



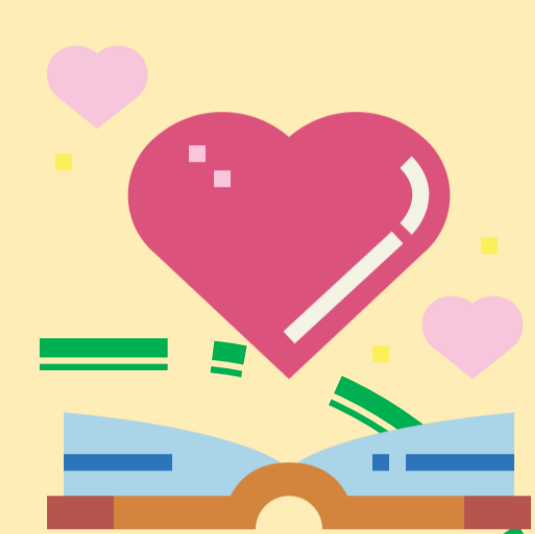
Togetherness: The value of reading aloud for school children in rural areas



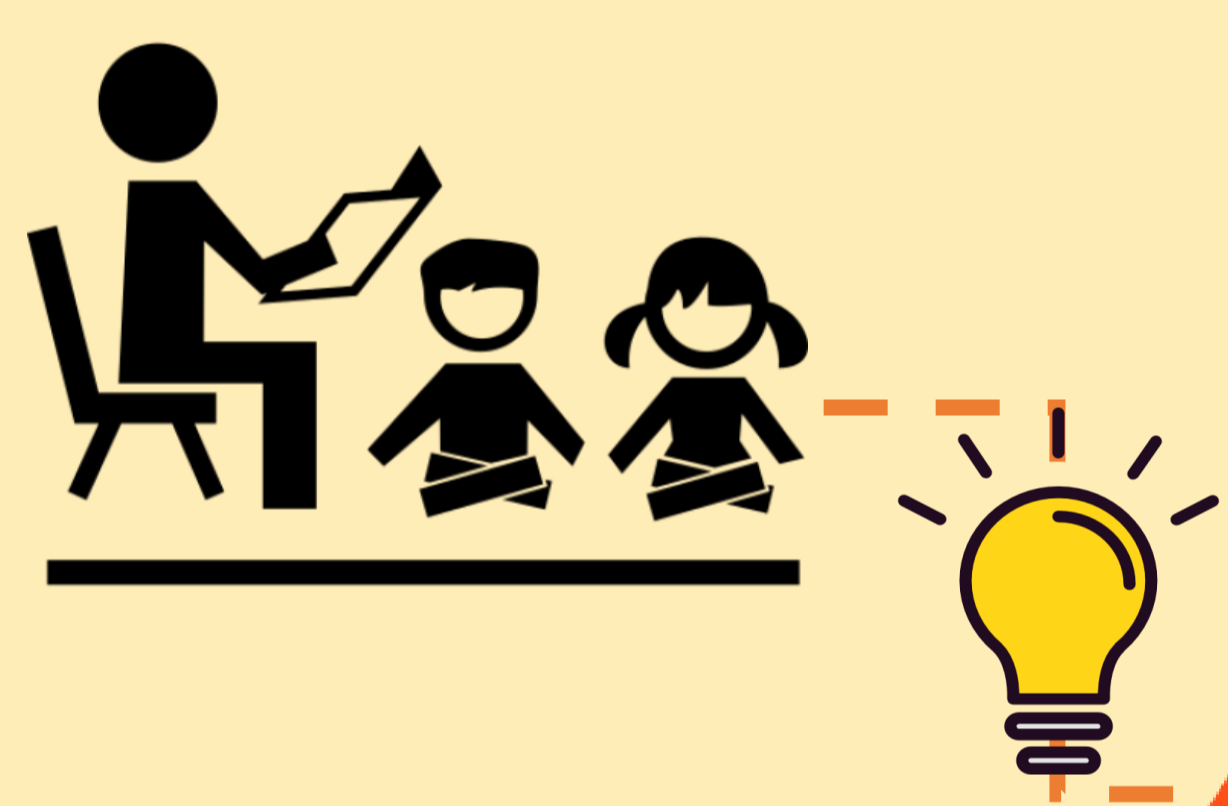
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Read Aloud for You (為愛朗讀)



Read Aloud for You is a schoolwide reading aloud practice for elementary school children in rural areas in Taiwan. A qualitative study was conducted to elicit the perspectives of the study participants on the benefits of reading aloud for school children in rural areas. A combination of interviews, focus groups, and observation were used to gather communication and interaction between study participants, including children, caregivers, the headmaster, school teachers, and non-profit organisation staff. Data gathered were analysed and interpreted, using symbolic interactionism as an analytic tool. Results identified benefits associated with two library-related symbols, i.e. books and communities.



Community as a symbol

Books as symbols

Increasing reading motivation

Study participants perceived the texts selected to be “very interesting”, “written from children’s perspectives”, and “reflecting children’s real-life experiences”, which helped build a pleasant connection between children and reading.

Supporting reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition

The majority of adult participants believed that reading aloud verbatim to children helped their comprehension because “adults tend to read in paragraphs fluently, whereas children sometimes read bits and pieces which could hinder their comprehension.”

Attracting school children’s attention

A teacher explained that “readers with good inflection and intonation” helped attract and sustain children’s attention.

Encouraging school children to reflect

As the story came to the end, a child concluded “Although it [the novel] didn’t say so, we know that when Wei-Je changed, his mother changed in tandem. If we change, our mothers will change as well.”



Adult modelling reading

As observed in daily reading sessions, children’s reading behaviours reflected those of the storytellers, such as holding books on their laps, reading along, turning pages, listening attentively, remaining seated, and answering questions raised by the storytellers.

Creating conversations and discussion

A child stated “I have more topics to converse with my classmates [...] and get to know more about my classmates’ families.”

Fostering togetherness among peers

A child reported that “I don’t feel alone when reading with others.”

Enjoying the companionship of caregivers

A child interpreted being read to as being “cared for” and “accompanied”, and another put it simply “I enjoy the ten minutes of love.”

School library as a place for reading aloud and gathering

After participating in the programme, some children regarded the school library as a place for “gathering”, “listening to stories”, and “having conversations with peers.”