



WORKING PAPER

Scoping the field of literacy research: How might a range of research be valuable to primary teachers?

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Abstract

Literacy research has an important role to play in helping to shape educational policy and practice. The field of literacy research however is difficult to navigate as literacy has been understood and researched in many different ways. It encompasses work from psychology, sociology, philosophy and neuroscience, literary theory, media and literacy studies, and methodologies include a range of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. In mapping this complex field, I draw on a systematic 'scoping survey' of a sample of peer-reviewed articles featuring literacy research relevant to literacy education for children aged 5-11. Studies were deemed relevant if they: addressed literacy pedagogies and interventions; and/or provided pertinent insights (e.g. into children's experiences of literacy); and/or offered implications for the range and scope of literacy education. The results of this survey are important in two ways. Firstly they help to articulate the range of literacy research and the varied ways that such research might speak to literacy education. Secondly they challenge easy distinctions between paradigms in literacy research. Recognising this complexity and heterogeneity matters given the history of relationships between literacy policy and practice in countries such as England, where polarised debate has often erased the subtle differences of perspective and confluence of interest that this survey illuminates. Based on the results of this survey I argue that an inclusive approach to literacy research is needed in educational contexts. Otherwise alternative and/or complementary ways of supporting children's literacy learning may be missed, as will important possibilities for literacy education and children's current and future lives.

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Scoping the field of literacy research:

How might a range of research be valuable to primary teachers?

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Introduction

Literacy matters. Through making, exchanging and using text we connect with others, explore what we know and feel, make a stand, and make things happen. We are also positioned in certain ways, opening out or closing down possibilities for who we can be and what we can do. In a world in which digital media are central to personal, social, civic, economic and political life, being able to create, interpret, innovate, evaluate and communicate through text has arguably never been more important. And in a world in which meaning making reflects diverse social, cultural and technological imperatives and practices, literacy manifests in multiple ways and everyday life requires an expanding communicative repertoire (Gillen, 2014).

In the light of this, literacy research has an important role to play in providing insights to inform debate and help shape educational policy and practice. This is challenging as the purpose of literacy education is open to interpretation and the field of literacy research is extensive and difficult to navigate. It encompasses work from psychology, sociology, philosophy and neuroscience as well as media, literary and literacy studies. Methodologies include many different qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. Given this complexity, the possible relationships between literacy research and practice are varied and wide-ranging.

In *Research Mobilities in Primary Literacy Education*, we are interested in the ‘kinds’ of literacy research that are gaining traction in literacy education and those that are not. We use ‘kinds’ of research to refer to research associated with different topics, theories and/or methodologies. We are exploring the kinds of research that are circulating in public and policy discourse as well as investigating those that reach teachers.

It is worth noting that, in considering the research that does (or does not) reach teachers, we do not intend to imply that teachers are passive recipients of research. Teachers’ professional knowledge draws on a range of experiences and sources. Teachers may be involved in research or enquiry directly and their engagements with others’ research are often dialogic rather than instrumental: teachers reflect on and interpret research findings with their own experience, context and children in mind (Cain, 2015; Coldwell et al., 2017). Nevertheless, as we have noted elsewhere, the extent to which teachers engage with different *kinds* of research can be affected by a range of political, commercial, institutional and personal factors (Burnett et al., 2022).

Given all of this, part of our work for *Research Mobilities in Primary Literacy Education* involves identifying patterns in the circulation of research in order to identify not just the research that was influential in teachers’ lives, but the kinds of research that were not. In order to do this, the project team required an overview of the different kinds of literacy research that *might* be relevant or valuable to primary teachers. In order to provide this overview I therefore conducted what I call a ‘scoping survey’ of recently published articles from a sample of journals with potential relevance to literacy education for children aged 5-11. It is this survey that is the focus of this working paper.

In what follows I begin by elaborating on the need for such a survey. I highlight how different assumptions about literacy play out in research, policy and practice and explore why it is beneficial for primary teachers and schools to draw on a range of research on different topics and from different perspectives if they are to plan for an inclusive and empowering literacy education. Next I outline the scoping survey methodology and summarise the topics, methods and perspectives identified, presenting these in relation to eight loosely conceived and inter-related 'orientations' to literacy. I conclude by arguing that, in addition to providing a touchstone for the project team, the results of this survey have potential to contribute to wider debates about relationships between evidence and literacy in primary education and to inform an inclusive approach to research in primary literacy education that acknowledges a range of research on different topics, using different methodologies and from different perspectives.

Literacy as contested terrain

The task of devising inclusive and empowering educational provision for literacy is a complex one, not least in primary schools which are often viewed as the preparation ground for learning across the curriculum. Debates concern not just how literacy should be taught but what should be prioritised. Should we prioritise the skills children need to decode and encode texts, or support their development as readers and writers that make readerly and writerly choices? Or should we focus on their understanding of how literacy works and provide opportunities to engage in literacies that make a difference to the world in which they live? Should literacy provision focus solely on the written word, or recognise the role of images, moving images, sound and connectivity in how we make and exchange meanings? And how can we capitalise on the diverse experiences of literacy that children bring to school, whether these arise from regular opportunities to share books with adults, from hearing and using multiple languages and the texts associated with them, or from playing and sharing with friends via digital media?

Questions about the nature and scope of literacy are therefore highly pertinent to policymakers and to charitable organisations and professional associations committed to promoting and supporting literacy education. They are also relevant to teachers and schools in deciding how best to support the children they teach and how to interpret and elaborate on curriculum frameworks. Importantly, however, decisions about literacy policy, provision and guidance to schools will depend not just on assumptions about how literacy is learned but to a large extent on how literacy itself and the purpose of literacy education are understood. Such differences have been mapped in various ways.

Over twenty years ago Hannon (2000) described how the scope and purpose of literacy education can be driven by different *imperatives*. He identified seven principles that might be used to frame literacy education: family choice, workforce requirements, social differentiation, equal opportunities, personal development, citizenship, or social change. Each has different implications for the emphasis of literacy provision. Workforce requirements, for example, are often cited as a reason for more effective and efficient teaching of literacy skills while a focus on social change might call for a greater emphasis on critical literacy.

Relationships between assumptions about the nature of literacy, literacy learning and literacy teaching are also explored in Ivanic (2004)'s framework for analysing discourses of writing. Ivanic's analysis distinguished between different discourses or 'configurations of beliefs and practices' (p.220) embedded within orientations towards writing, learning to write, and approaches to teaching and assessment. It identified assumptions and practices associated with six discourses - a skills discourse, a creativity discourse, a process discourse, a genre discourse, a social practice discourse and a socio-political discourse. Ivanic offered this framework as a research tool for identifying the different stances on writing that play through

policy documents, pedagogic practices and media coverage. Ivanic suggests that a similar set of discourses could be used to distinguish between trends in reading teaching.

The work of Hannon and Ivanic demonstrates that literacy pedagogy is never neutral but is framed by assumptions about what literacy education is for and how literacy learning happens. In practice, different assumptions interweave and overlap in a variety of ways. Teachers' commitments and intentions may well be at odds with priorities foregrounded in schools and educational systems. Tools and resources can sustain certain assumptions about literacy even if/when these become outdated or priorities change - literacy schemes, for example, may be too expensive to replace or throw out. And there are many classroom practices, both institutionalised and serendipitous, that help to construct literacy in ways that do not necessarily reflect teachers' espoused beliefs (e.g. see Ferguson, 2021). Engaging with a wide range of literacy research may therefore provide an important starting point for critical reflection or review of the range of assumptions that underpin current practice.

Hall (2003, 2013) demonstrates how different theoretical perspectives provide different lenses through which teachers can examine children's literacy learning and devise appropriate support. She provides vivid illustration of this in *Listening to Stephen Read* (Hall, 2003) in which she presents conversations with four reading experts working from different theoretical underpinnings. Hall invited each expert to comment on a running record¹ of one boy reading out loud and a transcript of a reading conference exploring his attitudes towards and experiences of reading. The experts' differing analyses of his strengths and needs illuminate varied aspects of his reading, generating diverse suggestions for the next steps for him as a reader. Engaging with a variety of research can therefore expand and refine teachers' professional repertoires in supporting literacy learning.

The value of attending to research from different paradigms is demonstrated through Ellis and Rowe's (2020) analysis of the positive effects of the *Strathclyde Three Domains Tool* (Ellis and Smith, 2017). The Tool was devised to prompt teachers to address three 'domains' when supporting children's reading: skills and knowledge, social and cultural capital, and children's identities as literacy learners. Each is informed by a different body of research which teachers draw on to identify and address children's needs as readers. Similarly, Purcell-Gates et al. (2006, 2016) describe how different perspectives make important and complementary contributions to understanding literacy learning. They argue that it is therefore valuable to approach print literacy through a 'widened lens' that sees cognitive dimensions of literacy as 'nested within' sociocultural context (Purcell-Gates et al., 2006, p. 81).

In summary, diverse perspectives from literacy research are important in:

- a) reflecting on the nature of literacy and literacy learning;
- b) reviewing the purpose and scope of literacy education;
- c) supporting literacy learning.

Navigating this diversity can be challenging not least because the field of literacy research is contested terrain, particularly in the area of early reading where alternative perspectives are often touted as competing positions rather than as offering complementary insights (Wyse and Bradbury, 2021). As Moss (2021) explains, an emphasis in England on experimental research traditions in psychology has led to the marginalisation of sociological perspectives, neglecting the relevance of culture, connection and place. The polarisation of different

¹ A running record is a record of the errors- or miscues- a child makes when reading a passage. They are termed miscues as it is assumed that errors are not random. Analysis of the miscues can be used to understand the strategies a child is trying to use when reading, even if these do not always result in the 'correct' reading of a word (Clay, 1986).

perspectives is further entrenched through methodological debates that pit quantitative evidence against qualitative findings. In *Research Mobilities in Primary Literacy Education*, we are working from the premise that methodological and theoretical narrowing may fail to recognise the contribution of work across the diverse field of literacy scholarship with detrimental effects on children's literacy learning. It was with this in mind that the scoping survey was designed and conducted.

Using a scoping survey to map the range of literacy research

Reviews of research are conducted for various reasons, most frequently to synthesise what is known about a particular topic, to identify areas worthy of further consideration or to weigh the evidence for using a particular approach or intervention (e.g. Kucirkova et al., 2019; Torgerson et al., 2019). For this scoping survey the intention was slightly different. It aimed to map the *range* of recent published literacy research relevant to literacy education for children aged 5-11.

Before explaining how this was done, it may be helpful to clear some ground by emphasising some things that this survey did *not* attempt to do:

- It did not attempt to identify and analyse *all* published literacy research articles. Its findings therefore are inevitably provisional and indicative rather than comprehensive.
- It did not make judgements about the *relative prevalence* of different topics, perspectives or methods within the research literature or within specific journals (for a recent attempt at this, see Parsons et al., 2020). Its purpose was to map the range of research rather than to draw conclusions about specific emphases or gaps within the field.
- It did not use criteria for selection adopted by some systematic reviews or meta-analyses and therefore cannot be considered as aligning with established standards. It is not offered as a comparator, in methodology, to syntheses of research findings produced in recent years by the Education Endowment Foundation, for example.
- It did not review the articles in detail or with criticality. As such it provides an overview of areas of interest and endeavour rather than substantive findings.

What this survey *did* attempt to do was to exemplify the diversity of orientations circulating in research linked to literacy education. It aimed to summarise the *kinds* of topics being addressed, the *range* of methods being used, and the ways in which different kinds of studies *might* speak to literacy education. As such it was an exercise in demonstrating the *potential* for a range of research to speak to literacy education rather than one of making specific recommendations for future directions in research or for evidence-informed practice. I refer to it as a 'scoping survey' to signal that it is essentially a preliminary piece of work designed to feed the work of our project. It provides an expansive overview designed to stimulate debate rather than an in-depth, definitive analysis of the state of the field.

The survey focused on a sample of articles featuring research focused on 5 to 11 year-olds. This age range was selected as it reflects the primary phase in England in which literacy is a key emphasis (and which is the focus for the *Research Mobilities in Primary Literacy Education* project).

Given that the aim of this exercise was to consider the variety of ways in which literacy research might speak to practice, it was important not just to include studies that included clear implications for pedagogy (along the lines of 'what works') but also to consider articles that were relevant to literacy education in other ways, as discussed above. As well as studies that might be helpful to teachers in supporting literacy learning I also included those that might support reflection on the nature of literacy and literacy learning, and on the

purpose and scope of literacy education. Articles identified through this exercise therefore included those which:

- evaluated or examined educational approaches (which I refer to as **responses**);
- provided insights which could be relevant to literacy teaching and learning, e.g. into children's experiences of literacy outside school or into the processes involved in reading (which I refer to as **insights**);
- raised questions that support critical reflection on teachers', schools' and policy-makers' priorities in literacy education (which I refer to as **critique**²).

The scoping survey

Given the expansive nature of literacy research, this survey was inevitably selective and involved considerable judgment on my part in deciding which articles were relevant and in identifying salient features and their potential relevance to literacy education. There is not space here to expand on the significance of my own experience and expertise to this process. Suffice it to say that the findings of the survey must be read as provisional and partial. However it is worth expanding on the process through which I identified and analysed articles, a process which I designed to allow me to gain an overview of literacy theories, methods and topics in a systematic but time-efficient manner. This process involved the following stages:

1. An initial sample of 20 journal articles was reviewed in order to develop and trial a matrix to log key aspects of research outlined in literacy-related research articles. This sample was derived from the four most recently published articles on literacy education for 5 to 11 year-olds in the following journals: *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Literacy* and *Journal of Research in Reading*. These journals were selected as they regularly featured research with the 5-11 age group and, due to their differing editorial policies, were likely to provide good coverage of a range of perspectives and paradigms.

The aspects logged were: orientation to literacy, theoretical perspective, methods and topics (See Appendix 1). 'Orientation to literacy' was used to capture the assumptions about the nature and/or purpose of literacy learning that underpinned different studies.³ Through this work 8 orientations to literacy were identified. While these were arrived at inductively they were inevitably influenced by my prior experience of the literacy field. Given that an aim of this exercise was to identify orientations to literacy that are missing from the policy discourse, particular attention was given to teasing out the breadth of research associated with a sociological perspective. In doing so it is recognised that some of the nuances within the range of psychological research may have been lost and this will be revisited at a later stage of the project.

2. This matrix was used to log key aspects of literacy research from a larger sample of articles, which were sorted according to the 8 orientations (while remaining open to adding further orientations if these became evident). At this stage initial lists were

² I arrived at the response/insight/critique categorisation during the analysis. Like any categorisation it has limitations and so needs to be treated with some caution and seen as provisional. It is retained in this working paper as it does provide as a way of distinguishing between research that offers different kinds of understanding (or perhaps evidence?) to teachers & which might prompt different kinds of professional reflection. In the final phase of our project we will explore whether, and if so how, such distinctions are useful to teachers

³ Literacy has been used to capture competence in a wide range of areas, such as health literacy, emotional literacy, financial literacy and so on. This exercise concerned only 'literacy' as understood in relation to meaning making processes and/or practices involving text.

constructed of theories, methods, and topics within articles linked to each orientation. Much of this was gleaned from abstracts but where this information was not evident or unclear, more in-depth reading of the article occurred.

3. In order to expand these lists of theories, methods and topics, the contents of three of these journals (which together were expected to represent the widest range of perspectives) were examined in more detail. For *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *Journal of Literacy Research* and *Reading Research Quarterly*, all articles published in issues over three years (between January 2019 and December 2021 inclusively) were reviewed as well as all articles published online through systems such as Early View or Online First but not yet allocated to issues. At this stage, all relevant articles were added to the matrix (see detail on exclusions below).
4. The contents of 8 other journals were then reviewed for additional theories, methods and topics that had not already captured through the initial trawl (again checking articles available prior to allocation to an issue, and those published in issues from 2019 to 2021). At this stage, articles were only logged if they featured theories, methods and topics that had not featured previously and if they featured literacy research with the primary age phase. If not they were discounted.

At this stage I reviewed all articles from *Literacy* and *Journal of Research in Reading* published during the survey period. I also reviewed 4 general education journals: *British Educational Research Journal*, *Oxford Review of Education*, *Research Papers in Education*, *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 2 journals were included to capture research on topics and themes relevant to literacy but that might be published in specialist journals. These were *Journal of Multilingual Theories and Practices* (included as articles relate to multilingualism are often included in journals focused on applied linguistics) and *Learning, Media and Technology* (as a key outlet for articles on digital media that may well be relevant to expansive notions of literacy). At this stage, only those articles that addressed theories, methods and topics that had not been included previously were added to the matrix.

Through this process 142 articles were logged. 106 of these were included following the systematic logging of all relevant articles in *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Reading Research Quarterly* and *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*. 36 were added from the remaining journals as they addressed topics, theories and methodologies that had not already been noted. Table 1 summarises the number of articles reviewed for each journal. Inevitably given the strategy described above, the majority of articles were derived from the first three journals. The other journals may well have published relevant articles but these will have been discounted if they did not add new theories, topics or methods that had not already been logged. These numbers are provided simply for reasons of transparency. It would be inappropriate to use them to draw conclusions about the relative number of literacy-related articles published in each journal.

Journal	Number of articles
All articles recorded:	
Journal of Early Childhood Literacy	36
Journal of Literacy Research	18
Reading Research Quarterly	52
Articles recorded only if they explored topics, theories and/or methods not previously logged:	
Literacy	11
Journal of Research in Reading	9
British Educational Research Journal	5
Oxford Review of Education	1
Research Papers in Education	6
British Journal of Educational Studies	0
Journal of Multilingual Theories and Practices	1
Learning, Media and Technology	3
TOTAL	142

Table 1: Number of articles included from each journal

5. The matrix was refined to remove redundancy and repetition. This process resulted in a summary of topics, theoretical perspectives, methodologies addressed by the articles reviewed. These were mapped against the 8 overarching orientations to literacy. See (1) above.
6. Given that this mapping exercise was ultimately designed to have relevance to policy makers, schools and teachers, the *implications* of research reviewed were also summarised in the final column of the matrix. These were clustered together to avoid repetition. The aim here was not to signal the precise implications of each article but to summarise the different *kinds* of implications generated through these different kinds of studies. These were categorised according to the three different kinds of implications described above:
 - a) **Responses** (which explored the value of specific approaches to literacy education –I use the term ‘response’ to allow for a diversity of approaches ranging from planned interventions or strategies to reactions or suggestions made in the moment;
 - b) **Insights** (which described or explained aspects of children’s literacy/ies in or beyond school);
 - c) **Critiques** (which challenged established policies or educational approaches.

Before presenting this matrix and accompanying commentary, it is worth emphasising that a series of guiding principles informed decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of certain articles. These are outlined in Appendix 1. While these are noted for reasons of transparency, it is emphasised that the field of literacy research is fluid and porous, and that this review like others is neither exhaustive or impartial and therefore does not seek to generate a comprehensive map of the literacy research field. Moreover the allocation of articles to orientations was partly subjective and orientations overlap in various ways. Given all of this, I emphasise again that I do not make any claims about the relative quantity of studies in each orientation or suggest that these categories are exclusive or definitive. Instead the orientation categories are intended as place-markers to suggest different emphases in literacy research which seem important to signal as they have different kinds of implications for educational practice. The final column of the matrix (implications) teases out these differences.

The matrix is provisional. *The Research Mobilities in Primary Literacy Education* team may decide to work on it further as we encounter research from other perspectives or which addresses topics currently not represented. In its current form it is simply a reference point for surveying patterns in the kinds of literacy research that are gaining traction and those which are not. While its format, level of granularity and use of terminology will need to be refined to suit different audiences, it does provide a starting point for discussion about the range of research that does, and perhaps should, gain sway in literacy education.

Findings

The matrix summarising the outcomes of this survey can be seen in Appendix 1. Orientations are listed in the first column. Theories, methods and topics associated with articles allocated to each orientation are listed in subsequent columns. (These are summarised from the range of articles.) All surveyed articles are referenced in the implications column to allow an interested reader to follow up individual studies if required. In what follows, each of the orientations is expanded in turn. While there is not space here to expand on topics, methods or theoretical perspectives, in what follows I briefly sketch the scope and range of articles associated with each orientation and the kinds of implications they offer for literacy education.

1. Literacy as a set of skills (55 articles)

The first set of studies includes those that focus on the teaching and learning of literacy skills. The range of topics included here is indicated by a series of literature reviews produced during the period of this review that focus on: dyslexia (Shanahan, 2021); the effects of text structure instruction on comprehension (Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2021); interventions for struggling readers (Neitzel et al., 2020); the role of play in literacy skills (Rand and Morrow, 2020); the effects of systematic synthetic phonics instruction (Ehri, 2020; Torgerson et al., 2019); the evidence base for reading instruction (Peng and Goodrich, 2020), and guidance for spelling teaching (Chen et al., 2021). Many of the articles included here align to the orientation to literacy that underpins the curriculum for English in England (within which reading and writing are primarily addressed – DFE, 2014), although not all of the topics represented here have been given equal attention in policy or practice. This group also includes studies that reflect diverse assumptions about the range of literacy skills that need to be taught and about how literacy skills are best learned.

Many of the articles referenced in this section derive from the research exploring the cognitive systems and neural processes associated with learning to read (Church et al., 2021) referred to as ‘the science of reading’ (Goodwin and Jiménez, 2020). Focus topics include phonics, morphological awareness, reading comprehension and reading difficulties. References to the ‘science of reading’ have been the subject of critique, not least because the term seems to convey greater legitimacy to research on some topics than others. Indeed our sample includes a number of articles which argue for an expansion of ‘the science of reading’ to include knowledge about reading generated in other paradigms. These include, for example, articles that call for a greater range of sensitivities to be considered in literacy learning such as the role of nonverbal elements in supporting lexical knowledge (Lawson-Adams and Dickinson, 2021).

This group includes explanatory studies which illuminate processes with a view to informing interventions and approaches. These include those that explore relationships between different competencies, such as Amendum et al.’s (2021) exploration of the variables associated with reading variance, Reutzel et al.’s (2019) study of relationships between children’s ability to name letters and to write them, and Tremblay et al.’s (2021) use of eye tracking to understand use of reading strategies by readers with varying levels of effectiveness. Phonological awareness is a key focus. Studies include for example those

exploring relationships between phonological awareness and reading comprehension (Double et al., 2019).

Several articles focus on comprehension, exploring relationships between comprehension and: morphological awareness (Kim et al., 2020; Lam et al., 2019; Levesque et al., 2019); oral reading proficiency (Sabatini et al., 2019); metacognition (Moir et al., 2020); home language environment (Relyea et al., 2020); background knowledge (Kaefer, 2020); task and text (Toyama, 2021). It is noteworthy that the vast majority of studies in this group focus on reading not writing, and that all studies reviewed confined their interest to the reading and writing of print text rather than multiple modes or media. The three studies that focus on writing trace the relative competence of children of different ages in writing certain text types (Tolchinsky, 2019; Stavans et al., 2019) and in planning for writing (Llaurado and Dockrell, 2019).

The most commonly used rubric for understanding the reading process in this group of studies is the Simple View of Reading (SVR) - which has underpinned policy on teaching reading in England since 2006. An example is Kirschmann et al.'s (2021) analysis of relationships between working memory, word and sentence reading, and comprehension. Also included are arguments for revisions to SVR. Duke and Cartwright (2021) argue for the superiority of an 'active view of reading' that expands the simple view to bring in self-regulation, Cervetti et al. (2020) argue that the SVR needs to account for a wider constellation of skills, while Taboada Barber et al. (2021) and Goldenberg (2020) argue for adaptations to account better for the experience of bilingual learners.

This group also includes studies that focus on different groups of learners. These include: Law and Ghesquière's (2021) exploration of the relationship between morphological and phonological processing by dyslexic students; van Bergen et al. (2021)'s study of the effects of children of different ages of choosing to read on reading fluency and comprehension; Proctor et al.'s (2019) examination of use of the effects of academic language use by bilingual children; Schmidt et al. (2021)'s analysis of differences in phonological information processing for children with and without learning difficulties; and Herman and Kyle's (2019) analysis of the support needed by deaf children and those with dyslexia.

Where articles focus on pedagogical interventions, they tend to focus on measurable effects of interventions or approaches on specific skills. While Hurry et al. (2021) examine the apparent effects of Reading Recovery 10 years after the intervention was used, most studies measure effects over a shorter timescale. They explore a range of aspects that might be valuable to skills development, such as the effects of: a handwriting programme on early reading skills (Ray et al., 2021); teaching questioning on comprehension (Blything et al., 2020); a text structure intervention on reading and writing informational text (Strong 2020); and of an interactive shared reading intervention on English language learners' vocabulary (August et al., 2021). Some articles focus on developing linguistic comprehension. Examples include the effect of sound stories on vocabulary learning (Lawson-Adams and Dickinson, 2020) and Cabell and Hwang's (2020) use of a content rich English arts curriculum. Some involve direct comparisons, such as Sargiani et al.'s (2021) comparison of the effects of grapheme phoneme decoding as opposed to whole syllable decoding, and Roberts et al.'s (2020) comparison of the effectiveness of teaching phonics in contextualised or decontextualised ways.

Morphological instruction is the focus for a significant body of work in this category, with several articles deriving from the special issue on morphology in *Journal of Research in Reading*. These include Colenbrander et al.'s (2021) randomised controlled trial of the impacts of structured word inquiry and Gellert et al.'s (2021) study of the effects of teaching morphology on vocabulary growth. A small number of studies explored the effects of using digital resources or texts on aspects of literacy skills learning (Bonneton Botte et al., 2021;

McTigue et al, 2019; Elimelech and Aram, 2020; Clinton, 2019; Bratlie et al, 2021). The vast majority of studies of interventions focus on evaluations. Exceptions include two articles that critique aspects or explore wider effects: Brooks et al.'s (2021) analysis of commercial phonics schemes themselves (rather than their implementation) which identifies a number of linguistic errors in schemes available to schools and Carter's (2020) study of children's perspectives on the Year One phonics check in England.

Methods used by studies reported in this group are predominantly quasi experimental, including randomised controlled trials, with effects measured using standardised tests (e.g. Moussa and Koester 2022). There are however articles that draw on wider methods to capture insights into literacy skills learning. Baker and Bradley (2021) for example used ethnographic approaches to explore how children drew on cultural and linguistic resources as they developed vocabulary use around a speech recognition app while Oakley et al. (2020) used mixed methods to capture the impact of multimodal app use on skills development. Both studies highlight how children's literacy skill development was supported by interactions with and around apps. They foreground sociocultural, rather than psychological-cognitive, understandings of literacy learning.

In recent years, as explored earlier, some countries have expanded their literacy curricula to include skills associated with making and using multimodal and/or digital texts. Articles in this sample however, even if deriving from different perspectives, focused on the acquisition of reading and writing skills traditionally associated with printed text. Studies that approached literacy more expansively tended to see literacy as about more than skills. The sections which follow illustrate some ways in which they do this.

2 Literacies as socially situated practices (25 articles)

This section surveys articles underpinned by the idea that literacy is socially situated (Barton and Hamilton, 1998). Rather than seeing literacy as a set of transferable skills, this work orientates to literacy – or indeed *literacies* – as social and cultural practices that are specific to people and places. Chamberlain (2019) for example explored how children's out-of-school writing practices were embedded in children's homes and family life, while Taylor and Clarke (2021) examined children's volitional writing, tracing connections to the texts they chose to read and their personal interests.

The most commonly cited reference point for the work reported in these articles is 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez et al., 2006). A focus on funds of knowledge foregrounds the diverse cultural and linguistic resources that children bring to school, resources often missed by the school system. The articles include studies of children and families at home (Flint, 2020; Tatal-Suangenco and Florida, 2020; Noguerón-Liu et al., 2020), such as those which trace children's transnational literacy practices through migration and communication with dispersed families (Compton-Lilly et al, 2019). Translanguaging– children's use of multiple languages to navigate tasks and negotiate meaning – was a recurrent focus (Choi, 2021; D'Warte, 2020). Kibler et al. (2020) for example explored shared book reading in multilingual families, noting how interactions usefully moved between languages to support decoding of texts, with siblings acting as cultural and linguistic mediators.

Research from a sociocultural perspective challenges deficit perspectives on certain groups of children, such as those from minoritised backgrounds, and explains how children and families can be marginalised through linguistic and ideological barriers and exclusionary classroom practices (Kuchirko, 2019; Chao and Ma, 2019; Shepard-Carey, 2021; Henning, 2020). Literacy assessments for example can fail to register children's abilities if they rely on monoglossic assessment (Chaparro et al., 2021). In response there has been a growth of interest internationally in culturally informed literacy instruction (Kelly et al., 2021) that aims to use children's funds of knowledge as the starting point for literacy education. Case studies of individual children provide insights into how children's experiences have been valued in

school and leveraged for literacy learning (e.g. Becker, 2021; Franco et al., 2021). For instance Flynn (2021) describes how translingual, transcultural group storytelling supported children's language development, while Machado and Hartman's (2021) participatory case study of a writers workshop analyses how children explored their transnational experience through poetry. Other examples include Bryan-Silva and Sanders Smith's (2021) exploration of a 'pedagogy of liberation', which positions parents and children as agents who highlight and use children's funds of knowledge within literacy classrooms, and Schmier's (2021) collaboration with preservice teachers to explore 'turn-around pedagogies' (Kamler and Comber, 2005), through which children positioned as having poor literacy skills are repositioned (or turned around) as literate through opportunities for digital storytelling that build on experiences of literacies in their lives outside school.

In contrast to the articles summarised in the previous section, research methods for this group of studies are predominantly qualitative, with a particular emphasis on ethnographic approaches (e.g. Omogun and Skerrett, 2021) and case study (Becker, 2021). Primarily these studies build on collaborations between academics and individual teachers. Exceptions include D'Warte's (2020) study which used design-based principles to develop such approaches across seven schools, and Hilaski's (2020) account of how a funds of knowledge orientation was used to adapt a Reading Recovery programme to be more responsive to children's cultural, linguistic and social knowledge. Reed et al. (2021)'s examination of multiple datasets relating to the 'summer reading loss' provides a rare example of quantitative analysis. Reed et al. concluded that there was no evidence for summer reading loss, arguing that the standardised tools for assessment that feed such datasets provide only narrow insights into children's learning; in other words, they do not account for the situated nature of literacies.

3 Literacy as meaning making (20 articles)

This section considers articles that foreground literacy as meaning-making. This is not to suggest that articles included in other categories do not see literacy as meaningful activity. This section however foregrounds research that specifically focuses on the meanings children make with an emphasis on creativity, purpose, expression and fulfilment. It includes studies that document children's meaning-making with a diversity of texts within and outside school, studies that explore the significance of children's enthusiasm for reading and writing as meaningful activity, and those that used approaches that foreground reading and writing for purpose and pleasure.

Studies of children's experiences of self-initiated literacy activity highlight the diversity of literacies in which children engage outside school linked to their own interests and purposes. These include Lim and Toh (2020)'s case study of children's out-of-school Youtube compositions, Kucirkova et al.'s (2019) systematic review of children writing on screen and Khosronejad et al.'s (2021) study of children's views of themselves as reflexive autonomous writers. Literacies as presented in this group of articles are often digital and multimodal and sometimes bilingual and/or transmedial, as in Kesler et al.'s (2021) analysis of the picturebooks created by bilingual children and Mills and Brown's (2021) documentation of how children's narrative shifted across media when using virtual reality.

Also included here are studies that explore children's motivation to read (Kavanagh, 2019; Lepper et al., 2021), working on the assumption that intrinsic motivation derives from an interest in the meanings of texts, or an enthusiasm for reading and writing as meaning making activities. Three studies question ideas and practices often associated with this theme. Scholes et al.'s (2021) exploration of boys' fiction reading challenges the commonly held belief that boys do not like narrative, while Kambara and Lin (2021) explore how reading motivation may be culturally specific, and hence assessments of motivation may be misleading. Hadley and Dickinson (2020) similarly question assessment processes, this time linked to assessments of vocabulary. They argue that assessment measures should look at

depth as well as breadth: at how far a child understands the meaning of words as well as the number of words they use.

Pedagogical responses include creative approaches to engaging children with texts or providing motivating and meaningful contexts for expression. Hong (2019) explores how defamiliarisation can be used to support creativity, engagement and writing for aesthetic experience in poetry writing, while Jusslin and Höglund (2021) review the role of the arts and dance in supporting poetry writing and Young et al. (2020) measure the effects of Readers Theatre on the reading of 2nd grade boys (aged 7-8). Three studies highlight the role of texts and other resources in generating meaningful engagement: Tabernero and Calvo's (2020) case study of responses to picturebooks by autistic learners; Zaidi's (2020) exploration of the use of dual language books with multilingual learners; and Kervin et al.'s (2019) argument for careful selection of digital resources to invite children's 'active socially engaged meaningful literacy learning'.

Other articles describe approaches used to encourage reading or writing with a sense of purpose, authorial intent and/or audience (Ward et al., 2021; Ayroles et al. 2021). These include two articles emerging from a project which focused on developing teachers as writers. Cremin et al. (2020) explore how teachers shifted their writing pedagogy as they wrote more themselves and developed identities as writers. Myhill et al. (2021) argue that the 'craft knowledge' developed in this way is an important counterpoint to technical knowledge about writing. In many of these articles, skills and meaning making are closely intertwined. Skills are important as a route to meaning or meaning making and learned and applied within the context of meaningful literacy activities.

4 Literacy and power (15 articles)

The articles included in this section build on the assumption that literacy and literacy education are always embroiled historically, socially and culturally in ways that reflect and uphold inequitable power relations. These include accounts of studies that explore the schooled literacy experiences of children who become marginalised by westernised and exclusionary practices, for example: Verhabovic's (2021) case studies of translingual refugee children; Ferguson (2021)'s sociomaterial network case study of literacy in one classroom; Sherfinski's (2020) case study of school literacy as constructed by neoliberal policy; Kontovourki and Siegel (2020)'s analysis of literacy and pedagogy in classrooms as saturated with power; and Moffat et al.'s (2019) exploration of how reading aloud practices in classrooms work to uphold certain ideas about reading and being a reader. Such work explores how literacy schooling itself can work to sustain inequitable power relationships. Two articles in this group address policy directly. Innes (2021) explores the effects on literacy policy on one school that joined an academy chain, while Willis (2019) draws on an analysis of policy and research on reading interventions to argue that reading research has been complicit in the reproduction of racial inequalities.

Also included here are studies that provide critical examinations of resources used in primary classrooms, examining how they challenge or uphold inequalities. These include analyses of children's books, such as Hayden and Prince's (2020) examination of representations of disability in picturebooks and Torres and Medina's (2021) study of the 'hidden' literature of Puerto-Rican island-based authors, which they propose as a counterpoint to the colonisation of children's texts post Hurricane Katrina. Others consider resources for teachers, such as guidance offered to teachers on dyslexia, which Worthy et al. (2021) argue can be reductive and misleading.

In response to such analyses, several studies describe how new educational spaces can be opened out to allow for literacies that challenge inequitable practices. Land (2020) outlines a teacher enquiry project through which teachers sought to include 'critical, humanizing' pedagogies in teaching writing through foregrounding purpose and audience to drive

students' agentic text design. Similarly Dernikos (2020) explored how sensitive and responsive actions by adults can challenge scripts for classroom success or failure whereby children of colour are labelled as struggling readers. Such studies are concerned with recalibrating classroom relations.

In other studies in this group children are encouraged to recalibrate their relations *with the world* through literacy activity. Sanchez and Ensor (2021) describe how online story exchanges were used to enable children to connect across the globe while Hajisoteriou et al. (2021) for example describe how children were invited to engage in a process of 'world making' through collaborative storytelling about social justice and sustainability. Such work articulates with previous work on critical literacy and/or critical pedagogy (e.g. Janks, 2013) and occasionally extends it. Yoon (2020), for example, drew on her ethnographic study to foreground how critical literacy and/or civic action arose in ordinary moments in everyday classroom life while Wynter-Hoyte and Smith (2020) outline how a teacher and researcher collaborated to disrupt a colonized early childhood education curriculum by teaching from an Afrocentric stance.

5 Literacy as social (10 articles)

The articles referenced in this section build on the assumption that literacy learning is a social process, with meanings negotiated through interactions between children, their families, their peers and their teachers. They share an interest the role of interaction in supporting children's engagements with text and include studies that illuminate the role of collaboration amongst learners in literacy learning: Kulju and Mäkinen's (2021) analysis of peer scaffolding of phonological strategies when playing a game and Jaeger's (2021) exploration of children's collaborative composing during Writers Workshop. This group also includes analyses of resources that may or may not support interaction with and around texts, such as Korat and Falk's (2019) analysis of the suitability of e-books for in supporting literacy and Pantaleo's (2020) exploration of the value of encouraging 'slow looking' at picturebooks.

The nature and quality of teacher/child interactions has long been a focus for educational research (e.g. Alexander, 2017) and is another area of interest in this sample. Pacheco et al. (2019), for instance, investigated the significance of teachers' participation in translanguaging practices in learners' engagement with texts. Two other studies explored aspects of coaching: Correnti et al. (2021) evaluate the impact of online content-focused coaching on dialogic text discussions while Robertson et al. (2020) draw on a meta-synthesis of studies of literacy coaching to identify obstacles to and enhancers of co-construction. Rowe (2019) emphasises that child/teacher interactions are multimodal through her analysis of the role of gesture when children are writing with adults.

Studies of classroom interactions have repeatedly problematised the nature of teacher/child talk and studies in this sample suggest that teacher-dominated talk persists in places. Peterson (2019) draws on fieldnotes to conclude that, in one classroom, student-led discussions included talk of a higher order than typical within teacher-led discussions. Boyd et al. (2020) identify how dialogic talk can usefully be integrated within teacher-led segments of Writers Workshop sessions.

6 Literacies as material and embodied practices (9 articles)

Articles referenced in this section explore the significance of materiality and embodiment to literacy practices. A dominant theme is the role of affect. Nordstrom et al. (2021), for example, document the role of joy as children create multimodal compositions while Boldt (2021) explores the 'vitality' and 'aliveness' of classroom life. Developing these ideas, a small number of posthumanist studies invite us to consider relationships between children, the things around them and the meanings they make (Thiel and Dernikos, 2020; Kuby and Gutshall Rucker, 2020). Rather than focusing on planned activity, such work explores

literacy as emergent and much of this work draws on examinations of what unfolds in the moment.

The majority of studies in this group draw on ethnographic approaches, with some use of post qualitative methods designed to challenge habitual ways of observing classroom activity with a view to sensitising themselves to aspects of classroom life they may not notice otherwise. Baroutsis (2021) for example used time lapse photography to look afresh at classroom activity moment-to-moment rather than examining it in relation only to teachers' intentions, Jokinen and Murriss (2020) examined images of hands from video stills of a literacy lesson, while Thiel and Dernikos (2020) revisited data on classroom composing with a focus on sound to enable them to 'feel' their data.

Pedagogies explored by studies in this group foreground the value of improvisational and/or open-ended activities. These include a practitioner study of the co-constitutive qualities of play and writing (Smith, 2021), a study of multilingual poetry writing (Abraham, 2021), and an argument for nurturing relationships between drama and reading (Medina et al., 2021). In each it is the unfolding activity that generates the impulse to read or write, rather than pre-designed and/or teacher-led interventions.

7 Literacy learning as multidimensional (6 articles)

It is evident from the previous sections that, as stated earlier, the boundaries between the 8 orientations are permeable. This section focuses on some ways in which researchers have explicitly drawn from across orientations to research to develop literacy learning by combining a focus on skills for example with a focus on social, cultural and/or material dimensions of literacy. Together this diverse set of articles demonstrate a several ways in which articles draw across multiple understandings in examining literacy learning.

They include articles that explore the role of multiple routes to word reading. Gottardo et al. (2021) combine a sociocultural perspective with linguistic independence theory to explore the significance of societal/contextual factors and prior learner experiences, in education and elsewhere, to children's cross-linguistic skills in word reading. Scanlon and Anderson (2020) draw on a secondary analysis of 6 experimental studies to conclude that approaches that encourage children to draw on both phonics and context are successful in helping to build sight vocabulary.

This group also includes work that considers successful reading in relation to affective dimensions of literacy: Pickren et al. (2021) analyse the effects on comprehension of texts with a strong emotional charge, presenting skills development is seen as inextricable from factors that exceed cognitive understanding. McArthur et al. (2021) also draw connections between literacy and emotions by exploring relationships between reading and emotional health and foregrounding the interconnectivity between literacy and wellbeing.

Also included are articles that approach evaluation in ways that challenge straightforward judgements about worth. Quinn and Bliss's (2021) evaluation of apps to support early writing for example uses a diverse set of criteria while Butvilovsky et al. (2021) highlight the limitations of using reading assessments to look at bilingual pupils' literacy, suggesting that analysis of writing produces a more nuanced and multi-layered assessment.

8 Literacy and learning across the curriculum (2 articles)

This final group addresses the role of literacy in mediating understanding, exploration and communication in subjects across the curriculum. It included only two articles, possibly because articles exploring the role of literacy in other subjects appear in other journals. In both articles the focus is on writing. Kosko and Zimmerman (2019) present a classification scheme for identifying children's mathematical writing and how this develops. Malloy et al.'s (2020) design-based project focused on developing argumentative agency and critical

argumentative literacy in history, with a particular focus on relationships between oral and written argument. These articles are included as a separate group as literacy across the curriculum represents a distinct area of interest.

Commentary

This survey aimed to articulate the range and scope of recent literacy research through mapping the diversity of topics, theories, methods and implications associated with different perspectives. It did not aim to explore the content of articles surveyed in any depth, and certainly not to evaluate them. The preceding sections provide just a flavour of the orientations, topics, theoretical perspectives, methods and implications of the 142 articles surveyed and summarised in Appendix 1. Nevertheless the outcomes of this survey do, as intended, provide a reference point for articulating the range of ways in which literacy in primary education has been understood and researched and the varied ways in which such research might speak to literacy education. They also, I suggest, problematise easy distinctions between paradigms or discourses in literacy research and in doing so challenge the polarisation of perspectives that has been such a feature of debates about literacy education in recent years. I expand on these two points below.

1. Articulating the range of research with implications for literacy education

In popular discourse, and indeed in the current National Curriculum for English in England (DfE, 2014), literacy is understood primarily as a set of skills. The potential for drawing on a range of literacy skills to support literacy learning is therefore a useful starting point for this discussion. As explored above, this orientation brings together a wide range of work on different topics and from different perspectives. Some of these, such as phonics, have gained considerable attention in the educational community while others, such as morphology, less so. Many of the articles surveyed build on research from cognitive psychology that has explored how children learn to read. However they also reflect other perspectives on how literacy skills are learned through approaching literacy learning, for example, as a social and cultural process. Given that, as explored in the introduction, it is helpful for teachers to draw on complementary ways of understanding literacy learning (Ellis and Smith, 2017; Hall, 2013), insights from a range of research can usefully feed teachers' repertoires in teaching literacy skills.

Importantly, the survey also generates different perspectives on *what* should be learned. With this in mind, the 8 orientations provide a diversity of perspectives on what literacy education is *for*. In some cases literacy is seen as the basis for schooling- for supporting learning across the curriculum for example (as in Orientation 8). In others it is designed to feed children's current and future lives more broadly: through approaching literacy for creativity and expression (Orientation 3) or addressing relationships between literacy and power (Orientation 4). Each of these signals possible areas to be addressed through literacy curricula.

Other orientations expand understanding of what might be relevant to *children's literacy experiences* exploring aspects of literacy education often missed in official accounts of literacy or literacy education. Orientating to literacies as social and/or cultural, material and embodied practices (see orientations 2, 5 and 6) has implications for expanding the curriculum to be more representative of and sensitive to children's experiences. It is also helpful in understanding that social, cultural, embodied and material dimensions of literacy learning exist even when left unrecognised. Research with these orientations highlights the need to make careful decisions about pedagogical approaches and resources but also to consider the significance of relationships, feelings, culture, identity, place, time and the subject matter of text to literacy learning. This matters given the current emphasis on understanding 'what works' in literacy education and on identifying 'proven' approaches that are likely to have a positive effect on literacy outcomes (DFE, 2022). Several articles

included here contribute to the 'what works' agenda (e.g. Colenbrander et al., 2021; Correnti et al., 2021) and may well provide useful direction to educational leaders and teachers in making decisions about future literacy policy. However attention to social, cultural, material and embodied dimensions of literacy suggests that understanding what works for particular children in specific settings is highly complex given the multiple factors and actors at play. Understanding such complexity requires multiple perspectives.

These 8 orientations therefore combine to suggest a diversity of ways in which research might orientate to practice and, by implication, how practice might orientate to research. The orientations address, in effect, different kinds of professional questions. As is evident from the final 'implications' column in Appendix 1, together they suggest diverse implications for: approaches to literacy teaching and learning ('responses'); vantage points on what happens in classrooms ('insights'); and questioning assumptions about the aims, purposes and effects of literacy in schools ('critiques').

2. Challenging the polarisation of perspectives on literacy

In highlighting a diversity of topics, theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, the results of this scoping survey reflect the findings of another recent study that highlighted an expansion in the field of literacy research. Based on a review of articles published in 15 literacy journals over 10 years, Parsons et al. (2020) noted how well-established areas of interest and methodological traditions in literacy research have persisted while new areas of interest, perspectives and approaches have emerged. While this diversification could be seen as an enrichment of the field, Parson et al.'s analysis suggests a growing fracturing of the literacy research community with scholars working in different traditions resistant to engaging with the methodologies and ideas developed elsewhere. They observed for example that researchers' journal choices may help to reinforce methodological silos as certain journals publish primarily qualitative or quantitative work, and that different topics were addressed in articles aimed at literacy academics and those aimed at practitioners. Parson et al.'s analysis suggests that literacy research often helps to sustain entrenched positions rather than facilitating the alternative ways of knowing that might be valuable to teachers working in complex environments.

While this survey's findings provide further evidence of diversification, they also suggest permeability. Researchers doing different kinds of work may well move in different circles and gravitate to different journals, conferences and so on. However the findings of this survey challenge straightforward distinctions between paradigms or discourses in literacy research. As is evident in Appendix 1 and in the summaries above, each orientation is associated with a range of theoretical perspectives, topics and methodologies and these combine in ways that defy easy categorisation. Oakley et al.'s (2020) analysis of multimodal app use, for instance, is concerned with subskills but its focus on digital apps extends our thinking about the *kinds* of skills typically associated with reading and writing. Yoon (2020)'s work on criticality, literacy and civic action in ordinary classroom moments is rooted in relationships between literacy and power but also resonates with orientations towards literacy as emergent. Of course, as explored earlier, the 'orientations' are themselves constructions, introduced to wrangle the diverse set of articles into workable categorisations. However, given the diversity of articles yielded through this process, alternative approaches to categorisation would likely prove equally provisional, heterogenous and indistinct.

The next section explores some implications of this analysis for relationships between literacy research and literacy education in policy and practice and argues for an inclusive approach to literacy research in education.

Towards an inclusive approach to literacy research

Recognising complexity and heterogeneity in literacy research matters given the history of relationships between literacy policy and practice in England, as exemplified by the often cited ‘reading wars’ that pit whole language approaches to teaching early reading against those using phonics (see Goldenberg, 2020; Wyse and Bradbury, 2020). Such discourses tend to polarise debate, erasing subtle differences of perspective.

The breadth of insights and implications illuminated through this survey illustrate the wide range of literacy research that might be relevant to literacy education. It shows some of the many important ways that research can speak to literacy and, through doing so, enrich, extend and sustain teachers’ professional repertoires. Research using different methodologies can produce complementary or alternative insights into children’s learning that may have implications for literacy teaching. Small scale, qualitative studies for example may support professional learning and reflection through providing insights into the diversity of children’s experience, showing how orientations to literacy education play out in children’s lives, and raising questions that challenge established ways of knowing and doing literacy. And research into different topics can usefully extend and challenge ideas about what literacy education is doing and what it might- and should- be trying to achieve. **I suggest therefore that different kinds of research should be seen as complementary rather than contradictory, and indeed that different kinds of research are needed to explore the complex relationships and experiences that frame literacy learning and curricula.**

Of course attending to multiple forms of research is not straightforward for various reasons. Some of these are practical, for example due to researchers’ differential access to resources to support dissemination and dialogue with teachers, and to the challenges teachers and schools face in accessing and navigating research. Others are philosophical. Some perspectives align easily with current policy or practice whereas others provide insights that are difficult to act on as they seem out of step with dominant discourses. Moreover some research may be poorly designed, executed or communicated, and different criteria are needed to evaluate the worth of different kinds of research.

While these challenges are not to be under-estimated, this survey generates a reference point for identifying patterns in the kinds of research that are gaining traction in public and policy discourse and in teachers’ professional lives, and those which are not. It explores a variety of ways in which literacy skills can be supported, but also shows how literacy education is about more than skills. And **it suggests that the value of research to teachers does not lie only in providing evidence for effective approaches (or responses) but in providing insights into children’s experience and frameworks for critique.** It prompts questions not just about dimensions of children’s learning that teachers might usefully attend to, but about the aims, purposes and effects of literacy education. It suggests a vision of relationships between literacy research and practice that is about generating new ways of seeing and knowing rather than answers, about illuminating possible pathways rather than indicating direct routes. Perhaps most importantly, through opening out possibilities, by presenting alternate ways of knowing- and hence alternative aims and means – it throws professional decision making and judgement centre stage. Addressing these challenges requires a policy context that allows for pluralism in recognising multiple ways of knowing and teacher agency in drawing on research to support professional thinking. If educators’ and policymakers’ interest is restricted to certain kinds of research (such as those addressing certain topics or using certain methodologies) then not only may alternate ways of supporting currently priorities be ignored but important possibilities for literacy education and children’s current and future lives may be missed.

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Appendix 1: Additional criteria for inclusion/exclusion on articles

Given that *Research Mobilities in Primary Literacy Education* explores teachers' encounters with research in England, the survey focused on studies that were deemed to have relevance to the English context. While such judgements are inevitably subjective, the principle applied was to include studies from elsewhere in the UK and internationally unless they focused on aspects of literacy education from overseas that were country-specific, for example those that focused on resources or curricula used outside England, or that concerned the language features of learning literacy in a language other than English in a country other than England.

Articles were excluded that were aimed primarily at an audience of researchers (such as those that identified gaps in research or recommended a particular methodology or theoretical standpoint). Given an underlying interest in implications for curriculum and pedagogy, articles focused solely on teachers' professional development were also excluded, such as those examining teachers' competence or beliefs, teacher education or other forms of professional learning.

Some articles were omitted because the age group was unclear or the reported study spanned a significant age range beyond the 5-11 age group. Articles were also excluded if they focused on interventions in settings other than a school and in which schools were not involved, such as home-based literacy programmes or museum education. Sometimes these decisions were not clear-cut. For example, an article was excluded which explored a community equity initiative (Wessel-Powell et al., 2021) in which local residents were involved in a range of literacy-related activities as there was no direct reference to school-based activity. This initiative may well have involved or been relevant to children in the area and relate in important ways to literacy in school. Similarly, work focused on 'lost learning' was starting to emerge in 2021 in response to the pandemic (e.g. EEF, 2021). Findings of such work were judged to be too generic to speak in useful ways to literacy pedagogy or provision and so was also excluded.

Finally it is emphasised that the categories presented are not mutually exclusive and that there is no intention to suggest that there are coherent and consistent associations between literacy orientations, theoretical perspectives, topics and/or methodologies. Distinguishing between orientations towards (or ideas about) literacy is in many ways artificial, not least because many of these ideas tend to cluster together in practice and intersect in multiple ways. The process often rested on very fine judgements. For example, studies of children's literacies at home were sometimes placed in the 2nd category (literacies as socially situated) and sometimes in the third (literacy as meaning making). They were placed in the second if the focus of the article was to explore the significance of children's home literacies for educational contexts. They were placed in the third if the focus of analysis was on drawing out the meanings children themselves were producing. Moreover, theoretical underpinnings were often hybrid and not always explicit so sometimes had to be inferred from the underpinning research.

Appendix 2: Literacy Scoping Matrix

Literacy Orientation	Theories (organised alphabetically – bold indicates most common approaches)	Methodologies (organised alphabetically – bold indicates most common approaches)	Implications
Literacy as a set of skills (55 articles)	Constructivist Developmental learning theory Multidimensional Multimodality Neuroscientific Psychological-cognitive Semiotics Sociocognitive Sociocultural Sociolinguistics	Corpus analysis of interactions Secondary analysis of dataset of assessments Ethnographic Experimental/quasi experimental design (e.g. using eye tracking, standardised tests, analysis of features of children’s writing) Exploratory mixed methods Longitudinal study Multi group structural equation modelling Randomised controlled trial Survey Systematic lit review/meta-analysis/tertiary review Textual analysis	Insights Effects of acquisition of literacy on the brain (Church et al. 2021) Explaining reading variance, including phonological processing (Amendum et al. 2021) Understanding children’s use of reading strategies (Tremblay et al. 2021) Relationships between letter naming and letter writing (Reutzel et al. 2019) The role of the nonverbal e.g. gesture, in supporting lexical knowledge (Lawson-Adams & Dickinson 2021) Reading competence of those passing phonics check at second attempt (Double et al. 2019) Vocabulary support needs for oral deaf children and children with dyslexia (Herman & Kyle 2019; Law & Ghesquière 2021). Phonological information processing for children with and without learning difficulties (Schmidt et al. 2021) Long term effects of Reading Recovery (Hurry et al. 2021) Qualities of children’s writing at different ages (Llaurado & Dockrell 2019; Stavans et al. 2019; Tolchinsky 2019) Relationships between comprehension and: background knowledge (Kaefer 2020); choosing to read (van Bergen et al. 2021); home language and literacy environment (Relyea et al. 2020); morphological awareness (Kim et al. 2020; Lam et al. 2019; Levesque 2019); working memory, word and sentence reading (Kirschmann et al. 2021); oral reading (Sabatini et al. 2019); task and text (Toyama 2021) Bilingual learners use of academic language (Proctor et al. 2019) Role of play in literacy (Rand & Morrow 2021) Critiques Critiques/expansions of Simple View of Reading (Taboada Barber et al. 2021; Cervetti et al. 2020; Duke & Cartwright 2021)

			<p>Integrating other perspectives within science of reading (Peng & Goodrich, 2020; Goldenberg 2020) Critique of brain-based interventions for dyslexia (Worthy et al. 2021) Children’s perspectives on phonics screening check & its effects on curriculum (Carter 2020) Linguistic errors in phonics schemes (Brooks et al. 2021)</p> <p>Responses</p> <p>Use of apps/programs to support literacy skills /vocabulary devt (Bonneton Botte et al. 2021; Baker & Bradley 2021; Clinton 2019; Elimelech and Aram, 2020; Oakley et al. 2020; Bratlie et al. 2021; McTigue et al. 2019) Effects of phonics teaching, including SSP and within whole language approach (Ehri 2020; Roberts et al. 2020; Torgerson et al. 2019) Significance of using orthographic neighbours to support orthographic processing in spelling teaching (Chen et al. 2021) Impacts of morphological instruction (Colenbrander et al. 2021; Gellert et al. 2021) Using sound stories to teach vocabulary (Lawson Adams & Dickinson 2020) Effectiveness of handwriting intervention (Ray et al. 2021) Effects of text structure instruction on reading comprehension (Bogaerds-Hazenberget al. 2021), on reading and writing informational text (Strong 2020) Effects on comprehension of: interactive shared reading intervention (August et al. 2021); content rich English Arts curriculum (Cabell & Hwang 2020) ; teacher questioning (Blything et al. 2020); teaching metacognition (Moir et al. 2020); Effects of read-alouds on reading competence (Moussa and Koester 2022) Instruction for children with dyslexia (Shanahan 2021); Interventions for ‘struggling readers’ (Neitzel et al. 2020)</p>
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<p>Literacies as socially situated practices (25 articles)</p>	<p>Cross-cultural psychology Ecological Funds of knowledge Language socialization Multiliteracies Multimodality Place-based Psychological-cognitive Social practice Sociocultural Sociopolitical Sociopsycholinguistic sociosemiotics Systematic functional linguistics Trans theories of language</p>	<p>Autobiographical Case studies, inc. participatory case study Critical review Design research Discourse analysis Ethnographic Exploratory analysis of existing datasets Interviews, observations Mixed methods Practitioner focused research Reading motivation questionnaire Textual analysis</p>	<p>Insights Children’s experiences, strengths & identities as meaning makers, including the role of families, out of school writing practices and peer interactions (D’Warte 2020; Kibler et al. 2020; Kuchirko 2019; Nogueroń-Liu et al. 2020; Tatel-Suatengco & Florida 2020) The role of translanguaging, multilingualism, transnationalism and digital media in young children’s literacies (Chao & Ma 2019; Choi 2021; Compton-Lilly et al. 2019) Volitional writing (Chamberlain 2019; Taylor & Clarke 2021)</p> <p>Critiques Critique of summer reading loss research (Reed et al. 2021) Inequity of classroom opportunity/analysis of appropriateness of schooling/resources for children’s needs (Henning 2020; Omogun & Skerrett 2021; Shepard-Carey 2021) Inappropriateness of monoglossic literacy assessments for bilingual children (Chaparro et al. 2021)</p> <p>Responses Culturally responsive teaching (Bryan-Silva & Sanders-Smith 2021; Kelly et al. 2021), e.g. through story circles (Flynn 2021), digital media (Becker 2021), digital storytelling (Sanchez & Ensor 2021; Schmier 2021), writers workshops (Machado & Hartman 2021); play (Flint 2020; Franco et al. 2021) Adaptations of approaches such as Reading Recovery (Hilaski 2020)</p>
<p>Literacy as meaning making (20 articles)</p>	<p>Aesthetics Literacy as social practice Multiliteracies Multimodality Readership & readers</p>	<p>Case study Conceptual review of assessment measures Content analysis of picturebooks Ethnographic discourse analysis Experimental/ quasi experimental</p>	<p>Insights Relationships between text characteristics, gender and motivation (Lepper et al. 2021) Motivation as predictor of reading success (Kavanagh 2019) Children’s writing on screen (Kucirkova et al. 2019) Subject knowledge for teachers of writing as craft knowledge (Myhill et al. 2021) Children as reflexive autonomous writers (Khosronejad et al. 2021)</p>

		<p>Illuminative evaluation methodology Interviews Questionnaire Randomised controlled trial Systematic review/systematic literature review Textual analysis</p>	<p>Children as motivated and accomplished composers of digital media outside school (Lim & Toh 2020) Creative design & transmediations of content in children's use of virtual reality (Mills & Brown 2021) Reading motivation as culturally specific (Kambara & Lin 2021)</p> <p>Critiques Challenge to discourse of boys as reluctant readers (Scholes et al. 2021)</p> <p>Responses Measures for assessment of early vocab development (Hadley & Dickinson 2020) Poetry writing: defamiliarisation as a tool to support creativity, engagement, writing for aesthetic experience (Hong 2019); dance and visual arts as way into poetry writing (Jusslin & Höglund 2021) Teachers as writers, teachers' identities as writers, writers as artist-educators (Cremin et al. 2020) Picture books for developing verbal and communication skills with autistic learners (Taberner & Calvo 2020) Use of dual language books with multilingual children (Zaidi, 2020) Writing workshop using picturebooks with bilingual children (Kesler et al. 2021) Effects of: readers theatre on boys' reading engagement (Young et al. 2020); task model enhancement on reading for purpose (Ayroles et al. 2021); contextualised teaching of grammar & mentor texts on writing (Ward et al. 2021) Principles for selection of digital resources (Kervin et al. 2019)</p>
<p>Literacy and power (15 articles)</p>	<p>Ableism Agential realism Black feminist critical theories Critical enquiry Critical literacy Critical race theory</p>	<p>Analysis of audio recordings Case studies Discourse analysis Ethnographic Interviews, participant observations Network case study</p>	<p>Insights Experiences of translingual refugee children (Verhabovic 2021) Children's creativity and competence in multimodal sign making (Kontovourki & Siegel 2020)</p> <p>Critiques</p>

	<p>Critical sociocultural Decolonial perspectives Disability studies Everyday criticality Feminist sociological Multimodality Non representational theory Posthumanism Sociomaterialism Affect</p>	<p>Sankofa methodology Teacher enquiry Teacher/researcher collaboration Textual analysis/content analysis/discourse analysis</p>	<p>Construction of inequities/literate identities (Ferguson 2021; Moffatt et al. 2019; Sherfinski 2020) Constraining effects of literacy policy (Innes 2021) Racialising pedagogies and practices (Willis 2019)</p> <p>Responses Developing critical, humanising pedagogies (Land 2020) Seeking out strength-based representations of children (Hayden & Prince 2020) Foregrounding 'hidden' children's authors (Torres & Medina 2021) Challenging scripts for classroom success/failure (Dernikos 2020) Disrupting colonised curriculum; teaching from an Afrocentric stance (Wynter-Hoyte & Smith 2020) Interrogating relationships between children, meanings and things around them (Thiel & Dernikos 2020) Fostering literacies as world making, world changing activities (Hajisoteriou et al. 2021) Opportunities for critical literacy/civic action in ordinary moments (Yoon 2020)</p>
<p>Literacy as social (10 articles)</p>	<p>Dialogism Heterotopic discourses Multimodality Sociocognitive Sociocultural Translanguaging</p>	<p>Case study Classroom observation, interviews Discourse analysis Ethnographic Experimental Metasynthesis Randomised controlled trial Textual/content analysis</p>	<p>Insights Nature of talk around shared reading (including ebooks, picturebooks) (Korat & Falk 2019; Pantaleo 2020) Role of gesture in early writing (Rowe 2019) Peer scaffolding in literacy games (Kulju & Mäkinen 2021)</p> <p>Critiques Relationship between teacher talk and child talk (Boyd et al. 2020; Peterson 2019)</p> <p>Responses Effects of literacy coaching (Correnti et al. 2021; Robertson et al. 2020) Co-composing, writers workshop, choice & agency (Jaeger 2021)</p>

			Role of teacher/other adults in facilitating talk, e.g. linked to translingual practices (Pacheco et al. 2019)
Literacies as material and embodied practices (9 articles)	New materialist Pluralist Posthumanist Relational Sociohistorical Sociomaterial	Autoethnographic Case study Collaborative action research Ethnographic/ethnographically grounded Mediated discourse analysis Practitioner research Post qualitative	<p>Insights Role of affect in classroom activity (Boldt 2021; Nordstrom et al. 2021) Literacy as relational rather than individual (Jokinen & Murriss 2020) Writing as emergent rather than planned (Kuby & Rucker 2020) The role of online story exchanges in transnational partnership in fostering relational ties (Sanchez et al. 2021))</p> <p>Critiques Challenging notions of literacy as design (Abraham 2021)</p> <p>Responses Decentring the teacher, e.g. reconfiguring familiar pedagogies, such as writers' workshop to be more child led (Baroutsis 2020) Developing generative pedagogies, e.g. drama and reading (Medina et al. 2021), play and writing (Smith 2021)</p>
Literacy learning as multidimensional (6 articles)	Complete View of Reading Holistic theory of bilingualism Multimodality Sociocultural/linguistic interdependence theory	Analysis of dataset from online assessment system Analysis of writing samples Analysis/evaluation of apps Experimental/quasi experimental Review Structural equation modelling	<p>Insights Low quality of apps for early writing (Quinn & Bliss 2021) Significance of emotional charge to text comprehension (Pickren et al. 2021)</p> <p>Relationships between reading and emotional wellbeing (McArthur et al. 2021) Relationships between cross linguistic skills, societal/contextual factors, and prior learner experiences in word reading (Gottardo et al. 2021)</p> <p>Critiques Inappropriateness of using monolingual reading assessments to assess bilingual children's literacy (Butvilofsky et al. 2021)</p> <p>Reponses</p>

			Encouraging use of context and phonics in word solving in reading (Scanlon & Anderson 2020)
Literacy and learning across the curriculum (2 articles)	Genre Social practice	Design based research Practitioner focused research Text analysis	Responses Classification scheme for identifying children's mathematical writing (Kosko & Zimmerman 2019) Developing argumentative agency and critical argumentative literacy in history (Malloy et al. 2020)