



**SHOULD READING ALOUD BE ALLOWED ?
A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS
OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
RELATED TO THE ROLE OF READING ALOUD
IN SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

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CERTIFICATE

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degree.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



Ruth Marian Nicholls.

ABSTRACT

Reading aloud has been a widespread practice throughout history in many societies, both in everyday life and in education. Research findings about its relationship to reading comprehension are mixed and somewhat ambiguous; and it often generates very negative feelings in students, both in mainstream English classrooms and in second-language classrooms (including English as a Second Language). Oral reading is nonetheless frequently used in many, perhaps most, language classes: to the point where its use has been described as 'ritualistic' (Goodman 1984) and 'a fixture' (Bruder & Biggs 1988).

This study was aimed particularly at examining the experiences and attitudes of a group of ESL teachers (n=7) and their teenage and adult students (n=23) with regard to the value of reading aloud in learning ESL. Participants were interviewed and completed a Likert-style survey eliciting their views on a range of reading-aloud issues. Their responses were then correlated with several factors which the literature on second-language development suggests may be significant influences on second-language learning: age, sex, first language, level of education reached in their country of origin, prior study in English, length of time in their current course in Australia, the setting of the class, and learning style factors (ascertained with a version of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Kolb Learning Style Inventory or the Willing (1988) AMES survey). Student and teacher responses were also compared and contrasted.

Although the numbers were small and results can be indicative only, some common views emerged. Listening to the teacher read aloud was much valued overall, while having to listen to poor readers (like classmates) was negatively regarded; and there was general agreement that oral reading was especially useful for developing speaking skills, including pronunciation, rather than for comprehension. There was however a range of views about all the questions raised, and some links were discernible between certain attitudes and some of the factors investigated.

These findings are discussed in relation to the relevant literature; in particular, the utility of learning style as a construct to explain views on reading aloud, and the notion of learning strategy as a valuable pedagogical tool. The discussion is framed in a consideration of the influence of teachers' 'espoused theories' versus 'theories-in-use' in pedagogical decision-making (e.g. Osterman & Kottkamp 1993), and implications are drawn for future research, teaching practice, and teacher education/professional development.

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