

A reflective account of using child-led interviews to promote discussions about reading

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Background & Aims

Children's literacy habits and experiences have changed in the last two decades. When trying to understand children's reading experiences it is important to use methods which allow their voices to be heard. Approaches which centre children's voices in literacy research are quite novel and in need of evaluating.

Aims: To compare child-led and adult-led interviews to explore how successful each approach is for understanding children's reading experiences.

Methods

Participants

33 children aged 9 - 11 years old. 12 of the children were trained as student researchers and 21 were interviewed.

Procedure

Child researchers helped design the interview questions and received interview training.

Child researchers were first interviewed by the adult researcher. Then child researchers interviewed 1 or 2 of their peers.

The adult researchers analysed the interview transcripts to look for themes.

Results

- Children discussed reading memories and experiences naturally and confidently.
- Child researchers used creative and playful communication (e.g., funny voices), creating a relaxed environment.
- Children's answers were often longer and more detailed in adult-led interviews.
- Child researchers asked different kinds of questions from adult researchers.
- Children built their understanding of each others reading experiences together.
- Child researchers said that they enjoyed being interviewers.

Note

Adult researchers were in the room for the child-led interviews in case children asked for support.

Discussion & Implications for Education

This study shows that supporting children to interview each other can help us learn more about their literacy experiences in their own words. Their insights could help teachers and researchers to plan activities and interventions which value these experiences.

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Academic paper

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