Impact study on early trial versions of Coaching eBooks
Objective

Oxford University Press wanted to find out the benefits and challenges of using prototype (early trial version) Coaching eBooks in order to inform the pre-publication development of this aspect of the Oxford Reading Buddy digital reading service.

Methodology

Researchers from the School of Education at the University of Southampton conducted a Randomized Controlled Trial following three schools, 322 students and 12 teachers for one term (Summer 2018). The six Year 1 and six Year 5 classrooms were randomly allocated into either the ‘experimental group’, who would use the prototype Coaching eBooks, or the ‘control group’, who would not.

Sources of evidence

- Researcher-administered questionnaires that assessed students’ reading attitudes before and after using the prototype Coaching eBooks
- Interviews with teachers
- Classroom observations
- eBook usage data supplied by the system

Resources used in the impact study

Seven prototype Coaching eBooks were specially created for the study. The reading level of the books was the assumed ‘average’ Oxford Level for the year group and the prototype contained a small number of the essential features of the proposed Coaching eBooks such as ‘Reading Buddy prompts’ and ‘Reading Buddy questions’, quizzes, feedback, audio and data-reporting.

Findings

Students’ attitudes towards reading were significantly more positive if they had been using the prototype Coaching eBooks.

The improvement in students’ attitudes towards reading was most significantly felt at Year 5.
Benefits identified by teachers

The Reading Buddy questions helped students reflect on their reading and engage in higher-order thinking skills.

“The Reading Buddy questions had the additional: ‘What about this? Have you thought about…?’ I have noticed some children engaging in that and talking it through with themselves.”

School 2, Year 1 teacher

The Coaching eBooks helped engage students with reading by integrating it with ICT.

“Thereir engagement has been really high with respect to the prototype Coaching eBooks.”

School 2, Year 5 teacher

Students themselves saw the value of the Reading Buddy questions.

“What the children found useful were the questions. So, it is the comprehension-type questions. It is always trying to find a fresh approach to get the children to answer questions about the text. There are lots of approaches to reading and to draw the correct information from the text. Actually, Reading Buddy is supportive as a tool for teachers.”

School 2, Year 5 teacher

The Coaching eBooks were enjoyable and therefore helped foster a love of reading.

“The children liked it. They absolutely loved all the stories. They were really upset when I didn’t have time, or the laptops broke down and that happened twice. They were really disappointed. They were engaged...with the stories.”

School 3, Year 1 teacher

Potential benefits identified

- Teachers felt that the Coaching eBooks could help bridge the gap between reading at home and reading at school.
- It was thought that the comprehension quiz questions could be useful preparation for National Assessments.
- Some teachers commented that a service like this could do two jobs at once: engage students in reading and inform teachers about progress against learning objectives.

“For some pupils, to access it at home will be a massive benefit.”

School 2, Year 1 teacher
## Challenges and impact on product development

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<tr>
<th>Challenges identified</th>
<th>Impact on pre-publication development of Oxford Reading Buddy</th>
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<td>Many teachers felt that insufficient school ICT equipment prevented them from using the prototype to its full capacity.</td>
<td>Oxford Reading Buddy will provide clear guidance on recommended usage to ensure that schools understand how all aspects of the service can be integrated to ease teacher workload and increase the impact of learning time.</td>
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<td>Time constraints restricted teachers’ ability to fully integrate and exploit the capabilities of the prototype. Focus on implementing the prototype reduced the number of other effective literacy practices taking place.</td>
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<td>Some Year 1 students found it difficult to access the prototype Coaching eBooks due to forgetting usernames, passwords and not yet possessing sufficient skills in ICT.</td>
<td>Oxford Reading Buddy is much simpler than the prototype and further refinements have been made as a result of the study to all aspects of the student interface to further improve usability for young learners.</td>
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<td>A limited capability for the seven prototype Coaching eBooks to address the interests and needs of all students in terms of reading level and motivation.</td>
<td>The finished Oxford Reading Buddy offers a large range and variety of books for students to choose from. Whereas only one Oxford Level per year group of prototype Coaching eBooks was offered for the study, the finished service matches students with a choice of books at their precise reading level. Oxford Reading Buddy offers a badge-based reward system to motivate and recognize good reading behaviours and achievements. Enhancements have been made as a result of the study.</td>
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## Conclusion

The prototype Coaching eBooks were found to provide a number of significant benefits to teachers and students. Most notably, usage of the eBooks was associated with significantly more positive attitudes to reading, particularly in Year 5. The Reading Buddy questions and quizzes were perceived to encourage deeper reflection on reading and to support comprehension. This pre-publication study also revealed challenges with implementation, which has allowed Oxford University Press to address these challenges in the finished Oxford Reading Buddy service.

Read the full report at [oxfordimpact.oup.com/oxford-reading-buddy-impact-study](oxfordimpact.oup.com/oxford-reading-buddy-impact-study)

## The Oxford Reading Buddy service

Oxford Reading Buddy is a digital reading service containing hundreds of Oxford books, including specially-created Coaching eBooks. The Coaching eBooks feature a digital reading buddy who prompts comprehension strategies and asks comprehension questions. The service also offers comprehension quizzes on digital and print books, automatic progress through Oxford Levels, teacher reporting and a reward system for students.