

Drama-Integrated Interactive Read-Alouds: Perspectives from Preschool Teachers on a Professional Development Program

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Abstract: Read-alouds are an important learning context for preschoolers; however, teachers need support to implement read-aloud strategies effectively. This qualitative study aims to explore preschool teachers' experiences with their involvement in a drama-integrated interactive read-aloud intervention. Two preschool teachers participated in a professional development program that combined workshops and ongoing coaching to facilitate the implementation of drama-integrated read-aloud strategies in preschool classrooms. The teachers were interviewed individually after conducting 24 drama-integrated read-aloud sessions in their classrooms. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes in the data, revealing three main themes: (1) Effective Read-Aloud Strategies, (2) Read-Aloud as a Tool for Development, and (3) Challenges in Implementing Read-Alouds. The results underscore the importance of providing professional development support to help teachers enhance their read-aloud practices effectively.

Keywords: Read-Aloud, Interactive Read-aloud, Preschool Teacher, Early Childhood Education, Professional Development, Coaching

Drama ile Bütünleştirilmiş Etkileşimli Kitap Okuma: Mesleki Gelişim Programına Katılan Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Görüşleri

Öz: Etkileşimli sesli okuma, okul öncesi dönem çocukları için önemli bir öğrenme bağlamı sunmaktadır. Ancak, öğretmenlerin bu etkinlikleri etkili bir şekilde uygulayabilmeleri için desteğe ihtiyaç duydukları görülmektedir. Bu nitel araştırmada, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin drama ile bütünleştirilmiş etkileşimli sesli okuma müdahalesine ilişkin deneyimlerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışmaya katılan iki okul öncesi öğretmeni, drama ile bütünleştirilmiş sesli okuma stratejilerini sınıflarında etkili bir şekilde uygulayabilmeleri için atölye çalışması ve sürekli koçluk desteğini içeren bir mesleki gelişim programına dahil edilmiştir. Öğretmenlerle, sınıflarında gerçekleştirdikleri 24 sesli okuma oturumunun ardından bireysel görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Verilerin tematik analizi sonucunda üç ana tema ortaya çıkarılmıştır: (1) Etkili Sesli Okuma Stratejileri, (2) Sesli Okumanın Gelişimsel Bir Araç Olarak Kullanımı ve (3) Sesli Okuma Uygulamalarında Karşılaşılan Zorluklar. Bulgular, öğretmenlerin sesli okuma uygulamalarını daha etkili bir şekilde sürdürebilmeleri için mesleki gelişim desteğinin sağlanmasının kritik önem taşıdığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Sesli Okuma, Etkileşimli Sesli Okuma, Okul Öncesi Öğretmeni, Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi, Mesleki Gelişim, Koçluk

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Read-aloud is a practice in which an adult reads a text aloud to children, providing them with access to language, story structures, and ideas beyond their independent reading abilities. In this approach, children are primarily passive listeners while the adult focuses on fluent and expressive reading to model language and convey meaning (Barrentine, 1996). In contrast, an interactive read-aloud goes beyond simple oral reading by actively engaging children in conversations about the book's content. During interactive read-alouds, adults use strategies such as asking factual questions about the text or posing higher-order questions that encourage children's reasoning about the story's topics, motivations, and actions (Rezzonico et al., 2015). This multifaceted approach supports the development of children's language, conceptual knowledge, social-emotional skills, and problem-solving abilities. Research indicates that read-aloud sessions positively affect comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and social-emotional growth (Baker et al., 2020; Schapira & Aram, 2020; Van Elsen et al., 2024). Furthermore, connecting reading materials to other academic domains, such as mathematics, science, and environmental education, can facilitate children's progress in these areas (Hsiao & Shih, 2015; Neuman & Kaefer, 2018; Op 't Eynde et al., 2023). Wright (2019) suggests that interactive read-alouds play a crucial role in expanding children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

Researchers today are increasingly exploring the integration of drama elements into interactive read-aloud sessions to enhance their impact (Kilinc et al., 2023; Ozen-Uyar et al., 2025). Drama-integrated interactive read-aloud involves teachers using dramatic techniques, such as role-playing and improvisation, to engage children more deeply with the text. This method offers a unique experience beyond traditional read-aloud strategies by encouraging children to embody the characters and experience events from their perspectives (Schmidt et al., 2024). Drama enables young children to actively and creatively explore meanings in texts they cannot yet read, allowing them to delve deeper into the story, extend their understanding beyond mere words, and explore complex themes (Adomat, 2012). Hoffman et al. (2017) highlight the power of incorporating drama to promote participation and dialogic interactions, thereby supporting language learning. Similarly, Kilinc et al. (2023) demonstrated that a professional development intervention designed to help teachers integrate drama-based pedagogy into English language arts improved reading achievement among kindergarten through third-grade students.

Although the benefits of interactive read-alouds for children's language, cognitive, and social-emotional development are well documented, research consistently demonstrates that teachers often struggle to implement these strategies effectively in the classroom. For example, preschool teachers frequently rely on low-quality, closed-ended questions that limit opportunities for children to engage in critical thinking or provide elaborated responses (Schmidt et al., 2024; Sha et al., 2024). While the majority of early childhood educators conduct read-aloud sessions regularly and dedicate substantial time to them (McCaffrey & Hisrich, 2017), the quality of interaction remains a persistent concern. Studies indicate that book-related discussions are typically brief, often lasting fewer than five minutes, and dominated by teacher talk, leaving limited space for children to contribute their perspectives (Hoffman et al., 1993; Sha et al., 2024). This imbalance weakens the transformative potential of interactive read-alouds, which are designed to foster the co-construction of knowledge. Such challenges underscore a critical gap in practice: preschool teachers require systematic professional support to move beyond surface-level questioning and create truly interactive, engaging reading experiences. Moreover, by integrating drama techniques such as pantomime, role-play, and character exploration, teachers can deepen children's participation and transform read-aloud sessions into rich opportunities for language, cognitive, and social-emotional growth. In this context, this study aims to explore teachers' experiences participating in a professional development program that combines workshops and ongoing coaching to facilitate the implementation of drama-integrated read-aloud strategies in preschool classrooms.

Read-Alouds in Preschool Classrooms

Interactive read-alouds involve an adult reading a picture book aloud to children, often extending beyond the text to include interactions about the book. These sessions have a significant impact on children's development across various domains. Numerous studies have examined the effects of read-alouds on comprehension skills, vocabulary development, and print awareness (Baker et al., 2020; Gómez et al., 2017;

Moussa & Koester, 2022). In a systematic review, Batini et al. (2020) found that read-aloud sessions focused on vocabulary acquisition and development effectively enhance overall language development and concept and content knowledge. Linking read-aloud to other academic subjects such as science, mathematics, or environmental education can further support children's development in those areas. Research has shown connections between read-aloud and children's mathematical development (Op 't Eynde et al., 2023), mathematics performance (Van den Heuvel-Panhuizen et al., 2016), science concept learning (Neuman & Kaefer, 2018), and environmental concepts (Hsiao & Shih, 2015).

Research has also demonstrated that read-aloud can significantly enhance children's social-emotional skills. Martin et al. (2022) suggest that more frequent shared reading during early childhood can positively impact social-emotional well-being. High-quality children's literature stimulates these interactions and serves as a powerful tool for sparking discussions about friendship, social skills, social dilemmas, and the emotions connected to them (Kemple, 2004). When children actively participate in conversations during read-aloud sessions, they are provided with valuable opportunities to practice expressing emotions and to learn how to navigate everyday social situations (Schapira & Aram, 2020). Furthermore, encouraging children to explore potential solutions to problems presented in picture books is an effective strategy for enhancing problem-solving skills in preschool (Gosen et al., 2015; Van Elsen et al., 2024). Importantly, Ng and Sun (2022) suggest that even without books explicitly focused on social-emotional learning (SEL), shared read-aloud sessions can still support SEL development.

Effective read-alouds play a crucial role in fostering both academic and social-emotional growth in young learners, and there are specific strategies that can enhance their impact. Wright (2019) emphasize three key characteristics of effective read-aloud strategies. First, the read-aloud must be interactive; teachers and students should actively engage with the text by critically thinking and discussing its content. Second, the process should be intentional and well-planned; teachers must carefully select texts that align with their instructional goals and deliberately design the reading experience to support student learning. Third, effective read-aloud should not be confined to language arts lessons alone but integrated throughout the school day and various subjects. Fisher et al. (2004) further expand on these ideas by proposing seven essential criteria to guide teachers in conducting interactive read-alouds. These include selecting high-quality and appropriate texts, thoroughly previewing and practicing the reading, clearly establishing a purpose for the session, modeling fluent reading, using animation and expression to engage students, facilitating meaningful discussions about the text, and encouraging independent reading and writing afterward. By incorporating these strategies, teachers can create an enriched reading environment that promotes comprehension, critical thinking, and an appreciation for literature while also supporting academic and social-emotional development across multiple disciplines.

Teacher Professional Development for Effective Read-Alouds

Preschool teachers read books to young children for various reasons: to entertain, develop early literacy skills, enhance content knowledge and vocabulary, support social and emotional development, and connect children with each other and the world around them (La Croix et al., 2024). However, research suggests that teachers often need additional support, training, and resources to thoroughly leverage the educational benefits of picture book reading. Alatalo and Westlund (2021) emphasized that preschool teachers should deepen their knowledge and understanding of early literacy to enhance their teaching practices. For instance, Damber (2015), in a study involving 39 Swedish preschool teachers, found that read-aloud activities usually took place once daily, were seldom planned, and were not often integrated into a broader contextual framework. Teachers frequently selected books randomly; only 27% of the reading sessions included follow-up activities. Similarly, Schmidt et al. (2024) observed that teachers rarely used effective read-aloud practices, and when they did, the quality was often low.

Işıkoğlu-Erdoğan and Akay (2015) found that only a small number of Turkish preschool teachers employed interactive reading, with a tendency to use closed-ended questions more frequently. Sha et al. (2024) further noted that preschool teachers prefer closed-ended questions over open-ended ones, potentially due to

a desire for control, adherence to a predetermined curriculum, or a lack of confidence in handling children's spontaneous or unpredictable responses. Moreover, Erdoğan (2020) reported that many preschool teachers struggle to maintain children's attention, display pictures, provide equal speaking opportunities, systematically ask questions, and evaluate or extend children's responses during read-aloud sessions. These challenges can significantly affect the impact of read-aloud on children's exploration and comprehension of various subjects. While a well-executed read-aloud can significantly enhance learning, a poorly conducted one can result in limited engagement and educational benefits (Schmidt et al., 2024).

Creating effective read-aloud sessions requires careful planning. McCaffrey and Hisrich (2017) emphasized that educators should not simply pick up a book and start reading without previewing the text, generating questions, facilitating peer-to-peer interactions, and selecting key vocabulary to teach. Davis (2022) supports this approach, underscoring that effective read-aloud instruction demands deliberate and strategic preparation. However, preschool teachers need access to ongoing professional development to implement such strategies effectively. These professional development programs should focus on enhancing interactive read-aloud techniques, including asking open-ended questions, encouraging participation, and using strategies to extend children's responses.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by two theoretical frameworks: Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Rosenblatt's (1978) transaction theory. According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, human development is conceptualized as a socially mediated process in which children construct knowledge through collaborative interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers and parents. A central concept of this theory is the zone of proximal development, defined as the distance between what a child can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with the guidance of a more competent partner. Within this zone, children are supported to move beyond their current capabilities through scaffolding. In the present study, Vygotsky's sociocultural framework is employed to position teachers as more knowledgeable partners who scaffold children's learning during drama-integrated interactive read-alouds. By using dramatic techniques, teachers guide children to inhabit roles, engage in dialogue, and co-construct meaning from texts. In doing so, teachers not only support children's comprehension and social-emotional growth but also embody the theoretical principles of mediated learning in practice.

Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory posits that the meaning of a text is not fixed but is constructed through a dynamic and ongoing interaction between the reader and the text. This process is shaped by the reader's prior experiences, cultural background, and social context. Meaning, therefore, does not reside solely in the text or the reader but emerges from the active contributions of both. Within this framework, the teacher plays a pivotal mediating role during the reading process. In the drama-integrated read-aloud activities conducted in the present study, teachers served as interactive bridges between children and the text, enabling them to embody characters, experience events, and connect the narrative to their own lives. Through this process, children not only deepened their comprehension of the text but also developed critical thinking, emotional expression, and collaborative skills. In this sense, drama-based interactive read-alouds provide a powerful learning environment in which meaning is jointly and interactively constructed, consistent with the principles of Rosenblatt's theory.

Present Study

This study aimed to explore preschool teachers' perspectives on participating in a drama-based interactive read-aloud program. Specifically, the research sought to address the overarching question: What are the experiences of preschool teachers regarding the implementation of drama-integrated interactive read-alouds in their classrooms? To elaborate on this inquiry, the study further examined the following sub-questions:

1. What strategies do preschool teachers consider effective in drama-integrated interactive read-alouds?

2. How do preschool teachers perceive the effectiveness of drama-integrated interactive read-alouds?
3. What challenges do preschool teachers encounter while implementing drama-integrated interactive read-alouds in the classroom?

Method

Research Design

This study employed a basic qualitative research design, which, as Merriam and Tisdell (2015) note, is the most common form of qualitative inquiry in education. The purpose of such studies is to understand how individuals make sense of their lives and experiences, typically through interviews, observations, or document analysis, with data analyzed inductively to identify recurring themes. The outcome of this design is richly descriptive and presents the researcher's understanding of the meaning people have constructed about their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, pp. 22-42). In line with this definition, the present study explored preschool teachers' perspectives on participating in a drama-integrated interactive read-aloud program. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed inductively to capture the strategies teachers considered effective, their perceptions of the program's effectiveness, and the challenges they encountered. By focusing on teachers' lived experiences and constructing themes from their narratives, this study aligns with the central characteristics of basic qualitative research.

Participants

Two preschool teachers from a public preschool in the central district of a city in southern Turkey participated in the study. Both teachers held undergraduate degrees. One teacher had one year of teaching experience, while the other had 15 years. They were 27 and 38 years old, respectively; one was female, while the other was male. Although both teachers completed a course on Children's Literature during their undergraduate studies, they did not receive in-service training on children's literature or interactive read-aloud techniques. The teachers taught children aged 52 to 67 months, and the number of children in their classrooms ranged from 19 to 25. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary for all teachers.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through one-on-one interviews with two teachers. After the intervention, face-to-face individual interviews were held with each teacher to gather comprehensive information. During these interviews, teachers were asked to share their experiences and perspectives about the intervention, including the impact on child outcomes and reading capacity, the usefulness of the strategies, and their potential future usage. The interviews with the teachers lasted between 43 and 49 minutes. Following ethical principles, the interviews were audio-recorded after the teachers provided consent.

Procedure

This study was embedded within a larger experimental research study regarding the impact of drama-integrated read-aloud strategies on children's social development. The study received approval from the Ethics Committee of Adıyaman University and the participating school districts. After obtaining the necessary permissions, the researcher visited two preschools and met with the teachers to explain the research objectives and procedures. Two teachers volunteered to participate and conducted the drama-integrated read-aloud sessions in their classrooms.

The intervention was designed to occur three days a week for eight weeks, resulting in 24 drama-integrated read-aloud sessions. Before the intervention, the teachers attended a two-hour workshop, where they received training on implementing the drama-integrated read-aloud strategies. During the intervention, the teachers conducted approximately 30-minute sessions thrice weekly. The average session length was 29.81 minutes (*range* = 16–56 minutes, *SD* = 7.09). The teachers were provided with a curated selection of books to facilitate the intervention. Each session was conducted with the entire class, with the number of children in attendance ranging from 12 to 25. Throughout the intervention, the teachers received ongoing coaching

support.

Picture Books

A total of 63 books were provided to the teachers. These books were carefully selected to help children develop essential social skills such as resilience, coping with challenges, conflict resolution, and empathy towards others. The books also aimed to promote friendship skills like sharing and helping while fostering respect for diversity, equality, and inclusivity. To ensure that the books effectively supported the development of social skills, they were initially screened to confirm they aligned with the study's objectives. Subsequently, the selected books were evaluated to ensure they met the developmental needs of the children and were age-appropriate.

The books were stored in a dedicated cabinet in the teachers' lounge to make them easily accessible to all participating teachers. Teachers were encouraged to review the collection and select books suitable for their classroom activities and instructional strategies. This process allowed teachers to choose books that complemented their teaching style and classroom dynamics, ensuring that the read-aloud sessions effectively promoted social competence among the children. Giving teachers the autonomy to select books also facilitated a more personalized and contextually relevant approach to achieving the study's objectives.

Training and Coaching

The teachers participated in a workshop designed to train them on conducting drama-integrated read-aloud sessions in their classrooms. The teachers participated in a workshop designed to prepare them for conducting drama-integrated read-aloud sessions in their classrooms. The training was guided by Wright's (2019) characterization of effective read-alouds and Fisher et al.'s (2004) criteria for interactive read-aloud practice, and it introduced an evidence-based approach in which teachers engage children purposefully with the text through questioning, prediction, and discussion before, during, and after reading. Teachers were familiarized with seven essential components of effective practice: selecting high-quality texts, thoroughly previewing and rehearsing the reading, establishing a clear instructional purpose, modeling fluent and expressive reading, using animation and varied vocal expression to sustain attention, facilitating meaningful dialogue, and encouraging independent literacy activities (Fisher et al., 2004). In addition, teachers were also trained to pose both literal and higher-order questions, direct children's attention to key story elements, and foster perspective-taking. To integrate drama, the training further equipped teachers with techniques such as pantomime, role-play, and character development activities, enabling children to embody diverse viewpoints and deepen their comprehension of the narrative (see Schmidt et al., 2024).

The researcher conducted the workshop, which lasted approximately two hours, and utilized various adult learning strategies. These included PowerPoint presentations, discussion questions, role-playing, video examples, and performance demonstrations of the learned strategies. The session began with an explanation of the benefits of drama-integrated read-alouds for children, highlighting how these techniques can enhance engagement and comprehension. Following this, the workshop delved into specific strategies to be used before, during, and after the read-aloud sessions. Practical strategies for each phase were discussed in detail to ensure a comprehensive understanding. An exemplary video of a practical drama-integrated read-aloud session was viewed, demonstrating the strategies in action. Participants then engaged in a discussion about the strategies used by the educator in the video. This was followed by a hands-on practice session where one of the teachers volunteered to conduct a read-aloud using a selected book, with other participants assuming the roles of children. This role-playing exercise reinforced the implementation of the strategies in a realistic setting. To further solidify their understanding, the teachers were asked to watch another read-aloud video and evaluate the pre-story, during-story, and post-story strategies using an assessment form. This exercise aimed to enhance their ability to effectively apply drama-integrated interactive reading strategies in their classrooms. The workshop's comprehensive approach ensured that the teachers had the necessary skills and confidence to implement drama-integrated read-aloud sessions, thereby maximizing the intervention's potential impact on children's social competence.

Following the workshop, teachers in the intervention group received coaching on a weekly basis over eight weeks. The coaching process was systematically conducted in three steps to ensure the effective implementation of drama-integrated read-aloud sessions: (1) classroom observation, (2) individual meetings with teachers, and (3) action planning. First, the coach observed the teachers' read-aloud sessions in their classrooms. These observations focused on various aspects of the reading sessions, including establishing reading routines, pre-reading strategies, during-reading strategies, and after-reading strategies. Key strategies for each phase of a practical read-aloud session were identified. Multiple indicators and behavioral markers operationalized each strategy. These included how well the teacher established reading routines, clearly introduced the book, maintained pacing, asked questions, and used emphasis and intonation. The indicators were placed on a color continuum of green, yellow, and red to facilitate targeted feedback and action planning. For example, an indicator for the "setting reading routines" domain included *Behavior expectations for the reading routine are not posted* (dark red), *Behavior expectations are posted but not visible to children* (light red), *Behavior expectations are clearly posted but not developmentally appropriate (e.g., lack of combination of text and visuals)* (light yellow), *Behavior expectations are clearly posted, but some are not developmentally appropriate (e.g., use of negative phrasing)* (dark yellow), and *Behavior expectations are clearly posted and developmentally appropriate* (green). These indicators were assessed by observing the teachers. Teachers received a green rating for each key indicator if they were performing well, yellow if it was an area needing some improvement, and red if it was an aspect requiring significant improvement. This system provided a clear and visual method to track progress and identify priorities for coaching. This structured coaching approach ensured that teachers received consistent, actionable feedback to refine their practices, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of the drama-integrated read-aloud sessions and improving student outcomes.

After the classroom observations, the coach conducted individual meetings with each teacher. During these meetings, the coach provided detailed feedback on the observed sessions, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. This dialogue allowed teachers to reflect on their practices and gain insights into how they could enhance their read-aloud techniques. Based on the feedback and discussions from the individual meetings, the coach and the teacher collaboratively developed an action plan. This plan outlined specific goals and strategies tailored to each teacher's needs to improve the effectiveness of the drama-integrated read-aloud sessions. A total of 16 coaching sessions were conducted, with teachers receiving an average of 8.15 hours of coaching (*range* = 7.62–8.67 hours). The mean duration of classroom observations was 30.37 minutes (*range* = 16–56 minutes, *SD* = 9.60), and the mean duration of individual meetings for feedback and action plan creation was 30.68 minutes (*range* = 23–46 minutes, *SD* = 5.99). The author conducted all coaching sessions.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed an inductive approach, where the researcher identified codes, main themes, and sub-themes within the data (Saldana, 2013). The analysis was conducted in four stages. Firstly, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed. To ensure accuracy during transcription, the audio recordings were listened to multiple times and compared against the transcripts. In the second stage, the transcripts were thoroughly reviewed, and the teachers' representative comments and descriptive anecdotes were examined. In the third stage, similar codes were grouped to form sub-themes based on the representative data. Finally, the sub-themes were combined, and main themes were identified. An independent researcher with expertise in qualitative research and early childhood education reviewed the identified main themes, sub-themes, and codes. Based on the feedback provided by the independent researcher, some theme names were revised, and the findings were finalized. In accordance with ethical principles, participating teachers were identified with codes (i.e., Participant 1, Participant 2) to ensure their confidentiality in the study. Direct quotations from the participants have been included to provide authentic insights.

Results

The study's findings shed light on how preschool teachers view the implementation of drama-integrated read-alouds in the classroom. Through analyzing teacher interviews, three key themes emerged: 1) Effective Read-Aloud Strategies that promoted children's engagement and learning; 2) Read-Aloud as a Tool

for Development, emphasizing children's developmental progress and teachers' professional growth; and 3) Challenges in Implementing Read-Alouds, identifying the obstacles faced during the process. These themes highlight the diverse impact of drama-integrated interactive read-alouds on teaching practices and child development. Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the themes and their sub-themes.

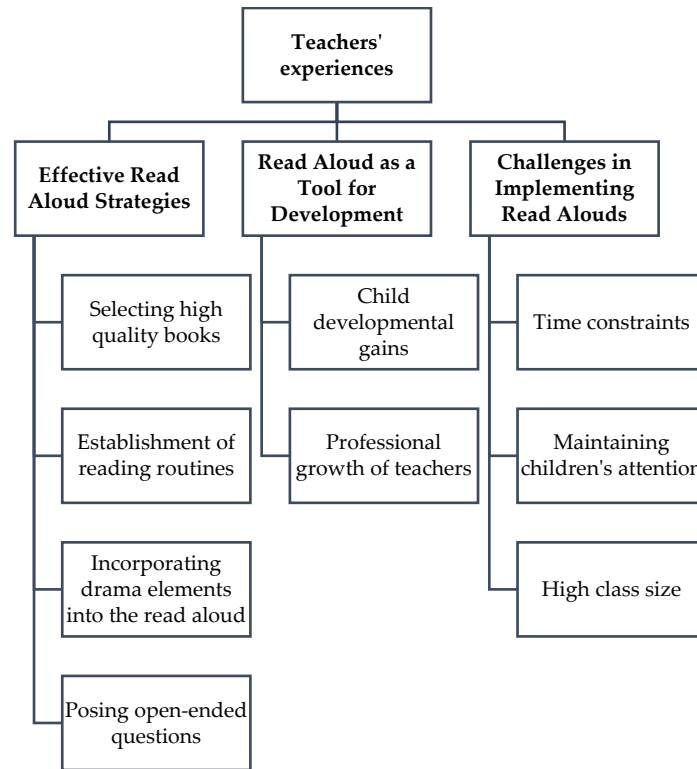


Figure 1. Thematic map of teachers' experiences with drama-integrated interactive read-alouds

Effective Read-Aloud Strategies

The teachers emphasized the importance of effective read-aloud strategies that significantly enhanced the impact of drama-integrated reading sessions. They highlighted the crucial role of selecting high-quality books to enhance the effectiveness of drama-integrated read-alouds. One teacher noted,

"The books you provided for us to read differed from those in our regular library. These carefully selected books were designed to promote behavior change and foster positive behaviors, creating significant awareness among the children. With this project, I realized the importance of selecting quality books more than ever." (Participant 1).

Another teacher shared,

"The content of the books was delightful for me. It is like watching a movie—some books felt like an animated film. I loved the storylines of the books." (Participant 2)

Another effective strategy highlighted by the teachers was the establishment of reading routines, particularly creating reading rules and using music to signal the beginning of storytime. Teachers believed that implementing clear rules and visual cues during the reading sessions reinforced appropriate behavior, such as active listening and participation, which the children gradually internalized. Additionally, using music not only captured the children's attention but also helped them transition smoothly into the reading activity, creating a consistent and engaging environment. One teacher observed,

"Playing a song and linking it to story time helped the children adapt immediately. They knew it was time for our reading session when they heard the music. As soon as the music started, they would stop whatever they were doing and move into the seating arrangement. They internalized this routine very well." (Participant 1)

The teachers highlighted incorporating drama elements into the read-aloud process as a strategy that enhanced the effectiveness of the sessions. One teacher remarked,

"If you ask me what the most important thing was, it was assigning roles to the children based on the book characters. For example, I asked the children to hug each other in a book where the characters hugged each other, and they loved it. I realized at that moment that the children needed that interaction. Even a child not listening to the story would immediately engage when I asked them to act out a role." (Participant 2)

Teachers identified using open-ended questions during the reading sessions as an effective strategy to engage children more deeply with the content. One teacher explained,

"Instead of yes-no or short-answer questions, it is important to ask open-ended questions that encourage children to think critically and immerse themselves in the story." (Participant 1)

Read-Aloud as a Tool for Development

Teachers reported that workshops and coaching sessions focused on drama-integrated interactive read-alouds could significantly enhance their pedagogical skills and support children's developmental growth. They observed that their involvement in the program resulted in substantial professional development. Concurrently, children demonstrated notable progress across various developmental domains, which extended beyond the classroom into the home environment. Parents also recognized these positive changes at home, further reinforcing the effectiveness of the intervention.

Child Developmental Gains

Teachers believed that the drama-integrated read-aloud sessions resulted in significant developmental gains in children, particularly in their language, social, emotional, and behavioral development. Additionally, they observed improvements in children's attention and engagement. These improvements were not only evident in the classroom but were also observed by parents at home across various aspects of their children's development.

Language development

Teachers observed notable improvements in children's vocabulary and language skills. They reported that children acquired advanced vocabulary, often beyond their expected developmental level. One teacher emphasized this point:

"At this age, children have learned words that we may not have encountered until middle or high school. For example, a preschool child learning the term 'bullying' at this age is a significant achievement in terms of vocabulary development." (Participant 1)

Teachers reported that the sessions not only expanded the children's vocabulary but also helped previously reserved children gain confidence and express themselves more comfortably. The long-term nature of the intervention particularly benefited shy children, allowing them to come out of their shells gradually. One teacher noted:

"Even the very quiet and calm children have now started expressing themselves with ease. Some children, despite sharing the same classroom, were too shy to speak. The long-term nature of the intervention worked well because these children needed considerable time to break out of their shells." (Participant 1)

Social and emotional development

The sessions also fostered empathy and compassion among the children. Teachers observed that the children showed increased compassion and empathy towards their peers, which translated into their behavior. One teacher shared:

"I have noticed a significant increase in the children's sense of compassion. In the books, when a child felt bad, their friends would encourage them. This has translated into their behavior. For example, I saw one child hug another who was crying because they missed their mother, saying, 'I stopped missing my mom, and you will too.'" (Participant 2)

Additionally, the sessions provided opportunities for children to form new friendships and increased their social interactions. One teacher remarked:

"In the dining hall, children from different classes who hadn't met before would wave to each other, and when they went out to the park, they became friends. Sometimes, as we were leaving the park, they would say, 'Teacher, I made a friend!'" (Participant 2)

Behavioral improvements and conflict resolution

Teachers reported a significant decrease in aggression and conflict among children. The intervention promoted constructive social problem-solving skills, which were reflected in their daily interactions. As one teacher observed,

"The children are not as aggressive as they used to be. Complaints have significantly decreased. I overheard two children who had a disagreement, and one said to the other, 'Remember, we talked about solving our problems between ourselves first, and if we can't, then we go to the teacher. It's just like in the stories.'" (Participant 1)

Moreover, the sessions raised awareness about peer bullying and promoted positive behavioral changes. One teacher explained,

"Some children had the mindset of 'You can only play with me, and no one else,' which they enforced as pressure on their closest friends. I believe we overcame this issue through the books we read about peer bullying." (Participant 2)

Improved attention and engagement

Children demonstrated increased attention spans and a greater interest in reading. Teachers observed a significant improvement in their ability to stay engaged throughout the sessions. A teacher noted,

"Their interest in reading and their attention during the sessions increased. They followed almost every book until the end. I can say that some children's attention span increased by about 70% compared to the early days." (Participant 2)

Parental observations and feedback

Parents also noticed positive changes in their children's behavior and communication at home, reinforcing the effectiveness of the intervention. Teachers received feedback highlighting how children enthusiastically shared their learning experiences. One teacher mentioned,

"The children would go home and talk about the books we read at school. I received overwhelmingly positive feedback from parents who appreciated this. A child narrating what they learned signifies communication, socialization, and the fulfillment of our educational goals to a significant degree." (Participant 2)

Professional Growth of Teachers

The study demonstrated that drama-integrated read-aloud strategies significantly contributed to teachers' professional development by encouraging self-reflection and continuous improvement in their teaching practices. Teachers acknowledged that the coaching process helped them identify their own areas for improvement and led to more effective reading practices. Teachers highlighted how the intervention prompted them to critically evaluate their methods and adopt new strategies to enhance student engagement. One teacher emphasized the importance of self-evaluation and adaptation, explaining that the experience led her to reassess her teaching methods and incorporate innovative strategies:

"It was a form of self-evaluation and self-critique. For the first time in my 15 years of teaching, I introduced music to signal storytime, which the children embraced and understood so well that as soon as the music started, they knew it was time for our story session." (Participant 1)

Additionally, the intervention enhanced teachers' questioning techniques during read-aloud sessions. Initially, they relied on simple yes/no questions, but over time, they transitioned to using open-ended questions that promoted critical thinking and deeper engagement. Reflecting on her progress, one teacher stated:

"Initially, I asked closed-ended questions, but I soon realized that wasn't sufficient for engagement. Over time, I became better at asking open-ended questions like, 'What do you think might happen?' or 'What would you do in this situation?' I felt more assured in my questioning, and it was rewarding when I realized I asked the right questions." (Participant 1)

Another teacher acknowledged the growth process, stating that while the experience revealed areas for improvement, it also helped him develop confidence in posing thoughtful questions without overanalyzing potential mistakes:

"I recognized my shortcomings, but I learned from them. I did not feel the need to overanalyze whether I might make a mistake or pose the wrong question." (Participant 2)

Teachers also reported improvements in their attention to book details, such as discussing the author, illustrator, and publisher—elements they had previously overlooked. One teacher noted:

"We used to overlook the book's authors and illustrators and did not spend much time on the cover or back page. However, we delved more deeply into these aspects this time, and I realized how much it enriched the storytime." (Participant 1)

Challenges in Implementing Read-Alouds

The findings reveal several challenges that teachers encountered during the implementation of drama-integrated read-aloud sessions, which influenced both the process and the outcomes. One major challenge identified by the teachers was initial anxiety and stress surrounding the process, particularly in balancing the demands of a busy school environment. One teacher shared,

"There was excitement at the beginning, which was good, but I was worried I would not be able to do it. It was such a busy and stressful time at school, but overall, it was a great experience." (Participant 2)

Another challenge was maintaining children's attention during the sessions. Teachers noted that children's focus sometimes wavered, especially during more prolonged or static reading activities. *"Sometimes the children's attention would drift"* (Participant 2) one teacher explained. *"When they had to remain seated for too long, they would start losing focus, especially if a conversation dragged on."* (Participant 1) The need for balance in session length and engagement strategies was highlighted, as longer sessions often led to restlessness and distraction among children.

Class size also played a significant role in the effectiveness of the read-aloud sessions. Larger class sizes made managing the children's attention and engagement more difficult. One teacher observed,

"When the class size reached 24 or 25 students, it became challenging. However, when there were only 15-20 students, everyone was fully attentive. With fewer distractions from classmates, it was much easier to keep them engaged." (Participant 1)

Conclusion and Discussion

The findings highlight that participating teachers expressed positive opinions on the social validity of the intervention. The teachers indicated that the drama-integrated interactive read-aloud intervention not only supported children's development but also contributed to their own professional growth. They identified key components of the intervention from their perspective, ranging from book selection to the types of questions asked during the reading process. However, they also highlighted various challenges they faced in implementing effective drama-integrated read-aloud sessions. These findings provide valuable insights into the potential of drama-integrated interactive reading strategies to enhance teachers' professional skills, as well as the obstacles encountered in classroom practice.

Teachers identified several strategies that contribute to effective read-aloud sessions, including selecting quality books, establishing reading routines, integrating drama elements into the reading process, and using open-ended questions. These strategies align with those proposed by researchers in the literature for effective reading practices (Fisher et al., 2004; Wright, 2019). Fisher et al. (2004) suggest that choosing books that align with children's interests and developmental levels, preparing for the reading process, setting clear objectives, modeling fluent reading, employing animated and expressive reading styles, and thoughtfully questioning children to focus on key aspects of the text are essential components of impactful read-aloud experiences. Furthermore, Lennox (2013) emphasizes three critical factors for successful read-alouds: increasing the frequency of reading, expanding the diversity and range of quality literature used, and focusing on the quality of interactions during the reading process. Building on these ideas, Wright (2019) highlights the need for purposeful planning, where teachers carefully select texts and strategically plan their instructional use to support student learning by determining the reading schedule, instructional focus, and key discussion points. Teachers must engage in effective pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading planning to achieve these goals. McCaffrey and Hisrich (2017) underscore that effective read-alouds do not occur by chance but result from deliberate and thoughtful planning to maximize their potential. Despite the recognized importance of planning, Hisrich and McCaffrey (2021) found that a significant proportion of teachers, ranging from 50% to 70%, engage in minimal preparation before conducting a read-aloud session. Damber (2015) demonstrated that read-aloud sessions were rarely planned or integrated into a meaningful context, with books often being selected at random. Ultimately, achieving an effective read-aloud experience requires intentional effort and

strategic planning by teachers, ensuring that the sessions are engaging, meaningful, and aligned with educational goals.

The findings suggest that drama-integrated read-aloud sessions profoundly impact children's language development, social-emotional growth, behavioral improvements and conflict resolution skills, attention and engagement, ultimately benefiting both classroom dynamics and home interactions. Interactive read-alouds are dynamic processes in which teachers and children actively think about and discuss the text being read aloud (Wright, 2019), thereby supporting children's development across multiple domains. In a literature review, Lennox (2013) emphasized that well-planned and engaging interactive read-alouds are widely recognized as a crucial approach to fostering young children's language development, particularly in relation to thinking and comprehension skills. Similarly, Venegas and Guanzon (2023) highlighted that interactive read-alouds offer valuable opportunities to teach and reinforce essential literacy skills—such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, reading comprehension, and writing—within a meaningful and authentic context. Research further indicates that effective interactive read-aloud sessions not only support children's literacy development but also provide opportunities to enhance their social skills, foster empathy, build a sense of community, and increase student engagement (Britt et al., 2016; López & Friedman, 2019). Interactive read-alouds have a significant influence on children's social and emotional development. Studies have shown that such interventions substantially enhance children's abilities to identify social problems and generate solutions (Bergman Deitcher et al., 2021), foster resilience and coping skills (Harper, 2016), and improve social interactions with peers (Kohm et al., 2016). As is evident, interactive read-alouds provide a context with great potential for the holistic development of children. However, realizing this potential requires effective teacher support during read-aloud sessions to help children construct complex meanings from high-quality children's literature (Hoffman, 2011). These findings underscore the importance of incorporating well-structured, engaging interactive read-alouds into early childhood education as a powerful tool for fostering children's cognitive, social, and emotional competencies.

The findings underscore the efficacy of drama-integrated sessions in equipping educators with effective interactive read-aloud strategies. As part of these sessions, teachers established a reading routine characterized by using music as a signal for storytime, engaging children in discussions about the author, illustrator, and publisher, and incorporating open-ended questions to foster critical thinking and deeper engagement with the text. Notably, these strategies align with the core principles of effective interactive book reading, thereby illustrating how the intervention facilitated teachers in enhancing their instructional practices. This alignment underscores the significant role of ongoing coaching in refining teachers' interactive reading methodologies. Artman-Meeker et al. (2015) suggest that while workshops and conferences play a vital role in raising awareness of evidence-based practices, they alone fall short in promoting sustained behavioral change or ensuring the accurate implementation of evidence-based practices within classroom settings. Given these challenges, teachers often struggle to translate the knowledge acquired from such training into practical application due to a lack of opportunities for implementation and feedback (Scheeler et al., 2009). Consequently, substantial and continuous support is essential for educators to carry out evidence-based practices as intended (DiGennaro et al., 2007). Dennis et al. (2021) posit that practice-based coaching effectively facilitates the implementation of evidence-based strategies within shared book reading sessions. Building on these insights, previous research has indicated that preschool educators face challenges in posing open-ended questions. For instance, Schmidt et al. (2024) highlighted that preschool teachers frequently ask low-quality questions that yield specific, short responses, often limited to yes/no answers. Similarly, Sha et al. (2024) found that preschool teachers tended to favor closed-ended questions over open-ended inquiries. In line with these findings, Dennis et al. (2024) posits that engagement in practice-based coaching, supplemented with scripted prompts, can potentially enhance teachers' proficiency in implementing both literal and inferential questioning as well as expansion and repetition skills.

Teachers encountered challenges in implementing drama-integrated read-aloud sessions, particularly in balancing the demands of a busy school environment and maintaining children's attention—a difficulty exacerbated by larger class sizes. Consistent with our findings, Alatalo and Westlund (2021) reported that

Swedish preschool teachers identified external factors, such as large group sizes and the requirement to teach mathematics and science, as obstacles in the planning and implementation of read-alouds. Similarly, Isaac (2018) found that large class sizes were perceived as a barrier to delivering interactive read-alouds to pre-k and kindergarten students. Merga and Ledger (2019) also highlighted that the frequency of interactive read-alouds declined in Australian classrooms due to a lack of time and high curriculum demands. The complexity of managing drama-integrated read-aloud sessions increases with larger class sizes, as these sessions require high levels of engagement and sustained attention. Larger groups often result in more distractions, making it challenging for teachers to maintain children's focus and active participation. This challenge underscores the necessity of effective classroom management strategies. Furthermore, these findings underscore the critical importance of maintaining optimal teacher-to-student ratios, as they directly influence the feasibility of implementing drama-integrated read-aloud sessions by allowing teachers to manage engagement and participation better.

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