracts were reviewed. The data set was reread, and each theme was reconsidered (for example, its usefulness, coherence). A thematic map was established that captured the most significant elements of the data relative to each research question (see example, appendix 5) (Byrne, 2022).
5	Themes were defined and refined	The themes were organised into a cohesive account. How they related to each other, and the research questions was reviewed. An analysis of each theme was written and how they related to the 'broader, overall 'story'' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 92).
6	Themes were written up as a chapter	The themes were written up using the three research questions to structure the arguments presented. The analytic narrative (Braun and Clarke, 2022) combined illustrative examples selected to tell a well-organised account. The order of the themes were organised to

		establish 'a cogent narrative of the data' (Byrne, 2022: 141).
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Table 9: Summary of the 6 phases of thematic analysis taken in layer 2 of the data analysis

Organising the data into themes was viewed as more than a technical exercise. As Gibson and Brown (2009: 128) argue, in qualitative research there are aspects that 'cannot be codified or abstracted into concrete rules of practice'. Thematic analysis fits with the interpretivist stance taken that context, including sociocultural conditions, influences theorisation and understanding (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Through reviewing and interpreting the data, more analytical connections were sought for the codes (Gibbs, 2007). As Byrne (2022) acknowledges, the researcher is active in the process and codes reflect their interpretations of what is meaningful. Whilst the coding process was 'flexible and organic' (Byrne, 2022: 1391), the process for the thematic analysis aimed to meet the 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 96). The main disadvantage recognised by Braun and Clarke (2006) was poorly conducted analyses or inappropriate research questions. A critical orientation was taken which sought to examine patterns of meaning and examine interpretations beyond those stated by participants (Byrne, 2022).

To further inform decisions made in the thematic analysis, an 'ongoing reflexive dialogue' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 82) was sought throughout. This involved routinely reflecting on choices, assumptions and influences and was assisted by journal writing and dialogue with researchers and supervisors. This reflexivity remained significant to the process by highlighting similarities and differences whilst allowing space for 'unanticipated insights' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 97). Overall, in this multiple-case study, thematic analysis proved useful in thinking deeply about key features from the large amount of data collected, and supporting the depth and insight sought to answer the research questions.

Analysis using the theory of practice architectures

In the third layer of analysis the theoretical framework of practice architectures was used. This was similarly an interpretive and thematic analysis but was propelled by patterns and perspectives from the theory of practice architectures. This theory understands social practices such as teaching as enmeshed with other arrangements and creates a framework from which these can be examined (Kemmis and Grootenboer, 2008). The theory of practice architectures aligns with wider practice theories such as Giddens (1984), Foucault (1980), Bourdieu (1990), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Schatzki (2002, 2012) which share an understanding that 'practices are situated, social and relational' (Mahon et al., 2017: 4). In this research the theory of practice architectures supports the opportunity to consider the social features and interconnections of reading comprehension without removing the ecology 'by which they are sustained' (Cliff Hodges, 2016: 86). The theory acknowledges social context which is required for a social approach to understanding reading (Street, 1993). To explain and justify this approach further, the following sections outline this theory, how it has been utilised in previous research, how it is useful for this research and concludes the section with how the theory of practice architectures was used to analyse the data in this study.

The theory of practice architectures

This research focuses on reading comprehension teaching practices, how these are understood by teachers and what influences these practices. As such, practice theory which focuses on how everyday actions are encountered, established, and reviewed via people and places (Nicolini, 2012) seemed fitting to support the inquiry. For research, practices are ethereal and can be difficult to uncover (Schatzki, 2012). They are complex and interconnected, for example, whilst they comprise of what is done, actions may be thought through or an enactment of assumed habits. Teaching actions encompass more than intended actions (Kemmis and Grootenboer, 2008). In addition, these actions are influenced by a range of factors (Kemmis, 2012), which include the setting or practice landscapes and practice traditions (Kemmis et al., 2014). The theory of practice architectures reveals how teachers understand practices and how various conditions 'reciprocally impact the

constructions of current and emerging practices' (Goodyear et. al., 2017: 237). It generates a framework from which researchers can study social practices in detail.

The theory of practice architectures focuses on the unfolding of what practices are, on the combinations of conditions, knowledge and influences that make that practice possible, and how practices influence each other (Salamon et al., 2016). It recognises that '[u]nderstanding practices requires identifying both the actions that compose them and their organization' (Schatzki, 2018: 154). The focus for practice architectures is not on what needs to be known to carry out practice. As such, practice architectures takes an ontological perspective of practices rather than an epistemological one (Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018):

This means that the theory focuses more centrally on what practices **are** – how they are enacted in the world – rather than on what we need to **know** in order to practise them (Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018: 124, emphasis in original).

It aligns with an understanding of pedagogy as social practice rather than pedagogy as method. It is a theory of practice that looks beyond the knowledge of the practitioner and instead focuses on how practices unfold discursively through language and sequences of time, and how they are interwoven or entangled with sites, in 'practice-arrangement bundles' (Schatzki, 2012: 14).

Schatzki (2012: 18) refers to practices as 'nexuses of activity' or 'organized nexuses of actions' (Schatzki, 2002: 77). The theory of practice architectures builds on Schatzki's idea that it is through practice that we as social beings interact with people and the world; where '[l]iving itself is accomplished in and through our practices' (Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018: 130). In everyday terms, teachers' practices revolve around participation in teaching and learning actions utilized to support pupil learning in classrooms in ways teachers may take for granted (Kemmis et al., 2014). These systems and spaces of practice combine to construct and constitute practice and are of central significance to understand practice (Kemmis, 2012). Practices unfold in the present, are focussed on the future whilst responding to the past (Kemmis et al., 2014). According to the theory, practices involve

three characteristic interactions: sayings, doings and relatings, and the social dimensions in which these occur (Rönnerman and Kemmis, 2016). These dimensions of semantic space, physical space time and social space are intersubjective spaces where practices are enacted (Kemmis and Grootenboer, 2008). These have been likened to Habermas' (1968) three social media (language, work, and power) and Bourdieu's (1986) types of capital (cultural and symbolic, economic, social). At the same time, these arrangements are seen to enable and constrain practices (Kemmis et al., 2014).

The social site in which practices occur is made up of three arrangements: cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political. These arrangements comprise the practice architectures of practices (Kemmis, 2012). They occur simultaneously and are interdependent and interconnected. They 'hang together' 'in places, in practices, in human lives, and in practice landscapes and practice traditions of various kinds' (Kemmis et al., 2014: 4), creating conditions which shape current practices and the development of new ones (Kemmis, 2012). The three intersubjective spaces (semantic, physical space-time, and social) and corresponding arrangements of practice architectures (cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political) are represented below, in this reproduction of Rönnerman and Kemmis' model (2016, open access). This diagram summarises key terms of practice architectures and relations between them. The arrows indicate the dialectical relationship between practices and practice architectures and how they both shape and influence each other.

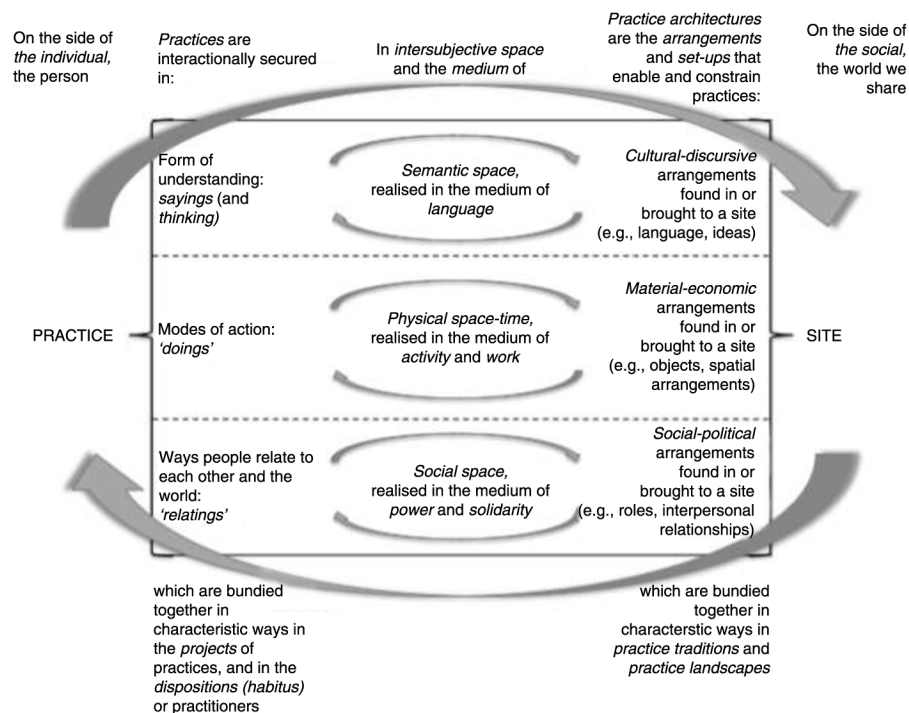


Figure 4: Theory of Practice Architectures in diagrammatic form (taken from Rönnerman and Kemmis, 2016: 96, adapted from Kemmis et al., 2014)

In the theory of practices architectures, the three aspects of sayings, doings, and relatings are inextricably intertwined within practices (Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018). They ‘hang together’ in a characteristic way as a project (Kemmis et al., 2014: 14) in ‘practice-arrangement bundles’ (Schatzki, 2002: 14). These organising principles inform how practices are ‘linked by understandings, rules, teleoaffective structure, and general understandings’ (Schatzki, 2002: 87). Kemmis (2012) likens the concept of teleoaffective structures to the project of a practice and the characteristic way that sayings, doings, and relatings of a practice combine purpose and affect.

Researching practices using practice architectures theory incorporates how the practice is spoken about and how language is used to form symbol systems and theoretical depictions (sayings). It identifies how the economic, material, and physical environment influences how practice happens (doings). It is also significant to recognise how practices are influenced ‘by power relations, social structures, ideologies, or hegemonies’ (relatings) (Heikkinen, 2018: 88). These practice architectures give practices ‘their *meaning and comprehensibility*’

(semantic space), 'their *productiveness*' (physical-space time) and 'their value in establishing *solidarity* among people involved in and affected by a practice' (social space) (Kemmis, 2012: 886, italics in original).

Over time, cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements change (Kemmis et al., 2014) and thereby practices change. Both practice landscapes and practice traditions enable and constrain practices influencing how practices are shaped and conducted. The intersubjective spaces of language, space-time and social relationships shape our teaching practices, yet we have some influence in shaping these spaces:

We are (not deterministically but indeterminately) both the products and the producers of language, both the products and the producers of work, and both the products and the producers of power (Kemmis et al., 2014: 5-6).

From this perspective, peoples' practices are prefigured and pre-shaped but not predetermined.

In addition to practices being embedded within practice architectures, Kemmis (2012) identified that practices cluster together in relationships with other practices including 'metapractices'. 'Metapractices' are defined as 'practices that shape other practices' (Kemmis, 2012: 886). In educational practice, that might include practices of innovative teaching, of initial teacher education practices, of educational policy, and of educational research that create conditions in which practices are enacted. These interconnected practices are described as 'ecologies of practices':

... in which different kinds of human—social projects and different kinds of subsidiary practices connect up with one another in ecological relationships that sustain whole complexes of practices like education in schools (Kemmis, 2012: 888).

Complex connections and interdependencies between practices may become apparent through applying the theory of practice architecture theory which considers practices like living things (Kemmis, 2012).

The theory of practice architectures incorporates an understanding of ‘site ontologies’ (Schatzki, 2002: 124), which situates practices within a certain site and time. Within these sites, people and practices interact and influence each other (Goodyear et al., 2017). For example, individual teachers contribute to and respond to the overall project of reading comprehension. Practices do not exist in isolation from other practices but are ecologically related to each other like ‘living systems’ (Kemmis et al., 2014: 41). These practices evolve and adapt in relation to practice architectures that enable and constrain how they unfold. The claim is not that practices are determined by practice architectures, rather they are malleable interactions, flowing into new relationships and conversations, adapting, and evolving but also sometimes resistant and the same (Kemmis, 2018).

Connected with the theory of practice architectures is the idea that practices have a moral aspect. Practices can be enacted as praxis in a neo-Aristotelian sense denoting ‘action that is morally-committed’ (Kemmis and Smith, 2008: 4) combined with praxis in a post-Marxian sense of ‘history making action’ (Kemmis, 2010: 9). Kemmis (2012: 894) explains the latter ‘as action with moral, social and political consequences—good or bad—for those involved in and affected by it’. Thus, praxis is acting ‘consciously and deliberately’ affecting ourselves and the world we live in (Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018: 11). The theory of practice architectures establishes a framework to understand everyday teaching practices; it offers insights into how to transform practices through a consideration of educational praxis, that is to identify ‘informed, committed action that makes histories’ (Francisco et al., 2017: 264). Furthermore, Edward-Groves and Grootenboer (2015: 151) argue that an approach that recognises praxis is needed to respond to the wider political context because ‘a praxis-oriented view is vital in the current climate of educational accountability, performativity and change’.

How the theory of practice architectures has been utilised in research

Practice Architectures has been used as a theoretical framework in research and developed collaboratively through the Pedagogy, Education and Praxis International Research Network (Edward-Groves and Kemmis, 2016). For example, Rönnerman et al. (2017) used practice

architectures as a theoretical framework when examining practices of middle leaders in Sweden. The three realms of cultural-discursive, material economic and social-political arrangements were used analytically whilst acknowledging that in practice these realms interrelate, enable, and constrain simultaneously. Rönnerman et al. (2017) identified the theory of practice architectures as useful for unravelling the influences on practice. It is useful for

... examining the site-based local conditions that influence what happens when people ... come together to work with one another, and how particular sayings, doings and relatings influence these happenings (2017: 6).

Practice architectures have been shown to be a useful tool to examine practices in education (Salamon et al., 2015). Edwards-Groves and Grootenboer (2017: 46) argued that the theory of practice architectures 'explicitly affords the possibility of a fuller description of practices'; it offers 'a lexicon for describing practices' and 'a theoretical lens to explore the nature and conduct of practices'. Kemmis and Mutton, (2012) used the framework to expose elements of characteristic language and what informed the discourses in education for sustainability practices. Goodyear et al. (2017) applied practice architectures to guide programme reform when examining teachers' understanding of how to use an innovation of practice and how to sustain this innovation. Edwards-Groves et al. (2016) used it to support a more explicit focus on the social interactions of educational practice. Salamon et al., 2015 utilised the theory of practice architectures to reveal the beliefs and implicit theories of early years educators and the conditions that had shaped these. They argued that the theory was 'helpful for identifying the particular constituents of practice and examining the conditions through which they are realised' (Salamon et al., 2015: 439). Following on from these examples, the next section identifies how practice architectures was useful for theorising the current research.

How the theory of practice architectures was useful for theorising this research

This research focussed on the reading comprehension practices of teachers and the influences on these practices. For this study, practice theory is useful as it recognises that in addition to being shaped by personal resources such as teachers' knowledge and pedagogy, their practices are influenced by external circumstances and conditions. Teachers' reading comprehension practices are more than individual behaviours; they are actions shaped by a wide range of factors such as values, discourses, traditions, subject and pedagogical knowledge and policies. An exploration of these wider factors will support a fuller understanding of reading comprehension teaching practices and assist in answering the research questions. Mahon et al. (2017: 7) identified practice architectures as a theoretical, analytical, and transformational resource to understand practices and how these 'shape and are shaped by the arrangements with which they are enmeshed in a site'. Consequently, it offers a 'theoretical language that can be used to describe and interpret the world' (Kemmis et al., 2014: 6).

To develop understanding of reading comprehension, the theory of practice architectures was utilised to reflect on the distinctive sayings, doings, and relatings of reading comprehension practices. It supported considerations of how reading comprehension teaching practices are influenced by previous educators and by our personal and collective pasts. Practitioners in classrooms are seeing and thinking about reading comprehension practices from an array of perspectives. The sayings, or forms of language, influence practice by enabling and constraining what is said and thought about actions and relates to the cultural-discursive world. The focus of sayings is the semantic space and the use of language, for example, the language a teacher uses to describe, interpret, or justify their practice (Kemmis et al., 2014). The doings, or modes of action, influence practice by prefiguring what is done and relate to the material-economic world. This is concerned with activity and work that takes place in physical space, for example, which resources a teacher uses and how they are used. The relatings, or ways in which people interact, influence practice through 'arrangements of solidarity and power that prefigure the ways in which people relate to each other and their environment' (Mahon et al., 2018: 169). This relates to the social-

political world and occurs in a social space where particular practices may be invested in by groups of teachers, for example, through teachers' shared understandings, policies, and rules (Kemmis et al., 2014).

In the classroom, observable reading comprehension practices are social and relational, which indicates a complex interplay of influences. Consequently, in this inquiry, the theory of practice architectures was utilised to analyse how reading comprehension practices unfold discursively in the semantic space, how reading comprehension practices unfold in and through the doings of activities in physical space time and how reading comprehension practices unfold as people encounter each other in varying roles and relationships in the social space. The theory of practice architectures understands teachers' actions as shaped by the practice landscape of a school, which enables and constrains how teaching reading comprehension can be conducted. Its 'site ontological perspective' proposes that practices are influenced by a site, not in a general or abstract sense but by the particular arrangements found in a site; practices are also understood to shape social sites (Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018: 125). Practice architectures can be used to explore how reading comprehension teaching practices are enabled and constrained and unfold in social sites (Schatzki, 2002) and how arrangements shape, but do not determine reading comprehension practices.

The theory of practice architectures can likewise be used to critique practices, supporting a fuller discussion of reading comprehension interactions. Practices that inhabit the semantic space may be unreasonably constraining on 'individual and collective *self-expression*' (Kemmis et al., 2014: 6, italics in original) resulting in contradictory or confused practices. Practices that inhabit physical space-time may be unreasonably constraining on 'individual and collective *self-development*' (Kemmis et al., 2014: 6, italics in original) resulting in harmful, inefficient, or unsustainable practices. Practices that inhabit the social space may be unreasonably constraining on 'individual and collective *self-determination*' (Kemmis et al., 2014: 6, italics in original) resulting in unjust or alienating practices.

After this summation of the theory and relevance of the theory of practice architectures, this section concludes with how this theory was used to analyse data for this inquiry.

How the theory of practice architectures was used to analyse data

Kemmis et al. (2014) position their work as philosophical-empirical inquiry as it focuses on how practice theory helps to interpret empirical data and it can result in prompting development in practices. In the third layer of analysis, the theory of practice architectures was utilised to explore and understand the arrangements and conditions that enable and constrain reading comprehension practices. The arrangements of the practices of the main participants in the four sites were viewed through the lens of practice architectures which involved an investigation of the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political spaces.

For this process, the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis and Grootenboer, 2008) was combined with thematic analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2017) to identify and interpret patterns of meaning. A table to organise data about reading comprehension practices using practice architectures was created by adapting the template for a table of invention (Kemmis et al., 2014: 39 and Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018: 142). The table of invention is an interpretive tool utilised in practice architectures analysis (Gibbs et al., 2022) to create a 'set of topics or viewing platforms (Kemmis et al., 2014: 224). Kemmis et al. (2014: 226) explain the aim of organising the data using the tables:

In the analysis we aim to identify at least the most significant proximal arrangements that shape the sayings, doings and relatings ... and, where relevant, more distal conditions ... that are significantly enmeshed in the practices under study.

For this study, I adapted a table of invention (from Kemmis et al., 2014: 39 and Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018: 142) by incorporating questions focusing on reading comprehension practices alongside utilizing the language of practice architectures theory. The table of invention for reading comprehension teaching practices (Table 10 below) acted as a guide to reflect on the data using the theory of practice architectures, to think about the relationality across columns and between rows and to find connections to establish interpretations that develop new understanding (Kemmis et al., 2014). The table and its series of questions

supported a ‘zooming in’ (Nicolini, 2012: 219) on local practices alongside a ‘zooming out’ for a panoramic perspective (Nicolini, 2012: 228).

Elements of Practice	Practice Architectures found in or brought to the site
Key: RC – Reading Comprehension	Key: RC – Reading Comprehension
<p>Project</p> <p>What were participants doing, or intended to do, or had done in their reading comprehension (RC) teaching?</p> <p><i>In a site</i> - Was there a concern, a shared concern about RC practices? Was everyone clear about the project of their practice?</p>	<p>Practice Landscape</p> <p>How the different participants (and others involved) inhabited the site in different ways in their reading comprehension (RC) teaching.</p> <p>How the participants and objects were enmeshed in RC practices.</p> <p><i>In a site</i> – Did all understand the practice traditions in the same way? Were all satisfied with the practice traditions? Was there a shared concern?</p>
<p>Sayings</p> <p>What language was being used by participants in relation to teaching RC? (both in the practices and about the practices)</p> <p>What language/ideas was being used to talk about, describe, explain, and justify RC practices?</p> <p>What ideas about RC were the most important to participants?</p> <p>How were participants’ language and ideas changing?</p>	<p>Cultural- discursive arrangements (what shapes sayings?)</p> <p>Where does the language of RC come from? (documents, policies, research etc. both local and wider afield)</p> <p>Who spoke this language in the site?</p> <p>Who spoke this most/ least fluently?</p> <p>Was there disagreement or debate about the language of RC practices or the key ideas or importance?</p> <p>Were these influences in the semantic space enabling or constraining?</p> <p>Were ideas about RC rational and reasonable – coherent, appropriate etc.?</p>

<p>Doings</p> <p>What were participants doing when teaching RC?</p> <p>Were activities sequenced or connected in RC teaching?</p> <p>What were the outcomes of the RC teaching?</p> <p>Were the intended outcomes of RC being achieved?</p>	<p>Material- economic arrangements (what shapes doings?)</p> <p>What physical spaces were being used for teaching RC?</p> <p>Were objects/resources used in a particular way when teaching RC?</p> <p>What material and financial resources were involved when teaching RC?</p> <p>Were arrangements adequate?</p> <p>Were these influences in physical space-time enabling or constraining?</p> <p>Were activities around RC productive and sustainable?</p>
<p>Relatings</p> <p>How did participants relate to pupils during RC?</p> <p>How did participants relate to other staff around RC – for example reading coordinator?</p> <p>How did participants relate to texts?</p> <p>Who was included and excluded and from what in RC practices?</p> <p>What systems, roles or functions were involved with teaching RC?</p> <p>Were there relationships of power with teaching RC (including domination or oppression)?</p> <p>Were there relationships of belonging and shared purpose (or exclusion and conflict)?</p>	<p>Social-political arrangements (what shapes relatings)</p> <p>What social and administrative systems of roles, responsibilities, functions, obligations, and reporting relationships enabled and constrained relationships when teaching RC in the site?</p> <p>Did people collaborate or compete for RC resources in the school?</p> <p>Was there resistance, conflict or disagreement around RC practices?</p> <p>Was the communicative space for RC practices a public sphere?</p> <p>Were these influences in social space enabling or constraining?</p> <p>Were relatings of RC comprehension practices just and inclusive?</p>
<p>Dispositions (habitus)</p>	<p>Practice Traditions</p>

<p>What were the most significant dispositions called on or developed in the participants in RC practices? Dispositions are subdivided into understandings/knowledge, skills and values.</p> <p>Understandings/knowledge - How did participants understand what was happening in and around RC teaching? This relates mainly to semantic space.</p> <p>Skills – What skills and capacities were participants using when teaching RC? This relates mostly to physical space-time.</p> <p>Values – What were the participants’ values and commitments to RC teaching? This relates mostly to the social space.</p>	<p>What does data tell us about practice traditions in RC practices? Interactions are considered against a longer history of RC practices.</p> <p>Is there evidence of professional practice traditions (not exclusive to this site) – like following a specific approach/policy to teaching RC? And did these enable or constrain what participants hoped to achieve?</p>
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Table 10: Table of invention for reading comprehension teaching practices(adapted from tables in Kemmis et al., 2014: 3 and Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018: 142)

The table of invention for reading comprehension developed for this study (above) identified questions to consider for each of the main participants, which was captured through a table for each main participant (see example, appendix 6). This was the first phase of the analytic process followed. (The subsequent phases are outlined and tabularised below). Multiple readings of the observation and interview data supported the process of populating each table of invention. Practices enacted in each classroom were deliberated in relation to semantic (e.g. language) spaces, physical (e.g. material) spaces and their corresponding arrangements, and social (e.g. power relations) spaces (Kemmis, 2012). This process was then replicated for each main participant so that there were 11 tables of inventions. The tables assisted sorting data using identified criteria and reflecting on how participants inhabited their site and how they were enmeshed in their comprehension

practices according to the theory of practice architectures. Although it should be noted that the selection was subjective as the identification and sorting of the tables was done by me.

A key area of interest was which practice architectures enabled and constrained the reading comprehension practice examples. Data were grouped into the three arrangements: cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political. A similar analytic step was taken by Rönnerman et al. (2017) and Goodyear et al. (2017). From this, themes and sub-themes were identified which were reviewed against the three research questions before a thematic map of how arrangements ‘hung together’ was developed. Finally, these themes were refined into a cohesive account of the principal structures of practice architectures that constructed and constituted reading comprehension practices before being written up. This analytical process was informed by Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. By incorporating these phases with the tables of inventions analysis the practice architectures analysis followed eight phases. These are itemised in Table 11 below.

Phase	Adapted from Braun and Clarke’s (2006) phases of analysis	Process followed by the third layer of analysis
1	Table of invention	A table of invention was created for reading comprehension teaching practices. This was adapted from (Kemmis et al., 2014: 39 and Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018: 142).
2	Data became familiar	Fresh transcripts were repeatedly read through in relation to these new headings.
3	Tables of invention were populated	Data was organised on tables of invention for each of the main participants (appendix 6).
4	Each arrangement was grouped across cases	Across the cases, the practice architectures that enabled and constrained practices were collated and compared. These were grouped into the three arrangements: cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political.

5	Themes were sought and identified	The grouped data was worked through to gain overarching themes and sub-themes for each of the three arrangements.
6	Themes were reviewed	The themes were reviewed and arranged in response to the 3 research questions. A thematic map was established.
7	Themes were refined	The themes were organised into a cohesive account. How they related to each other, the theory of practice architectures and the overall narrative were developed. The themes were checked against those from the thematic analysis in the previous chapter to establish links and avoid repetition.
8	Themes were written up as a chapter	The themes were written up using the 3 research questions to structure the arguments presented.

Table 11: Summary of the phases used for analysis with practice architectures in this research

The theory of practice architectures was used as an analytical tool to explore the conditions that comprise the characteristic elements of the sayings, doings, and relatings of reading comprehension practices and how these conditions enabled and constrained practices. Mahon et al. (2017: 19) argued that practice architectures is useful as ‘an analytical tool’ because, ‘it allows us to identify actual empirical connections between practices and arrangements’. The effects of the semantic space, the language and discourse used within reading comprehension practices by individual teachers, within schools and within the whole study were explored. In addition, the influences of the material and economic arrangements that shape and are shaped by reading comprehension practices were analysed. The effects of social-political arrangements on reading comprehension practices were considered and an exploration of interactions around themes such as solidarity and power.

The theory supported a discussion to identify how reading comprehension practices are enmeshed in practice architectures in 'practice-arrangement bundles' (Schatzki, 2012: 14). Applying this theory to the data included analysing how the practices and practice architectures combine in 'the project of a practice' (Kemmis et al., 2014: 31). The 'project of a practice' refers in part to the intentions of the participants of the practice, also to things taken for granted by the participants, and things that exist in the intersubjective spaces in which participants encounter each other in a site. Through the framework of practice architectures, the multidirectional links between individuals and sites which are 'dialectically related and mutually constituted' (Kemmis and Grootenboer, 2008: 55) were explored. Individual practices alongside how they connected with the site offered a renewed perspective of reading comprehension practices. This is discussed in the corresponding analysis chapter (chapter 7).

Chapter 5: Analysis 1: The Observations

Introduction

Data analysis within this study is viewed as ‘the process of making meaning’ from the data in response to the research questions (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015: 202). In this first data analysis chapter, the first research question, ‘How do teachers teach reading comprehension?’ is explored through summative descriptions and selected sections of the observed lessons taught by the main participants in this multiple-case study. As agreed by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), data analysis can result in a descriptive account. Because context is central to case study research (Stake, 1995), each school setting in this multi-site study is briefly described to give context to the teaching practices. These brief summaries about the four schools were informed by interviews with participants and other information shared by participants.

Following the school summaries, each of the main participants’ observations are briefly depicted and illustrated with excerpts from transcriptions of the observations. The contexts of practices and the influential factors on these practices are significant and the intention of this study is to allow the contexts of practices to be opened up. Each lesson observed is summarised to contextualise the chosen excerpts. This was a pragmatic decision to manage the quantity of data and allow for a full exploration of all of the research questions. The vignettes from the observed lessons were selected to make meaning from the observation data in the light of the research question about how reading comprehension is taught. The chosen extracts feature sections of the lessons where teachers were interacting with pupils and engaging in reading comprehension instruction. A range of criteria informed the choice of excerpts: identified as interesting in relation to the research question, linking with literature discussed in the literature review chapters, a section which was characteristic of the lesson, or representing the range of content across lessons. Combined, these extracts add to knowledge about how reading comprehension is taught in English classrooms and help to build understanding in this area.

This rich description is a feature of case study (Merriam, 2009) and supports a clear communication of what teaching was observed and data collected. In accordance with Stake (1995: 1), the intention is that in seeking to understand:

... we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how [they: actors] function in ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn.

A strength of case study research is that through a rich description, understanding of a phenomenon is developed in its natural setting (Meredith, 1998). In this instance, description of reading comprehension instruction from actual practice begins the understanding of how teachers teach reading comprehension (Punch and Oancea, 2014). It connects the research with everyday reading comprehension instruction and maintains an important link back to concrete practices.

Practice Context of School A

School A was a two-form entry, inner city school with about 45% of the children in receipt of pupil premium (DfE, 2022b), which is a measure of socioeconomic disadvantage. The reading coordinator had taken this position of responsibility only a few months prior to data collection (2017) and was still developing the role. She believed that weak language skills for some pupils in their school made reading comprehension more difficult as ‘there is quite a paucity of language in this area’ (reading coordinator, School A). This has been raised in wider concerns around the language word gap of pupils in the UK (Harley, 2018). In addition, the reading coordinator thought that some pupils’ experiences made it difficult for them to understand the text:

Because they can’t bring any of their own world into that text. Very often we are asking them to imagine things they have never done, they’ve never been there, they have never seen...

This teacher's concern aligns with Smith et al.'s (2021) finding that weaker background knowledge has a detrimental influence on reading comprehension. To alleviate this, the school planned the curriculum using a cross-curricular approach arranged around a topic. They applied this to their teaching of reading comprehension to support pupils with 'background markers' and a 'context that is meaningful' (reading coordinator, School A).

At the time of data collection (2017), the school was reviewing their teaching and organisation of reading comprehension. They had set out expectations for the teaching of reading for all year groups but were reviewing how to deliver guided reading 'that is purposeful' (reading coordinator, School A). Although the teachers were involved with conversations about texts with their pupils in comprehension lessons, the reading coordinator thought they needed to develop their preplanning so that all aspects of teaching reading comprehension were taught. Sarah (year 4 class teacher) was concerned about the lack of a whole school policy and wanted clearer direction for her comprehension teaching. The school had established expectations of how often guided reading should take place, but this had not been 'prescriptive in how you have to do it or what you have to use' (Steve, year 3 class teacher). The organisation of guided reading sessions in key stage 2 (KS2) had proved challenging. In key stage 1 (KS1), each teacher took a group at the end of the morning whilst the other children went for their lunch. This meant that the teacher could focus on each guided group without disturbance from the other children, but this option was not available in KS2.

During the period of data collection, school A had identified a need for some changes in their teaching of reading comprehension, but the full direction had yet to be decided. Varying approaches to teaching reading comprehension were being tried with some lessons observed organised as group lessons and some as whole class lessons. This echoes the wider contemporary debate amongst teachers about how to organise the teaching of reading comprehension (Wilson, 2016; Gaffney, 2017; Payne, 2017). The reading coordinator was interested in a possible approach from the Local Education Authority (LEA) consultant. This gave structure to teaching different aspects of reading comprehension and supported teachers in the organisation of both guided and independent reading opportunities. The school had bought some comprehension textbooks to help resource the teaching. In

addition, they had recently invested in an assessment tool to track pupil progress which included reading comprehension national curriculum (DfE, 2013) statements.

Steve's Practice

Steve had been teaching for fourteen years and had taught about half of that time in this setting. He had previously been the reading coordinator in the school. In January 2017, in the first lesson observed, Steve worked with a focus group of four children in his year 3 class and a teaching assistant worked with another group, each doing a guided read. The other three groups had independent reading activities as per the carousel guided reading model (Burton, 2018). This is where over the week there are several independent reading activities which the children do as a rotation whilst the teacher focuses on the guided group.

Activities in this session included one group working on a story map on a recently guided text and looking up unknown words, a second group using Comprehension Box (Prim-Ed Publishing), a resource with short texts and questions which are differentiated in difficulty, and finally a group rereading a text and sequencing the story using laminated pictures. The lesson lasted for about 30 minutes and the main focuses were gathering and using clues to understand the text and answer questions.

In Steve's guided reading session, they used a short narrative extract taken from the Reading Explorers scheme (Hopscotch). Each of the children had their own copy of the text. At the start, there was some orientation around the narrative text extract including title and predictions. Steve showed the children some words in the text that might be tricky to read (including 'beady'). The pupils read the text and Steve listened to individual pupils read and gave them some support and some feedback on their reading. Next, they came together as a group and discussed the meaning of the word 'beady' as this section illustrates:

Teacher Steve: Okay so when you read that sentence now what do you think beady might mean Chris?

Laura: I know! I know!

Chris: I was going to say but I lost it.

Teacher Steve: Have another think, read the sentence again. What do you think beady means?

Laura: I think it means your eyes are really big.

Chris: Big beady eyes

Teacher Steve: So, it is to describe the eyes. So, you guys think they are big?

Alex: Small

Teacher Steve: Why do you think?

Alex: I don't know, I just sort of thought it might be small.

Laura: I think it's a different thing because like beady reminds me of beads which is quite small.

Teacher Steve: Yes, right - beads being small maybe makes us think small. That's good thinking, that.

Alex: Sometimes you can get beady eyes 'cos beads are really small.

Ben: Yeah

Teacher Steve: So, if someone is watching someone with beady eyes how would you make your eyes go beady? (Teacher and children narrow their eyes)

This discussion demonstrates the significance given to the development of vocabulary knowledge, which combines with background knowledge to support comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2015). Following this extract, they continued discussing questions about the text. Pupils were encouraged to be active and flexible in the process of answering these. This lesson fitted with the guided reading model of teaching reading comprehension (Fountas and Pinnell, 2012). Within this structure, Steve was supportive whilst encouraging deeper thinking around texts, identified as a goal by Blything et al. (2019). There were also opportunities to respond collaboratively to texts by finding clues in the texts which they highlighted and discussed, noted as an opportunity to develop comprehension by Lemov et al. (2016).

In contrast, for the second lesson observed in March 2017, Steve worked with the whole class for about 55 minutes. The main focuses of the lesson were scanning for key words and

using clues in the text to understand the text more fully and answer questions. They used the novel *The BFG* (Roald Dahl), which they had been reading intermittently over a few months as their 'class reader'. Some children had their own copy of the book, and some children shared a copy with a partner. Steve gave the pupils a few questions to think about whilst he read the text aloud. After he modelled reading a section of text, the children searched for words and phrases in the text that answered the questions using a scanning technique; this vocabulary was then discussed. According to Duke et al. (2011: 74), the strength of this type of approach is the enhancement of vocabulary:

Read-aloud experiences that include direct explanations of words along with dialogic interactions that foster deep understanding result in significant gains in vocabulary and reading comprehension.

One question they considered was 'How did the BfG move?' As this section demonstrates, Steve encouraged the pupils to think about the choice of wording used by the author and to talk about their understanding of, in this instance, how the BFG 'glided' and then 'melts'. This is noteworthy as it engaged the pupils in dialogue that involved them in being active in the process of comprehension.

Teacher Steve: Okay, so, listen carefully if you have not found it.

Teacher Steve (reads): He glided forward through the vast garden, and once again Sophie noticed how he seemed to melt into the shadows wherever he went.

Teacher Steve: So, he glided. What does Sophie say he does, what else does he do? He melts! What!

Child: Is he a snowman?

Teacher Steve: Is he a snowman?

Children: No (laughter)

Teacher Steve: What do you think, talk to your partners, what do you think Roald Dahl means when he says he melted into the shadows? Talk to your partners. (Children discuss for 90 seconds.)

Teacher Steve: Okay. I have heard two excellent ideas. My first person and my expert on melting is Joshua - can you tell us what you thought?

Jamie: Disappears

Teacher Steve: You gave me more information than just that.

Jamie: If there is a load of darkness you will like... disappear.

Teacher Steve: There is an area of darkness with shadow, when he goes into it, he disappears, okay.

Jamie: Going in and going in.

Teacher Steve: So, he keeps going in and going in, so he is disappearing a bit at a time. Okay. So why didn't Roald Dahl write that, why did he write melted? Why melted, Jane what did you say?

Jane: Well, if a snowman melted, he wouldn't be there anymore, so it means like the BFG is no longer there.

Teacher Steve: Right, it means like a snowman melting and he's not there, he melts. So, there is no BFG anymore, so Sophie is stood in a puddle of BFG?

Children: No

Teacher Steve: No, I am getting confused now. SO, he is there but he is...

Hannah: You can't see him.

Teacher Steve: So, it doesn't mean he has actually gone, it means he is not there as in we are not able to see him. Okay Yeah, now that is starting to make sense... Did anybody else have anything else to say about it?

By playfully exploring how words can be used in different ways, this discussion supports vocabulary knowledge through building semantic connections and supporting fluency (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). The teacher builds an opportunity for '[e]xplicit attention to vocabulary' and 'developing children's ears for language' (Cremin, 2018: 15). After this excerpt, the pupils continued to listen to sections of the text read and then considered a linked question asked by the teacher, often in pairs before discussing together as a whole class.

Dave's Practice

Dave had been teaching for just over four years but was new to teaching in key stage 2. He described himself to be in the 'infancy stage of teaching'. In January 2017, in the first lesson observed, Dave worked with a focus (guided) group of seven pupils in his year 3 class whilst the other children worked independently. The lesson lasted about 25 minutes. The main focuses of the lesson were reading the text carefully and using evidence from the text to answer questions. All the children were reading a narrative text extract and answering questions on this. The children independently recorded their answers in their books whilst the guided group centred on reading the text and answering the questions orally. The text and questions were from the Reading Explorers scheme (Hopscotch) which included three levels of differentiation. In Dave's focus group, a child read a section of the text out loud whilst the others followed their copy of the text with their fingers. The children needed support with decoding to read some of the words which affected the fluency of their reading (DfE, 2023). After reading the text, they were encouraged to find answers to questions within the text as this section shows:

Teacher Dave: Did Jack land with a bump on his head?

Children: No

Teacher Dave: Find it in the text. How did he land when he jumped? (Children talk about the answer, but not clear) He didn't land on his feet. Did he land hard and hurt his head? How did he land? Find it in there. I'll give you a clue, it is near the bottom...

Mason: He says he landed in his mum's dusty farm.

Teacher Dave: And how did he land? Did he land hard?

Ethan: He landed softly.

Teacher Dave: Softly, soft like a...?

Children: Pillow

Teacher Dave: It doesn't say pillow, soft like a...?

Leah: Soft like a feather

In this extract the teacher encourages the pupils to try and use the language of the text to answer the question. Focusing on the word choices of the text might support pupils in developing a stronger integration and mental model of the text (Oakhill and Cain, 2018b) and establishing a justification for their chosen answers. After discussing five questions, the teacher worked with the whole class looking at answers to these questions and inviting responses from pupils. In this lesson, there was a focus on getting the correct answers to the questions, which were identifiable as the product of reading comprehension. This might be viewed as a weakness compared to Steve's lessons which included concern with reading as a process. The significance of this relates back to an aspect of the working definition of reading comprehension used in this thesis that identified reading comprehension as being '*characterised by an active interaction between reader and text and refers to both the product and process of reading*'.

In March 2017, in the second lesson observed, Dave worked with his whole class for about 35 minutes. He used song lyrics as his text. Before the lesson, Dave had explained that he was enthusiastic about music and thought the pupils were finding this approach to a text engaging. Whilst the song was played, the pupils looked at their copy of the lyrics, 'Fast Car' (Tracy Chapman) and followed this with their finger. After that, the children read the text independently and then individuals were chosen to read sections aloud. Next, the teacher asked some questions about the text and the pupils discussed their answers in pairs. This was followed by a discussion with pupils and the teacher exploring the answer. Here is a sample from this section of the lesson:

*Teacher Dave: Remember the answer, we find it in the text to help us, okay, so...
What do you think? Is the singer happy or sad?*

Jacob: I think she's sad.

Teacher Dave: Okay, why do you think she's sad?

Jacob: Because it says 'starting from zero'

Teacher Dave: Starting from zero, got nothing to lose. So, what has the singer got at the moment?

Children: Nothing

Child: But she can't lose anything if she's got zero.

Teacher Dave: Yes she can, if you start on zero, you can you go backwards, or are you only going to be going forwards?

Children: Forwards

Teacher Dave: Levi had a good answer. Levi what did you say? Is she going to be happy or sad?

Levi: She is going to be sad because it says.

Child: It is not a 'she'.

Teacher Dave: It is a 'she'. Find it in the text. Levi

Levi: Any place is better.

Teacher Dave: So where is she now Levi?

Through a discussion, the teacher encouraged the pupils to connect ideas in the text (Reedy, 2011) and to make inferences at the local level whilst linking these with their background knowledge (Kispaal, 2008). The main focuses of the lesson were reading carefully and finding clues from the text to answer questions and to make sense of text. They planned to look at the lyrics to the second half of the song in the next reading session. In contrast to the previous lesson, discussion was seen as important, and time was given to explore meanings in some depth. In this example, Dave's choice of, and enthusiasm for the text seemed to bring an increased value to the lesson and a fuller engagement from the pupils. This is significant as deciding to replace the textbook with a selected text supported a fuller and more genuine discussion.

Sarah's Practice

Sarah had been secondary trained seven years before and had only been working in primary settings for a few years. In January 2017, in the first lesson observed, Sarah worked with a guided group in her year 4 class for about 30 minutes. The class have been studying a topic on the Egyptians. In this lesson they looked over a non-fiction text on Ancient Egypt with questions from the Twinkl website that they had previously found difficult to complete

independently. The main focuses of the lesson were getting to and recording the correct answers to the questions. In the guided group, individual pupils, chosen by the teacher, read sections of the chosen text aloud and the teacher supported them with words they found difficult. Next, they looked at the questions together. Each question was considered as this extract demonstrates:

Teacher Sarah: So, what is the question please?

Siobhan: (reads): Why do you think rivers are so important?

Teacher Sarah: Why do you think rivers are so important? We talked about this didn't we?

Children speak at the same time: I know this.

So they can wash hands

So they can drink, eat

Teacher Sarah: Well, it is not just for washing.

Siobhan: Sailing, clean their bodies...

Lucas: Sailing, swimming...

Teacher Sarah: Right so it starts in paragraph three. So, let's read this out again. I am going to read it to you so listen very carefully.

Teacher (reads): Egyptian people needed the water of the river Nile for drinking and washing. Okay.

Noah: That is what I got.

Teacher Sarah: Okay so they needed that. But there are other things isn't there? Why do you think rivers are so important? Not just for drinking and washing, what does it do for the land?

Emma: For food

Teacher Sarah: So, it helps plants grow...

Joshua: And sailing

Teacher Sarah: It is more than just drinking and washing... sailing. What is the importance of sailing?

Siobhan: Catching fish...

In this extract the teacher demonstrates that a question may have multiple answers and serves as a reminder that the reader needs to work at integrating information across the whole text which may require multiple readings (Perfetti et al., 2005). Following discussion of the questions, the pupils completed or corrected their answer on the worksheet from the previous lesson.

In March 2017, in the second lesson observed, Sarah worked with the whole class on a text about extreme weather for about 35 minutes. This included some set questions on the text from the Twinkl website which were set out as a test-type assessment. The main focuses of the lesson were understanding vocabulary and finding and recording accurate answers to the questions. The teacher read a section of the text, then checked for any unknown vocabulary as this section illustrates:

Teacher Sarah: Is there a word there that you do not understand the meaning and we will look at it in context?

Liam: Significantly

Teacher Sarah: Significantly. So, let's read it in the context.

Teacher Sarah (reads): Extreme weather occurs when a weather event is significantly different.

Teacher Sarah: So, it is explaining the word different, what do you think it means Liam?

Liam: Is it like really?

Teacher Sarah: Yeah. So, notably different, something that is significantly different is it makes you stop and think.

In this short extract, the teacher scaffolds the pupil to think about the meaning of a word using instruction and context clues to expand vocabulary (Rupley et al., 2012; Cain and Oakhill, 2018). After that, individual pupils chosen by the teacher read sections of text aloud using a large inflatable microphone. The rest of the pupils had finger torches which they used to follow their copy of the text being read. These props were being trialled as a way of engaging the pupils. The whole class worked through some questions about the text

together led by the teacher. There was some focus on noting what the question was asking and where they needed to look in the text to find the answer as this section demonstrates:

*Mia (reads): What is 'Extreme weather'? **Circle one.***

Teacher Sarah: Okay. What is the main thing that is highlighted in that question? So, remember we did this during the test. Abigail.

Abigail: Circle one.

Teacher: Circle one, how many do you need to circle?

Children: One

Teacher Sarah: So where are we going to look? What is the first thing we are going to do with our text?

Matt: Read it

Teacher Sarah: You have just read it. What are we going to do? Usually, our questions will be in order; in year 4 they are usually in order, aren't they? They are until about five and six and then you have to dot around. So, where do you think we're going find the answer to this?

Mia: In the text.

Teacher Sarah: In the text, roughly where?

Mia: In the first paragraph.

Teacher Sarah: In the first paragraph, so let's have a look. (Teacher reads and adds some words to answer choices to make sentences) So what is extreme weather? (Teacher reads from question choices) Is it weather far away? Your favourite kind of weather? Or is it really bad or unusual weather?

Leo: Umm, really bad

Teacher Sarah: Good, so you circle one.

In this extract the teacher is guiding the pupils through the stages of answering a written question by stressing what they need to do: where to look for the answer, making a choice and then recording this. It highlights the multiple steps that need to be integrated to record an answer for what might be described as a simple retrieval question which draws on working memory (Nation, 2005) and can be challenging for some developing readers (Smith et al., 2021). After that, the pupils continued with the questions independently whilst the teacher supported one group to write answers to the questions. Similar to Dave's first lesson, the attention in Sarah's lessons was on pupils recording the correct answers to the

set questions, an emphasis on the product of reading comprehension, that could be marked as correct or incorrect. A weakness of this approach is that it limited the opportunities for pupils to respond to the text and be fully active in their interaction with the text.

Val's Practice

Val was in her fortieth year of teaching. In January 2017, in the first lesson observed, Val worked with a focus (guided) group in her year 4 class using a short play extract from Reading Explorers scheme (Hopscotch) for about 30 minutes. The other groups worked independently to answer the questions in their books which were looked at later by the teacher. The main focuses of the guided lesson were making sense of the text and finding answers to the questions using the text where possible. Each child had a copy of the text and took turns to read a short section aloud. Val asked questions before and during the reading. She also helped with unknown words and gave advice on expression which supported fluency (Higgins et al., 2017). After reading the text, the guided group verbally worked through questions from the textbook. Pupils were asked to identify the key word in a question to help them to find the answer in the text. In this section they have been looking for the key word 'Bill':

Teacher Val: Have a look at this text, how do you know that Bill might not have been a cleaner?

Jo: Because he was a small chap

Teacher Val: He was small. Is there anything else?

Mike: He was a fellow

*Teacher Val: Okay so you have found words. Is there anything else?
(Children look at text)*

*Teacher Val: Read the next one and see what P.C. Williams is saying. P.C. Williams has got some evidence.
(Children read text and talk to each other – teacher picks up on one of these strands)*

Teacher Val: Okay, so there's dust, there's a dry mop in a bucket. What hasn't Bill done?

Jo: Cleaned up

Teacher Val: Okay, so maybe he came here, and he wasn't the cleaner. So, we have got to be very careful when we look at the text. We have found Bill and you read the right thing but that didn't really answer our question, so you need to carry on and read for some more clues.

This could be viewed as an example of pupils understanding words but not yet having developed associations between words to integrate a fuller meaning from a text. Cain and Oakhill (2018: 18) refer to associations between words influencing depth of vocabulary, which can act as 'the "glue" that makes the text adhere'. As Perfetti et al. (2005) recognised, teachers can support inferences by encouraging pupils to have more rigorous expectations for texts to be coherent. By scaffolding understanding of a text that pupils cannot currently access without support (DfES, 2003b), Val is helping to make the reading process more explicit.

In March 2017, in the second lesson observed, Val and the whole class worked with a fiction extract from the Iron Man (Ted Hughes) and questions from Literacy World (Pearson). The lesson lasted about 40 minutes and the main focuses of the lesson were making sense of the text and finding answers to the questions using the text where possible. The teacher recapped the story through asking questions as this section demonstrates:

Teacher Val: What has happened in this extract so far? Ivy?

Ivy: He broke all his body parts into pieces.

Teacher Val: He broke all his body parts into pieces. How did he do that?

Oliver: Because he fell off a cliff

Teacher Val: Right, what's a cliff Leo?

Leo: It's basically a big giant rock that is really tall.

Teacher Val: And where do you normally find them?

Leo: Beach

Teacher Val: Yes, exactly. Do you remember anything else from what we read? You have got it in front of you Adam so maybe with a bit of skimming you could have a look.

Adam: He went to see if he could try and find his ear even though it wasn't in there.

Teacher Val: Okay, he went to try and find his ear. What else was he doing?

This extract shows elements of summarising and clarifying vocabulary supported by Val. This is significant as gathering the important parts of the text and integrating these in meaningful ways is one of the skills of successful reading comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2015). After that the text was read, some aloud by pupils and the teacher, and some silently. Val asked questions before and after sections were read. There was opportunity to discuss some questions with a partner, with some set questions from the comprehension textbook and additional challenge questions for children that had completed the first set of questions. After reading the text, pupils wrote answers to the questions in their books. The teacher rotated around the tables talking to pupils about their answers and supporting some pupils. A strength of Val's lessons was her confidence to utilise a range of opportunities for reading and answering of questions, which may have been a reflection of her many years of teaching experience.

Practice Context of School B

School B was a two-form entry inner city school with about 40% of the children in receipt of pupil premium (DfE, 2022b). Challenges to reading comprehension identified by the reading coordinator were ‘low book handling experiences’ and ‘low language experiences.’ Base-line assessments of children at the school identified around 70% of children needed support with language development, again echoing concerns around the language word gap in UK schools (Harley, 2018). Children across the school were encouraged to read and develop the volume of their reading and the school referred to this focus as increasing ‘reading miles’ (reading coordinator, School B). This is important as the amount of reading makes a difference to overall reading attainment (Stanovich, 1986).

The school had prioritised the teaching of reading over several years and had become a teaching school for reading. They had developed a consistent approach to teaching reading comprehension based on the guided reading model from the national strategies (DfEE, 1997; DfES, 2003a) and further influenced by Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993) and their shared discussions of focussed reading teaching. As Lorraine (year 3 teacher) explained, ‘the whole school right from reception up to year six will follow that structure’. Guided reading lessons were supported with resources and deployment of support staff. School B identified as an ‘Every Child a Reader’ (ECAR) school and included a range of reading interventions in its provision. These included Reading Recovery, Fischer Family Trust, Better Reading Partners, and Inference Training. The latter was focussed on reading comprehension with a focus on ‘what does a good comprehender do?’ (reading coordinator, School B).

In addition, all staff at School B had opportunities for staff development to support the teaching of reading. The reading coordinator there explained that this was an ongoing commitment:

Reading and comprehension is a high priority even though we are in a very good position in terms of data, but it’s still high priority on our school improvement plan so therefore there are always opportunities for continued professional development.

Teachers were often observed by each other and by visitors to the school who came to view their reading practices. This was viewed positively by staff as the ‘culture of observation’ and was combined with ‘a culture of learning amongst staff’ (reading coordinator, School B). Conversations about children’s individual reading were encouraged and valued. This culture was further supported by a reading consultant, who whilst working with a range of schools across the area, was based at the school. Part of the current school focus was working around dialogue and the ‘teaching interaction’, with the aim of ‘teachers being able to listen to responses and lift the quality of responses’ (reading consultant, School B).

Lorraine’s Practice

Lorraine had been teaching for seven years and for three years in this school. In January 2018 in the first lesson observed, Lorraine worked with a focus group in her year 3 class. The main focuses for the guided group were accessing the text as individuals and getting to the main themes and ideas in a text. The lesson lasted about 35 minutes and the text was chapter 2 of an adventure book started previously. A teaching assistant worked with another guided group. The other groups had a range of independent reading activities as per the carousel guided reading model (Burton, 2018). The teacher Lorraine, spent time recapping chapter 1 with her focus group as this extract demonstrates:

Teacher Lorraine: What happened in chapter 1? What were the family planning on doing? Fatima, what were the family planning on doing?

Fatima: Going on a holiday

Teacher Lorraine: They were planning on going on a holiday.

Christina: Abroad

Teacher Lorraine: They wanted to go on a holiday abroad. Who remembers why dad wanted to go on holiday abroad? Why did dad want to go on holiday abroad? Go on Felix

Felix: He saw this magazine.

Teacher Lorraine: He did, and it had a really nice holiday in there as well but there was another reason why dad wanted to go abroad, and not stay in England. Go on Jude

Jude: He wanted to go on a fancy holiday, and he didn’t want BJ to come.

Teacher Lorraine: Well done, he didn't want BJ the dog to go did he and he said if you go on foreign holidays, you are not allowed to take

Children: Dogs

Teacher Lorraine: Yes, you won't be allowed to take dogs, dad was thinking, if we go on a foreign holiday and we go on an aeroplane we won't have to take BJ with us. Because what did dad say BJ always does? Dad said BJ always does something and that's why he didn't want him to go on holiday. Go on Felix

Felix: Rips things

Teacher Lorraine: He destroys things, and he always does something involving dad. What did dad say he does involving him? Go on Fatima

Fatima: He tells them something, like when he was eating cereal, he was telling Mum that he had another bowl.

Teacher Lorraine: That's right, BJ, whenever dad is doing something a little mischievous, BJ always tells mum, always tells Mr Bucket's wife and he ends up getting himself into a little bit of bother.

Jude: I wonder what his real name is...

Teacher Lorraine: That is quite interesting isn't it, we might find out later on in the story.

In this extract, the teacher guided the pupils to remember and gather the important parts of the text and leave out the peripheral information which is a skill needed for reading comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2015). This was complemented by a discussion about the main characters and which adjectives might describe them. Before starting the next chapter, Lorraine asked pupils about their experiences of camping and asked them to predict using their prior knowledge of the text and their background knowledge. Then the teacher did a strategy check, where children talked about what they could do if they got stuck. Lorraine showed them some vocabulary that might be difficult and explained their meaning, which demonstrated a recognised opportunity for explicit instruction of targeted vocabulary words (Butler et al., 2010: 7). After that, she read out and displayed two questions, for them to think about when reading. Whilst the children read the text independently, Lorraine listened to individual children read the text for a short period. For each one, she fed back what they did well and what they should focus on to develop. Finally, she returned to the two questions, and these were briefly discussed.

In the second lesson observed in April 2018, Lorraine talked briefly to the whole class about using inference in reading and then gave groups their independent activities. After that, she worked with a guided group reading a non-fiction text about African animals for about 35 minutes. The main focuses of their lesson were accessing the text as individuals and using the contents page to help find answers to questions about a non-fiction text. Each child had a copy of the text. Lorraine gave pupils a fiction book and they compared the two genres, recapping features of non-fiction texts. They used the contents page together to identify questions that might be answered in the book. After doing a strategy check, Lorraine modelled how to 'chunk up' a word (blend a multisyllabic word). Lorraine gave the group a focus question to return to at the end of the lesson. As previously, Lorraine listened to individual children read the text for a short period and fed back what they did well and what they should focus on to develop. After that, they discussed the focus question shown below:

Teacher Lorraine to group: Who can tell me then the answer to the question, what is the difference between a white rhino and a black rhino? Who can tell me something about a black rhino? Thomas

Thomas: Black rhinos are very rare.

Teacher Lorraine: Well done.

Thomas: And white rhinos are just rare.

Teacher Lorraine: Very good, you got that exactly right. (Teacher looks at table in the text) White rhinos are just rare and black rhinos are very rare.

Sylvia: So, if we find a white rhino people we will say, 'oh it's rare' but if you see a black rhino, you will be like famous or something.

Teacher Lorraine: Maybe. What does the word rare mean?

Thomas: Really hard to find.

Sylvia: No one can find it ever.

Teacher Lorraine: If something is rare, we don't have very many of them.

This exchange was not limited to just asking a 'looking question' (Tenant et al., 2016), one asked by the teacher and answered by a single child; instead, there was opportunity for pupils to reflect further and make sense of the answer. Finally, they shared what they had learnt together and looked at the information in the table from the text.

In June 2018, in the third lesson observation, Lorraine worked with a guided group reading a non-fiction text about Victorians for about 35 minutes. The main focuses of their lesson were accessing the text independently and making use of contents and chapter pages to extract information to answer questions. The choice of text was linked with other work the class had been doing on Victorians and features of non-fiction texts were recapped. After that, they did a strategy check as demonstrated in this section:

Teacher Lorraine: So, when you are reading today, if you come to a word and you are not sure what that word says, what can you do? Fatima

Fatima: Look at the glossary.

Teacher Lorraine: If we can't read the word, is the glossary going to help you? what are we going to do?

Christina: We can chunk it.

Teacher Lorraine: We can chunk it up, good girl.

Jude: You can reread.

Teacher Lorraine: You can chunk it up or you can go back and reread the sentence, good girl. Felix.

Felix: You can look at the pictures if there's any.

Teacher Lorraine: Well done, you can use the pictures, that might help you. Matthew?

Matthew: Read around the word.

Teacher Lorraine: Read around the word, well done and see if you can work out what it says because you are looking at it in context. Haleema?

Haleema: Sound it out.

Teacher Lorraine: Sound it out, you can use your phonics and sound it out.

In this extract the pupils identify strategies they could use if they get stuck on a word; the pupils are expected to be monitoring their reading and draw on independent skills to assist their reading. Self-monitoring comprehension has been identified as an important skill for successful reading comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2003). After that, the pupils practised chunking some unfamiliar vocabulary, supporting efficient decoding and fluency in reading (DfE, 2023). Lorraine gave them a focus of sharing at the end of the session something they

had learnt from the text and the option of some further questions if they finished before the end of the lesson. The teacher briefly listened to individual children read the text and gave feedback as this section demonstrates:

Teacher Lorraine: What I liked about your reading is that you were reading at a nice, steady pace, there was one point where you realised that it didn't quite make sense and you went back and read it again, that is really good. What I want you to make sure you do next time is to be always listening out to check it makes sense. You did it once, but when you read this sentence here, I am going to read it as you read it, see if you can spot what your mistake was. You read it as 'he had a desk put next to Victoria's'. Can you spot your mistake?

Fatima: He had a desk next to Victoria's.

Teacher Lorraine: Good girl, you put an extra 'put' in, so we need to make sure we are reading accurately.

Building awareness amongst readers about what they are doing well and what they need to develop further in context supports the development of metacognition and attainment in reading (Quigley et al., 2018). To close the session, they returned to the question posed and shared what they had learnt.

Sakina's Practice

Sakina had been teaching for about fourteen years and had taught in two previous schools. In January 2018 in the first lesson observed, Sakina talked briefly about inference to her year 3/4 class. She worked with a guided group using a non-fiction text about the Great Plague for about 30 minutes. The main focuses of their lesson were summarising information from a text and using evidence from the text. A teaching assistant also worked with a guided group on a different text and another teaching assistant took a group out for an Inference Training intervention session. (This is a structured group intervention programme that aims to build inference and comprehension skills). The remaining groups had a range of independent reading activities as per the carousel guided reading model (Burton, 2018).

Sakina started her guided session with some orientation of the text and gathering of prior learning. (For example: 'Have you been to London?' The meaning of some words like 'tragedy'; What could they predict about the text from three illustrations? What did the blurb tell them about the text? What did they know about non-fiction?). Next, the teacher showed them a list of 'tricky words' that were in the text which she explained. Then the teacher read out three questions that were displayed for them to think about when reading. The children read independently; Sakina listened to them individually and gave personalised feedback. At the end, they returned to the first question as a group as illustrated below:

Teacher Sakina: If people caught the plague, what were some of the awful signs?

Flora: Rats

Teacher Sakina: No, signs. It doesn't mean about how it was carried. It means what were the signs? What did people show as their symptoms? What kind of things showed them they were getting ill?

Flora reads: The awful signs

Teacher Sakina: Remember try not to just read it to me. Look at it, let's all go to page 4. I listened to some people read this bit, so just read this paragraph in your head again and then see if you can tell me in your own words what were the signs to spot people were ill, have a look, in your head. Try and put the words in your own sentence, what kind of things you can see to show people were getting ill. Flora can you tell us one sentence?

Flora: The signs were easy to spot.

Teacher Sakina: I want to know something you can tell by looking at somebody or how they felt - that you knew they were getting ill.

Flora: They suffered with the plague.

Teacher Sakina: In that paragraph it tells you clues. I am asking, what words were the awful signs?

Flora: High fever

Farrah: Those things on her neck.

Teacher Sakina: The buboes

Farrah: They can also be on your arms; they can go on their neck or on their arms.

Teacher Sakina: Well done.

Mustafa: It will really, really hurt.

Teacher Sakina: It really, really hurts. What did you just say, swell, what swells?

Mustafa: It swells at the tops of the legs.

In this extract, the children need a few attempts before they can find the right information to answer the teacher's question. It is a useful reminder that even to answer a literal question, the reader has to construct meaning by considering how the word meanings interrelate (Kintsch and Rawson, 2005). They planned to continue to read this text in the next guided reading lesson.

In the second lesson observed in April 2018, Sakina worked with a guided group using a text from a previous SATs (Standard Assessment Tests) paper (KS1, Level three). The lesson lasted about 35 minutes. Two groups read with other adults and two groups independently as above. The main focuses for the teacher's group were reading around a word to establish meaning and identifying new vocabulary and phrases. Sakina linked the text with their topic on Africa. She orientated them around the text discussing key vocabulary and relating this to themselves as this section shows:

Teacher Sakina reads: ...there lived two expert weavers.

Teacher Sakina: What does expert mean? What is an expert? If you are an expert at something whether it is weaving, or maths or writing, what does it mean? Mustafa.

Mustafa: When you are really good at something.

Teacher Sakina: When you are really good at something. Let's see if we can say what we are all experts at. Let's have a little think. I think I know some things you are experts at. Let's start with Yusuf this time and go round to Laila. What are you an expert at Yusuf?

Yusuf: Hockey

Teacher Sakina: Hockey, wow! Jamila

Jamila: Drawing

Teacher Sakina: I definitely agree with that.

David: Football

Teacher Sakina: Definitely some good sports people here.

Mustafa: Hockey

Martha: Reading and tennis

Teacher Sakina: That's nice to have reading and tennis.

Laila: Drawing

Teacher Sakina: Yes, we definitely have good artists in our class. These two people in the story are experts at weaving so we know they are really good at it. And we have got some African names to learn here. One is Kofi, can you say that?

Children: Kofi

Teacher Sakina: And the other one is Yaw. Can you say that?

Children: Yaw

Teacher Sakina: And what they did was, they wove a simple cloth and there is another African name here, and the cloth they made was called nwen netoma, can you say that?

In this extract the teacher is developing new vocabulary by engaging pupils in relating unfamiliar words to their own contexts and to the context of the text through conversation (Butler et al., 2010). After that, Sakina shared some key questions about the text that she wanted them to deliberate. Whilst the children read independently, the teacher listened to them individually and gave personalised feedback. The children were asked to make a note of any words that were unfamiliar, prompting self-monitoring, which is an important part of successful reading (Nation, 2005). At the end they discussed one word meaning and one of the key questions together.

In June 2018, in the third lesson observation, Sakina worked with a guided group reading a chapter from *Secret FC* (Tom Palmer). The lesson lasted about 35 minutes and the main focuses were finding and commenting on vocabulary used by the author to describe and build a picture, reading fluently, and using punctuation to establish meaning. They had previously read earlier chapters from this fiction book. Using the next four chapter titles, they discussed what might happen:

Teacher Sakina: So, what do you think they might end up doing in these next few chapters?

Martha: Playing football

Teacher Sakina: Also, what is the title? What did we talk about last week?

Martha: Secret Football

Teacher Sakina: Yes. Cathy, do you want to follow up on what Martha said on that chapter, 'Don't tell the teacher'?

Cathy: They might be planning to do a secret football club. They really want to play football but if they know then they will get in trouble.

Teacher Sakina: Especially, who is the main teacher who doesn't want it to happen?

Martha: The headteacher

Teacher Sakina: The headteacher, Mr Edwards. Yusuf and Fred what do you think about that chapter? What about you Ann?

Ann: Because they wander in the woods, they might do football in the woods.

Teacher Sakina: They talked about the woods right at the beginning and I am going to show you chapter 6, as chapter 5 has no illustrations. When you get to chapter 6, which is called dirty beasts, there is a reason why it is called that title. I am going to show you one picture and see if you can predict why it might be called dirty beasts and what you think they might be doing linking to what Ann just said about football in the woods. Go on Martha.

Martha: A little grassy area where they might play.

Teacher Sakina: Go on then Abdul, follow on from Martha.

Abdul: I think they might make a mudman.

Teacher Sakina: To play football?

Abdul: No maybe to scare the teacher.

In this extract, the pupils are encouraged to use chapter headings and what they know about the text so far to make predictions about the text. Making predictions supports reading comprehension; it has been identified as one of the strategies that pupils need to learn for successful comprehension (Warner, 2013) and is one of the content domains that informs assessment (STA, 2015). After that, Sakina shared the learning objectives, key questions, and tricky vocabulary for the lesson. The children read independently, and the teacher listened to them individually and gave personalised feedback.

A consistent approach to the teaching of reading comprehension, mentioned in the context for school B earlier, was evident in the similar lesson structure observed in this school. There were a number of strengths demonstrated in these lessons, such as the impact of the ethos and status allotted to reading instruction which was apparent from both teachers and pupils. In addition to explicit instruction, Lorraine and Sakina encouraged pupils to apply

strategies in their reading including self-monitoring. There were scaffolded discussions about texts and the teachers took note of the language, behaviours and understandings that pupils brought. This is significant as it links with recognition of reading as a cultural and social process (Pearson et al., 2020; Street, 1984).

Practice Context of School C

School C was a three-form entry inner city school with about 55% of the children in receipt of pupil premium (DfE, 2022b). 98% of pupils spoke English as their second language and the reading coordinator explained that many parents did not speak much English. The school had a specialist teacher who worked alongside teaching assistants to support language development for children with English as an additional language (EAL). This included lots of activities around books which developed book language, familiarity with well-known texts and discussion skills. Whilst the language word gap affects a range of pupils, certain groups including EAL pupils are more likely to have a limited vocabulary in English which in turn impacts on reading comprehension (Harley, 2018). The reading coordinator at the school explained that vocabulary and knowing the meaning of words was a key aspect to success in the reading comprehension SATs papers linked with the revised national curriculum (DfE, 2013). This had meant an increased focus on teaching reading comprehension strategies and skills at the school:

We've had to really, really focus on the comprehension strategies, and teaching the children skills that they can apply themselves to help them access the text, and understand them more effectively (reading coordinator, School C).

In addition to the challenge of comprehending text in a second language, many pupils had not had 'those first-hand experiences', which made it more difficult for them to connect with some texts: 'for the children often it's home, the mosque, the supermarket, the market and not beyond' (reading coordinator, School C). This is significant as weaker background knowledge has been shown to have an unfavourable effect on reading comprehension (Smith et al., 2021).

Some teachers had begun to question the impact of the guided reading carousel model in developing reading comprehension for the pupils at this school; they had noted discussions on social media of other teachers trying out whole class teaching of reading instead of groups in KS2 classrooms. The concern was that the pupils were only getting support once a week with their reading and that the other independent activities were 'not that beneficial'

(Liz, year 4 teacher). Similar discussions in blogs were referred to in chapter 3 of this thesis (Wilson, 2016; Gaffney, 2017; Payne, 2017). The school was interested in applying research to the development of their teaching and was committed to teachers developing teaching through an action research model. Thus during 2016-17 (the year before data for this study was collected) the reading coordinator carried out a practitioner inquiry to investigate a whole class approach to the teaching of reading comprehension alongside Liz, a class teacher then in year 5.

As a result of this inquiry, a whole-class model of teaching reading comprehension was developed by the reading coordinator and Liz. The experience of this approach was that they were 'explicitly teaching the comprehension skills' (reading coordinator, School C) and that learning was more linked. Instead of pupils having one reading lesson a week, they now had a reading lesson each day and learning was more easily identified as cumulative:

Every day you had the opportunity to revisit and build on what you'd done previously and if there were any difficulties for children then you could revisit them the next day. It was very flexible, whereas the carousel was very rigid and then the planning was much more straightforward and much more meaningful (reading coordinator, School C).

Following positive end of term assessments, this approach was subsequently extended to the other two year 5 classes. In the following academic year (2017-18 which coincided with the data collection for this study) this was being rolled out to the year 4 classes where Liz was now based. At the time of this study, Liz taught in year 4 and worked with the other year 4 teachers changing their model of teaching reading comprehension to a whole-class model.

The whole-class approach to teaching reading comprehension at School C developed competences which had been informed by the theory of reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984). In their previous reading comprehension teaching, the teaching had highlighted the main skills of reciprocal reading: to predict, clarify, question, and summarise. In the revised approach to teaching comprehension, there was daily reading comprehension

teaching. Each of the elements from reciprocal reading was considered in detail and often discretely. For about a week, a text extract was studied in depth and read each day which helped develop fluency (DfE, 2023). There was much discussion in the lessons and some recording of activities in reading comprehension exercise books including a copy of each text extract with annotations. The teaching sequence for each reading extract included:

- *Predict, read text (adult/pupil pairs/independently)*
- *Quick scan for words, label text features*
- *Underline words to clarify, clarify words by reading around*
- *Visualise one section and label with evidence*
- *Summarise one section, or summarise the text as a whole*
- *Model SATs style answers*
- *Answer literal, inferential and evaluative questions (including comparing and contrasting different texts)*
- *Peer and self-mark, improve answers*
- *Teacher marks and feeds back*

In addition to the whole class teaching there were interventions in place which aimed to achieve all pupils becoming competent readers. These included groups doing extra guided reading and individuals doing Better Reading Partners or Fischer Family Trust interventions.

Liz's Practice

Liz had been teaching for three years. She had been working with the reading coordinator to develop a model for whole class teaching of reading comprehension within KS2 at the school over the past four terms. In January 2018, in the first reading lesson observed, Liz worked with the whole of her year 4 class using a page of non-fiction text about robots from Rising Stars Cracking Comprehension (Hodder and Stoughton). The lesson lasted about 30 minutes. The main focuses of the lesson were becoming familiar with new vocabulary and clarifying meaning. The text was displayed on the whiteboard and each pupil had a copy of the text in their books. They had looked at this text the day before (each text extract is studied for about a week). Through questioning, Liz recapped features of the text that indicated it was non-fiction. There was pacy discussion of the text which allowed pupils to

demonstrate what they understood about the text as well as clarify some confusions, as this extract demonstrates:

Teacher Liz: What sort of text did we decide this was going to be? Will?

Will: Non-fiction

Teacher: Non-fiction, why did you decide that?

Will: It has got a robot in.

Teacher Liz: Okay is it a story, so the text is telling us about robots, robots are real so it must be non-fiction, what if it was a story about robots, then it might be a fiction text. Can you build on that for me Rashaad?

Rashaad: It has a real company's name in it.

Teacher Liz: When you read it yesterday, you saw that it had the name of a real company in it. Any more reasons Farrah?

Farrah: It says 1963 and has real stuff.

Teacher Liz: So, when it is talking about 1963, it is talking about how things have changed over time. Matthew, have you got something to add? Nabeel?

Nabeel: It says Doctor Who, which is a TV show.

Teacher Liz: Have you ever watched it?

Nabeel: Yes

Teacher Liz: What is it about Farid?

Farid: It is about a man he has a time machine.

Teacher Liz: Has it got robots in it?

Farid: Yes

Teacher Liz: That is why it is included in the text. What kind of text features did you find? Rima?

Rima: A simile

Teacher Liz: Was there a simile in there? What simile was in there?

Rima: Like a human

Teacher Liz: Okay, what else did you find Adil?

This extract demonstrates how the teacher assists the pupils in gathering text knowledge about a non-fiction text, which is one important aspect of background knowledge used in reading comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2015). After the section of teaching described above,

Liz then established from the children that she needed to attend to punctuation, intonation, and expression, to read fluently. She then modelled this in her reading of the text, assisting comprehension (Higgins et al., 2017). Whilst she read, the pupils followed their copy of the text and underlined any words they were unsure of. Then children worked in pairs to read around the text of their underlined words to see if that helped to clarify meaning. As a whole class, they reviewed unfamiliar words, using discussion and teacher questioning. They wrote a list of words, indicating word class and definition/explanation in their books. This multi-layered approach to developing language utilised context. This was significant as it incorporated knowledge of grammar and syntax, which supported depth of vocabulary (Nation and Snowling, 2000). At the end of the lesson, pupils wrote a quick self-reflection about any new vocabulary they had learned.

In the second reading lesson observed in March 2018, Liz worked with the whole class (for about 35 minutes) on a narrative extract from *The Little Ghost* (Otfried Preussler) reproduced by *Rising Stars Cracking Comprehension* (Hodder and Stoughton). The main focuses of the lesson were summarising a text and answering questions about a text. They had already had a few lessons on this text. Similar to the above lesson, the text was displayed on the whiteboard and the pupils had a copy of the text. This lesson began with pupils reading the text in supportive pairs. After establishing what they knew about summarising, the children worked in pairs to summarise the whole text. Various examples of summaries were discussed and evaluated. Then Liz asked questions about the text and in pairs children wrote answers on their whiteboards. Understanding was further developed through the help of a guided discussion (Shanahan, 2022), showcasing a range of possible answers, as this extract shows:

Teacher Liz: What is the simile that is used to describe the ghost? You need to copy the simile exactly though don't you, because it says what is the simile, so therefore you just copy the simile from the text (children work in pairs to write answers on whiteboards). Okay, let me see those boards, what was the simile? Hasna?

Hasna: Like a wisp of mist

Teacher Liz: Okay why is that a really good simile to describe a ghost, 'as a wisp of mist', why did you think? Why do you think that is a good simile Will?

Will: Because you can't touch a ghost.

Teacher Liz: Because you can't touch a ghost and you can't touch mist, I like that. Why else is it a good simile, any other ideas? Shakira

Shakira: Because the ghost could be... it is just like air, you can't really see it.

Teacher Liz: Yes, you can't really see the ghost and you can't really see the air. Zayna?

Zayna: He doesn't weigh anything.

Teacher Liz: Yes, because he doesn't weigh anything, air doesn't weigh anything and the ghost doesn't weigh anything. Zafir did you have any more?

Zafir: Because you can't see a ghost and you can't see air, and you can't weigh air and everything.

During the lesson, Liz picked up on teaching points to do with summaries but also linked discussion with other aspects of English such as grammar and figurative language. The following day it was planned that pupils would write answers to the questions, which they would mark together, and where pupils would have an opportunity to add to their answers.

In the third reading lesson observation, in June 2018, Liz worked with the whole class using a non-fiction instructional text entitled Rocket Balloon (Year 4 Rising Stars, Hodder and Stoughton). The main focuses of the lesson were recording answers to questions alongside discussions and the lesson lasted about 35 minutes. As above, the text was displayed on the whiteboard and the pupils had a copy of the text to read. After recapping what they have done with this text so far, pupils read the text in supportive pairs. The teacher then returned to the main purpose of the lesson and clarified with pupils what that involved. In this section of the lesson, some pupils demonstrated their awareness of reading comprehension processes.

Teacher Liz: What is our learning objective today, Shakira?

Shakira: LO – I can answer comprehension questions.

Teacher Liz: And we are thinking about the range of questions. What skills do I need to use? Hanifa

Hanifa: Literal retrieval

Teacher Liz: What does that mean again?

Hanifa: Getting information from the text.

Teacher Liz: Picking out our information from the text, anything else? What is that word that means reading between the lines?

Hanifa: Evidence

Teacher Liz: We are going to use evidence to back up our ideas, but there is a word where the answer may not be in the text, but we use evidence to try and add to our ideas. Zafir?

Zafir: Inference

Having the language to talk about the skills involved in reading comprehension supports metacognition which in turn supports reading comprehension through detecting discrepancies and encouraging coherence (Oakhill, 2020). After that, the children worked in pairs to answer questions about the text in their books. The same questions had been considered orally the previous day and the teacher moved around the room supporting pupils. Then the children marked their answers amidst further conversation about the answers. Children were expected to add corrections or further detail to their written answers during the discussion. Finally, the pupils added a short self-reflection.

In contrast to the lessons observed in school B, Liz's lessons followed a cyclical structure over a week to ten days. A strength of this approach was that pupils had time to focus on and apply, with growing confidence, different strategies. This developed a broad knowledge of both the text and of reading comprehension strategies. A drawback of this approach might be that the cycle becomes predictable, and each stage might become an important endpoint rather than the overall focus being the comprehension of the text.

Pete's Practice

Pete had been teaching for five years. In January 2018 in the first lesson observed, Pete worked with the whole of his year 4 class looking at an adventure text extract from Reading Explorers scheme (Hopscotch). The main focuses of the lesson were answering questions from the text using their knowledge of the text and using evidence to support their answer. The lesson lasted about 30 minutes. The same fiction text extract was used all week, and this was the fourth session on this text. The pupils had their own copies of the text extract.

Pete asked questions to recap features of this text and then asked pupils to pick out the main points of action, which is shown in this section:

Teacher Pete: Those first paragraphs – what action, what is the thing that actually happens first?

Saman: Louise fell and hurt herself.

Teacher Pete: Okay. Ameera?

Ameera: She drops down.

Teacher Pete: Why does she drop down?

Ameera: To see.

Teacher Pete: So, she can see the little eaglet. Next bit of the story Izzy? What is the action that happens next?

Izzy: Dead mouse

Teacher Pete: What for?

Izzy: The eaglet

Teacher Pete: Yes, next one

Amaara: She gets the eaglet.

Teacher Pete: Yes, she gets the eaglet. We had a phrase as well, she doesn't say eaglet, or say chick, how does she refer ...?

children: Ball of fluff

Teacher Pete: Ball of fluff, so she uses a different phrase. Good, so what is the last thing she has done, what she needs to do?

Tim: She climbs back up.

Teacher Pete: She climbs back up.

In this extract the pupils were scaffolded to identify the main parts of the text which assists in building an overview of the text for comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2015). It also highlighted for the teacher if pupils had understood the significant bits of the text (De Sousa and Oakhill, 1996). Afterwards Pete talked through three questions about the text, including which part of the text would help to answer the question. Pupils discussed answers to the questions in pairs. This was followed by a class discussion led by the teacher. Next, three more questions were explored in the same way using paired and whole class discussion.

Finally, three further questions were introduced which were going to be looked at in the next lesson.

In the second reading lesson observed (lasting about 35 minutes), in March 2018, Pete worked with the whole class using a humorous poem based on Hey Diddle Diddle from Reading Explorers scheme (Hopscotch). The main focuses of the lesson were summarising verses in a poem and drawing out comparisons of mood. As previously, the text was revisited in daily lessons across a week, and this was the third session about the poem. The text was displayed on the whiteboard and each pupil had a copy of the text in their books. Using questioning and discussion, Pete recapped features of a text as this section demonstrates:

Teacher Pete: Nimra, give me some evidence that suggest what type of writing we are looking at ...

Nimra: It rhymes.

Teacher Pete: It includes rhyme, we spotted some of the rhyming words... Sadiah

Sadiah: Verses

Teacher Pete: We have got these verses, kind of like paragraphs, kind of not. Abdul

Abdul: Verses because they don't have paragraphs.

Teacher Pete: Goher, kind of paragraphs but not really.

Goher: It's not paragraphs because if it was a paragraph, it would be a whole line and it must be a bit bigger than that, so if it is a verse, it will be half of a line or a tiny bit of a line that is why it is a verse.

Teacher Pete: Yeah, it stops there (pointing at line of poem on whiteboard). It doesn't look like paragraphs, and also it is there (points at shape of poem). We have got rhymes, verses, anyone remember anything else? Khalid

Khalid: Written in lines.

Teacher Pete: Like Simrah said, it is not normal paragraphs.

Mina: They are the same words; some bits have changed the name.

This extract demonstrates how the teacher gathers the knowledge the pupils have about a poetry text, which was identified earlier as one key aspect of background knowledge (Oakhill et al., 2015). He encouraged the pupils to suggest how they could summarise the

poem. Summarising the main ideas from more than one paragraph is one of the content domains of the KS2 English reading test framework (STA, 2015). As there were so many actions in the text, they decided to summarise the emotions or mood in each verse. The children worked in pairs to do this with the four verses. They drew emoji faces to indicate the contrasting moods of the verses. This was followed by questions and discussion about which verse would fit with which emotion using evidence.

In the third reading lesson observation, in June 2018, Pete worked as before for about 35 minutes with the whole class on a reading lesson using a fiction text extract from Reading Explorers scheme (Hopscotch). The main focus of the lesson was summarising sections of the text with a picture and a summary sentence. This was the fourth session looking at the same text extract. Pete read each paragraph and they discussed what was happening at each point of the story and who was there. As can be seen by this section from the lesson, some of the pupils were still unsure about the details of the text, even though they had already looked at the text three times before:

Teacher Pete: So that paragraph, Sajaad, tell me who is there?

Sajaad: The dad

Teacher Pete: Dad, no one has said anything about dad.

Sajaad: Little sister

Teacher Pete: So, you were listening and trying to figure out who is there, talk to me about the picture in your head. You shouldn't need to read, what is the picture in your head?

Sajaad: She is making a wish.

Teacher Pete: Okay (teacher draws stick character with thought bubble as he speaks) so she may have her eyes closed. She is thinking. Daniel, what else?

Daniel: She wants a go on the lifeboat.

Teacher Pete: Is she on a lifeboat?

Daniel: She is thinking about going on it.

Teacher Pete: Ah! so that could be the bubble when she is wishing something like the lifeboat. Ameera, who is there?

Ameera: Mrs Pender

Teacher Pete: How do you know? Is Mrs Pender in that picture in your head? (reads) "Make a wish, Leah", said Mrs Pender. Is she there?

Children and Ameera: Yes

Teacher Pete: Yes, she is speaking to her. Mrs Pender is there. What else Samira is happening?

Samira: She is hoping that she can go on the lifeboat.

Teacher Pete: We have already got that one. She is thinking, she is thinking of the lifeboat. Mrs Pender is there. She is telling her to make a wish.

Imran: She is looking outside,

Teacher Pete: She is looking outside. What is anyone doing? Abdul

Abdul: Her little sister is grabbing her.

Teacher Pete: Not in this paragraph, no, we don't know if her little sister is there, we are not sure.

Mina: Slowly cutting a cake

Teacher Pete: Yes, she is the cutting the cake. So, there is the cake, she is there, maybe there is Mrs Pender, and she is thinking about ...

Children: The lifeboat.

This extract is an interesting reminder that younger readers can sometime struggle to build a mental image of the literal text when the information may be embedded within more complex syntactic structures. The task of integrating the text can involve simple connecting inferences between sentences but also involves the reader in discounting irrelevant phrases from the text (Oakhill and Cain 2018b). Afterwards, they discussed what image summarised each section of the text extract. Then the children created a table in their books and drew a simple picture to summarise each paragraph in the text extract. As an extension, some pupils wrote a summary of each part of the text.

Asma's Practice

Asma had been teaching for ten years and this is her fifth year in this school. During the first visit to the school, Asma was not observed as she had just started transitioning to whole class teaching for reading and was being supported and coached by Liz. Consequently, the first lesson observed coincided with the second observation of Liz and Pete in March 2018.

In this lesson which lasted about 30 minutes, Asma worked with the whole year 4 class using a poem called A Dream of Elephants (Tony Mitton) from the Rising Stars Cracking Comprehension (Hodder and Stoughton). The main focuses of the lesson were retrieving information and understanding text to answer questions. The same poem extract was utilised all week, and this was the fourth session using this text. The pupils read the text as paired readers (reading aloud together) as advocated by Topping et al. (2011). This was punctuated with some discussion about what paired reading involved. Then Asma asked a question about the text and the pupils worked with a partner to find the answer. Pupils were chosen to say the answer and there was some dialogue about how they knew the answer. Asma encouraged pupils to add to other pupils' answers as this section illustrates:

Teacher Asma: So why has the author used the words, 'beneath a silent sky'? Why has the author done that? I am going to ask Khalid.

Khalid: I think it is because the sky is really silent....

Teacher Asma: The words tell us that the sky is really silent. What does the author want to create? What does he want us to imagine then? I am going to ask Naveed.

Naveed: No creatures live there.

Teacher Asma: Yes, you can imagine there are no other creatures. Hina

Hina: Nothing going on.

Teacher Asma: There is nothing going on, nothing has made a sound, so how does the author want us to picture it then? Remember when we did our visualising. Soraya.

Soraya: There isn't anybody there.

Teacher Asma: There is no one else there.

Zenab: There are no creatures or birds in the sky.

Teacher: There are no creatures or birds. Can anyone else add any more details? Farhia

Farhia: In the second paragraph it says heat, so in the third paragraph maybe it's very hot in the air.

Teacher Asma: So, if it is very hot, what have the other creatures maybe done?

Farhia: Went away

Teacher Asma: Yes, went away or resting somewhere, not in the blazing heat, only the elephants that have made this solemn journey are carrying on, nobody else is there. Bilal

Bilal: They are silent because when you are dreaming nobody talks.

Teacher Asma: That is a good way of thinking, when you're dreaming there is nobody else there, there is no one else talking in your dream. I like that way of thinking Iqbal.

Iqbal: Because it is silent, it makes no noise.

Teacher Asma: Yes, the silence, Parvia?

Parvia: The other animals don't want to go outside when it is so hot.

Teacher Asma: I think you are on the right lines because it is so hot none of the animals are out in the heat but the elephants, they have made themselves the promise to do the journey, they are carrying on.

In this extract the teacher encourages the pupils to draw on language that helps to build a stronger mental image of what is happening in the text in a 'supportive classroom context' (Duke and Pearson, 2002: 207). The children build on each other's ideas and there is a sense that there are layers of interpretation that can be developed through dialogue. A similar supportive context was observed in Liz's classroom and in Steve's classroom from school A; each viewed interaction as important and pupils' ideas were valued and nurtured. Next in Asma's lesson, the pupils worked with a partner to discuss the first three questions on a worksheet and write answers on whiteboards. Finally, there was a discussion about the answers to these questions, this included some exchanges about where to look for the answer and how to decide what the answer was/could be. The remaining questions were to be considered in the next lesson and recorded in their books.

In June 2018, in the second reading lesson observed, Asma worked with the whole class using a text extract from *The Iron Man* (Ted Hughes) for about 30 minutes. The main focuses of the lesson were answering questions and identifying the skill used to answer the question. All the children had a copy of the extract. The book was the 'class reader' (the book the teacher is reading to the class). The same extract was looked at over the week and this was the fourth session on this text. The lesson started with a brief recap of the story, as this section illustrates:

Teacher Asma: So, what is the Iron Man?

Komal: A robot

Teacher Asma: Like a robot can anybody else add to that? Azra

Azra: Massive

Teacher Asma: So, we know he is a massive, a massive machine, what is he taller than?

Taliah: Taller than a house

Teacher Asma: Taller than a house, so he is like a giant. Where did he come from?

Jamie: He came from the sea.

Teacher Asma: Excellent, he came from the sea. Yes?

Bilal: And he broke.

Teacher Asma: And we know he broke at the beginning...

In this section, the teacher develops a cumulative dialogue about what the iron man is, rather than settling for a basic initiation-response-feedback pattern (IRF); this exchange suggests Asma is aiming for a more dialogic interaction (Alexander, 2008). Again, a similar recognition of quality discussion was observed in Liz and Steve's lessons. After that, the children read the text to each other in pairs using a 'quiet voice' helping each other to read fluently through paired reading. Then Asma asked questions about the text, which mainly focussed on vocabulary and language choices. The pupils worked with a partner to find the answer and write these on whiteboards. The teacher gave prompts such as 'read around' and 'find it in the text'. Then Asma chose individuals to share their answers alongside dialogue about how they knew the answer.

Practice Context of School D

School D is a two-form entry suburban school with about 5% of the children in receipt of pupil premium (DfE, 2022b). It had a strongly embedded school ethos where learning was viewed as connected and relevant. Consequently, the curriculum was organised and developed by the school in an original and detailed way. The school applied a learner-led approach which they argued encouraged independent and self-motivated learners. Pupils were involved in developing the choice of topics and content studied in each classroom. In addition, lessons for all subjects were organised into key skills. Children spent much of their time working on independent tasks which they chose from a set arrangement of 'communication', 'problem-solving', 'reflection' and 'collaboration activities'. The ethos in the school was confident and strong with all staff committed to the school's approach and contributing to the development of the curriculum. All teachers collaborated within curriculum teams, where teaching and learning continued to be mapped and developed.

The English curriculum team had been discussing the idea of mastery in English and how the principles of mastery (Education Endowment Fund (EEF), 2021b) might be applied to English. This was a focus of staff meetings during autumn 2017 and the reading coordinator shared the presentation slides with me. One area explored was how questioning could be developed to support children and introduce additional challenge. Teachers were asked to review their questioning, planning both 'cold' and 'hot' (higher order thinking) questions as a range of questioning would support pupils' fluency within a concept. In a second staff meeting, the English curriculum team presented the content domains (STA, 2015) as 'key skills' for reading. The content domains table 'sets out how elements of the curriculum will be defined for test development purposes' (STA, 2015: 7). Staff were encouraged to use these to condense the curriculum and clarify learning. In particular, understanding of vocabulary was recognised as a key feature of more recent SATs tests. To develop this in their practice, teachers were asked to work with another year group to plan a vocabulary lesson focusing on different independent areas of learning.

In the school, English is planned and taught as a cycle, with reading, grammar and writing alternating as the focus for a week. These feed into each other so that the pupils apply what they have learnt from their reading comprehension and grammar learning into their writing. This links reading and writing but also allowed for a protracted focus on each of these aspects of literacy. Texts were chosen to link with the topics that the children had been involved in choosing. The reading coordinator explained that they 'don't really do traditional guided reading'. Instead, during the reading week of each cycle of English, each group worked with a teacher for the 'focus task' and with a teaching assistant for the 'directed task' around a reading objective. In addition, pupils completed a range of independent tasks over the week which supported the reading objective. The children and the staff were positive and confident about their approach to reading and the wider curriculum.

Ellie's Practice

Ellie had taught for six years in the same school. The first two lessons observed occurred on days when reading was the focus of the English session. In the first English lesson observed in January 2018, Ellie began working with the whole class. The main focuses of the lesson were asking and answering questions, showing understanding, and starting to show opinion through retrieving and recording information. The lesson lasted about 60 minutes. The teacher talked about the learning focus and discussed with the pupils how they might go about the activities. In pairs, the children asked questions about their chosen famous person from World War II developing awareness of comprehension through metacognition and motivation (Bruggink et al., 2022). Ellie extended the examples to questions that asked for opinion but were still based on facts. She talked about different types of questions (cold and hot questions) which they would all do at some point as the focus activity with the teacher. The children worked in pairs to answer these questions verbally and Ellie asked some pupils to share their discussion. In the following example, two readers drew differing inferences from the words used. It demonstrates how discussion about the details in a text, including disagreement, were recognised as part of developing understanding about a text.

Teacher Ellie: Gemma and Amelia have reached a stumbling block. I have heard you having an argument! What were you arguing about?

Amelia: It doesn't say in the text that he died from the disease.

Teacher Ellie: It doesn't say in the text that he dies from the disease, or did he?

Gemma: Yes

Teacher Ellie: How do you know?

Gemma: Because it says that he caught the disease and then he died.

Oliver: It says before he died.

Teacher Ellie: If it says before he died, do we know actually that he died from the disease?

Children: Yes/No

After further discussion and in the next part of the lesson, the children worked in groups, with one group working with the teacher whilst others worked on independent activities. The focus group had to answer some questions about their chosen famous person (for example: Explain why this individual is inspirational). The text used was a collated booklet of information about people that helped in World War II. There was a variety of independent tasks which all shared the focus of considering facts and/or opinion around the class topic of World War II. To close the lesson, Ellie led an activity that encouraged children to notice how an answer to a question about how helpful someone is, is affected by perspective. This supported the pupils in developing skills of noticing how a writer comments on the world through their language choices (DfE, 2023) and how context informs language choices (McDonald, 2016).

In March 2018 in the second lesson observed (lasting about 45 minutes), the main focuses were making predictions using evidence from the text and using deduction to suggest what happens just before and just after an extract of text. Ellie started her lesson about making sensible predictions by working with the whole class. They recapped what a prediction involved and discussed using evidence from the text to form meaningful predictions. This section demonstrates how answers were sought from multiple pupils and how an idea was explored in detail gaining a cumulative response from pupils (Alexander, 2006):

Teacher Ellie: What is a prediction? Go on Jenny what is a prediction?

Jenny: A sensible guess about what happened before or after something.

Teacher Ellie: A sensible guess about what happened before or after something else and, how do you make a prediction? Do you just make it up?

Children: No

Teacher Ellie: Go on Charlotte.

Charlotte: You need evidence like a picture of what has happened before and after

Teacher Ellie: So, you could use a picture and you could think, I know what is happening right now, so I could use that to tell me what happened before and what happened after. Go on Amelia.

Amelia: Umm

Teacher Ellie: Go on Glen

Glen: You could find evidence from the text.

Teacher Ellie: Evidence from the text - Go on Oliver.

Oliver: Can a prediction be in the middle?

Teacher Ellie: Yes, a prediction could be something that happened in the middle.

Following that, they noted chapter titles and the order these might come in a book using deduction and knowledge of how plots develop to extract and construct meaning (Snow, 2002). The children worked in pairs and Ellie used examples with the whole class. Her questioning challenged pupils to support their points whilst acknowledging that there was no right answer to the question as this section illustrates:

Teacher Ellie: Sophie has just given us a nice example, read that one out again for us.

Sophie: I predict that they were walking on the beach, and they stopped at the sea, so they had to swim and then they got to the shore at last.

Teacher Ellie: Brilliant, and what is that chapter called?

Sophie: The shore at last.

Teacher Ellie: Has Sophie made a realistic prediction?

Children: Yes

Teacher Ellie: What makes it realistic? What makes you think, 'yeah okay that could be what happened', we don't know what happened, so actually there is no right or wrong answer for this because we don't yet know what is going to happen, so it is

just us making a prediction, but it is about whether that prediction is realistic and how we come to that prediction. Why is it a realistic prediction Leah?

Leah: Because it is not silly.

Teacher Ellie: Why is it not silly?

Leah: Because it is a good answer in the story.

Teacher Ellie: It is a good answer, it is not silly, I like all the things you are saying. It isn't silly and it was a very good answer. But why is it a good answer? Why isn't it silly?

Fran: I think it's a good answer because Sophie, she thought really carefully, because maybe they were on a beach, or they could have started in the ocean and then they could have made it to the shore at last.

Teacher Ellie: So, what was it about Sophie's prediction that made sense, that made it realistic and relevant based on the title? Remember that's all we've got; all we have got is the title.

Fran: It made it realistic because it was like, it could happen, and it was real.

Teacher Ellie: It could happen, we don't know what's going to happen. Think about what the chapter is called: 'The Shore at last'. Did Sophie mention anything to do with that title? Bridget is nodding. What do you think Bridget?

Bridget: She did because in the story when they were trying to find the cave, they are at the sea and the shore is next to the sea and they were going to have to swim to the next side of the sea and that's the shore.

In this extract, predictions are discussed using details about the text. This is significant as it encourages viewpoint, builds greater cohesion of the text, and supports the pupils in their role as problem solvers (Pearson and Cervetti, 2017). After the whole class input, pupils worked in groups on tasks linked with prediction. As previously, one group worked with the teacher, one with a teaching assistant, and the others worked independently. The guided group were continuing working on their writing of the next bit of the story based on their prediction. Ellie worked with individuals to support fuller, more detailed or reasoned writing about their predictions.

For the third lesson observation in June 2018, the teachers wanted to demonstrate that teaching and practising of reading comprehension happened outside of English lessons. The class had been doing themed work on rocks. The main focus of the lesson was using clues

and knowledge to make sense of some sentences about rocks. The lesson lasted about 25 minutes and started with Ellie recapping what they had learnt about rocks on the previous day. The children mainly worked independently in groups as above, and one group was supported by the teacher. The group supported by the teacher were working out missing words on a worksheet about rocks. Through questioning and discussion, they developed their understanding of specific vocabulary (Butler et al., 2010). They used deduction and understanding so far to work out the missing words.

For Ellie, comprehension is happening much of the time in the classroom with pupils reading and writing independently and having to understand what they are doing for the independent tasks.

Because of the independent areas, there's opportunity to read and to apply and to use comprehension skills in a range of ways in every lesson (Ellie).

In the practice context section above, it was explained that in school D reading was taught within an English cycle. Observations of Ellie's practice demonstrated that whilst there were reading objectives for guided and independent activities, these were not taught and applied in discrete reading lessons but in English or topic lessons. A strength of this approach is the amalgamation of spoken language, reading and writing as part of learning about and through English. Reading comprehension was sought and applied through texts; it involved understanding a text to gain connections in a story or to build knowledge about an aspect of the topic being studied.

Martha's Practice

Martha had taught for five years in the same school. In March 2018 (Martha had been ill for the visit in Jan 2018) in the first English lesson observed, Martha began by working with the whole class. They discussed what was used to make a realistic prediction (evidence from the text and what they know – 'life experience'). Then Martha worked with a focus group and the other children chose an independent activity. The main focuses of their lesson were making realistic predictions using evidence from the text and using deduction to suggest

what happens next. The lesson lasted about 60 minutes. Individual children read to the group from the text extract, which was taken from the class reader 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth' (a simplified version from Usborne books). In this section, the teacher asked one of the children to summarise the story. Summarising is advocated as a strategy that readers need to develop (Warner, 2013; STA, 2015) and can be utilised by the teacher to establish if readers have understood a text (De Sousa and Oakhill, 1996). This extract demonstrates how the pupils were encouraged to share and clarify their thinking:

Teacher Martha: What has happened so far in this part of the story? What have we learnt in this part of the story? Fran what has happened?

Fran: We know that they are on a boat, and they have gone down a deep, dark hole in complete darkness with only one light and they were about to drown... so, they went downwards, and big waves came toppling over they almost drowned. Instead of drowning the boy, he would rather be eaten by a sea monster, crashed into the rocks and something else. As they got to the bottom, it started to go up again.

Teacher Martha: What started to go up?

Fran: The tide, it started to go upwards, so the boat went with the tide and they are about to drown and then the boy puts his hand on the side of the wall and he cut his hand because he was going so fast to the top but his uncle was worried because they got to the top and there was no way out, they would crash.

Teacher Martha: A nice little summary there, anyone want to add anything to that they have learnt from that part of the story.

Lizzie: I think they were climbing up something and there was a little dark hole, and the top was blocked, and I think that is where they might be crushed.

Teacher Martha: So, Lizzie was saying, she thinks the top was blocked, do we know that the top was blocked?

Fran: No

Paula: In what way was the top blocked?

Teacher Martha: I don't know. What have we found out?

Fran: Oh! the top of the cave is blocked.

Darcy: The top of the holes because they went down.

The teacher scaffolded the pupils' predictions; the summary of the story so far acted as a reminder of what has happened in the text which assisted the pupils in more plausible examples of what might happen next. In pairs, children talked about what had happened so

far in the story. Then children were asked to think about what they knew and predict what might happen using some evidence. Alongside questioning from the teacher, they discussed predictions and how realistic they were using clues such as chapter titles to help. They then wrote their predictions. Finally, Martha worked with the whole class on predicting what might happen from chapter headings and information they knew so far. Children were invited to comment on each other's predictions and to explain why a prediction was sensible. They also explained why they thought that chapter heading came from the beginning, middle or end of the story. They were developing both a cohesive account of the text and self-awareness of their own comprehension, which supported their reading comprehension (Pearson and Cervetti, 2017).

The second English lesson observed was later in the same week in March 2018 and lasted about 70 minutes. Martha worked with a focus group on reviewing their written predictive responses to a text extract. The main focus of the group lesson was understanding evidence from the text – either to make predictions or to appreciate that whilst some text is understood literally, some is inferred from experience. The other children chose an independent activity as above. Pupils in the focus group read the extract, discussed what was happening in the story, and suggested how the characters were feeling. Then the children swapped predictions and evaluated if the prediction was realistic, made sense, and if the style fitted with the main story. Martha worked with the pairs, asking questions, and challenging the children to justify their choices as illustrated below:

Teacher Martha to Jack and Hugo: Boys, have you shared your evidence with each other. Do you think you have both made realistic predictions?

Hugo: Why is he going so fast that he can't take a breath when he can?

Jack: That is not the point.

Teacher Martha: Why did you write that then?

Jack: Because they were going at a really fast speed, so for example I already know that when people are running, they can't catch a breath because they are going so fast, they have to stop and get their breath back, like in swimming when you go in the water you have to swim up and (breathes heavily)

Teacher Martha: So, Jack's used what he knows already. He knows that when you are moving very fast, sometimes it is hard to catch your breath. Have you ever been on a roller coaster?

Hugo: Oh yes!

Jack: What is a roller coaster?

Teacher Martha: A ride at a theme park.

Jack: I have never been.

Teacher Martha: Have you Hugo?

Hugo: Yes!

Teacher Martha: So, you sit there and when it starts going, what happens?

Hugo: It's hard to breathe.

Teacher Martha: So now you know why Jack has written, they were going so fast he couldn't catch his breath. That is what he is describing.

This discussion values and encourages the type of personal response to the text needed for 'high quality discussion' (DfE, 2013: 4). As the additional adult had been called out of the lesson, Martha went to work with that group who were identifying what they knew from the text and what they knew from their wider experience. In Martha's lessons, an environment is being established where dialogue between teacher and pupil and between pupils is nurtured (Rosenblatt, 1956). Returning to the working definition of reading comprehension, these observations share an understanding that reading comprehension is an active interaction between reader and text. They also illustrate how reading comprehension is both a product and a process of reading.

In June 2018, the third lesson observation was early on in a topic about rocks (lasting about 30 minutes). The main focus of the lesson was consolidating and developing vocabulary connected with the class topic. Martha explained the independent activities, which again followed the school's practices of communication, ICT, problem-solving, reflection and collaboration activities. The pupils were encouraged to gather and engage with information and new vocabulary on rocks through carrying out the independent tasks. Martha explained that the lesson was 'lots of research, lots of reading'. The focus group worked with Martha who explained that to be able to complete some work about the rock cycle they would need to understand some technical vocabulary. She showed them a list of words they would need

to understand the text. The children looked up the words they did not know and created a word bank using dictionaries and iPads. They were encouraged to define words they knew and supplement these using dictionaries (working out which meaning of a word is required for this context). In addition to vocabulary instruction, there were 'varied opportunities to practice, apply, and discuss their word knowledge in meaningful contexts' (Rupley et al., 2012: 299).

Summary: How do teachers teach reading comprehension?

Through the description from the case studies in this chapter, the findings are that reading comprehension teaching is varied and multi-layered. In considering what teachers do when teaching reading comprehension, these observations illustrate how reading comprehension is organised in different ways with some teachers utilizing guided reading groups (school B), some using whole class teaching (school C), and some using a mixture of guided groups and whole class teaching (school A; school D). This contrast can be understood in reference to previous discussions about the strengths (DfES, 2003a; Fountas and Pinnell, 2012) and drawbacks (Wall, 2014; Gaffney 2017) of focusing on a guided group for reading comprehension instruction.

Many of the lessons observed were found to use text extracts. These may help readers to build a wide base of background knowledge (Ofsted, 2022) or their use may be influenced by teachers' lack of knowledge about children's texts, particularly where literacy schemes are relied upon (Cremin et al., 2009). The updated reading framework (DfE, 2023) restates the expectation in the national curriculum (DfE, 2013) that opportunities are not restricted to extracts. In the lessons observed there were also examples of the class novel being used (Steve observation 2; Ellie observation 2; and Martha observation 1 and 2) which allows for a quality text to be explored in depth (Westbrook et al., 2019). A further possibility is using a text written or collated by the teacher. This was the case in Ellie's first lesson with the collated booklet of information about people in World War II, which linked directly with their topic work and had evolved directly out of the children's interests.

The observations indicated that teachers focused on questioning as their main teaching approach. In some lessons the questions were informed by the questions on the textbooks or worksheets (Sarah; Dave; Pete) but in others, questions were asked in relation to the specific learning outcomes of the group/class and in response to the ideas, answers, and questions of the pupils. There were examples of 'high-quality discussion' with pupils (DfE, 2013: 23) which sometimes contained instruction and explanation and sometimes allowed for cumulative and reciprocal responses (Steve; Lorraine; Liz; Asma; Ellie; Martha), both aspects of Alexander's (2008) dialogic approach to learning. There were indications in the

lessons observed that pupils 'getting the correct answer' was a concern (Sarah; Pete). It is not surprising that teachers were influenced by the discourse of high-stakes tests as this has been recognised in the literature. For example, schools experienced pressure (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2017) and the narrowing of the curriculum (Moss, 2017), so 'teachers view reading comprehension solely through the prism of the test demands' (Tennent, 2020: 482).

In the lessons observed the teachers drew on a range of teaching interactions with some instruction and explanation. There were opportunities to discuss with peers, to practise applying taught strategies, to develop vocabulary and to respond to the text silently. Generally, the lessons shared a sense of travelling through a text together with the teachers orientating the pupils to develop their understanding using a range of skills. The observations indicated that teachers focused on questioning as their main teaching approach. In some lessons the questions were informed by the questions on the textbooks or worksheets (Sarah; Dave; Pete) but in others, questions were asked in relation to the specific learning outcomes of the group/class and in response to the ideas, answers, and questions of the pupils. There were examples of 'high-quality discussion' with pupils (DfE, 2013: 23) which sometimes contained instruction and explanation and sometimes allowed for cumulative and reciprocal responses (Steve; Lorraine; Liz; Asma; Ellie; Martha), both aspects of Alexander's (2008) dialogic approach to learning.

A particular contrast was noted between observations of Steve and Dave who were both year 3 teachers in school A. Steve encouraged pupils to respond widely and freely in his questioning; there was time to think about wording and work out what they thought and to rehearse answers. The attention was on the meaning of the text. In contrast, the focus for Dave's questioning in the first lesson, seen in the first vignette, was on getting 'the correct answer'. Concentrating on the skills of answering questions by checking the text reinforced the idea of comprehension as getting the intended and right answer. Similarly, Sarah's lessons placed emphasis on getting the correct answers to comprehension questions which detracted from a focus on broader reading experiences. It may be that these teachers were influenced by the discourse of high-stakes tests which have been recognised in the literature as impacting on teaching decisions. For example, schools were found to have

experienced pressure (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2017) and a narrowing of the curriculum (Moss, 2017). This trend of pedagogical decisions being influenced by testing demands continues to be of concern with Tennent (2020: 482) concluding that 'teachers view reading comprehension solely through the prism of the test demands'.

With this in mind, what might be more surprising was the fact that the majority of lessons observed included some dynamic interaction with text where pupils were encouraged to actively interpret a text, such as asking their own questions and drawing upon a complexity of skills. After multiple readings of the observations, the data from reading comprehension teaching seemed concerned not just with a set of cognitive skills that could be broken down into parts, but also about teachers and pupils developing interactive learning opportunities with texts together. Teachers were not limited to supporting young readers to understand a text; this extended to pupils understanding themselves and the world in which they live, which corresponds with a fuller sociocultural view of reading, such as argued by Freire (1985a). In their teaching, as noted in some of the vignettes above, pedagogy as social practice (Street, 1984, Smith 2010) was enacted. For example, education occurring through intimate, flexible, organic processes where teachers and learners encounter each other in shared languages, shared spaces and shared contexts. In many examples of practices (Steve, Lorraine, Sakina, Asma, Ellie, Martha), the intention of influencing the environment through the ethos and value given to reading (Perkins, 2015) was evident.

These observations indicate that teachers are aware that children learn to comprehend successfully through a range of approaches, and they will continue to draw on a repertoire of approaches in their classroom practice. Perkins (2015) goes further and argues the teaching profession needs to be able to explain their pedagogical decisions and classroom practices and identify how these are supported by research. In the next chapter, the focus shifts to incorporate data from interviews, where the teachers have had the opportunity to communicate some of their thinking about their practices.

Chapter 6: Analysis 2: Thematic Analysis of Interviews and Observations

Introduction

In this second analysis chapter, the data from the interviews and observations are explored using thematic analysis and guided by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022). It aims to offer insights in relation to each of the research questions and the gaps in knowledge that these address. The three research questions remained central to informing the coding and 'keyness' of subsequent themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For the first research question, 'How do teachers teach reading comprehension?', understanding was gained from thematic analysis of the observed lessons supplemented by the semi-structured interviews. This builds on findings in chapter 5. For the second and third research questions 'How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?' and 'Why do they teach reading comprehension in this way?', the interviews were the focus and were interpreted using thematic analysis to bring better understanding to reading comprehension teaching practices.

This thematic approach aims to provide a 'concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell - within and across themes' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 93). As explained in the methodology chapter, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase guide to thematic analysis was used to structure the analytic process:

1. Data became familiar
2. Initial codes were generated
3. Themes were generated
4. Themes were reviewed
5. Themes were defined and refined
6. Themes were written up as a chapter

Although this knowledge generation was subjective, it was also situated through reflexivity (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The resulting themes and analytical connections contain an

integration of the views and ideas of the participants across the four school sites as interpreted by the researcher.

To assist with understanding the discussion, this table may be useful as a reminder of which teachers taught in which schools.

School A	School B	School C	School D
Steve	Sakina	Liz	Martha
Dave	Lorraine	Asma	Ellie
Val		Pete	
Sarah			

Table 12: Participants and their associated schools

It may be useful to note that throughout this chapter the following abbreviations are used:

RCo: reading coordinator

LEA consultant: Local Education Authority consultant

EMAS consultant: Ethnic Minority Achievement Service consultant (working with pupils with English as an additional language)

The themes are set out to respond directly to the three research questions. The identified themes are presented in Figure 5 below:

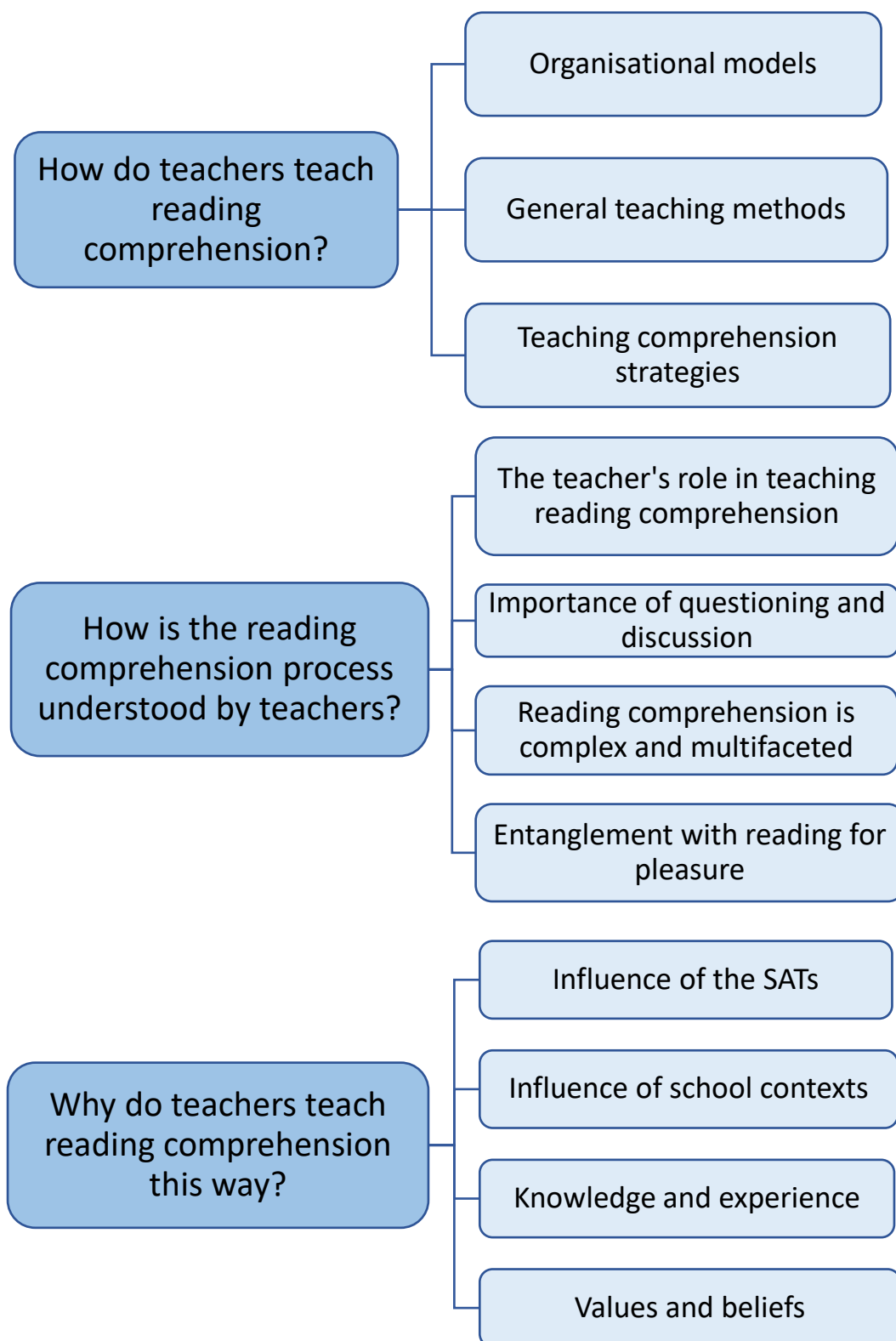


Figure 5: Themes for each research question

How do teachers teach reading comprehension?

In this section, three themes will be discussed that were derived from a structured review of the observation and interview data with this question focus. The nature of this research question meant the identified themes linked with it were broadly descriptive. Building on the description in the last chapter, these illustrative and semantic themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006) synthesised data across the four school settings. The themes identified were:

- organisational models
- general teaching models
- teaching comprehension strategies

Organisational models

This first theme that responds to the question ‘how do teachers teach reading comprehension?’ integrates ways that reading comprehension was organised within the eleven classrooms and four schools of this study. This establishes a concrete starting point for the thematic analysis that follows on from the discussion in the last chapter, creating a cohesive link between these two approaches to data analysis.

Each of the four settings utilised aspects of cross-curricular and topic work when teaching reading comprehension to make these experiences significant to pupils by linking with their wider learning. Yet the how and the when of reading comprehension, and the organisational models used were varied. School B had a ‘very set structure’ (Lorraine) of teaching reading comprehension through group guided reading lessons. School C had been using a similar guided reading approach with a carousel of independent activities but had recently changed to teaching reading comprehension each day to the whole class. Within this model, the pupils also did paired reading (Liz; Asma) which has been promoted as a way for pupils to experience fluent reading (Topping, 2014). School A were at the start of reviewing how reading comprehension was organised and taught using a mixture of guided group and whole class lessons. In contrast, school D integrated the teaching of reading into an English cycle (reading, grammar, and writing) within their wider topic. A key aspect of the overall model in school D was the children learning independently, where reading comprehension

learning was viewed as happening within the independent tasks in addition to within the teacher's focus group.

As identified in chapter 3, Durkin (1978) identified concerns with reading comprehension teaching that revolved around reading comprehension exercises where pupils had to answer questions which were marked and thereby assessed but where little direct teaching was happening. Val had taught for forty years and recognised that reading comprehension had developed over that time. She thought practices had moved away from comprehension exercises that largely focused on literal questions (also known as retrieval questions, where the answer can be found in the text). From her perspective, questions now involved more interaction with children, which is 'more tailored to the children's individual reading ability' (Val). However, the reading consultant (school B) raised a concern that practices were still influenced by comprehension exercises and not always focusing on developing teacher-pupil interaction around text.

It was evident that some participants were confident with the guided reading model (Sakina and Lorraine, school B). Like the concerns shared by teacher blog posts identified in chapter 3 (for example, Wilson, 2016; Kingsnorth, 2017), reservations were shared about the value of the independent group activities in the guided reading model (RCo school A; RCo school C). Val identified that planning for five separate groups was onerous which is a useful reminder that reading comprehension is just one of the many responsibilities a teacher has in the primary classroom. She pointed out that sticking with one guided group was no longer the general approach in the classroom as it had been during the Primary Strategy (DfES, 2003a) when guided reading had been introduced and so children found it unsettling if the teacher is not available to support them more broadly.

Some participants identified opportunities to teach reading comprehension beyond the comprehension focus lesson. There might be a reading focus in English lessons, for example, looking at a text to find key words (Val; Asma,) and teaching vocabulary (Dave; Sarah). There was the reading of longer texts to the class (often referred to as the 'class reader') and linked discussion with this (Steve; Val; Lorraine) alongside wider book talk (Steve; Sarah). Pete and Asma referred to opportunities to apply their comprehension independently, for

example, during ERIC (everyone reading in class) and the reading consultant (school B) mentioned opportunities from organised extracurricular activities such as book clubs. These examples identified the organisation of reading comprehension instruction as important and integrated into wider learning opportunities (DfE, 2013; DfE, 2023).

General teaching methods

The next theme about how reading comprehension is taught identified that the teachers applied their general teaching pedagogies to the teaching of reading comprehension. This theme was meaningful as it is not highlighted in reading comprehension theories but was found to be a significant aspect of teachers' everyday practices of teaching reading comprehension. Teachers drew attention to key content as in other lessons in the curriculum. Lorraine and Asma signposted this to the pupils by a walk-through of the text highlighting key content whilst linking with experience including prior learning. Liz used the four Ws (who, what, when, where) to help pupils find the most important elements of the text. Some teachers also drew attention to key learning to support pupils' progression, such as the process of picking out what is stated and what is implied to support inference (Lorraine) and changing your voice for expression when reading (Steve; Sakina; Liz).

Explanation was a widely used direct teaching approach in comprehension teaching. This included explanation about structural aspects of texts, for example, Lorraine explained how to use a contents page, Steve explained how noticing punctuation can help understand how something is being said and Asma explained how punctuation communicates details about the meaning. Teaching involved explanation about the reading comprehension process too, Ellie explained how understanding builds from different bits of information like bricks in a wall, Liz explained how visualisation supports learning and Steve and Sakina explained how inference involves looking for clues. There were many explanations linked with answering questions. Some were to lead children from misconceptions to a more productive route. It was explained by Sarah that the process of answering questions did not mean guessing the answer and by Val that they did not have to remember the text to answer the questions. Further examples of explanation around questioning included how and why we read between the lines to answer some questions (Steve; Lorraine), or that there can be more

than one answer for some questions (Martha) or that finding an answer might take time (Sarah).

Modelling was a widely used pedagogical tool when teaching reading comprehension. Dave and Sarah read aloud to pupils to demonstrate fluency and the Inference Training TA modelled slowing down if unsure of a word on first reading. Modelling was often used as a short intervention to demonstrate an aspect of reading such as Lorraine modelling how to use a contents page, or Steve modelling how to reread after noticing an error, or scanning for a key word to help answer a question (Steve; Sarah; Asma). Sometimes the teachers modelled a longer process, for example, summarising the main points so far (Lorraine; Sakina; Pete; Asma) or how to go about answering a question (Sarah; Sakina; Asma). Some modelling demonstrated the thinking behind developing understanding of a section of text, for example Ellie modelled the process of choices when answering a question and Lorraine modelled how inference is used to unravel further understanding. Saying out loud the steps of thinking (mentioned by Steve; Pete; RCo school C), referred to by Duke and Pearson (2002) as 'thinking aloud', was understood by Liz as serving to reveal aspects of the comprehension process for pupils. This links with metacognition and readers thinking about their own understanding which has been established as an important aspect of reading comprehension (Irwin, 1991; Afflerbach et al., 2013; Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 2021). Liz also thought it was important to model reading behaviours such as 'a love of reading' which echoes Cremin's (2020) argument that teachers have a responsibility to teach children how to become readers and develop their reader identities.

Further generic teaching methods used included explicit instruction; for example, instructing pupils to 'find evidence in the text' (Dave; Steve; Sarah). Sometimes this included drilling of routines like for Dave following the step-by-step process of reading the text, looking for key words, then answering the question. Sarah referred to 'coaching them how to answer questions properly' and supporting their steps to get a correct answer. There were instances of prompting to guide pupils in the desired direction. For example, to encourage pupils to self-monitor, Steve asked if there was 'anything you found tricky?' and Lorraine and Sakina asked pupils to think of some strategies to use if they got stuck with their reading. Feedback was given in response to individual reading, in areas such as

accuracy, fluency and prosody (Steve; Lorraine; Sakina). Val and Sarah also guided pupils in how to orientate the text and Steve guided pupils to the section of text that was most relevant to answer a question.

The pedagogical tool most widely used by teachers for teaching reading comprehension was questioning. This concurs with previous research (Parker and Hurry, 2007; Fisher, 2008; Concannon-Gibney and Murphy, 2012; Blything et al., 2019). Expanding on findings in the previous chapter, this study deepens understanding by illustrating how questioning was utilised in reading comprehension teaching. Sometimes teachers posed a few questions before a text was read to focus on an aspect of comprehension (Steve; Lorraine; Sakina). More typically questions were asked after a text had been read. Teachers identified a range of purposes for questions, some literal/retrieval questions (Sarah), some to predict (Sakina), some to clarify vocabulary (Asma; Liz), some to recap (Lorraine; Pete) and some to summarise (Lorraine). Liz referred to using contrasting 'question stems' and Ellie and Martha had experienced input from a staff meeting on utilising 'hot and cold questions' (Ellie) to encourage a range of question types. Questions were broadly referred to as literal or retrieval questions, inference questions and evaluative questions. Asma and Martha referred to the progression in questioning from pupils answering literal questions to being able to find evidence and answer inference questions. Supporting and justifying answers using evidence from the text was a key focus in questioning exchanges (Steve; Val; Pete; Sakina; Martha). To support this, Val said that she encouraged pupils to look for key words and sometimes to underline these.

Ellie and Liz talked about pre-planning questions and Steve spoke about inference questions needing careful planning. Ellie noted that sometimes questions would arise from children's responses and Liz referred to this as 'on the spot' questioning. Sarah and Pete chose to use questions from textbooks or other published resources but Steve, Liz and Asma chose to supplement these with additional questions that responded to pupils. Teachers in school B focussed predominately on oral questioning whilst some lessons observed in the other schools orientated around recording answers to questions. The reading coordinator in school C identified the importance of support offered to pupils when moving from oral answers one day to written answers on the following day. In some lessons there was

layered questioning which allowed for a range of responses and provided space where answers could be refined or elaborated on (Steve; Val; Liz; Martha). There were a few examples of cumulative questioning (an example of dialogic teaching from Alexander, 2008) where understanding builds (Steve; Lorraine).

Understanding of texts was further developed through discussion. Val referred to talking about the text together and Sarah encouraged pupils to share their thoughts. This suggested a more 'conversational format' (Phillips, 2013: 17) and encouraged opportunities for reciprocal talk (Alexander, 2008). Dave gave opportunities to debate ideas and Steve identified an acceptance of different ideas. Martha talked about pupils having permission to share their thinking whilst Lorraine and Sakina thought it was important to link questioning with pupils' experiences. Tentative language such as 'perhaps' was used by Val and Steve suggesting there could be alternative views or that more evidence for points were needed. Through skilful responses, some teachers demonstrated how to elaborate on an answer (Val; Asma; Liz), extend pupils' thinking (Martha), or review information to re-evaluate understanding (Steve). To support discussion of text, Lorraine and Liz encouraged pupils to use metalanguage such as features of a non-fiction text.

Teaching comprehension strategies

This final theme that responds to the question 'how do teachers teach reading comprehension?' is concerned with teaching comprehension strategies. This is meaningful as widespread use of strategies has been identified as dominant in reading comprehension practices (Smith et al., 2021) and can be illustrated by this data set. In addition to generic teaching pedagogies, an aspect of reading comprehension instruction is teaching reading strategies and opportunities to practise these (NICHD, 2000; EEF, 2021). The list of reading comprehension strategies synthesised by Warner (2013) and discussed in chapter 3 included: activating prior knowledge, prediction, questioning and clarifying, visualisation and imagination, summarising, drawing inferences, and monitoring understanding; these will be revisited in relation to the data collected.

Activating prior knowledge was utilised and recognised as an aspect of comprehension teaching by some participants who linked texts with experiences and wider understanding to support comprehension (Steve; Sarah; Lorraine; Sakina). Prediction was similarly encouraged as a strategy to support comprehension by some participants. This might be from information from the cover and blurb of a book (Sarah; Lorraine) or from recapping what is known from text so far (Martha). Steve and Liz suggested prediction was a useful way of testing out ideas about the text. Ellie and Martha had prediction as a focus of one of their lessons illustrating how pupils could justify their predictions using supporting evidence.

The next comprehension strategy from Warner (2013) is questioning which has been examined previously as a generic teaching approach. Additionally, as a strategy for reading comprehension where readers develop intentional and goal-orientated awareness (Afflerbach et al., 2008), questioning is concerned with readers asking themselves questions to support understanding of a text. In this data set, some readers were encouraged to ask questions about things they were unsure of or were puzzling (Sarah; Steve; Lorraine; Asma). Steve and Val viewed teachers asking questions before reading as supporting pupils towards noticing their comprehension as they read (rather than afterwards). Lorraine and Liz thought pupils could develop the strategy of questioning through experience of contrasting questions. Martha wanted to include questioning that encouraged pupils to think beyond the literal and Steve wanted pupils to develop knowledge of the steps for answering a question and to understand that there can be more than one answer to a question. Clarification as questioning the understanding of words and phrases was a further strategy encouraged by teachers (Steve; Sarah; Val; Pete; Asma; Liz; Ellie). (This is expanded upon in more detail in a later section on vocabulary.)

Visualisation was referred to by some participants as a strategy that assisted comprehension and text was sometimes discussed as creating an image for the reader. Lorraine encouraged pupils to talk about the image the author produces in the mind and Val asked, 'What image do you think he wants you to have in your head?'. In the Inference Training lesson, pupils were encouraged to visualise the text as they read (Inference Training TA) whilst Steve told readers they may need to put some clues together to get a detailed picture of what is happening in a text. This links with Woolley's (2014) argument

that visualisation helps readers make appropriate inferences through connection with prior knowledge and life experiences. In school C they drew simple drawings in their exercise books which represented a section of text showing details from the extract. Visualisation was part of their lesson structure which had been informed by reciprocal reading (Palincsar and Brown, 1984).

The structure for teaching reading comprehension in school C likewise involved a focus on teaching and practising summarisation. This practice model complements Oakhill et al.'s (2015) finding that successful readers can identify the important parts of the text and consequently omit the peripheral information. Being able to integrate the key parts of a text was observed in Pete's lesson which focussed on summarising each stanza of a poem. Liz talked about the importance of children knowing the steps of summarisation and being able to evaluate and comment on summaries. Martha utilised summary when recapping the text 'so far' and Val sometimes asked pupils to draw on their skill of skimming text to generate a summary. Teachers in school C had been developing their understanding of summarisation through staff discussions as they had recognised it as 'an incredibly difficult skill' (RCo school C).

The final strategy from Warner's (2013) list of reading strategies is monitoring understanding, identified as an important predictor of reading comprehension (Oakhill et al., 2003). This was evident in Sakina and Lorraine's lessons where pupils were encouraged, and over time expected, to reread when they were unsure of a section of text. Val reminded pupils to read to the end of the sentence to check the meaning of an unknown word. For the LEA consultant and Lorraine, monitoring understanding might involve pupils recording words they do not understand. In school C, part of their reading comprehension cycle was clarifying the meaning of words (Liz; Pete; Asma). For some participants, self-monitoring links with children asking themselves questions about the text (Ellie; Martha; Liz) which was mentioned earlier. Dave and Asma expressed that the overall aim of this strategy is for readers to check their understanding as they read and to take responsibility for their metacognition.

In addition to teaching reading strategies, building vocabulary was often a part of reading comprehension instruction, so that it 'expands and deepens over time' (Butler et al., 2010: 1). Readers having knowledge of word meaning is understood as significant for reading comprehension (Perfetti et al., 2005; Oakhill et al., 2015; Cain and Oakhill, 2018; DfE, 2023). Some teachers identified that teaching around vocabulary could link with grammar work (Steve; Sarah; Val; Liz). The RCo in school D thought it was an important element of reading comprehension as teaching focus words could include vocabulary that would support children's writing. Lorraine and Sakina might systematically explain a few words before a text was read, Steve might dwell on an unknown word and Asma might highlight it and talk about it. Pupils were often encouraged to ask about, clarify (school C) and discuss unknown vocabulary (Lorraine; Sakina; Asma; Liz). The process of making sense of an unknown word was referred to in the Inference Training lesson as a process called 'broken down and repair' (Inference Training TA). In some reading lessons, pupils were encouraged to read around a word and think about the context in which the word was being used (Sarah; Val; Asma; Martha); for example, 'melted into the shadows' was not a literal meaning (Steve). Sometimes children were asked to use print dictionaries and thesauruses to check meaning and build understanding of words (Steve; Sarah; Val) as well as online sources (Martha; Ellie) for this. The RCO in school A thought vocabulary might be broadened through a discussion about how to use a word in a different context. Asma sometimes encouraged pupils to visualise a picture of a new word linking with the strategy of visualisation.

How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?

The nature of this question meant a focus on how participants talked about their comprehension teaching practices. After analysing the data using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2022) in connection with this second research question, 'How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?', four main themes were identified:

- the teacher's role in teaching reading comprehension
- importance of questioning and discussion
- reading comprehension is complex and multifaceted
- entanglement with reading for pleasure

Each of these themes is discussed below.

The teacher's role in teaching reading comprehension

Amongst the participants there was a strong shared understanding that reading comprehension is important. Reading comprehension is in Martha's words, 'one of the most important things as they need reading for everything'. Liz viewed it as affecting every aspect of learning. Similarly, Steve thought it underpinned wider teaching and learning whereby pupils gained information and learnt new things. More broadly still, it was viewed as 'a life skill' by Dave and Ellie which according to Val 'opens up doors to knowledge'. Martha viewed reading comprehension as a purposeful activity that supports understanding and wider knowledge. For Steve, it could in turn sometimes get pupils interested in reading for pleasure. The LEA consultant thought that knowledge and understanding of texts such as the process of unpicking an author's intent supports writing. Some teachers expressed that writing in turn affirms reading comprehension (Steve; Val; Liz; Martha).

Because of the importance of reading comprehension, a responsibility for teaching and scaffolding reading comprehension was expressed. Martha thought that as adult readers, connections for reading comprehension 'just happen automatically'; 'we automatically infer and we understand it, whereas children don't necessarily do that'. The LEA consultant thought that comprehension can be gained 'through day-to-day living' whilst the reading consultant school B thought reading comprehension needs to be taught to meet the needs

of all readers. Liz thought that comprehension teaching builds on decoding and is complemented by grammar and punctuation teaching; skills such as responding to literal/retrieval and inference questions, and having metalanguage to talk about aspects of text, need to be part of reading comprehension instruction. The reading coordinator in school C thought reading comprehension skills are layered over time. Yet there were words of caution that mimic Durkin's (1978) concern that teachers might be assessing comprehension rather than teaching it, when the RCo from school C notes,

my experience has been that teachers have thought that they're teaching comprehension but in fact what they're doing is giving children a comprehension assessment to do.

Pete understood that teaching reading comprehension involves explicitly teaching the process that 'mimics what very confident readers do' so that it becomes a habit. Dave, Steve, and Sarah noted that reading skills need to be repeatedly used and practised to lead to understanding. Key skills that need to be taught for reading comprehension according to Steve were literal thinking, deductive thinking, and inferential thinking alongside sifting through and interpreting text. Inference is identified as a particular focus for readers in years 3 and 4 (aged 8 and 9) in the national curriculum (DfE, 2013). Inference was recognised by Steve as a key skill, but Liz and Sakina acknowledged that they found it challenging to teach. Steve and Dave likened inference to hunting for clues like a detective. The process of inference was understood by Martha as hard to break down, although it came to some pupils naturally when they drew on their knowledge and experience. As the Inference Training TA explained, knowing you need to 'read between the lines' does not mean that you know what these steps look like; thus, successful inference needs a toolbox of skills which inter-relate including rich language.

The importance of teaching vocabulary for comprehension is well documented (Butler et al., 2010; Oakhill et al., 2015; DfE, 2023). This was another key aspect of reading comprehension understood by the participants. The EAL coordinator (school C) thought developing vocabulary supports competence in understanding by appreciating the gist of a

text in addition to grasping the meaning of specialist vocabulary. Although it can be difficult to separate reading from vocabulary, the LEA consultant thought 'it needs teaching discretely' where readers have weak vocabulary. Asma thought looking at vocabulary in more depth is a slow process to allow pupils to linger on the meaning of text, 'it's not just a quick, easy answer, they've got to really think about it'.

The role of the reader, the teacher, and the text, as understood by the teacher, is of significance to reading comprehension interactions. The view of reading comprehension discussed in chapter 2 was a cognitive process in which the reader is actively interacting with the text to find meaning; this idea of the reader taking an active role in comprehension was evident in some of the teachers' views. Dave thought reading comprehension involved readers reading carefully, for Val it was working out the meaning and for Asma checking for understanding. Sakina thought the reader's role is to 'read for meaning' and to look beyond a literal understanding. For Lorraine and Sakina that involves identifying the purpose of texts and for Steve and Asma thinking with connection to the text. For the Inference Training TA that could mean working at making sense of the text. Sarah expected readers in school to engage with the teaching and take responsibility for pace and effort. Over time, Liz's pupils were expected to reason and think about text independently, to 'ask appropriate questions about the text', develop their own strategies for understanding and enjoy reading. For Ellie, the pinnacle of the role of the pupils as readers is how they use their engagement with different texts 'to build on their understanding'.

The role of the teacher in reading comprehension was understood as having some general features such as planning the focus that supports progression (Steve), scaffolding teaching (Pete) and assessing next steps (Martha). More specific to reading comprehension, the teacher's role was understood as choosing a suitable (Steve), engaging (Liz) or age-appropriate text (Sarah). Broadly, teachers set out:

to equip them with the skills that they need in order to have a better understanding of the text in depth (Steve).

Pete thought the teacher's role was to teach strategies, Liz included asking a range of questions and Lorraine included encouraging inferences. Sarah described the teacher as having 'an enabling role'. Similarly, Sakina talked about the teacher supporting pupils 'on their journey to becoming an independent reader'. The teacher was seen to facilitate the comprehension process (Liz; Ellie; Martha) through skilled questioning and by helping pupils to make connections and links (Steve; Martha; Asma). The reading consultant (school B) thought a teacher's role was to 'listen to responses and lift the quality of responses' and 'keep trying to go deeper' to get what Asma described as 'more developed answers'. In addition, Val thought teachers have a role in 'bringing the book to life' for the pupils.

The role of the text in reading comprehension was given its place by the purpose understood by teacher and pupils. There were some brief references to the role of the text such as supporting the learning objective (RCo school A), linking with topics or the wider curriculum (LEA consultant) and containing some new vocabulary (Asma). In addition, the LEA consultant thought the breadth of the texts was important and the reading coordinator (school C) noted that challenging texts were needed for 'more able readers'. Texts used in reading comprehension lessons needed to be appealing (Liz) or relevant (Asma), as they can influence the imagination, subject knowledge, and social and emotional development of the reader (Ellie). Ideally, Liz thought readers needed opportunities to compare and contrast texts, have experiences of different genres, and be able to choose some texts themselves.

Importance of questioning and discussion

The next theme that informs how teachers understand reading comprehension is the importance of questioning and discussion. Previously, these have been considered in relation to how reading comprehension is taught, such as varied questions. This section identifies how the significance of questioning and discussion were understood by teachers. First, questioning will be deliberated. The LEA consultant identified questioning as 'crucial' to reading comprehension, for example, questioning could be used to guide young readers to respond and reflect on a text. They understood the purpose of questioning as supporting pupils' progress in reading, assisting them in making connections and so linked with what they needed to learn next.

Dave and Sarah recognised that comprehension was developed through questioning. Lorraine thought questioning helped young readers to focus on key information. It could be inferred that for successful reading comprehension teaching, the teacher needs to develop their questioning skills. Steve observed that questions could encourage pupils to think a little more widely, but not too widely as there is a balance needed so that pupils do not lose sight of key parts of text. Val noted that broad open questions can work well as they encourage a range of responses. For Ellie, pupils should experience different formats of question from contrasting perspectives and be encouraged to give an extended response whilst Sarah thought questioning encouraged self-monitoring of comprehension and supported assessment. However, there also needs to be some teaching and not just questioning for assessment, as the LEA consultant warned there is a danger of 'just assessing, assessing, assessing, rather than teaching'. This is reminiscent of Biddulph's (2002) findings that teachers confused assessment of reading comprehension with direct teaching.

The LEA consultant appreciated that over time readers need to develop their knowledge of how to answer questions and be taught the skills needed to answer questions. To support this, pupils benefit from the answering of questions being modelled for them. Dave and Pete thought that answering questions involved readers giving evidence for answers. Lorraine wanted pupils to learn to justify their answers, Steve wanted the pupils to become skilled at using the text to verify answers, and Val wanted pupils to avoid guessing from memory. To answer many questions, the reader draws on evidence from the text and Asma found that questions often follow the pattern of 'ask them why? how do you know? show me the text'. There are strategies the pupils can apply to answer questions such as carefully looking at the text (Dave), orientating around the text, and using skimming and scanning to assist (Sarah). Pupils will need to develop knowledge of the language of questions, for instance, 'be really familiar with how a question is asked' (Sarah), understand the phrasing used (EAL coordinator school C), and understand what the question is asking of the reader (Asma).

More nuanced understanding of questioning was also raised. In comprehension, Steve thought it is not always as straightforward as a question having a right or wrong answer and for the reading consultant (school B) not simply about the pupils getting the right answer. Questioning did not have to be initiated by the teachers. According to the reading consultant in school B, a good indication of active comprehension was pupils asking their own questions. This was perceived as a sign of 'true comprehension' (Inference Training TA). At times, Dave and Val talked about the questioning interaction of reading comprehension as if this was itself reading comprehension rather than an aspect of the practice around reading comprehension. This may link back to the practice of comprehension exercises that revolved around questions with written answers recorded and had become embedded into some practices (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016; Perkins, 2015).

Sarah appreciated that a teacher needs to be 'clever at questioning' to facilitate 'a well-structured conversation' and Dave referred to conversational work. Steve thought this could occur before or after reading a text, Asma thought it developed from modelled interactions with teachers to discussion in pairs and Ellie thought this could build to debates between peers. Ultimately, Dave wanted the children to be able to manage the discussion around a text as discussion allowed pupils a chance to reflect on their understanding. Steve and Lorraine thought it was an opportunity to encourage pupils' opinions and the reading consultant (school B) thought it could facilitate a viewpoint. Lorraine thought the expectation of discussion about a text encouraged children to think about the content of their reading so they can join in the discussion. Moving away from question and answer to more of a conversation or discussion was suggested as the ultimate goal of teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions around a text. This complements Reedy's (2011) findings that dialogic talk was identified as a key factor in successful guided reading.

Lorraine understood that 'without all that discussion then the comprehension isn't going to be there'. Val noted that discussion about text could involve responding to opportunities in the text and the reading coordinator (school B) referred to 'asking questions in the moment'. Some teachers encouraged pupils to talk about their understanding. Through discussion, Liz thought they were guided to a fuller understanding and Steve thought this was better than being told the meaning. Asma noted that discussion was understood as an

important step before recording answers as pupils could gain a deeper understanding before they had to write down their answers. Steve thought it encouraged active meaning making and Martha thought pupils could add to each other's points to build comprehension. Duke et al. (2011) argued that class discussion was effective as readers appreciated that comprehension was active and collaborative. Many participants thought the teacher has a role in structuring discussion. The Inference Training TA spoke of how it helps pupils with 'reading between the lines and coming up with scenarios of what it could be', then linking this to the text. Through discussion, Asma thought pupils can build their metacognition as they talk about how they got their answers; the RCo (school C) thought it helped them decide which answer is the best one. Asma appreciated that opportunities for discussion gave pupils 'lots of ideas' and helped them build more detailed answers so that they could answer a question independently and use this in their writing discussion helped pupils build more detailed answers. The EAL coordinator (school C) thought that discussion about texts supported wider language development by developing 'competence at speaking and listening and understanding'.

For the teacher, discussion gave insight to pupils' comprehension. Steve explained that discussion helped him see their thought processes and how they were linking ideas to gain meaning. Lorraine enjoyed the unpredictability of discussion and using her reflexive skills by 'responding on the spot'. Managing discussion of texts was understood as having some challenges for teachers. One reading coordinator (school A) thought it can be difficult to keep a track of what you have covered in open discussions and the LEA consultant noted that discussion may move away from objectives and lack focus. The success of using discussion can be influenced by children's confidence in speaking (Ellie) and it can be a challenge to get quieter children involved (Sakina). Also, Pete noted that discussion was not always successful as a steppingstone between oral and written answers as some children forget even after verbalising their answers.

Reading comprehension is complex and multifaceted

Liz explained that reading comprehension in broad terms is being 'able to read something and understand it'. To add to this, reading comprehension was identified by Sakina as the

process of 'reading for meaning' which Martha explained involves readers in 'making sense of what they've read by relating to other texts and also to their own experience'. For Val reading comprehension involves questioning meaning and checking understanding. Success in reading comprehension was understood by Martha in tune with Rose's simple view (2006) as building on skills in language comprehension and decoding text. Where decoding is weak this affects reading comprehension, as reading can become 'very broken' and 'takes longer' which can in turn affect enjoyment of a text (Martha). As argued by Stuart and Stainthorp (2016) and Smith et al. (2021), reading comprehension was understood by the LEA consultant to be informed by wider knowledge:

Comprehension is understanding of what you've read but it's understanding to the degree of what the child can bring to the table and what knowledge they've got and what skills they've got so that the responses are variable (LEA consultant).

Martha noted for reading comprehension 'you have to use your full understanding of the world around you and what you've experienced and what you've seen before'.

In chapter 2, it was argued that reading comprehension is a complex and multifaceted process (Perfetti et al., 2005; Oakhill et al., 2015; Elleman and Oslund, 2019). These aspects of reading comprehension were also evident in the data and make up the third theme in response to how reading comprehension is understood by teachers. The perspectives of the participants illustrate how teaching reading comprehension takes some unravelling and how this complexity is experienced in practices. Steve referred to teaching reading comprehension as 'a complicated thing' which according to Val was 'tricky to teach'. Ellie noted that reading comprehension is not something that is instant but 'takes time and takes an exposure to a range of things'.

Some responses to the complexity of teaching reading comprehension were emotive such as the reading coordinator in school A, who shared that 'reading comprehension is so complicated, it's almost scary'. The reading consultant (school B) understood reading comprehension as 'a mystery to a lot of children and a lot of teachers probably'. They explained that part of its complexity is that 'you can teach for comprehension but really you

can't make someone have comprehension' (reading consultant school B). Another part of its complexity, as argued by Meixner et al. (2018), is the multiple aspects involved in reading comprehension (RCo school C) and that this 'layered' nature (RCo school B) is 'so wide' (RCo school A). This leads on to the next aspect regarding the multifaceted nature of comprehension.

According to Liz, for successful comprehension, the reader needs to combine a range of actions and strategies. Lorraine explained that some of the complex layers which lead to children's comprehension include:

relating the text to personal experiences, understanding of new vocabulary, being able to understand what the author is communicating, inference, personal opinion, and understanding the structure of the text.

Pete identified the process of reading comprehension as being 'quite intangible'. Despite this, some of the participants attempted to explain their understanding of reading comprehension by untangling its varied characteristics. Reading comprehension was identified by Martha as 'a combination of different skills' that Liz thought needed repetition. In the first instance, children need to be able to decode and read the literal text to be able to comprehend text independently (Dave; Steve; Sarah; Ellie). As argued by Ofsted (2022), the reading consultant in school B thought without fluent, accurate reading supported by efficient decoding, comprehension would be a struggle. Dave noted that to comprehend text a reader needs to think about the meaning of words. The LEA consultant identified literal comprehension as the 'bedrock' of comprehension that preceded other aspects such as inference or evaluation.

For successful comprehension, Val thought a reader needs to understand the key content in a text. To support this, in Inference Training sessions, pupils were supported to establish the gist of the text (Inference Training TA). At the same time, Martha identified that detail is important for building understanding. A reader having the reading stamina to be able to read longer texts assists comprehension (Pete; Asma; Liz). For Steve reading comprehension involves thinking about the whole text and linking ideas which for the EAL coordinator

(school C) might involve ‘integrating sources of information to interpret the text’. Steve considered it can involve some puzzling through where a reader may need to work out possibilities of meaning. The Inference Training TA explained, ‘sometimes you have to guess and work it out and get your own feel for it’. In addition, gaining understanding involves monitoring understanding (Steve; Liz; Sarah). But as Lorraine noted because comprehension is fluid it differs between people. Steve recognised the aim was for children to comprehend as they read but noted that children tend to focus on comprehension after reading, partly because that is what the discussion and questioning suggests.

Entanglement with reading for pleasure

The final theme linked with the question ‘how do teachers understand reading comprehension?’ is the entanglement of reading for pleasure. Kirsch et al. (2002: 121) referred to the ‘entangled relationship’ between ‘cognition and motivation, proficiency and engagement in reading’. Following on from the complex nature of reading comprehension above, this theme focuses on the affective factor of reading for pleasure and how this is understood by teachers as integral to reading comprehension practices.

As identified in chapter 3, the aim of reading for pleasure is influential in policy and practice (DfE, 2013; DfE, 2023). Understanding of reading has expanded beyond a focus on cognitive characteristics to also include motivational and behavioural characteristics (OECD, 2019). The work of Cremin et al. (2009) has been significant in recognising how teachers’ attitudes to reading can affect their pupils’ attitudes. It is an example of research that combined with the empirical data to inform analysis in this study through the process of abductive inference. Cremin et al. (2009) noted the importance of teachers’ knowledge of children’s literature but also that support is needed for them to meet these aims and thereby support pupils’ reading for pleasure. Subsequently the importance of a coherent reading for pleasure pedagogy was established in the ‘Teachers as Readers’ project (Cremin et al., 2014).

Reading for pleasure has become a constituent aspect of the reading experience in English schools. According to the LEA consultant, reading is taught better because of this

consideration. The relationship between reading for pleasure and reading comprehension was identified as important by Sakina and imperative by Liz. Steve considered that reading comprehension was supported by a general ethos where children 'enjoy and understand what they are reading'. Martha understood comprehension as affecting enjoyment and Liz raised the question 'how can it be enjoyable to read something and not comprehend what is going on?'. In agreement with Shanahan (2019), Ellie thought enjoyment influences understanding as the reader becomes more motivated and engaged with the text. A significant relationship was recognised by the participants between reading comprehension and reading for pleasure. For example, as expressed by the RCo at school A, reading for pleasure means that 'comprehension comes through the love of the text, and the love of words and the love of reading'.

Some teachers expressed that they want their pupils to enjoy reading (Sarah; Liz; Steve). Sakina in school B agreed that reading for pleasure was an important part of the reading experiences of pupils. She shared this value with her pupils as part of their reading routines, which included cultivating pupils' opportunities to read their own choice of texts independently and regularly. The RCo (school A) spoke passionately about its importance, such as wanting the children to be 'wrapped up' and 'soaked in the text'.

In school C, Liz shared her enthusiasm of reading, 'I have a love for reading; my class definitely have a love for reading'. Liz thought her commitment to reading would make pupils' reading experiences more enjoyable. An important value for her was to affect her pupils' relationship with reading; this resonates with Cremin's (2020) argument that teachers can influence pupils' identities as readers and the recent identification of 'teacher as influencer' in the reading framework (DfE, 2023). Liz noted the significance of preventing a barrier to reading developing for her pupils. Similarly, the reading coordinator from school D was 'an avid reader' and argued that it was possible for all pupils to read for pleasure:

I believe that there is a book for every child and that if they find that book, they will enjoy reading for pleasure.

In contrast, Asma in school C was less confident about affecting pupils' enjoyment of reading. Although she recognised reading for pleasure as being important, Asma thought this was something that only a small minority of pupils in her class had experienced. For her it was more complex than encouraging reading for pleasure in the classroom as the pupils' relationship with reading was also affected by other factors such as lack of reading models at home, weaker reading skills, and stamina. Nevertheless, as Perkins argues (2015), schools and teachers understood they were expected to influence children's reading behaviours. For example, school D were encouraging children to read with a reading challenge; they found having a 'reading dog' incentivised some children to read (Martha). The aspiration expressed by the RCo (School D) was that pupils develop reading as a hobby and become inspired to read. The LEA consultant thought that teachers need to be trained in promoting reading for pleasure to be able to support it well. Her understanding was that teachers being enthusiastic readers made a difference. Whilst the teachers all recognised the importance of reading comprehension, that does not assume an interest in reading themselves or an interest in children's literature. Steve thought it was preferable that teachers are themselves engaged in reading, whilst Dave in school A said that he did not enjoy reading.

Martha in school D explained that she thought the relationship between reading for pleasure and teaching reading comprehension was 'tricky'. She wondered how much teachers can affect pupils' enjoyment of reading. Martha identified an in-built tension which influenced her practices: whilst you need to be able to understand what you read to enjoy reading; the teaching of reading comprehension skills may detract from the enjoyment of reading for some pupils. She explained that,

I think you need to be able to enjoy reading but I suppose the process of actually teaching them those skills might be the thing that steers them away from the book because they're not being allowed to just read.

The participants had a range of considerations about how they might influence reading for pleasure. Sarah appreciated that teachers and pupils reading texts aloud can bring enjoyment although Dave acknowledged that finding time to read a class novel can be

challenging. Steve noted the relevance of the text might affect pupils' engagement. Liz thought that making connections with real life is important, but that enjoyment of reading can likewise come 'out of it not being relatable to real life' such as through adventure stories. Sakina appreciated that reading for pleasure is underpinned by competent reading:

They can't enjoy what they're reading or find the humour in it or be excited if they're actually struggling to read it.

The reading consultant (school B) identified that reading for pleasure can be understood as a 'a bit of a woolly term' because 'you don't have to enjoy it all the time'. The entanglement of reading for pleasure and reading comprehension is complicated by the dual task of teachers to develop reading comprehension and develop a culture of reading for pleasure. These can act divergently; Val had observed that readers can 'lose the enjoyment through overanalysing' and the RCo (school A) had noted a possible tension between 'interrogating the text' and enjoying the text. Martha explores the contradictory nature of comprehension teaching and reading for pleasure identifying that the process of teaching them skills for comprehension might detract from any experience of enjoyment:

But teaching it and breaking down those skills and I don't want to say forcing it, but you almost are, aren't you? And making children reflect on everything and evaluate what they've read and that might take away the pleasure (Martha).

A further point noted by Asma is that a focus on enjoyment of reading does not always encourage accuracy of reading. She explained that when pupils read for pleasure 'they just want to finish' the book 'and move on' and maybe miss out on some connections. In addition, the reliance on using text extracts to teach and practise reading comprehension skills and strategies could be seen to limit pupils' experiences of whole texts. The RCo in school A was concerned that 'we seem to have lost the love of books somewhere along the line when we are reading extracts'. In addition, Val thought that the pupils engaged more fully with a longer text and that it helped them to develop perseverance with their reading.

Overall, these complexities suggest there is an ongoing negotiated balance between the varying needs of the developing reader. The next section turns to why teachers teach reading comprehension in the ways that they do.

Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?

This section is focussed on the above research question. In chapter 2 the wider literature about reading comprehension theories, policies and advice contextualised this question. This discussion considers the influences on teachers' reading comprehension practices drawing on the interviews conducted. After reviewing the data guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2022) thematic analysis, for the question focus, 'why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?' four themes were identified and are discussed below:

- influence of the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs)
- influence of school contexts
- knowledge and experience
- values and beliefs

Influence of the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs)

In examining why teachers teach reading comprehension as they do, the first theme to discuss is the influence of SATs. It is unsurprising that guidance from the national curriculum (DfE, 2013), such as age-related expectations, was identified by some participants as influencing practice decisions (Steve; Sarah; Val; Martha). The national curriculum outcomes for reading comprehension in key stage 2 SATs are itemised in the content domains in the reading test framework (STA, 2015). These in turn were used by some participants for planning (Liz; Ellie; Asma; RCo school D). The RCo in school D referred to them as the 'set of skills' that needed to be taught with successful achievement in the reading comprehension SATs as an endpoint. Even whilst Liz recognised that understanding of text was the ultimate aim, she acknowledged that 'the test is definitely a really big part of it'. The reading consultant in school B explained that the tests shaped how comprehension was perceived:

The testing side of it is a huge pressure and I think that gives an image of what comprehension is.... it does influence the teachers' perception of what comprehension is.

Yet at the same time Ellie recognised that there is a difference between comprehension questions on a SATs paper and 'actually comprehending text' where a depth of understanding occurs over 'a period of time'.

Whilst Pete noted the impact of SATs may be experienced more in the key year groups of year 2 and year 6, the impact was still experienced in the participant classrooms of year 3 and year 4. The emphasis in the tests influenced the focus of comprehension lessons, which echoes the concerns of Williams (2021). For example, the reading coordinators in school C and D had noted that vocabulary had become more important in the revised SATs, and this led to an increased focus of teaching vocabulary and word meaning. Asma and the RCo (school D) commented that the main types of questions in SATs had been identified as inference and literal so these had become the focus of teaching. Liz thought that teachers should aim to model 'SATs style questions', although Asma found that in longer texts (such as novels) 'it's sometimes hard to find questions that are similar to exam style questions'. In contrast, Liz praised the Cracking Comprehension scheme questions as 'the sentence stems are quite similar to the ones that they use in the SATs'.

The reading coordinator (school A) recognised that some aspects of the tests such as circling the correct number or responding with the correct number of answers 'aren't really comprehension'. However, as success in reading comprehension is judged by SATs outcome, as Tennent suggested (2021), this still influenced teaching. For example, Liz acknowledged that pupils need to be able to successfully answer questions in a test and to be able to do this, Sakina thought children needed experience of the tests. Steve acknowledged that the structure and layout in tests can seem 'quite alien' which could have an impact on his pupils' confidence and success; whilst this logically suggested more test practice, this did not 'feel right' to him. He identified a 'dilemma between testing and the enjoyment of getting into books' (Steve) which is an example of the impact of performativity (Ball, 2010). From Steve's perspective, a teacher could find out more about their pupils' understanding through discussion than through tests which similarly reinforced unhelpful ideas about reading comprehension, such as there are correct answers, and that comprehension happens after reading. Another drawback of the SATs type assessment of reading comprehension mentioned by Lorraine was that the written answers required can be

overwhelming for some children. Moreover, tests can have long texts that some children struggle to read and orientate within (Lorraine). As a response to this, the RCo in school C noted that teachers there had undertaken a focus on pupils building reading stamina.

Influence of school contexts

A further influence on reading comprehension practices were the school contexts, including the expectations of practice associated with the schools. These were evident in ideas that had become embedded in settings, for example from reading programmes such as Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993) in school B and school C. Another model referred to in school A and school C was reciprocal reading (Palincsar and Brown, 1984). Questioning was identified by Martha and Sarah as being influenced by Bloom's taxonomy and Blank et al.'s (1978) four levels of questioning, and resources such as questioning dice referred to by Sarah. DIAL (deductive, inferential, authorial and literal) was an acronym used by Steve and Val to inform and structure a range of questioning. Training and discussion from staff meetings and training days were noted by Martha and the RCo (school D) as informing how teachers understood reading comprehension. As a follow-up to a course about using reading journals more thoroughly and systematically with the LEA consultant, Val in school A was hoping these practices would become integrated into their reviewed school approach. Equally, reading comprehension instruction could be influenced by a lack of guidance in a context, for example Sarah wanted to be mentored to develop her reading comprehension teaching.

The specific resources of the participants' schools affected why teachers taught reading comprehension as they did. For example, the texts that were accessible to the teachers influenced their reading comprehension lessons. Whilst schools may be expected to ensure access to engaging texts (DfE, 2023), lack of materials was identified by the LEA consultant as a restriction on reading comprehension instruction. Sarah and Val noted it was sometimes difficult to find a suitable text and for Val it could be a problem finding a set of six books for a guided group. Some schools had reading comprehension schemes (examples from participant schools included 'Reading Explorers' and 'Cracking Comprehension'). These included differentiated texts with teacher notes and questions, which the teacher might add to (Steve; Asma; Liz) but for Val and the LEA consultant these were not considered

interesting enough to use all of the time. Other resources that had restrictive influences on how reading comprehension was taught was lack of TA support mentioned by Val and Sarah, the challenge of time within wider demands of the curriculum (Steve; Val; Asma) and Dave noted the challenge of finding suitable spaces for text discussion.

A major contextual influence on decisions about reading comprehension practice was pupils' language. Multilingual pupils identified by the teachers as EAL, were understood to have 'limited English' so they needed 'exposure to vocabulary' (Liz) alongside skills to look at text around unknown vocabulary so they could build their independent reading skills. It was appreciated by the EAL coordinator (school C) that some children were literate in their first language and that 'a sound grounding in their first language helps their English language development'. But Liz observed that language could act as a barrier to comprehension and Asma recognised that they needed to be mindful of not assuming that pupils understood the language of texts. As argued by Stuart and Stainthorp (2016), vocabulary is significant for comprehension; this was understood by participants and influenced their practices. 'Language deprivation' was identified as the 'biggest school challenge' in school B (reading consultant) resulting in teachers planning 'rich language opportunities' (RCo school B) which supported vocabulary instruction (Butler et al., 2010). School A recognised a 'paucity of language' which meant that teachers were 'filling in gaps' (RCo school A). To support vocabulary development, Sakina and Asma chose texts that linked with specific topics. Similarly, the RCo in school A encouraged linking texts with topics as these had 'background markers' which made texts more accessible.

Another significant contextual influence on why teachers taught reading comprehension as they did was the lack of experiences their pupils had (mentioned by Liz; Sarah; Asma; Val; Steve; Lorraine; Sakina). Experiences were recognised by participants as impacting on background knowledge which in turn impacted on understanding texts. Background knowledge has been identified as affecting comprehension success (Willingham 2006; Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016; Smith et al, 2021). School C demonstrated their understanding of this by aiming to broaden experiences, for example through planned trips with linked opportunities to increase vocabulary (RCo school C). Lack of experiences and language deprivation were understood as being more likely for pupils who came from lower socio-

economic backgrounds. This links with Quigley's (2018) findings that 'word poverty' was more likely to affect pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Accordingly, Liz argued that pupils who were not from disadvantaged areas would not need as much time and dedication in teaching reading comprehension.

A further contextual factor that was understood to influence reading comprehension practices was the involvement of parents. Parents reading to and supporting their child's reading has been widely encouraged (DfE, 2022a; DfE 2023). Liz had identified that those children whose parents supported them at home with reading tended to be the stronger readers but for others, 'home influence is a really big barrier'. Pete understood that children practising their reading at home made a difference and Sakina identified that those that did not read at home made slower progress. The RCo (school B) acknowledged that some children had little experience of handling books or texts being read to them before they started at school therefore, a focus in school B was to maximise opportunities for text experience at school, referred to as increasing 'reading miles' (reading consultant). The RCo (school A) noted that some pupils lacked parental reading role models whilst Liz commented that some parents at their school could not read in English. A further complication raised by the LEA consultant was that parents were unsure how to support comprehension and what to ask. Similarly, the RCo (school A) identified that parents were more focussed on decoding which is not surprising given the dominance of phonics in reading discourse (Wyse and Bradbury, 2022). According to Sarah, this meant that parents listened to their children read in 'a very passive way' and were not asking questions to develop comprehension but focussing on accuracy of word reading. To counter this, Liz in school C actively encouraged parents not just to hear their child read but to ask questions about the text.

Knowledge and experience

When participants spoke about their reading comprehension teaching, one influence was the knowledge they had about teaching reading comprehension and the experiences they had in trying out different practices and establishing what functioned well. The RCo in school A explained, 'teaching comprehension is more than understanding a piece of text': readers also need to relate to a text, and thus their knowledge and experience had informed

the goal 'to teach reading comprehension in a context that is meaningful'. Val explained that her teaching of reading comprehension came about, 'through experience and knowing what works'. This suggests a reflexivity where evaluations are made, and practices adjusted and developed over time.

When knowledge and experience were built on collaboratively, there was confidence about the direction of practices. In school B, their knowledge and experience of developing guided reading in their setting had influenced their practices. They aimed for 'a research-based approach around comprehension' (RCo) and recognised there was always more to be developed. For example, at the time of the interviews they were looking at the link between oracy and inference and how this might develop their reading comprehension instruction (RCo). In school D, their approach to teaching the curriculum had been developed and adjusted utilising knowledge and experience. Martha explained how the influence from the school model was ongoing and thus continued to influence any modifications to their reading comprehension instruction. Their approach emphasised metacognition. They explained how they encouraged children to become aware of higher-order thinking skills in reading, 'so they understand what the more difficult skills are and what it is to be a more established reader' (RCo school D).

Experience and knowledge about reading comprehension influenced acknowledgement of limitations in practices and thinking behind practices. According to Borg (2006), this thinking is central to understanding teaching. Steve thought that reading comprehension had 'lots of barriers', whilst Sarah was concerned that pupils were not absorbing their reading and some pupils were challenging to teach due to their lack of attention and engagement. Sarah observed that independent work using the group model could be dull and was not always seen as very productive. According to Liz, these were some of the reasons why school C changed to a whole class approach. However, the RCo (school C) recognised that some teachers in the school may lack awareness of why differing elements of the school's sequence were included and their teaching may include remnants of previous approaches. This is redolent of Concannon-Gibney and Murphy's recognition of 'an enduring reading pedagogy' (2012: 445). School C recognised that some fine tuning needed to be developed

between having a consistent school approach and adapting in response to a particular class or text (RCo school C).

A lack of knowledge about reading comprehension and how to teach it might account for why reading comprehension is taught in a certain way. The LEA consultant who had wide experience of reading teaching in different schools argued that guided reading can be a good opportunity, but it can be a waste of time against the goal of reading comprehension 'if the teacher's disinterested, they're not prepared, and it's not pitched at the right level'. They explained that some reading comprehension practices were likened to teachers 'going through the motions'. They had experienced some teachers not recognising the purpose and value of guided reading and adversely influenced by the hard work and effort involved. This echoes Fisher's (2008) findings about the confusion about how to implement guided reading in practice. According to the LEA consultant, some teachers needed a 'mindset change' as guided reading was often misunderstood, for example, using a 'round robin' approach or a lack of systems and processes. They argued that an attitude shift was needed to understand guided reading as 'a vehicle for teaching children to read' so that teachers had a greater understanding of reading as a journey.

Whilst there may be a need to raise subject knowledge for some teachers, the reading consultant in school B recognised there was a thirst for improved skills, even if there 'was a long way to go' in terms of outcomes. Sarah demonstrated a desire to improve her practice alongside her frustration about lack of guidance when she exclaimed 'tell me what to do!'. Even where schools had developed their reading comprehension models, there might still be limitations, for example, Liz realised that some teachers might follow the school model without knowing why and might be lacking in professional knowledge. This echoes recommendations that developing practices needs to be managed effectively (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1993; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996). Some teachers used textbooks as a guide for questioning but the knowledge that informs their use is of significance. The LEA consultant was wary that some teachers might begin to rely on these 'as a crutch' which could lead to lack of awareness and fewer skills in their teaching, a concern shared by Fitz and Nikolaidis (2020). The reading consultant in school B argued that to be successful,

teachers needed to reflect upon the process of reading comprehension, stripping 'it back to find out what helps', 'and think what does a good comprehender do?'

Some teachers referred to an intuitive knowledge that they drew on when teaching reading comprehension. Dave spoke of going 'with my own gut'. Similarly, Val explained that interactions and questioning were 'one of those things that you almost do by instinct'. Sarah described that questioning can be organic, where some questions are prepared, and some respond to the pupils' responses, which is a reminder of the interactive and responsive nature of teaching. These descriptions of practice illustrate Olson and Bruner's (1996: 10) argument that teaching interactions are 'affected by our everyday intuitive theories', which they categorised as 'folk pedagogies'. As Perkins (2015) explains, this could be when a teacher makes a pedagogical decision based on experience of a successful outcome without understanding why that might be the case.

Harrison (2004: 29) notes alternatives to a scientific approach to teaching are framed as 'tradition', 'superstition' and 'anecdote' rather than professional wisdom. The latter is redolent of Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* (Kemmis, 2012), where practices like teaching are partly informed by practical wisdom. In the *Nicomachean ethics*, Aristotle (1976) identified three types of knowledge: *episteme* (scientific knowledge), *techne* (technical knowledge), and *phronesis* (practical wisdom). The terms *epistemic* and *technical* are recognisable in current discourse but there are no modern words linked with *phronesis*, which Flyvbjerg (2004: 285) argues 'is indicative of the degree to which scientific and instrumental rationality dominate modern thinking and language'. To teach reading comprehension using all three types of knowledge, teachers would utilise *epistemic* knowledge that corresponds to an understanding of the science of teaching reading. They would use concrete, technical knowledge represented by a technical know-how of teaching reading derived from context. And they would utilise *phronetic* knowledge (practical wisdom) to make decisions about how *techne* and *episteme* are applied. For Aristotle, *phronesis* combined understanding and virtue (Flyvbjerg, 2006b) linking knowledge with ethics. *Phronesis* has resonance with teaching practices as it acknowledges the place of deliberation incorporating values (Flyvbjerg, 2004), and engaging in morally-committed action, previously explained as *praxis*

(Kemmis and Smith, 2008). This leads to the final theme for this research question which explores values and beliefs.

Values and beliefs

In terms of exploring why teachers teach reading comprehension in the way that they do, the data collected through interviews relies upon the self-awareness of teachers and the choices they are making in their practices. The RCo in school A argued that:

teachers are quite skilled in teaching the strategies ... but I sometimes think we are not as skilled at unpicking what we do as it is so complex.

Added to the complex nature of teaching is the complexity of reading comprehension which has previously been argued. Teachers' beliefs have been used to help explain practice decisions (Schoenfield, 2011; Wallace and Priestley, 2011). Although it is noted that these in turn might be influenced by habits (Abernathy-Dyer et al., 2013) or dominant folk cultures in a school (Ilić and Bojović, 2016).

The LEA consultant thought some schools were constrained in their reading comprehension practices by their lack of vision, for example by not being underpinned by a love of reading. In contrast, Ellie was enthused by the positive impact of the ethos of her school. The enjoyment of reading was a core value for many participants (Liz; Martha; Steve; Asma; Sakina) and is strongly encouraged in policy documents (DfE, 2012; DfE, 2013; DfE, 2023). Steve and Sarah thought they could influence children through their own enthusiasms for reading and Ellie thought she could raise pupils' confidence through successful reading interactions. The positive impact of having exposure to a wide variety of texts was another shared belief (Val; Steve; Lorraine; Liz; RCo school D), which in turn influenced teachers' choices of texts. Steve believed it was important that children stay active in making meaning. This could be encouraged according to the reading coordinator (school D) through children seeing links in the text rather than always being shown them. Martha's decisions about reading comprehension teaching were influenced by her belief that they had a responsibility to offer wider experiences. In addition to finding out about reading, during

reading comprehension practices, the reading coordinator (school D) recognised that children benefitted from opportunities of reading to learn.

There were some shared beliefs about the importance of pupils being engaged in their reading comprehension lesson. Dave identified that his new approach of using song lyrics as the text for the lesson captured children's interests. Sarah wanted pupils to be interested in the text and see its relevance. However, the LEA consultant recognised that children being engaged does not equate to reading development, explaining that just because children are joining in and having fun does not imply learning is happening. This point is echoed by Hendrick and Heal (2020): whilst pupils may look busy learning, this may be material they already know, giving the appearance of learning (Nuthall, 2007). Indeed, the reading consultant in school B suggested that the high priority given to reading for pleasure may need a clearer perspective. Whilst it is significant, it is also 'a bit of a woolly term', and so worth recalling that 'you don't have to enjoy it all the time' (reading consultant school B).

Summary

This chapter has laid out a rich account of reading comprehension practices, how these are understood by teachers and what influences these practices. Using reflexive thematic analysis, the data were examined in response to the three research questions. This built a coherent understanding of reading comprehension which was enriched with practice detail about the decision making of participants. The findings are outlined below for each of these key questions.

- How do teachers teach reading comprehension?

When considering how teachers taught reading comprehension, contrasting organisational models were identified in different sites. The application of general teaching methods by the participants was of interest as these are not highlighted in reading comprehension theories. Examples of explanation, modelling and questioning and discussion added illustrative detail about practices. The teaching of reading comprehension strategies which have been identified as significant in reading comprehension practices (Smith et al., 2022) were exemplified.

- How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?

In response to the question, 'how is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?', evidence was presented that the teachers involved in this study had a deep commitment to the teaching of reading comprehension. They could talk about their role in reading comprehension instruction. In particular, they recognised the importance of questioning and discussion to support and build reading comprehension with their pupils. Yet they were aware of and sometimes ponderous of the complexity of reading comprehension. This was made even more involved by their understanding of how reading for pleasure was entangled in reading comprehension practices.

- Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?

To address this question, influences of reading comprehension practices were explored and exemplified. It is through the specific examples of how these influences are characterised that further insights about reading comprehension practices were gained. The impact of the national SATs and individual school contexts affected teachers' pedagogical decision making. Teachers' knowledge and experience were exemplified as significant factors in practices. These might include phronesis, where knowledge draws on practical wisdom (Kemmis, 2012). This associates practices with praxis as morally-informed action (Kemmis and Smith, 2008) and linked with the final significant factor influencing reading comprehension practices, which was teachers' values and beliefs. This understanding is further built on in the final analysis chapter, which is structured around the theoretical framework of practice architectures (Kemmis and Grootenboer, 2008).

Chapter 7: Analysis 3: Using the Theoretical Framework of Practice Architectures

Introduction

In this final analysis chapter, the data is analysed using the theoretical framework of practice architectures (Kemmis and Grootenboer, 2008). This theory recognises that ‘practices do not exist in isolation from other practices but are ecologically related to each other like ‘living systems’’ (Kemmis et al., 2014: 41). In the earlier methodology chapter, the theory of practice architectures was established as a suitable lens to gain multiple insights into individual and organisational teaching practices. It supports the intention of gaining a deeper understanding of the influences on behaviours and pedagogical decision-making, thus making reading comprehension practice visible at a descriptive level, at a practical level and at a critical level (Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018). Practice architectures is used here as a theoretical and analytical resource (Mahon et al., 2017), utilised ‘to reach beyond the boundaries of the four walls of the classroom’ (Edward-Groves and Grootenboer, 2017: 37) to gain fuller understanding of reading comprehension teaching practices.

For this section of the study the practice landscapes of the four schools and their participants were analysed using the theory of practice architectures as laid out in the methodology chapter. Individual practices were considered alongside how they connect with their sites and the other participants, which offers a holistic view. The three research questions were:

1. How do teachers teach reading comprehension?
2. How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?
3. Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?

In response to these questions, the sayings, doings, and relatings of reading comprehension practices at the four sites were explored through the form of cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements (Kemmis et al., 2014). Practice architectures fitted with this enquiry as the theory recognises the complexity of practices in these three

intersubjective and overlapping spaces, whilst aiming to maintain focus on practices involving decisions made by individuals (Mahon et al., 2017). The practice architectures framework offered an ontological perspective on how reading comprehension practices ‘hang together’ in projects which combine to make distinctive practices (Kemmis et al., 2014: 26). The table below summarises the three arrangements that work together to enable and constrain reading comprehension practices and may be helpful as a reminder of the theory of practice architectures.

<p>Sayings</p> <p>What words are said when enacting reading comprehension practices?</p>	<p>Cultural-Discursive Arrangements</p> <p>What language, discourses and thinking have shaped, enabled, and constrained the semantic space of reading comprehension practices?</p>
<p>Doings</p> <p>What actions are taken when enacting reading comprehension practices?</p>	<p>Material-Economic Arrangements</p> <p>What material things, activities and work arrangements have shaped, enabled, and constrained the physical space-time of reading comprehension practices?</p>
<p>Relatings</p> <p>How do they relate to other people and objects when enacting reading comprehension practices?</p>	<p>Social-Political Arrangements</p> <p>What relationships and arrangements of power or solidarity have shaped, enabled, and constrained the social space of reading comprehension practices?</p>

Table 13: A simplified summary of analysis using practice architectures (adapted from example of quick reference guide for data analysis Gibbs et al., 2022: 9)

Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) argue that practice architectures shape the self-understandings of practitioners but can also construct practice possibilities and inform actions. They inform the dispositions of practitioners, so that practices are influenced beyond the sayings, doings, and relatings of individuals by conditions such as policies, procedures, and other arrangements. Sites such as schools develop practice traditions which enact and capture ‘the history of the happenings of the practice’ (Kemmis et al., 2014: 31)

and continue to be reshaped by practitioners. Practice architectures acknowledges that the systems and spaces of engaging with practice both enable and constrain practices (Rönnerman and Kemmis, 2016). A fuller understanding of the enabling and constraining influences on reading comprehension practices will add to knowledge about reading comprehension practices and inform future developments.

Using this theory for analysis does not assume an explicit revelation of all relevant information but draws on ‘informed inferences’ by the researcher (Kemmis et al., 2014: 225). These were informed by the extensive literature review and experiences of teaching and observing reading comprehension. The three arrangements of cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political will be considered discretely. The process of separating out the arrangements offers a lens through which practices can be analysed in greater depth and understood more fully. It should be noted, however, these delineations are imposed for the purposes of analysis (Rönnerman et al., 2017). In this study, the arrangements will be discussed in the order of material-economic, cultural-discursive, and social-political as this order better complements the order of the three research questions in this inquiry. The decision about which themes were identified as significant were drawn from the data and influenced by the way these arrangements shaped practices at the time, but ultimately were chosen by the researcher. A reflexive stance was adopted throughout the research which included ongoing reflection on the effectiveness of the research methods and an openness to possible outcomes (Cooke et al., 2020). The arrangements and the themes identified for each of these are represented in a pictorial summary in Figure 6 below.

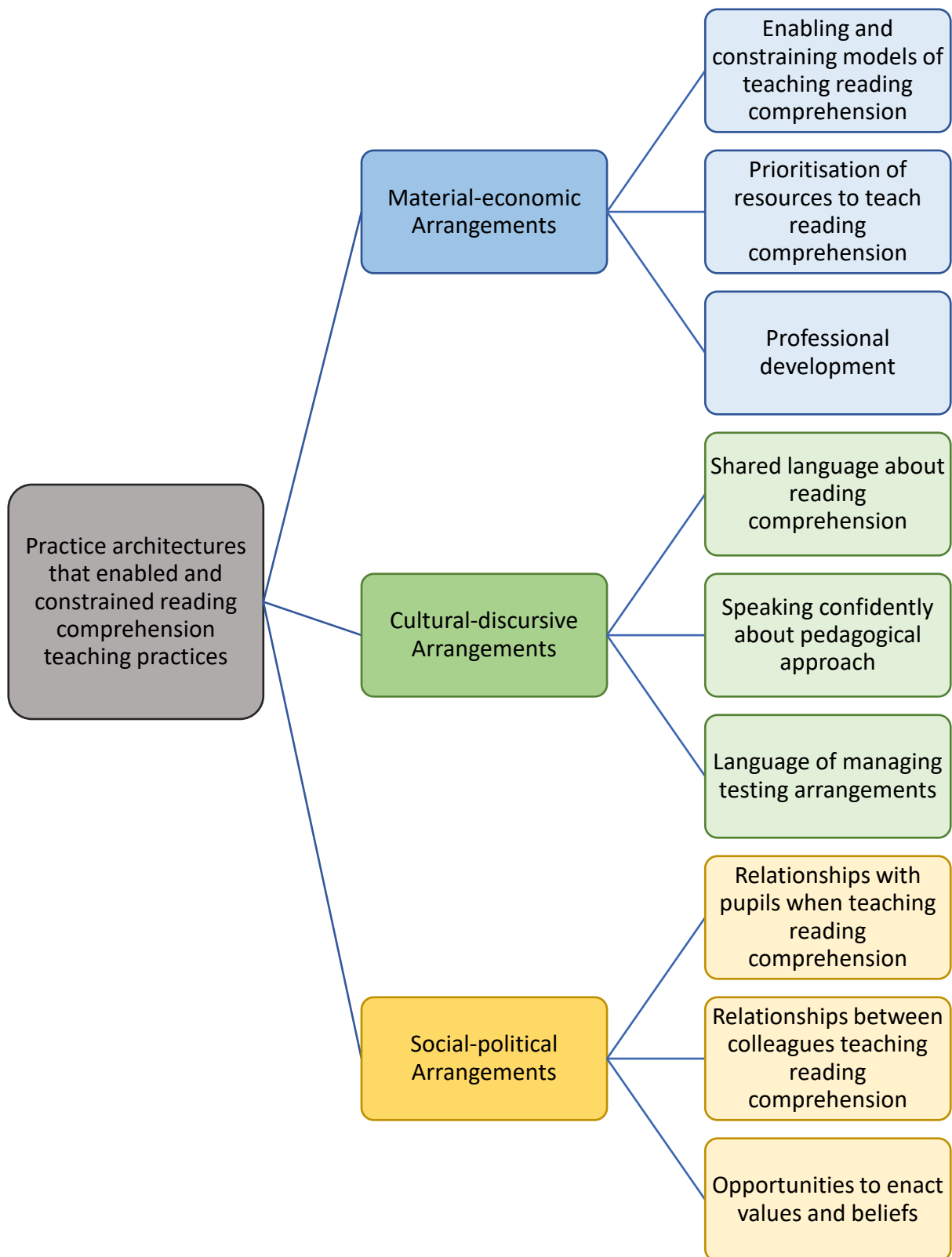


Figure 6: Summary of the material-economic, cultural-discursive, and social-political arrangements (adapted from figure displayed by Cooke and Francisco, 2021: 1077)

Material-Economic Arrangements that Enabled and Constrained Reading Comprehension Teaching Practices

Material-economic arrangements are the material things, activities and work arrangements used by the participants that shaped, enabled, and constrained reading comprehension practices. These resources make practice possible and are realised in the characteristic doings of a practice (Kemmis et al., 2014). Considering the doings of a practice and the associated material-economic arrangements develops our understanding of the skills and capacities used in reading comprehension practices and contributes to answering the research question:

- How do teachers teach reading comprehension?

Across the four sites, three key material-economic themes were identified that help inform how teachers teach reading comprehension:

- enabling and constraining models of teaching reading comprehension
- prioritisation of resources to teach reading comprehension
- professional development

Enabling and constraining models of teaching reading comprehension

The first material-economic theme that enabled and constrained practices were the models of teaching reading comprehension that had been established in each school site. It has been previously identified that differing models of reading comprehension draw on alternate understandings of the reading process, and that a major policy emphasis has been teaching strategies (DfEE, 1997; NICHHD, 2000; EEF, 2021a). This theme extends that of ‘organisational models’ from the thematic analysis set out in the last chapter and forms a link between these two layers of analysis.

School B had adopted and fine-tuned over subsequent years a group guided approach to teaching reading comprehension which emphasised the teaching of reading strategies and encouraged discussion. This led to a shared practice tradition which the teachers found enabling. Both Lorraine and Sakina spoke positively about their practices and were confident about the outcomes of their reading comprehension teaching. They were aware that practices continue to emerge and were comfortable to acknowledge how the model

could be further developed. For example, Sakina was aware that a few of her pupils were not as confident in speaking, and she was reviewing how she might respond to this within their school approach.

School D had developed a strong, school model of organising the curriculum through a cross-curricular approach where pupils chose the focuses of their topics. This model did not particularly focus on teaching reading strategies but viewed reading as a significant element in their learning cycle. Martha explained they approached their teaching with an interconnectivity of learning between reading and writing. The school did not 'do traditional guided reading' according to the reading coordinator but rather applied reading across all subjects. When asked about the place of reading comprehension in the classroom, Ellie identified reading comprehension as a constant part of their school approach to learning:

It is sort of embedded in everything as opposed to being an hour of the day where you read a book.

From the teachers' perspective, their model for teaching reading comprehension was both productive and sustainable. Their practice tradition of teaching reading comprehension was enabling whilst allowing some flexibility for review and adaptation. For example, at the time of the interviews, teachers in school D were developing their approach to questioning inspired by the idea of mastery from their mathematics teaching.

School C was in the process of developing an improved model of teaching reading comprehension after identifying constraints in their reading comprehension teaching. As previously discussed, this involved changing reading comprehension instruction to a whole class approach rather than a five day and five group carousel approach. The teachers spoke about the new approach as a positive and enabling change. Liz thought practices had 'greater purpose' with their reviewed model because instead of one taught group and four 'holding activities' there were 'five purposeful activities a week which are all teacher led'. This chimes with the concerns about the difficulties of teaching guided reading in key stage 2 from blogs discussions mentioned previously (for example, Payne, 2017). Pete agreed that this new approach was more manageable as a class teacher:

So instead of carousel being the extreme of being so focused on having the resources that you've barely got time left over to really think through how you're going to do it.... you can actually go through a process covering all the skills rather than where you just had to focus on isolated skills.

Asma, another teacher in school C, was very positive about the change to teaching reading comprehension with the whole class. She thought this approach was more productive as it included more teaching of vocabulary and discussion with pupils checking answers in reading lessons. This led to better outcomes as the pupils participated more, and there was more focus on asking if 'they actually comprehend what they have read'.

School A was at the early stage of reviewing their reading comprehension instruction which meant their approach was still being considered and was unresolved. At the time of data collection, there was no shared model of teaching reading comprehension although teachers drew on some patterns from guided reading. Sarah in school A was concerned that there was 'very little guidance' for teaching reading comprehension in her setting. She was concerned about the lack of a school policy that clarified what they should be doing and what was expected across the school.

Whilst this lack of a cohesive approach was a constraint on practices, it might be understood as a significant stage that had the potential to propel future change in practices and establish an enabling model for teaching reading comprehension. It could be seen as an opportunity to unfreeze practice (Lewin, 1947) before making improved changes. Steve acknowledged the flexibility of the school approach, 'we are not prescriptive in how you have to do it or what you have to use' which may be viewed as enabling future innovation. The four teachers in school A were flexible in their approaches with some group teaching and some whole class teaching of reading comprehension. When identifying influences on his reading comprehension practice, Dave referred to 'magpieing' ideas, which he explains thus:

I'll have taken snippets from those that I think are a good idea and I look to try and implement those ideas, or ... I'll be altering them slightly that I know will work with my particular class.

The lack of a school-wide model meant that teachers were free to try out different and new approaches to see what worked well for their context.

No model of teaching reading comprehension was deemed complete by the participants. All four schools recognised that some children continued to need help with decoding during years three and four. There were interventions in each of the schools to support this aspect of reading. In addition to opportunities to practice reading in school, schools wanted parents and carers to listen to their children read, to ask questions and to model positive reading behaviours. Working with parents supporting their children with reading is an ongoing concern for primary schools (DfE, 2023). The participants viewed parental support for reading as shaping practices in an enabling way. Sarah explained that school A had been working on a project where parents were guided to engage with their child's reading in a more active way through questioning. In school B teachers had had discussions with parents about how they could support their child, even starting this with parents of 2-year-olds. Similarly, Liz in school C acknowledged the parental influence on reading behaviours and the importance of meetings and informal discussion with parents particularly to encourage questioning around a text. However, this was something the participants thought that not all parents felt able or comfortable to do. Some of the difficulties shared included parents who themselves found reading difficult or parents who could not read in English.

[Prioritisation of resources to teach reading comprehension](#)

In school B the teaching of guided reading was prioritised by the school in its organisation of support staff. These were timetabled across the school so that each class had one or two additional adults to teach a guided group at the same time as the teacher. This was enabling as it made the organisation of guided reading less taxing and arguably more successful for the class teachers. School D adopted a guided group approach that was supported by their focus on developing and supporting independent learning approaches. The children were

viewed as a major resource in this setting which was enabling for practices. In contrast, Dave from school A found managing lots of children talking about the texts challenging and would prefer there to be support available to manage the reading lesson. The lack of a strong model for teaching reading comprehension in school A also influenced how resources were allocated and perceived.

The use of high-quality books (DfE, 2013) and high-quality texts (CLPE, 2016) has been recognised as an important resource for a successful reading curriculum. They influenced some reading comprehension practices. In school B teachers tried to make links between the wider curriculum and the choice of texts. Similarly, texts in school D were linked with the theme that the pupils had chosen; Ellie talked about their practices as enabling. They had a:

... really big emphasis on high-quality texts and using a combination of texts and using classics but also using things that will just grip the children.

A lack of available suitable texts was raised by some teachers in school A as a constraint on their reading comprehension practices. Sarah referred to 'floundering around trying to find things that are suitable' and Val admitted that sometimes she was struggling to find suitable texts and to find multiple copies of a text.

Schools A and C had opted to purchase comprehension textbooks (sometimes supplemented by websites) as a resource to support reading comprehension instruction. These contained text extracts and questions that could be used for oral or written comprehension. This is not surprising as Dockx et al. (2019) argue that textbooks are used as the basis for reading comprehension instruction in most countries. These resources were generally perceived by the participants as enabling. Sarah in school A liked the differentiation contained within the different difficulties of text and subsequent questions based around the same text from the Reading Explorers scheme. Liz in school C explained that they used comprehension textbooks as they contained shorter text extracts, which meant pupils had access to a broad experience of texts. The reading coordinator there thought shorter texts lent themselves to repeated readings, which supported pupils to understand with greater depth.

Liz argued that the questions in the textbooks were more focused and could be shaped like questions in the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs). She explained that the school had bought the Cracking Comprehension textbooks as the format and style of the questions were like those used in the SATs. Asma and Liz described how they added additional questions on clarifying vocabulary and ensured they used a mix of literal/retrieval and inference questions to complement their overall reading model. As sets of guided reading books had dwindled in school A, Val found their textbooks were a helpful resource. However, she also noted that in comparison to using the textbooks, using their class reader (a novel read to the whole class) for comprehension supported deeper understandings:

They understand the characters and they know the storyline and they know what has gone on before there is much better understanding. And they can predict better.

The opportunity that whole texts offer to layer up understanding and responses is supported by Sehgal Cuthbert (2021) and acknowledged in Ofsted's English research review (2022).

It seems that where schools had strong models of teaching reading comprehension this influenced the prioritisation of resources. Schools B, C and D enabled practices with resources such as support staff, timetabling, models for independent pupil work, texts, and textbooks. Whilst school A had some texts and textbooks and a new assessment package for assessing comprehension, without a clear model of how to teach reading comprehension, these had not become integrated into practices as a shared project and their usefulness was yet to be fully established. In interviews, Sarah and Dave referred to the textbooks almost as if they were a model of teaching reading comprehension rather than a resource to support their teaching. Similar concerns about teaching being restricted by comprehension exercises have been shared in the wider literature (Perkins, 2015; Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016). A further constraint identified by Val in school A was finding enough time to meet the guided reading expectations. Similarly, Dave had said that time and finding a quiet space for group work were challenging to teaching reading comprehension. In the schools where reading

comprehension was identified as a priority these factors had not been raised as a constraint, suggesting that site specific resolutions had been negotiated.

Professional development

The third material and economic arrangement identified using practice architectures that enabled and constrained practices was professional development. This is well-recognised in schools as an important mechanism for teachers to learn and refine pedagogies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). To support their models of reading comprehension, schools B and D had ongoing professional development which added to the success of the shared project. Teachers in school B had regular training as the school was a teaching school. Lorraine spoke positively about 'the opportunity to develop and deepen your understanding of reading and comprehension and inference'. Within a few weeks of starting at school B, staff had training on their approach to teaching reading supported by the reading coordinator and a reading consultant based there. This involved observing experienced teachers including from 'behind a screen' which meant new staff could discuss with a facilitator what was happening in the lesson as it unfolded.

The training and subsequent continuous input around teaching reading had developed Sakina's awareness of the skilled process involved in teaching reading. Lorraine was looking forward to an upcoming opportunity to watch and find out more about Inference Training, an intervention focusing on developing inference skills. All the teachers in school B were involved in supporting wider professional development; there were regular visits from other schools to observe their reading teaching which had been integrated into their shared project. Observations of practice were the accepted norm in school B and referred to by the participants as an enabling rather than constraining factor. They expressed comfort and commitment to being part of professional development for the broader teaching community.

In school D the discussion and staff training about reading comprehension was 'an ongoing thing'; Martha described a shared approach of 'always changing, adapting, trying to improve' and of 'constantly sharing practice'. All staff at the school were encouraged to contribute to the development of the school's policies and approaches to teaching. Each

staff member was involved in a curriculum team such as English and whilst there was an English coordinator (that also took up the role of reading coordinator) to represent the school in wider training, the team had a shared responsibility for developing English. They spoke about the collegiate responsibility for developing the teaching in school D and investigating whether ideas fitted with their school approach. There was an openness to trying things out even if they did not work out:

... go and try it, have a conversation... what's good about it, what could we develop further, what will work within the school model. And there is the opportunity to go and try things and say, 'Actually, it didn't work'.

Ellie explained that their school model, which responded to the interests of the children meant you had to research for each topic and investigate texts and other resources that would be suitable. She did not question the sustainability of this approach to practices. Instead, this was perceived as an enabling aspect that was adding to their professional development:

It's good for teachers in that there's that constant element of research to it and you're having to read a lot yourself because in order to be able to plan things and resource things and stuff like that. I wouldn't have been able to do the text that we've done this time last year because it didn't exist, hadn't been published, so things like that, you have to look into at the time.

In school C there was also a record of enabling professional development to support reading practices. In recent years, they had had training on incorporating aspects from the reciprocal reading approach (Palincsar and Brown, 1984) into their reading lessons. The Reading Recovery trained teacher had shared their expertise with staff, and some teaching assistants had been trained in the reading interventions of Fischer Family Trust and Better Reading Partners. Coinciding with the period of data collection for this inquiry, school C were in the process of building on these practice traditions and modifying their reading

comprehension practices. More generally, senior staff members were encouraged to develop practices through practitioner inquiry; through action research, teachers could learn collectively whilst improving learning outcomes (Johannesson, 2020).

The area of action research at school C chosen by the reading coordinator was using a whole class approach to teach comprehension. Following concerns that one group lesson a week was not having sufficient impact on reading development and attainment, the reading coordinator worked alongside the class teacher Liz in developing this project. After positive outcomes, the new model was rolled out to other teachers in year 5 and then in the next academic year this was rolled out to years 3 and 4 (the year of my data collection).

Implementing this new model of teaching reading comprehension involved a considered programme of support for teachers. Whilst the new model was shared in staff meetings, there was a staggered approach to individual support to implement the change. For example, Asma spoke positively about the opportunities she had of observing a series of lessons using the new approach, followed by team teaching and supportive conversations before changing from a group to a whole class model of teaching.

In contrast, the lack of shared model in school A restricted opportunities for professional development. For example, Sarah referred to a particular type of questioning which they were expected to use in their teaching. This training had preceded her time at the school, so even though she knew about the school expectations, she felt as a newer member of staff, that she had to 'sort of guess it'. Sarah had entered teaching via a secondary trained route and felt she had missed out on learning about early reading teaching and was keen to have training around reading. Although by the time of the second interview, she had had an opportunity to observe guided reading in another school which she had found 'helpful' for her professional development. Val had been at the school for much longer and during her time there, had had 'pockets of training' and shared ideas with colleagues. More recently, Val had attended some training on reading comprehension with a LEA consultant. When interviewed, the consultant explained she had developed a model and supporting book to support teachers in successfully delivering guided reading. The teachers in school A hoped to adopt this new model but were waiting for a process of change to be instigated by the reading coordinator who was restricted by opportunities to do so.

Ongoing professional development is a feature of primary teaching in the UK (Fox, 2021) and can have a significant effect on teaching (Zuccollo and Fletcher-Wood, 2020). For this to be effective, the DfE (2016) advises that there should be a partnership between school leaders, teachers, and external providers. The school cases in this study affirm the enabling influence of professional development on practices through motivating improvements to practices, underpinning confidence in practices, and sustaining a shared project. Work arrangements can also affect the discourses around pedagogy through the professional development opportunities offered to teachers. This example of how actions within the physical space affects the semantic space serves as a reminder of the interrelationship of arrangements within practices. The cultural-discursive aspects of the practice architectures are the focus of the next section.

Cultural-Discursive Arrangements that Enabled and Constrained Reading Comprehension Teaching Practices

Cultural-discursive arrangements are the language, discourses and thinking acquired and used by the participants that shaped their reading comprehension practices. These can be taken-for-granted discourses used to describe, interpret, and justify practices which in turn are influenced by policies and traditions (Kemmis et al., 2014; Biesta et al., 2015) and are reflected in the characteristic sayings of the practice. Considering the cultural-discursive arrangements, develops our knowledge of how reading comprehension practices are understood and contributes to answering the research question:

- How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?

Across the school sites, three important cultural-discursive themes were identified, which in turn, enabled and constrained teachers' reading comprehension practices:

- shared language about reading comprehension
- speaking confidently about pedagogical approach
- language of managing testing arrangements

Shared language about reading comprehension

The first cultural-discursive theme that enabled and constrained practices was the shared language about reading comprehension in a site. This expands on the models of teaching discussion by focussing on the semantic space with particular attention paid to informing understanding of how reading comprehension was understood by teachers. The participants in school B shared a common approach to teaching reading comprehension through structured guided reading. With this came a fluent shared language which built on the practice tradition. This is demonstrated by Lorraine talking with ease about their 'set structure' and 'set sequence':

Starting with introducing the book, trying to relate it to the children's own experiences, sharing the learning objective, sharing what strategies can you use, sharing the tricky words or new vocabulary, giving them a comprehension question what we want them to look for when they're reading, independent reading, encouraging them to look back and answer while they're reading, feeding back and then returning to the text. We all follow that same structure.

In school B, shared language about different aspects of the reading process supported a shared project for reading comprehension. This included the children who were familiar with the structure which in turn gave them confidence to participate in the lessons (Sakina).

As mentioned previously, school C was developing a new model for teaching reading comprehension. Whilst this was not fully embedded as the pedagogical approach throughout the school, it was being developed with supportive mechanisms including shared language. For example, the lead teacher was demonstrating lessons and team-teaching with the other teachers in the year groups and the reading coordinator was working alongside the lead teacher to develop a cohesive system for planning and sequencing of the lessons. This included a shared language about the parts of a lesson which drew on language from reciprocal reading (Palincsar and Brown, 1984), which the school had previously used. Thus, the new model built on a familiar structure and a shared language was referred to by the teachers and displayed in their classrooms. For example, Asma spoke with assurance about reading comprehension using language from the

reciprocal model of 'summarising, clarifying, visualising etc.' The current model had developed from the reciprocal reading model and used shared language that had become part of their shared practice tradition.

Wider discourses about teaching influenced how the teachers understood reading comprehension and applied this to their practices. For example, the reading coordinator in school C was confident that everyone was using thinking aloud (Duke and Pearson, 2002) and modelling (Fountas and Pinnell, 2017) with each part of their reading comprehension model.

The other thing that we do that I think is really, really fundamental; the teachers think aloud so everything they're asking the children to do, they always model it first ...using a first question to model it for the children and then the second question is a very similar question but they do that independently – so the visualising, you visualise one paragraph and you think aloud for the children, explaining why you're drawing that, going back to the evidence, labelling it so you're lifting out the evidence and placing it on to the actual visualisation, but then inviting them to do a visualisation on a different paragraph and apply the same skills, so it's very much about that model.

The reading coordinator from school C also commented that some teachers had used the new structure in a very prescriptive way, for example doing a whole lesson on prediction with each piece of text. Similar to Fountas and Pinnell (2012), they had recognised that an ongoing professional dialogue about the details of their approach was needed to allow for a fuller response to the text and the pupils. With regards to shared language, the three teachers in school C each referred to the importance of pupils in their school context needing to develop stamina with their reading. It was interesting to note that the word stamina was not mentioned by any of the participants in the other case schools revealing a shared semantic understanding of practice intent at this site.

In school D, their cohesive pedagogical approach influenced their characteristic sayings about the teaching of reading comprehension. This was viewed like any other part of the

curriculum and consequently taught using their overall structure and principles. As Ellie explains:

We are quite consistent across the school, but it's more because of the model for teaching that we have generally, rather than specifically for English.

For the reading coordinator in school D, that did not lessen the importance of reading comprehension teaching; the independent nature of their learning environment meant that reading comprehension is 'absolutely necessary for every lesson'. As Ellie explained, there were reading activities every day, whilst they may not be the teacher focused activity but rather the independent activities, pupils had lots of opportunities to practise and apply this key skill.

Another part of the school ethos at school D was pupils reflecting on their own and their peers' learning. Martha identified this as the principle that underpins pupils self-monitoring their understanding in reading comprehension. School D can be viewed as an example of how an individual characteristic practice shapes 'the project of a practice' within a site (Kemmis et al., 2014: 31). Martha talked about the approach in school D to teaching English which interconnected the teaching of reading and writing and how teachers across the school would be using comparable phrasing with pupils:

They'd be doing different work, they'd be approaching things in different ways, but I think you'd hear similar language from the teachers, you'd hear similar feedback from them.

By including the teaching of reading in their overall skills approach to the curriculum, suggests a concern with developing a cohesive institutional praxis (Kemmis and Smith, 2008). Alongside this unified model was a shared language about teaching practices.

Previously, the lack of a clear model for reading comprehension instruction in school A has been discussed. Participants identified this in the interviews in their language choices when talking about their teaching. Val suggested a concern with the lack of momentum towards a

renewed approach, she commented that ‘sometimes we dip into things and then nothing happens’. Whilst there was freedom to try out different approaches at the site, practices were disparate which impacted on the language teachers used about them. There was some frustration expressed, possibly due to lack of clarity in the approach, for example by Sarah that the children would not look carefully and check the answers and by Dave that he wanted the children to read the text before trying to answer the questions. By the second interview, Sarah spoke enthusiastically about a recent opportunity to see a guided reading lesson at another school. She recognised the value of that site’s cohesive school approach as their teaching of reading was more regular, more consistent, and more guided ‘from the top’. Sarah thought they would benefit from a similar structure and claimed ‘what we really need is a whole school ethos’ which suggests a desire for a cohesive institutional praxis (Kemmis and Smith, 2008) as mentioned above. She suggests a coordinated approach would lead to the support of a shared project including a shared culture and a shared language about reading comprehension practices.

The lack of a practice tradition does not determine a constraint, but at this time the participants’ accumulated knowledge in school A was not being developed into a shared language. The language to talk about reading comprehension practices had stalled. The teachers in this setting found it more difficult to articulate their practices than the other three schools in this inquiry. For example, when asked whether reading comprehension might be about making links the teachers in school A were not sure if or how they did this. Val said she did have key principles that guided her teaching of reading comprehension, but she found these hard to put into words. Similarly, when asked if she used strategies to teach reading comprehension, Val answered, ‘I think I do but without thinking I am doing it’. A lack of self-awareness about teaching practices may not be that unusual amongst teachers more generally. According to Biesta et al., ‘teachers tended to articulate aims that are vague in nature’ with ‘little articulation of the fine detail’ (2015: 634). Yet in comparison to the other sites in this study, the lack of a shared language to articulate and discuss reading comprehension practices in school A seemed to act as a constraint on how reading comprehension practices were understood and how they might be developed.

Speaking confidently about pedagogical approach

The second factor that enabled or constrained the cultural-discursive arrangements of reading comprehension practices was how confidently teachers spoke about the pedagogical approaches of a site. The range of policy and curriculum emphases and influences (discussed in chapter 2) inform the complex context for reading comprehension practices. School A recognised that they did not have a cohesive pedagogical approach which was understood as a constraining factor for some teachers. Whilst the school had a broad expectation of teachers doing guided reading, teachers were free to interpret this within their practices. But Sarah in school A was troubled by a lack of certainty, for her the reading comprehension arrangements were ‘woolly’ as ‘no one is really saying, “this is how it is meant to be”’. Her language about the pedagogical approach to teaching reading comprehension lacked confidence and appeared to be impacting on her self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The school had recognised they were at a point of change and development with the teaching of reading comprehension. But the time when this data was collected was an unsettling one, when practices had become fragmented and had yet to be realigned.

That said, there was an openness to contrasting approaches and a willingness to engage with discourse about reading comprehension practices. For example, Val in school A recognised that a less prescriptive approach enabled her to respond more reflexively to the pupils’ understandings of text. Teachers in school A had looked for ideas to support their practices, for example Dave spoke of collecting ideas from different sources whilst Sarah referred to blogs for ideas. Steve spoke more confidently about his teaching as he had been on development courses, but Sarah and Dave (who had each been teaching less than five years) had had no training in teaching reading at the time of the first interview. In contrast, Val had been teaching for a few decades. She explained there were lots of things that she drew on to inform her teaching, ‘through experience and knowing what things work’ but there was also some hesitancy when she added about comprehension, ‘it is quite tricky to teach’. When looking at some examples of children’s poor written answers to reading comprehension questions, despite teacher input, Sarah commented:

I can't figure it out, what I need to do, and that is sometimes where I feel insecure about my subject knowledge. So, I will go and do some research because I want to help them. It is not just about progress; I don't want to fail these children.

Whilst she sought school guidance on how to teach reading comprehension, she continued to look for ideas herself as she understood it to be important. Reading comprehension has been previously discussed as a complex process (Perfetti et al, 2005) where identifying priorities for teaching could be made more challenging without a coherent model to draw upon.

Participants in schools B, C and D spoke confidently about their school approaches to teaching reading comprehension. Martha in school D was assured that their overall approach to learning where they were 'constantly building on the last thing', helped pupils to make connections and supported their reading comprehension. Lorraine liked the model used for reading comprehension in school B as she found it was successful. It encouraged the pupils

...to be actually thinking about what they're reading while they're reading it because they know that they're going to be expected to talk about it at the end (Lorraine).

She valued the flexibility for discussion permitted by their model that responded to the children. The structure was not understood as restrictive. Instead, Lorraine enthused that in a reading lesson 'the things I really like is you never know what's going to happen' in pupils' responses and interpretations. Both Lorraine and Sakina spoke about their school being a teaching school specialising in reading. The prominence of reading within school B meant discourse about reading was embedded in the semantic space. This appeared to support the confidence of the participants there. For example, Sakina explained that after joining the school, she was 'so much more aware of the structure and how I've been teaching the guided reading sequence'. She had become confident in the process of teaching reading comprehension and the layers of teaching required to have an impact on pupils' reading.

In school C, Pete was confident in their teaching model, and that it supported what was a very complex activity:

The purpose of this process, it is to break down that comprehension element which is... almost is, quite intangible when you get to a confident especially adult reader.

Liz's focus on developing reading comprehension enabled her to speak knowingly about different aspects of teaching it. For example, she was confident to discuss the difficulties that the many multilingual (EAL) pupils in their school setting had with inference which was in turn affected by their vocabulary knowledge. She wanted the pupils to understand that they can look around the word, to think:

Well actually I don't know what that means but I can decipher from the words around it how it's used in the sentence, what kind of word it is and therefore what it means.

Her response to this pedagogical challenge was to talk about and clarify vocabulary with her pupils, and to teach how a reader can gather information about a word from the surrounding text. Vocabulary instruction including building knowledge of morphology is recognised in the literature as supporting reading comprehension (DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2013; Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016; Elleman and Oslund, 2019).

It seems that where schools had strong models of teaching reading comprehension this influenced the confidence that teachers had in talking about their reading comprehension teaching. This confidence was more evident in schools B, C and D in how assuredly the participants described, explained, and justified their reading comprehension practices. They spoke with clarity about what was important, and the overall influence of the semantic space was enabling.

Language of managing testing arrangements

The final theme that enabled or constrained the cultural-discursive arrangements of reading comprehension practices was the language of managing testing. This builds on a section of the discussion in the previous thematic analysis chapter which noted the influence of the standard assessment tests (SATs). Here the focus is on the sayings of the participants, their language choices, which indicate how they understood reading comprehension. Participants in the study made references to discourse about assessment arrangements, in particular SATs at the end of KS2 and how these influenced practices. In line with Bradbury's (2019: 5) survey of primary headteachers on the impact of these tests, this is not surprising; he noted headteachers thought 'SATs have far-reaching and distorting effects on school organisation and the curriculum'.

Liz in school C talked about using 'SATs style questions'. Both Asma from school C and the reading coordinator in school D referred to using the language of the content domains (STA, 2015), (which advise the reading comprehension SATs questions) to inform their teaching. They acknowledged their teaching focus was influenced by the types of questions that came up more often on the SATs test papers. Asma referred to a briefing where staff were told that the main types of questions are making inferences and retrieval, so consequently these were the focus of their comprehension lessons. A similar emphasis had been incorporated into practices in school D as explained by the reading coordinator:

We do more inference and retrieval and the word meaning from context, because they're the ones that come up a lot more.

In addition, Asma recognised that the skills of summarising the text and developing vocabulary supported these more tested areas and so their developing model fitted with this focus of success in standardised assessments.

Steering a course through what to teach, why it is taught and consequently the priorities of practice can be challenging and complex. According to Biesta et al. (2015: 635), teachers' decisions are 'driven by a perceived need to maintain a 'normal desirable state' in the classroom'. This favoured norm includes goals such as enjoyable lessons, engaged pupils

and well-behaved classes. Participants defended practices being influenced by the testing arrangements using language of legitimacy and necessity through the support it gives pupils. For example, Sakina in school B explained that 'we're here to support them on their journey to becoming an independent reader' but that included choosing to do some reading tests so that the children 'could get used to that way of working'. Similarly, her colleague Lorraine talked about 'teaching them the difference between the different types of questions' so that they understand where they are expected to tick an answer, or write a sentence, or give reasons for their answers.

At school C, the reading coordinator defended the focus on content domains in reading comprehension practices. She explained that teaching these outcomes meant teaching pupils the skills they needed to become better readers. She commented:

It's not just teaching to the test, but it does really break down the skills for reading and helps them to be better readers, because the children understand the skills.

In school B, Lorraine was aware that some children found the independent comprehension expectations on a test paper much more difficult than accessing the text through a supportive group dialogue. Similarly, her colleague Sakina talked about the difficulty that some pupils had negotiating between the test paper and the answer paper and closing one to open another to answer the questions. Consequently, the school had identified a need to practise the skills to answer written responses to test-style questions.

Considering the language used to talk about practices illustrated how teachers had to manage the high stakes around testing expectations and feelings that this evoked. Schatzki's (2010: 51) argument that practices are organised by phenomena including teleoaffective structures: 'acceptable or prescribed end-project-action combinations', which combine purpose and affect was helpful in building understanding. The recognition of an emotional aspect to practices is agreed by Friedland (2018: 1364) who comments that 'positive affordances of affection' are 'part of the active space of practice'. Pete in school C said he felt removed from the pressures of SATs because he was teaching in year 4. But he later acknowledged that SATs are 'kind of forced as a goal', suggesting that their influence is far-

reaching and across year groups. An awareness of the asymmetric draw or tension between reading attainment tests and broader reading goals was shared by participants at different sites. In school C, Liz explained that as pupils' reading success was judged by the SATs, then she needed to respond to this in her teaching choices,

Even though reading for pleasure is what's most important for me and then being able to understand it is most important to me, I'll feel like I'm failing them if they can't answer questions in a test.

Yet there are hints of conflict contained with these practice decisions. Liz in school C admitted, 'I don't want to say the test, but I think the test is definitely a really big part' of what informed her reading comprehension practices. Liz talked about a reluctant acceptance of the necessity to incorporate within her practice the dual outcomes of reading for pleasure and test skills,

It sounds a bit of a paradox when I say being aware of the test but also trying to breed a love of reading.

Her words identify an irony when she makes the point, 'by just reading texts that they would like' she could be 'setting them up to fail'.

In school A, Steve spoke about the 'dilemma between testing and the enjoyment of getting into books'. This challenge between balancing 'the will and the skill' of reading has been noted as a serious concern for schools (Cremin et al., 2020: 92). This thesis illustrates examples of how this dilemma is affecting practices. Steve noted that texts in SATs may not suit all readers and could include irrelevant topics that do not engage some pupils who would consequently be at a disadvantage. He was concerned that teachers are judged by score results and stated a preferred scenario would be more teacher assessment and 'a bit of faith and trust in teachers'. Steve thought that teachers could find out more about what children understood through dialogue. He acknowledged the tension he experienced about wondering if they should do more test practices, but he felt uneasy about this. One problem was that when it came to working in tests, pupils had to do so completely independently,

this way of working seemed 'quite alien'. At the same site, Sarah shared concerns that children lacked confidence with the dissimilar way of working with comprehension in tests. She questioned the logic of how the assessment fitted with the teaching: 'we don't teach like that, so how can we test like that?'

The emotions and dilemmas that the teachers communicated around managing testing can be related to the broader conflict of what teachers feel obliged to do compared to what they want to teach. The tendency of educators to respond to targets and assessments, maybe setting aside personal beliefs, can lead to inner conflict which is part of what Ball identified as 'the terrors of performativity' (Ball, 2010: 215). The dilemma voiced by Steve and arguably hinted at by other participants between the values and purpose of teaching reading comprehension might be likened to 'a kind of values schizophrenia' (Ball, 2010: 221). Steve's conflict can be understood as an example of a divide between judgements around good practice, pupil needs, and performative outcomes.

Ball identified the significance for teachers of who had control of the 'field of judgement' (Ball, 2010: 215); that is who determines what is evaluated and which measures are deemed significant. In scenarios where this is removed from teachers, this has led to insecurity and doubts about what is shaping practices. This links with the idea of praxis as education, where the moral agency of teachers is of significance (Kemmis, 2012). When practice is focused on following rules, Kemmis and Smith (2008) argued that educators can lose their agency and act as operatives in the system within which they work. Being able to practice with praxis, 'for the good' (Kemmis, 2012: 885) for individuals and humankind, may mean gaining some agency where teachers critically negotiate the preconditions of their sites and settings. This leads into the next section on social-political arrangements.

Social-Political Arrangements that Enabled and Constrained Reading Comprehension Teaching Practices

Social-political arrangements are the relationships and arrangements of power or solidarity used by the participants and within their sites that shaped, enabled, and constrained

reading comprehension practices. Reading comprehension practices are social practices that are evident in social interactions. Kemmis (2009: 23) suggests these can be:

... relations of belonging or not belonging, inclusion and exclusion, differences of standing or role among people, and relations of power.

Considering the social-political arrangements develops our understanding of the values and commitments to reading comprehension practices and contributes to answering the research question:

- Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?

Three social-political themes were identified across the four sites:

- relationships with pupils when teaching reading comprehension
- relationships between colleagues teaching reading comprehension
- opportunities to enact values and beliefs

[Relationships with pupils when teaching reading comprehension](#)

How models of teaching reading comprehension were enacted was influenced by the school context. Liz in school C referred to large numbers of pupils who spoke English as an additional language, many of whom came from a lower socio-economic background. Liz thought the consequence of this for a significant number of pupils was lack of experiences, which created a constraint on reading comprehension, albeit difficult to express:

I find it quite a difficult one myself to articulate what the barriers are and how you teach it. For me it's just hammering it, just trying to ask as many of those as possible and then talking through reasoning for answers as well as pairs, as a class, one-to-one things like that, but it is one of the more tricky ones, I think.

Liz recognised that some of her pupils found reading comprehension challenging and consequently she approached teaching reading comprehension through a range of approaches that aimed to be inclusive and would maximise her pupils' experiences.

The wider approach to teaching in school D gave pupils some control over their learning and meant that they were enabled to work independently and take responsibility for their reading comprehension. This links with developing self-monitoring, which has been recognised as an important aspect of successful reading comprehension (NICHHD, 2000; Ofsted, 2022). As the reading coordinator in school D explained:

We do try to put the ownership back on them, so they see the value of the reading as well.

Where pupils had lots of experience of reading, Martha and the reading coordinator in school D shared the view that understanding came about naturally for most children.

Whilst the relationships between teachers and pupils in reading comprehension practices may be influenced by the practice traditions of a site, this also differed within sites. Asma in school C spoke about the teacher and pupils needing to work together to make sense of text. This was a slow and detailed process which she relished:

Even if a child's given me an answer, I keep prodding and keep trying to go deeper and get more children to give me more developed answers.

In the same school setting, Pete admitted that he was 'a bit frustrated' because pupils did not seem to remember work from previous sessions and thought they were 'perhaps being a bit lazy'. Although he believed in the process of verbalising answers before being asked to write answers, he voiced doubts about it as he had experienced no evidence that this was influencing his class. Similarly, frustration was shared by Sarah and Dave in school A because they thought the pupils were not looking closely at the text or following the instructions carefully enough. In comparison, Steve in the same school spoke with encouragement and resilience about his interactions with pupils.

Across the sites some teachers spoke positively about the role the pupils played in their comprehension. When exploring the social space of practice architectures, the focus includes participants' values and commitments to reading comprehension. This was

indicated by how they interacted with pupils in reading comprehension sessions. Lorraine and Sakina in school B were encouraging and positive about the pupils' reading, welcoming their questions and comments. Steve in school A spoke about his aim of guiding pupils to the right answer so that they could stay active in the comprehension process. Liz in school C saw her role as facilitator, developing comprehension skills as the pupils become increasingly independent. Asma in school C and Ellie in school D referred to the positive aspects of collaborative learning for pupils. In Ellie's lessons there was a feeling of shared purpose with pupils, where students were encouraged to ask questions, and support and challenge each other.

Martha, also in school D, thought their approach to teaching reading comprehension was supported by how the school organised learning and the curriculum. The children were involved in deciding what they wanted to learn and were generally encouraged to work collaboratively and independently and to puzzle things through. She explained this as:

A connected cycle where teacher, pupil and text all have a role. The teacher and pupils make the text useful.

In Martha's lessons it was evident that the pupils were confident to ask questions and challenge each other's ideas. Previously when discussing models of reading, the role of the reader as being actively involved in the reading comprehension process was identified (Durkin, 1978; Yopp Nolte and Singer, 1985; Harrison, 2004; Duke et al., 2011). Martha viewed her pupils as having an active role which involved sometimes leading the learning through their models and demonstrations. In these examples, the pupils had some power in the reading comprehension interactions.

[Relationships between colleagues teaching reading comprehension](#)

The significance that a cohesive model for teaching reading comprehension can have on practices has previously been identified. Linked with the development of school models, having some control to shape or influence practices amongst colleagues was significant for the participants. School D had developed a collegiate approach to developing practices

where responsibility for developing reading comprehension as well as communicating any initiatives were shared amongst a team of teachers. An aspect of practice architectures is considering if practices are just and inclusive (Kemmis et al., 2014). The sharing of responsibility and power around practices at this site added to a sense of shared purpose which was enabling for practices.

Similarly, in school B, Sakina and Lorraine were invested in the school's shared project to develop reading. They spoke positively about being observed by visiting teachers. This suggested they framed these with a sense of empowerment. School C offered opportunities for shaping practices: Liz worked with the reading coordinator to develop and influence practices across the school. They seemed enabled by the opportunity offered by the school and the success of the project. The idea of enthusiastic teachers influencing wider practices and raising attainment in a school through leadership supported by research fits with the route of becoming a middle leader in schools, for example through the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML). This has opportunities of empowerment for some sections of the teaching community.

Although schools B and C had reading coordinators, reading comprehension practices were discussed and decided amongst the wider teaching team. Whilst these individuals may have had more power to influence reading comprehension practices, these were referred to more as maintaining the importance of the subject and offering support. These relationships were spoken of by participants as inclusive and identified as enabling. In contrast, teachers in school A did not seem empowered in their reading comprehension practices. Without a shared approach to develop practices they lacked power, and this was constraining. The reading coordinator in school A seemed overwhelmed by the task in hand and was concerned by the lack of non-contact time she had been given in which to focus on this.

For Sarah, Dave, and Val in school A there was a sense that they were waiting for practices to be revealed to them rather than feeling empowered to collaboratively control the direction and development of practices. This may be explained by a lack of practice tradition which encouraged opportunities for teachers to explore, articulate and develop practices. Taking up such a position would involve a significant responsibility and some risk and may

not necessarily be the power sought by all teachers. Steve seemed less uneasy than the other participants in school A about his practices but that may have been because he had recently been the reading coordinator, which had allowed him the opportunity to develop a fuller understanding, which impacted his confidence. But like the other teachers in school A, his practices had become individualised, rather than orientating around a shared model. For all the participants in this setting, the lack of a shared model brought uncertainty, this in turn meant that reading comprehension practices were not a fully collegiate or inclusive experience.

Opportunities to enact values and beliefs

The theme of values and beliefs was identified in the previous thematic analysis chapter as influencing why teachers teach reading comprehension as they do. This is built on further using the theoretical framework of practice architectures to consider the opportunities teachers had to enact their values and beliefs within the social space. These opportunities may in turn have been influenced by other practice factors previously discussed such as professional development and teachers' confidence in a reading model.

The range of focus for shared values around teaching reading comprehension is indicative of the complexity of reading comprehension and the variety of contextual priorities. As Ellie from school D summarised about teaching reading comprehension, 'yes I think it can be taught; no, I don't think it's easy'. When talking about her reading comprehension practices, Val in school A said she just went along with things. As the practices at school A had become disassembled, she may have felt excluded and been reluctant to invest in the expectation that she could enact her beliefs about reading comprehension. Alternatively, less discourse about reading comprehension practices may have influenced the level of attention she gave to considering these values. Given the opportunity to do so, Val knew things she wanted to develop in her practice:

When I do think about it, I think I would prefer it to be more book-based in that the children are reading from a book rather than an extract.

She was uneasy that ‘firing out sheets’ from extracts would not encourage the pupils to pick up a book, a disquiet linked with her core value of enjoyment of reading. Concerned with their school context, Liz in school C thought a lack of life experiences was a partial barrier to reading comprehension. Part of their school’s response was to use a wide variety of text extracts as they believed this developed pupils’ knowledge of a broad range of text types and range of vocabulary. This decision could be viewed as enacting a value given to this aspect of reading comprehension but is in stark contrast with Val’s earlier developmental goal of using more longer texts.

Lorraine in school B talked about teaching pupils that their opinions about a text can differ. Her view about teaching reading comprehension extended beyond a correct response and beyond success in summative tests. She was able to enact this value through commitment to dialogue and invited opinions which might extend teaching and learning interactions. Similarly, Ellie in school D wanted to develop a fuller understanding beyond ‘being able to answer questions about a set text in a set period of time’. Instead, the comprehension she valued was accumulated over ‘a period of weeks’ where understanding is built through reviewing aspects of a text in detail. This might include linked texts, allowing for different perspectives and engaging pupils ‘to build on their understanding’. These beliefs about comprehension could be enacted within their schools’ models of teaching reading comprehension.

Val in school A referred to a struggle about enacting values. She thought reading for pleasure was more important than and sometimes in conflict with reading comprehension. Val was concerned that some of the questioning approaches detracted from enjoyment of the text; that is some teaching practices may be constraining as they negatively impact on pupils’ enjoyment. With regards to constantly asking questions, she found herself wondering ‘do they need to know?’. For Val, reading for enjoyment was the priority and so she did not ‘want to question the hell out of something’. She gave a higher recognition to reading for pleasure than she did to comprehension.

I think reading for pleasure is more important and the getting involved in the story and being able to imagine and predict. The next thing is widening up the world to

them and encouraging their vocabulary. I think sometimes as an exercise in itself; it is not that important as long as they can understand what they are reading. I think there is a balance.

This can be further understood by considering what Val meant by reading comprehension. When talking about it, Val seems to be characterising teaching reading comprehension as written answers to questions, akin to what has been referred to previously as 'comprehension exercises' (Stuart and Stainthorp, 2016).

Participants in this study had varying experiences of feeling included within the context of their school. The reading coordinator in school B talked about her position as being 'a dream job'. She had a strong sense of belonging as she was able to influence reading practices. The social and material environment of her setting was enabling through the support she was given to research and develop, with a colleague, a new model for teaching reading comprehension which she believed in. Similarly, Ellie in school D commented that the pedagogical approach of the school fitted with her views which supported a sense of belonging. The practice architectures of the school meant that she was empowered to enact her values. She comments on this synergy:

I think it has to be taught differently for different children, which is why we run it in the way that we do to try and encompass all of those children so having the range of activities and having a range of different tasks that mean they have to look at things in a slightly different way or access things in a slightly different way.

The social-political arrangements supported some teachers to experience an inclusivity and belonging which brought with it some empowerment in how pedagogy was enacted. Having understandings beyond national policy documents supported teachers' agency to shape practices and offered the potential to develop curriculum differently.

Teachers feeling able to enact values and beliefs around teaching links with the idea of agency. As Priestley et al. (2015) acknowledge, agency is an inexact construct; it can refer to a teacher's individual capacity to act agentically, or a teacher's quality of engagement with

their environment. This acknowledgement of context matters as opportunities for teachers to act as change agents (Fullan, 2003) is affected by aspects of the environment in which teachers work (Priestley et al., 2015). Recognising that individual agency is 'enabled and constrained by their social and material environments' is significant in shaping teachers' expectations of themselves and others, where agency is something that people can do or achieve rather than something they have (Priestley et al., 2015: 136).

Summary

This chapter has further reviewed the data from this research project using the theory of practice architectures to establish how the arrangements in physical space-time, semantic space, and social space enable and constrain reading comprehension instruction. Edward-Groves and Grootenboer (2017: 46) explain this process:

To understand practices requires the researcher to unravel the knots of practices (like learning and teaching in classrooms) to discover the nuances and particularities of practices as they happen in particular sites.

Each of the research questions will be briefly reviewed below.

- How do teachers teach reading comprehension?

Exploration of the doings of reading comprehension practices and the associated material-economic arrangements further established the influence of models of teaching reading comprehension on how teachers teach it. Related to these models were the themes of how resources were prioritised and opportunities for professional development within a site. How these arrangements impacted on how teachers taught reading comprehension practices was illustrated. Strong models of teaching reading comprehension contributed to a practice tradition which in turn influenced the prioritisation of resources and opportunities for professional development. This demonstrates some of the complex connections and interdependencies between practices that can become apparent through applying the theory of practice architectures.

- How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?

Investigation of the sayings of reading comprehension practices and the associated cultural-discursive arrangements informed this research question. Connections were identified between a confident model for teaching reading comprehension and the enabling shared language used to develop and talk about reading comprehension practices. The discussion considered how confidently participants used language to discuss their practice approach. A further theme from the semantic space was the language used to manage testing arrangements and the dilemmas expressed by some participants around performativity and how to practice with praxis, which incorporates teaching with acting for the moral good.

- Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?

This research question was explored through the relatings of reading comprehension practices and the associated social-political arrangements. The first theme discussed was participants' relationships with pupils and if these were positive and enabling and thereby afforded the pupils some power. Relationships between colleagues around reading comprehension instruction were discussed and whether these supported a sharing of responsibility and power, which might add to a sense of shared purpose. The final theme focussed on the opportunities participants had to enact their values and opinions about reading comprehension within the social space. This contributed to an understanding about power and illustrated examples of how agency is affected by social and material environments. The next chapter combines understanding from the three analysis chapters, evaluates how this informs our knowledge of reading comprehension practices, and discusses future implications for practices.

Chapter 8: Synthesis, contributions, and implications

Introduction

This thesis was concerned with researching how teachers teach and understand reading comprehension. Reading continues to be a central focus for primary school teachers (Ofsted, 2022; DfE, 2023). Although there is an array of research into how readers learn to comprehend, new understanding continues to develop (Shanahan, 2020). In comparison our knowledge about reading comprehension practices, that is how teachers go about teaching reading comprehension in classrooms, has received insufficient attention from researchers. This inquiry has gathered a mass of detail about professional decisions made by teachers in the complex environment of reading comprehension. Using a spiral of three layers of analysis has enabled a fuller and more nuanced understanding of these practices and what influences them. This study has focused on the practices of individual teachers and recognises that making general points risks overlooking the significance of and influences upon the decision-making of individual teachers. Nevertheless, there are some broader points to be made in response to the research questions that are laid out in the next section.

Braun and Clarke (2022: 7) discuss the importance of developing a ‘qualitative sensibility’ when carrying out qualitative research. They indicate that research is messy; one of their listed qualitative sensibilities orientates a researcher to have a

... desire for understanding that is about nuance, complexity and even contradiction, rather than finding a nice tidy explanation – you like the long answer, not the short answer!’

Whilst this research project has set out the long answer in previous chapters, a criticism might be that the dialogue has resulted in a lengthy answer. To conclude, this chapter assists in identifying a shorter answer. This includes an outline of the key findings in relation

to the research questions; the implications of these are discussed, highlighting the practical and theoretical contributions. Finally, it explores limitations of, and future directions for, the research.

Summary of answers to the research questions

- How do teachers teach reading comprehension?

The impetus for this inquiry was to understand how teachers teach reading comprehension. A précis of findings in relation to this question across the three layers of analysis is captured in the table below. This table includes summative descriptions from the case study as these served to answer this first question:

How do teachers teach reading comprehension?	
Summative descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching practices are varied and multi-layered • text extracts were often used in lessons • a range of interactions were used but questioning was the focus of teaching
Reflexive thematic analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisational models varied, for example guided group or whole class approaches were used • general teaching pedagogies such as explanation, modelling, questioning, and discussion were applied to reading comprehension instruction • reading comprehension strategies were taught and opportunities sought for pupils to practise these
Practice architectures: 'doings'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a strong organisational model was enabling • prioritisation of resources was enabling, and these were linked to strong organisational models • practices are supported by professional development which is needed to sustain strong models

Table 14: A summary of findings for 'How do teachers teach reading comprehension?'

The summative descriptions of reading comprehension practices established that approaches are varied and multi-layered. Text extracts were often used in lessons to allow for repetition and a focus on detail, but this raised a question about if and when, longer whole texts could be used. A discussion on this is included in the updated reading framework (DfE, 2023), identifying the benefits of whole texts and extracts but insisting that whole texts are part of pupils' reading curriculum. This suggests the contemporaneous

nature of this topic. These summative descriptions noted that whilst a range of interactions were used when teaching reading comprehension, the focus of these was questioning. This indicates that in preparing student teachers for reading comprehension instruction, a focus on types of questioning of text would be supportive to their placement experiences.

The reflexive thematic analysis indicated that organisational models of teaching reading comprehension were varied but orientated around guided group and/or whole class models. In lessons, teachers drew on general teaching pedagogies as well as teaching reading comprehension strategies, which were illustrated through practice examples. Using practice architectures to examine the ‘doings’ of reading comprehension practice added to understandings about the organisational models used. A strong organisational model, which was a model shared and experienced across a site, was enabling for teachers. In addition, it found that having a strong organisational model was linked with resources being prioritised and professional development being in place.

- How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?

This research project also aimed to gain understanding about how teachers understood their reading comprehension practices. This question was examined using reflexive thematic analysis and the ‘sayings’ of practice architectures. A summary of findings in relation to this question is captured in the table below:

How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?	
Reflexive thematic analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers understood the importance of teaching reading comprehension and could talk about their role • questioning is significant and discussion is highly regarded in reading comprehension instruction • reading comprehension is understood as complex and multifaceted • reading comprehension is viewed as entangled with reading for pleasure
Practice architectures: ‘sayings’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a shared language about reading comprehension was enabling and was linked with strong organisational models • speaking confidently about pedagogical approach was supported by strong organisational models

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the language of managing testing arrangements indicated compromises and tensions that need to be negotiated
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Table 15: A summary of findings for ‘How is the reading comprehension process understood by teachers?’

The reflexive thematic analysis found that teachers understood reading comprehension as complex but also important. They could talk about aspects of their role in the instruction process. Whilst reading comprehension is multifaceted, teachers appreciated the importance of questioning whilst aiming for discussion amongst their pupils. Alongside the goal of pupils reading for meaning was the goal of pupils reading for pleasure so that both aspects had become entangled. Focusing on the ‘sayings’ of practice architectures identified that a shared language about reading comprehension practices and speaking confidently about these were enabling for teachers. These aspects were identified as linked with having a strong organisational model. Finally, it was found that teachers negotiate aspects of their practices which are challenging or problematic; this was demonstrated through their language about testing arrangements. The participants offered examples of modifying their instruction in response to SATS content and style and the tensions and feelings this evoked.

- Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?

The final question of this inquiry was to gain insight into what influenced the understandings that teachers had about their reading comprehension practices. This question was examined using reflexive thematic analysis and the ‘relatings’ of practice architectures. A summary of findings in relation to this question is captured in the table below:

Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?	
Reflexive thematic analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the influence of the SATs the influence of school contexts their knowledge and experiences their values and beliefs
Practice architectures: ‘relatings’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> their relationships with pupils when teaching reading comprehension – empowering pupils? the relationships between colleagues teaching comprehension – empowering teachers?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the opportunities teachers had to enact values and beliefs – empowering teachers?
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Table 16: A summary of findings for ‘Why do teachers teach reading comprehension in this way?’

Reflexive thematic analysis of the data signified that reading comprehension practices were influenced by national testing of comprehension in the SATs and the individual contexts of each school. Teachers’ knowledge and experiences were also significant in informing reading comprehension practices. Knowledge was strengthened by collaborative discourse, but a lack of knowledge could also impact practices. Phronesis, a type of knowledge that drew on practical wisdom could also influence practices, and this was linked with teachers’ values and beliefs and their praxic intent. Considering the ‘relatings’ of practice architectures indicated that the relationships that teachers had with their pupils influenced their reading comprehension interactions. Some teachers sought opportunities to empower their pupils in these interactions. It also suggested that the relationship between colleagues affected practices and that a co-constructed model was enabling and empowering for teachers. Finally, it was found that where teachers had the opportunities to enact their values and beliefs through their reading comprehension practices, this was enabling and empowering.

Contribution to knowledge

Findings from this research contribute to understandings of recent reading comprehension practices in England. In this section the most significant aspects of this will be distilled.

- Broadened understanding of reading comprehension practices

The first key contribution to knowledge is the broadened understanding of reading comprehension practices achieved by this study. Understanding of the content of how reading comprehension is being taught is identified through the exemplary knowledge of case study (Thomas, 2011). Through narrative examples, the study has revealed how the complexities of reading comprehension ‘play out’ in teaching practices. Whilst the complexity of teaching has been recognised (Hoban, 2002, 2005), this research illustrates specific ways in which reading comprehension practices are varied and multi-layered. To the

author's knowledge, this is the first major inquiry into reading comprehension practices in England since Fisher (2008) and is particularly timely given the ongoing focus on reading (DfE, 2023).

- Exemplification of the supportive impact of a strong organisational model

The second key contribution is the exemplification of the supportive impact of a strong organisational model. Whilst different organisational models of teaching reading comprehension were observed, a cohesive institutional praxis (Kemmis and Smith, 2008) was identified as enabling for teachers. Models that were developed through the involvement of teachers and in response to contexts were empowering. This was demonstrated through examples such as resources being available for practices and sustained by professional development. A strong organisational model maintained a shared language about reading comprehension which impacted on teachers' confidence to articulate and gain understanding of their practices. Complexities in initiating and extending organisational models were also illustrated.

- The affective nature of reading comprehension practices

The third key contribution is recognition of the affective nature of reading comprehension practices. The summative descriptions and sections of lessons cited were illustrative reminders that teaching is a social interaction that orientates around the relationship between teachers and pupils. Teaching needs to be considered beyond a cognitive view of learning because feelings and emotions play an important role in teaching interactions (Hargreaves, 1998; Korthagen, 2010). Teachers are tasked with balancing agendas in the details of their teaching decisions (Scales et al., 2018). These may conflict with each other, (for example to use text extracts or whole texts) or conflict with their values and beliefs. Whilst some classroom approaches to teaching reading comprehension may have been developed, more broadly this has not been fully resolved in schools as teachers struggle to find systems in which reading comprehension can be taught in a manageable and skilled way.

Development and application of improved reading comprehension pedagogies remain hindered by the unresolved mechanisms of how these can work effectively and

meaningfully in classroom practices. Seidenberg et al. (2020) note that as theories of reading have become more complex, these have become oversimplified in how they have been represented in the educational context. Consequently, there is a need for translational research that links reading science to classroom practices. The cases demonstrate examples of how teachers have been unsupported by the distance between suggested pedagogies of teaching reading comprehension, their beliefs about the role of the teacher and the viable opportunities available. This study affirms the significance of teachers' daily decision making through its ongoing focus on practices and responds to Paige et al.'s (2021) argument that a focus on the art of teaching reading must be given consideration alongside the science of reading.

- The layered approach to analysis

One of Braun and Clarke's (2022: 7) qualitative sensibilities that particularly resonated with this study was 'the development of an analytic orientation to data'. This captured the persistence required to analyse the broad array of case study data in an ongoing way. The bringing together of case study, reflexive thematic analysis, and practice architectures in a layered approach has brought a richness of discussion which has contributed to the overall understanding. Although this was a personal and pragmatic response to reviewing and shaping the data, the layered methodology was also an innovative approach that facilitated a multidimensional view of reading comprehension practices. This allowed for a consideration of individuals, contexts and themes that combined practices across four sites. This approach may be a fruitful one for other researchers to adopt to investigate specific teaching practices across subjects and age phases.

In particular, the framework of practice architectures brought an additional lens to analysing the data which proved useful in identifying further insights about reading comprehension practices. As a theory it helped to 'make things visible or intelligible that are not immediately observable' (Biesta et al., 2011: 227). As a practice theory, it recognises that social practices are both situated and evolving and provides a multidimensional perspective that examines the interconnected arrangements beyond the visible. Examining the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements offered a profound

understanding of reading comprehension practices. The practice architectures framework was helpful in identifying some complex conditions of reading comprehension practices. It has articulated how practices are shaped and uncovered beliefs and implicit theories about reading comprehension practices such as exposing aspects of power, which adds to the interpretation (Biesta, 2013).

All these contributions are useful for those involved in understanding and developing reading comprehension practices. As a teacher educator, the key points about this research to communicate to student teachers are that reading is a complex process and that teaching reading is complex. As student teachers develop their knowledge about teaching reading, they should also develop their awareness of the contexts in which they practise and become aware of the values and beliefs they incorporate into their practices. For policy makers, a significant finding is that strong organisational models that respond to school contexts are supportive for teachers' reading comprehension practices. This research illustrates that teaching goes beyond the cognitive view of learning because feelings and emotions play an important role in teaching interactions. Consequently, focus on the art of teaching reading should be given consideration by policy makers alongside the science of reading to appreciate the complexity of decision making when teaching reading. Of note to researchers are the opportunities to study how the complexities of reading comprehension teaching practices 'play out' in the classroom. This can inform the success of translating research about reading into successful classroom practices. Therefore, there is need for continuing research on teaching practices, especially researching with teachers to negotiate their practices in genuine contexts and resisting 'telling them what to do'.

Limitations of the research

This research is limited by the vagaries of qualitative research more generally and case study more specifically. Idowu (2016: 184) captures typical criticisms of case study:

Case study research is often charged with causal determinism, non-replicability, subjective conclusions, absence of generalizable conclusions, biased case selection and lack of empirical clout.

A robust defence for case study being rigorous and suitable for this study was laid out in the methodology chapter. In brief, this inquiry argues that case study supports an ‘investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context’ (Schoch, 2020: 245) that informs relationships between parts of the whole (Stake, 2005).

A second limitation is this is a small research inquiry conducted over a number of years. Clarke (2022: 435) defends how ‘knowledge accumulates in qualitative research’ and how small-scale studies can add to our understanding.

It accumulates through lots of small-scale studies, addressing the same topic area, and through that you can start to tell a bigger broader story.

A further limitation of the study is that policy landscape of teaching reading more widely and teaching reading comprehension specifically has continued to develop and emerge since the collection of data. For example, the reading framework was substantially updated in July 2023, just two years after the initial publication in July 2021. A final limitation is to note the difficulties of gathering data about practices which teachers may lack awareness of and where my presence may have altered their comments and thinking. Just as responding to questions and discussing a text may alter a reader’s comprehension, talking about and discussing practices may have altered the teachers’ understandings.

Future directions and implications for research

This research is relevant to anyone who is interested in understanding and enhancing reading comprehension practices. The findings might be pertinent to professional development providers, initial teacher educators, and curriculum innovators including school leaders and policy makers. Engagement with practice theory such as practice architectures has established the significance of teachers’ practices responding to contexts. This investigation has focussed on the actual practices of reading comprehension, and better understanding how theories and policies might influence these. It establishes a starting point from which reading comprehension practices can be further developed. Integral to this research was a stance taken that did not set out to identify ideal practice or tell teachers they need to do things better or differently. Freire’s (1985b: 17) argument that

education is political and when we try to be neutral 'we support the dominant ideology' was a helpful reminder to remain mindful of concerns about teachers' performativity and the dominance of attainment in policy. Similarly, Biesta (2009, 2010) argued for the need to resist the drive to 'lock down' practices through standardisation and teacher proofing through scripted curricula and directing teaching through the guise of 'evidence-based practice'.

This study has highlighted the social interactions of teaching reading comprehension and the significance of relationships between teacher and pupils. It has affirmed the importance of teachers having agency over their practices and offering pupils agency over their own reading practices. There is scope for a greater appreciation and application of the concept of phronesis to understand and develop teaching practices in future studies, where the resolve of individual teachers to seek out agentic opportunities and to teach with praxis can be further understood. Exposing the impediments of reading comprehension practices is part of promoting the development of a reading comprehension praxis. However, developing reading comprehension practices is best achieved by teachers collectively reflecting on and amending their practices, as seen in examples from schools B, C and D. This is an aspect of development that can be initiated and supported by teacher education courses. This thesis has demonstrated that the organic and dynamic practices of teachers are worthy of better understanding. It recognises the problems that teachers face in their practices, once acknowledged, can inform the meaningful development of reading comprehension teaching.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Study Title

A case study exploring how teachers teach reading comprehension

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please read the following information carefully and ask questions if anything you read is not clear or you would like more information. Please take time to decide whether or not to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of the study is to investigate how reading comprehension is taught in schools and to hear the views of teachers about this. I am keen to find out what influences teachers' decisions about teaching reading comprehension.

Why have I been invited?

I am interested in your experiences of and opinions about teaching reading comprehension and you are in a school that has agreed to take part in this study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide. I will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which I will give to you. I will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What will be expected of me if I take part?

The study will take place in the academic year 2017 -18. If you take part, I will observe you teaching reading comprehension three times over the academic year. I will audio-record these lessons and I will be writing notes to aid my memory. I will interview you in the autumn and summer terms about your teaching of reading comprehension. These interviews will be audio-recorded and should take no more than 45 minutes.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You would be contributing to the development of research evidence in an important area, which may inform the teacher education curriculum.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to Karin Boyle (contact details below) who will do their best to answer your questions. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes, data will be audio-recorded and any quotes I use from it in writing up the research will be completely anonymised. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer known only by the researcher. Once the interviews have been transcribed, all the sound files will be deleted. No individuals will be identified, and any schools mentioned will be given pseudonyms.

What will happen if I do not carry on with the study?

If you withdraw from the study, I would retain the material recorded up to that point.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be written up for my PhD and for possible publication. You will not be identified.

Who is organising or sponsoring the research?

MMU: carrying out research is part of a university lecturer's role.

Further information and contact details:

Karin Boyle

k.boyle@mmu.ac.uk

0161 247 5046

Appendix 2 Consent form



Karin Boyle
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Consent Form

Title of Project: A multiple case study of reading comprehension: How do teachers teach and understand their teaching of reading comprehension?

Name of Researcher: Karin Boyle

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.
3. I understand that my responses will be sound recorded and used for analysis for this research project.
4. I give permission for my interview recording to be archived as part of this research project, making it available to future researchers.
5. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous.
6. I agree to take part in the above research project.
7. I understand that at my request a transcript of my interview can be made available to me.

Name of Participant Date Signature

Researcher Date Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant.

Once this has been signed, you will receive a copy of your signed and dated consent form.

Appendix 3 Letter to parents



Faculty of Education

5th January 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a Senior Lecturer teaching on the BA Primary Honours Degree and PGCE teaching courses at Manchester Metropolitan University. I am currently studying for a PhD and my area of research is reading comprehension.

The headteacher and the teachers in years 3 and 4 have agreed to support me in my research by letting me watch some of their teaching and talk to the teachers about reading. My focus is on how teachers teach reading comprehension. For part of my data collection, I will be observing guided (group) reading sessions. I will be taking notes about what is said and done in these lessons and will audiotape some short extracts. That means I may be observing the teacher when your child is working within a small group, doing what they regularly do in reading lessons.

I will be thoughtful about not interfering with the children's learning whilst I am visiting school. Prior to working at MMU I was a classroom teacher for 25 years and so have a deep understanding of how important it is for things to run smoothly. Any information I gather will be anonymised, for example, the school and individuals will not be named. This data will be stored securely and not accessible to anyone except myself.

The school has agreed to me undertaking this research, but if you are not happy with your child being involved in this project, please let me know that you do not consent. If you would like to ask any outstanding questions, please contact me at k.boyle@mmu.ac.uk and I will be happy to answer any queries. I will assume that you agree to your child being in a group that is being observed in reading and talking about books unless you return the attached slip below by Monday 16th January.

Yours faithfully,
Karin Boyle

FAO of Karin Boyle

I do not give permission for to take part in the research project about comprehension.

Signed Date

Appendix 4 Working table collating themes for each research question

<p>How do teachers teach RC? (Not including decoding and word recognition)</p>
<p>How - Guided reading and alternative organisational models Guided groups – school B – ‘very set structure’ – Lorraine see page 30 for long quote Changed from guided groups to whole class – Asma see p.18 for more details of carousel Mixed (school A) Guided groups is not the general style of teaching now and so children find it hard if the teacher is not available to support more broadly - Val Planning for 5 groups is onerous – Val Can be large groups of 8-10 as 5 groups is not manageable without a TA – Val Guided reading is not marked – Sarah Concern about what the independent groups are doing during guided reading and the quality of this, in KS1 doing at lunchtimes to avoid this problem – RC school A</p> <p>Reciprocal Reading School A, school C RR gives structure</p> <p>School C model: predict, read, clarify, questions, summarise</p> <p>Cross-curricular and topic School A, school B, school C - link learning – Liz, school D children choose the topic</p> <p>School D part of English cycle</p>
<p>When Guided reading or whole class In addition to comprehension focus lesson: Reading focus in English lesson – looking at a text, finding key words – Val, Asma</p> <p>Wider reading opportunities – range of texts read, and vocabulary taught in English – Dave, Sarah Wider book talk, including links between texts – Steve, Sarah Reading class reader and linked discussions- Steve, Val, Lorraine Independent activities for non-guided groups – Lorraine. Other independent activities such as book clubs – Reading consultant school B ERIC – Pete, Asma Paired reading – Asma, Liz (reminding of expectations and skills) Reading longer texts – Asma</p> <p>Concern – not enough reading done – Sarah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing attention to

- key content – Val, walk-through sets up context and links with experience including prior learning – Lorraine, Sakina, – Asma; finding the most important bits using the four Ws (who, what, when , where) – Liz
- what is stated and what is implied – to support inference – Lorraine
- changing voice for expression when reading – Steve, Sakina, Liz
- different types of questions
- Modelling
 - fluency when reading aloud novel – Dave, Sarah
 - rereading when making an error - Steve
 - the thinking behind developing understanding of a section of text, using ‘think talk’ – Steve, Pete, RC school C, Ellie on process of choices when answering a question; of how used inference – Lorraine
 - being unsure of what a word means on first reading– Steve, – Inference training TA
 - scanning for a key word to help answer a question – Steve, Sarah, Asma
 - summarising main points so far – Lorraine, Sakina, Pete, Asma
 - how to answer a question – Sarah, Sakina, including think-talk – Asma
 - checking understanding - Val
 - love of reading – Liz
 - thought processes – Liz
 - how to use evidence from the text to visualise a section of the text and draw this – RC school C
 - pairs of children asked to model how they can ask and answer questions about their chosen person – Ellie
 - Also a need for readers to take responsibility to make their own decisions and know the different skills used to answer different questions – RC school D
- Explanation
 - There can be more than 1 answer for some questions - Martha; a bit of a debate is a good thing – Dave, okay to be wrong as we can learn that way – RC school C
 - The type of question and the language used – Pete, Liz
 - Scanning for key words or punctuation can help to answer questions – Steve; Asma
 - Inference involves looking for clues – Steve, Sakina
 - Noticing punctuation can help understand how something is being said – Steve; and communicates details about the meaning – Asma
 - Why we need to read between the lines to answer some questions – Steve, how-Lorraine
 - To answer questions, do not just guess (Sarah) or think you need to remember the text (Val) look back at text so that you can be accurate, look back when reading independently – Asma
 - Finding the answer may take time – Sarah
 - How to use a Contents page – Lorraine
 - How visualisation supports understanding – Liz
 - Understanding builds from different bits of information like bricks in a wall
 - Some questions easier to answer than others – Ellie

- Guided practice
 - Choosing suitable text and planning questions – Steve
 - Helping pupils to orientate the text – Val; which section will have the relevant section – Steve, ‘teach them how to find things’ – Sarah
 - ‘coaching them how to answer questions properly’ and supporting steps to get a correct answer – Sarah
 - Drawing attention to how punctuation can affect tone and meaning – Steve, Val
 - Expanding on answers to support others understanding the answer – Val, Asma, Liz
 - Sequencing parts of the story – Asma
- Instruction – find evidence in the text – Dave, Steve, Sarah; think about which part of text to look at and look there – Val
- Drilling of routines – for example, read text, look for key words, answer question – Dave
- Prompting for self-monitoring – ‘anything you found tricky’ – Steve or written question cards – LEA consultant
- Checking – answer is from the text – Sarah; they can think of some strategies to use when stuck – Lorraine, Sakina
- Feedback on individual reading for example accuracy, fluency and prosody – Lorraine, Sakina

Teaching reading strategies

- Activating prior knowledge – linking text with wider understanding, links with background knowledge – Steve, Sarah
- Prediction – encourage, can test out ideas as you read – Steve, Liz
May use the blurb, be scaffolded with questions – Sarah; using ‘evidence from the text’ and what is known from ‘life experiences’, recapping what is known from text so far – Martha; justify your prediction – Martha; widening view of prediction, prediction as a sensible guess with supporting evidence from the text (including the pictures)– Ellie
- Questioning – students encouraged to think about (Sarah) and ask questions about the text
this supports them as active readers - Steve
 - Asking questions with different focuses – Val
 - Taught about different types of questions – Lorraine
 - Pupils are told the steps of answering a question – Steve,
 - To answer question, reader needs evidence from the text -Steve
 - Planning questions carefully for inference – Steve
 - Asking questions before reading can guide pupils towards comprehension as they read (rather than afterwards) – Steve, Val,
 - Asking questions to encourage children to think beyond the literal
 - There can be more than 1 answer to a question – Dave, Steve
 - ‘think about the parts you are going to go and look at to answer the questions....Some of these questions you need to think for yourself as it is your ideas, you won’t find the answer in the text’ – Val

- Recording answers is not required as they can talk about what they understand- Val
- Oral answers then written answers – Asma
- Cold question, answer just from the text and – Ellie
- Clarification – checking understanding of words – Steve, Sarah, Val; Pete, Asma, Liz, Ellie (see vocab. below)
- Visualisation – finding information to get details of what is happening, may need to put some clues together – Steve; text creates an image for the reader: ‘What image do you think he wants you to have in your head?’ (Val); talk about the image the author creates in our minds – Lorraine; encouraging children to visualise whilst text is read – Inference training TA; simple drawings to represent sections, details of text, how characters might be feeling – Pete,
- Summarisation – RC school B, Pete;; through recap – Martha; ‘what has happened in this extract so far?’ (Val), encouraging some skimming of text – Val; children knowing the steps of summarisation and able to evaluate and comment on summaries – Liz, school C having a discussion about summarisation as it is an /incredibly difficult skill’ – RC school C

Also

- Self-Monitoring – rereading, reading to the end of the sentence to check meaning of unknown word – Val,

Building vocabulary

- Dwell on an unknown word, highlight it and talk about it – Steve, Asma; how use in a different context, the picture the words draw in children’s minds – RC school A; visualise it – Asma
- Teacher explaining a few words before text is read – Lorraine, Sakina
- Think about the context word is being used in (for examples melted into the shadows is not a literal meaning Steve) – Steve, Sarah, Val, Asma, Martha
- Children use dictionaries and thesaurus to check meaning and build understanding of words – Steve, Sarah, Val, dictionaries and iPads – Martha and iPads and IWB – Ellie
- Linking with grammar work – Steve, Sarah, Val, Liz
- ‘You can’t separate reading from vocab. but if vocab.’s weak, it needs teaching discretely’.
- Children recording words they do not understand – LEA consultant
- Reading around a word, using picture and context to work out a word; ask and discuss word – Lorraine, Sakina, Asma, Liz
- Unknown words are underlined and meaning is unpicked, children find it text using quick scanning skills – Asma; this process is referred to as ‘broken down and repair’ – Inference training TA
- Concerned with seeing building vocabulary as just looking at words, also about phrasing and interaction is important.
- Vocabulary is more important in the revised SATs – RC school C
- ‘Rich language opportunities’– RC school B
- Many words pupils did not understand and assumed understanding as the children could read the text – Asma

- Looking at vocabulary in more depth is slower and they think about it – ‘it’s not just a quick, easy answer, they’ve got to really think about it’ – Asma
- Developing vocabulary supports competence in speaking, listening and understanding – EAL Coordinator school C
- Specialist vocab and gist of text needed for understanding – EAL Coordinator school C
- Text and therefore vocab linked to topic – Martha
- Teaching vocab that children will want to use in their writing – RC school D

Asking questions

- Uses scheme questions and some inference questions – Liz
- Posing a few questions before text is read to focus comprehension (which are displayed) – Lorraine, Sakina
- Different types of question – Val
- Questions are varied, to do with vocabulary, clarification, ones that are literal and inferential – Asma
- Generally questions follow pattern of ‘ask them why, how do you know, show me the text’ – Asma
- Some questions before reading text as a focus for understanding whilst reading – Steve
- Some literal questions – Sarah
- Progress from literal to inference – Sakina; via finding evidence – Martha
- Encouraged to look for key words – Steve, Val; and underline them – Val
- Layered questioning – allowing for different responses – Dave
- Cumulative questioning and answering where understanding builds – Steve, Lorraine; and answers are more refined or elaborated on
- Supporting and justifying their answers using evidence from the text – Steve, Pete
- Open and broad questions to encourage range of responses – Sarah, Val
- When reading class book may ask fewer questions so as not to ‘detract from then enjoying a story’ – Val
- To predict – Sakina
- To recap – Lorraine, Pete
- To summarise – Lorraine

Through discussion

- Linking to own experiences – Lorraine, Sakina
- Talking about text together – Val
- Allowing children the opportunity to explain and justify their thinking – Steve, Martha
- Encouraging their opinion – Steve, Lorraine, or their view – Reading consultant school B
- Accepting different ideas – Steve
- Using tentative language like perhaps, suggesting ideas need to be further verified – Val
- Scaffolding thinking to review information and re-evaluate understanding – Steve
- Elaborating an answer – Steve, Martha; and extend thinking – Martha
- Sharing thoughts about something – Sarah

- Talking about language choices of the author and linking with writing – Sarah, ‘author intent’ – Val
- Talking about texts, such as features of a non-fiction text, encouraging use of metalanguage – Lorraine, Liz

Encouraging meaning making
individual or prescribed/formulaic

- Reflect on understanding – Dave
- ‘Have another think, read the sentence again’ – Steve
- Vague answers need to be developed – Steve

Miscellaneous

Using picture books to support inference and deduction skills – Steve

Different to literal comprehension questions as exercises of the past – Val

There is more interaction with children and it is ‘more tailored to the children’s individual reading ability’ – Val

Manifestations of how RC is taught can be limiting – ‘as an exercise in itself it is not that important as long as they can understand what they are reading’ – Val

Reading journals at moderation meetings had pages of ‘standalone’ exercises but did not tell the story of a child’s reading development – LEA consultant

Less RC being taught in N/R ‘because it is all so wrapped up in phonics’ and ‘reading is about being able to read words and not the whole text’ – RC school A

Comprehension exercises have limitations – Reading consultant school B

Looking from text to detail such as words and then back to whole text to summarise it – Pete

How is the RC process understood by teachers?

What is reading comprehension?

Reading Comprehension is about understanding text and ‘reading for meaning’ – Sakina
‘reading comprehension is essentially understanding and I think you have to use your full understanding of the world around you and what you’ve experienced and what you’ve seen before’ – Martha

It builds on decoding, where decoding is weak this affects reading comprehension, as reading can become ‘very broken’ and ‘takes longer’ – Martha – ‘you don’t have the time to digest what’s happening to get that understanding of the book and therefore to enjoy it’ – Martha

Questioning meaning and checking understanding of reading – Val

Making sense of what they read – Val

Aim ‘to teach reading comprehension in a context that is meaningful’ – RC school A

‘more than understanding a piece of text’ they also need to relate to it – RC school A

Comprehension can be gained ‘through day to day living’ and reading for pleasure and conversations – LEA consultant

'Comprehension is understanding of what you've read but it's understanding to the degree of what the child can bring to the table and what knowledge they've got and what skills they've got so that the responses are variable' – LEA consultant

Different layers that lead to children's comprehension includes 'relating the text to personal experiences' (also Asma), understanding of new vocabulary, being able to understand what the author is communicating, inference and personal opinion, understanding the structure of the text – Lorraine

Teaching skills and over-layering these over time – RC school C

Skills need to be taught such as literal retrieval, inference, building on decoding, grammar and punctuation help with understanding, having metalanguage to talk about aspects of text – Liz

It builds on the foundations – Lorraine

'pictures are very important' – Inference training TA

Understanding can involve some puzzling through, working out possibilities of meaning, 'sometimes you have to guess and work it out and get your own feel for it' – Inference training TA

It is not about getting the right answers. – Reading consultant school B

Understanding the vocabulary can be comforting – Pete

'my experience has been that teachers have thought that they're teaching comprehension but in fact what they're doing is giving children a comprehension assessment to do' – RC school C

Challenge needed for more able readers – RC school C

'make sense of text if what you've read by relating to other texts and also to their own experience' – Martha

For some reading comprehension comes naturally and they 'are able to make connections better than others' but for others 'you need to explain to them and point out and prompt and encourage' - – Martha

As adults 'connections just happen automatically'...'we automatically infer and we understand it, whereas children don't necessarily do that' – Martha

Our responsibility to offer wider experiences – Martha

Teaching offers experiences. School D's approach means that pupils have a range of activities and ways to access the learning – Ellie

If children read more, understanding can come about naturally, reading outside of school has a role to play in wide exposure to text – RC school D

Children need to see links in the text rather than always being shown – RC school D

Children can be given opportunities to read to learn/find out rather than learning about reading – RC school D

Metacognition – trying to get the children to become a bit more understanding of what higher-order thinking skills are in reading, so they understand what the more difficult skills are and what it is to be a more established reader’ – RC school D

Reading Comprehension is important

Reading and understanding text

‘runs through absolutely everything’ – RC school C, ‘runs through everything’ – Ellie

‘one of the most important things as they need reading for everything’ – Martha;

‘one of the most important things we do’ – RC school D

It is purposeful, supports understanding and wider knowledge eg. for technical language in topic – Martha

- As a life skill – Dave, Ellie – need to comprehend what you’re doing in life which is supported by experiences of text or information – Ellie
- Necessary for every lesson – RC school D
- Affects every aspect of learning – Liz
- To raise standards
- Getting pupils interested in reading- Steve
- To gain information and learn new things – Steve; ‘opens up doors to knowledge’ (Val)
- Underpins wider teaching and learning – Steve
- Knowledge and understanding of texts supports writing and writing affirms reading comprehension – Steve, Val, Liz, Martha

Unpicks an author’s intent and links with writing – LEA consultant

Reading comprehension is complex

RC ‘takes time and takes a n exposure to a range of things and takes the engagement of children to want to use those different texts and build on their understanding’ – Ellie

Looking at a range of texts and styles of writing and different perspectives over weeks leads to comprehension– Ellie

‘it’s a combination of different skills’ – Martha

‘so many different aspects to it’ – RC school C

‘Comprehension is the most complex bit’ – Reading consultant school B

‘a complicated thing’ – Steve

‘tricky to teach’ – Val

‘so wide’ – RC school A

Layered – RC school B

‘it’s so complicated, it’s almost scary’ – RC school A

‘I think comprehension is a mystery to. A lot of children and a lot of teachers probably’– Reading consultant school B

'You can teach for comprehension but really you can't make someone have comprehension' – Reading consultant school B

'be able to read something and understand it' – Liz

Combining a range of strategies – Liz

Needs repetition – Liz

'making sense of print, its getting meaning and enjoyment out of text' – EAL Coordinator school C

- Process is 'quite intangible' – Pete
- It involves monitoring your understanding – Steve, Liz
- Understanding key content – Val, inference training pupils establish the gist (1. Characters, 2 Story takes place, 3 story starts, 4 the problem, 5 is the problem solved?). They also capture the beginning, middle and end of the story using pictures – Inference training TA
- Children need to be able to decode and read the literal text to be able to comprehend text independently – Dave, Steve, Sarah; they need to be able to read with fluency 'without the reading efficiency, then the comprehension's going to struggle' – Reading consultant school B
- literal comprehension precedes inference or evaluation, literal is 'bedrock' and needs to be solid to build inference on top of; decoding precedes even literal – LEA consultant; weak decoding makes RC harder – Ellie
- Children tend to focus on comprehension after reading, partly because that is what the discussion and questioning suggests, although the aim is 'for them to comprehend as they're reading' – Steve
- It involves careful looking at text to find answers – Dave
- You may need to orientate around the text and use skimming and scanning to assist - Sarah
- It involves giving evidence for answers – Dave and not guessing from memory - Steve, Val,
- and checking answers – Dave
- It involves thinking about the meaning of words – Dave
- And thinking about the whole text, linking ideas – Steve
- It can involve puzzling something through - Steve
- It involves accuracy – Dave
- Although it is not always as straightforward as a question having a right or wrong answer - Steve
- It can involve giving an opinion – Dave; Lorraine
- It is fluid, it differs between people – Lorraine
- Pupils need to be confident to find answers in a text- Dave
- It involves self-monitoring – Sarah
- Breadth of applying skills is needed across genres – LEA consultant
- 'Integrating sources of information to interpret the text' – EAL Coordinator school C
- Comprehension can be partial – EAL Coordinator school C
- Detail is important for understanding – Martha

How purpose of Questioning is understood

'crucial' – LEA consultant

- Children asking the questions – part of inference training routine – Inference training TA; views this as 'true comprehension', 'a good comprehender asks their own questions' – Reading consultant school B
- Questioning monitors understanding - AFL and encouraging self-monitoring – Sarah
- Understanding develops through questioning – Dave, Sarah
- Opportunity for readers to justify answers – Lorraine
- RC talked about as if it is answering questions about texts – Dave
- Some questions are planned – Lorraine
- Some questions respond to pupils' responses – Steve, – Lorraine
- Helps to focus on key information – Lorraine
- Questions to think a little wider, not too wide as pupils can lose sight of key parts of text – Steve
- Develop understanding of language of questions – 'They have to be really familiar with how a question is asked' – Sarah, understanding what the Q is asking of reader – Asma
- Need to be 'clever at questioning' to facilitate 'a well-structured conversation' – Sarah
- Encourages children to make connections
- Questions need to support pupils' progress. Pupils need to be taught the skills needed to answer questions – LEA consultant
- Children need answers to be modelled – LEA consultant
- Needs to link with what child needs to learn next – LEA consultant
- Encouraging response and reflection to a text – LEA consultant
- They can be used to assess pupils but there also needs to be some teaching, a danger of 'just assessing, assessing, assessing, rather than teaching' – LEA consultant
- Uses questions from textbooks – Pete
- On the spot questioning and planned questioning – Liz
- 'SATS style questions' – Liz with '
- 'question stems' – Liz
- Linked content domains are displayed – Liz
- Understanding phrasing of questions – EAL Coordinator school C
- Important to think about questioning, 'and to manipulate things so they aren't always experienced from the same perspective' – Ellie
- Different types of questions and different formats of question even for same skill. Encourage children to do an extended response – Ellie
- Some questions pre-planned, some from children, some come from children's responses, some hot and cold questioning – Ellie

Discussion supports reading comprehension

'without all that discussion then the comprehension isn't going to be there' – Lorraine

- Discussion in pairs – Asma
- Conversational work – Dave
- Before they answer independently, 'lots of ideas, lots of discussion' – Asma
- Discussion before and after reading text – Dave

- Expectation of discussion encourages children to think about what they are reading so they can join in the discussion– Lorraine
- Enjoys the unpredictability of discussion and using skill of ‘responding on the spot’ – Lorraine
- Building to debates with peers, children able to run discussion – Dave
- Children’s oral answers are often clearer than written ones – Steve
- You can see their thought processes and how they are linking ideas to gain meaning - Steve
- Guided them to understanding rather than telling them - Steve
- Adding to each other’s point – cf to cumulative talk – Alexander – Steve, – Inference training TA, Asma, Liz
- Longer texts can support better understanding as they understand the characters better, know the storyline and can predict better (would like it to be more book-based) – Val
- It can be difficult to keep a track of what you have covered in open discussions – RC school A
- Discussion may move away from objectives and lack focus. Teachers may not have considered the text in detail beforehand
- Need for tasks or activities to record comprehension? Capture learning and as a useful memoire with pupils - – LEA consultant
- Can be a challenge to get quieter children involved – Sakina
- Structured discussion helps with ‘reading between the lines and coming up with scenarios of what it could be, then linking it to the text’ – Inference training TA
- Even after verbalising answers, children forget – Pete
- Before writing down an answer, discuss with a partner – Asma
- Pupils encouraged to talk about their understanding and gain deeper understanding – Asma
- Talk about how they got their answers – Asma
- Talking about answers builds more detailed answers – Asma and greater understanding – Liz
- Works to ‘develop competence at speaking and listening and understanding’ – EAL Coordinator school C
- Discussing which answer is the best one – RC school C
- Can also draw on each other’s experience to build comprehension – Martha
- Also influenced by children’s confidence in speaking – Ellie

Roles in reading comprehension

Pupils

‘reading for meaning’ – Sakina

‘someone who enjoys reading’ – Liz

Experiences they share supports other pupils gaining those experiences – Ellie

- Should read carefully – Dave
- They should look at the text to retrieve answers (Val); try and gain a good understanding by looking at the details of the text and **checking** understanding and answers – Dave, Asma
- Think with connection to the text – Steve, Asma – ‘I like that way of thinking’

- Working out the meaning (suggests active) – Val; needing to work at making sense – Inference training TA
- ‘be an active learner’ – Steve
- ‘be active, trying out the skills’ – Steve
- Engage with the teaching – Sarah
- Take responsibility for pace and effort – Sarah
- Identifies purpose of text – Lorraine, Sakina
- Need to build on their literal understanding – Sakina
- Pupils knowing the skills they need to answer comprehension questions: Skills like looking in the text taught by the teacher, but reader takes responsibility to apply skills; they tend to still need reminding to use skills – Asma
- ‘they have to love reading or want to understand. They have to develop their own strategies for understanding’ – Liz
- Reasoning and thinking about text independently – Liz
- Ask questions, links this with KPIs, ‘ask appropriate questions about the text’ – Liz
- Knowing how reading skill support writing – RC school D

Teachers – ‘an enabling role’ – Sarah; supporting them on their journey to being an independent reader’ – Sakina

‘almost a facilitator’ ‘open the children up to many different types of texts’ – Liz

‘facilitating’ – Ellie

Facilitates through questioning – Martha

- Choosing suitable text (Steve) that is engaging (Sarah, Liz), age-appropriate (Sarah, Liz) and yet challenging – Liz
- Noticing pupils’ understanding
- Planning questions that support comprehension – Steve
- Asking range of questions – literal retrieval, inferential and deduction – Liz
- ‘trying to equip them with the skills that they need in order to have a better understanding of the text in depth’ – Steve
- Helping them make connections – Steve; Martha; Asma – for example being reminded to use their skills to read, they ‘don’t make connections easily’; ‘sometime I think that as a teacher maybe that’s the main thing I end up trying to do is to help children make those connections and links – Asma
- ‘bringing the book to life’ – Val
- Encourages inferences – Lorraine
- Teaching interactions – Reading consultant school B
- ‘listen to responses and lift the quality of responses’ – Reading consultant school B; after an answer, ‘keep prodding and keep trying to go deeper, get more children to give me more developed answers’ – Asma
- Supporting the gap between reading and being able to answer questions about the text – Pete
- Teaching pupils’ strategies ‘and scaffolding where necessary’ – Pete
- Breaking down the process to answer questions, scaffolding where necessary – Pete
- ‘keep asking questions, not giving them the answers’ – Asma
- ‘increasing fluency’, ‘vocabulary building’ – Liz

- Assessing next steps – Martha

Text

- Given its place by purpose given it by teacher and pupils
- Needs to support objective – RC school A
- Linked with topics or wider curriculum – LEA consultant
- Breadth of texts is important, also familiar and unfamiliar – LEA
- Text needs to be interesting – Asma
- Text ‘has some relevance to the reader’ – Asma
- Contains some new vocabulary – Asma
- Linking to real life, understanding genres and purposes of texts – Liz
- Pupils able to choose texts to support motivation, teachers offering appealing texts – Liz
- Comparing and contrasting texts – Liz
- Texts can influence the imagination, subject knowledge, social and emotional development – Ellie

Children need to develop some key skills

- Literal thinking, deductive thinking and inferential thinking – Steve
- Sifting through information and interpreting it – Steve
- Explicitly teaching the process that ‘mimics what very confident readers do’ so that it becomes a habit – Pete

‘Inference is a key skill’ – Steve

- Like being a detective, ‘clue hunting’ for example to see how a character feels at a point in the story – Steve
- It is hard to teach – Sakina; ‘most challenging’ to teach’. Skills need to be taught such as literal retrieval, inference, building on decoding – Liz; harder than retrieval – RC school D
- Inference needs a toolbox of skills including rich language – Inference training TA
- Knowing you need to ‘read between the lines’ does not mean that you know what these steps look like – Inference training TA
- Hard to break down inference, but inference ‘comes naturally’ to some pupils as they draw on their knowledge and experience – Martha

Skills inter-relate

- To infer, you may also need to read for purpose and scan for key words – Steve

Repetition of using skills will lead to understanding Dave, Steve

‘if you repeat, repeat, repeat those skills then they will start understanding it’ - Sarah

Reading comprehension is linked with background knowledge

- Children may have limited experiences which influences their reading comprehension – Steve, Sarah, Asma, Liz; and makes it harder – RC school A; cannot fully influence – Lorraine; cannot be taught Sakina
- ‘gaps of knowledge’ can be challenging – Val
- Choosing texts linked with topics helps children as they have ‘background markers’ – RC school A, also Sakina school B and Asma school C
- ‘You always bring your background knowledge, no matter what you are reading’ – Inference training TA

- Children draw on wider knowledge and experiences to build understanding – Ellie
- ‘a lot of comprehension is based on experience and being allowed to have that experience that isn’t just focused on reading the text itself, but focused on them understanding it on a different level rather than just extracting information....the deeper understanding of it comes from a combination of exposure and opportunity to sort of live the text’ – Ellie

Reading comprehension is intertwined with reading for pleasure

Develop as a hobby and be inspired to read – RC school D

‘to enjoy a book, I think you have to be able to understand it and you have to be able to make those connections’ – Martha

‘But teaching it and breaking down those skills and I don’t want to say forcing it but you almost are aren’t you, and making children reflect on everything and evaluate what they’ve read and that might take away the pleasure’ – the process of actually teaching them those skills might be the things that steers them away from the book because they’re not being allowed to just read’ – Martha

School encouraging children to read with a reading challenge – ‘I don’t know if you can encourage reading for pleasure (laughs)’ – Martha

Reading dog encourages children – Martha

Reading is taught better because of reading for pleasure – LEA consultant

‘comprehension comes through the love of the text, and the love of words and the love of reading’ RC school A –

Teachers need to at least act their love of reading – RC school A

Wants children to be ‘wrapped up’ and ‘soaked in the text’ – RC school A

The relationship between reading for pleasure and reading comprehension is imperative, if you do not comprehend, you will not enjoy reading – Liz

- Want them to enjoy reading – Sarah, Liz and ‘learn from reading’ – Liz
- RfP is important – Sakina
- Enjoyment influences understanding – Ellie
- It can influence a growth mindset – Liz
- Teachers being enthusiastic readers makes a difference – LEA consultant
- Children enjoy listening to adults and peers model reading – Sarah
- ‘children need to know the purpose and the outcome’ of reading; need to know purpose of reading – Asma
- They understand better – Sarah – links with cognitive load theory
- lack of time to read class novel – Dave
- Teachers want ‘children to enjoy and understand what they are reading’ – Steve
- RfP is underpinned by competent reading – ‘they can’t enjoy what they’re reading or find the humour in it or be excited if they’re actually struggling to read it’ – Sakina
- Relevance of the text might affect engagement – Steve
- Wider reading opportunities helps pupils make links – Steve; and wider variety of text builds comprehension Skills need to be taught such as literal retrieval, inference, building on decoding – Liz; independent way of learning in school D supports pupils making connections – Ellie
- RfP and ‘getting involved in the story’ is more important than reading comprehension – Val

- You can ‘lose the enjoyment through overanalysing’ – Val; tension between ‘interrogating the text’ and enjoying the text – RC school A
- Limiting experiences to analysing text extracts can be detrimental to enjoyment, ‘we seem to have lost the love of books somewhere along the line when we were reading extracts’ – RC school A
- Teachers need to be trained in RfP – LEA consultant
- RfP is comprehension in practice – RC school B
- Readers need to be motivated to read, RfP is ‘a bit of a woolly term’, ‘you don’t have to enjoy it all the time’ – Reading consultant school B
- Reading is not linked to pleasure for the majority of children in class – affected by lack of models at home and weaker reading skills – Asma
- When they do read for pleasure ‘they just want to finish’ the book ‘and move on’ and maybe miss out on some connections; although they use imagination and different understandings do not matter – Asma
- Making connections with real life is important but enjoyment of reading can also come ‘out of it not being relatable to real life’ such as adventure stories – Liz

Miscellaneous

Reading Comprehension has ‘lots of barriers’ – Steve

Concern that pupils are not reading and absorbing – Sarah

Lower attainers can be challenging in their attention and interest – Sarah

Can use venn diagrams to draw links between texts – LEA consultant

Stamina to read longer texts will support comprehension – Pete, Asma, stamina and to read and recall – Liz

Texts written for white, middle-class English children which may not relate to children trying to read the book – Asma

Why do they teach RC in this way?

Teacher Knowledge

School training and structure – school A

Teacher knowledge is a challenge to RC, they need ‘skilling up’ – LEA consultant, a need to raise subject knowledge – Reading consultant school B; also ‘engagement and enjoyment on behalf of teachers’ and lack of materials – LEA consultant

‘got a long way to go’ but ‘there is a thirst there’ – Reading consultant school B

Teachers do not recognise the purpose and value of guided reading and are put off by the hard work and effort. Guided reading is misunderstood, often. A ‘round robin’ approach and a lack of systems and processed in weaker schools; teachers need greater understanding of reading as a journey – LEA consultant

Teachers’ attitude shift is needed, ‘it’s beyond six books, turn-taking, they’ve answered a question’ instead of a chore, to see it as a vehicle for teaching reading – LEA consultant

Guided reading is misunderstood, often. A ‘round robin’ approach and a lack of systems and processed in weaker schools; teachers need greater understanding of reading as a journey – LEA consultant

Discuss questions orally before given a written comprehension – Liz

Not really teaching for silent comprehension which is another life skill, 'silent comprehension is for the reader' – Liz

Face paced – pace as an important part of the sequence – Liz

Some teachers following the school model do not know the reasons why – Liz - and so lack some professional knowledge

TAs need to be trained in guided reading and be able to follow and use teachers' plans – LEA consultant

Some schools are constrained by their lack of vision which is not underpinned by a love of reading – LEA consultant

Lack of other guidance – Sarah

Hopes this replaced by more structure and a whole school ethos around teaching reading – Sarah

Teachers need guidance to teach guided reading purposefully – RC school A

New way of planning for school C 'has a much greater purpose' – Liz

Teachers found guided reading 'a chore' and looked at it as 'an add-on' – LEA consultant

'they didn't really want to do it and the biggest chore was finding the materials to use and thinking about what they were going to do. They didn't see it as the teaching of reading' but would 'go through the motions' – LEA consultant

Question the use of schemes with scripts for teaching reading which were used 'as a crutch', teachers needed more awareness and more skills – LEA consultant

Guided reading can be a good opportunity but it can be a waste of time 'if the teacher's disinterested, they're not prepared, it's not pitched at the right level' needs a 'mindset change about how positive it can be and how rewarding it can be' – LEA consultant

'teachers need time to think about how you can't force it, you've got to strip it back and find out what helps'; 'and think what does a good comprehender do?' – Reading consultant school B

We need to do more that give children more exercises of something they find hard – Reading consultant school B

'a research-based approach around comprehension' – RC school B

'a high priority' – RC school B

'more time teaching' with new whole class approach – Liz

Some staff relying on the comprehensions provided with the text books (Cracking Comprehension)

Question stems to develop question range – Liz

New structure 'explicitly teaching comprehension skills' – RC school C

All teachers may not have awareness of why the different elements of sequence are needed. – RC school C

Fine tuning between consistent approach and adaptable for class, text etc. – RC school C

Responding to 'what works'

Influence from school model is ongoing – Martha

Working independently in guided reading is seen as quite dull – Sarah

Always more to be done, school B looking at the link between oracy and inference – RC school B

Likes the process – Pete

Whole class is more manageable for workload – Pete

With guided reading, independent work was not very productive – Asma
'in the past it was more like I was listening to them read but now it's more of a focus on 'do they actually understand what they read?' – Asma

Repeating the structure supports the pupils and all of the children get some focussed teaching each day –and all of the skills are being taught each week – Pete

Important not to rush through stages of understanding such as summarising and clarifying – Liz

Answering questions as the endgame – Pete

Can make assumptions about what pupils can understand – RC school 'teaching comprehension is not

High-quality texts – RC school C

Influences

The influence of national documents

- National Curriculum and age-related learning objectives – Steve, Sarah, Val, Martha
- Picking out the skills from the NC (represented by the content domains)

Other influences

- Knowledge of theory
- Reciprocal reading
- Collecting ideas about how to teach RC, 'listening to ideas, advice, support' – Dave
- Blogs – Sarah
- Questioning tools such as Blank 4 level questioning (naming, describing, retelling, justifying) and questioning dice – Sarah
- Experience – Sarah, Asma, limited so planned trips to broaden experiences and develop vocabulary– RC school C
- 'tell me what to do!' Sarah
- Staff meetings and other training – Steve,
- DIAL staff training – Val
- Reading journals course with LEA consultant - Val
- A lack of influence – would like to be mentored – Sarah

- Reciprocal reading – RC school A, RC school C, summarising and visualising help with comprehension – Asma
- DARTS activities such as cut-up texts and sequencing – EAL Coordinator school C
- Informed by what a good reader can do and being aware of barriers – RC school C
- Staff meetings, INSET days – Martha
- Bloom’s taxonomy to ‘promote higher order thinking’ – Martha
- Twitter – RC school D
- Network meetings for new ideas – RC school D
- Discussions in staff meetings – RC school D

The influence of context

- Pupils – language – EAL (multilingual pupils) and limited language – Pete, Asma, Liz – so need ‘exposure to vocabulary’ alongside skills to look at text around unknown vocabulary so they can build their independent reading skills; ‘paucity of language’ influencing understanding and teachers ‘are filling in gaps’ – RC school A; language deprivation, that’s our biggest school challenge’ – Reading consultant school B; correlation between listening comprehension and reading comprehension – Reading consultant school B; many words they do not understand – Asma; language barriers – Asma; barrier of language can affect pupils from the start of their time at school – Liz
Some children literate in their first language – EAL Coordinator school C
‘a sound grounding in their first language helps their English language development – EAL Coordinator school C
Lack of vocabulary in school context – RC school C
- Pupils in schools not from disadvantaged areas will not need as much time and dedication in teaching reading comprehension – Liz
- Parents – if they read to their child before they come to school ‘reading miles – Reading consultant school B; listen to their child read, model reading, ask questions; ‘low book handling experiences’ – RC school B
(School A – a number of pupils that get little or no support)
‘home influence is a really big barrier’ – Liz
Children whose parents support them at home with reading tend to be the stronger readers – Liz
Parents listen to their children read in ‘a very passive way’ – not asking questions to develop comprehension but focussing on accuracy of word reading; parents are more focussed on decoding – RC school A; Liz in school C encourages her parents not just to hear them read but to ask questions, some parents cannot read in English
a lack of parents as reading role models – RC school A; parents unsure how to support comprehension and what to ask – LEA consultant
- Lack of experiences – Liz. Martha talks about life experiences and reading experiences and support with this at home
- Children reading at home makes a difference– Pete; those that do not make slower progress – Sakina
- School support and professional development

- Resources
 - Reading Explorers' scheme has suggested question which teaches add to - Steve, Sarah
 - And has differentiated texts with questions – Sarah, Val
 - Not interesting to use all of the time - Val
 - Comprehension Box for independent activities – Sarah
 - Sometimes hard to find suitable text – Sarah, Val; or sets of 6 books – Val, would like an 'easily accessible' 'bank of resources' (Sarah)
 - Filling gaps in texts part of role – RC school A
- Challenge of time – Dave, Val, Asma
- and space – Dave

Phronesis?

Working at an intuitive level – Dave

Questioning can be organic – some preparation and some responsive – Sarah

'just through experience and knowing what works' – Val

Interactions and questioning – 'one of those things that you almost do by instinct' - Val

Responding to opportunities in the text - Val

'teachers are quite skilled in teaching the strategies ...but I sometimes think we are not as skilled as unpicking what we do as it is so complex' – RC school A

The influence of tests and performativity

'a tendency to do more test-type comprehension in year 6' – Steve

'I think the test is definitely a really big part of it' – Liz

'the testing side of it is a huge pressure and I think that gives an image of what comprehension is', 'it does influence the teachers' perception of what comprehension is' – Reading consultant school B

'forced as a goal' – Pete

Need to be able to answer questions in a test – Liz

- SATS type questions, using Cracking Comprehension scheme questions as 'the sentences stems are quite similar to the ones that they use in the SATs' – Liz
- Sometimes they need to write their answers down to practise this skilled for SATS test – Steve
- 'dilemma between testing and the enjoyment of getting into books' – Steve
- 'feeling judged' – Steve
- Find out more about a child through discussion that by tests – Steve
- Reinforces idea that there are correct answers and that comprehension happens after reading – Steve
- Structure and layout in tests can seem 'quite alien' and impact on confidence and success, which can suggest more test practice. But does not feel right – Steve
- In y2 and y6 different as they 'are having to get the children through SATs' RC school A
- Aspects of the tests such as circling the correct number or responding with correct number of answers 'isn't really comprehension' – RC school A
- Tests have written answers but written answers can be overwhelming for some children – Lorraine

- Tests can have long texts that some children struggle to read and orientate within – Lorraine
- Children need experience of the tests – Sakina
- In longer texts (novels) ‘it’s sometimes hard to find questions that are similar to exam style question’ – Asma
- Plan to ‘model SATs style questions’ – Liz

Content domains

Seen as ‘the set of skills’ – RC school D

Use the content domains when planning – Liz, thinking about things that can be taught – Ellie

Do – reading for word meaning (using the context to work out the word meaning), retrieval, inference summarising and making comparisons, predicting, impact of author’s choices – RC school D

- Main type of questions in SATs are inference and literal so focus and expand on these. They also need to summarise to order text fully – Asma
- Similarly focus on inference, retrieval and word meaning because they come up more on tests – RC school D
- Informs the LOs – Asma
- Difference between comprehension questions on a SATs paper and ‘actually comprehending text’, it is ‘another thing having a depth of understand that occurs over time over a period of time – Ellie

The influence of values and beliefs

- Children stay active in making meaning – Steve
- Influence children through own enthusiasms for reading – Steve, Sarah
- Frustrated that pupils do not check the text to answer question – Dave, Sarah
- Sometimes feels insecure about subject knowledge – Sarah
- Important to raise pupils’ confidence – Ellie
- Influence and ethos of the school – Ellie

The seduction of the engaging lesson

Using song lyrics as text – this ‘new way to read’ acted as an innovation that captured children’s interest – Dave

Want pupils to be interested in text and see its relevance – Sarah

Children being engaged does not equate to reading development – LEA consultant

Just because children are joining in and having fun this does not imply learning is happening – LEA consultant

Miscellaneous

The difficulty with using text extracts is that each lesson is stand alone with different texts each time and that misses out the opportunity to build cumulative knowledge about a text – Val

With shorter extracts the questions can be more focused. There is more time for repeated readings and to look at the text in depth. They suit pupils who can find concentration challenging – Asma

Writing answers can use different skills – Sakina

Moving to whole class means that the objectives are much clearer as very hard to figure out where each group was up to – Pete

Appendix 5 Significant elements of the data in relation to research question 'How is reading comprehension understood by teachers?'

How is the RC process understood by teachers?

What is reading comprehension?

Reading and understanding text - 'be able to read something and understand it' – Liz

Reading Comprehension is about understanding text and 'reading for meaning' – Sakina

Questioning meaning and checking understanding of reading – Val

Making sense of what they read – Val 'make sense of text of what you've read by relating to other texts and also to their own experience' – Martha

'making sense of print, it's getting meaning and enjoyment out of text' – EAL Coordinator school C

'reading comprehension is essentially understanding and I think you have to use your full understanding of the world around you and what you've experienced and what you've seen before' – Martha

It builds on decoding, where decoding is weak this affects reading comprehension, as reading can become 'very broken' and 'takes longer' – Martha – 'you don't have the time to digest what's happening to get that understanding of the book and therefore to enjoy it' – Martha

'Comprehension is understanding of what you've read but it's understanding to the degree of what the child can bring to the table and what knowledge they've got and what skills they've got so that the responses are variable' – LEA consultant

Reading Comprehension is important

'runs through absolutely everything' – RC school C, 'runs through everything' – Ellie

'one of the most important things as they need reading for everything' – Martha

'one of the most important things we do' – RC school D

It is purposeful, supports understanding and wider knowledge eg. for technical language in topic – Martha

- As a life skill – Dave, Ellie – need to comprehend what you're doing in life which is supported by experiences of text or information – Ellie
- Necessary for every lesson – RC school D; affects every aspect of learning – Liz
- To gain information and learn new things – Steve; 'opens up doors to knowledge' (Val); Underpins wider teaching and learning – Steve
- Knowledge and understanding of texts supports writing and writing affirms reading comprehension – Steve, Val, Liz, Martha
- Unpicks an author's intent and links with writing – LEA consultant
- Getting pupils interested in reading- Steve

Reading comprehension is complex

RC 'takes time and takes an exposure to a range of things' – Ellie

Looking at a range of texts and styles of writing and different perspectives over weeks leads to comprehension – Ellie

'Comprehension is the most complex bit' – Reading consultant school B

'a complicated thing' – Steve

'tricky to teach' – Val

'so many different aspects to it' – RC school C

'so wide' – RC school A

'layered' – RC school B

'it's so complicated, it's almost scary' – RC school A

'I think comprehension is a mystery to. A lot of children and a lot of teachers probably' – Reading consultant school B

'You can teach for comprehension but really you can't make someone have comprehension' – Reading consultant school B

Combining a range of strategies – Liz

Different layers that lead to children's comprehension includes 'relating the text to personal experiences' (also Asma), understanding of new vocabulary, being able to understand what the author is communicating, inference and personal opinion, understanding the structure of the text – Lorraine

Reading Comprehension is multifaceted

Untangling the intangible

- Process is 'quite intangible' – Pete
- 'it's a combination of different skills' – Martha
- needs repetition – Liz
- Children need to be able to decode and read the literal text to be able to comprehend text independently – Dave, Steve, Sarah; they need to be able to read with fluency 'without the reading efficiency, then the comprehension's going to struggle' – Reading consultant school B
- literal comprehension precedes inference or evaluation, literal is 'bedrock' and needs to be solid to build inference on top of; decoding precedes even literal – LEA consultant; weak decoding makes RC harder – Ellie
- It involves thinking about the meaning of words – Dave
- And thinking about the whole text, linking ideas – Steve
- It can involve puzzling something through – Steve, 'Integrating sources of information to interpret the text' – EAL Coordinator school C
- Detail is important for understanding – Martha
- Understanding key content – Val, inference training pupils establish the gist (1. Characters, 2 Story takes place, 3 story starts, 4 the problem, 5 is the problem solved?). They also capture the beginning, middle and end of the story using pictures – Inference training TA
- It involves accuracy – Dave
- It involves monitoring your understanding – Steve, Liz. It involves self-monitoring – Sarah
- can involve giving an opinion – Dave; Lorraine
- It is fluid, it differs between people – Lorraine
- It involves careful looking at text to find answers – Dave
- You may need to orientate around the text and use skimming and scanning to assist - Sarah
- It involves giving evidence for answers – Dave and not guessing from memory - Steve, Val,
- and checking answers – Dave
- Although it is not always as straightforward as a question having a right or wrong answer - Steve

- Children tend to focus on comprehension after reading, partly because that is what the discussion and questioning suggests, although the aim is 'for them to comprehend as they're reading' – Steve
- Understanding can involve some puzzling through, working out possibilities of meaning, 'sometimes you have to guess and work it out and get your own feel for it' – Inference training TA
- Stamina to read longer texts will support comprehension – Pete, Asma, stamina and to read and recall – Liz

Teaching Reading Comprehension

Comprehension can be gained 'through day to day living' and reading for pleasure and conversations – LEA consultant

For some reading comprehension comes naturally and they 'are able to make connections better than others' but for others 'you need to explain to them and point out and prompt and encourage' – Martha

As adults 'connections just happen automatically'...'we automatically infer and we understand it, whereas children don't necessarily do that' – Martha

Skills need to be taught such as literal retrieval, inference, building on decoding, grammar and punctuation help with understanding, having metalanguage to talk about aspects of text – Liz

Teaching skills and over-layering these over time – RC school C

'my experience has been that teachers have thought that they're teaching comprehension but in fact what they're doing is giving children a comprehension assessment to do' – RC school C

Children need to develop some key skills

- Literal thinking, deductive thinking and inferential thinking – Steve
- Sifting through information and interpreting it – Steve
- Explicitly teaching the process that 'mimics what very confident readers do' so that it becomes a habit – Pete

Importance of building vocabulary

- Developing vocabulary supports competence in speaking, listening and understanding – EAL Coordinator school C
- Specialist vocab and gist of text needed for understanding – EAL Coordinator school C
- 'You can't separate reading from vocab. but if vocab.'s weak, it needs teaching discretely' – LEA consultant
- Looking at vocabulary in more depth is slower and they think about it – 'it's not just a quick, easy answer, they've got to really think about it' – Asma

'Inference is a key skill' – Steve

- Like being a detective, 'clue hunting' for example to see how a character feels at a point in the story – Steve
- It is hard to teach – Sakina; 'most challenging' to teach'. Skills need to be taught such as literal retrieval, inference, building on decoding – Liz; harder than retrieval – RC school D
- Inference needs a toolbox of skills including rich language – Inference training TA
- Knowing you need to 'read between the lines' does not mean that you know what these steps look like – Inference training TA

- Hard to break down inference, but inference ‘comes naturally’ to some pupils as they draw on their knowledge and experience – Martha

Skills inter-relate

- To infer, you may also need to read for purpose and scan for key words – Steve

Repetition of using skills will lead to understanding Dave, Steve

‘if you repeat, repeat, repeat those skills then they will start understanding it’ - Sarah

Roles in reading comprehension

Pupils

‘reading for meaning’ – Sakina

‘someone who enjoys reading’ – Liz

Experiences they share supports other pupils gaining those experiences – Ellie

- Should read carefully – Dave
- They should look at the text to retrieve answers (Val); try and gain a good understanding by looking at the details of the text and **checking** understanding and answers – Dave, Asma
- Think with connection to the text – Steve, Asma – ‘ I like that way of thinking’
- Working out the meaning (suggests active) – Val; needing to work at making sense – Inference training TA
- ‘be an active learner’ – Steve
- ‘be active, trying out the skills’ – Steve
- RC ‘takes the engagement of children to want to use those different texts and build on their understanding’ – Ellie
-
- Engage with the teaching – Sarah
- Take responsibility for pace and effort – Sarah
- Identifies purpose of text – Lorraine, Sakina
- Need to build on their literal understanding – Sakina
- Pupils knowing the skills they need to answer comprehension questions: Skills like looking in the text taught by the teacher, but reader takes responsibility to apply skills; they tend to still need reminding to use skills – Asma
- ‘they have to love reading or want to understand. They have to develop their own strategies for understanding’ – Liz
- Reasoning and thinking about text independently – Liz
- Ask questions, links this with KPIs, ‘ask appropriate questions about the text’ – Liz
- Knowing how reading skill support writing – RC school D

Teachers – ‘an enabling role’ – Sarah; supporting them on their journey to becoming an independent reader’ – Sakina

‘almost a facilitator’ ‘open the children up to many different types of texts’ – Liz

‘facilitating’ – Ellie

Facilitates through questioning – Martha

- Choosing suitable text (Steve) that is engaging (Sarah, Liz), age-appropriate (Sarah, Liz) and yet challenging – Liz
- Noticing pupils’ understanding
- Planning questions that support comprehension – Steve
- Asking range of questions – literal retrieval, inferential and deduction – Liz

- 'trying to equip them with the skills that they need in order to have a better understanding of the text in depth' – Steve
- Helping them make connections – Steve; Martha; Asma – for example being reminded to use their skills to read, they 'don't make connections easily'; 'sometime I think that as a teacher maybe that's the main thing I end up trying to do is to help children make those connections and links – Asma
- 'bringing the book to life' – Val
- Encourages inferences – Lorraine
- Teaching interactions – Reading consultant school B
- 'listen to responses and lift the quality of responses' – Reading consultant school B; after an answer, 'keep prodding and keep trying to go deeper, get more children to give me more developed answers' – Asma
- Supporting the gap between reading and being able to answer questions about the text – Pete
- Teaching pupils' strategies 'and scaffolding where necessary' – Pete
- Breaking down the process to answer questions, scaffolding where necessary – Pete
- 'keep asking questions, not giving them the answers' – Asma
- 'increasing fluency', 'vocabulary building' – Liz
- Assessing next steps – Martha

Text

- Given its place by purpose given it by teacher and pupils
- Needs to support objective – RC school A
- Linked with topics or wider curriculum – LEA consultant
- Breadth of texts is important, also familiar and unfamiliar – LEA
- Text needs to be interesting – Asma
- Text 'has some relevance to the reader' – Asma
- Contains some new vocabulary – Asma
- Linking to real life, understanding genres and purposes of texts – Liz
- Pupils able to choose texts to support motivation, teachers offering appealing texts – Liz
- Comparing and contrasting texts – Liz
- Texts can influence the imagination, subject knowledge, social and emotional development – Ellie
- Challenge needed for more able readers – RC school C
-

How purpose of Questioning is understood

'crucial' – LEA consultant

It is not about getting the right answers. – Reading consultant school B

- It involves careful looking at text to find answers – Dave
- You may need to orientate around the text and use skimming and scanning to assist - Sarah
- It involves giving evidence for answers – Dave and not guessing from memory - Steve, Val, and checking answers – Dave
- Although it is not always as straightforward as a question having a right or wrong answer - Steve

- Children asking the questions – part of inference training routine – Inference training TA; views this as ‘true comprehension’, ‘a good comprehender asks their own questions’ – Reading consultant school B
- Questioning monitors understanding - AFL and encouraging self-monitoring – Sarah
- Understanding develops through questioning – Dave, Sarah
- Opportunity for readers to justify answers – Lorraine
- RC talked about as if it is answering questions about texts – Dave
- Helps to focus on key information – Lorraine
- Questions to think a little wider, not too wide as pupils can lose sight of key parts of text – Steve
- Develop understanding of language of questions – ‘They have to be really familiar with how a question is asked’ – Sarah, understanding what the Q is asking of reader – Asma
- Need to be ‘clever at questioning’ to facilitate ‘a well-structured conversation’ – Sarah
- Encourages children to make connections – LEA consultant
- Questions need to support pupils’ progress. Pupils need to be taught the skills needed to answer questions – LEA consultant
- Children need answers to be modelled – LEA consultant
- Needs to link with what child needs to learn next – LEA consultant
- Encouraging response and reflection to a text – LEA consultant
- They can be used to assess pupils but there also needs to be some teaching, a danger of ‘just assessing, assessing, assessing, rather than teaching’ – LEA consultant
- ‘SATS style questions’ – Liz with ‘
- Linked content domains are displayed – Liz
- Understanding phrasing of questions – EAL Coordinator school C
- Important to think about questioning, ‘and to manipulate things so they aren’t always experienced from the same perspective’ – Ellie
- Include different types of questions and different formats of question even for same skill. Encourage children to do an extended response – Ellie
- To answer question, reader needs evidence from the text -Steve
- Open and broad questions encourage a range of responses – Sarah, Val
- To answer many questions, the reader draws on evidence from the text - Generally questions follow pattern of ‘ask them why, how do you know, show me the text’ – Asma

Discussion supports reading comprehension

How is discussion as an aspect of RC understood by teachers?

- Encouraging active meaning making - ‘Have another think, read the sentence again’ – Steve
- Encouraging their opinion – Steve, Lorraine, or their view – Reading consultant school B
- A chance to reflect on understanding – Dave
- Need to be ‘clever at questioning’ to facilitate ‘a well-structured conversation’ – Sarah

‘without all that discussion then the comprehension isn’t going to be there’ – Lorraine

- Discussion in pairs – Asma
- Conversational work – Dave
- Before they answer independently, ‘lots of ideas, lots of discussion’ – Asma
- Discussion before and after reading text – Dave

- Expectation of discussion encourages children to think about what they are reading so they can join in the discussion– Lorraine
- Enjoys the unpredictability of discussion and using skill of ‘responding on the spot’ – Lorraine
- Building to debates with peers, children able to run discussion – Dave
- Children’s oral answers are often clearer than written ones – Steve
- You can see their thought processes and how they are linking ideas to gain meaning - Steve
- Guided them to understanding rather than telling them - Steve
- Adding to each other’s point – cf to cumulative talk – Alexander – Steve, – Inference training TA, Asma, Liz
- It can be difficult to keep a track of what you have covered in open discussions – RC school A
- Discussion may move away from objectives and lack focus. Teachers may not have considered the text in detail beforehand – LEA consultant
- Need for tasks or activities to record comprehension? Capture learning and as a useful memoire with pupils - – LEA consultant
- Can be a challenge to get quieter children involved – Sakina
- Structured discussion helps with ‘reading between the lines and coming up with scenarios of what it could be, then linking it to the text’ – Inference training TA
- Even after verbalising answers, children forget – Pete
- Before writing down an answer, discuss with a partner – Asma
- Pupils encouraged to talk about their understanding and gain deeper understanding – Asma
- Talk about how they got their answers – Asma
- Talking about answers builds more detailed answers – Asma and greater understanding – Liz
- Works to ‘develop competence at speaking and listening and understanding’ – EAL Coordinator school C
- Discussing which answer is the best one – RC school C
- Can also draw on each other’s experience to build comprehension – Martha
- Also influenced by children’s confidence in speaking – Ellie

Reading comprehension is enmeshed with background knowledge

- Children may have limited experiences which influences their reading comprehension – Steve, Sarah, Asma, Liz; and makes it harder – RC school A; cannot fully influence – Lorraine; cannot be taught Sakina
- ‘gaps of knowledge’ can be challenging – Val
- ‘You always bring your background knowledge, no matter what you are reading’ – Inference training TA
- Children draw on wider knowledge and experiences to build understanding – Ellie
- ‘a lot of comprehension is based on experience and being allowed to have that experience that isn’t just focused on reading the text itself, but focused on them understanding it on a different level rather than just extracting information....the deeper understanding of it comes from a combination of exposure and opportunity to sort of live the text’ – Ellie

Reading comprehension is intertwined with reading for pleasure

Develop as a hobby and be inspired to read – RC school D

‘to enjoy a book, I think you have to be able to understand it and you have to be able to make those connections’ – Martha

'But teaching it and breaking down those skills and I don't want to say forcing it but you almost are aren't you, and making children reflect on everything and evaluate what they've read and that might take away the pleasure' – the process of actually teaching them those skills might be the things that steers them away from the book because they're not being allowed to just read' – Martha

School encouraging children to read with a reading challenge – 'I don't know if you can encourage reading for pleasure (laughs)' – Martha

Reading dog encourages children – Martha

Reading is taught better because of reading for pleasure – LEA consultant

'comprehension comes through the love of the text, and the love of words and the love of reading' RC school A –

Teachers need to at least act their love of reading – RC school A

Wants children to be 'wrapped up' and 'soaked in the text' – RC school A

The relationship between reading for pleasure and reading comprehension is imperative, if you do not comprehend, you will not enjoy reading – Liz

- Want them to enjoy reading – Sarah, Liz and 'learn from reading' – Liz
- RfP is important – Sakina
- Enjoyment influences understanding – Ellie
- It can influence a growth mindset – Liz
- Teachers being enthusiastic readers makes a difference – LEA consultant
- Children enjoy listening to adults and peers model reading – Sarah
- 'children need to know the purpose and the outcome' of reading (LEA consultant); need to know purpose of reading – Asma
- lack of time to read class novel – Dave
- Teachers want 'children to enjoy and understand what they are reading' – Steve
- RfP is underpinned by competent reading – 'they can't enjoy what they're reading or find the humour in it or be excited if they're actually struggling to read it' – Sakina
- Relevance of the text might affect engagement – Steve
- Wider reading opportunities helps pupils make links – Steve; and wider variety of text builds comprehension Skills need to be taught such as literal retrieval, inference, building on decoding – Liz; independent way of learning in school D supports pupils making connections – Ellie
- RfP and 'getting involved in the story' is more important than reading comprehension – Val
- You can 'lose the enjoyment through overanalysing' – Val; tension between 'interrogating the text' and enjoying the text – RC school A
- Limiting experiences to analysing text extracts can be detrimental to enjoyment, 'we seem to have lost the love of books somewhere along the line when we were reading extracts' – RC school A
- Teachers need to be trained in RfP – LEA consultant
- Readers need to be motivated to read, RfP is 'a bit of a woolly term', 'you don't have to enjoy it all the time' – Reading consultant school B
- Reading is not linked to pleasure for the majority of children in class – affected by lack of models at home and weaker reading skills – Asma
- When they do read for pleasure 'they just want to finish' the book 'and move on' and maybe miss out on some connections; although they use imagination and different understandings do not matter – Asma

- Making connections with real life is important but enjoyment of reading can also come 'out of it not being relatable to real life' such as adventure stories – Liz

Miscellaneous

Can use venn diagrams to draw links between texts – LEA consultant

Understanding the vocabulary can be comforting – Pete

Texts written for white, middle-class English children which may not relate to children trying to read the book – Asma

- Longer texts can support better understanding as they understand the characters better, know the storyline and can predict better (would like it to be more book-based) – Val

Appendix 6 Example of table of invention

Table of invention Steve

Elements of Practice	Practice Architectures found in or brought to the site
<p>Project <i>Focus of the practice</i> Lesson Observation 1: Steve is working with a focus group in his year 3 class. The other groups have a range of reading activities as per the carousel guided reading model. There is some orientation around the book (title and predictions and showing difficult words contained within). The pupils read the text and Steve listens to individual pupils read. They are encouraged to answer questions by finding clues in the text. The focus appears to be gathering and using clues to understand the text.</p> <p>Lesson Observation 2: Steve is working with the whole class. He gives the pupils a few questions to think about whilst he reads the text. He reads the text and they consider the questions in pairs and whole class discussion. The focus appears to scanning for key words and using inference to answer questions.</p> <p><i>What do participants say they are doing, or intend to do, or have done in their reading comprehension (RC) teaching?</i> Interview 1: The purposes of recent lessons have been literal thinking in relation to comprehension and then deductive thinking and then moving towards more inference-based questions.</p> <p>‘key principles for me are the literal thinking, the deductive thinking and the inferential thinking’.</p> <p>To help the pupils understand a word in the text, they need more than phonics, they need to read around the word and use the context and be able to use dictionaries.</p>	<p>Practice Landscape <i>How the different participants (and others involved) inhabit the site in different ways in their reading comprehension (RC) teaching.</i> Steve teaches RC through guided reading and whole class sessions during English sessions. Also, through the class reader, there is questioning and discussion although there may not be identified learning objectives. When preparing for writing and modelling texts, there is RC with discussion and role-play about characters and new vocabulary explained.</p> <p><i>How the participants and objects are enmeshed in RC practices.</i> Interview 1: One influence on Steve’s RC teaching was an LEA adviser that helped him to reconsider the use of picture books with older children, so using visual literacy discussions to help develop inference and deduction. Steve’s perspective on reading – he loves it- he talks about books, buys books, reads to pupils, values books – ‘you bring that aptitude with you, and - you influence children’ Steve thinks you can still teach RC without this enthusiasm but that pupils can be influenced by teacher’s views.</p> <p><i>Some objects apparently not relevant to the RC practices may play a role in enabling or constraining them.</i> Interview 1: Topics in texts may be unfamiliar or seem irrelevant to pupils with fewer experiences ‘So, are they going to be engaged in that text? Are they going to understand? What about the vocabulary? Can you teach a</p>

Steve is concerned there is not enough time to focus on reading for pleasure – ‘this is the thing that I feel that we lack a little bit, that we can’t fit the time in just for reading for pleasure, is a class reader.’

Interview 2: Later in the year the focus is on inference and understanding the subtext. The skills of skimming and scanning are important for this.

The goal is for readers to comprehend as they read - ‘I think that’s the step, that’s the leap; for them to comprehend as they’re reading. I think that’s what we are aiming for.... because that’s what we do as readers.’

In a site

Is there a concern, a shared concern about RC practices? Is everyone clear about the project of a practice?

Interview 1: There has been a shared school developmental focus on developing literal, deductive and inferential thinking.

An assessment programme has been bought called – This is designed to prepare pupils to answer RC SATs questions. One focus is for pupils to achieve well in the RC SAT.

?Time for developing RC for all pupils
?Balance of RfP and teaching for success in tests
?Judgement of being a successful reader and comprehender is different between teachers and national measures of attainment.

child to understand every word that they might come across? You can’t; so there has got to be some experiential things in there.’

Comprehension test has stayed as it is because it is considered easier to measure as right/wrong than writing. But – ‘As a discussion you find out more about what a child can do than from the test where you’ve not seen their thought processes. You find a lot more out about them but you cannot measure it as well can you- it is about measuring.’

Interview 2: After the test, some pupils did unexpectedly well and some unexpectedly badly – some responded badly to test situation, some struggled with the layout, some with the length of time.

Steve draws on reading comprehension to inform developing writing – ‘when we’re writing an adventure story we build in what we’ve learnt from what we’ve read and I think you know in a way you are reinforcing the comprehension and the understanding of it and ‘okay if you want your character to do this is there a reason why they’re doing it’ and that kind of thing.’

In a site

Do all understand the practice tradition in the same way?

Interview 1: Steve viewed the commitment of timetabling guided reading with TA support as a commitment of teaching reading comprehension.

In Steve’s opinion, some teachers are more confident and comfortable to use the focus on inferential, deductive and inferential thinking.

Are all satisfied with the practice traditions?

Is there a shared concern?

Interview 1: Tension between performativity and reading for pleasure – ‘I

	<p>just find the dilemma between testing and the enjoyment of getting into books as one of those things for every school and every teacher and you are battling in your own head and you are debating with other teachers.’ Some teachers like tests and claim that pupils like it. The pressures can be intense – ‘sometimes it’s a battle because you feel like you are being judged at the end of the day by what you put on a piece of paper, which is a number.’</p>
<p>Sayings Language of teaching RC used by Steve in the lessons Steve refers to pupils being active readers Lesson Observation 1: ‘What do you think it might be about then?’ – orientating pupils around the text ‘We need to find out, that is a good suggestion.’ ‘we are going to do a little bit more detective work like that’ ‘Words give you clues about some of the questions I am going to ask.’ ‘That is good detective skills there using the text.’ ‘Be a detective. Is there any evidence to say it is like a bear or a fox?’—reading involves some puzzling through ‘it is a kind of flower isn’t it. You’ve been looking at that in science.’ ‘Coronation Street is based in a city or a town isn’t it. And then if you think of Emmerdale that’s more in the countryside.’ ‘Like we were doing in PE yesterday when we were doing directions’ – linking text with pupils’ experiences To 1 child reading – use punctuation for reading– ‘What you really need to be thinking about is as you are reading looking at the punctuation because sometimes when there’s a comma, it’s a shorter pause than you would have for a full stop. Okay, so look really carefully at the punctuation.’ ‘What have these characters done? Have a look at the beginning. See if you can find some clues of what they do near the beginning. Look at the end, is there any</p>	<p>Cultural- discursive arrangements (what shapes sayings?) Where does the language of RC come from? (documents, policies, research etc. both local and wider afield) The National Curriculum influences choice of learning objectives and this can be ‘a bit repetitive and prescriptive’.</p> <p>Who speaks this language in the site? Steve seems comfortable with the language of RC</p> <p>Is there disagreement or debate about the language of RC practices or the key ideas or importance? Interview 1: The school has a focus on developing literal, inferential and deductive thinking and being able to answer questions about texts. In year 2 and year 6 there is SATs type questioning including ‘exam skills in reading’ and ‘more test-type comprehension’</p> <p>Are these influences in the semantic space enabling or constraining? Interview 1: NC can be both – ‘Sometimes it is a burden and sometimes it gives you something to aim for, to measure against and show progress. I don’t think it influences me particularly in that way. I think it’s just there in the background all the time but sometimes you start from it, sometimes you start from a book, sometimes you start from what you know your children need.’</p>

clues of what they might do at the end? See if that might help you figure out what they might be.’ - Where to look in the text to find the answer.

‘when we get into the text we can find this word beady and we can see if that sentence gives us any clues.’ Later: ‘when you read that sentence now what do you think beady might mean?’ - make sense of a word using context/ knowledge so far ‘creatures that stare at people maybe with beady eyes. Do you think it is a sign that they are going to do something really fun?’ – pupils encouraged to make deductions from word choice

‘can you tell me, by finding some words in the text, where about this story is set. Is it set in the city or is it set in the countryside?’ – use clues to answer a question

‘And can you find some evidence to prove it?’’ Which one do you think and give me one bit of evidence.’ – find evidence to support your answer

Lesson Observation 2: ‘We are going to use **clues** (*stresses word*) that Roald Dahl writes to find out about how characters feel... and to see if we can work out something about the actions that he describes. Sometimes, it’s not really obvious what he means. So we are going to try to use what we know to **infer** (*stresses word*), which is almost like to guess, to use clues for what he means’ – reading may involve puzzling things out ‘Can you find some proof for me?’ and ‘Put your finger on that evidence’ and ‘Did you find anything, any evidence?’ ‘But it doesn’t say that in the book does it, I am looking for the evidence in the book.’ - Find evidence to support an answer ‘scan through that text. Use your fingers underneath. Scan for, the word garden maybe, ‘cos that’s the one that’s in the question.’ ‘So, if we are wanting to find out the answer to this question, ‘in what way are

Are ideas about RC rational and reasonable – coherent, appropriate etc.?

There is tension between the goals of attainment as measured by SATs and reading for pleasure. These might lack cohesion.

they talking? We can scan for the speech marks to find the words that they say. Okay. When we find that, we then read the sentence and those bits like M said, where we have 'said' at the end, sometimes they can describe **how** the character talks.'

'You need to be scanning through the text, on this page that we have just read, looking for clues to how the giant moves.' 'I want to know how does Roald Dahl describes the traffic, so like you looked for the words about movement, those verbs, now I'd like you to scan for the word 'traffic' and see if you can find how Roald Dahl describes the traffic.' - Use scanning to find answer to a question

'Does anybody know what mute means? You might know it from your remote controls on the TV or your iPad and things.'

- Links with other learning/ experiences

'What do you think? You think it's the Queen's garden, yeah. Why do we think it's the queen's garden?' and 'So you are putting all those clues together, you are thinking about a general idea there. You have found the garden when you have scanned through it, you are reading around it and you are thinking about who is in this scene.' - Thinking about the answer to a question

'Is there another word, for not making a sound that we could use if we were writing in our stories.' 'I am going to add this to our list (*teacher writes glided on the whiteboard*) because we might be able to use this in our writing' - Linking to pupils' writing

'use that method of scanning for the key words from the question' - Use a key word to answer a question

'How do we definitely know it is the queen? Find the bit in the text' - Look closely at the text for answers

What language is being used by participants in relation to teaching RC?

(both in the practices and about the practices)

Interview 1: 'they need to look at the text. When they are doing a written comprehension for instance they tend to guess or just try to go from memory. So it is about trying to bring them to look at the text and find the evidence. So I needed to find a text that would allow us to highlight and find those clues.'

'I liked that because I saw that they had picked things out of the text and you know that they are, they are picking up on the clues.'

Interview 2: More reading of enjoyment is needed to develop inference and better comprehension skills – 'The more you read, the more you take in..... if you're reading actively.'

Pupils that do not read much at home or read very widely focus on literal meaning.

What language/ideas is being used to talk about, describe, explain and justify RC practices?

Steve used the Reading Explorers scheme as a 'springboard' for questioning around a text. He tries to respond to the children in his questioning.

There is a dilemma between getting the children to think widely about a text and answering questions using the text as evidence.

'It's just thinking on my feet really.'

What ideas about RC are the most important to participants?

Reading to comprehend is an active process.

Reading without comprehension misses the point.

How are participant's language and ideas changing?

<p>Steve has previously been English coordinator. He is confident to talk about reading. He thinks this is an area that needs developing in the school.</p>	
<p>Doings What are participants doing when teaching RC? Lesson Observation 1: Steve shows names of characters on card to support unfamiliar vocab - Orientates for new vocab. Listens to individuals read and offers individual support Gives some questions before reading text so pupils can think about these as the text is being read. ‘So now you have read the whole sentence, can you go back to this word and think about what it might say. If you read to here (<i>points to text</i>), the whole sentence, it might give you a clue’ – encourages rereading ‘What you really need to be thinking about is as you are reading looking at the punctuation because sometimes when there's a comma, it's a shorter pause than you would have for a full stop.’ ‘Words give you clues about some of the questions I am going to ask.’ - advises ‘You know how sometimes when we write our stories we use the introduction to begin to set the setting and things. Maybe it might be at the beginning.’ – scaffolds with hints Pupils are asked to highlight the word beady, talk about where the sentence begins and ends so that they can think about what it might mean in the sentence – gives time and prompts to apply a strategy</p> <p>Lesson Observation 2: ‘We are going to use clues (<i>stresses word</i>) that Roald Dahl writes to find out about how characters feel... and to see if we can work out something about the actions that he describes. Sometimes, it's not really obvious what he means. So we are going to try to use what we know to</p>	<p>Material- economic arrangements (what shapes doings?) What physical spaces are being used for teaching RC? The teaching of reading tends to take place in the classroom either in attainment groups or with the whole class.</p> <p>Are objects/resources used in a particular way when teaching RC? The school has the Reading Explorers scheme. Steve used this in Lesson Observation 1, he used the text extract and a couple of the suggested questions. After that he built questions around the pupils' understanding and what they were saying.</p> <p>Teachers are trying out some different approaches to teaching RC</p> <p>What material and financial resources are involved when teaching RC? Lesson Observation 1: Steve used a text extract from Reading Explorers scheme. One group used cards from a resource called Comprehension Box. One group had a group sets of texts and another a groups set of texts and laminated pictures to sequence. A teaching assistant worked with 1 group.</p> <p>The school has invested in sets of books. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of resources</p> <p>Are arrangements adequate? As the school are reviewing practices this suggests that they think current arrangements can be improved.</p> <p>Are these influences in physical space-time enabling or constraining?</p>

infer (stresses word), which is almost like to guess, to use clues for what he means.' – explains a strategy

Reads some sections of the text

Talks around the text to clarify understanding

Scaffolds answering of Q so answers are expanded or developed

Scaffolds an exploration of the text and draws on inferences

'BFG and Sophie are talking to each other and it says in the text, they are in the garden, (*reading*) *not more than a hundred yards away through the tall trees in the garden. Okay. So you are putting all those clues together, you are thinking about a general idea there. You have found the garden when you have scanned through it, you are reading around it and you are thinking about who is in this scene.'*

'So, if we are wanting to find out the answer to this question, 'in what way are they talking? We can scan for the speech marks to find the words that they say. Okay. When we find that, we then read the sentence and those bits like M said, where we have 'said' at the end, sometimes they can describe **how** the character talks.' – talks through steps

'You need to be scanning through the text, on this page that we have just read, looking for clues to how the giant moves. See if you can find the words that tell you how the giant moves.'- Instructs

Uses movement to clarify meaning of glided – children move around as gliding and there is some discussion – uses movement/drama

Interview 2: Chooses accessible text
Plans questions about chosen text that supports learning next steps that pupils are likely to achieve

Questions to help pupils use and apply comprehension skills – '*So it's through questioning that I always feel that I'm trying to get the children to use the skills to*

Interview 2: Having enough time for a range of reading experiences is a constraint – '*this is the difficult thing, this is the thing that I feel that we lack a little bit, that we can't fit the time in just for reading for pleasure, is a class reader.'*

Sometimes RC teaching is in small groups and sometimes as whole class. Small groups allows for more opportunity for pupils to be active but it does take time to work with all the pupils in the class.

Are activities around RC productive and sustainable?

Interview 1: The children need to learn to write good written answers and they need to practice writing precise answers – There are oral answers though can be much clearer. Answers can develop through dialogue too.

The SATs are an influence on this being a focus - '*in the back of your head that you have got to do a SATs test to show how well you can read in the end and in that you are going to have to write your answers down'*.

RC is also developed when reading stories and poems for pleasure. RC during these reading occasions may not be measured but the impact can be seen in later RC focus lessons.

comprehend what is in the text' and 'if it's the process of scanning and skimming and identifying key words then I need to make sure I generate questions where the answer can be found by scanning and skimming'.
Models how to answer example question.
Talks through how to answer a question – 'I might discuss a question and say, 'ok what are the key words in the question?' Trying to equip them with that skill that's like: 'I can read a question about this text and then if I want to try to understand it and find something out from a text, I know how to go about that'.
Talks about a skill like reading between the lines
Explains comprehension process by talking about what is going on in his head – 'it's about thinking 'ok what is it that's enabling me to understand this and how can I get that across to the children'.
Steve questions pupils before texts too. Often these are to get the pupils engaged. Steve considers that they could shift some questioning prior to reading to encourage active reading – 'maybe we could move some more of the comprehension style questions into that: 'as you read this, can you find the clues to explain why this character feels the way they do?' or 'why do you think they do this?' and make them more active readers through that method.'
Encourages self-monitoring that words make sense in a sentence by asking – 'does this make sense?' 'how do you know it doesn't make sense?' 'can you ... as you are reading?', 'if it doesn't make sense ...', 'do you recognise it and do you go back?'
Questioning is a tool teachers use to develop active reading habits – 'I think there has to be some kind of questioning because there has to be some thought that you have... as you're reading if you're actively engaged in it. Even if it's just 'why am I enjoying this book' or 'why am I not enjoying it' but to go beyond that 'it's boring' which is sort of their stock answer.'

<p><i>Are activities sequenced or connected in RC teaching?</i></p> <p>Interview 1: Steve’s questioning is informed by the pupils and how they respond with text.</p> <p>Sometimes this is just talking, but sometimes pupils need ‘to be able to write their ideas, and write their understanding down’ – influenced by SATs tests</p> <p>Steve teaches RC skills such as, ‘scanning and the skimming, the highlighting and the vocabulary, the reading and rereading to try and get understanding’ rather than understanding that can come from experiences.</p> <p>Steve uses visual literacy to develop broader comprehension skills</p> <p>Interview 2: Thinking about when RC takes place – does teaching suggest it happens afterwards? - ‘I think they read and then they know that you’re going to talk about it afterwards so probably they think or associate it with coming afterwards.’</p>	
<p>Relatings</p> <p><i>How do participants relate to pupils during RC?</i></p> <p>Lesson Observation 2: When talking about how to unpick meaning using ‘we’ suggesting aiming for a shared meaning - ‘how do we know who is there? How do we know he is outside?’ and ‘How do we know then? How do we know L that the BFG and Sophie are in the garden?’</p> <p>Children encouraged to take on role of ‘expert’ and can help answer questions - ‘my expert on melting is R can you tell us what you thought’.</p> <p>Teacher talking about errors, confusion – Reads in normal voice when text says whispered and asks what he has done wrong</p>	<p>Social-political arrangements (what shapes relatings)</p> <p><i>What social and administrative systems of roles, responsibilities, functions, obligations and reporting relationships enable and constrain relationships when teaching RC in the site?</i></p> <p>Guided reading is timetabled with TA support. This is enabling as this supports the organisation of the carousel guided reading approach. It also sets down an expectation that this is important and required.</p> <p><i>Do people collaborate or compete for RC resources in the school?</i></p>

Asks pupils to help as he is getting confused with the melting in the darkness phrase – voicing what other may be wondering if looking to a literal meaning - ‘I am glad you are here to help me with this because sometimes I get confused.’

Children are encouraged to share their ideas and answers with talking partners.

Interview 1: Questions about text are largely in response to what children say In relation to questions – ‘They have got to come from what the children are talking about and the directions that they go.’

A discursive model is encouraged to develop a clear written answer – ‘they write it and then we discuss what they have written and why they have put that and things like that. ‘Is there a better way of putting it?’ Or sometimes you are reading it round and then somebody reads theirs and they say, ‘that’s what I wanted to put but I’ve written this’ and you can say, ‘well you are on the same lines but this one is a little bit clearer, why? Why does this one seem clearer?’

Pupils should be active in meaning making. The teacher is guiding them towards understanding rather than telling them- ‘It is guiding them to find that rather than telling them that is an important thing for them as well. You find that sometimes, you end up telling them an answer and you think, ‘there’s nothing from them, all right’. When they find it you go like ‘bing!’ you can see the joy in their eyes, that they have worked something out.’

When pupils managed to co-construct meaning with the teaching as scaffold, this needs to be reviewed to understand why a session works well – ‘Someone would say something and then they would take it a little bit further. That is what you want, I felt that was working really well today. Is it

There has been collaboration in allocating support staff. All year groups have been bought some RC resources – program

Is the communicative space for RC practices a public sphere?

Currently there is discussion and encouragement to try out different approaches.

the choice of text? Is it the choice of questions? That is what you have to go back and ask and analyse afterwards for next time.'

What role do teachers and pupils play in RC teaching and learning?

Interview 2: Teacher plans for learning opportunities and pupils need to actively engage with reading – 'I think that's my role, trying to equip them with the skills that they need in order to have a better understanding of the text in depth.... And their role, they need to be an active learner.'

Pupils can explain to each other how they reach understanding.

Pupils can also model and lead – 'the role of some children in a group is also to sort of model and lead and demonstrate'.

Early readers are not active readers – 'I think as you start reading you're not really an active reader, you're just a passive reader, you just read.'

Pupils do not question their understanding very much - 'With regards to comprehension, it's more difficult for them to self-monitor I think because they take what they've got from it and they think they're right.'

How do participants relate to other staff around RC ?

There is a team response to developing the teaching of RC.

The reading coordinator has some responsibility to review and develop reading teaching and influence teachers.

Are there relationships of belonging and shared purpose (or exclusion and conflict)?

In Steve's lessons there was a feel of shared purpose with pupils—use of we and drawing on pupils as experts.

Dispositions (habitus) 'feel for the game'

Practice Traditions

Understandings/knowledge - How do participants understand what is happening in and around RC teaching? This relates mainly to semantic space.

Interview 1: Reading is a difficult skill and it is complicated – ‘It is a difficult skill, I think people take reading for granted. Within a school situation you understand how the children develop and how their reading comes on and it’s a complicated thing.’

Skills – What skills and capacities are participants using when teaching RC? This relates mostly to physical space-time.

Interview 1: Steve thinks about the reading and understanding the reading – ‘how do children read?’ and ‘how do they get the information from the reading? That is the kind of thing I think about.’

RC is more than a right or wrong answer – ‘We saw that today in the lesson when we were discussing that, if that was a SATs question, what kind of animal is it? And they put dog down as the right answer and some children put fox would they have given that as wrong? That’s not right is it?’

Values – What are the participants’ values and commitments to RC teaching? This relates mostly to the social space.

Interview 1: The overall purpose for Steve is that children enjoy and understand what they read and that they appreciate the uses of reading – ‘you want the children to enjoy and understand what they are reading, what the point of it is, that they can read to get information that they can read to share information, that it is informing their writing and things later on’

Pupils should be active in meaning making. The teacher is guiding them towards understanding rather than telling them- ‘It is guiding them to find that rather than telling them that is an important thing for them as well. You find that sometimes, you end up telling them an answer and you

What does data tell us about practice traditions in the site – ‘the way we do things around here’? Interactions are considered against a longer history of RC practices.

The overall school focus is similar to Steve’s - ‘This idea that we need to allow the children to access the text’

Practices are influenced by SATs and performative testing –

After the class test, some pupils did unexpectedly well and some unexpectedly badly – some responded badly to test situation, some struggled with the layout, some with the length of time

Is there evidence of professional practice traditions (not exclusive to this site) following a specific approach/policy to teaching RC? And do these enable or constrain what participants hope to achieve?

Teaching is constrained by the SATs – ‘In the back of your head is that you have got to do a SATs test to show how well you can read in the end and in that you are going to have to write your answers down. You have to be aware of that, it is not fair in my head but ...’

Questioning in scaffolded discussion is different to the independent written comprehension questions on tests such as SATS – ‘seems quite alien compared to how we work on it in class which I suppose is the problem you have all through school.’

think, 'there's nothing from them, all right'. When they find it you go like 'bing!' you can see the joy in their eyes, that they have worked something out.'

RC is important for children's general understanding and to make sense of the world – 'It's crucial to children's understanding of the world really and their access to information and how they perceive and see things. You need to give them those skills that they can sift through information particularly in the modern age when you are bombarded with it constantly. You need to be able to interpret it and see sometimes....I don't know - the bias or.... the way things are not so straight forward, that inference you have to pick it apart so many things that aren't dead obvious and I think comprehension is crucial to that - and children enjoy it. Children enjoy reading stories and reading information texts, finding stuff out and talking about it.'

RC is an important part of learning independently– 'I think it is a very important part of learning. It's embedded in everything that I do in my class. We are always reading and if we don't understand what we are reading, if we can't look for things to try and find out how do we find things out other than someone just tells you all the time.'

Interview 2: Steve talks about himself as a reader and considers the reading process – 'Actually the pieces have been put together so I am sort of asking myself things as I am reading but it's a natural process. It's a natural process that developed through reading things as I was a child.'

Questioning helps develop active readers – 'I think there has to be some kind of questioning because there has to be some thought that you have... as you're reading if you're actively engaged in it.'

(Adapted from tables in Kemmis et al. 2013:81, 82, Kemmis and Edward-Groves, 2018: 14