

*Positions on the Mat: A micro-ethnographic study of  
teachers' and learners' co-construction of an early  
literacy practice*

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

**Doctor of Philosophy**

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by

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## Abstract

This thesis reports on research into micro-interactions within the reading literacy event *Reading on the Mat* in three Grade One classrooms. This event is the core of literacy learning in Foundation Phase classrooms in formerly 'white', government-funded primary schools in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, and takes place daily for every child. It is literacy practice resembling *Group Guided Reading*. The research focused on teachers' identity-forming decisions, actions and discourses as a way of examining micro-interactions within the literacy event. Hymes's work on the ethnography of communication provided categories for the investigation.

Using an ethnographic approach, I entered the sites of the study as a participant observer. There I focused on the central literacy event, in which a group of children and the teacher sit in close proximity. I made field notes, video recordings and audio recordings in three sets of visits spanning the full school year. These were supplemented by teacher interviews, consideration of reports and assessments, and an analysis of the text types used on the Mat, for example, graded readers, flash cards and phonics primers. Beginning with Hymes' S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic, cycles of analysis using multiple instruments foregrounded the data.

The central finding of this research is that in *Reading on the Mat* children are offered identities through strong normative work and embedded practices. Teachers promote positive identities for children as successful readers and create positive affect for reading activities. This positive positioning work is however undercut by three factors: first, the fact that activities on the Mat focus on decoding text fragments rather than interrogating whole texts. The resultant identity offered to children is one of code breakers alone. A finding subsidiary to this, but important for pedagogic practice, is that teachers' choice of text types is the most powerful determinant of children's code breaker identity. A second factor that undercuts children's identity as successful readers is that, although they are active, they have little agency. This derives from the strong assessment focus of teachers on the Mat and their questioning practices. A third factor which undercuts the positive identity children are offered in this literacy event is that, by focusing primarily on decoding fragmented text and on assessment opportunities, teachers avoid engaging with

issues of differentiation and disregard cultural and linguistic differences. Teachers' choices, therefore, while creating a positive climate in the classroom and developing emergent readers who are effective decoders, construct children as limited literate subjects. The same choices enable teachers to ignore learner diversity.

## Declaration

I, the undersigned, Caroline Rosemary Dyke van der Mescht, hereby declare that the work presented in this document is my own, that it has not been submitted for a degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources utilized or quoted have been duly acknowledged.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. van der Mescht', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Caroline van der Mescht (January 2013)

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this study to the memory of my mother, Jill Wells, parent, teacher and principal, who taught thousands the joy of books and for whom there was no greater pleasure than the sight of a reading child.

## Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the generous help and support of many.  
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**My husband and family** for their patience, support and understanding.

## Conventions adopted in this thesis

1. All names are pseudonyms which reflect the home language and sex of the individual, for example Wajeeha was named Zahida; Kerryn was named Tarryn; Nomalungelo was named Nomsa, Francois was named Pierre, etc. The schools and teachers have also been given pseudonyms.
2. Quotes of data recorded on site are referenced to either the audio tape (e.g. C35) or the video tape (e.g. 202).
3. Automatically generated codes provided by the audio recorder have been retained. Some sessions were coded sequentially and others not, that is: C36 is not necessarily recorded at the same site and time as C37. See Appendix 3.
4. The video tapes were coded according to site visit, for example, 301 is the first tape of the third visit to that site.
5. The interactional data, largely presented in Chapter Six, is referenced as follows:  
Teacher. Reading group. Time of year. Focus text. Audio tape code, eg.:  
**Mrs Mitchell. Weak readers. Early in the year. Ladder books. E50.**
6. In the interactional data, participants are referred to as:  
Mrs D = Mrs Dean  
Mrs M = Mrs Mitchell  
Mrs S = Mrs Samuels  
C = unidentified child  
Cs = unidentified children.  
The transcriptions were done from audio tape which recorded less ambient noise. It was therefore often not possible to identify individual children.
7. Photographs (Figures 1 - 42) were taken from the video recordings. These videos were copied onto a laptop with reduced pixels in order to make them easier to store and manipulate. The blurred images produced by this process were retained in the interests of anonymity.
8. A CD of selected video material has been provided to give the examiners a sense of the interactions and the data. The CD will not be included in the final copy of the thesis for ethical reasons.

9. The faces of participants will be masked in the final copy. As the examiners will receive a CD of material this was not deemed appropriate for the examiners' copy. See examples of masked images in Figures 4 and 31
10. Three reading series were used in the classrooms of this study: Reading 360 (Ginn, 1987), New Reading 360 (Ginn, 1993), Key words with Ladybird (Murray, 2004) and Gay Way (Boyce, 1985). These have been fully referenced on first mention in each chapter only.
11. Quotes of single words or short phrases used by the teachers have been italicized on first mention, but not thereafter, e.g.: Ladder books, busy work, hook and look, criss-cross. As there are many of these, this convention was chosen over quotation marks. Italics also indicate single words quoted from other sources.
12. The following appendices are included in the blue pages:
  1. Letters to principals
  2. Questions for interviews with teachers (late 2010)
  3. List of audio recordings
  4. Video viewing list
  5. Table of Act Sequences samples: one from each teacher
  6. Table of Norms
  7. Transcription samples: one from each teacher
  8. Tables of discourse analysis results
    - 8.1 Naming and participants, all teachers
    - 8.2 Processes for all teachers
    - 8.3.1 Transitivity and analysis for children, all processes
    - 8.3.2 Comparative table of transitivity by process
    - 8.4 Statistics for other language items: modality, conventional politeness, question tags, pronouns and adverbs.
  9. Table of nonverbal behaviour
  10. Children's drawings, one from each classroom, titled "The researcher, the teacher, the classroom and me".



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# Chapter One: Introducing this study

- 1.1 Motivation for and background to the research
- 1.2 Locating the study: reading literacy in South Africa
- 1.3 Locating the sites: former Model C schools
- 1.4 Reasons for choosing the literacy event: Reading on the Mat
- 1.5 Reasons for choosing the methodology
- 1.6 Creative tensions in this study
- 1.7 An overview of this thesis

## 1.1 Motivation for and background to the research

The primary motivation for this research is my personal and professional interest in reading generally, and more specifically in the context of poor levels of reading ability among children in South African schools (a topic that received increasing attention in the media as the study progressed). As a high school teacher of English as a home and additional language, and later as a lecturer at a Further Education and Training (FET) college in the early 1990s, I became increasingly aware that students' reading literacy was not strong enough to meet course demands. At an FET college the link between poor literacy and poverty is clear: many students' opportunities of moving out of very impoverished environments are curtailed by their weak literacy skills.

In the early 2000s, colleagues at many different institutions started expressing their concern that students could not read well enough to keep up with coursework demands. This applied equally to Master's and Bachelor's degree students – who were described as reading at “frustration levels” (Pretorius & Currin, 2010, p. 72) – college students, and high school and primary school learners. In 2007 the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) confirmed these perceptions in a rigorous system-wide report which revealed that South African Grade Fives read nearly 200 points below the international median of 500 points. This converts into reading levels approximately three years behind international norms (Howie, 2008). In addition, Eastern Cape scores are the lowest in South Africa, with learners reading approximately four years behind

international norms (ibid.). These results combined with my interest in reading to confirm *reading literacy* as the focus of my research.

This chapter begins by noting research findings which give cause for concern regarding reading literacy. These findings suggested former Model C schools<sup>1</sup> in the Eastern Cape as suitable sites for research into reading literacy. A brief historical background to these institutions is provided in section 1.3. The third section explains why the study focuses on identity work in these schools, while a fourth section describes the literacy event *Reading on the Mat* and accounts for what makes it suitable for identity research. This is followed by a rationale for the methodology chosen for the investigation. The final section clarifies creative tensions underlying the study.

## **1.2 Locating the study: Reading literacy in South Africa**

At a time when literacy is internationally recognized as a basis for prosperity and economic growth (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998), the performance of South African school children is giving increasing cause for concern. For decades researchers (Fleisch, 2008; Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999) have warned that language and literacy learning need urgent attention. Similar warnings have come from the Systemic Evaluation programme (2004, 2007) and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (2007). The PIRLS report (Howie et al., 2007), gives a comprehensive picture of low levels of reading literacy in South African schools.

More recently, the Department of Basic Education's report on macro-indicator trends in schooling states: "Both national and international assessments indicate that South African children have failed to master the mathematics and language skills appropriate for their grade" (2011, p. 12). This has reached the media and during the writing of this chapter, a news channel announced that "South Africa's education system is one of the worst in the world. It has been ranked 140<sup>th</sup> out of 144 countries by the World Economic Forum. ... Many children of school going age can hardly read or count" (SABC, 2012). The

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<sup>1</sup> "Former model C" refers to a school situated in the suburbs, well resourced, with relatively small classes and staffed by qualified teachers. See explanation page 4 also.

seriousness of this situation is that children who cannot read quickly enter a negative spiral as they become increasingly unsuccessful at school-based literacies (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001; Chall, Jacobs & Baldwin, 1991). In South Africa children who are additional language speakers of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) are likely to be in this vulnerable group. In South Africa, this means most children by the end of Grade Three (Fleisch, 2008). Abadzi summarizes the situation:

Since children cannot learn from textbooks until they become fluent readers, the effects of illiteracy may reverberate through secondary and higher education. Illiteracy translates into dropout, grade repetition, and a need for extra resources. The survivors may enter secondary school with a reading speed of 80 words per minute and second-grade knowledge and be unable to catch up over the years. Then universities in low-income countries must deal with students who lack the prerequisites to follow higher-level courses. Illiteracy in grades 1-2 *creates inefficiencies that reverberate all through the education system.* (Her emphasis. 2008, p. 598)

There have been recent attempts to intervene through the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Grades One and Ten (South Africa, 2010). This reworked curriculum is supported by learner workbooks in the Foundation Phase. An Annual National Assessment (ANA) tracks the impact of these interventions, but recently recorded a repeat of the PIRLS results of three years earlier: 69% of all South African children are not performing at grade level (South Africa, 2011, p. 31). The ANA summary states:

Fewer than half of all learners in the country perform at a level that indicates that they have at least partially achieved the competencies specified in the curriculum. ... At the top end, too few learners are able to achieve outstanding results. (South Africa, 2011, p. 29)

The ANA results show that children do better at well-provisioned high-quintile schools, but not as well as they should. PIRLS similarly points out that home language speakers of English in well-resourced, former Model C schools, staffed by well-qualified professionals should have performed better than they did. They produced the highest scores, but additional language learners at the same schools did not achieve as well as their home language peers. This last finding suggested the site for this study. Former Model C schools represent the best learning environments provided by government-funded education in South Africa. If even in these classrooms children are not reading at international benchmarks or national grade standards, it seemed appropriate to investigate teachers' micro-interactions as they teach reading literacy.

### **1.3 The sites of the study: Former Model C schools**

This section explains further why former Model C schools are appropriate sites for research on identity and reading, and presents the history and language profiles which have made these schools complex multilingual, multiracial and multicultural environments. It also asserts that formative identity construction is inevitably part of children's experience of a new school environment, and identifies the advantages of using this perspective in a study of literacy practices. The section ends by suggesting that identity is a lens (Clegg, 2011; Gee, 2000), that enables the researcher to consider less visible aspects of social interaction.

In brief, the 'C' model offered to communities in the early 1990s allowed parents to keep their local school autonomous, charging fees to maintain facilities and hiring teachers to keep a low teacher-student ratio. Today the term suggests a well-resourced school, usually in a suburb. Children in these schools are usually either middle class or represent the middle class aspirations of their parents. Pilot visits in 2009, the year before data collection, also suggested that these schools retain some practices characteristic of schooling in the apartheid era. The history of these schools indicates that an investigation of their practices will be an investigation of socially dominant literacy events and forms.

While the Language in Education Policy of South Africa "recognizes that our cultural diversity is a valuable national asset and hence is tasked, among other things, to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country" (South Africa, 1997, p. 1), this has not materialized in practice. At the inception of the policy, school communities were empowered to choose the school LoLT through Section 6(1) of the South African Schools Act (1996). At the same time many parents whose home language was not English sent their children to private and former Model C schools where the LoLT was English or Afrikaans. Learners who attend these schools have an advantage in literacy learning as these schools are better resourced, with smaller classes and well qualified teachers. As a result, former Model C schools are multilingual environments where children's first literacy experiences are in English or Afrikaans. In the schools in this study, little support was given to language development; remedial reading teachers helped children with reading difficulties.

Researchers propose a strong link between underachievement and learning in an additional language (Fleisch, 2008; Howie et al., 2007; MacDonald & Burroughs, 1991; Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999, 2003). In apartheid South Africa, MacDonald and Burroughs suggest that “language sits like a Gordian knot” (1991, p. i) at the centre of a complex web of political, cultural and poverty-related factors. Two decades later Fleisch writes:

there is almost complete unanimity about the covariance of under-achievement and having been taught and assessed in a second or additional language. The trend is evident in the cross-national studies, national studies of achievement, small-scale studies in specific locations and from rich descriptions of individual case studies. (2008, p. 99)

PIRLS reports that internationally there is “a strong relationship between speaking the language of the PIRLS test at home and performance on the PIRLS test” (Howie et al., 2008, p. 6). However, it is worth noting that some countries with language policies and demographics comparable to South Africa performed well in the PIRLS assessment. Singapore, one of the highest performing countries in the PIRLS study, is a system in which over 70% of learners learn in English. Canada is another, and the work of Genesee (2007) there from 1965 to 1990 contradicts the commonsense notion that children should learn early literacy in their home language. Genesee summarizes his findings by observing: “English speaking students were able to attain the same levels of reading skill in English in immersion as comparable students in all-English programmes and this is true for a broad range of students and language types” (2007, p. 2). In South Africa, however, learning in an additional language is associated with low performance, even in the best schools. This detail suggests that there may be unrecognized factors that affect literacy learning in immersion environments like former Model C schools, and that an investigation of practices might clarify the difficulties that additional language children encounter.

Entering a new language or learning community, such as a Grade One classroom, challenges aspects of the identities that learners have in their homes and their home language communities, and these challenges may expand or reduce their opportunities for learning. This is particularly the case because schools vigorously ascribe identities to newcomers. Bourne maintains that “[i]n relation to language in multilingual contexts, a whole raft of learner identities are constructed in official pedagogic discourse in the Western world, each category being subject to a specialized form of pedagogy and

specialized forms of evaluation of achievement” (2006, p. 5). In the Grade One classrooms of this research, children were immediately categorized in terms of home or additional language and reading ability, as well as in terms of learning challenges such as Attention Deficit Disorder or dyspraxia. Research shows that the negotiation of identity is particularly important for additional language learners, who need the opportunities given to group members of using language so that they can become full members of the community of practice. As the majority of children in the classrooms of my study do not speak English at home, identity investigation is appropriate. Table 1 below gives the statistics of class membership by language.

School	Class total	English	English %	Bilingual Afrikaans/ English	Bilingual, English / isiXhosa	Afrikaans	isiXhosa	Urdu
Greenbanks <sup>2</sup>	22	10	44%	1	-	4	5	2
Oakhill	27	4	15%	-	-	6	14	1
Riverside	25	12	48%	2	2	5	4	-

**Table 1: Languages in each class by number and percentage**

Block and Pressley describe the process these children undergo as they enter Grade One:

In particular, when individuals move across geographical and psychological borders, immersing themselves in new sociocultural environments, they find that their sense of identity is destabilized and that they enter a period of struggle to reach a balance. At this stage, it is easy to conceive of identity as contested in nature because the new and varied input provided to the individual serves to upset taken-for-granted points of reference. (2007, p. 864)

The identities that teachers offer to all children will have an impact on their opportunities for literacy learning, but in a multilingual, multiracial environment, such as these former Model C classrooms, all participants must engage in identity work more intensely, with teachers constructing institutional identities for new school members and children

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<sup>2</sup> All schools and participants are provided with pseudonyms.

negotiating the identities offered to them. Gumperz and Herasimchuk (1975) assert that there can be self-fulfilling prophecies at work, reinforced by teacher interaction, and Mehan gives examples of micro-ethnographies that

demonstrate that face-to-face interaction is a productive site for the study of cultural production and reproduction. Significant cognitive structures, such as 'intelligence', 'ability' and 'disability', such social structures as identities and steps on educational career ladders are socially constructed in locally organized social situations. (1998, p. 248)

Identity is therefore a central issue in these communities of practice and the focus of my research.

In conclusion, three factors apart from personal interest motivate my study and at the same time suggest sites for research. First there is the acknowledged systemic failure in teaching reading literacy, which has recently reached crisis proportions. Secondly, while some of these results can be explained by the difficulties children experience with reading in an additional language, the connection between underperformance and becoming literate in an additional language is not automatic. This suggests that there is scope for further investigation into literacy learning. Finally, even the best resourced schools in South Africa do not promote appropriately high levels of reading literacy, even in home language speakers. Children in these classrooms have complex racial, class and language profiles, which means that shifting identity will inevitably be part of their early learning experience. The question is: What are teachers doing when they teach such a diverse group, and what reader identities are they offering this diverse group as they teach them to read?

#### **1.4 Reasons for choosing the literacy event: Reading on the Mat**

The context outlined above indicates which schools might make appropriate sites for investigation. Pilot studies were accordingly conducted in 2009, in Grade One at Oakhill; in Grades One, Two and Three at Greenbanks school; in the same Grades at Saint Mary's, a township English medium primary school; at Ntsikana, an isiXhosa medium township school; and at Kingsmead, a private school. As a result, I chose Grade One, where children have their first formal contact with school-based literacy practices and where formative events are modeled for them. Children entering Grade One are immediately involved in identity-forming experiences, as they become school members, learners and



readers, and learn the practices of the former Model C school communities.

An argument in support of my choice of Grade One for investigation is that researchers emphasize the importance of children's initial contact with literacy. Beard, for example, reviewing literacy research, shows that many investigations have confirmed the importance of primary schooling. His research suggests that school experiences can have a greater influence than background on learner success and that "positive primary school factors affect examination attainment at the age of 16+" (2000, p. 7). He suggests therefore that a country's highest return on its investment in education comes from the early years of schooling when children are first learning to read and write (see also Adams, 1990). Research into the success of remedial reading programmes also suggests a narrow window of opportunity in the earliest grades for learning to read and for helping pupils who have difficulties. Little evidence exists for the success of programmes designed to correct reading problems beyond the second year of schooling (Beard, 2000, p. 12). These factors all suggest that Grade One classrooms are an appropriate site for investigation.

Accordingly, as described above, I visited nine local suburban and township Foundation Phase classrooms in a pilot study. There I encountered *Reading on the Mat*, a reading literacy teaching event characteristic of former Model C and private schools of the district and throughout the Eastern Cape. Its distinctive features are further described in Sections 3.4 and 3.5, and in Chapter Four, where it is compared in detail to a widely recognized approach with similar features, Group Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The pilot study showed significant local variations in the activities recommended for Group Guided Reading, and these are discussed in Chapter Five as *Act Sequences*. Part of the value of my study is that it reveals the detailed interactions within a local variation which express the values and priorities of local teachers. These insights are doubly relevant in South Africa today as Guided Reading is now promoted in the CAPS (South Africa, 2011). The practice called Reading on the Mat was retained in these former Model C schools but was not a recommendation in curriculum in use at the time of the study, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (South Africa, 2002a). A practice developed and retained in this way in similar institutions in spite of changes to the curriculum is likely to represent strongly held beliefs about the nature of reading literacy.



Figure 1: Reading on the Mat, Grade One with Mrs Samuels at Oakhill

Two additional features suggested that Reading on the Mat would be an appropriate event to research. First, it is a naturalized, that is, accepted and unquestioned, teaching formation which allows teachers close contact with young readers and in which there is strong normative work. Secondly, Reading on the Mat is the core reading literacy event in these schools, and every child comes to the Mat daily for reading instruction in the three years of the Foundation Phase. Teacher attitudes and values regarding reading are most visible on the Mat, although it is not the only literacy event in the classroom. This means that questions on literacy learning practices and their associated identity-forming qualities will be answered primarily through a close analysis of interactions during Reading on the Mat.

## 1.5 Methodological choices

The question with which I approached the investigation – “What *else* is happening when children *do* learn to read, which accounts for the widespread underachievement on reading literacy assessments?” – served to suggest a methodology, for an open-ended question of this kind is the first question of the ethnographer. At the same time, research that investigates a single significant event in a particular community of practice suggests the narrower focus and more detailed analysis of micro-ethnography. Intending to answer the question “What is going on here?”, an ethnographer enters the site, observes, collects data

from interviews, videotapes and records exchanges, and collects texts and artifacts used in a representative event. Once the data has been collected, the ethnographer sifts through it, allowing it to generate its own categories and to present its own significance. Therefore decisions regarding an ethnographic approach also suggest decisions on analysis and interpretation.

The inductive approach and detailed description of ethnographic investigation is characteristic too of interaction analysis, which is also associated with ethnography and participant observation, the points of view I adopt in my research. Such an approach has been used since the 1960s to investigate face-to-face interaction in educational settings. Jordan and Henderson write persuasively of the position taken up by researchers who use interaction analysis:

Verifiable observation provides the best foundation for analytic knowledge of the world. This view implies a commitment to grounding theories of knowledge and action in empirical evidence, that is, to building generalizations from records of particular, naturally occurring activities, and steadfastly holding our theories accountable to that evidence. Underlying this attitude is the assumption that the world is accessible and sensible not only to participants in daily human interaction but also to analysts when they observe such interaction on videotape. Analytic work, then, draws, at least in part, on our experience and expertise as competent members of ongoing social systems and functioning communities of practice. (1995, p. 4)

All the principles set out above by Jordan and Henderson are evident in my study. Furthermore, analysis with these principles in mind maintains a focus on the detail of practices and interactions. However, it would allow description but not promote a critical or ideological investigation of such significant group dynamics as accompany teaching practices and identity work. It seemed therefore that my analysis required a lens to promote deeper level insights into and rigorous analysis of the relational aspects of the interaction: the construction of relationships between teachers and learners and learners and texts. This can be found in the analytic tools and interpretative strategies of identity investigation in language learning. These tools have an established history in the investigation of relationships in language learning classrooms and also in textual analysis. Therefore my study foregrounds what interaction says about identities and relationships on the Mat, using the metaphor of identity *positioning* to discuss the identities offered to children as they learn to read. These additional methodological and analytic decisions lead to the final focus of this research: What identities are offered to emergent readers in

Grade One classrooms as they learn to read? Or, in terms of the title of my thesis: *“Positions on the Mat: A micro-ethnographic study of teachers’ and learners’ co-construction of an early literacy practice”*.

The essential concepts in this title are clarified in Chapter Two, which presents the theoretical context, and in Chapter Three, which presents the research methodology. My study set out to investigate:

- The detail of interactions in the literacy teaching event known as Reading on the Mat in three South African Grade One classrooms
- The norms of Reading on the Mat as a literacy event
- The identity positions teachers offer to emergent readers in Reading on the Mat
- Children’s negotiation of the positions offered to them by teachers
- How the positions offered by teachers and negotiated by learners provide opportunities for emergent readers to learn to read
- Aspects of identity positions that may have implications for reading in a multilingual, diverse student group.

My study therefore sought answers to the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of Reading on the Mat as reflected in teachers’ practice in the chosen classrooms?
- What are the micro-level behaviours of the participants when they engage with text?
- What identity positions do teachers offer emergent readers as part of learning to read?
- How do these identity positions present reading as a practice?
- How do teachers manage diversity: do the positions they offer vary between groups? Do they change as the year progresses?

## **1.6 Creative tensions in this study**

The decision-making process recounted above in Sections 1.2 to 1.4 results in a study which crosses the boundaries of different disciplines and methodologies. It expresses linguistic interests as well as educational concerns and uses methods and analysis from

different research perspectives. Closer examination of these differences reveals four sets of tensions that are integral to the design decisions, appear in the analysis, and influenced the writing. These tensions are the focus of the last section of this chapter and are expanded on in Chapters Two and Three.

In the first place, tensions exist between investigating socially situated literacy learning in communities of practice and the pedagogic focus within the classrooms on learning skills and training habits. A social perspective suggests that literacy learning is a process of induction implicating the relationships and identities of community members, while a pedagogic perspective may present literacy learning as skills transmission. For some theorists these are mutually exclusive standpoints. In this study, Reading on the Mat manifests both aspects: it has an undeniably social quality but at the same time the purpose of the interactions it fosters is skills learning. I have conceptualized socially situated learning as the framing perspective of my study, which affirms throughout that the teacher and children hold the practice together in a mutually reinforcing community. This conception of Reading on the Mat is in line with the work of Wenger and of Eckert on communities of practice (Mullany, 2007). However, their three broad criteria for identifying such communities do not allow for the detailed descriptive work provided by Hymes' mnemonic. I found it also necessary to refer to research on reading pedagogy to sharpen the interpretation of what teachers are doing, since teachers explain their choices in terms of teaching methodology and theory.

A second tension is present in theories of reading pedagogy, which express themselves as a continuum rather than as a unitary body of approaches and practices. The literature shows a pendulum swing between teaching approaches to reading literacy known as *whole language*, on the one hand, and *phonics-based*, on the other, although this is recognized as a false dichotomy. Thus a tension emerges in my study as teachers' practice expresses one or other approach. These contrasting approaches to teaching reading are detailed in Chapter Two, but in summary, the whole language approach requires teachers to focus on reading authentic texts for meaning. Phonics, punctuation and spelling are taught during reading, in an embedded way. This approach is often contrasted to phonics-based methods which teach the relationship of sound to word in an explicit, disembedded way so that children learn the principles behind spelling and sounding English words. Recently the *balanced approach* has incorporated both aspects: the need to read for meaning and the

importance of decoding skills. Features of the balanced approach are explicit phonological awareness and phonics instruction, reading aloud to children, independent reading, guided reading, shared reading, and literacy centers for independent practice. The RNCS (South Africa, 2002a) is silent on teaching methods but the handbook *Teaching reading in the early grades* (South Africa, 2008) promotes the balanced approach and also recommends Guided Reading. It is endorsed by CAPS on both counts. The balanced approach is implemented in the classrooms that feature in this study, although a close examination of Reading on the Mat reveals nuances of difference from and within the recommended practice.

A third tension is inherent in the methodology of the research and the analysis of the data. As I explain above, identity theory and the analytic tools associated with it provide an additional lens enabling me to examine relationship dynamics in the exchanges. Investigations of identity are, however, located in a critical or interpretive paradigm; data analysis is through deconstruction – the argument that the practice is not as it appears to be. In contrast, ethnographies seek rich description and approach data inductively, allowing perspectives to emerge. I have conceptualized the ethnographic approach with its inductive analysis as constituting the opening phase of the research and the analysis, which indicates areas for further, more critical, investigation. This study is therefore not a critical ethnography, or an ethnography with a critical purpose, but rather an ethnography with both descriptive and critical elements.

The final set of tensions arose from the complexity of reading literacy learning, of classrooms, of the literacy event Reading on the Mat and of the multiple, fluid nature of identity itself. Mehan maintains that “[b]ehaviour is not private, it is social; social interaction is less about the individual than it is about the world that people hold together for each other. And the social world is held together in ways that defy simplistic conceptions” (1998, p. 259). I experienced this tension in the writing in terms of the difficulty of celebrating different practices while seeking commonalities. Bringing these together in a way that is both clear and also sufficiently nuanced is a significant challenge. In consequence I have chosen to present description, analysis and interpretation together in each of Chapters Four to Seven, so as to keep these aspects close together in the mind of the reader.

The first three sets of tensions described above posed difficulties in the study which I believe were also creative opportunities. With regard to the first, the tensions between socially situated literacy and skills transmission enabled me to view Reading on the Mat as a practice in action, while at the same time engaging with the perspective of teachers who concentrate on skills transmission. Secondly, an appreciation of the tensions between phonics-based and whole language approaches enabled me to understand the pedagogic intention behind teachers' activities, such as the use of flash cards. The third set of tensions, between research paradigms, enabled the event to be both described in detail, and for this detail to inform practitioners and be critiqued as a practice.

## **1.7 An overview of the thesis**

The first three of the tensions described above are the focus of the following chapter, which indicates the theoretical context of the study, and of Chapter Three, which describes design decisions regarding data collection and analysis in more detail. Chapter Four presents the information from the first cycle of analysis, which uses the categories of the linguistic ethnographer, Dell Hymes. The initial analysis reveals areas for further investigation, which are reported on in Chapters Five, Six (supplemented by interactional data of which samples appear in Appendices 7 and 11) and Seven. These chapters include descriptions of the specific analytic instruments used for each focus area and, where appropriate, additional related theory. Chapter Eight reports on the findings, indicates the limitations of the study, and points to possibilities for future research. This structure allows the data to be given prominence in line with the inductive goal of the methodology.

The data collected for this study has in all cases been coded to the original video or audio recording (see *Conventions adopted in this thesis*, p. vii). Appendices include the following information for cross-reference:

1. Letters to principals
2. Questions for interviews with teachers
3. List of audio recordings
4. Video viewing list
5. Table of Act Sequences sample: one from each teacher
6. Table of Norms
7. Sample transcriptions: one from each teacher
8. Tables of discourse analysis results
9. Table of nonverbal behaviour

10. Children's drawings: "The researcher, the teacher, the classroom and me." One from each classroom.
11. CD of sample video material: two from each teacher (for examination only)



## Chapter Two: Theoretical contexts and tensions

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Implications of the view that literacy learning is socially situated
- 2.3 The role of identity in socially situated literacy learning
  - 2.3.1 Defining identity
  - 2.3.2 Conceptualizing identity work on the Mat
  - 2.3.3 Researching identity with young children
  - 2.3.4 Recognizing identity construction
- 2.4 Justifying a focus on the teacher.
- 2.5 Investigating reading literacy learning and identity
  - 2.5.1 Ideological and autonomous conceptions of reading literacy
  - 2.5.2 The simple view of reading
  - 2.5.3 Implications of the simple view of reading for practice
  - 2.5.4 Teaching comprehension
  - 2.5.5 Issues of text choice relevant to this study
  - 2.5.6 Issues on grouping children relevant to this study
- 2.6 The four roles / resources of the reader
- 2.7 Further justification for focusing on the teacher: Developing reading literacy
- 2.8 Responses to tensions underlying this research

### 2.1 Introduction

As Chapter One explains, this study is located in the field of early reading literacy learning. It presents literacy learning as an induction into the values and practices of a community. The methodology, micro-ethnography, is frequently used both in investigating the social uses of literacy (Heath, 1983) and in investigating classroom learning as a socially situated practice (Gee, 2004; Lemke, 1985; Street, 1995). My research investigates the dynamics of early reading literacy as it is experienced by children in their first contact with reading in Grade One classrooms in three Eastern Cape schools. More specifically, through an examination of teacher construction of learner identity, it gives a more nuanced picture of reading literacy learning than is provided by recent large-

scale studies such as PIRLS (Howie et al., 2007) and the ANA results (South Africa, 2011).

This chapter first examines the implications of a social view of literacy learning for my research and explores related theoretical issues. The chapter then presents research on identity in language and literacy learning, exploring issues of terminology and citing studies that use identity as a conceptual lens for investigating junior classroom practice. The third section of the chapter canvasses theories of learning to read, in particular the *simple view* of reading and the debates that it has provoked. It presents contested issues in Guided Reading, the formation on which Reading on the Mat is based, in order to contextualize the analysis in Chapter Five. It introduces Luke and Freebody's (1999) conception of the four roles or resources of the reader, which helps enable an understanding of the identity positions children are offered. Finally it offers a justification for the focus on the teacher in terms of reading instruction. The chapter ends with an account of the decisions made with regard to the sets of tensions presented in Chapter One.

## **2.2 Implications of the view that literacy learning is socially situated**

This section introduces models of literacy learning within the conceptual field of learning as social practice, and presents certain issues that this conception of literacy raises for my study. These include considerations of access, dominant literacy practices, power (in this case the power of the teacher), the agency of participants, and the choices teachers have in Grade One classrooms. The section ends by relating these issues to my research.

My study draws on the work of social linguists who show that becoming literate is deeply embedded in the social practices and values of the home, the community and the school (Heath, 1983; King, 1978; Lemke, 1985, and Street, 1995, 2001). In this perspective, literacy is a social practice and its use is learned through relationships with and within a community that communicates values associated with reading and the relative power of different practices. These researchers argue that literacy learning is a social experience in every environment, including school classrooms. Street expresses it as follows:

The ways in which teachers or facilitators and their students interact is already a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy being learned and the ideas about

literacy held by the participants, especially the new learners and their position in relations of power. It is not valid to suggest that ‘literacy’ can be ‘given’ neutrally and its ‘social’ effects only experienced afterwards. (1995, p. 8)

Difficulties with literacy learning in this view are therefore a consequence of the social conditions in which literacy is taught, and the relationships promoted as children learn. Theorists who work with this view refer to it as an *ideological* model of literacy learning. In an observation particularly relevant to South Africa today, Street states in this regard:

The transfer of literacy from a dominant group to those who previously had little experience of reading and writing involves more than simply handing on some surface skills. Rather, for those receiving the new literacy, the impact of the culture and of the politico-economic structures of those bringing it is likely to be more significant than the technical skills associated with reading and writing. The shifts of meaning associated with such transfers are located at deep, epistemological levels, raising questions about what is truth, what is knowledge and what are appropriate sources of authority. (1995, p. 15)

Theorists juxtapose this socially situated view with the *autonomous* model, which depicts literacy as a neutral technology, a set of surface cognitive and physical skills which do not affect the lives and relationships of recipients. These considerations conduced to my approaching this study with the notion that explanations of systemic failure in teaching reading might lie beyond the pedagogy, in the deep structures of social interaction. Cummins comments that “... human relationships are at the heart of schooling. The interactions that take place between students and teachers and among students are more central to student success than any method for teaching literacy, science or math” (1996, p. 1). Reading on the Mat, with its circle formation and close interaction, is a social structure. However, as the analysis presented in Chapters Five to Seven reveals, teachers’ practice discloses that they view reading literacy as a discrete set of skills – phonics-based decoding skills in particular – and that their own view of literacy learning is therefore an autonomous one. A creative tension arises from the juxtaposition of these two views. Street suggests that the dominant paradigm in school literacy is attributable to schools’ endorsing the autonomous model of literacy, a view supported by the example of the schools in this study, all of which administer a school readiness test of language and numeracy proficiency. This is effectively a social class gatekeeper that serves to maintain the relative homogeneity of groups. Furthermore, the teachers in the study did not problematize any aspect of their teaching or the texts they used, giving every indication

that they conceptualize reading as a set of neutral competencies free of social context and distanced from teacher and learner. In this regard, Luke and Freebody remark

Literacy education is not about skill development, not about deep competence. It is about the institutional shaping of social practices and cultural resources, about inducting successive generations into particular cultural, normative ways of handling texts, and about access to technologies and artifacts (e.g., writing, the Internet) and to the social institutions where these tools and artifacts are used (e.g., workplaces, civic institutions). (Retrieved August 2012 p. 2)

Presenting literacy learning as induction into a community of practice raises four issues for this study. First, the ideological model suggests that literacy is imbued with the power structures and social relationships of the society in which it exists. Issues of dominance and subordination between communities of practice therefore also influence literacy learning. Street (1995) and Barton and Hamilton (1998) distinguish between *dominant* literacies, which arise from dominant institutions, and *vernacular* literacies, which arise from everyday life, for example texting. Literate forms associated with formal schooling have been endorsed by other dominant institutions such as universities, legal systems and business institutions and have achieved dominance in schooled societies (Street, 1995). High status schools such as former Model C schools in South Africa maintain the hegemony of practices in well-provisioned environments. Children who come from homes which do not align well with the middle class schools featured in this study, or where literacy is vernacular rather than of the dominant schooled variety, may experience these dissonances as barriers to learning. My study investigates how teachers manage multilingual classes, and indeed, whether or not they address the issue at all.

Issues of dominance and subordination between social groups will extend to their representatives in the school classroom. A second implication of conceiving of learning as socially situated, therefore, is the question of access: successfully entering and maintaining membership of the community of practice is key to gaining the skills and learning opportunities which exist in that group. Novice participants must learn and apply the norms of the group, for example the practice of turn taking, and respond appropriately to community members' expectations. Only by participating can the child receive affirmation and the guidance which teachers give to group members. In multilingual societies such as South Africa, additional language speakers of English may be marginalized in classrooms if they have fewer language skills and are unfamiliar with dominant literate forms. In my study, more than half of the children were additional

language speakers of English. The demographics appear in Section 1.3. Issues of access are highlighted in the RNCS (South Africa, 2002a). Lack of access is presented as a root cause of poverty and the first aim of the Language in Education Policy is to “promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education” (South Africa, 1997, p. 2).

A third aspect of seeing learning as socially situated is that issues of power and access implicate the teacher as an institutional gate-keeper, initiator of activities and model for what it means to be literate. Her views are the ones which will dominate children’s learning experiences and access to literate forms. Power relationships will be played out in every teaching encounter, making classrooms and their literacy learning activities sites for contestation and negotiation. Negotiating this social space is crucial to learner success and the identities teachers offer learners within the emerging relationship may grant or deny them opportunities for entering the community of practice and accessing the dominant discourse(s) it employs. My study, however, finds that in Grade One classrooms the power differential between seven-year-old children and their middle-aged teacher is so great that children’s negotiation of their rights on the Mat is almost invisible. Children do negotiate with each other for group resources, but the teacher controls all access by emphasizing turn-taking norms. Generally speaking, teacher permissions are more visible than learner acceptance or resistance, which is in part why I chose to focus on the teachers rather than the children in my study.

A final consequence of affirming the importance of communities of practice is to highlight the question of individual agency versus social control. That is, to what extent do emergent readers have individual choice, and to what extent are they constrained by the social structures of the communities they enter, such as Reading on the Mat? Some researchers ascribe greater agency to the individual while others emphasize group control of the positions that are made available to participants, but all acknowledge an interplay between the two. Bourdieu, for example, suggests a two-way flow of influence between the environment which imposes constraints and the individuals who continuously alter and recreate those environmental constraints (Sewell, 1992). A focus on the community suggests that social practices create individuals’ identity in relation to that group. Communities of practice may condition interaction but they are also conditioned by interaction (Block & Pressley, 2007, p. 866), and individuals can influence group practice.

Reading on the Mat is a rigid structure with clear norms of participation that constrain participants differentially. The teacher is the participant who invariably has the most agency, and her power to direct activities means that she cannot be viewed only as an individual participant. She is the human interface for the whole mentoring and socializing force of the larger community she represents, that of the school and the education department. These small groups are structured to facilitate interaction between the teacher and individual children rather than among the children (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), so to her institutionally sanctioned power is added the force of her personality. This raises the profile of the individual teacher in group dynamics, and is another reason why the teachers and not the children are the focus of my study.

The extent to which teachers are themselves constrained by the activities they initiate is an interesting one, as, at the time of the study, there was no formal curriculum requirement for them to teach reading in this or any other formation. At the same time institutional traditions and expectations are powerful factors in shaping events. The extent to which teachers manipulate curriculum, policy and methodology expresses their ideology in respect of reading and is a measure of their agency within the system.

Three aspects of my study are influenced by the issues of ideology and power dynamics raised in this section. The first of these is that I focus on the teacher, the dominant participant on the Mat who aligns her teaching to her school's version of dominant literacy practice. Secondly, I focus on the norms which teachers promote on the Mat. Normative work makes the community rules clear to newcomers and also to the researcher. In the Grade One classrooms in the study the teachers signal their expectations in ways which suggest that they are making group membership requirements explicit to school newcomers. This material is presented in Chapter Six. A third aspect of my study influenced by the ideological perspective is the examination of discourses of reading literacy to investigate power and other relationships embedded in language and text. This is related in Chapter Seven. Reyes and Vallone suggest that critical literacy "places the student search for identity within the context of a society fraught with issues of race, class, gender, and culture, and it identifies critical classrooms as powerful and potent places where identity construction can be supported and negotiated" (2007, pp. 7–8).

At the same time it is evident in this research that teachers design interactions around text based on methodological priorities rather than relationship concerns. On the Mat, teachers

are inducting children into the schools as readers and promoting reading values which assert the literacy priorities of dominant social groups. This means that the interaction is based on pedagogy and is therefore appropriately analyzed in terms of recommendations on reading instruction. This feature of Reading on the Mat creates the first of the tensions described in Chapter One. It is not an assertion of the “autonomous” view of literacy acquisition, but rather an acknowledgement that this is a group brought together for reading skills transmission.

In conclusion, this study affirms the social nature of literacy learning but foregrounds the contribution of the powerful, institutionally-endorsed role of the teacher. For this reason the focus of the study is on what the teacher permits and promotes in exchanges in which learners and teachers are mutually engaged in teaching and learning to read. At the same time it highlights the importance of understanding the pedagogy of the exchange as the content of the interaction.

### **2.3 The role of identity positioning in socially situated learning**

Social theorists (Giddens, 1991, Popkewitz, 2005) suggest that an interest in identity is a feature of the postmodern condition, in which individuals are destabilized by the uncertainties of multiple careers, social flux, multiculturalism and multilingualism. These uncertainties find expression in a preoccupation with identity, in terms of which the altered self has to be constructed as part of personal and social change. Giddens observes that “The self has become a reflexive project” (1991, p. 32). Gee (2000), speaking of educational research, attributes an interest in identity to the difficulty of dealing with diversity and change. As South Africa is a rapidly changing society, in which most individuals must negotiate rapid urbanization, a changed political order and new educational and work opportunities, a study focusing on identity has general relevance.

Understanding literacy learning as socially situated in a community of practice (Section 2.2 above) suggests that learning is inevitably affected by group dynamics pertaining to access, relationship and agency. My study focuses on identity construction as a place where these issues come together. It suggests that communities of practice offer identities to individuals within them and that these identities enable group members to access interaction in ways that affect their literacy learning.

In Chapter One I suggest that, as they enter Grade One classrooms, children inevitably undergo crucial identity-forming experiences. In addition, insofar as it highlights particular aspects of the community of practice, a focus on identity has two advantages for research into literacy learning. A first advantage of such a focus is that it emphasizes the issue of access referred to in the previous section. Foucault describes the *right to speak* as a crucial feature of access (Lye, 2008). In these small learning groups, access is not just about learning, it is about the right to practise and display reading skills; and an analysis in terms of identity allows the researcher to examine patterns of exchange (such as the questioning of teachers reported on in Section 6.6.4 which allows or disallows that right to speak). Norton writes that “[e]very time we speak we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time and space” (2010, p. 1). Gee (2000) writes of the importance of children being recognized as certain kinds of worthy people in order to gain access to groups and to the intellectual and economic advantages they offer. In my study, teachers imply in their practice that the most valued identity for group participants is that of *code breakers* (Luke & Freebody, 1999), a perception that has potential consequences for their effectiveness as readers.

Secondly, an investigation of identity enables the researcher to examine certain power relationships. This aspect of identity research is well established in critical studies of language learning. Analyzing the discourses that entrench powerful elites is the focus of this approach, together with the question of how discourses affect language and literacy learning opportunities (Janks, 2010; Norton, 2010). Post-structuralists take the position that the semiotics of a society are sites of struggle, and that language communities are therefore inevitably characterized by conflict and negotiation (Storey, 1994). Cockburn suggests that identity processes are “second only to force as the means by which power is effected in oppressive and exploitative systems” (1998, p. 10), while Janks asserts that “The education system is a central institutional apparatus for the privileging of a particular variety (or language) and legitimating its dominance” (2010, p. 116). Because education structures the modern self through these power relationships, identity work in schools has particular interest for researchers. In post-apartheid South Africa, where the constitution and curricula explicitly require more equitable access to social resources, the ways in which schools construct learners to fit into society as literate individuals has particular



relevance. Constructing children primarily as *code breakers* (Luke & Freebody, 1999) may limit children's ability to enter fully into the literacy practices valued by other institutions in South Africa.

An additional advantage to researching identity is that it can be a research tool enabling deep level investigations into human interaction and allowing analysis and interpretation to go beyond the descriptive. Clegg (2011), for example, suggests that identity is a *lens* through which one might look at the issues of structure and agency. As the researcher sifts through the data, seeking the mechanisms of identity construction and negotiation – for example by examining norms and rules governing behaviour, analyzing discourse and looking at the contribution of written and oral texts – important dynamics of relationship and community appear. An examination of identity construction reveals patterns of interaction that are unmarked, thereby suggesting hegemonic structures or assumptions. Gee calls identity “an important analytic tool for understanding schools and society” (2000, p. 99). He suggests that we need to remember that identity is not a product or an object, but an abstraction, a cluster of concepts that enables us to talk about who we are; for the researcher, a “focus on the contextually specific ways in which people act out and recognize identities allows a more dynamic approach” (2000, p. 99). Moje and Luke suggest that

[I]teracy-and-identity studies can also offer insights into practice, particularly for educators working within a sociopolitical milieu that casts literacy learning (and all learning) as a matter of accrual of skills and information. Developing academic literacies – or any kind of learning, for that matter – of necessity involves shifting identities, whether as a requirement for the learning to occur or as a result of the learning. (2009, p. 433)

As individuals navigate structures in relation to others and to the texts of their group practice they express the significance of their activities to themselves and to others. As an analytic instrument, identity investigation therefore enables close inspection of aspects of the community of practice. A focus on identity enables the researcher to examine the individual *within* the community of practice, revealing aspects of relationship between group members; in relationship *to* the community of practice, highlighting issues of access; and in relationship to literacy practices in the community, enabling description of dominant literacies. The interplay of identity with language learning has been the focus of research since the early 1990s (Block, 2007). Moje and Luke write:

Because literacy-and-identity studies focus on people as much as they do on processes or skills, on agency as much as on subjectification, on the relationships between the social and the individual, and on the formation of the acting subject through relationships with texts and other people, they make an important contribution to the study of literacy. (2009, p. 416)

In my study, which examines a complex, multi-layered, transitory but significant literacy event, an investigation of identity positioning therefore elucidates ways of thinking and being promoted on the Mat by the teachers.

To summarize this section, a focus on identity offers particular advantages to a researcher investigating communities of practice, and therefore to me in my research into Reading on the Mat. Identity is a crucial issue for children entering Grade One, a phase in which the school and the teacher will make available multiple new identities as part of their learning experiences. This study affirms the social nature of learning, which suggests that the relationships individuals have with each other and the identities they claim and promote in Reading on the Mat have particular significance. Again, identity issues have been implicated in the ability of individuals to take up opportunities of language learning, which makes identity a suitable focus for an examination of early literacy learning. Finally, critical studies have shown that a focus on identity enables researchers to interrogate issues of access and power-based relationships. Identity is perhaps best construed as a concept that enables the researcher to examine the deep structures of interaction, and, potentially at least, to bring unexpected elements into view.

While this section asserts the advantages of focusing on identity, it concedes that concepts and terminologies within identity research are contested. The following section therefore outlines three aspects of the shifting field of identity research. First I reports on ways in which identity has been conceptualized by researchers in different fields and outline the concept I use in this study. I then turn to examine the way in which different conceptualizations of identity have expressed themselves in the metaphors currently in use in identity research, and the implications of those metaphors for research. I explain in this section how I arrived at *identity positioning* as a metaphor. Finally I consider some of the research focusing on identity construction in young children to provide a sense of the kinds of work researchers engage in with junior participants.

### 2.3.1 Defining identity

Moje and Luke suggest that the crucial question in using identity in literacy research is: “How do particular views of identity shape how researchers think about literacy and, conversely, how does the view of literacy taken by a researcher shape meanings made about identity?” (2009, p. 415). This section accordingly clarifies the conceptualization of identity construction in this study. Gee (2000), writing of identity as an analytic lens for research in education, presents perspectives on identity in terms of the putative sources of identity construction. He suggests that research can view identity in four ways: as deriving from *nature*, as formed by *institutions*, as constructed by *discourse*, and as produced by *affinity* groups. In the individual, these four perspectives co-exist or overlap in multiple ways. For the researcher, each of the perspectives has specific implications.

The *nature* perspective suggests that identity names the state one is in, either because one is born into it, or because it is our nature (Gee, 2000, p. 101). This perspective proposes a core identity or permanent, stable state of being. It is a view of identity used in psychology and is also one of the earliest conceptions of identity. It construes identity as outside an individual’s control and also largely beyond the reach of society to affect or change, although Gee (2000) suggests that both society and the individual must recognize it in some way to give it currency. Many researchers oppose the idea that identity is something we are born into and insist instead on its *un-fixity* (Clegg, 2011). The latter is a view with which I concur, and the nature perspective does not feature in this research.

The *institutional* perspective on identity is authorized by the perceived power of institutions. In this view identity derives from individuals’ positions in organizations and is given currency by the hierarchy of the organization, for example, the role of teacher or principal. Identity constructed in this way is underwritten by the rules and norms of organizations and defined by the changing discourses and practices of the community. In my study both teachers and children are aware of the force of institutional identity. For example, all teachers reprimand children for encroaching on their institutionally sanctioned role. These reprimands are discussed in Section 6.3. It forms the baseline identity of all participants on the Mat, but is not made explicit in the interactions there.

In the *discursive* perspective on identity individuals are named as having a particular quality, for example as a *good reader* or a *rude boy*. The community and the discourse of

the community ascribe identity by recognizing a trait rather than an occupation. The source of identity in this view is the dialogue of others, and the individual may accept or oppose the identity offered by discourses. Unlike that proposed by the nature perspective, this identity is not inherent but achieved by the individual. In discursive identity construction, words used to describe an identity are crucial, and this area has been a fruitful focus of research (for example, Moje & Luke, 2009). Institutions such as schools, by generating such discourses, ensure that the person is recognized in a certain way and not in others (Foucault). Participants within those institutions may seek to ascribe identity to others in order to deny or endorse access and to maintain their own role in the group. For example, teachers who select children for Reading on the Mat groups based on ability are enacting this process. At the same time, individuals may seek to be seen in a particular way, for example as *good readers*, as a way of maintaining access to the group and its activities. Analysis in Chapter Seven shows the teachers actively constructing children using discourse.

The *affinity* perspective on identity derives from the shared experiences and choices made in groups of like-minded individuals. This perspective comes from individuals' allegiance to, access to and participation in the practices of a group with a shared purpose. The way in which power works in such groups is through participation. While groups on the Mat have shared experience, they are not affinity groups as they are called together by the teacher rather than drawn together by common interests of their own. This perspective is therefore not relevant to my study.

This study construes identity as a blend of institutional and discursive perspectives in focusing on Reading on the Mat groups. Institutional identity emerges on the Mat as teachers use the authority of their position to establish norms and rules for reading and to regulate children's behaviour. Discursive identity construction is also highly visible, as teachers instruct and inform, praise and reprimand, initiate activities or regulate behaviour. Jordan and Henderson capture how the discursive and the institutional are blended in classrooms:

Teaching situations are dominated by talk-driven interaction though some physical objects also figure prominently in classroom turn-taking: copybooks have to be handed in, chalk has to be picked up in order to write on the blackboard, models and pictures are brought in by teacher or students – but note that the activities of which

these objects are a part are generally initiated by the teacher. In most school situations students play a passive role. (1995, p. 35)

In my study I used these notions of identity construction to direct the analysis towards two aspects of the teachers' work: to the way in which they exerted their institutional role to control and regulate children on the Mat, and to the discourses on the Mat, verbal spoken, nonverbal and written text. Treatment of these phenomena appears in Chapters Six and Seven, respectively.

### **2.3.2 Conceptualizing identity work on the Mat**

For the researcher in the field of human identity another aspect which needs clarifying is terminology. Moje and Luke suggest that one of the problems in identity research is *slippage* in the meanings of identity-related concepts and in how these terms are used. They cite Davies saying that "there are several meanings to identity that slide in and out of each other because one word is asked to carry so many meanings, meanings moreover that spill into each other in practice" (2009, p. 417). Ambiguity arises from the specialized and the general understandings of what *identity* means and the ways it is used in different disciplines. In this section I explain the implications of different terms used synonymously with identity and how I reached the decision to use the concept of *identity positioning* in my research.

Identity is a term current in psychology, sociology, linguistics and education. In each discipline the interests of research and the associations of the term are different. As researchers have worked with differing foci in these fields, they have also proposed alternative terms, such as *subjectivity* and *positioning*, in an effort to make different emphases clear. In a review of identity research in additional language learning, Block suggests that the terms *identity / identification*, *subjectivity / subject position* and *position / positioning* are used interchangeably in identity research (2007 p. 866). However, the metaphors contained in these terms reflect nuances in researchers' foci and interests. Outlined below are the concepts implied by particular terms, and how these contribute to my research.

The search for additional terms is motivated by researchers who believe that *identity* suggests a fixed core, or a *real me*, as it does in the natural perspective described in the

previous section. They find this term incompatible with notions of fluidity and change central to some identity research. Weedon remarks that many researchers reject notions that “presuppose an essence at the heart of the individual which is unique, fixed and coherent” (1997, p. 32). Social theorists working with structuration theory also view *identity* as too static a term (Giddens, 1991). They prefer *identification* to capture the process as individuals exert or fail to exert agency in the social structures they inhabit. Agency has already emerged as an issue in communities of practice, as mentioned in Section 2.1 of this chapter. Giddens claims that structures do not exist outside the people who inhabit them, but are nevertheless durable because they are repeated in everyday life. This resonates with the findings of my study, where the structure of Reading on the Mat has solidity and influence because it is repeated daily and closely follows patterns initiated by the teacher.

An alternative terminology is that associated with poststructuralist feminist studies and critical race theory, a rich source of work on identity. This work allies identity to agendas for social justice and links it to critical pedagogies. Researchers with this focus prefer the term *subjectivity* (derived from *subject*) and also speak of *subject formation*, *intersubjectivity*, *subjection*, and *subject positioning* to capture the identity-forming power relationships between individuals and groups. This term suggests that the individual is always the subject of or subject to manifestations of power which are realized in language. Three defining characteristics of subjectivity are foundational to the conception of identity in this research: that it is complex and multiple, that it is contested or negotiated, and that through negotiation it changes over time. Norton relates this three-part conception of identity to language educators: “While some identity positions may limit and constrain opportunities for learners to speak, read, or write, other identity positions may offer enhanced sets of possibilities for social interaction and human interaction” (2010, p. 2).

When researchers focus on culture, race or gender, identity is frequently presented as difference. Such studies, according to Moje and Luke, focus on “how people are distinguished each from another by virtue of their group membership and on how ways of knowing, doing or believing held or practiced by a group shape the individual as a member of that group” (2009, p. 420). This conception of identity is particularly useful for looking at how and why individuals take up the literate practices of schooling, how they identify with those practices, and what this might mean for their education (Heath,

1983). As children in my research come from different race, class and language groups, difference is an important perspective in my study, as is the question of how teachers engage with difference as they teach reading literacy.

The *positioning* metaphor, the one used in this research, comes from the field of psychology. Smith (1988) introduced the concept of positioning, which he linked to subjectivity. More recently, Harrè and colleagues (Davies & Harrè, retrieved 2011; Harrè & Moghaddam, 2003; Harrè, 2004) suggest that positions are more fluid, contestable and transitional than other perceptions of identity. Moje and Luke suggest that “[i]n some ways, the identity-as-position metaphor brings together all of the previous metaphors. It recognizes the subject as called into being, invited to stand in certain positions, to take up particular identities” (2009, p. 431). In my study *positioning* has advantages over other metaphors used to capture identity. General advantages are that *positioning* allows the researcher to work with manifestations of identity that are fragmented and in tension, as appears to be the case on the Mat. Positioning has a literal meaning which implies access: entering the group in Grade One is a physical statement of group membership and participants move there with expectations about the literacy practices they will encounter. Moje and Luke point out that positioning metaphors require that the researcher follow people through different physical/spatial and social/metaphorical positions of their lives, documenting activity, artifacts, and discursive productions simultaneously” (2009, p. 431).

The choice of *position* and *positioning* as the central metaphor for identity work in this study allows the researcher to use identity as a noun, and to think of it as a product or a place. A position is there to take up, to be called into, or held by a child during an activity. The term captures the transient nature of that identity: a position will be held only as long as it is useful. At the same time, the verb to *position* suggests an activity or ongoing process. Moreover, its use as a transitive verb shows how an individual can be positioned or placed involuntarily. It is this last activity, the positioning of an individual by a powerful other, which lies at the heart of the present investigation.

Using the phrase *identity positioning* to describe identity construction in Reading on the Mat in Grade One classrooms has five specific advantages which are worth clarifying at this stage. First, positioning suggests that identity is constructed in relation to other people and thus captures the cooperative, social nature of literacy learning. Harrè and Moghaddam (2003) relate the positioning metaphor to Vygotskian thinking about how a child is

mentored into skills while interacting with more expert others, and this feature of identity work is recognizably present in Reading on the Mat.

A second advantage of the positioning metaphor is that it suggests that identity may be constructed in relation to inanimate things and abstractions, for example, texts or social structures. Discourses are therefore not the only source of identity construction in groups; identity may be a response to others' gestures, movements and seating arrangements. Moje and Luke suggest that "[a] powerful component of the identity-as-position metaphor is the space it makes for other than discursive aspects of identity formation or even representation ... the power of activities and interactions, artifacts, space and time and embodied difference" (2009, p. 431). The positioning metaphor allows me to consider the role of texts on the Mat. Moje and Luke point out that "recognizing literacy practices as social has led many theorists to recognize that people's identities mediate and are mediated by the texts they read, write and talk about" (2009, p. 416). As texts are an important aspect of literacy events, a perspective which allows them to be included in the analysis has benefits for a study of reading.

A third advantage of the positioning metaphor for this study is that it suggests the possibility of active or passive roles for individuals, who can claim an identity – position themselves – or more passively accept a position offered by others. Positions can be chosen before an interaction with others or taken up during the interaction. Positioning thus suggests a continual process of offer and counter-offer, as those with power and those without power negotiate a position for reading and the reader. Power relations and positions may change over time; an individual may be offered one position in one community and another elsewhere. In this perspective, the power structures of the group form the basis of identity construction, as those who have power can recognize, determine, offer or influence the identity positions available to others. On the Mat this applies to the teacher's recognition of emergent readers. The discourses employed by those in power therefore become an important source to a researcher, and in response to this understanding my study examines discursal elements. In addition, Harrè explicitly links positioning work to norms, rules and duties:

a position can be looked at as a loose set of rights and duties that limit the possibilities of action. A position implicitly limits how much it is logically possible for a given person to say and do and is properly part of that person's repertoire of actions at a certain moment in a certain context. (2003, p. 5)



This perception points to another source of identity construction: the normative work done by the teacher.

A fourth advantage of investigating identity as position is that positioning may be deliberate and in the control of those who offer positions, or it may be unintentional (Davies & Harrè, 2011). Much of the interaction on the Mat is planned: teachers, for example, prepare activities, interactions and questions to ask children. Both intentional and unintentional positioning is captured in the analysis presented in Chapters Four to Seven.

A fifth advantage of conceptualizing identity in this way is that positioning who you are depends on where you are. It suggests that identity is flexible and fluid and that it alters in response to context. In the classrooms in the study children come to a special space in order to become readers, so positioning captures both the literal and the metaphysical space they enter as they learn to read. The concept of identity as positioning allows the researcher to focus on one particular identity offered to children: that of readers.

From the above discussion on terminology and concepts related to identity research, I derive three key concepts for investigating identity positioning. They are, first, that identity positioning must be socially recognized; secondly, that positioning is continually negotiated; and thirdly, that identity positioning is fluid and multiple. Ongoing negotiation of the kind described above suggests that identity positions change continually as participants move into or accommodate others in identity positions. Some researchers view identity as an ongoing process of becoming as individuals explore representing themselves in various ways to various groups. This view construes identity as a continuum of positions taken up and discarded. Another view is that each individual has a core identity with different facets that are presented in different social contexts, in other words, a central identity position with a constellation of context-specific positions around it. A variation on this view is that identity positions are the outward, visible manifestations of a core identity. These manifestations are fragmented and partial and can be in conflict with each other. In the present study the children are being offered identity positions in terms of one aspect of schooling: that of readers. While other aspects of their identities may emerge or dominate in the remaining eleven years of their school lives, being a reader is a skill as well as an identity that will affect their institutional success or failure during those years.

### **2.3.3 Researching identity with young children**

The previous section describes how identity is conceptualized in this study. A second potentially problematic feature of research of this kind is investigating identity with young children. Work on identity and language learning has been done mostly with adults and teenagers, with a particular focus on the interplay of identity and language learning in changing social and linguistic circumstances (Norton, 2010). This comes from a perception that identity is an adolescent and adult project. Cekaite states that “[u]ntil now, relatively few classroom studies have considered the genesis of child novices’ L2 interactional competence over time” (2007, p. 46). However, Gee (2000) suggests that there is growing interest in how children build identities in classrooms through networking and in joint activities and shared experiences. Reyes and Vallone point to the “importance of early school experiences in the formation of cultural attitudes in children, especially in preschool through the end of first grade” (2007, p. 6). They note that bilingual immersion programmes with their implications for identity change start in preschool, and that schools therefore, as socializing agents, are able to influence identity construction profoundly (Reyes & Vallone, 2007, p.10).

While little research has been done in the area, recent studies indicate that identity construction in Foundation Phase classrooms is a significant factor in children’s success or failure there. The formative nature of children’s experiences in their first contact with formal literacy practices suggests that this is an important area for investigation. Luke (1992) shows that very young children are positioned as capable or not capable via their reading performance, and that daily evaluations are a powerful source of identity formation in schools. Toohey (1998, 2000) demonstrates how the teacher’s notions of learning lead to constructions of a positive or a negative learner identity for each child, and that this in turn shapes the learning opportunities available to them. This finding resonates with my research, as the view that identity construction in junior classrooms is heavily dependent on the teacher’s offerings and denials is central to the project. Day and Park (2005) use a similar framework to Toohey, and in a close discursive analysis show how identity positions allow children to develop a voice in and membership of the discourses within the community. He (2003) examines the interactional processes by which learners enter different speech roles, and is critical of the idea that additional

language speakers are a homogenous group. His viewpoint applies to South African former Model C classrooms, where there is no automatic link between race and home language among the middle class children of socially mobile parents. Hawkins (2005) shows that in some cases identity may be more important than cultural capital (Sullivan, 2001) as a means of understanding additional language learners' success in literacy learning. Her finding is that the fit between the capital children bring into a Grade One classroom and what is valued there may be less obvious than previously thought, and that the advantage of coming from a milieu congruent with the school environment may be overridden by other elements. This perception speaks to issues of access in my own study. Finally, Hruska (2000) shows that while in some settings children are able to draw on bilingualism as a positive identity, this does not always apply.

### **2.3.4 Recognizing identity construction**

A final aspect of investigating identity is the issue of recognizing identity work in practice. Harrè and Moghaddam warn that studies in identity as well as the instruments used to carry them out can be “abstracted from the domain of concrete human activities” (2003, p. 8). Clegg (2011) suggests that in identity research there is a gap between the philosophical level and the research level which needs to be filled by each researcher within each research project. How then does one fill the gap between the theory of identity positioning and the reality of Grade One classrooms and Reading on the Mat circles? Some intersections are suggested by the choice of *identity positioning* as the metaphor for this investigation, presented in Section 2.3.2 above. In this section I present the cues indicating identity work used in this study.

Firstly, Harrè and Moghaddam suggest that one of three interlocking elements of positioning is the *story line*, of which they say: “Episodes do not unfold in any random way. They tend to follow already established patterns of development” (2003, p. 6). If participants collaborate to hold together social interaction, then group practices will follow patterns predictable to the group members. The daily repetition of structured interactions gives the identity work done in these groups added force. This places repetition and pattern at the heart of identity investigation. I track these elements of Reading on the Mat in the Act Sequences of the event, reported in Chapter Five.

A second way of recognizing identity work is supplied by Harrè and Moghaddan, who define position as “a cluster of rights and duties to perform certain actions with a certain significance as acts, but which also may include prohibitions or denials of access to some of the local repertoire of meaningful acts” (2003, p. 6). This suggests that identity work will be perceptible when rights and duties are claimed, enforced or contested. Mehan (1979) provides useful pointers in this regard that served to guide my investigation of normative work on the Mat. He suggests that norms can be recognized from consistency of occurrence, that is, by participants holding each other accountable for behaviours, and whether participants apply positive or negative sanctions. I report on this aspect of identity work in Chapter Six. Negotiations by teachers or children will also signal that norms are being upheld or contested, and this fits the perception that identity is constantly negotiated. Other guiding principles for this aspect of the research come from interactional analysis, an approach which since the 1960s has studied face-to-face interaction in educational settings. Interactional analysis has uncovered unspoken rules and norms for classroom behaviour, and in this regard Mehan writes that the culture of the classroom “is guided by rules or norms established by convention, which means these rules are implicitly taught, tacitly agreed on and cooperatively maintained” (1998, p. 249). As a methodology, interactional analysis argues that claims must be based on interaction (Mehan, 1998): the speech recorded in educational settings provides the data, as it does in my research, though video and audio recordings aid the rigor of the approach. Further details of how norms are recognized in interaction are supplied in Chapter Six, which presents normative work by teachers on the Mat.

A third source of information about identity work derives from a close examination of the dialogue and the ascriptions of participants. Many researchers suggest that discourse is key to identity positioning, and Moje and Luke comment that “it is difficult to argue against the idea that identities are at least in part represented in and through language” (2009, p. 427). Gee (2000) identifies the discursive as one of the four perspectives of identity, indicating that discourse is central to identity positioning. As I view identity as being called into existence through social recognition, the language of that recognition, largely generated by the teacher in this study, would appear to be crucial. Critical studies that see no language as “innocent” in creating and maintaining power relationships (Janks 2010) supply the linguistic tools of Discourse Analysis. I made an eclectic choice of

language items for such analysis, according to their usefulness in the recognition of identity work. The analysis, together with additional justification, appears in Chapter Seven.

A fourth source of identity work comprises of the many texts brought into the classrooms by the teachers. Moje and Luke suggest that “recognizing literacy practices as social has led many theorists to recognize that people’s identities mediate and are mediated by the texts they read, write and talk about” (2009, p. 416). Texts used on the Mat are part of the discourse and are also a voice in the pedagogic exchange. An analysis of both the pictures and the texts used on the Mat is given in Chapter Seven.

Finally, the physical positioning work done by teachers is an aspect of the discourse of Foundation Phase classrooms. Dixon’s recent work in Gauteng classrooms makes a significant contribution to this aspect of identity work. Her study “examines the relationship between literacy, power and the body in early schooling. It investigates how the ideal literate subject is constructed in policy documents and classroom practice” (2007, Abstract). In the Grade One classrooms in the present study, embodiment (Lakoff, 2001) is viewed as a nonverbal aspect of the discourse of the classroom. Moje and Luke suggest that the strength of the identity-as-position metaphor is that it allows the researcher to consider “activities and interactions, artifacts, space and time and embodied difference” (2009, p. 431). How children are placed as readers expresses their access to the textual resources. Thus how teachers position books and adjust children’s seating on the Mat is recognized as part of identity construction. For this aspect of the analysis I use categories developed by Erikson; the analysis appears in Chapter Seven.

To recap, the central identity positioning metaphor suggests three investigative methodologies for closing the gap between identity theory and practice in Grade One classrooms. These are, first, to identify patterns and repetitions and to interrogate them for their identity-forming qualities; secondly, to examine the norms, rules, expectations, assumptions and negotiations of participants; and thirdly, to apply some of the methods and categories of Discourse Analysis to transcriptions of discursive exchanges. Additional theory drawn from linguistics and detailed in the relevant chapter strengthens the methodology and the analysis in each of these three areas.

The three elements identified above (interactional patterns, normative work and discourse) appear as fourth, sixth and seventh items in Hymes’s S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic. This

heuristic, used by linguistic anthropologists to analyze speech events, comprises the first analytic cycle applied to the data and is described further in Chapter Four. Hymes's terminology refers to interactional patterns as Act Sequences, to discourse as the Instrumentalities and to normative work as the Norms of the event. This mnemonic provides the organizing structure of the analysis described in detail in Chapters Four to Seven.

## **2.4 Justifying a focus on the teacher**

The research described above in Section 2.3.3 investigates the construction of children's identities, and Norton (2010) suggests that it is usual to examine the effects of power relationships or social structures on the individuals who are subject to them. This study however examines the positions that teachers offer to children as they enter Grade One classes and become readers there. It investigates what the *power broker* in the community does and allows in terms of identity construction. This section therefore seeks to justify the emphasis I have given to identities proffered by teachers, rather than to the children's acceptance of them.

I argue that this is an appropriate focus for identity work in Grade One classrooms, where the power differential between teacher and children is great and organizational structures uphold the teaching priorities in the mind of the teacher. The teacher is the expert adult mentoring children into the practices of reading. Her induction of children using small groups and individually tailored interaction suggests Vygotsky's conception of learning. Within the small group of Reading on the Mat, the teacher is the source of most of the identity positioning work. She has the power to offer, to recognize, to allow, to give access, to speak and demand silence of others, to choose text, to model and insist on physical attitudes, and to provide rules. Each of these eight powers fits with views of identity positioning discussed above.

Firstly, teachers *offer* positions to individuals as part of group activities. In Reading on the Mat, teachers make the offers and children seldom refuse them. They summon children to the Mat in ability groups, signal turn-taking patterns and confirm standards through approval and disapproval. For an identity position to exist on the Mat – for example if a child wants to be seen as a “good reader” – the teacher must *recognize* that position.

Hawkins writes that “[i]t is not enough to make a bid for a certain position or even to appropriately enact a desired identity within a discourse community – one must be recognized and acknowledged as that (kind of) person by others within the community” (2005, pp. 61–62). In an example of this, a teacher identifies a child’s reading as *gorgeous* and another child challenges her view – “I read faster” – but the second child’s identity as a gorgeous reader on the grounds of speed is denied. Expressive reading is recognized, fast reading is not. In a less active variation of this, the teacher *allows*. Her silence is tacit approval for what is happening on the Mat. She may also signal acceptance by nodding, meeting the eyes of a child or adopting a relaxed physical pose.

The teacher *gives access* to children. She calls the group and provides texts. She offers opportunities to answer questions, to speak or read. According to Janks, “‘Who gets access to which languages, linguistic varieties, literacies, genres, discourses?’ is a key question for critical approaches to literacy education. This question takes us to the heart of the relationship between access and power, that is to mechanisms for social inclusion and exclusion” (2010, p. 127).

The teacher is the discourse channel for the classroom on the Mat. She speaks and demands silence of others, she chooses text, she models and insists on bodily dispositions. All the texts which make up the discourse of reading on the Mat come from her, from what she says, from the texts she makes and supplies, from her gestures and the bodily dispositions she both models and insists on.

The teacher also interprets the discourse of the school and the education department to the children. The RNCS specifies the kind of learner that is envisaged: “a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen” (South Africa, 2002a, p. 3). Teachers offer positions for learners based on their understanding of the RNCS and theories of teaching reading, as well as the traditions of the school and their training.

Finally, the teacher supplies rules. As part of this she assesses, judges and evaluates each child on a daily basis. She mentors children into appropriate behaviours as readers at the same time as teaching them the skill of reading, and the strong normative work visible on the Mat is a consequence of this. She reminds children of what is expected and holds

them to account if they do not meet these expectations. She offers attitudes for them to endorse. She reprimands and approves, praises and disapproves.

As mentioned in Section 2.2, my research shows that children's negotiation is done with other children rather than with the teacher or what she is teaching. This confirms research that shows children using each other as resources in Foundation Phase classrooms (Willett, 1995). In my study children seemed not to challenge their teachers' notion of what it means *to read* or to *be a reader*. For example, they made no requests for alternative activities. The institutional and pedagogic drive naturalizes activities on the Mat and as novices children are swept along by the sense of its suitability. They accept the rules and norms that are implemented there, and the values associated with the activity of reading. These justifications for keeping the teacher central to a study of identity work have depended upon her role as participant. Additional reasons emerge from a consideration of teaching reading effectively, and this justification appears in 2.5.4, below.

Section 2.3 has clarified decisions made in this study relating to identity construction. It has discussed some of the debates in the field of identity research relevant to the present study. It has justified the choice of terminology and discussed its advantages for the researcher. It has presented foundational concepts for identity positioning in the present research and recounted studies on children in early schooling. It has suggested ways in which identity positioning work can be recognized in practice. Finally, it has justified the present study's focus on the teacher rather than the child, in terms of the teacher's important role in identity construction on the Mat.

I have referred to Davies and Harrè's (2011) warning against an assumption that positioning work is completely intentional or wholly unintentional. Interactions on the Mat are dominated by intentional pedagogy, which is planned, strategic, and based on the literature on teaching early reading and the curriculum. Teachers perform the teaching sequences on the Mat consciously and with full awareness. Concurrently they interact unintentionally in ways that affect positioning. For this reason it is appropriate to make observations on the pedagogy of the reading as well as on the implementation of that pedagogy. Section 2.5 therefore examines the tensions between theories of reading acquisition which contribute to understanding teachers' choices on the Mat.



## 2.5 Investigating reading literacy learning and identity

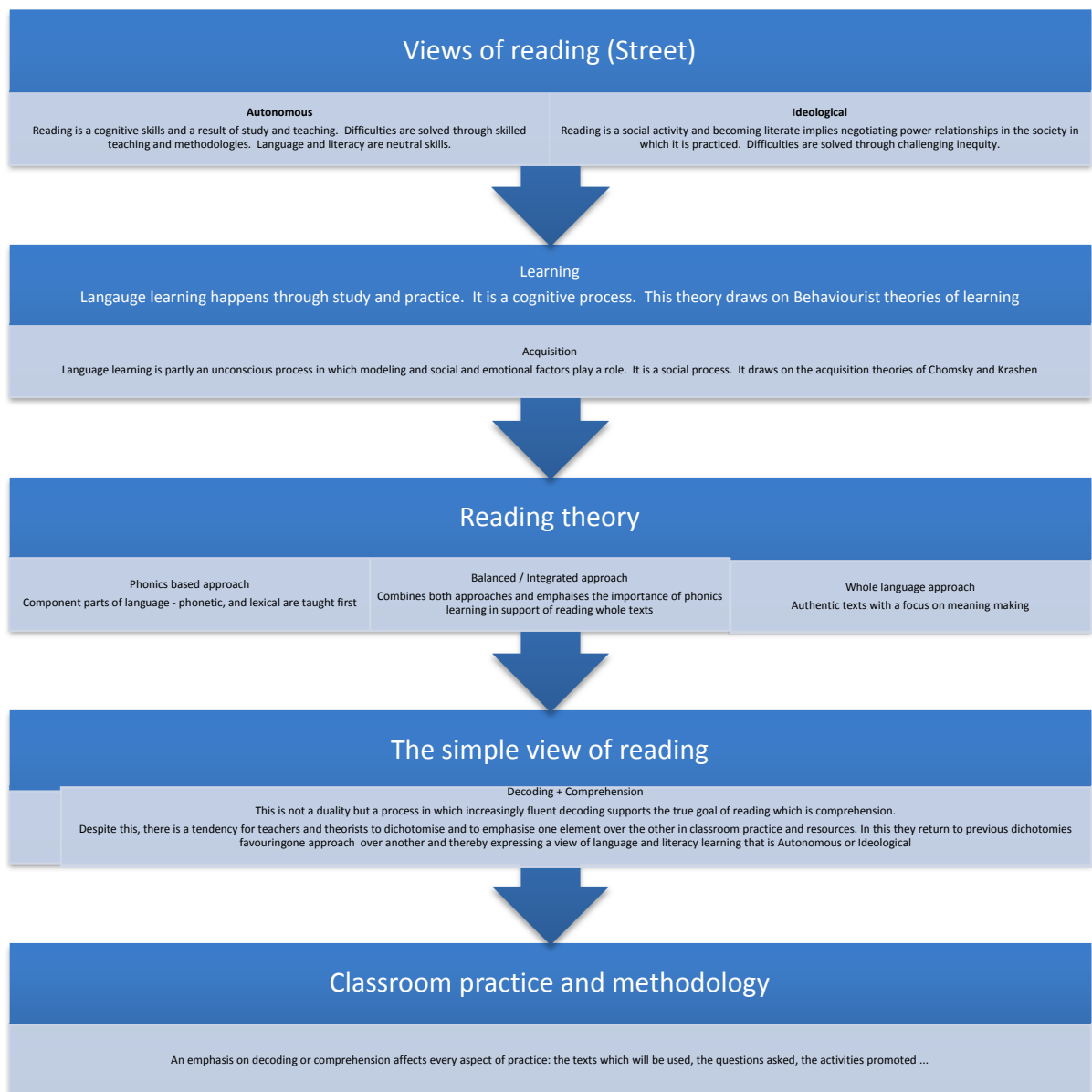
It proved impossible in this research to separate the identity positioning work done by teachers from the pedagogy which provides the content of their interaction with the children. This is inevitable, as Reading on the Mat is a literacy practice exemplified in a literacy event. Teachers' high work focus on the Mat means that there is little room for other kinds of interaction, and Chapter Five shows how identity positions are supplied by the pedagogic decisions teachers make.

Reading literacy is a socially embedded activity (see Section 2.2). It is also a combination of skills which demand complex, multiple abilities in an emergent reader, and those abilities are the focus of this section. Researchers in reading literacy are particularly concerned with apparent barriers to learning, as schooled literacy is seen as crucial in modern economies (The American National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). Driven by the perceived importance of reading literacy, many researchers have focused on the barriers children experience, which can come from many sources and are influenced by a complex combination of interlocking circumstances. Fleisch asserts that

[r]eading and mathematics are not singular, easily definable competencies that teachers produce in school-children, but things that are formed in multiple overlapping spaces, with diverse forces determining their achievement and meaning. (2008, p. viii)

Explanations for the difficulties that children experience in reading are expressed as a series of debates about effective teaching. In their pedagogic choices, the teachers in my study align themselves with aspects of these debates. This section (2.5), in which these debates are outlined, therefore provides a way of understanding many of the practices evident on the Mat. Debates in the field of teaching reading literacy also comprise the third set of tensions underlying the present study.

I have represented Sections 2.5.1 to 2.5.2 as a flow chart, Figure 2 below, in which macro-social concerns flow downwards to emerge as policy, methodology and practice in the classrooms in my research. The reverse is also true: the use of a particular method aligns the practice of a teacher more closely with a particular conception of literacy. In this way the simple view of reading, which I discuss further in Section 2.5.2, which is not a dichotomy, may still emerge as a dichotomy in teachers' practice.



**Figure 2: Flow of ideology into practice**

This section follows the flow chart in Figure 2 above and raises issues of classroom practice relevant to my research.

### **2.5.1 Ideological and autonomous conceptions of reading**

The first of the debates on teaching reading literacy is located in the broad conceptual divide introduced in Section 1.6, between perceptions of learning to read as skills training and as a social practice – the autonomous and the ideological perspectives. These conceptions go to the heart of government policy and inform the debate of where to place

the emphasis in programmes aimed at improving literacy. The ideological perspective suggests that reading literacy is shaped by social restraints. It locates reading literacy in the power relations between social groups. Issues of access and exclusion, of dominance and inequity, are therefore the greatest influences on and barriers to literacy learning. The solutions to perceived problems in system-wide literacy learning lie therefore in challenging power relationships in society (Snow, 2004, p. 9). The ideological view of literacy is consonant with a critical perspective on power relationships in language learning. For example, Luke and Freebody, in a review of the history of literacy pedagogy, declare that there is

no single definitive, truthful, scientific, universally effective, or culturally appropriate way of teaching or even defining literacy. History taught us that literacy refers to a malleable set of cultural practices shaped and reshaped by different – often competing and contending – social institutions, social classes, and cultural interests. If the formation and distribution of literacy is indeed about the construction of social, cultural, and economic power, how it is constructed and who gets access to its practices and potentials is hardly a foregone conclusion of skill acquisition, behavioral patterns, or natural patterns of creativity and development. (1999, p. 1)

By contrast, the autonomous model ascribes difficulties in reading to the cognitive abilities of the individual. Difficulties with reading literacy in this view are therefore solved by improving curricula, materials, teaching methodology and teaching skills. This perspective acknowledges power relationships and social organization as a factor, but researchers with an autonomous viewpoint are more likely to argue that children growing up in some environments are unlikely to have access to certain kinds of knowledge or to develop certain skills, which schooling must therefore supply. In South Africa, recent education policy decisions such as the CAPS (South Africa, 2010), implemented in 2012, and the materials developed for Foundation Phase teaching, mentioned in Chapter One, side-step issues of power and focus on skills teaching. This suggests that in South Africa the DoE embraces an autonomous model of literacy learning.

Approaches to literacy learning are inherent in each of these two views, bringing theory closer to the classroom. A social view of literacy learning suggests that it is partly *acquisition* (Hinkel, 2011), which emphasizes the social context in literacy learning. Concepts such as relevance, social appropriateness and strategic competence proposed by Canale and Swain (in Hinkel, 2011) and creating a nurturing learning environment are all part of acquisition theory and point to the importance of social relationships. A language

*learning* approach, on the other hand, emphasizes skills teaching and aligns more closely with behaviourist and cognitive theories of formal instruction. In my study, learning, with an emphasis on drill, repetition, rules and breaking up units of meaning, takes up much of the time on the Mat and the teachers are skilled in this form of transmission. The literacy practices children meet in Grade One therefore emphasize learning. At the same time, there is a strong mentoring quality to interactions, which suggests that social dynamics are a contributory factor.

Another set of debates on reading literacy hinges on the definition of what it means to read. Street observes that “[l]iteracy practices I would take as referring not only to the event itself but the conception of the reading and writing process that people hold when they are engaged in the event” (1995, p. 133). Debates in this area are implicit in the classrooms in my study as they result in a series of secondary methodological issues that teachers must adopt or ignore. In this regard, the current research is also exploring a contested field. The central idea of what it means to read leads to the *simple view* of reading, a model which informs modern reading theory and which offers a way of interpreting teachers’ pedagogic choices as they offer children positions as readers. As part of this discussion I locate the simple view of reading in other debates on teaching reading, bringing it, the generating purpose of Reading on the Mat, into sharper focus. Teacher and learner conceptions of what reading is will inform the way they position themselves and each other in the activity and in relation to texts. For example, if reading is conceived of as unison reading, the identity position offered a *good reader* will depend on his or her ability to read loudly and steadily.

The historical perspective shows centuries of debate, settling into two contrasting views of best practice literacy teaching: *the whole language approach*, which proposes that children read only authentic texts and focus primarily on meaning making, learning to recognize words through frequent exposure. On the other hand, there is a *phonics based approach* which favours equipping children to recognize the parts of words. Some claim that this approach may help early readers and additional language speakers who are still being introduced to English sound-letter correlations; but as the phonetic system of English is complex, some children are not able to benefit from this instruction (Abadzi, 2008). More recently the *balanced approach* (CAPS, South Africa, 2010) or *integrated approach*

suggests a blend of phonics and sight word recognition, with an emphasis on meaning. The National Association for the Education of Young Children, for example, states that

Research has clearly established that no one method is superior for all children ... and approaches that favour some type of systematic code instruction along with meaningful connected reading report children's superior progress in reading. (1998, p. 35)

The balanced approach is recommended by the current curricula in South Africa, and the teachers in the present research named it as the approach they use.

### **2.5.2 The simple view of reading**

The simple view of reading expresses the two elements of the balanced approach mentioned above as a single formula for reading: *Decoding + Comprehension* (Genesee, 2008; Lipson, 2007; Snow, 2004). Decoding means applying the alphabet principle, phonemic awareness and phonics, while comprehension involves interpreting the meaning, implications, associations, genre and effects of text. It is important to emphasize that the simple view does not express a dualism but a process in which increasingly fluent decoding supports the true goal of reading, which is comprehension.

The simple view of reading helps researchers understand some of the problems experienced by readers in the first years of primary school. The forward relationship between decoding and comprehension is clear: if you can't decode you can't comprehend. However, recent research shows also that effective decoding does not automatically lead to effective comprehension. Genesee expresses this succinctly: "Decoding is the way into reading but it is not the way out" (2008). This being the case, reading theorists debate issues such as: should decoding precede comprehension teaching, or should they be taught simultaneously? Issues arising from these debates flow into teaching methodology: the suitability or otherwise of different kinds of texts, activities and classroom groupings.

In this research, the simple view of reading enables teachers' choices on the Mat to be interpreted in terms of a conception of what it means to *be a reader*. The debates outlined below indicate other choices teachers encounter on the Mat in terms of current thinking on teaching reading, and suggest a way of understanding those choices in terms of reading identity positioning.

### 2.5.3 Implications of the simple view of reading for practice

As I emphasized in the previous section, no opposition is implied by the Decoding + Comprehension formula for the simple view of reading. Research shows that it is important not to dichotomize these two elements and that different instructional materials and strategies work in combination for different children (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). However, researchers, curriculum designers, policy makers and teachers tend to emphasize one or the other, with debates over the last fifty years focusing on the precise relationship between them. The RAND Reading Group comments that

One critically important, but thorny, aspect of teaching reading in general and comprehension in particular is the appropriate balance between teaching skills and using literature. Over the last 20 years the reading field has vacillated between the two – with fierce opposition between those recommending one or the other. (Snow, 2002, p. 43)

The question of “appropriate balance” has given rise to discussions of *when* and *how* to introduce both decoding and comprehension. Issues in this regard which emerge in the practice of teachers in my study are outlined below.

The first issue arising from the simple view of reading is whether, because decoding is a necessary precondition for comprehension, it should be taught first. When students pause too often to decode their focus is broken and their comprehension suffers. Abadzi, for example, comments that “it may be better to focus on fluency early on and focus more on comprehension after students become fluent and their working memory capacity increases” (2008, p. 592). Block and Pressley (2007) cite research that confirms the link between fluent decoding and comprehension as well as research showing that the effective teaching of decoding skills can increase comprehension. Unfortunately this research is commonly interpreted as increasing the amount of decoding instruction for struggling readers, and a consequent neglect of comprehension strategies results (Snow, 2002). This was the practice in the classrooms in my study, where both aspects of reading receive attention but most time is spent on decoding skills. Problematically, research shows that rapid decoding developed through recognizing decontextualized single words may not transfer to longer texts (Armbruster & Osborn, 2003). Reading time spent with word cards and lists may be the time least effectively spent. Some researchers emphasize the importance of teaching comprehension strategies from the earliest grades, and the issues

arising are addressed in Section 2.5.1.5, below. Armbruster and Osborn, for example, write that “[b]eginning readers, as well as more advanced readers, must understand that the ultimate goal of reading is comprehension” (2003, p. 55).

Recent engagement with these issues therefore also addresses the question of *when* to teach comprehension, as higher order questions are perceived as too difficult for emergent readers. It is argued that comprehension strategies should only be introduced when the children have reached the right developmental stage, or when their decoding is well established. The RNCS (South Africa, 2002a) recommends that all comprehension strategies be introduced in Grade One, as does PIRLS (Howie et al., 2007), which questions the “traditional” emphasis in South Africa on decoding in Grade One.

A second issue arising from the simple view of reading is whether decoding can be called *reading*. Theoreticians address themselves to the relationship between decoding and comprehension in ways that suggest that many teachers regard decoding alone as evidence of reading (Adler, 2003; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Genesee, 2007; Lipson, 2007). But as Adler, for example, points out: “Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading” (2003, p. 48). Block and Pressley say that comprehension is the “essence of reading” and the ultimate goal of successful literacy (2007, p. 220). Fountas and Pinnell remark that “[r]eading is the construction of meaning. Comprehending is not a product of reading: it is the process” (1996, p. 156).

A misconception that teachers have in this regard is that rapid decoding alone will ensure comprehension, and Lipson attributes educators’ neglect of comprehension skills to “the erroneous belief that accurate word recognition automatically leads to good comprehension” (2007, p. 11). Similarly, the teachers in my study did not prioritize comprehension skills, but rather used *fluency*, a combination of speed and accuracy in decoding, as a measure of reading ability. Surveys of reading in the United States found that “even when students acquire high levels of word-level proficiency, they may not develop the other knowledge and skills needed to become highly literate adults” (Snow, 2002, p. 11). Children with a limited vocabulary are particularly at risk, even if they have effective decoding skills (Lipson, 2007; Snow, 2002). Additional language learners may therefore be vulnerable, and also because they may not know enough of the complex linguistic and discourse structures to interpret meaning in texts (Snow, 2002).

Unfortunately, research has also shown that as little as 2% of reading time is routinely spent on teaching comprehension strategies (Snow, 2002).

All of these observations apply to my study, which confirms research showing that teachers have a tendency to minimize comprehension activities, which has implications for their learners' emerging identity as readers. The next section therefore clarifies relevant issues of teaching comprehension.

#### **2.5.4 Teaching comprehension**

Decoding skills and fluency are usually taught through drill and repetition. They are easily measured, providing teachers with clear evidence of learning in an education system in which they are increasingly held to account through measuring tools such as the Annual National Assessments. However, comprehension skills are less easily defined or tested. Learning comprehension strategies also involves more concerted effort on the part of both the teacher and the emergent reader. Lipson observes that comprehension “is a complex process that requires active and intentional cognitive effort on the part of the reader” (2007 p. 128). The RAND Reading Study Group comments:

Because meaning does not exist in text, but rather must be actively constructed, instruction in how to employ strategies is necessary to improve comprehension. To construct meaning, students must monitor their understanding and apply strategic effort. (Snow, 2002, p. 32)

There is a considerable literature on aspects of comprehension, and different lists of what comprises comprehension skills, but all agree on a central issue: strategies for comprehension must be explicitly and directly taught (Armbruster & Osborn, 2003; Lipson, 2007; Snow, 2002). Direct instruction is particularly helpful to weak readers. The RAND Study Group defines comprehension as “the ability to *learn from text*” (their emphasis, Snow, 2002), and suggests that “comprehension instruction gives students access to culturally important domains of knowledge and provides a means of pursuing affective and intellectual goals” (Snow, 2002, p. 32). Research shows that comprehension relies on fluency, vocabulary, making connections to personal experience, and understanding genre features, but also that no specific strategy, set of texts or practice results in comprehension. Instead, teachers weave together a complex environment



through an array of practices (Snow, 2002). Research into the effective teaching of comprehension (Dewitz, Jones & Leahy, 2009; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Pressley, 2001,) indicates that these practices include high level questions, opportunities to think beyond the text, and connections between texts and experiences. Choice, challenge and collaborative learning improve comprehension. This suggests three interactions for participants: discussion, questions and modeling. Each points to a slightly different role for teacher and children and therefore a different identity position for child participants. Discussion, questions and modeling appear on the Mat in different combinations, and specific details of recommended practice are given in the recommendations on Guided Reading. Each form of interaction is briefly discussed below so as to provide a context for them within this study.

The benefits of the discussion of text are emphasized by Chang-Wells and Wells, who suggest that this form of interaction offers the emergent reader a model of ways of literate thinking: “It is thus through talk about texts that children construct and develop facility in the mental activities that are involved in the literate thinking that makes possible the construction of ‘scientific knowledge’” (1993, p. 64). Palincsar, Brown, and Campione (1993) examine the role of *structured dialogue*, in which the teacher scaffolds children’s understanding by providing explanations, modeling, support and feedback. This dialogue gives access to the mental processes involved in comprehension, and also models strategies used by successful readers. Lipson (2007) recommends a teacher *talk aloud* which takes children through the cognitive moves necessary for a task. Both discussion and modeling are redolent of a Vygotskian approach in which emergent readers will internalize ways of relating to texts and making them part of their own reading repertoire. PIRLS emphasizes the social benefit of discussion and suggests that it makes the emergent reader part of a community of literate practice, while at the same time creating and maintaining that community and promoting “intellectual depth” (Howie et al., 2007, p. 19).

Questions have been called “one of the teacher’s most potent tools” (Petty, 1993, p. 139), and research confirms the central role of teacher questions in supporting emergent readers (Dillon, 1988; Thompson, 1997; Wragg & Brown, 2001). At the same time researchers express concern over the general cognitive level of teacher questions, a concern that applies also to the classrooms in my study. Higher order questions model for children a

style of approaching texts and provide challenge and purpose. Applegate, Quinn and Applegate recount the consequence of staying with lower order literal and retrieval questions: “Literal comprehenders may function effectively and may even be judged as competent readers while they cultivate a negative attitude towards reading” (2002, p. 175). In the classrooms in the present study teacher retrieval questions dominated all other devices for promoting comprehension strategies, as Section 6.6.4 reveals (see Appendix 8.4.).

The importance of the simple view of reading for this study is that it provides a way of understanding both the teaching practices observed in the study and the identity positioning of emergent readers. Dixon suggests that this is also the case in the Gauteng classrooms that she studied: “The emphasis on skills like decoding and encoding texts rather than meaning-making constructs a limited literate subject” (2007, p. ii). My own observation indicates that teachers make identity positions available which present a view of reading as predominantly decoding.

### **2.5.5 Issues pertaining to text choice relevant to this study**

Issues arising from the conception of reading as Decoding + Comprehension dominate teaching practice on the Mat, and are visible in teacher choices there. Other debates relevant to my study, which are also reflected in teacher choices on the Mat, are issues pertaining to the texts used and the reading activities promoted with those texts. The debate on text returns us to the quarrel between whole language and phonics-based approaches. The phonics-based approach demands small units: single letters, words and phrases; proponents of the whole language approach recommend only authentic texts with *natural language patterns* (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). They argue that texts should be *functional wholes*, not language items stripped of contextual cues, and disagree with any approach that “requires teaching one item (a word or a letter for example) at a time in a tightly controlled sequence. Such tight control reduces children’s opportunities to put together the process” (1996, p. 157). Many advocates of the whole language approach reject commercial graded readers which introduce vocabulary in a controlled sequence. For advocates of the whole language approach, the pursuit of meaning drives reading from the start. The balanced approach seems not to have resolved this conflict over texts.

Phonics teaching requires decontextualized letters and words, usually presented as cards or lists but also in phonics primers, while comprehension demands more extended, coherent texts, usually with pictures to support interpretation. The CAPS (South Africa, 2010) recommends commercial graded readers for work on the Mat, and in the classrooms in my study teachers chose to use a range of texts in that context: single word cards, sentence cards, phonics primers with sentence hash, graded readers with both natural and unnatural language patterns and authentic readers from the school library. Teacher choices therefore included texts recommended for both approaches; their use of texts proved to be a significant deciding factor in the identity positions they offered children on the Mat.

### **2.5.6 Issues of grouping children relevant to this study**

The formation used for reading instruction is a further source of debate, but here there is unanimity on the benefits of small groups. The National Association for the Education of Young Children claims that

Young children benefit most from being taught in small groups or as individuals. There will always be a wide range of individual differences among children. Small class size increases the likelihood that teachers will be able to accommodate children's diverse abilities and interests, strengths and needs. (1998, p. 39)

Fountas and Pinnell suggest that the small reading group in Grade One is the core event, "a foundation of the literacy curriculum" (1996, p. 30). It is one of four formations now recommended for literacy instruction in South African schools. Shared reading, independent reading and teacher *read alouds* are promoted by CAPS (South Africa, 2010) and Teaching reading in the early grades (South Africa, 2008). All four were present in the classrooms in my study. The issues associated with small group reading practices in Guided Reading speak directly to Reading on the Mat. Once in the small groups, teachers are urged to exploit the opportunities they provide for individual teaching and Fountas and Pinnell point out that "even though we are working in a group context, we are developing the individual reader's processing systems" (1996, p. 161). An analysis of the discourse as presented in Chapter Seven shows the teachers emphasizing the performance of individuals.

There is less agreement on who should be group members. Some theorists suggest ability groups, as does the CAPS curriculum and the National Reading Strategy handbook, both cited above. Allington and Baker (2007) name ability grouping as evidence of exemplary teaching practice. Ability groups are essential when teachers use commercial graded readers, as the teachers in my study do. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) review research on the advantages and disadvantages of ability grouping. They conclude that ability groups tend to be static and therefore do not meet the needs of individuals. In addition, children in low and high ability groups commonly receive different instruction, with children in low groups spending more time on decoding tasks with fewer opportunities to read (Allington, 1983). Children in low groups are also more likely to be additional language speakers. Labeling groups as weak may result in damage to confidence and self-esteem (Eder, 2006). The Massachusetts Reading Association advises flexible grouping in many different small needs-based groups because interaction between children of varied ability increases achievement. In the classrooms in the study one child dropped to a lowest group by herself, and a weakest group of three was observed receiving additional instruction; otherwise, no other child moved between groups. This confirms research recounted by Cook-Gumperz (2006) reflecting an *institutional inertia* which freezes children into early groupings and handicaps them with the cumulative record of earlier performances. Eder (2006) shows how those who get placed in lower groups in Grade One may travel through an institution labeled as poor performers. The groups themselves, as well as the practices modeled on them, therefore have significant identity-forming features.

A final issue evident in teacher choices on the Mat concerns activities considered appropriate for Guided Reading. The literature argues the merits of different forms of reading, whether silent, individual aloud, round robin reading or unison chanting. All of these forms were present in the classrooms in the study, with identity forming implications for the children participating in them.

Fountas and Pinnell (1996) are unequivocal that silent independent reading is the goal of Guided Reading. Children come to groups to read silently under observation and then to read a selected amount aloud for further assessment. The reading begins and ends with discussion and questions, which alert the children to features of the text and promote comprehension. In the classrooms in my research silent independent reading is not an obvious goal on the Mat, although one teacher ends every session with a few minutes of it.

In this regard, it is important to mention that, while silent reading is the express goal of Guided Reading and research shows that it builds fluency, there is no evidence that it helps weak readers with either fluency or comprehension (Konza, 2011).

In the other two classrooms in my study, silent reading does not happen at all in this formation. Instead, every child reads a number of different texts aloud daily: letters, cards, sentences, lists, phonics readers and graded commercial series. Authentic story texts are distributed on the Mat but read at home. Individual letters, words, lists and sentences are read by individuals or in unison, but graded readers are used for *round robin reading*. In round robin reading, children take turns to read parts of a text aloud, and follow others' reading silently when it is not their turn. This practice enables teachers to support children's development of oral fluency and to assess a group rapidly. Adler (2003), however, believes that round robin reading does not in itself increase fluency because students read small sections of text, and they usually only read this small section once. This reading pattern will therefore not promote comprehension although it may give an impression of competent reading. A third form commonly used by teachers in my study is unison reading. This enables children to move together through longer texts, and Beard says that "the ancient satisfactions of chant and song can be used to sustain the feelings of involvement among pupils" (2000, p. 19). However, in my observation, unison reading may have a mindless quality which puts the cognitive engagement of the participating children into question. Repetition in oral reading has been shown to benefit comprehension but the same claim cannot be made for independent reading (Snow, 2002).

In conclusion, the debates in reading theory, particularly between phonics and whole language approaches, emerge in classrooms as many smaller points of practice. Teachers in my study daily make choices regarding the issues mentioned in this section. Research indicates that many common practices, for example round robin reading, have limited use in promoting comprehension, the goal of reading. They nevertheless remain part of the Foundation Phase teacher's repertoire, and are used by the teachers in the present study.

This section has reviewed theories of learning to read and looked at the implications of this theory for such identity-forming choices as teachers make in Reading on the Mat. The discussion of reading theory concludes with Luke and Freebody's four resources of the reader, followed by further reasons for the focus on the teacher in the present study, this time drawn from reading theory rather than identity theory.

## 2.6 The four roles / resources of the reader

The previous section explores learning to read from the perspective of pedagogic theory and recommendations made to teachers in policy and curricula. A model of reading that approaches reading from the perspective of the reader is commonly known as the *four roles of the reader*, renamed the Four Resources model by its authors (Luke & Freebody, 1999). It suggests four activities in which the reader must engage to make sense of text. Its relevance is that it sharpens the focus on identity positioning in terms of the role or resource which the teacher offers to emergent readers. The resources may be deployed simultaneously on the same text or readers may move strategically between them. These resources do not represent a hierarchy of ability or a teaching progression in which the first named resource, code breaking, is introduced first (1990, p. 121). The authors' purpose in developing this model is to avoid the hunt for a "best" way of teaching reading and to focus instead on what readers need to be able to do with texts. They express their intention as follows:

We wanted to shift the focus from trying to find the right method to determining whether the range of practices emphasized in a reading program was indeed covering and integrating the broad repertoire of textual practices required in today's economies and cultures. (retrieved 2011, p. 3)

The usefulness of the four resources model to the present study is that it presents ways of thinking about the positions that teachers offer to children *as readers* in relation to the simple view of reading described in Section 2.5.2, above. The resources are as code breakers, meaning makers, text users and text critics. As *code breakers*, readers use their understanding of sound-letter correlations, phonic and phonemic awareness and *sight vocabulary*, that is, words they have learned to recognize as wholes rather than by sounding out component parts. As code breakers, readers exploit the decoding dimension of the simple view of reading, which Luke and Freebody refer to as coding competence. The next three resources correlate with strategies for comprehending text. As *meaning makers*, readers seek understanding, using their background knowledge and integrating aspects of the text such as illustrations. They respond to clues regarding implications and the author's intention. Luke and Freebody relate this to semantic competence. As *text users*, readers use their knowledge of genre to approach the information in a text appropriately. Luke and Freebody link this to pragmatic competence. Finally, as *text*

*critics*, readers evaluate texts and assess whether the author's purpose has been achieved. They consider point of view, bias and how the text expresses power relationships. Luke and Freebody call this critical competence.

This model shifts the focus in literacy research towards an understanding of the practices and traditions in classrooms. It dovetails with the conception of reading as decoding + comprehension, but provides more detail regarding the kinds of abilities needed by readers to comprehend texts. It captures the levels of understanding needed to operate with texts in modern schools and society, and also suggests the kinds of reader that teachers may be constructing through the practices they promote.

## **2.7 Further justification for focusing on the teacher: Developing reading literacy**

Section 2.4 justifies a focus on the teacher in this research. Further justification emerges from the literature on reading instruction, where many researchers insist on the influence of the teacher over methodological factors. Hoadley and Ensor (2005) maintain that since the 1960s school effectiveness studies have identified teachers as the most significant variable in learners' success or failure. The discussion of comprehension in Section 2.5.4 above, for example, refers to "a panoply of practices" and the "complex environment" which teachers hold together (Snow, 2002). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998) comments that teachers rely on experience and make pragmatic decisions drawn from many areas: their understanding of theory, of the curriculum, of their students and the context. These factors place the teacher – rather than curriculum, materials or methods – at the heart of literacy learning. The National Association for the Education of Young Children position statement declares that

Research supports the view of the child as an active constructor of his or her own learning, while at the same time studies emphasize the critical role of the supportive, interested, engaged adult (e.g., teacher, parent, or tutor) who provides scaffolding for the child's development of greater skill and understanding. (1998, p. 37)

The acknowledged complexity of teaching reading suggests that there is much yet to be explored and that the teacher is an appropriate focus for research. Teachers also have a crucial role in making a meaningful whole of the literacy learning experience. Louden, Rohl, Barratt-Pugh, Brown, Cairney, Elderfield, House, Meiers, Rivalland, and Rowe

comment that “The ways in which effective teachers are able to manage the competing demands of the classroom have been likened to the skills of a juggler or to the conductor of a large orchestra” (2005, p. 184). They show that effective teachers are not limited to a defined, shared set of practices, but rather use a wide range of methods. What effective teachers do share is an ability to draw on resources: variety rather than uniformity is a characteristic of Foundation Phase classrooms, a finding which emerged from my study. Luke and Freebody suggest that

both literacy and literacy education refer to repertoires of capability and to families of practices. As students vary in their needs for development in different aspects of that repertoire, so do teachers vary in the range of educative experiences they can offer and in their responsiveness to students’ needs. (2011, p. 6)

Teachers are also responsible for interpreting theory, policy and curriculum, and their conception of literacy will affect the choices they make in the classroom (Papen, 2001). They have the dominant input in teaching reading, as well as in identity construction, however learners respond to their experience. Lipson (2007) makes the point that while collaboration between home and school is ideal, research which influences education policy can change the school environment, but not necessarily the home environment. A further factor supporting a focus on teachers is that the literacy experiences children bring to school are varied, as is their progress. The National Association for the Education of Young Children claims that “children do not progress along this developmental continuum in rigid sequence. Rather, each child exhibits a unique pattern and timing in acquiring skills and understanding related to reading and writing” (1998, p. 37). Research shows that children’s literacy performance at school is the product of a host of minute cumulative experiences throughout their preschool years. Prinsloo and Steyn (2004) call this a *black box* approach to researching reading literacy, as it focuses on the many unpredictable features of the learner’s experience and discounts the role of the teacher. This study therefore investigates what experienced teachers are doing, as they and others replicate certain experiences for children year after year, experiences that include not only the identity work referred to above, but also the reading skills teaching which transmits it.

On the Mat, the teacher’s pedagogic presence dominates the small group, more so than when she interacts with the whole class. She is closer to the children and handles their bodies and books. She signals, monitors, corrects, cues, all from a distance of no more than a metre. She may withdraw from an overt leadership role and allow the patterns she



has established to take over, but her silence is consent that the interaction is following a pattern approved by her. Group membership and appropriate behaviour linked to literacy practices are introduced by the teacher, who thus makes particular identity positions available to learners. Who you are in the community will determine both the experiences offered to you, and the degree to which you are able to take hold of those experiences. Teachers determine these aspects of Reading on the Mat. A study of the detail of the exchange will help to uncover the invisible pedagogy that Bourne claims simply masks the “inescapable authority of the teacher” (2002, p. 7).

Finally, the implication of studying a group brought together for a *teaching* purpose is that identity-forming interactions are infused with the pedagogies chosen by the teacher. This factor highlights once again the importance of studying the teacher in these groups, and also explains why the theoretical context of the study needed to include reading pedagogy. In interviews the teachers in this study were not critical of their own practice beyond their choices of method, but insights drawn from the literature on reading provide another dimension to the decisions that teachers make on the Mat. Sections of my study use reading theory therefore to contextualize teachers’ choices.

## **2.8 Responses to the tensions underlying this research**

In Chapter One I explain that my investigation results in four sets of tensions. The first three sets of tensions emerge in a review of the relevant theory outlined in this chapter. The fourth set of tensions consists in the practical difficulty of rendering a complex activity with clarity, and balancing the inevitable simplifying with a corresponding need to capture the detail of the event. In this section I reiterate these tensions and present the position I have taken in regard to each.

To begin with, tensions exist between perspectives emphasizing the social nature of literacy learning and the focus on skills transmission. Both of these appear on the Mat, which displays strongly inductive, social interactions even though teachers focus on skills training. The relationships involved in the activity and the identity positions offered to learners are a feature of the community of practice, while simultaneously phonics drill and decoding are the basis of the interactions. Part of the tension exists because the interest of the researcher aligns with an ideological view of literacy learning, while the goals of the

teacher subjects are expressed in terms of an autonomous view. I have conceptualized the social perspective of the ideological view as the framing perspective of the study, which affirms throughout that the teacher and the children hold the experience together as a practice. At the same time it is necessary to acknowledge the role of skills transmission, as this explains what teachers are doing and how they interpret the literature on teaching methods. It is also their insider perception of their own practice.

A second tension in my study derives from the fact that practices of reading pedagogy are not a unitary body of approaches, and it is important in this context to recognize a tension between the two aspects of the balanced approach to reading, that is, phonics tuition and whole language reading. The teachers studied in this research project devote time on the Mat to phonics and word recognition activities, although this is not recommended in the literature on Guided Reading or in the curriculum. Because of the presence of both activities – phonics and reading – on the Mat, the teachers can be seen to be balancing the approaches in ways that have an impact on the identity positions they offer readers. In terms of the resources of the reader, teachers offer the learners the identity position of code breaker, establishing that role as the dominant resource in their relationship with text. The teachers' movement between decoding and comprehension emerges as an element in the identity work done on the Mat. For this reason my analysis includes, as a context for activities, an examination of what the literature recommends. In this study the teachers' explanations of their practices are embedded in reading methodology: the answer of one teacher to the question "How would you define 'reading literacy'?" was a quote from the curriculum. A solution to the lack of insight of teachers into their own practice was to refer to literature on teaching reading literacy. This provided not only a level of interpretation, but also the insights of professionals in the area of Foundation Phase instruction. Erikson maintains that when participant perceptions are insufficiently nuanced, the observations of knowledgeable non-participants may be used (1982, p. 228).

Finally, there is a tension inherent in combining a focus on identity, and using analytic instruments associated with critical studies, with the data capture methods and analysis associated with ethnography. As I explain at the beginning of this chapter, the theory of identity positioning provides a conceptual lens that enables the examination of relationship dynamics. Investigations of identity, however, often issue from a critical or interpretive paradigm, while ethnographies generally seek rich description. In order to accommodate

these two paradigms I have adopted an ethnographic approach as a framework for the collection and analysis of the data. This thesis is not a critical ethnography (Madison, 2012), but rather a study with two strands: one ethnographic and descriptive and one interpretive and critical. Noblit, Flores and Murillo comment that “We should not choose between critical theory and ethnography. Instead, we see that researchers are cutting new paths to reinscribing critique in ethnography” (2004, p. 4). The first categories of analysis therefore come from the work of Dell Hymes, and their use in investigating previously unrecorded events is well established in linguistic ethnography. His categories provide the framework for the first analysis, presented in Chapter Four, and allow the researcher to identify aspects of Reading on the Mat requiring further investigation. The more detailed analysis, presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, uses concepts drawn from critical and interpretive paradigms. Further tension arises from the fact that ethnographic analysis seeks participants’ explanations of the significance of their actions, while an interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to offer interpretations and a critical paradigm allows the researcher to critique relationships. Moves from a descriptive framework (Chapter Four) to increasingly critical analytic approaches, the present study blends ethnographic description and interpretation in the three chapters describing the process of analysis, Chapters Four, Five and Six. The methodology of data collection and analysis are the focus of Chapter Three.

## Chapter Three: Methodology and research design decisions

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Ethnography and micro-ethnography
- 3.3 Research design decisions regarding data collection
- 3.4 Research design: Sites and participants
- 3.5 Further details of Reading on the Mat
- 3.6 Reading on the Mat as a source of identity positioning
- 3.7 Data analysis
- 3.8 Validity of the data and analysis
- 3.9 Changes to the research design: Becoming a participant observer
- 3.10 Changes to the observation schedule in Mrs Mitchell's classroom
- 3.11 Ethical issues of participation
- 3.12 Concluding comment

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the decisions that were made before and during the data collection and analysis phases of my research. First it outlines the approach chosen for this research, micro-ethnography, and suggests why this method is particularly suited to a study of classroom interaction. The chapter then accounts for decisions regarding data collection and describes the research sites, the teacher participants and the children. It provides more detail on the Reading on the Mat event and offers additional reasons for its being a suitable focus for identity research. Section 3.7 describes data analysis and Section 3.8 considers issues of validity arising from the research decisions made. During the year-long period of data collection, changes to the research design were inevitable, and the next sections (3.9 and 3.10) describe two of these. The chapter concludes with an account of ethical questions the researcher faced when collecting data.

### 3.2 Ethnography and micro-ethnography

Reasons for the choice of this methodology were given in Section 1.5. Ethnography is an approach particularly suited to researching both literacy practices and classroom interaction (Bourne, 2002; Day & Park, 2005; Dyson, 1996; Gee, 2004; Hawkins, 2005; Heath, 1983; Hoadley & Ensor, 2005; Jones, 1989; Prinsloo & Steyn, 2004; Street, 1995 & 2001; Toohey, 1998, 2000; Willett, 1995). Street suggests that the investigation of literacy practices from a social perspective “necessarily entails an ethnographic approach which provides closely detailed accounts of the whole cultural context in which those practices have meaning” (1995, p. 29). It is the perspective informing the New Literacy Studies of the past twenty years, a trend favouring socially embedded research on literacy practices. Scollon suggests that ethnography is a point of view or stance rather than a method, “the result of looking in particular ways at particular phenomena and reporting on them in particular ways” (1998, p. 276). Street (2001) claims that there has been a steady increase in awareness of the value of ethnographic methods in educational research. The main reason for choosing an ethnographic approach in research of this kind is to allow for a detailed description of the event before the application of theoretical approaches to its analysis.

An ethnographic study of classroom literacy involves the researcher being immersed in the environment as an observer for an extended period. While observing, the researcher takes field notes, makes recordings for later analysis, carries out interviews with the subjects and collects relevant site documents. When at the site the researcher may choose between stances ranging from non-participant observer to full community member, but in all cases seeks to ascertain insider perspectives. Analysis is referred back to the participants for comment, interpretation or observation, and these responses are subjected to further analysis and scrutiny. This ensures that the participants’ perspectives emerge in the study, and authenticates observations made about them.

*Micro-ethnography*, the approach of this research, embraces all of the activities mentioned above, but with a restricted time scale and focus. Rubio and Szecsy suggest that micro-ethnography, which they define as the “ethnography of social interaction” (1997, p. 1), has its roots in the ethnography of communication and interactional sociolinguistics developed by Gumperz and Hymes (1972). Erickson (1982) further developed this methodology as a

qualitative approach for researching teaching. Rubio and Szecsy conclude that this methodology “is rich and important in better understanding the textured nuances of social interaction” (1997, p. 1). Micro-ethnography is a form of ethnography in which *micro* suggests the closeness of the event selected for study. The chosen event should also be a microcosm of interactions in the whole community: Stockrocki suggests that micro-ethnography is “the study of a smaller experience or a slice of everyday reality, such as instruction” (1997 p. 34). It is used where a single event can fruitfully be analyzed to understand whole-institution interactions.

Reading on the Mat constitutes such an event because it is the core formation for teaching and learning reading literacy in the classrooms concerned. Studying it in this way enables the thesis to present both the interactional details of the event and the conclusions drawn about identity positioning during teacher and learner engagement with text. *Micro-ethnography* further suggests a micro-analysis that captures the detail of the tiny actions that make up social reality. Street suggests that in this way an analysis of an event leads us back to understanding the literacy practice it exemplifies: “Literacy practices I would take as referring not only to the event itself but the conception of the reading and writing process that people hold when they are engaged in the event” (1995, p. 133).

To some researchers (Rubio & Szecsy, 1997) micro-ethnography also implies that the focal event will be video recorded, so that interactions can be analyzed and re-analyzed and the nuances of the exchanges can be interrogated in detail. The data in my study is of five kinds: video recording, audio recording, field notes from observation, which include notes on informal discussions, formal interviews and email correspondence with the teachers, and classroom texts. The video recording was the main material for analysis, together with field notes of observations I had made when watching the original event. Kress et al. (2001) remind the researcher that video data can only ever be seen as a representation of the event being studied. It forms a *video text* (Kress et al., 2001) of the interactions in its own right and can never be the interaction itself, as the process of recording is also a process of selection and therefore interpretation.

Le Compte and Goetz (1993) identify six principles for ethnographic research which have guided my study. The researcher:

1. Does not manipulate relationships, behaviours or materials in the classroom of the research.

2. Develops close, trusting relationships with subjects, participating in classroom life and interacting freely with subjects, if necessary, to achieve this aim.
3. Is interested in insider perspectives, systems of meaning. The researcher seeks to understand the motivations and attitudes of participants.
4. Uses inductive methods of data collection, theorizing only after collecting data in order to avoid preconceptions and over-rigid interpretation.
5. Makes use of multiple data sources.
6. Considers the socio-political and historical context to avoid simplistic connections.

With regard to le Compte and Goetz's stipulation of a naturalistic setting, after a pilot visit and an introductory session with the children, I entered classrooms for a week at a time, to become familiar with the wider context and to be accepted in it, although Reading on the Mat only lasts about 20 minutes for each group.

The second requirement listed above suggests the importance of relationships, and in my study this was most secure with Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels, in whose classrooms the research was piloted. They were familiar with me and the recording process when the study started, while Mrs Mitchell was not. I had naively ignored this as a factor in our relationship and adjustments were made to the second and third visits to reduce the tension experienced by Mrs Mitchell. This is described in Section 3.10. An important aspect of my relationship with the teachers was my involvement in the classrooms, where I played the role of a participant observer. This raised issues of ethics and validity which are discussed separately in 3.8 and 3.11, below.

A problematic aspect of micro-ethnography which relates to le Compte and Goetz's second requirement is the conflict between the researcher's need to gather authentic, uncontaminated interaction, and her need to develop trusting relationships with participants. Relationship-building may paradoxically undermine the naturalness of the setting, a problem that Labov calls the *observer's paradox*. He states that "the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain this data by systematic observation" (1972, p. 158). My decision to enter the research sites as a participant observer, as well as the effect of this decision on relationships and the authenticity of the data, is discussed further in Sections 3.8 and 3.9.

A third requirement for an ethnographic study is that the researcher should focus on insider perspectives, motivations and attitudes. During observation sessions teachers volunteered explanations for what they were doing and why, and I captured these in field notes. In a similarly informal way they explained decisions in answer to questions and pointed out aspects of the children's performance. Their comments regarding pedagogy were perhaps the most useful to me. But when I referred interpretations back to them their perceptions of their own behaviour became less acute. My analysis therefore became more interpretive, using literature on reading instruction and discourse analysis to offer explanations for their practice. Erikson (1982) suggests that when participant perceptions are insufficiently nuanced, the observations of knowledgeable non-participants may be used. In line with this suggestion I include explanations of teachers' practice derived from readings on early literacy and effective teaching, as well as from the curricula.

My study fulfils the fourth and fifth of le Compte and Goetz's requirements. The data was subjected to cycles of analysis, first using Hymes's S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic, which is described in more detail in Section 3.6, below, followed by additional analysis using other methods. After that, three areas, each of which shows complexity and contradiction, were subjected to additional cycles of investigation. This is further described in Section 3.7. In this way the analysis sought an increasingly detailed and nuanced understanding of the event. My research uses inductive methods to avoid preconceptions, and analytic tools from multiple sources, an approach consistent with ethnographic practice. The main data for analysis comprises video and audio recordings made in the classrooms, and transcriptions of these. Selections from these transcriptions are included for the reader and can be found in the Appendices.

### **3.3 Research design decisions regarding data collection**

In ethnography, observation is the central one of a cluster of data collection strategies, as indeed was the case in my study. Using multiple complementary sources allows for interpretations drawn from one source to be confirmed by another. This enhances academic rigour through triangulation, that is, through cross checking interpretations and impressions drawn from one data source against those drawn from another. Multiple sources also supply the density of data necessary for the *thick description* (Geertz, 1973)



valued in ethnographic studies. Watson Gegeo (1992) argues for *thick explanation* in studies of language socialization, the “integration of micro- and macrolevels of contextual data collected and analyzed in a qualitative, ethnographic framework, to achieve a more holistic understanding of children’s socialization” (1992, p. 52). Section 3.7 describes how cycles of analysis attempted to implement the principle of detailed explanation for this study. The main data of my research consists of the video and audio recordings spanning five consecutive days (or one teaching week) of the daily literacy teaching event, Reading on the Mat, in each class, in three cycles in 2010, the year of study. These cycles happened in March or April, in July or August and in November in order to confirm interpretations and identify possible changes in the positions being offered to children. Throughout each of those five days in each cycle I observed teaching on the Mat and also whole class interaction, and took observation notes on all aspects of the teaching and learning, both on and off the Mat. I observed many sessions closely, sitting with the group, but also moved around the classroom while the stationary camera and the audio recorder captured interactions. On some days class teaching was also recorded, as a context for the identity positioning work done on the Mat in these classrooms.

Pilot studies described in Chapter One showed that simultaneous audio recording was necessary to overcome the problem of ambient noise. Audio recordings, except of interviews, are therefore not usually a separate data source, although some sessions exist only as video and others only as audio recordings. All were reviewed for analysis.

The strongest and the weakest groups in each of the three classrooms were tracked in case the teacher applied differential teaching to groups perceived as having different abilities, as Collins (2006) suggests (Section 2.5.6). To avoid giving the impression that I was choosing particular groups I recorded all groups. The selection of children was guided only by their membership of groups on the Mat, as this is the authentic site of their literacy learning and identity negotiation.

The texts of the reading series used by the teachers were collected, and these are described and analysed in Section 7.2.2. I also collected any additional material that teachers were willing to supply, such as worksheets, assessments, class records and reports. These provided useful context but are not formally analyzed. In an attempt to capture the children’s impression of the research process (Adendorff, 1999), they were asked to draw a picture of me in relation to themselves, the classroom and their teacher. A single

example from each class appears as Appendix 10. This data indicates that they saw me as a teacher: despite physical differences, the teachers and I were most frequently depicted in the same way. Moreover, the recording technology was not intrusive: only two of sixty-nine children depicted the camera, although it was present in the classroom when they made the drawings.

Towards the end of the observation year each teacher was interviewed or replied in writing to questions designed for interview (see Appendices 2a and 2b). The questions were designed to capture details of the teachers' professional history and motivations. These interviews were an unsatisfactory source of insights into identity construction as the teachers interpreted the questions at a methodological rather than a philosophical or theoretical level. Teachers' informal observations and comments as they taught or as we relaxed together gave more significant insights. These were recorded in the daily Observation Notes. A second round of questions was emailed to each teacher, which sought clarity on details that emerged from the analysis. Later, interviews during writing up (November 2011) were able to target significant elements of the exchanges and provide additional insights. However, teachers' answers to direct questions remained a weak source of information, therefore the video and audio recordings are in all cases the primary data for analysis, except for the analysis of texts (Section 7.2.2).

### **3.4 Research design: sites and participants**

The research sites are the Grade One classrooms of three former Model C schools in the Eastern Cape: Riverside, a boys' school, Greenbanks, a girls' school and Oakhill, a co-educational school. This section provides further information about the research sites, describes the teachers and gives details of the language profiles of the children.

As Section 1.2 and 1.3 explain, PIRLS studies and ANA results show that former Model C schools are the most successful government-funded teaching environments in South Africa. Teachers and principals at the schools selected for this study have a positive self-image as members of successful institutions; discussion during the pilot visit and during the data collection with staff members, librarians, principals and remedial teachers indicates that reading literacy is actively promoted throughout the schools. Discussion during and after the pilot visit shows that the teachers who feature in the study are

confident professionals with a well-articulated interest in and knowledge of reading pedagogies and learning styles. Very few children repeat a grade in these schools (one Grade One of seventy four in the year of the data collection). This was a significant factor in my choice of site, as I sought good practice environments to investigate identity-forming elements of practice when children do learn to read. It was coincidental that the three schools shared a pedagogic practice, the Reading on the Mat event, and that the graded commercial reading series used in all three classrooms was the Reading 360 series (Ginn, 1978). The three environments are very alike in aspects such as class size (between 23 and 27 children), resources and appearance, as figures 3 and 4 below suggest:

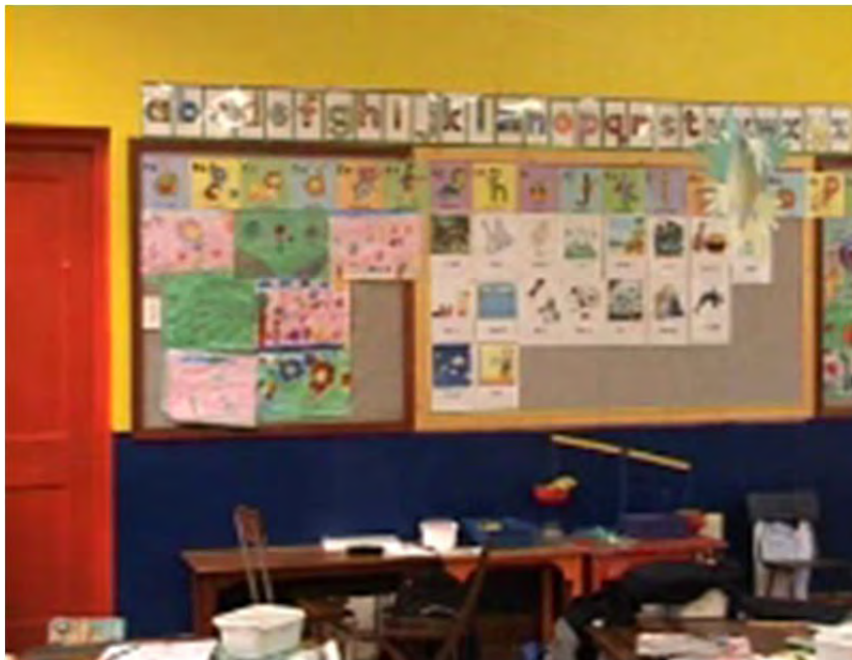


Figure 3: The back wall of Greenbanks classroom, November 2010



Figure 4: Mrs Mitchell at Riverside in her reading corner

In the year of the data collection, all three classrooms had been recently painted and were equipped with low desks and chairs, a carpet or carpets, blinds or curtains, a sink with towel and cups, low cupboards, book shelves, alphabet and other friezes, and a whiteboard or chalkboard or both. Riverside has a data projector.

In sum, these are well-equipped schools that function effectively and allow the researcher access to classrooms uninterrupted by organizational problems. Dissimilarities in teachers' practices are not the result of the environment or supplies.

The three teachers in the study have a great deal in common. All are English-speaking women in their late thirties to early fifties, married and with children. All had taught at their schools for a number of years and had five or six years of training. All had followed their initial diploma training with further qualifications. Each takes part in semi-annual teacher development training programmes and workshops. Each has taught all the Foundation Phase grades (One to Three) and has remedial experience and/ or training. All have well-developed ideas about what is necessary for effective teaching, and all cited *experience* as the most important factor influencing their teaching choices.

Within the broad similarities described above, Mrs Mitchell is the most experienced, with thirty-two teaching years in total and nineteen years teaching Grade One, and Mrs Samuels is the least experienced, with sixteen years in total and five years teaching Grade One. Mrs Samuels is the most recently and highly qualified with a BEd Hons degree obtained in 2009. Mrs Dean, with seventeen years' experience and four years in Grade One, has taught at her school for eight years and is part of management there. There are other similarities. All three teachers seek additional insights and information about teaching and learning and put new methods or technologies into practice: they all attend teacher upgrade workshops and have added qualifications to their initial training (Interviews, 2010). In the year of the study Mrs Mitchell started working with a data projector, for example. They prepare thoroughly for lessons and make many resources themselves. All three are aware of the influence of the environment on learning and see their classrooms as plastic resources: they all rearranged furniture several times during the year of observation. They change friezes, posters or displays of children's work regularly. They experiment with seating arrangements and the most productive combinations for grouping children.

Additional similarities are that their classrooms are frequently visited by colleagues and parents. They all mention their own husbands, children and children's friends to their learners and know the children's home circumstances. The schools' ethos is Christian and the teachers express this through prayers, graces and hymns. Mrs Dean and Mrs Mitchell share their personal religious perspectives in class.

Despite these similarities, the classrooms provide a different experience for children entering them. Mrs Mitchell, the most experienced, emphasizes the need for uniformity, regularity, discipline and pattern. She likened teaching Grade One to "training and taming wild horses. Teaching a routine and discipline and respect for others and their property" (Interview questionnaire, November 2010).

Mrs Dean has a playful, dramatic style. She says teaching Grade One is like being in Alice in Wonderland "because it allows you into a little people's world every single day. ... You can have fun. You can play; wear an orange wig to school. In Grade One that's totally appropriate and you can do so much learning through play" (Interview, August 2010). For her, the central focus of Grade One teaching is reading.

Mrs Samuels runs the most casual and creative classroom of the three teachers. She values children's input and avoids labeling children's problems unless they have been identified by a professional. She allows children to play with her materials and to create their own games using her equipment. She says: "I think maybe that stems from my personality because it's like a free ... I think I'm quite down to earth and easy going and free. So I don't want to have to tell children 'Now it's time you have to read to a friend.' They've got their own brains and they can choose and if they're reading as long as they read it's fine. Whichever manner they choose. Each one might be comfortable with a certain style" (Interview, November 2010).

While a study of three teachers does not enable convincing generalizations to be made, comparisons between them gives finer distinction to the interpretation. As I explain in Section 3.2, contrast and dissimilarity between teaching practices indicate an area for further inductive analysis.

As mentioned in Section 1.3, the children in Grade One at Riverside, Oakhill and Greenbanks represent different race, language and cultural groups. As the medium of instruction at these schools is English, this means that many of them have a first literacy

experience in an additional language. Statistics collected during the pilot study and the data collection year, and captured in Table 2 below, indicate the percentages of additional language learners in these classrooms. They also show that the proportions of home language to additional language learners change from year to year (see Oakhill 2009 and 2010):

<b>Numbers and percentages of learners who do not speak English as a home language.</b>		
<i>2009 Pilot, Grades 1–3. Former Model C Schools</i>		
	<i>Numbers of Additional Language speakers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
	23 of a class of 28	82%
	24 of a class of 24 (Oakhill 2009)	100%
	20 of a class of 23	87%
	14 of a class of 21	67%
	12 of a class of 23	52%
	18 of a class of 21	86%
<i>2010, Grade One, the schools in the study.</i>		
2010 Grade 1 Greenbanks	12 of a class of 22	56%
2010 Grade 1 Oakhill	23 of a class of 27	85%
2010 Grade 1 Riverside	14 of a class of 26	53%

**Table 2: Numbers and percentages of learners who do not speak English as a home language**

Additional language learners speak mostly isiXhosa or Afrikaans at home (see Table 1) but individual children in the pilot and study spoke French, German and Urdu as home languages. This means that teachers are delivering an ambitious English Home Language curriculum to classes in which significant majorities are additional language speakers. The additional language RNCS, Grades R – 9 requires the following:

When a learner enters a school where the language of learning and teaching is an additional language for the learner, teachers and other educators should make provision for special assistance and supplementary learning of the additional language, until such a time as the learner is able to learn effectively in the language of learning and teaching. (South Africa, 2002a, p. 5)

The teachers are not supported in additional language tuition: they trained as home language teachers and retain methodologies suitable to home language classes. Remedial support is provided for children with diagnosed perceptual difficulties, but not in language learning. At the same time it is important to remember that the language profile of South

Africans is increasingly fluid. Children identified by schools as isiXhosa speakers may in fact speak more English than isiXhosa to their young professional parents or be multilingual or diglossic at home (de Klerk, 2000). As teachers grapple with multilingual classes, they will perforce make choices which position children as particular kinds of readers.

The comparative success of the children proved impossible to assess in this study. The Revised Burt Reading Test 1974, used in the classrooms in the study, rates children's ability to recognize common words and to decode others. If given at the end of Grade One, such a test would only assess whether the child had been exposed to the word before. Mrs Dean observed that Grade One children's knowledge is too narrow to test. She added: "Reading is so limited at this stage. And if the type of words in the test aren't the type of words they are familiar with, never mind the whole cultural thing, it doesn't give me an accurate reflection" (Interview, November 2010). As they all use the Reading 360 graded readers (Ginn, 1978), vocabulary seems a reliable test, but teachers supplement Reading 360 with other texts, giving children practice in reading different vocabularies. Nor would a vocabulary-based test assess comprehension. Grade One children of this study do not have enough experience of written questions or the writing ability to make such a test a true assessment of their ability to read.

The only comparison that can be made between classrooms is that the top groups were reading the Ginn 360 level 4.1 in November, with one or two children in each class reading well above that level and most reading at level 3.4 to 3.6. They do so with different levels of confidence and fluency. Using the Reading 360 as a measure is also problematic, for two reasons. First, teachers know that particular children may be capable of reading above the level they are at, but do not allow for this. The reader levels are therefore only a rough guide. Secondly, children come with various degrees of exposure to reading, so that the progress they make in Grade One may not only be from the teaching there. The position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children states that "some kindergartners may have skills characteristic of the typical three year old, while others might be functioning at the level of the typical eight year old" (1998, p. 31). Variety within schools and between schools is to be expected and is not necessarily a function of the Grade One teaching there. I therefore avoid comparing

teachers' practice in terms of its effectiveness, but this choice leaves a gap in the answers that my study can provide and is one of its limitations.

### **3.5 Further details of Reading on the Mat**

A central issue for a researcher using a micro-ethnographic approach is identifying the focal event for examination. The first justification for my choice appears in Section 1.4: that Reading on the Mat is the core literacy event in these classrooms. This is a local name for an activity reminiscent of Guided Reading, a formation also widely used in Foundation Phase classrooms in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It fulfils Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, and Shuart-Faris's definition of an event as a "bounded series of actions and reactions that people make in response to each other at the level of face-to-face interaction" (2005, p. 6). In addition, Reading on the Mat fulfils the requirement that the event needs to be a microcosm of relationships, values and attitudes in the larger environment and the institution (see Section 3.2). Crucially, this is a daily event for every child in these classrooms, and the activities and relationships which promote reading in these groups will have a significant impact on the emergent reader. The following section describes Reading on the Mat and explains its interest as a literacy practice.

Reading on the Mat is analyzed in detail in Chapter Four, where it is compared to Guided Reading, and the activities which take place in this formation are also the focus of Chapter Five. Briefly, therefore, Reading on the Mat is daily reading instruction for a small group (one to ten in the classrooms in this study) of children of similar ability. Word drill using flash cards and lists is followed by round robin reading, closely monitored by the teacher. Each child may be asked a question on the text which has been read or the whole group may be asked to volunteer answers. Sometimes other activities such as games or unison reading are included. Children not in the group are given work and discouraged from interrupting activities on the Mat. Although activities on the Mat appear similar to Guided Reading, a closer examination shows innovations or historic practices by the teachers in my study that suggest different understandings and constructions of reading. The analysis of Act Sequences presented in Chapter Five outlines the recommendations for Guided Reading in the literature and the Curriculum and contrasts these to Reading on the Mat as



it appears in the classrooms in this study. This analysis shows that the teachers in the study have made or retained significant changes to the event that affect the identity positions offered to children. I consider the possible origins of the event in Section \*\*

The Mat is an important site in the classrooms featured in the study as it demarcates the main teaching arena. Small groups or the whole class move into or out of this space all day to be taught, to tell news, to be read to, to be isolated for misbehaviour or to eat. Mrs Mitchell uses a smaller mat at the back of the classroom for reading groups only, while Mrs Samuels moves between the larger mat at the front and a smaller area at the back of the classroom. In the Grade One classrooms in my study, therefore, there is constant movement from whole class to smaller groups and back again. This is simultaneously a movement between the physical spaces of the classroom, and from activity to activity. For example, the whole class may sit together on the Mat to listen to a story, then go to their desks to illustrate what they have heard, while one group works with the teacher on maths problems on the Mat and a single child leaves the room with a remedial teacher. In every case the activity requires physical and group changes and physical re-positioning in terms of the activities of the event.

Finally, school organization and the funding of resources support the idea that reading in general and Reading on the Mat in particular are the defining activities in these classrooms. Firstly there are the reading texts: commercial graded reading series (at least two sets in each class) and containers with laminated cards of words and letters for each child. Other materials keep the class occupied and enable the teacher to focus on the reading group for extended periods. Children work in *Busy Books*, cut up and colour in worksheets; there are puzzles, word games, a reading corner or *book box* with rotated library books, word and number games in plentiful supply. Children are read to daily from a *Big Book*, a library book or a *chapter book*. Remedial teachers, whose salaries are paid from school fees, withdraw children for additional help with reading. Finally, the importance of reading in the classrooms is emphasized by the teachers' exclusive focus once the reading group is under way. The *don't interrupt* rule is strictly enforced and even adult visitors may be ignored while a child spells out a word. The teachers themselves acknowledge this, though not all would have agreed with Mrs Dean's assertion that "Everything I teach is reading. I teach reading all day" (Interview, August 2010).

To conclude, the dynamics and activities of groups on the Mat therefore provide formative experiences of what it means to be a reader. That is, the identity positions that are offered by the teacher in relation to written texts are offered most consistently and visibly in these groups.

### **3.6 Reading on the Mat as a source of identity positioning**

In addition to what has already been observed about the importance of Reading on the Mat as a literacy event, two features of Reading on the Mat suggest it as an appropriate event for investigating identity positioning.

The first feature is that Reading on the Mat takes place in ability groups. Section 2.5.5 details the concerns of theorists in this regard. Teachers in my study use strategies to minimize children's awareness of group ranking, which suggests that this is a sensitive issue. For example, in January 2010 Mrs Samuels experimented by grouping the children randomly because she didn't want to "label them" (Discussion and observation notes, April 2010). After June she found that some were progressing too slowly to benefit from her instruction and created ability groups. In another example, Mrs Samuels and Mrs Mitchell used books from a different reading series to disguise from the weakest readers that they were repeating earlier levels (Observation and Interviews). In a third example, Mrs Dean listened to the top group (one child, Angie) and the bottom group (one child, Geri) together because she didn't want to isolate Geri (Observation notes, Nov. 2010). Children however are inevitably aware that groups are ranked. Membership of a strong or weak group may be one of the most significant identity positions assigned by the teachers in my study. The efforts they make to construct a positive identity for weak groups are presented in Chapter Seven.

A second feature is that Reading on the Mat has clear boundaries and follows predictable patterns in each classroom. The patterns and norms of behaviour create a "discourse of reading", which implies the significance of activities on the Mat and suggests roles for the participants. This gives the researcher access to the identity positioning features of the formation.

Additional identity positioning work is done through the texts of commercial graded readers. All teachers identified the older Reading 360 series (Ginn, 1978) as the main text,

although they also use other series. The positions offered to children through these texts are examined in Chapter Seven, and are essentially identities based on Northern hemisphere middle class values and attitudes. As well as using the graded readers, teachers make word lists, alphabet cards and word cards which they employ in various ways on the Mat. A phonics text book is used in two of the classrooms. These are described in Chapter Five.

The cards, used in the first phase of Reading on the Mat, and the books used in the second phase both strengthen the voice of the teacher, but in different ways. During phase one the teacher works with the cards in ways she has developed herself, with vocabulary or sentences she has designed. In this phase the children often have more agency and choice. For example, they are asked to create their own words and sentences. This means that the interactions around cards may carry indications of position more powerfully. In phase two, the books strengthen the middle class values and attitudes of the teachers who read the texts uncritically with the children. When the books are being read, the teacher usually focuses on pronunciation, fluency and other technical aspects of reading aloud.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

As part of his contribution to the ethnography of communication, Hymes's work on Speech Events provides a coherent theoretical framework within which to examine exchanges in linguistic ethnographic research. He conceptualized these in terms of a series of levels. The largest unit for study is the *Speech Community*, the social group, and the organization of all the semiotic means within it. In the present study the speech community is the classroom. Within such a community many contexts, for example ceremonies, are associated with speech, and Hymes calls these *Speech Situations*. The smallest units are the *Speech Event* and *Speech Act*, of which Hymes observes: "it is of speech acts and speech events that one writes formal rules for their occurrence or characteristics" (1974, p. 52). An event may comprise many speech acts, as is the case with Reading on the Mat, or only one. My research operates at the level of the speech event, and the analysis seeks to understand the rules and expectations that affect identity positioning for the children participating in these events. Chapter Five, which examines Act Sequences, presents the order of speech acts making up a session on the Mat, but does

not analyze each act separately. In my research the event therefore is the unit of analysis.

Hymes's most significant contribution to work on speech events is a set of categories used to analyze speech events cross-culturally. He arranged these into a heuristic: the mnemonic, S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. Since its introduction in 1974 the mnemonic has been widely used in linguistic ethnography to conduct an initial investigation of a speech event. Duranti explains the import of the heuristic as "[t]he idea that to study human behaviour, including speech, means to engage in the detailed and systematic study of the semiotic and material resources that go into the constitution of usually multi-party joint activities" (1985, p. 328). The first cycle of analysis in my research is according to the categories of the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic, which allows a comprehensive initial analysis. The thesis has been organized according to the material emerging from an investigation of each category. Briefly, Hymes analyzed a speech event in terms of:

1. *Setting*, the observable circumstances as well as *Scene*, the psychological or cultural importance of the event
2. *Participants*, all who are present in the event
3. *Ends*, the individual goals and / or group outcomes
4. *Act sequences*, the expected order of speech acts in the event
5. *Key*, the tone, manner or mood of the event
6. *Instrumentalities*, the range of instruments used by participants to communicate: modes, media and channels
7. *Norms*, the rules and expectations participants have of the event
8. *Genre*, the type of speech act that is being created.

Chapter Four provides a more detailed explanation of the categories and applies them to Reading on the Mat. This initial analysis shows that some categories such as *Genre* can be captured briefly without contradictions. Others, for example *Norms*, show variation and contradiction in the practices of the three teachers, as well as within the practice of the same teacher from day to day. This is the thick data mentioned in Section 3.3, that alerts ethnographers to social significance and signals a potential area of investigation. In my study, each category of thickened data is subjected to a second cycle of analysis using additional, and more critical, analytic tools and theoretical perspectives. Therefore, Act Sequences is the focus of Chapter Five, Norms the focus of Chapter Six and Instrumentalities the focus of Chapter Seven. Comparisons with recommendations in the

literature and the curriculum are offered, as well as interpretations based on interviews and analysis of the transcriptions. The identity positions offered to children by these different facets of Reading on the Mat are presented together with the analysis.

The process of analysis was inductive. Each chapter reports findings emerging from at least three cycles of analysis, based on viewing and interrogating the video or the audio recordings (see lists in Appendices 4 - 9). Themes and categories emerged from these cycles and the salience of the themes were confirmed from other data sources: interviews, email questions to teachers, texts used in the classrooms, field notes and notes of discussions with the teachers and their colleagues. Recommendations in the literature on Guided Reading as well as reading literacy theory supplied additional insights.

The process therefore was as follows: After analysing the whole corpus of video data according to Hymes's categories, each session was re-examined to establish the order in which teachers presented activities on the Mat, and this supplies the Act Sequences, reported on in Chapter Five. Appendix 5 presents the raw analysis of the sequences. Following this, the whole body of the video data was re-examined for evidence of Norms. Indicators for normative work come from research in that field (Mehan, 1979) and are presented in more detail at the beginning of Chapter Six. As with the cycle of Act Sequences, this data generated its own categories: teachers' Norms for establishing, performing or ending the event. The table of this analysis appears as Appendix 6. A re-analysis of these elements, also captured in the table, suggested interpretations of the norms, and how these contribute to positioning and identity work in the event: who children are allowed to be, through what they are allowed to do.

Finally, in order to analyse Instrumentalities, transcripts were made of six sessions for each teacher: two at the beginning of the year, two mid-year and two at the end of the year. Audio recordings proved to be clearer than the video recordings and were therefore used in preference. The sessions were chosen as representative in length and style: by this time I was familiar with the body of data from investigating Act Sequences and Norms. In each pair of transcriptions, one lesson is with the strongest and one with the weakest group of readers in that class. A sample transcription is included as Appendix 7. The Antconc programme was used to count the frequency of occurrence over 130 pages of transcriptions as the groundwork for an analysis of discourse, and the results are included as Appendix 8. The categories used to analyze the verbal exchanges are selected from

studies in similar environments on identity work in both texts and oral exchanges. The analysis of processes and transitivity patterns proved particularly revealing, for example, and teachers' naming and use of pronouns, modality, and adverbs add subtlety. The choice of categories is eclectic and driven by the focus on identity. As part of a focus on instrumentalities, McKinney's (2005) categories were used to investigate the identity positioning work offered by the graded readers. The work of McDermott, Gospodinov and Aron (1978) on body language during reading lessons provided a basis for the analysis of teachers' gestures and postures. For this analysis the video recorded data was again reviewed, with the sound turned off, and this once again generated its own categories.

Each of Chapters Four to Seven includes a more detailed description of analytic tools and the categories which resulted from that analysis, and the thesis progresses from description to a more critical investigation. These additional tools of analysis strengthen the validity of observations. Erikson, writing of analyzing video data, suggests working from the event as a whole to increasingly small constituent elements (1982, p. 218). This is the structure of the analysis reported on in my thesis, with Chapter Four giving an overview of Hymes's mnemonic as applied to Reading on the Mat, and Chapter Seven representing the most detailed and most critical level of analysis.

In conclusion, Hymes provides an established theoretical basis for examining the diversity of human communication and also allows for systematic analysis of its different aspects. He offers terminology to describe different levels ('speech community', 'situation', 'event' and 'act') and a method for conducting an ethnographic investigation of communication (the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic) which can be applied to an event such as Reading on the Mat. As Chapter Two explains, identity positioning is used as an additional perspective to add detail and shading to the ethnographer's broad question, "What is going on here?" It allows a focus on the activities that one participant in this speech event – the teacher – is promoting or disallowing with children as they learn to read. The interest of this study is partly in what it reveals of the practices of teachers as they use the formation and pedagogies, both recommended and of their own devising. In addition, as I mentioned earlier, interpretations and observations are made on pedagogy in an effort accurately to describe the literacy practice.

The third of the three sets of tensions underlying this study, and introduced in Section 1.6, arises from the combination of an ethnographic approach with additional analytic

categories more often used in critical and interpretive studies. Hymes's categories provide a grid which allows the researcher to examine the event in detail, from eight perspectives. This first phase of the analysis using the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic provides an answer to the first research question and allows the researcher to achieve the first goal – a micro-level *description* – and to lay a foundation for further investigation. Aspects of the first phase of the analysis which present conflicting or complex answers are subjected to a second phase of investigation which is more critical than descriptive, and which offers an interpretation of the activities on the Mat in terms of the identity positioning work done there. Each of the three sections subjected to this second phase employs additional tools for analysis or interpretation. Some interpretation is done using the literature on reading pedagogies. Some of the analysis uses discourse analysis techniques for transcribed oral and written text. The analysis of body language uses categories developed for use in a Grade Three classroom by McDermott et al. (1978). Some researchers experience a disabling disjunction in using approaches grounded in different epistemological fields. But in the present study I believe that this combination provides detail and reinforces interpretative validity by embracing a variety of perspectives. However, the movement between description and interpretation must be acknowledged as one of the tensions underlying this study.

### **3.8 Validity of the data and analysis**

Potential problems with validity in this research are responded to in a number of ways at the different stages of data collection and data analysis. In my study, although the primary data is the video and audio recordings of sessions on the Mat, data was collected from videos of whole class interaction, from interviews and questionnaires, from informal discussions and comments, from classroom documents and artefacts and this enabled me to check impressions or theories and triangulate the data. In addition, data collection visits were spaced about three months apart to confirm impressions or trends. I made brief non-observation visits to the classrooms between the formal visits to maintain my relationship with teachers and to confirm impressions emerging from early data analysis.

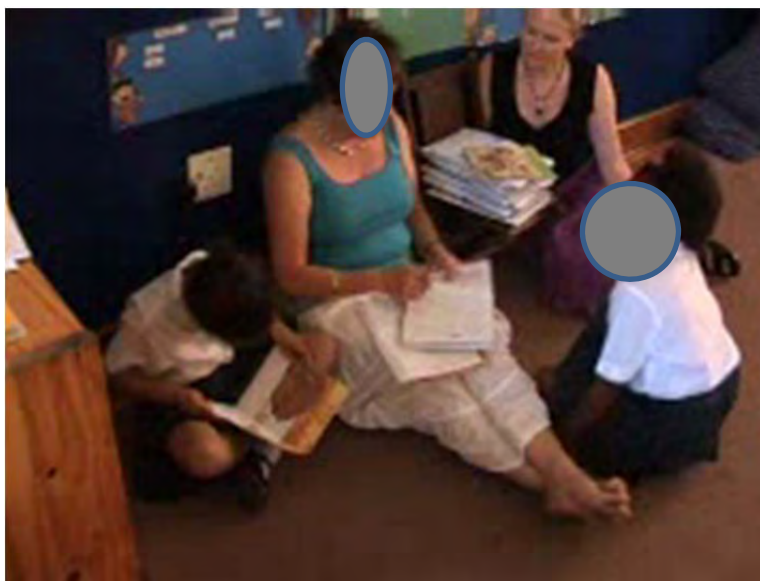


Figure 5: The researcher with Mrs Dean and the last of a reading group

While I was on site I spoke informally to the teachers in the study, to principals and other staff members and this data source which was captured in daily observation notes. Knowing my interest in reading, they shared their views spontaneously and generously. This enabled me to build up the descriptions of the schools and teachers set out in Section 3.4, above.

A principle of micro-ethnography is that the researcher seeks to ascertain the perceptions of insiders, but this was difficult in practice. Teachers, happy to be filmed while teaching, were reluctant to be interviewed or to complete a questionnaire. Nor, as a source, did they add additional insights, as I have mentioned, because their explanations focused on pedagogy. Many informal discussions captured in the observation notes had the same emphasis. Finally, although the children quickly became accustomed to the presence of the researcher and appeared oblivious of the camera, this was not the case with the teachers, the foci of the investigation. There is a performance element, or self-consciousness, suggested by teachers' glances at the camera, which never fully disappears. In this regard, however, I argue with Kress et al. that

the presence of two researchers and the video equipment made the video-text of the classroom inevitably different from that which the classroom would have been if we had not been there, but, we argue, not so contaminated by the research process as to make the video data invalid. (2001, p. 32)



It is possible also to argue that in performance a teacher may exaggerate her beliefs on best practice and that self-consciousness might thereby make identity positioning work more visible to the researcher.

In the analysis, validity challenges were answered by checking for alternative interpretations by re-analysis, and by using different analytic tools (see Section 3.7). I consciously distanced myself from subjects and events by following initial analysis with a period of reflection before returning to the material for a further round. I am not a primary school teacher and have no investment in a particular method or practice from my own teaching experience. Although categories are derived from the work of McKinney (2005), Hymes (1974), Fairclough (1989) and others, the material generated its own categories. This principle of ethnography strengthens the validity of the interpretation. The research reported in this thesis has data-generated categories at its core.

### **3.9 Changes to the research design: becoming a participant observer**

Unexpected features of Grade One classrooms prompted me to take up the position of *participant observer* rather than observer, as I had initially intended. This section provides reasons for this decision. Adler and Adler claim that “influencing settings is a relative, rather than an absolute, concept in field research; it is an inevitable outgrowth of researchers interacting with setting members. Ultimately, researchers can only weigh **the extent** and **kinds of** influences they will permit themselves to exert” (Their emphasis. 1987, pp. 31–32). Wollcott’s (1995) position is more extreme, that the effect of the observer wears off over time, and can therefore be discounted. In practice, I was confronted with two issues: first, the extent to which it is possible or desirable to be a non-participant observer, and secondly, the extent to which observer neutrality is appropriate when subjects are young children. In both of these aspects I was guided by four features of the research sites:

1. As I noted in Section 3.7, above, the children moved hourly between areas designated for different activities and in the process they rearranged themselves, or were rearranged, into many different social groups. This created a fluid social world in which children could approach me and I could move around as groups changed.

2. The classrooms are visited daily by other adults: parents of children, colleagues, student teachers, therapists, cleaning and ground staff and relatives of the teachers. Some interact with the children as if they were teachers, for example, Mrs Mitchell's daughter, a Foundation Phase teacher at another school, explained a worksheet while her mother looked for materials. I was therefore one of many adults and less intrusive as a result.
3. I was responding to the invitations of teachers and children. Teachers asked me to participate in teaching and classroom management: for example, Mrs Dean insisted that I teach a reading group of my own every day I was on site. Teachers accepted help with teaching, classroom management and tasks like making coffee. In the role of assistant teacher I read stories and repeated teacher instructions. I entertained waiting children with *brain gym* exercises, rhythmic clapping, recitation and singing. I accompanied children to other venues. I handed out and collected books and materials, photocopied worksheets, put books away and helped tidy the classroom. The children also invited me into the roles of teacher or teacher assistant, care-giver and class member. I was asked for explanations or reassurance with completing tasks. I was asked for permission to go to the toilet or the reading corner, to check work and to find or supply paper, pencils and work cards. In the role of care-giver I tied shoelaces, arranged hair, sharpened pencils and resolved disputes. Many children approached me with social overtures, usually initiated with a neutral statement such as "My father has a computer like that ..." (Oakhill) or "My mother is pregnant ..." (Greenbanks). I was frequently asked what I was writing and why, and about the audio recorder. At Greenbanks girls asked to "do" my hair.
4. Finally, the technology used in the research, a stationary video camera and an audio recorder on the Mat, allowed me to move around, as neither needed attention once they were running. This had two implications: I could set up the camera at the beginning of the day in a single position where it became a familiar feature. That it was largely ignored is demonstrated by footage of the backs of children. As I mentioned in Section 3.3, only two children drew the video camera in drawings of "the researcher, the teacher, the classroom and yourself," suggesting that for the children it had become invisible. Secondly, because I could move away from the

technology this lessened its intrusive impact. I usually sat somewhere else when I made observation notes and the impression that I was focusing elsewhere seemed to reassure participants.

The decision to take the stance of participant observer had two consequences for the study: by participating in the ways I describe above I gained access to insider knowledge and perceptions through informal discussions, and at the same time I reduced the imposition of my presence, especially for the children, by claiming a position as community member. This challenges the notion that increased participation contaminates the research and affects the validity of the data (Section 3.2).

There are four possible reasons for this contradictory effect. First, children in Grade One are less aware of the usual practices in schools regarding visitors and therefore accept a researcher as one of many legitimate adults in their classroom (see Section 3.9). Dixon (2007) cites hook's (1989) view that younger children are less conscious of an observer than older children and the present study confirms this. A second possible reason is that children's interactions suggest that for them I shared the attributes of a teacher. Dixon (2007) confirms Robson's perception that children in primary schools view the participant observer as "something akin to a teacher" (1993, p. 197). By responding to questions on tasks I unintentionally confirmed this perception. Thirdly, the children offered opportunities to establish an authentic relationship and seemed confident that I would interact appropriately. By responding to children's social overtures I had the opportunity to be accepted as a group member. Finally, responding to individuals gave me an opportunity to explain the research and the technology to individuals (see Figure 6 below). Children seemed less aware of me after receiving explanations and handling the technology. Mrs Mitchell discouraged children from asking questions and the distracting effect of my presence seemed to persist in her classroom.



Figure 6: The researcher shows children what she is writing at Oakhill in November

### **3.10 Changes to the observation schedule in Mrs Mitchell's classroom**

The second change in the research design was to the schedule in Mrs Mitchell's classroom at Riverside. Mrs Mitchell was not in the pilot study and I had underestimated how stressful the video recording would be for her. In addition, four of twenty-six (later twenty-seven) children in her class had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and another twelve were being supported for perceptual or emotional problems. The high proportion of children who needed special attention made the presence of a researcher problematic for her. After the first visit in April she asked to withdraw from the study but as a compromise agreed that in the last two observation sessions I would be present only for the first half of the day (7h30–10h00), which was when she focused on reading literacy, and not on Friday when she did assessment. As I had already spent a whole week observing continuously in her classroom this curtailment did not affect the data collection in a significant way. The same number of sessions on the Mat was recorded in all the classrooms. I continued to spend the whole day in Mrs Dean's and Mrs Samuel's classrooms, where reading sessions are interspersed with other activities throughout the day.

### **3.11 Ethical issues of participation**

A researcher who enters the social world of others may be offered relationships by the participants, as was the case in my study. This poses the ethical question of how to negotiate those relationships and the decisions I made in this regard are discussed in Section 3.9. The position I took seemed in line with ethical guidelines which emphasize the importance of nurturing relationships with participants (Prozesky, 2010). Sieber suggests three ethical principles for researchers which apply to becoming a participant observer:

1. Beneficence or “doing good”: maximizing beneficial outcomes while avoiding unnecessary harm
2. Respect: courtesy and respect for individuals as persons
3. Justice: treating people fairly. (1992, p. 18)

From experiences during the present study I argue that greater involvement by the researcher is beneficial to and respectful of both the teachers and the children. For the teacher, increased involvement allowed me to help a busy professional and this was rewarding on a human level. An assistant role for the researcher acknowledges the teacher’s rights in her classroom and her professional standing. For the children, increased involvement seemed beneficial because it meant a faster turn-around time between problem and answer. Involvement seems respectful of the children because to ignore their many overtures would appear discourteous. This echoes Dixon’s experience, of which she observes: “Being cold to them, or not answering their questions as to why I was there, did not seem ethical, particularly as they were the focus of this research” (2007, p. 113).

Involvement also gives children the opportunity to ask about note taking and recording and allows the researcher to explain intentions and methods to them individually. Figure 6 shows children asking what the researcher is writing and why. Guidelines for participant observation require that researchers should identify themselves and explain their purpose to participants individually (University of Toronto Guidelines, retrieved July 2010, p. 4).

Despite these considerations, ethical concerns regarding the researcher’s relationship with and access to children become more acute when they are very young (six to seven years old). Some issues of access were not resolved and consequently affected the data collection and I acknowledge these as a limitation to this study. Although I was eager to

present my research proposal to any relevant group (see letter in Addendum 1a) and mentioned the parents specifically in interviews with the principals of the three schools, they responded to two separate verbal requests by stating that it was “unnecessary” for me to seek permission from parents. I accepted the principals’ ruling for two reasons. Firstly, the focus of my research was on the teachers who had given their full consent, rather than the children. As adults, the teachers had the confidence to negotiate parameters of the data collection, and this they did. Secondly, at the time of my study ethical guidelines at Rhodes were under review and I based ethical decisions therefore on guidelines drawn from other institutions, such as those from the University of Toronto (2010) referred to above, on the advice and experiences of researchers already in the field and recommendations from a symposium on ethics in research (Rhodes, March 2010). Nevertheless, the decision I took regarding formal permission from parents placed the teachers rather than the parents in the position of gatekeepers, and as a consequence my access to institutional documents such as tests was uneven. Cross-classroom comparisons of, for example, reading scores, became impossible.

In other ways I believe the present study poses no ethical problems. Schools, teachers and learners have been given pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. Consent was obtained through letters to principals and interviews with them (Appendices 1a and 1b), and verbally from the teachers and the school principal. Permission to use images for this thesis was given verbally. I request the use of video material separately for any conference presentations from each teacher. Mrs Mitchell asked that videos and images of her classroom should be for the thesis alone and I have respected that request. As an added precaution I have masked the faces of participants, including the teachers, who are looking directly at the camera and are therefore recognizable. During observation visits, access was negotiated with teachers on a daily basis and teachers were free to exclude the researcher from any activity. This they occasionally did: see Mrs Mitchell in Section 3.10.

### **3.12 Concluding comment**

The picture of literacy practices that emerges from this study is one of multiple identity positions being offered to young readers through different facets of the literacy learning event, Reading on the Mat. A challenge to reporting this research stems from the need to

capture complexity and difference without presenting an unduly fragmented piece, and to capture similarities without essentializing and generalizing on the practice of three very different teachers. The three chapters which follow present the analysis and supporting data as well as additional instruments used in the investigation.

## **Chapter Four: Applying the categories of Hymes's S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Reading on the Mat as a speech event
- 4.3 Discussion of the identity positioning supplied so far
- 4.4 Chapter summary

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an analysis of the whole corpus of the Reading on the Mat video and audio recordings, according to the categories of Hymes S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic. It thus provides a detailed picture of the event as it appears in the three classrooms of the study. Three of the categories display richer data than the others, with contrasts and variations among teachers' practices. These are the focus of additional investigation reported in subsequent chapters. While there is some repetition involved in presenting the material in this way, it also reflects a progression towards more detailed analysis. Themes emerging from these cycles of analysis either confirm each other and thereby suggest the validity of the findings, or add other facets to the emerging understanding of identity positioning in Reading on the Mat.

As well as offering an analysis of Reading on the Mat this chapter compares it to Guided Reading. Guided Reading is a widely recognized approach with similarities to Reading on the Mat; it is one of the teaching approaches recommended in the CAPS curriculum (South Africa, 2010). Guided Reading therefore presents many of the parameters within which teachers make their choices in Reading on the Mat. A comparison between what is recommended in the literature and local variations also shows the extent to which individual teachers have made the formation their own, or have inherited the practice from others, and suggests the direction in which changes have been made to accommodate local



conditions.<sup>3</sup> These accommodations indicate that Reading on the Mat represents a situationally specific practice with emergent features.

## **4.2 Reading on the Mat as a Speech Event**

When one applies the heuristic of Hymes's S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic to Reading on the Mat, it is clear that Mrs Dean, Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels are enacting the same event, although they give it individual variation. Hymes acknowledges that applying his model may produce redundancies, as happens below with the categories of Genre and Goal. He also suggests that the analysis will reveal which category provides the richest description of the event, and both of these observations are valid for my analysis of Reading on the Mat. The categories in the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic introduced in Section 3.7 are examined in more detail in this chapter.

### **4.2.1 Setting and Scene**

Hymes (1974, p. 55) identified setting as the time and place of a speech event and this category includes all the concrete, physical circumstances that can be directly observed. Scene, on the other hand, is the "psychological setting" or "cultural definition" of the social occasion, including characteristics such as formality or seriousness. Within a particular setting, participants are free to change the scene, for example, to adjust the level of formality through the activity in which they are involved (Wardhaugh, 2010, p. 259). Table 3 below compares the requirements of Guided Reading and the practice of the three teachers in terms of Hymes' category of Setting and Scene.

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<sup>3</sup> My initial interpretation of Reading on the Mat, that it derived from Group Guided Reading, now seems erroneous. It is more likely that the teachers' practices developed separately in former Model C schools, perhaps based on the thinking behind Guided Reading, but including many already established features. Teachers in the study equate their practice with Guided Reading and seem not to see the different emphasis they place on elements of the interaction. See Chapter Five.

<i>Hymes' category</i>	<i>Guided Reading</i>	<b>Mrs Dean Greenbanks</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell Riverside</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels Oakhill</b>
<b>Setting or locale</b> <i>Information about where it occurred (place, time)</i>	<i>Daily on a cycle: each group reads at least three times a week throughout the day, all year.</i>  <i>In a specially designated area, either round a table, or "the teacher can sit with the children in a semicircle on the floor or rug, or sit on a chair with the children in a semicircle of small chairs or stools or on the floor" (Fountas &amp; Pinnell, 1996, p 43).</i>	Daily throughout the day, all year.  Front of the class. Children and Mrs Dean seated on mat with her back to the board.  Reading takes precedence over other activities, especially in the first half of the year.	Daily with each group before the 10:30 break, all year.  Back of the class. Children seated on mat, Mrs Mitchell on chair or mat. Mrs Mitchell has her back to the bookcase.	Semi-daily throughout the day, all year. May be replaced by poetry reading or Smook phonics in whole class unison.  Front of the class. Children seated on mat, Mrs Samuels on a low stool. Mrs Samuels has "my place" (102) to the left nearest the board. Also takes groups into the corridor while a student teacher takes the rest of the class.  Late in the year Mrs Samuels promotes silent individual reading and "buddy reading."
<b>Scene or situation</b> <i>Generic information about the social occasion.</i>	<i>Small group teaching of reading strategies only. Goal is to promote confidence and enjoyment.</i>	Small group teaching of phonics, literacy and numeracy. Enjoyment through game elements.	Small group teaching of phonics and reading. Serious and work oriented.	Small group teaching of phonics and reading. Casual, relaxed.

**Table 3: Setting. Guided Reading and a comparison of the teachers' practice.**

The setting in the three classes is uniform: children on a mat, often at the front of the classroom, and the teacher seated with them on the mat or a low chair from which she can view the room.



Figure 7: Reading on the Mat – the Setting. Mrs Samuels plays the *Fish Game*<sup>4</sup> with a mixed ability group early in the year

The identity suggested by the physical setting is an institutional one in which the children are physically aligned in the formation of an international and local pedagogy. The setting is maintained by the school which provides the Mat as well as the wide range of textual resources that make this kind of group work possible, and by the teachers who buy, make or bring additional texts.

At the same time the formation is one which allows close interaction among children, teacher and texts. Jordan and Henderson suggest that

[p]hysical arrangements, the spatial layout of a setting, the arrangement of furniture, the open spaces, walkways, coffee niches, doors to the outside, and so on, have an important influence on structuring interaction. Of particular interest to Interaction Analysis is how these physical set-ups affect possible participation structures, that is to say, how they encourage or hinder certain kinds of interaction between people in the scene. (1995, p. 43)

The “scene” or psychological setting is uniformly serious with a high work focus. Although the groups are reminiscent of game circles, the activity of the group is not taken lightly. Teachers are aware that quick success for emergent readers is vital in Grade One (Interviews and informal discussion, 2010), and that the Matthew Effect<sup>5</sup> (Chall, 1991; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001) must not be allowed to enter its negative cycle. Turn-

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<sup>4</sup> In this game each child “fishes” for a word on the back of a fish-shaped card, and says it.

<sup>5</sup> In the Matthew effect, strong readers become increasingly motivated and therefore increasingly proficient, while weak readers become increasingly demotivated and therefore fall further and further behind.

taking in the groups is methodical and all children have equal time and opportunity to interact with the text. Within the seriousness and focus of the event, however, individual teachers' personalities emerge. Mrs Mitchell's intensity and Mrs Dean's playfulness continue to find expression in the interactions in the small group. These observations relate also to the Key or mood of the event and will be expanded on in that category in due course.

The general identity position provided by the setting and scene is one that values the activity on the Mat and, by extension, the children performing it. Those on the Mat are privileged, as, daily for at least twenty minutes, they receive individual attention and reading tasks at their own pace, while those off the Mat are busy with general class work. The teacher ignores or reprimands bids from children outside the group with comments like: "Then you shouldn't be here during the reading group, boys" (Mrs Mitchell, C101). At the same time a child who is uncomfortable about being close to the teacher, who is not secure in the group to which he or she has been assigned, or who interprets the seriousness of the teacher as severity would be positioned less favourably by the setting and scene. Only one child did not attend Grade R, and so most had already been inducted into the dynamics of a teacher-lead circle.

#### **4.2.2 Participants**

This category includes all those present, whether they are directly addressed as receivers of a message or are part of a less active audience who hear but do not interact. Participants may change roles in the interaction. Bloome et al. (2005), in their analysis of classroom literacy events, point out that every event has a number of participants whose closeness to the activities varies, and in Reading on the Mat there are three categories of participants. The primary participants are the teacher and the children, and analysis in my research focuses on their interaction.

At a secondary level, other children and adult visitors witness the event. Children frequently approach the teacher for help with worksheets and sit or stand on the perimeter of the group. They watch Reading on the Mat being modeled by the teacher and classmates and they hear texts they have encountered or will encounter being read aloud by others. Video footage shows these children reading over the shoulders of group

members, or following the words laid out on the mat. See Figure 32, for example. Groups may ask to do the activities they have just watched classmates perform, as they did, for example of Mrs Samuels's fish game shown in Figure 7 (Observation notes, April 2010). In my study this second group of participants, which is silent, is not considered for analysis. However, their presence has identity positioning implications which are visible in Mrs Dean's practice. Her groups daily include outside observers: children from other classes and visiting adults who sit outside the reading circle and become a temporary audience for her teaching and the children's reading. Some older children follow the reading by mouthing or following the words. These participants, particularly the adult ones, communicate respect, even reverence, for the process of reading, by kneeling and waiting attentively, and Mrs Dean takes the opportunity to praise readers to visiting adults. The clear message to the whole community is that Reading on the Mat is an important event, and that the children may claim their reading-based identity beyond the classroom, especially if it is the positive identity of a good reader. By contrast there is no such identity position offered by Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels, who interrupt the reading for visiting children and adults.

A third group of participants is not physically present, but enter the exchanges through texts used in the reading groups and referred to by teachers: writers, illustrators and publishers, curriculum developers, theorists and academics. Bloome et al. follow the work of Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) in arguing that the "context(s) of production is / are always part of the context of use; thus, the book publishers, school board members, and so on, are materially present in the event if not bodily" (2005, p. 186). How they are present depends on how they are mediated by the teacher, and in this study analysis shows that teachers do not problematize the material presented in textual form, for example, the situations shown in the graded commercial readers introduced in Section 3.4. Observations on these third-level participants appear in the analysis and interpretation in Chapter Five, which presents the Act Sequences of Reading on the Mat, and Chapter Seven, which reports on an analysis of the graded readers.

As I mention above, the primary participants on the Mat are the teacher and a group of children selected for ability. In this section I first discuss the question of how the group is formed, that is, how children become group members, then describe the central role of the teacher. After that I briefly consider other participants. Table 4 below compares the

recommendations of Guided Reading to the practice of the teachers with regards to participation.

<i>Hymes' category</i>	<i>Guided Reading</i>	<b>Mrs Dean Greenbanks</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell Riverside</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels Oakhill</b>
<b>Participants</b> <i>Who was there: (addressor/ addressee, performer/ audience, questioner/ answerer)</i>	<p><i>The teacher with a group of between 5 and 8 children, selected either for achievement or ability.</i></p> <p><i>The group changes membership continually as the teacher groups them for activities practicing different skills.</i></p> <p><i>Both the teacher and the children initiate and maintain the central activity which is discussing the book. Children read the whole text to the teacher.</i></p>	<p>Five ability groups of varied sizes. Top and bottom = a single child, middle groups have between 5 and 7 children.</p> <p>After June the weakest child forms a group of her own in order not to keep the others back (Interview Nov 2010)</p> <p>Mrs Dean proceeds randomly with those who are "ready." Children depend on her direction for the sequences of a session which may follow many patterns. When she leaves the circle they stop the activity. Each child reads the whole text silently then reads a "favourite" page to the teacher.</p> <p>Children and visiting adults view the reading and wait for a phase to finish.</p>	<p>Five ability groups of up to 7 children. Sometimes joins two bottom groups together on larger carpet.</p> <p>The membership of the groups is stable throughout the year.</p> <p>Mrs Mitchell initiates activities by naming a child on her left or right to start and goes round the circle. Children do not initiate. They read a fragment of text: words, a sentence or a page as individuals or in unison. Children who need guidance may approach but return at once to their desks. If an adult enters the room Mrs Mitchell stops reading and attends to the visitor.</p>	<p>Up to June three mixed ability groups of about 8 children. After June four ability groups: Weakest =3; strongest = 7.</p> <p>After June the membership is stable.</p> <p>Mrs Samuels initiates activities by naming a child to her left or right to start and goes round the circle. Children bid to begin. Children will continue reading while she is out of the circle. They read a fragment of text: words, a sentence or a page as individuals and in unison.</p> <p>Children who want guidance may interrupt briefly but return at once to their desks. There is no adult audience.</p>

**Table 4: Participants. Guided Reading and comparison of teachers' practice.**

#### **4.2.2.1 Choosing participants for the groups**

At Riverside and Oakhill membership in a group is fixed during the year, rather than continually shifting in the way recommended for Guided Reading. In Mrs Dean's classroom at Greenbanks the weakest child dropped into a single group of her own, and in

Mrs Mitchell's classroom a child new to the school was placed in the weakest group. Mrs Samuels started the year experimentally with three large undifferentiated groups, which changed into ability groups after June. Once the groups are formed, however, they remain unchanged and therefore provide a strong, permanent identity for the children in them. These issues are presented in Section 2.5.6. The names for the groups (Toasts, Blue Lions, Red group ...) are intended to disguise the fact that teachers rank reading ability, but there is little doubt that the children are aware of which group contains stronger or weaker readers, as they are using the same reading series with clearly marked levels. Participants are selected by teachers according to an assessment of their reading ability, in line with curriculum recommendations and school practice. This provides an institutional identity for the children as strong or as weak readers.

CAPS provides five guidelines for selecting an ability group. Children should be in the same group if:

1. They all read the text with ease and 90–95% fluency, although there will be challenges at either a decoding or comprehension level. They should all finish reading the same text within a minute of each other
2. They all read the text fluently and with appropriate expression
3. They are interested in the text
4. They do not need to finger-point while reading
5. They read silently (South Africa, 2010, p. 15)

Weaker readers would display the same behaviours with a simpler text.

The teacher's authority to select participants is a powerful tool of identity positioning in these classrooms, with potentially enhancing or damaging effects on children's self-esteem. However the alignment is not as simple as it appears. As mentioned, Mrs Samuels formed ability groups after June; in Mrs Mitchell's classroom the two top groups, that is seventeen of the twenty-five children, were reading at the same level for most of the year, with the result that there was less differentiation through grouping; in Mrs Dean's classroom the weakest child was her own group and received added attention.

Collins warns of the effects of rigid grouping on a child's future performance. He observes that

The ostensible justification of ability grouping is that it permits instruction to be tailored to student aptitude and that, being flexible, it can be adjusted to the given student population and to changes in that population. In practice it represents a very inflexible classifying procedure, permitting little movement out of groups, once ability has been assigned. (2006, p. 118)

Collins (2006) cites research into differential instruction in American public schools which exposes the result of ability grouping: strong readers receive both more and better reading instruction than weak readers. Fountas and Pinnell report findings indicating that

[c]hildren in low groups have fewer opportunities to read. Moreover they spend more time practising 'item' tasks like decoding individual words. Students in higher groups spend more time on critical thinking, focus more on meaning and read two to three times as many in-context words as children in low groups. For lower students the pace is slower and they are more likely to be off task. (1996, p. 97)

In the settings of that research, weak ability often equated with membership of minority groups or additional language speakers, so groups marginalized in the society were also marginalized in their access to dominant literacies. That was not the case in my study and the strongest reader in a class was as likely to be an additional language speaker of English (Pele) as was the lowest to be a home language speaker (Geri). Nevertheless the general warning is clear: ability grouping may reduce the access of the weakest readers to the skills they need. In an attempt to prevent weak readers from falling behind, Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels give them additional time during class and more individual attention. They use alternative sets of books for revision to give the children the impression that they are still moving forward.

#### **4.2.2.2 The role of the teacher on the Mat**

In Reading on the Mat the teacher has a dominant and formative role, unlike that of individual participants in a social episode, speech event or social literacy event. Aspects of the importance of the teacher in this context are used as a justification for the focus of my study in Chapter Two. In this section I recount some of the features and effects of that role, which derives from the multiple nature of the event: simultaneously a speech event, a literacy event and a teaching event. The teacher possesses institutional and intertextual knowledge of the event; she has the status and power.

The teacher attends simultaneously to the reading group and to the children in the classroom and moves from one arena to the other. Reading on the Mat contains multiple



strands of interaction, all constantly available but subject to selection by the teacher in response to a perceived need. No one strand is entertained to the exclusion of all others. For example, Mrs Dean interacts with both Vicky on the Mat and Tarryn at her desk: “Look. What is it? Vicky. Uh-uh Tarryn! Stop sharpening please...” (B33). The teachers’ skill in holding together this complex and multiple event cannot be underestimated. This means that the teacher is the key to what happens on the Mat and she weaves together, juggles or orchestrates the different goals of the event on different levels: pedagogic, social, and regulative.

Reading on the Mat contains little of the negotiation which may be present in speech events such as adult conversations, and is driven by the teacher’s simultaneous need to teach and to control. On the Mat the teacher makes all the choices which give the event its distinguishing features: she chooses the setting, identifies the scene, dictates the participants, chooses a goal and makes this clear or arranges exchanges to achieve it. She initiates sequences, sets the tone or mood, models or selects instrumentalities, reminds participants of norms and maintains the genre of the event. The distinctive nature of the event depends largely on her personal style. The teachers in the study were aware of this, with Mrs Dean likening Grade One to a pregnancy, as after nine months children are *born* as readers (Interview, Nov. 2010), and Mrs Mitchell comparing it to “taming wild horses” (Questionnaire, Nov. 2010). On the Mat, they frequently made rules and norms explicit, and this is an approved feature of Guided Reading. Fountas and Pinnell observe that “[e]very moment invested in teaching routines is time well spent, because it will save hours of instructional time later” (1996, p. 62).

As a literacy event, Reading on the Mat has a central role in transmitting a culturally dominant form of literacy. It demonstrates the values inherent in school reading and what it means to be literate in that environment. The teacher establishes routines for the literacy event, for example turn-taking, and may regulate the volume and speed children read at, direct them to handle texts in a particular way, or correct pronunciation and expression. She allows or disallows activities and thereby models a conception of what reading is.

As a teaching event, Reading on the Mat is structured to facilitate the teacher’s access to individuals. She uses the closeness to gain insight into the child’s reading strategies. The Teacher’s Handbook, “Teaching reading in the early grades,” stresses that “Group Guided Reading is a teacher directed activity. ... The teacher supports a small group of learners as

they talk, read and think their way through a text” (South Africa, 2008, p. 26). The closeness also helps the teacher assess children. Clay observes that reading happens through a “network of unobservable in-the-head strategies” (1991, p. 328). The teacher cannot observe the child’s mental strategies in order to confirm or correct them and instead must rely on behaviours such as self-correction, phonic attack, and phrasing to hypothesize the strategies that the child is using. *Fluency*, a combination of accuracy and speed, is their chief diagnostic instrument (Mrs Dean, Interview, August 2010).

In the classrooms in my research Reading on the Mat has a formal, almost ritual quality, and the more formalized an event is, the more it coerces speakers into accepting the status quo (Duranti, 1997). The formal, ritualistic quality, the repetition and regularity, not only serves to induct junior members into a practice and get them used to its forms and structures; it also suggests that teachers are establishing and maintaining a dominant literacy practice. Nevertheless, Reading on the Mat is a powerful instrument of skills transmission.

The prime place of the teacher in the event inevitably impacts on the identity positioning work done there and offers children a passive role. As participants they are continuously under direction and are monitored not only for reading but also for other behaviours, for example, the way they are seated, where they are looking or whether they are holding their books up. This very high level of control offers children an identity position more passive than their animated interactions suggest.

### **4.2.3 Ends: the Goals and Outcomes**

Ends, according to Hymes (1974, pp. 56–57) are the communicative purposes or goals of the event, which he divides into two sub-categories. First, the Outcomes are the conventionally recognized, expected outcomes of the speech community. Secondly, the Goals are the personal aims of individual participants and need not be the same for everyone in the group. Table 5 below compares Guided Reading and the practice of the three teachers as these relate to Ends.

<i>Hymes' category</i>	<i>Guided Reading</i>	<b>Mrs Dean Greenbanks</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell Riverside</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels Oakhill</b>
<b>Ends: Outcomes</b> <i>Purpose of the event. There may be multiple overlapping outcomes.</i>	<i>To teach; to learn reading literacy, especially with a view to teaching strategies and promoting independent reading. To assess individuals' progress.</i>	To teach; to learn reading.  To assess individuals' progress.	To teach; to learn reading literacy.  To assess individuals' progress.	To teach; to learn reading and numerical literacy. To assess individuals' progress.
<b>Ends: Goals</b> <i>Purpose of the participants</i>	<i>To teach the strategies needed for independent reading. To give an opportunity to children to have their strategies challenged, made more explicit and developed by individual tuition.</i>  <i>"The goal is for children to read independently and silently" (Fountas &amp; Pinnell 1996, p. 4).</i>	To teach phonics and reading through a blend of phonics and word recognition. Numeracy is taught in the same formations with similar dynamics.  Children's purpose is compliance and belonging to a group. They sit outside and read vicariously (304). They are curious about others' reading.	To teach phonics and reading through drill and repetition.  No record of numeracy taught in small groups.  Children's purpose is compliance and group membership. They don't show other reasons for joining the group.	To teach phonics and reading through a variety of experiences. Numeracy is taught in the same formations with similar dynamics.  Children's purpose is compliance and group membership. Their curiosity about reading is expressed when they experiment with texts outside Reading on the Mat.

**Table 5: Ends. Guided Reading and a comparison of teachers' practice.**

Fountas and Pinnell suggest six purposes for Guided Reading, which succeeds to the extent that it:

1. gives children the opportunity to develop as individual readers while participating in a socially supported activity
2. gives teachers the opportunity to observe individuals as they process new texts
3. gives individual readers the opportunity to develop reading strategies so that they can read increasingly difficult texts independently
4. gives children enjoyable, successful experiences in reading for meaning
5. develops the abilities needed for independent reading
6. helps children learn how to introduce texts to themselves. (1996, pp. 1–2)

The first five goals are manifest in the teachers' practice, but the sixth was not evident in the teaching I observed. Instead, phonics and word recognition through flash cards predominates. Mrs Mitchell gives most attention to drill and repetition, and to the performance aspects of reading such as volume, and only Mrs Dean has silent independent reading as the final phase of each session. The fact that teachers prioritize the goals of

Reading on the Mat differently has consequences for identity positioning. This is discussed in conjunction with the Act Sequences in Chapter Five.

In addition, all teachers prioritized the second goal above, to monitor and observe children reading. Fountas and Pinnell suggest that Guided Reading “involves ongoing observation and assessment that inform the teacher’s interaction with individuals in the group and help the teacher select appropriate texts” (1996, p. 2). Mrs Dean expresses assessment on the Mat as follows:

A child who struggles can still chug and read the wrong word. Whereas if you have the children in groups to read to you every day you know who is making good progress, who is struggling, what they’re struggling with. It’s far more thorough, diagnostic, precise and terribly accurate. (Mrs Dean, Interview, August 2010)

These insights tailor her teaching to the child’s needs: “[It] depends on what’s good for her on the day” (ibid.).

Participants’ individual goals are less easy to assess than group goals. The teacher’s goal is to teach and assess reading according to her own perceptions of the children’s needs and her interpretation of the literature. Children’s individual goals are more difficult to assess than teachers’ as they are compelled to be in the groups and to be involved in the reading tuition that happens there. Obedience and compliance play a powerful role. However, as I have mentioned in Section 4.2.2, in Mrs Dean’s classroom children wait at her side and participate vicariously in the reading activities. They are silent and attentive as they watch others read, and make admiring comments on the reading in higher groups than their own. Mrs Samuels’s children use her materials in games, mimicking interactions on the Mat (see Figures 12 and 13). This voluntary additional participation and exploration suggests that her children are motivated by interest and curiosity as well as compliance. Mrs Mitchell ensures that children off the Mat are fully occupied, with *busy work*<sup>6</sup> for those who finish early. Her children therefore cannot express their interest in activities on the Mat in the same way, and it is difficult to surmise what this may be.

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<sup>6</sup> *Busy work* is the term for work done by those children not on the Mat, or for a book supplied to keep faster children occupied with coloring in, puzzles and tasks.

#### 4.2.4 Act sequences

Wardhaugh defines Act Sequences as “the actual form and content of what is said” (2010, p. 260). Sequencing is based on the idea that participants help each other maintain the perceived purpose of the exchange by following an expected series of verbal and nonverbal moves and counter-moves. Sequences on the Mat are signaled explicitly by the teachers who are also inducting novices in the expected moves. The patterns they establish will be used to teach reading literacy in these schools for the whole of the Foundation Phase. However, Mrs Mitchell, Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels each sequence the components of the event differently, and the most significant determiner of Sequence is the text they choose to work with. There was considerable variation in the Sequences between the teachers and in the practice of each individual, and for that reason “Act Sequences” is reported on in more detail in Chapter Five.

#### 4.2.5 Key

Key refers to the “tone, manner or spirit” of the speech event (Hymes, 1974, p. 57) and is also described as the *mood*. Nonverbal elements such as voice quality or gesture are important in establishing Key, and some of these are discussed in Section 7.4 as part of Instrumentalities. Key also captures aspects of the relationship between participants that are not otherwise accessible in other categories. Key contributes significantly to participants’ understanding of the event and so can be crucial to analysis. Chang-Wells and Wells observe in this regard

When studying teacher-student conversation, therefore, it is important to take account of moves that serve a phatic and personalizing function during interaction, as they provide evidence of the ways in which participants give, and respond to, affective cues during conversation. (1993, p. 85)

On the Mat, the Key is generated and controlled by the teacher. Children respond to her mood and rely on her cues. Table 6 below, which compares the practice of the teachers, generalizes from many days’ observation of the demeanor of both teachers and children.

<i>Hymes' category</i>	<i>Guided Reading</i>	<b>Mrs Dean Greenbanks</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell Riverside</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels Oakhill</b>
<b>Key</b> <i>Tone, manner or mood</i>	<i>The small circle provides an intimate social zone for young readers intended to minimise the stress of whole class performance.</i>  <i>The "Key" chosen by the teacher should be supportive of both reading and discussion.</i>	Mrs Dean is calm, serious and task-focused as well as playful. Reading on the Mat interactions are based on pleasure and reassurance. She is intimate, involved and collaborative.  Teacher's voice: steady, unemphatic.  Physical indicators: Children sit in "hook and look" posture, but may also sit sideways. Mrs Dean also sits "hook and look." She may hold children in her lap. Children may lean on or stroke her.	Mrs Mitchell is serious and task focused. No casual chat is allowed between learners who are subdued. She gives urgency to activities by telling them to "hurry" and act "quickly."  Teacher's voice: sing-song rise and fall, especially when annoyed, or in unison reading.  Physical indicators: Children sit cross-legged and upright with books in front of them. They project formality and attentiveness.	Mrs Samuels is casual, but teacher-driven. Friendly but brief. Reading on the Mat includes a variety of activities, some of which are game-like. Quiet chat is allowed as well as collaboration.  Teacher's voice: varied, conversational rather than teacherly.  Physical indicators: Children sit or lie on their stomachs; they crawl closer to the teacher on their knees.
	<b>Pedagogic determiners of Key.</b>  <i>These are not recommended aspects of Guided Reading practice but emerge from each teachers' personal style.</i>	Mrs Dean's Reading on the Mat teaching is dominated by card games she has developed to teach sight and sound words for each level. The games promote <b>choice</b> , an important feature of her teaching.	Mrs Mitchell's Reading on the Mat teaching communicates <b>urgency and uniformity</b> . She claps her hands and tells children to hurry. The group acts in unison: all read together, get ready together. She makes sure each child reads the same amount.	Mrs Samuels' Reading on the Mat teaching is <b>casual and characterized by variety</b> . She promotes independent, creative engagement with texts, and this is seen especially off the Mat.

**Table 6: Key. Guided Reading and a comparison of the teachers' practice.**

The Key established by each teacher on the Mat derives from three separate elements, and these are considered below. Firstly, there is the ambient Key or mood of the classroom, especially as it is expressed in discipline. Secondly, there are the personal style elements of each teacher, such as voice tone. Thirdly, pedagogic choices of activities add substantially to the mood on the Mat.

Activities on the Mat do not exist in a vacuum but inevitably draw on the mood and relationships which are established in the whole class. In particular, each classroom has

its own system of penalty and reward, which contributes in a general way to the Key in all groups and activities. Mrs Dean and Mrs Mitchell both exclude or isolate children for being disruptive. Mrs Mitchell sends children to work at a desk in the corridor, while Mrs Dean sends children to a *grow-good mat* at the back of the room until they are ready to reintegrate with the class. A formal apology might be required.

Mrs Samuels ignores undesirable behaviour but pointedly affirms children who demonstrate the desired behaviour. In addition, Mrs Samuels and Mrs Mitchell reward positive behaviour with a public score-keeping. In Mrs Mitchell's case it feeds into the school system of *Lion Awards*. In Mrs Samuels's case good performance or behaviour is rewarded by having a name peg fixed to one of four faces corresponding to the four categories on the quarterly report cards. All the teachers manage conflict between children by seating them with more congenial work partners. Disruptive or easily distracted children are placed in desks at the end (front or back) of a line or group.

Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels do not call children or behaviour *bad* or *naughty*, but tell children in direct imperatives to start the desired behaviour. A reminder can imply disapproval, for example, "Natasha, have you finished all your...?" (Mrs Dean, B54). Mrs Samuels has a casual, energetic approach to discipline, allowing many formations and activities to develop in the class and there is no record of direct reprimand or exclusion.

On the Mat, the Key common to all three teachers is seriousness and focus. However, their seriousness takes different forms and their focus has different effects. Mrs Dean is calm and reassuring, and her voice is unemphatic. She is the most serious about the importance of reading and takes pleasure and pride in children's performance, for example by asking visiting adults to witness the *cleverness* of the class. During card games she is playful, putting her head to one side and teasing children with cards (see Figure 11). Mrs Mitchell by contrast appears severe or anxious, and urgent. This impression is reinforced by the triple repetitions of her phonics and whole-word practice, and some of her habitual instructions such as "Quick, quick" (D 47) or "Practice, practice, practice" (C64). Mrs Samuels is the most casual and informal, and her robust style communicates reassurance: children off the Mat seem to pay little attention to her

On the Mat the seriousness with which teachers approach reading suggests that reading is an important skill in these classrooms. Teachers make a point of affirming reading performance and evidence that children have done their homework, for example, Mrs

Mitchell: “I can hear you’ve been practising, Kayden! Well done!” (C100). *Good and Well done!* punctuate activities and turn taking. Analysis reported in Section 7.3 shows how teachers’ language choices keep a positive and affirming Key on the Mat, and how they maintain respectful politeness in their interactions. In interviews, Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels identify reading as “the most important skill to teach in Grade One”. The reading identity created for learners in their classrooms is that readers are important and worthy of the teachers’ undivided attention. Weaker readers get more individual attention and more individual tuition, more praise and encouragement in these classroom.

Mrs Mitchell’s emphasis is slightly different. She identifies confident public performance as the prime goal of reading instruction: “Speaking fluently and confidently in the LoLT would be the first step” (Questionnaire, 2010). In her classroom weaker children spend less time on the Mat, in some recorded cases less than half the time given to stronger readers. This not only reduces the amount of tuition time they receive but also positions them as less worthy of teacher time and interaction. The tendency for weaker children to get less time with reading has been found in other teaching environments also, and has already been referred to.

Finally, a significant additional contribution to the Key comes from teachers’ pedagogic decisions. The best example of pedagogically derived Key is Mrs Dean’s practice of starting every session on the Mat with vocabulary cards in a variety of game-like sequences. These are described in more detail in Section 5.6.2. She plays the same game with all the groups on a particular day, and the games enable her to vary her teaching and therefore children’s experiences on the Mat. Vygotsky insists that play is crucial in learning and cognitive development because it is a prototype of collaborative learning in which participants share in a social activity underwritten by rules that must be grasped and voluntarily accepted. According to Nicolopoulou and Cole,

[p]lay is enjoyable, it is intrinsically voluntary, and it is at the same time an essentially rule-governed activity: its two essential components are the presence of an imaginary situation and the rules implicit in this imaginary situation. The system of rules serves, in fact, to constitute the play situation itself; and, in turn, these rules derive their force from the child’s enjoyment of, and commitment to, the shared activity of the play-world. (1993, p. 293)





Figure 8: Mrs Dean with Level Four word cards. Strong readers, late in the year

Mrs Dean may simply show each child a word card to say aloud, as she is doing in Figure 8, but mostly she exploits the game possibilities of cards. For example, children are challenged to *win*. These challenges are always against the teacher and are constructed so that the child will always win and be rewarded with a high five or a sweet. “Walk the word wall,” or “Walk the sentence” imitates hop-scotch: each child stands in turn on words or sentences and says them.



Figure 9: “Walking the word wall.” Strongest reader early in the year. Note the second level participant waiting for Mrs Dean’s attention.

Children may also be asked to choose from a fan of cards, or the cards may be placed upside down on the floor for them choose from. In either case the child keeps the card and

shows it to another who reads it, or is be asked to make a sentence with it. Words that children struggle to read are noted and re-taught or kept as the focus for the next day's game.



**Figure 10: “Choose a word” fan. Weakest reader late in the year. The cards are those read by the strongest reader eight months earlier (Figure 9)**

Mrs Dean uses the cards to allow individual choice within the confines of each activity. After a series of word or sentence building activities that all participate in, each child chooses cards to make into a sentence of their own. The effect of this is to engage the children cognitively. If they are sorting through letters and words in order to choose, they are also reading accurately and understand the meaning of each word. On another level the activity suggests that personal choice and developing independent taste is important. In Mrs Dean's classroom children choose *Little books* and library books for homework. They also choose their favourite page, sentence, colour, game or book.

The game elements and the choices offered to children suggest particular identity positions for them. Mrs Dean's teaching has an underlying playfulness that children respond to (see Figure 10). She laughs and teases group members. Although she constructs and directs the games and watches children's performance very closely, she appears absorbed by the challenges she sets, in which she also participates. The pace of the activity is the pace of the child. Games remove the need for overt discipline, as the rules of the game provide parameters (Nicolopoulou & Cole, 1993, p. 293). This positions children on the Mat as equals or partners and allows Mrs Dean to present herself as a respectful collaborator and co-participant in a way that influences the mood of the interaction. This interpretation is

confirmed by analysis of the discourse, presented in Chapter Seven. Physically Mrs Dean projects this by sitting with the children in the *hook and look*<sup>7</sup> posture required on the Mat. It also enables her to affirm their identity as readers by daily creating situations in which even the weakest reader will win. Children challenged and corrected her in this context. The physical nature of some of the tasks, like walking the word wall, enable kinetic engagement with the task (discussion, Observation Notes 1) and suggest intimacy and informality. She is aware of this and says “there is a need for advancement and a need for pleasure. I would want to marry both. Which is why they have their box books where selection, variety, different ability are all open for them to choose” (Mrs Dean, Interview, August 2010).



Figure 11: Mrs Dean and Angie set up the cards for a competition. Strongest reader early in the year. Mrs Dean mirrors Angie’s posture

To recap, the Key that Mrs Dean establishes through game and choice elements position children as collaborators and equals who are able to make and develop personal choice.

In Mrs Samuels’s classroom the Key is different. Of her teaching style she says:

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<sup>7</sup> In this posture, used throughout the school, children sit cross legged with their arms folded across their chests. This ensures forward-facing attention and is used instead of instructions to pay attention or to be silent. Mrs Dean requests *hook and look* by modelling the posture with a finger on her lips until children comply.

I think I'm quite down to earth and easygoing and free. So I don't want to have to tell children "Now it's time you have to read to a friend." They've got their own brains and they can choose and if they're reading, as long as they read it's fine. Whichever manner they choose. Each one might be comfortable with a certain style. But you also want them to step out of their comfort zones to learn something else. (Interview, November 2010)

Mrs Samuels appears to be positioning children as independent readers in a way that parallels Mrs Dean's. However, the Key of the two teachers contradicts this. Mrs Dean's mood is calm and controlled rather than spontaneous and "free." Mrs Samuels is casual and vigorous in Reading on the Mat, using large gestures and raising her voice above the ambient noise. She has not developed a particular methodology for the formation. Instead, she uses the Mat for the same kinds of interactions she uses in the whole class. The results of her Key can be more easily seen when the children are interacting during free time. Here they can often be seen voluntarily reading alone, to each other, or in unison in small groups. Mrs Samuels does not restrict access to her teaching materials and children use them in their own games. For example, three friends sat at Mrs Samuels's desk and went through a set of sentence flash cards in imitation of her.



Figure 12: Three girls role-playing with sentence flash cards in Mrs Samuels's class. Early in the year

Another example is Kieran who, after eight weeks in Grade One, wanted to copy flash cards. He did this uninterrupted for most of one morning.

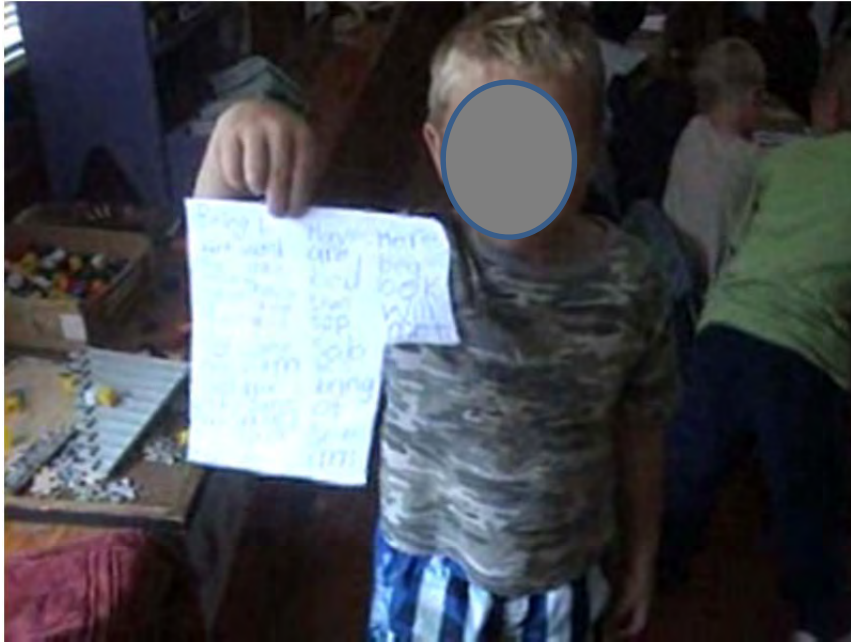


Figure 13: Kieran with a list of copied words. Early in the year.

Mrs Samuels's teaching practice therefore celebrates independence and a creative, individual exploration of text in a different way from Mrs Dean, and the effect of this Key is more visible in whole class leisure activities than on the Mat. She offers young readers an identity position as creative experimenters and purposeful communicators. She says:

I give them books because they are scientists and they have to look through the books for information and find out about sharks, and you won't believe how they love it. And although it might be a Life Skills lesson, they are reading. And I've never seen it done before. Give them a purpose. I give them things they have to find out and they love it. (Interview, December 2010)

The Key projected by Mrs Mitchell is different again. Whereas in the other classrooms Reading on the Mat happens throughout the day, in Mrs Mitchell's practice it takes place only before the 10:30 break. Mrs Mitchell therefore works under a time constraint and exhorts children to hurry, to take out their books quickly, to sit smartly. Activities only begin when the attention of each child is assured. Unison reading ensures unified participation. They turn pages on Mrs Mitchell's instruction. Mrs Mitchell also requires all children to point to the words as they read them, although this is against the recommendation of Guided Reading, which suggests that this interrupts the flow of independent silent reading and is only appropriate for inexperienced readers (CAPS, South Africa, 2010, p. 15). However, both requirements ensure that Mrs Mitchell is able to observe and control the pace at which children read, and that they participate uniformly.

Children realize this urgency and one makes a telling comment on the Key she generates: “But, Mrs Mitchell, we never see you smile...” (C100).



Figure 14: Mrs Mitchell emphasizing pointing. Weak readers early in the year with Yellow books.

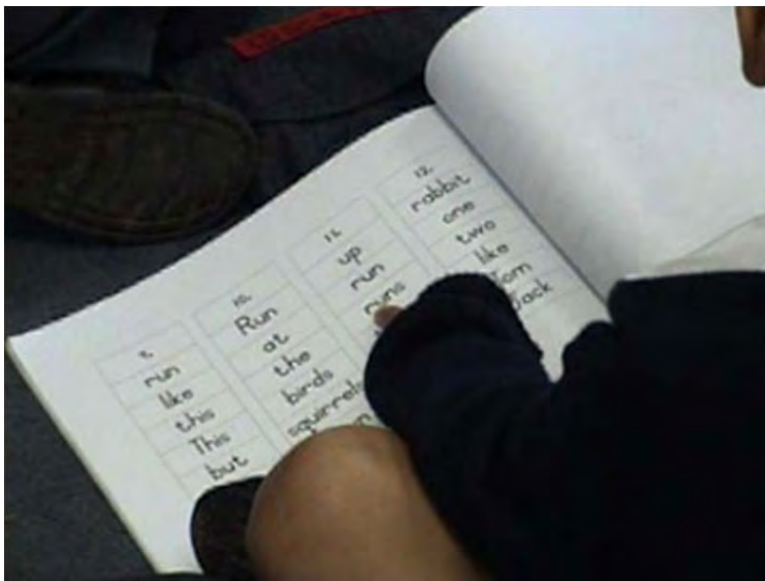


Figure 15: Pointing in the “Ladder book” early in the year

Mrs Mitchell’s urgency puts pressure on children and they seem to deflect it onto each other. They can be argumentative and challenging towards her and towards other children on the Mat. They accuse neighbours of taking books or impinging on their space. Arriving on the Mat can lead to conflict, for example:

**Mrs Mitchell. Strong readers. Midyear. C64**

- C           **Ma'am? He said he can't see because of my big head.**
- Mrs M       (Chuckles) Because... he didn't say big head, lovey.
- C           **He say... you said because of my head.**
- C           **I can't see!**
- C           **The only thing that's big, hey?**  
*Children talking together*
- C           **I didn't say big head!**
- Mrs M       Okay, I'm going to say... USH and ISH... and this is yours, Josh. ICK, and you're going to have...
- C           **I can't see with your head in the way, I said...**

In this context it is important also to mention that the only attempts at repartee appear in Mrs Mitchell's classroom. The exchanges below suggest that if her Key appears urgent and severe, this does not intimidate the children.

**Mrs Mitchell. Strong readers. Late in the year. Reading 360: "The Animals." C100**

- Gulio       Reads: *No, said Ted, it wants something to eat. Do not feed the animals.*
- Mrs M       Right, stop. If there's a sign that says "Do not feed the animals," what must you never do then?
- C           **Don't read it!**

**Mrs Mitchell. Weak readers. Late in the year, changing groups. C100.**

*(Groups' names are "Pizza's" and "Toasts")*

- Mrs M       Okay, Pizzas!
- C           We're not Pizzas, Ma'am!
- Mrs M       I mean, sorry! Toasts!
- C           *Laughs*
- Mrs M       You've really... I just haven't seen my group has changed!
- C           **If you said Pizzas, I'll be hungry.**
- Mrs M       *Laughs.* Page two, please.

A second aspect of Mrs Mitchell's teaching which affects the Key on the Mat is her preference for fragmented repetition and single word practice. This aspect of her practice is expanded on in later chapters. As the commercial readers she chooses for consolidation do not contain natural speech patterns, and her other main text is the Ladder Book lists (shown above in Figure 15), the model of reading she supplies is one in which the accurate

performance of decontextualized words is paramount. Fragmented single-word reading is embedded in other aspects of her teaching and common whole class literacy tasks are word and letter hunts and word puzzles. Mrs Mitchell’s practice strongly suggests the need for accuracy and speed. She presents text as a puzzle or challenge rather than as a source of information or understanding, and this affects the Key of her teaching. The event offers children in her classroom an identity position which is subject to a high level of surveillance and control, and this creates tension on the Mat.

To summarize, in each classroom an analysis of Key provides insight into how it changes the same literacy event to produce the steady, playful mood of Mrs Dean, the casual, laissez-faire style of Mrs Samuels, and the controlled, repetitive practice of Mrs Mitchell. These provide identity positions for children as collaborators in or as subjects of reading instruction.

#### 4.2.6 Instrumentalities

Instrumentalities are the “forms and styles of speech” used by participants to maintain an event (Hymes, 1974, pp. 58–60). These include register, dialect, and formality, as well as the channel, modes or media of the event: written, spoken, gesture, sign, and pictorial, whether they are used individually or combined. Each event may move through a series of instrumentalities. Table 7 below compares Guided Reading and the practice of the three teachers as these relate to Instrumentalities.

<i>Hymes’ category</i>	<i>Guided Reading</i>	<b>Mrs Dean Greenbanks</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell Riverside</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels Oakhill</b>
<b>Instrumentalities</b> <i>Type of discourse or channel of transmission as well as its mode of use. Different texts generate different sequences and styles of interaction.</i>	<i>Oral based on texts. Only one text with multiple copies for each individual. Individual reading aloud and silently.</i>  <i>Texts should have “natural language patterns” and recommends a collection of “real” or “whole” books</i>	Oral based on texts: books and cards. Individual and silent reading. Some unison reading late in the year.  Texts: *Commercial graded reader: New Reading 360 series * Large and small cards of the	Oral based on texts. Always more than one text at each session. Individual and unison reading and repetition.  Texts: * Commercial graded readers: New Reading 360, Link Up, Gay Way. * Reading is Fun	Oral based on texts. Combinations of texts vary from session to session. Individual and unison reading. Silent reading at the end of year  Texts: * Commercial graded readers: New Reading 360, Ladybird * Cards of



	<i>selected for level rather than controlled vocabulary readers.</i>	vocabulary one level above that of the books they are reading. Angie’s last sessions are Level 7 word list from Grade 2.  Mrs Dean demonstrates with gesture, points in and handles books. She has developed a series of gestural cues for sight words. She demonstrates on her own and children’s bodies and with objects brought into Reading on the Mat.	phonics course * “Ladder books” * “Yellow books” * Data projected text (riddle)  Mrs Mitchell points in a child’s book but does not handle children.	vocabulary from various sources * “Fish” cards * Smook phonics * “Big books” * Flip files * Poetry books  Mrs Samuels points in children’s books, handles children and their books and demonstrates using gesture. Weak readers are encouraged to point like her.
<i>Types / forms of speech: dialect, variety, style. Linguistic and other choices. Register.</i>	<i>No recommendation</i>	Standard South African English. Mrs Dean comments and jokes in Afrikaans and isiXhosa. Children speak only English to her and to each other. Corrects non-standard pronunciation. Mrs Dean speaks in formal sentences with full modality, nicknames and endearments e.g.: “Yolanda, could you help Siphe with her flower, love?” (102, 1:04:04)	Standard South African English. No other language in class. Mrs Mitchell speaks in formal sentences with little modality and full first names. “Now don’t move your fingers away. I’m going to point to them and I’m going to ask you to give me some rhyming words” (302, 00:03:49)	Standard South African English. Other languages are present in the class, and are used in groups when children interact with each other. Mrs Samuels’ speech is quick and energetic, often fragmented, with contractions and slang, e.g.: “Let’s get your brains warmed up. ( <i>Clicks fingers</i> ). Come.” (201, 00:00:30)

**Table 7: Instrumentalities. Guided Reading and a comparison of the teachers’ practice.**

Reading on the Mat exists in many modes together. Primarily, speech links elements and binds the activities into a whole, supported by posture and gesture. In addition there are multiple text types, books, cards and lists, some of which are supported by visual modes like drawings, pictures and photographs. Guided Reading recommends a *picture talk*, a discussion cued by pictures, but does not include recommendations for Instrumentalities. The analysis of the Instrumentalities is reported on in Chapter Seven.

#### **4.2.7 Norms of interaction and interpretation**

Norms are subdivided by Hymes into the norms of *interaction* and of *interpretation*.

Norms of interaction are the conventions governing the event and the participants' actions and reactions, "the behaviours and proprieties that attach" to the event (Hymes, 1974, p. 60). Turn-taking is an example of a Norm, as is voice volume, and Norms for these can be signaled in various ways. To identify Norms one would investigate expectations of how people should behave, as well as typical behaviour, that is, how they do behave. Norms may be codified verbally in sayings, rules or laws. Because they suggest social expectations, norms of interaction also implicate the social structure and power relationships of the event and signal the identity positions that are offered to participants.

Norms of interpretation, on the other hand, indicate the way in which behaviours are understood by group members. For example, a teacher's nod may be interpreted as a signal to read. Norms of interpretation reflect common knowledge, cultural expectations and shared understandings (Saville-Troika 2003).

An examination of the Norms category reveals diverse practices in the three classrooms in the study, and these are further described and analyzed in Chapter Six. Some dimensions are also recounted in Chapter Seven, which scrutinizes in more detail the Instrumentalities of verbal and nonverbal exchanges.

#### **4.2.8 Genre**

Genre suggests the type of speech act or event that is being created, and how the genre is marked to distinguish it from casual speech. Hymes maintains that "[t]he notion of genre implies the possibility of identifying formal characteristics traditionally recognized" (1974, p. 61). He adds that genre may overlap with the event, as it does in the case of Reading on the Mat, but should be analyzed separately (1974, p. 61). Table 8 below compares the requirements of Guided Reading and the practice of the teachers.

<i>Hymes' category</i>	<i>Guided Reading</i>	<b>Mrs Dean Greenbanks</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell Riverside</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels Oakhill</b>
<b>Genres</b> <i>Category of event (story, conversation ...)</i>	<i>Formal teaching through individual reading aloud.</i>	Formal teaching and learning. Game elements predominate.	Formal teaching. Pedagogic elements predominate.	Formal teaching and learning. Social elements predominate.

**Table 8: Genres. Guided Reading and a comparison of the teachers' practices.**

While the genre of Reading on the Mat can be broadly defined as small group literacy teaching, it comprises smaller units that suggest other genres. Each text that a teacher presents to the group is dealt with in a different way, and each session moves through a series of sub-genres related to these texts. Introducing cards, for example, may require children to construct words or sentences; lists may require unison chanted repetition. Sometimes the sub-genre is didactic and sometimes it is evaluative. It is seldom individual story reading although this is purportedly the core activity being taught. These sub-genres are dealt with more fully in Act Sequences in the following chapter.

### **4.3 Discussion of the identity positioning described so far**

This initial examination of Reading on the Mat indicates aspects of the positioning work done by teachers through choices related to Setting and Scene, Participants, Ends or goals and Key.

The Setting supplies an identity position for readers and reading as privileged and important in these classrooms. Reading is highly resourced by the teachers and the schools, and readers are given the additional resources of teacher time and focus. This can be a setting in which weak readers feel vulnerable, and teachers accordingly spend time affirming children and creating a positive environment for early literacy learning.

An examination of Participants provides two further insights into identity positioning work on the Mat: it confirms the crucial impact of teachers' pedagogic choices on the identities offered to children on the Mat, and suggests that there are significant identity-forming consequences to being put into an ability group for literacy learning.

Investigating the Ends of the event suggests that teachers emphasize a variety of goals on the Mat, different both from those of each other and from the recommendations in the

literature. This affects the identity positions offered to the children as readers, as it answers the question implicit in every learning encounter (“What is reading?”) with an answer that prioritizes word recognition skills rather than independent silent reading and meaning making. Assessing individual readers is also an important goal. This suggests that teachers construct young readers as code breakers (Luke & Freebody, 1999) and simple meaning makers, rather than as text users or text critics.

This claim is supported by evidence from Setting / Scene. Considerable effort goes into adding phonics and word recognition practice to sessions on the Mat, which suggests that code breaking rather than comprehension is the focal skill of the formation. The teachers offer children roles primarily as code breakers, and this emerges as a significant theme in other cycles of analysis reported on in subsequent chapters.

The Key confirms some of the observations made above. The seriousness of teachers and their constant affirmation of young readers suggests the important place of reading in these classrooms, and teachers affirm this in interviews. Teachers’ seriousness shows that individuals’ performance on the Mat is significant in terms of classroom status. The monitoring and assessing quality of some of the teachers’ behaviour and their habitual lavish, even exaggerated, affirmation, mentioned in Section 4.2.5, further underlines the desirability of being a good reader in these classrooms.

While an analysis using the categories of the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic suggests that the teachers’ practice shows considerable overlap, it is important to remember that there are also differences. This is exemplified in the analysis of the Key: the game, independence and urgent puzzle-solving characters of the Keys introduced by the three different teachers suggest qualifications to the identity positions presented above. Importantly, this suggests in turn that recommendations in the literature will not provide a similar core experience to child participants, and that the teachers’ interpretation of the event is crucial. I return to the implications of this point in the concluding chapter.

#### **4.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented a first analysis of Reading on the Mat and focused on the aspects that are generalizable across the practice of the three teachers, pointing to common elements of the event as it is interpreted by Mrs Dean, Mrs Samuels and Mrs Mitchell. It

has also indicated features that Reading on the Mat has in common with a widely recognized approach to reading literacy, Guided Reading. Reading on the Mat is still recognizably the same event in all three classrooms, although it evinces variations in all of Hymes's categories, with important implications for identity positioning.

The analysis presented in this chapter omits close investigation of the Act Sequences offered by the teachers, the Norms on which Reading on the Mat is predicated, and the Instrumentalities or modes through which it is communicated. Instead of being fairly stable across the three classrooms like the other categories reviewed above, these aspects show considerable variation in detail. This suggests that they involve aspects of identity positioning work that are worthy of closer examination. Such variations and differences are examined in the chapters that follow.

## Chapter Five: Act Sequences - Activities on the Mat

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Reintroducing Act Sequences
- 5.3 Reading on the Mat compared to Guided Reading
- 5.4 Act sequences in the practice of individual teachers
- 5.5 Possible explanations of teachers' practices
- 5.6 The role of texts in Act Sequences
  - 5.6.1 Sequences with books
  - 5.6.2 Sequences with cards
  - 5.6.3 Sequences with Ladder books, Smook phonics, yellow books and flip files
- 5.7 Identity positions offered through Act Sequences

### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gives a general description of Reading on the Mat as a speech event, analyzing it in terms of Hymes's categories. It provides an account both of the features shared by individual teachers' performance of the literacy practice and of certain minor differences between them. The chapter points to some of the identity positioning work done in Reading on the Mat, and, by revealing categories that are more complex, nuanced or varied, it suggests the focus of the analytic chapters to follow. Act Sequences, the focus of this chapter, comprises the first of the categories which, on initial examination, indicate significant variety in the practices of Mrs Dean, Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels. A comparative analysis of the teachers' practice in terms of sequencing throws light on the positioning work that is characteristic of each. It also points to the identity positioning work done in any classroom using similar activities.

Decisions made by teachers regarding Act Sequences highlight the distinction between decoding and comprehension in the reading debate, as referred to in Section 2.5.2. The Act Sequences in Reading on the Mat show the teachers making decisions that value decoding over comprehension, and that offer children an identity as code breakers rather than as meaning makers, text users or text critics. The details and mechanisms of this

process are embedded in the choices teachers make in respect of activities and these are the substance of this chapter.

## 5.2 Reintroducing Act Sequences

As Chapter Four indicates, Hymes's category *Act Sequences* suggests the expected form or order of elements in the event. The fundamental principle behind an event such as Reading on the Mat is that the participants produce it through mutual collaboration and make adjustments according to their notions of what is appropriate. This in turn suggests that each participant has knowledge and expectations of how the event will proceed. Teachers are conscious of their role in inducting novice participants – young readers – into the expected sequences: in interviews all three teachers characterize this as an investment in discipline and cooperation that will pay off throughout the Foundation Phase. The literature also emphasizes the need to familiarize children with patterns and expectations relating to reading (Snow & Juel, 2004). This chapter therefore presents teachers' perceptions of how the event should unfold. The Act Sequences are further enshrined in the Norms presented in Chapter Six. By introducing and maintaining patterns over time in familiar sequences associated with reading, teachers convey to the children what it means to be a reader.

It has proved almost impossible to derive a standard sequence from the practice of the teachers in the study, who emphasize first one and then another feature of the possible elements of Reading on the Mat. This variety exists in the practice of one teacher from day to day, the same teacher at different times of the year, and of course among the three teachers who feature in the study. Sometimes the variation is strategic, as it is in the case of Mrs Dean (see Section 5.6.2), and at other times opportunistic. Reading on the Mat displays surface formality and regularity, which suggests that the underlying structures are likely to be similarly rigid, but the patterns and sequences are in fact less predictable, regular, formal and formalized than the appearance of the event suggests.

This finding is significant because the teachers concerned have a broadly similar training, are working from the same curriculum in schools with a similar history and resources, and their core literacy teaching event resembles Guided Reading, whose patterns are comprehensively described in the curriculum (CAPS, South Africa, 2010) and the

literature on reading (for example, Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). They use the same commercial graded reading series. The differences in the Act Sequences of their practice therefore represent their own interpretation. Teachers prioritize some elements over others and thereby suggest that certain activities are valued in reading. Decisions on the order or form taken by the event are pedagogic ones that conduce to modeling the behaviour appropriate to being a reader. They therefore have an impact on identity positioning.

In the sections below I explore the variations in Act Sequences, and show how teachers' choice of text influences them. The chapter ends with conclusions about the identity positions offered by Act Sequences to children in these classes.

### **5.3 Reading on the Mat compared to Guided Reading**

Very generally, Reading on the Mat exhibits a four-phase structure in the practice of all three teachers. Brief initiating moves are followed by some kind of introductory word recognition or phonics practice and teaching, either of the words in the graded readers or of other sets of words. This second phase uses texts such as cards, lists and phonics readers. The third phase comprises reading from commercial graded readers. Finally, sessions end with an instruction to select an additional book for homework. Teachers distribute books and confirm homework before the children disperse, interacting socially. At the end of the year Mrs Dean and Mrs Mitchell may omit the word practice and go straight into reading. This suggests that for them the early emphasis on code breaking may be temporary, although there was not a concurrent marked increase in teaching comprehension skills and questions stayed at a retrieval level. Mrs Samuels is the only teacher who varied this basic four-part structure, and then only briefly.

Because Act Sequences on the Mat are related to recommendations in the literature and in policy I present all three for comparison. The comparison demonstrates not only the extent of the digressions from recommended practice, but also *where* the teachers of the study have added something, and *what* they have omitted. Both the additions and the omissions change the experience significantly for participants, so they are examined in detail. The comparative table below shows that while Reading on the Mat has some features of Guided Reading it omits others. The RNCS (South Africa, 2002a) in use at the time of the study does not make the pedagogy explicit, but the teacher's handbook,



“Teaching reading in the early grades,” (South Africa, 2008) does. Its recommendations align with those of CAPS (South Africa, 2010), now in use in Grade One. CAPS recommendations have therefore been presented for comparison in Table 9 below. Bold sections in the right hand column indicate teachers’ digressions from Guided Reading and also from CAPS.

<i>Sequences of Guided Reading compared to Reading on the Mat</i>			
	<i>Guided Reading, Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 2.</i>	<i>Guided Reading, CAPS, South Africa, 2010, p. 16</i>	<i>Reading on the Mat: generalisations from teachers’ practice.</i>
1.	Teacher chooses a book for the session from a stock of “real” books rather than graded readers.	Teacher selects a graded reader at a level lower than texts selected for whole class Shared Reading. Selects a language feature for the day’s teaching focus.	Teacher selects a graded reader from a set or sets available, usually the next in the series. <b>Language focus omitted.</b>
2.	Teacher calls group members together and gives each a copy.	<i>Inferred: Teacher calls group members together and gives each a copy.</i>	Teacher calls group members together and gives each a copy. <b>Does book and homework admin.</b>
3.	Teacher sits with the group on the rug or around a small table.	<i>Inferred: Teacher sits with the group. No mention of mat / rug.</i>	Teacher sits with the group on the Mat or on a small chair/ stool.
4.	Teacher introduces the book and some of the language of the book. Informative but brief.	Teacher introduces the type of book. Makes links between the topic of the book and their own life experiences.	<b>Teacher leads phonics or word-recognition practice using another text, e.g.: cards or lists.</b>
5.	Teacher points out aspects of the pictures and print. Children ask questions or make comments.	Teacher briefly talks through the illustrations of the book, pointing out significant details and asking children what might be happening. Points out organizational features. Introduces difficult words.	<b>Teacher sometimes talks through pictures. Almost never talks through print, although may point out structural features such as the contents page. Children do not ask questions</b>
6.	Teacher asks children to repeat the language of the book. Conversation as they notice and point out things.	<i>No recommendation</i>	<b>Teachers seldom engage children in discussion or encourage their questions. May ask each child a single question.</b>
7.	Teacher asks them to locate individual words in the text on several pages	<i>No recommendation</i>	<b>Omitted</b>

	<i>Guided Reading, Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 2.</i>	<i>Guided Reading, CAPS, South Africa, 2010, p. 16</i>	<i>Reading on the Mat: generalisations from teachers' practice.</i>
8.	Each child reads the whole book softly while the teacher observes. She may interact briefly to solve difficulties but she tries not to interrupt. At the same time she assesses their ability to use reading strategies, and whether the book is at the right level for the individual.	Children read silently until the teacher asks them to read aloud. The teacher observes their reading and may teach additional strategies based on what she sees. The teacher moves from child to child and listens to a small section of the text read aloud, prompting children with questions on the text or making suggestions for strategies.	<p>Mrs Dean: All children read the book silently and choose a double page spread to read to her before leaving. She observes their reading closely. There is no explicit teaching of reading strategies. She asks a single question of each child.</p> <p><b>Mrs Mitchell: Each child reads a section of text while others follow in their books. Individual reading is alternated with unison reading of sentences or pages. She observes their reading closely. She asks one comprehension or retrieval questions of each child. No silent reading recorded.</b></p> <p><b>Mrs Samuels: Each child reads a section of text while others follow in their books. She observes their reading closely. Children may read in unison. Silent reading happens in leisure time at their desks.</b></p>
9.	Using a small whiteboard, the teacher teaches a decoding strategy, for example using knowledge of NO to decode NOT.	<i>No recommendation</i>	<p>Mrs Dean uses word cards to teach decoding strategies and links them to gestural cues.</p> <p>Mrs Mitchell teaches strategies verbally in response to children's reading.</p> <p>Mrs Samuels teaches strategies verbally in response to children's reading.</p>
10.	Children locate the focus word of the decoding teaching in the text.	<i>No recommendation</i> Teacher returns to questions children may have raised in the <i>text talk</i> earlier. Can also ask questions on phonics or grammar. Asks questions to develop comprehension.	<b>Omitted</b> <b>No whole group final discussion; no questions from children.</b>

	<i>Guided Reading, Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 2.</i>	<i>Guided Reading, CAP, South Africa, 2010, p. 16</i>	<i>Reading on the Mat: generalisations from teachers' practice.</i>
11.	Children practice unison reading with fluency and phrasing.	<i>No recommendation</i>	Mrs Mitchell requires regular unison reading and stresses fluency and phrasing. Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels ask for unison reading at the end of the year, where it seems designed to move through the text more quickly.
12.	Teacher adds the book to the <i>browsing box</i> of previously read texts so that those who like it can return to it.	Children re-read the text alone or in pairs on following days.	Children choose <i>Box books</i> for homework reading. Children re-read books from the graded series once or twice more, but move steadily up the levels. Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels supply books from additional series for consolidation; Mrs Dean provides books from an earlier edition of Reading 360.
13.	The teacher may do an extension activity with the group.	<i>No recommendation</i>	<b>Extension takes place outside Reading on the Mat.</b>
14.	One child remains for assessment of a "known text."	<i>No recommendation</i>	<b>Formal assessment takes place separately from Reading on the Mat.</b>

**Table 9: Sequences of Guided Reading compared to Reading on the Mat.**

From this table one can see that Mrs Dean's practice is closest to the spirit of Guided Reading because she requires daily silent reading, and independent silent reading is her goal. Mrs Mitchell is more likely to include a picture talk and some instruction, but focuses on unison performance and round robin reading. While the literature and curriculum suggest 15–20 minutes for a single group, Reading on the Mat seldom took under 30 minutes in the classrooms in the study: the longest recorded session was in Mrs Mitchell's classroom and lasted 44 minutes (202), as was the shortest recorded session which lasted 12 minutes (C64). Longer sessions are a consequence of teachers adding decoding practice with cards or lists. Partly in order to accommodate this, other aspects of the recommended sequences are omitted. Both the additions and the omissions are described in more detail below.

In sessions recorded for this study and also viewed in other classrooms during pilot visits, decoding and word-recognition practice starts each session. In Mrs Dean's practice, word recognition ensures 95% fluency, which she calls the *holy grail* of reading (Interview, August 2010). She expands on this by saying: "If you are not 95% fluent you don't have

sufficient comprehension because you're so busy struggling to read you lose meaning" (ibid.). However, phonics and word recognition teaching usually take up the bulk of time on the Mat, with the result that children's contact with continuous narrative text is reduced. Mrs Dean and Mrs Mitchell spend 29% and 34% of the time, respectively, with the graded readers and the rest of the time on word recognition. When Mrs Samuels uses readers, 80% of the time is spent with the books; on the other hand she may use books only once or twice a week and in other sessions focus on poetry, phonics or word card games.

It is not clear where the practice of adding phonics to Reading on the Mat comes from. Jean Place, Foundation Phase specialist at Wits and writer of the Foundation Phase CAPS (South Africa, 2010), comments "I am not sure where the practice you relate to me comes from. Is it widely spread through the E. Cape? Or is it an 'inherited' school practice?" (Personal correspondence, 18 November 2011). Experienced teacher trainers in the Eastern Cape (B. Moore, L. Westaway, Rhodes Education Department, Interviews November 2011) asserted that the pattern was general practice in Eastern Cape former Model C schools. It proved impossible to assess how long this practice has been in existence, or what its original roots may have been.

While research presented in Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 asserts the benefit of phonics teaching, incorporating it into Guided Reading is not recommended practice. Fountas and Pinnell disagree with any approach that "requires teaching one item (a word or a letter for example) at a time in a tightly controlled sequence. Such tight control reduces children's opportunities to put together the process" (1996, p. 157). There is also no mention of the practice by CAPS (South Africa, 2010) in its description of Guided Reading.

More significantly, however, as well as adding phonics teaching to the sequences on the Mat, the teachers also leave out certain phases that promote understanding of the text: the introductory and ending discussion, and comprehension questions during reading. This is in spite of the assertion that "text talk between teacher and children (and children with each other) is central to this approach" (South Africa, 2011). Leaving out text talk has important pedagogic consequences which in turn affect the identity positions offered to young readers. It is worth noting that Collins reports this as a tendency among teachers of weaker readers; these teachers "rarely addressed the more synthetic issue of overall story line" (2006, p. 119) and focused instead on more phonics drill. He observes that "An

instructional process that consists primarily of children reading in a word-by-word fashion and teachers providing isolated decoding cues will leave the beginning readers without much practice in applying their knowledge of spoken language to the task of reading” (2006, p. 136). It seems that in the classrooms featured in this study, all the children are receiving teaching instruction that in other environments has been shown will benefit their reading least. A trend that excludes discussion, independent reading and meaning making in favour of drill is therefore a significant one. Each aspect omitted is scrutinized in more detail below.

As the Table 9 above indicates, introductory discussion has been replaced by decoding and word recognition drills. Picture talk, usually part of the opening discussion, is also largely omitted. Mrs Mitchell uses picture talk, but in the form of direct questions directed to individuals rather than for general discussion, for example, “Vuyo, what have you seen that’s in a park?” (C60). Pedagogically the importance of an introduction is to *activate schemata*, that is, to make explicit the associations children need in order to understand the text. Activating schemata provides context and cognitive preparation for reading. It enables the reader to visualize events, and is a reminder of words and concepts. It enables readers to relate the text to their own lives. Alerting children to these aspects enables them to bring meaning into the text at the same time as deriving meaning from it through decoding. Picture talk has the same introductory purpose but uses the semiotic of images. By omitting these introductory stages from the sequences on the Mat, teachers reduce the opportunities children have to interrogate texts for meaning, or to have that process modeled for them in the group.

While opportunities to interrogate texts are reduced on the Mat, it is important to note that Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuel model interrogation and comprehension processes in daily Shared Reading<sup>8</sup> with the whole class. This is in line with the recommendations of Snow and Juel, who write that

[a]ccurate and fluent reading is a challenge for young readers, and they have few cognitive resources to devote to reaction or interpretation while still struggling with the challenges of decoding. They are, of course, fully capable of reacting and

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<sup>8</sup> “In a Shared Reading session, the teacher reads with the class or group, using a large Story Book that has big, bold print. Learners follow the text, joining in when they are able to do so” (South Africa, 2008).

interpreting – but to texts that are read aloud, not to those they are reading themselves. (2004, p. 520)

Nevertheless, I question the value of shifting this activity from small to whole group, especially in terms of its impact on identity positioning, because it moves a significant aspect of reading out of the core literacy event.

The second point at which teachers omit opportunities to model comprehension strategies is during the reading. The literature on reading theory presented in Section 2.5.4, recommends that teachers engage children in discussion on what they have read. When the teachers in my study ask children questions these are usually brief, retrieval-type questions rather than ones that test association or implication. Analysis of teachers' questions (Section 6.6.4 and Appendix 8.5) shows that the most frequently used question word is *what...?* Mrs Dean uses this in 38% of all questions, Mrs Mitchell 35% and Mrs Samuels 47%. It is followed in frequency by the question tag *does...?* which Mrs Dean uses in 31% of all questions, Mrs Mitchell 24% and Mrs Samuels 43%. As each teacher is also on record as using sophisticated, well-calibrated questions on the Mat (for example those of Mrs Dean in 6.6.4) this omission is not due to a lack of skill or knowledge. CAPS suggests many ways of starting questions that promote higher order thinking skills (South Africa, 2010, pp. 20–21), and PIRLS recommends that all levels of question be introduced from Grade One, in line with international norms, on account of evidence that “the reading achievement for learners for whom the skill was introduced in Grade 1 achieved higher than for those learners for whom the strategies were introduced in later grades” (Howie et al., 2007, p. 46). The RNCS has the same requirement (South Africa, 2002a, pp. 45–46). The omission of comprehension questions characterizes reading as a decoding task rather than as a project in individual meaning making.

The importance of questions in developing comprehension and directing emergent readers to aspects of text is referred to in Section 2.5.4, and teacher questions form a large body of research in their own right (Applegate et al., 2002; Day & Park, 2005; Dillon, 1998; Simpson, 1996; Taylor et al., 2002). Fountas and Pinnell suggest that “the overall purpose of guided reading is to enable children to read for meaning at all times. The instruction may involve brief detours to focus children’s attention on detail, but the construction of meaning overrides” (1996, p. 4). After recommending their use during reading tuition, CAPS provides examples of questions which “will help develop both lower and higher

order comprehension skills” (South Africa, 2010, p. 20). International research shows that the earlier such strategies are introduced, the better the children perform in international reading assessments. PIRLS queries whether South African children are given adequate opportunity to answer higher order questions of the kind they meet in the PIRLS assessments (Howie et al., 2007, p. 53). It appears from my observations of Reading on the Mat that they may indeed not be.

The third point at which teachers omit opportunities to interrogate text is at the session end. They usually leave out the consolidation questions and closing discussion suggested by CAPS (South Africa, 2010). The pedagogic purpose of closing discussion is to return to points that were raised at the beginning of the session, confirming understanding and strengthening perceptions of meaning. It is the time when readers assess the book as a whole text, give opinions and form judgements, all higher order thinking skills essential to comprehension. A critical perspective can be introduced, comparisons suggested, or comments made on characters, motivations and moral issues. The closing discussion is also the point at which children can ask their own questions in order to clarify an incident or test an evaluation. My recording and observation shows that children seldom ask questions related to the text, with only two examples recorded (see Section 6.6.4). Children are more likely to try to connect with the teacher socially through the text. The fact that children are unlikely to volunteer questions further reduces the time spent interrogating the text.

In addition to these variations, a general omission is marked by the absence of silent reading. As silent, independent reading is the goal of Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell 1996, p. 103), this omission directs the purpose of the reading circles towards decoding practice. Only Mrs Dean promotes silent individual reading on the Mat and elsewhere: at the cushion corner or at desks. Mrs Samuels promotes silent reading at other sites. There is no record of Mrs Mitchell promoting silent reading on the Mat or elsewhere. PIRLS results suggest that frequent silent reading is a strong indicator of reading success. For learners who read daily or almost every day, “their overall mean performance was amongst the highest of all response categories” (Howie et al., 2007, p. 52). For struggling readers the benefits of frequent silent reading have not been proved (Konza, 2011). However, children in the classes in my study are not struggling: they have passed a language proficiency test and are supported with perceptual difficulties, where those exist.

A practice that omits silent reading does not offer children an identity position promoting independence and agency.

To conclude, although Reading on the Mat appears to be related to an established, internationally accepted pedagogy, the Act Sequences employed by teachers deviate from its recommendations. The omissions are substantial enough to suggest that the purposes of Guided Reading may not be achievable in Reading on the Mat. This in turn suggests that the identity position offered to children is not that of the “independent reader” of Guided Reading, but something different. Further discussion of the identity positioning implications of the changes teachers have introduced appears in Section 5.7.

#### **5.4 Act Sequences in the practice of individual teachers**

The description in Section 5.3, above, shows that Act Sequences on the Mat do not follow the outline suggested for Guided Reading, not only concerning what is taught when, but also concerning what is taught at all. More problematically, even in the practice of an individual teacher it is difficult to detect a predictable sequence. Instead there are patterns which each teacher varies depending on the perceived needs of the teaching moment, the level of the group and general principles of learning to read. This feature of teachers’ practice is the focus of the present section.

Before looking at the elements that each teacher uses to create the sequences on the Mat for that day, it is worth observing again that the teachers in the study are experienced professionals, moving with confidence through a web of decisions and tracking individual children with acuity. They all identify experience as the main source of guidance in their teaching. Much of the variation may simply be explained by teachers’ need to prevent boredom for all participants, as Mrs Dean indicates:

It gets boring. It gets boring for them; it gets boring for me, if you just flash the words, so I’ve developed all the different things as just different ways to do the same thing. And once you’ve passed the teaching of the words stage and you’re into the consolidations, that’s where those games are so important, because otherwise they start to misbehave and lose interest and focus and all those things.... It’s a way to keep everybody involved and it’s a way to ensure you have enough repetition. (Interview, Aug. 2011)



In addition, research into effective teaching shows that good teachers do not share a standard pedagogy; instead they respond strategically to perceived needs in the way that the teachers in this study do (see Section 2.5.4). The practices of each teacher are described below.

When Mrs Dean teaches on the Mat she uses cards and graded readers only. The sight-recognition vocabulary covers the words of Reading 360 only, a few levels in advance of where the child is reading at that time, and her card games increase children's exposure to the words of the text. She revises rather than extends their reading vocabulary in a strategic way. It is difficult to generalize about her Act Sequences however, as she varies the patterns, one day emphasizing sounds and letters, the next word and sight-recognition, and the next reading fluency, as she herself observes, above. But the variety has a deep structure, and the word-recognition practice first introduces and then revises vocabulary. Although the cards comprise a decontextualized word drill, the words are later contextualized for the readers in texts that allow comprehension.

When Mrs Mitchell teaches on the Mat she uses graded readers, Ladder books, Yellow books and the Reading is Fun phonics books (Smook, 2008). At the beginning of the year she starts sessions with vocabulary practice in either the *Ladder books* or the *Yellow books* before going on to the readers. Towards the end of the year, and with the top group, she uses the additional texts less and bases sessions more strongly on the readers. In all Mrs Mitchell's teaching, pattern and sequence are obscured by self-interruptions as she responds to a teaching opportunity or as she corrects a child. At any moment she may ask a question on meaning, punctuation, or give an instruction related to reading or behaviour, sometimes with a long additional explanation. An example of her style is to be found in the transcriptions, Appendices 6 and 10.

On the Mat, Mrs Samuels uses graded readers, cards of vocabulary items from various sources, Reading is Fun (Smook, 2008), a *flip file* and a *poetry book*. Once again it is difficult to generalize about the sequences she uses. She was influenced in the first half of the year by not using ability groups. As weaker readers fell behind she used pair groupings or *reading buddies* to give them additional time for reading. In her practice, phonics is not introductory but rather an alternative reading activity which takes place on the Mat. In the first half of the year phonics and word recognition could be the last activity on the Mat; after June, when the children were in ability groups, phonics assumed

the introductory position used by Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Dean. In Mrs Samuels's practice, all the texts are used in both the whole class and on the Mat. As whole class reading is done in unison while on the Mat it is individual, Reading on the Mat provides individual practice in activities that are also part of the whole class repertoire.

In conclusion, the sequences of Reading on the Mat are only loosely derived from other sources and demonstrate the extent to which teachers have adapted the small group formation to their own purposes.

## **5.5 Possible explanations of teachers' practices**

While the teachers have adapted the recommendations in literature and the curriculum for their own use, it is less clear why they vary their own practice in the way they do. As I suggest above, professional confidence derived from experience may be a reason. The analysis of Act Sequences therefore captures the moment-by-moment decision-making of experienced teachers as they initiate this familiar daily teaching structure. The variations in teachers' Act Sequences seem to result from decisions made about the following:

- Choosing the text. This is the most significant decision affecting sequences.
- Choosing what to teach from the text. The text itself may control what can be questioned and what can be discussed. This includes aspects of the texts which relate to the children's lives and the opportunities this gives for discussion.
- Choosing whether reading is individual, in unison or silent. Teachers may make this decision responsively. For example, Mrs Mitchell calls for unison reading to provide group support for a struggling individual. It gives relief to the reading child and a moment of group solidarity and success before the next one reads. Teachers also use unison reading to end the activity after every child has read aloud.
- Choosing a method of repetition. Repetition and practice ensure the automaticity and fluency that free the reader to focus on comprehension. The teachers provide for repetition in different ways. Mrs Dean varies the task to provide numerous but qualitatively different contacts with vocabulary, and this is described further in Section 5.6.2, below. Mrs Samuels repeats the text and the activity round the circle, alternating unison and individual reading. Mrs Mitchell repeats each word

three times and alternates unison and individual reading. She frequently asks children to re-read a section.

- Explaining word meaning. Teachers usually make this decision responsively as children hesitate. Mrs Dean plans for explanations of certain words, for example by bringing a mug to the Mat and explaining *rim* by asking children to feel it. She also places the word in a sentence to illustrate its meaning while Mrs Samuels and Mrs Mitchell explain in the abstract.
- Teaching metalanguage elements like punctuation or text structures (for example, chapter headings). This may be part of the beginning (Mrs Mitchell) or the end (Mrs Dean) of a session, or appear at any point in response to children's reading.
- Teaching reading strategies. This is usually in response to hesitations and teachers may suggest *breaking up* a word or pointing. Mrs Dean cues a child visually. This is one of the intended foci of Guided Reading and the reason the teacher pays close attention to each reading individual.
- Supporting a reading child with co-reading, that is, falling in with the reading child and providing a word or phrase. This was a common feature of Mrs Samuels's practice, and was used by Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Dean in the weaker groups. Mrs Dean co-read least, preferring to use gestural cues.

Planned or spontaneous decisions on the above aspects of reading blend during performance to give each Reading on the Mat event a unique shape within the overall sequences habitual to each teacher, captured in the image of Figure 16, below. This responsive teaching is possible because the event is always driven by a single powerful individual rather than by mutual consent: the children depend on the teacher to direct the activities and phases of the event. Only Mrs Samuels's children are confident enough of the Act Sequences to proceed without her by mid-year. The variety provided by spontaneous decision making prevents monotony in the learning and teaching. It also allows teachers to respond to needs as they arise and provides space for reflexive practice.

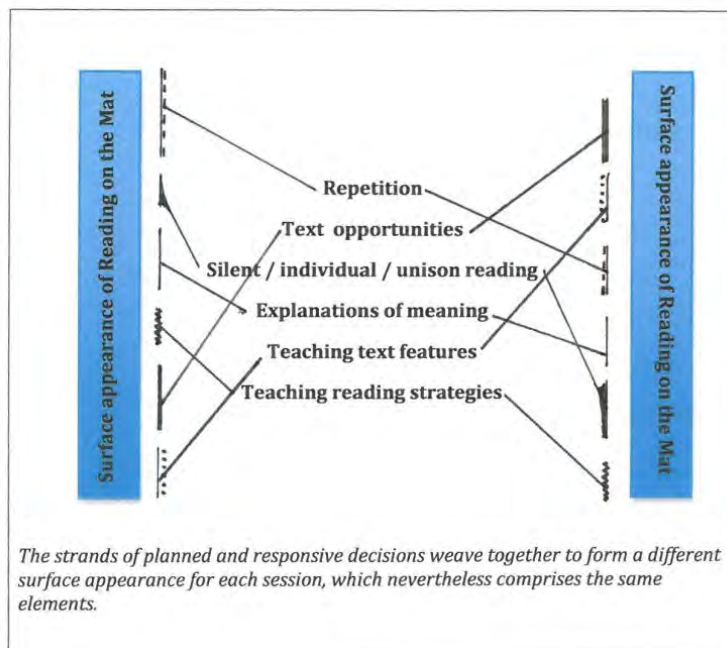


Figure 16: Showing how responsive variations in teachers' practice produce different surface appearances

## 5.6 The role of texts in Act Sequences

In spite of the latitude that teachers allow themselves on the Mat, one element dominates their decision-making: the choice of text. Text determines the Act Sequences in respect of that text and therefore of the whole session on the Mat, because only certain activities are possible with each text type. For example, if the teacher chooses two readers, then the sequences for readers will be repeated twice. If the teacher chooses vocabulary cards, then certain activities are not possible, for example, comprehension questions, picture talk or discussion. I therefore analyze in some detail the sequences associated with each text type used on the Mat (books, cards and other texts).

### 5.6.1 Sequences with books

The three teachers identified the commercial graded reading series, Reading 360, as the core reading series but in fact used other reading series as well. The content and style of these books and their contribution to identity positioning is presented in Section 7.2.2. On the Mat they may take a secondary role at the end of the session. Mrs Samuels did not always use books on the Mat.

The written and visual texts in graded readers allow for Act Sequences that involve some or all of the following: reading aloud, reading silently, reading in unison, predicting the story, discussing setting and character, making judgments on characters' behaviour, making associations or comparisons with other books, as well as other activities specific to the meaning of a particular text.

Mrs Dean's Act Sequences depend on whether she chooses the core reader of the graded series, in which case each child has the same book, or whether she chooses the supplementary *Little books*, in which case each child has a different text. If they have the same book, each child reads a double page spread while the others follow in their own copies until the book is finished. They may read the opening or closing page in unison. If she chooses Little Books or library books, these are placed in the circle and children choose one they have not read. They read it silently on the Mat and as they finish each reads a *favourite* page to Mrs Dean. Each child is asked at least one question on the book, and the level of question depends on both the text and the child (Interview, 2011). Questions are not always part of the sequences. Each child packs up and leaves the group after reading.

Mrs Mitchell's Act Sequences are close to the recommendations for Guided Reading presented in the table in Section 5.3: picture talk, with teaching or a reminder of the structural features of books, such as the contents page. There may be a discussion of the book topic. However no silent reading, the express aim of Guided Reading, is recorded. Individuals read a single sentence while others show that they are following by pointing to the words in their own books. Mrs Mitchell's emphasis on pointing is discussed in Section 4.2.5. Individual reading alternates with unison reading. Questions may be directed to the group, in which case Mrs Mitchell accepts bids, or each child in the circle may be asked a single retrieval question. When they have all read she instructs the children to choose a *box book* for homework reading.

Mrs Samuels's Act Sequences were affected by heterogeneous grouping in the first half of the year. Reading on the Mat started with round robin reading, often beginning with the child who has bid most energetically to start. After each child has read a page, stronger readers leave the Mat to read silently at their desks or to a *reading buddy*, while weaker readers received additional word recognition or phonics practice. Sometimes the whole text of a poem or reader is read in unison and general comprehension questions are

directed to the whole group. After June the weaker readers revised reading skills in Reading 360 Big Books, and the stronger readers started with flash cards “to warm up your brains” (201) followed by Reading 360 reading, sometimes unseen with a few questions. Another text such as the flip file or poetry book could replace Reading 360.

### **5.6.2 Sequences with cards**

All three teachers use sets of word and letter cards to practice word recognition and the phonic skills involved in *spelling out*. These cards are rapidly replaced as the children master each set. Large flash cards are usually shown round the circle and each child says the word they are presented with. At their desks and on the Mat children use individual sets of smaller cards to build words and sentences requested by the teachers and of their own choice.

Mrs Dean has developed game-like sequences with cards, using the vocabulary of the Reading 360 series, at least one level ahead of the one they are reading. She uses the same game with all the groups one day and changes the sequence the next day. These sequences enable the choice and game-like elements in her teaching mentioned in Section 4.2.5. Daily repetition ensures multiple exposures to the words and allows her to give each child four or five cards each time, rather than a whole list. She remembers the words each child or group had difficulty with and might present those words alone. Her practice permits many variations. In no particular order, the following sections describe the patterns that Mrs Dean was observed following with cards. She develops new variations for different groups and in the year after the study designed a new game for a group of four strong, independent readers (Interview, Dec 2011).

#### **5.6.2.1 Small cards (early in the year)**

The *small cards* are about 1.5cm square with letters or words printed on them. Teachers print a complete set for each child who uses them for homework and practice at his or her desk. Early in the year they are individual letters; later in the year they are words. Small cards are used in all the classrooms in the study and in ways similar to Mrs Dean’s practice, as described below:

- Letter cards: Children “pack out” the letters on the Mat and read them to the teacher. The child receives the letter of the day and says it. The teacher asks the group to create words using that letter. She illustrates the meaning of each word by using it in a sentence. She chooses simple, physical words to illustrate the use of the letter, easily demonstrated and appropriate also to additional language learners.
- Word cards: Children pack out the words on the Mat and read them to the teacher. She asks for sentences using words that have been introduced that week. The last sentence is one of their own choice. The teacher may construct her own sentence with the child, who reads it.
- Word cards: Children pack out the words on the Mat and read them to the teacher. The teacher asks each child to find a word she names. She does this round the circle until each child has identified five or six.

#### 5.6.2.2 Large cards (“Flash cards”)

- *Flash cards* are also used in all the classrooms in the study. Mrs Mitchell’s and Mrs Samuels’s card vocabulary comes from various sources; Mrs Samuels uses commercially produced cards as well as those she has made. The teacher presents a card to a child who says the word. Mrs Dean’s large cards duplicate the vocabulary of the children’s small cards, and are used daily throughout the year in one of the following ways: Mrs Dean hands out cards round the circle. As each child receives the card she says it. Mrs Dean and the children build sentences from the words and lay them in the open space. Each child chooses a sentence to *walk*, standing on each word as she says it. See Figure 9.
- Mrs Dean hands out cards round the circle. As each child receives the card she says it. Mrs Dean calls for words in no particular order. Children put them down in a row and then each “walks the word wall”. Then Mrs Dean might omit the words they know and use this game to consolidate the more difficult words of that level (Observation notes, March).
- Mrs Dean shows cards round the circle. The words that any child cannot say are put into the *word wall* and each child walks it, saying the words as she stands on them. See Figure 9.

- Mrs Dean places the cards face down in the circle. Each child turns one over and says it. If she can read it she keeps it, and the *winner* has the most cards. This gets played as consolidation, not as introduction. Mrs Samuels uses the same game and children play it independently in her classroom, where it is called the *fish game* (see Figure 37).
- Mrs Dean places all cards face up in the circle. Each child chooses a word, says it, then makes a sentence using the word they chose.
- Mrs Dean holds cards out in a fan. Each child chooses a card and says the word until all the cards are with the children. Then each child turns to a neighbour and repeats the process. The receiving child makes a sentence using the word he or she has received.

As well as promoting learning through play, following her remarks quoted in 5.4 above, in Mrs Dean's practice the Act Sequences with cards provide a systematic framework for developing individual choice and promoting cognitive engagement with the task, as mentioned in Chapter Four. As each child concentrates on deciding which card to choose, which word to build, which sentence to make, which page is their favourite, their attention is focused on the text for an additional purpose which requires reading but is overtly for another purpose. This *embedded learning* is identified by Wray, Medwell, Fox and Poulson (2000) as one of the strategies of effective teachers. The identity positions offered to children through Mrs Dean's game-like structures are discussed under Key in Section 4.2.5.

### **5.6.3 Sequences with Ladder books, *Reading is Fun*, Yellow books and Flip files**

These texts are used by Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels for consolidating phonics and word-recognition in drills. Mrs Dean does not use any comparable text on the Mat or in her classroom: children practice vocabulary through the cards alone. I have grouped these texts together because they share two features: first, none of the texts is illustrated, obviating picture talk; and secondly, because the texts have been written to teach sounds, their language is disjointed and unnatural, and they lack a clear story line. For examples of these texts see the quotations from Yellow Books, Flip files and *Reading is Fun*



(Smook, 2008) phonics below. Close repetition of similar sounds may give these texts a tongue twister quality which distracts from meaning and presents reading them as a high level decoding challenge. These features of the texts make comprehension questions either inappropriate or impossible. In 1908 Huey condemned the “unnatural, boring, and meaningless sentences found in phonics primers,” referring to them as “sentence-hash” (Snow & Juel, 2004, p. 504). Yet it would seem that this kind of text is still valued for drill and practice.

Mrs Mitchell uses *Ladder books* at the beginning of a session. Going round the circle, each child reads a list from the top to the bottom or from the bottom to the top, repeating each word three times. The ladders of the day, identified by number, may be read through a number of times in this way. Individual reading may alternate with unison reading in no particular pattern. The Ladder books are shown in Figure 15. Later in the year, Mrs Mitchell adds *Yellow books* to the Ladder Books in the following sequence: Children read the vocabulary list at the top of the paragraph, either in turn or in unison, and then each child reads a few sentences of the paragraph. As each paragraph is a series of statements developed around a phonics sound or sounds it lacks narrative coherence. It is only possible to ask simple retrieval questions of these texts. For example:

Come mom come. See the rat. Dad has one too. Dad has the red bag. Come mom come. Dad has ten cats. Come bring the dog for mom to pat. The red peg is for Meg. Come mom come see my pet rat. Dad has one too. Bring a bag for the rat. Have you got the bag? I see two bags. One rat for Pat too. (102)

After reading this text, Mrs Mitchell asked questions on the colour of the bag, the number of rats and who had the bag. She refers to these texts as *stories* although they are clearly constructed primarily for decoding.

Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels both use *Reading is Fun* (Smook, 2008), a commercial phonics primer. Reading is Fun is used alternatively with the Ladder books, Yellow books or *Flip file*. Mrs Samuels asks children to read the sounds on a page and then the sentences in unison. Mrs Mitchell uses the same sequence as she does in the Yellow books: each word repeated three times and then the sentences read either in unison or individually. Examples of sentences on the sound -ng:

- Mom sent me to the king.
- I can sing a lot of songs.

- I will sing to the king.
- The king will ring his bell.
- Ding dong come along.
- The king is fond of songs.
- I wish I had a ring like the king.
- The king has a big ring. (Smook, 2008, p. 6)

Note how similar these sentences are to the Yellow Book passage above and the Flip file below. Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels do not ask questions on these sentences, but the children are asked to find rhyming words. Two features of the Smook phonics are additionally problematic. Firstly, the vocabulary is chosen for sound alone and words may have little meaning for six year olds, whether they are home or additional language speakers. Words in Book 1 include *sap, tod, tag, gag, rut, max, vex, tax, jig, fig, wit, quit, quill, zep, tuff, muff, ruff* and *yen*. (Note that *tod* and *zep* are not English words.) A second problematic feature is that some sound distinctions, for example, *i* for *tin* and *i* for *ink*, are difficult even for adult English home language speakers to hear. A lesson attempting to teach this difference confused the children, who couldn't do the tasks set on it, and frustrated the teacher.

Mrs Samuels uses *Flip files* similar to Mrs Mitchell's Yellow books. These are A4 pages with a text constructed around a sound or sounds, for example,

Sleepy the tall tree stood in the middle of the farmer's beetroot field. All the creepy crawlies would creep up to Sleepy to get out of the hot sun. Sleepy the tree hated feeling the creepy crawlies creep up his thick rough tree trunk. Day after day the creepy crawlies tickled his bark. This made him feel rather sleepy. One day the beetroot farmer pushed his wheelbarrow all the way across the beetroot field, only to stop right in front of Sleepy. The beetroot farmer grinned at Sleepy with rotten brown teeth. The beetroot farmer grabbed his axe out of his green wheelbarrow. This made Sleepy the tree very frightened. The creepy crawlies wanted to help poor Sleepy. They all jumped into the beetroot farmer's sheep skin hat and began to creep into his dirty brown hair. The farmer took off at an incredible speed. Sleepy the tree never saw the beetroot farmer again. (Audio 103)

When she used this text Mrs Samuels showed individuals cards of the words with an *ee* sound, then led the children in unison reading of the text. She explained the meaning of *rotten, axe* and *incredible speed*. A child asked what a *creepy-crawlie* was. Mrs Samuels concluded by asking why the insects wanted to help Sleepy. She showed children additional *ee*-sound words which they stuck on a picture of a tree on the board.

In addition to the Flip files and Smook phonics, Mrs Samuels used *Poetry books* of poems pasted into a soft-cover A5 book on themes dealt with in the class, such as the farm or the sea. The poetry books are used for unison or individual reading. There is no record of poems being interrogated for meaning.

In summary, an analysis of Act Sequences shows considerable variation in the practice of the teachers and also reveals the extent to which their practice, reportedly common in former Model C schools in the Eastern Cape, has moved away from recommendations in the literature and curriculum. It shows that teachers emphasize decoding over comprehension when they are teaching on the Mat and that they do this in five intersecting ways. To begin with, decoding is added to a formation and pedagogy designed for reading instruction. Secondly, adding decoding to this particular formation reduces the time spent on reading, both silent and aloud. Thirdly, adding decoding practice also means that teachers omit crucial interactions on meaning: introductory context building, comprehension questions and summative discussion. Fourthly, the cards, Ladder Books and Smook phonics that teachers have added to Reading on the Mat do not allow for interactions beyond retrieval questions. To conclude, these additions and omissions have come about through the teachers' selection of particular texts, which in turn control the kinds of Act Sequences possible on the Mat. The addition of the decoding practice through additional texts limits the scope for questions and discussion which would otherwise increase the cognitive demands of the reading experience. This in turn has implications for the identity positioning of children in these classrooms.

### **5.7 Identity positions offered through Act Sequences**

The discussion of these findings has two aspects: a consideration of the possible benefits these changes hold for the teachers, and an examination of the identity-positioning implications for children in their classrooms. It seems appropriate to ask why three experienced teachers, independently of each other, have all adjusted activities on the Mat towards decoding, although with different texts as tools. Mrs Dean identified her work with cards as a special innovation of her own, as did Mrs Mitchell with the Ladder books and Yellow books (Informal discussions, 2010). In each case the change involved the teacher in considerable additional work and organization.

The first finding of Act Sequences is that patterns are hard to detect. Mrs Dean explains that variation prevents boredom and this is a significant reason. Nevertheless, a consequence of the variations described in this chapter is that children inevitably remain heavily dependent on the teachers' direction. Although they are apparently being inducted into the expectations of a local literacy practice, and the teachers acknowledge the importance of training them, there is in fact not enough that is predictable or standard in the event to make the children independent participants. By retaining the power to determine sequences, teachers seem not to be concerned with developing the agency of children as independent, self-monitoring individuals in Grade One.

A second consequence of the Act Sequences in these classrooms is to elevate decoding over comprehension. This has a number of advantages for the teachers in this study. It enables them to manage diversity in their classrooms in a way that allows them to continue to promote their children as effective readers and themselves as effective teachers. None of the teachers acknowledged in interviews that race, culture or home language had changed their teaching practices, and all of them said that the demographic was approximately the same as in previous years (Interviews, 2010). They did mention the importance of the schools' Grade One entrance test, based heavily on English language proficiency (Observation notes, March, Greenbanks). This suggests that they are aware of the difficulties attendant on additional language learning mentioned in Section 1.2. The demographic of the ability groups on the Mat was balanced between home and additional language speakers in all classrooms, perhaps as a result of the entrance test, and additional language speakers do not pool in the weakest groups. Nevertheless, it seems probable that teachers focus on decoding as a response to children's being unfamiliar with the language they are reading. Teachers may intuitively construct children as code breakers to protect the identities of everyone in these classrooms as *successful*. Highly effective decoding, crucial to fluency and comprehension, gives the impression that children are reading well. For the same reason teachers may avoid asking comprehension questions at a high cognitive level. Because of the time spent in decoding and the way in which it is valued on the Mat, children in all the classrooms develop a positive identity when they are able to decode effectively. This may have consequences in future grades. For example, the best reader in Grade Two, an additional language speaker of English, read *aeroplane* and *hydrogen* but could not guess the meaning of either word (Pilot, Greenbanks, 2009).

Skills-based literacy teaching was firmly entrenched in the nineties (Bloch, 1999; Flanagan, 1995) and the focus of these teachers on the Mat bears witness to the tenacity of a particular practice. Recent developments in education may also have influenced teachers' perceptions of Reading on the Mat. The emphasis on group work in Outcomes Based Education may have encouraged teachers to use the structure in a more general way, as Mrs Samuels does. It is used in many classes for numeracy teaching as well (Pilot observation, 2009). Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels use opportunities in Shared Reading to ask comprehension questions and involve children in picture talk and summative discussion; Mrs Samuels uses all the available texts for both whole class and activities on the Mat (Observation notes, 2010). This suggests that Reading on the Mat is just another teaching formation for which teachers have developed their own methods on a pragmatic, individual basis, rather than as a result of curriculum-based pedagogic theory.

Chapter Four portrays teachers actively creating positive identities for young readers. The analysis of discourse presented in Chapter Seven reveals a similar picture. What this examination of Act Sequences shows is that this identity is positive mainly in relation to a particular skill: decoding. The identity position offered to children as code breakers results from teachers' choices regarding Act Sequences and the promotion of decoding over comprehension that they imply. This may also explain the finding of PIRLS, that although the South African children in the study performed poorly against international benchmarks, they still had moderately positive to very positive attitudes towards reading, regarded themselves as good to moderately good readers, and had high to medium self-concepts as readers (Howie et al., 2007, p. 38). When proficient decoders are offered an identity position as successful readers it is to be expected that they would perform poorly on tests which require comprehension. Part of this identity position may be created by the sequences of activities promoted on the Mat.

The discussion in this chapter highlights the importance of two features of Reading on the Mat for the identity positions offered to children in any classroom which uses this teaching formation. The first finding is that pedagogic choice plays a powerful role in identity positioning. In this study children are offered positions of code breakers rather than meaning makers, text users or text critics, deriving from the positive identity attached to the decoding aspect of reading. Different pedagogic choices would change the identity positioning work in a significant way.

The analysis presented in this chapter also demonstrates that texts and materials play a crucial role in the Act Sequences of this teaching event. This study suggests that the choice of materials determines pedagogic opportunities. Reading as it is envisaged by the curriculum demands not only a richly resourced classroom but also the use of a certain type of text. Without texts that conduce to a flowing discursive whole, teachers are unable to involve children in discussion or ask higher order questions. Even when lavishly supplied with such texts, as the teachers in this study are, they may omit these interactions. The texts, therefore, as the determiners of sequences, play an important role in identity positioning – not through their content, but through the teaching opportunities they afford or deny. Jordan and Henderson suggest that artifacts such as books and cards both allow and disallow interaction, and that is the case in these classrooms. They affirm that

the basic premise is that artifacts and technologies set up a social field within which certain activities become very likely, others possible, and still others very improbable or impossible. One of our central interests lies in understanding what kinds of activities and interactions particular material objects engender and support and how these change as different artifacts and technologies are introduced. (1995, p. 44)

The pedagogic sequences within Reading on the Mat outlined in this chapter suggest an identity position for readers as code breakers rather than meaning makers, as performers rather than consumers of text. This construction, if ubiquitous in South African schools, may well produce readers who are unable to perform in international tests of reading which, in Grades Four and Five, require higher order insights into texts.

If the model of reading supplied to children in Reading on the Mat is one that values decoding over comprehension, it is possible that children will not learn that text is for interrogating and understanding rather than decoding alone. In the Act Sequences observed in this study, texts are usually not presented as objects to be queried, compared, considered or manipulated in other ways. Even if these approaches to text are modeled during whole class reading, the skills involved may be associated with class entertainment rather than individual meaning making. When comprehension questions and critical closing discussions mostly take place in Shared Reading, there is a danger that the activities of comprehension may become detached from the practice of silent individual reading.

## Chapter Six: Norms of Reading on the Mat

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Reintroducing Act Sequences
- 6.3. Phase One: Creating Reading on the Mat
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- 6.5 Making participation work: The role of the teacher
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  - 6.6.5 Implications of norms of pedagogy for identity construction
- 6.7 Conclusions regarding Norms and identity positioning

### 6.1 Introduction

Data presented in Chapter Four from an overview of Hymes's S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic suggests that a second category meriting further investigation is that of Norms. As in the cases of Act Sequences presented in Chapter Five and Instrumentalities presented in Chapter Seven, the initial analysis shows contradictions and contrasts in the Norms that teachers promote on the Mat. Some Norms apply to all classrooms while others may be specific to a particular teacher; some Norms control social interaction and others relate to pedagogy. This chapter presents a more detailed examination of the Norms of Reading on the Mat.

An analysis of the Norms of the event takes us closer to understanding identity positioning because Norms express a constellation of constraints and permissions surrounding the activity of reading. Children are not just learning to read but are also learning what it means to be a reader. These expectations may be implicit or explicitly expressed. As Chapter Five also shows, the identity positioning work that happens on the Mat is best understood as a series of decisions about applied literacy practices and pedagogy, although aspects of the event, such as the opening and closing moves, have a social quality.

This chapter starts by reintroducing Hymes's category and indicating how Norms are recognized in interaction. This is followed by a report on the analysis which clusters normative behaviours into three main groups. Section 6.3 briefly describes *creating and maintaining* Reading on the Mat as a group. It probes the group as a physical space and also describes the Norms of the social space: the rights and obligations that exist for each member before participation begins. These Norms are reasonably standard across the three classrooms. Section 6.4 describes the Norms relating to *the performance* of Reading on the Mat, particularly the permissions and expectations that control participation. The third section, 6.5, presents a related aspect: the roles that Norms endorse for the teacher, as controller of the event and as a resource during reading. It is followed by Section 6.6, which describes the Norms of *the pedagogy*. These are Norms of pronunciation, accuracy, explaining and teaching decoding strategies, and asking and answering questions. As the group is brought together to learn, practice and be assessed, this section is the main focus of the chapter. Each of these clusters of Norms has its own identity positioning implications and these are presented in a concluding discussion at the end of each section. The chapter concludes with comments on the identity positions offered by normative work.

## 6.2 Reintroducing Norms

Hymes's category of Norms allows analysis of the conventions and rules that govern the participants in an event such as Reading on the Mat. Hymes divides the category into norms of interaction and norms of interpretation. Norms of interaction are "the behaviours and proprieties that attach" to the event (Hymes, 1974, p. 60). Norms of interaction express group and individual expectations. Norms of interpretation, on the other hand, suggest the tacit understandings shared by participants, their common knowledge and cultural expectations (Saville-Troika, 2003). For example, children may stop reading when the teacher's attention is elsewhere, suggesting that they tacitly accept the monitoring function of Reading on the Mat. In the analysis reported in this chapter I use three guidelines for identifying Norms: *consistency of occurrence*; whether participants *hold each other accountable* for behaviour; and whether positive or negative *sanctions* are applied by participants to each other's behaviour. Mehan writes that the culture of the classroom "is guided by rules or norms established by convention, which means these



rules are implicitly taught, tacitly agreed on and cooperatively maintained” (1998, p. 249). The three guidelines I apply are simplified from Mehan’s (1979) four guidelines for inferring Norms from classroom interaction.

Firstly, *consistency* suggests that repetition signals normative work. The presence of norms is indicated by verbal or nonverbal items repeated in a naturalized or automatic way, and speech and actions that are habitual and unmarked. The simple repetition of instructions is an obvious example of this category. Also, as Erikson (1982) explains, when verbal and nonverbal communications regularly occur together, they signal an appropriate form through their co-occurrence. For example, when Mrs Samuels says *Okay* one child stops reading and another starts, revealing that *Okay* is a normative signal for readers to change.

A second way of inferring Norms is from *accountability*. When participants hold each other responsible for doing (or not doing) something, a rule is being expressed (Erikson, 1982). Explicit apologies, excuses, reminders and blame as well as proscriptions and affirmations, contestations, approval, agreement, disapproval and disagreement all indicate participant expectations. Rule building is particularly evident in the early part of the year, when teachers are inducting novices into the norms of the formation; for example, Mrs Dean: “Right, noos, you know the rules? Read...” (B21).

A third source of normative work is *sanctions*, either by reprimand or strong positive reinforcement. Mehan warns that patterns of sanction are not always consistent: some actions are negatively sanctioned in one event but not another, and this was the case on the Mat. The many inconsistencies in normative work are evidence of the variation and complexity of the Mat as a socio-pedagogic space. Some apparent inconsistencies can be explained by the fact that children learn Norms quickly, while teachers relax some rules and enforce others more stringently as the year progresses. Secondly, as Section 5.4 shows and Figure 16 illustrates, teachers create variation in their teaching by bringing elements together in different ways. A Norm might be invoked or repressed depending on the profile the teacher wants for that day’s event. Erikson acknowledges these complexities when he points out that “usually the situation is not quite this neat. Analysis of subsequent instances often reveal variations of the rules initially inferred and modifications of the event will be required” (1982, p. 228).

An analysis of the rules of behaviour expressed in Norms inevitably raises issues of training and conformity, and, following Bernstein's understanding of regulative discourse<sup>9</sup>, of classroom practices as being structured for the purpose of promoting behaviours. On the Mat rules are expressed physically, and the postures and behaviours that the school finds appropriate to the tasks of learning and reading are made visible. Reading on the Mat in Grade One is the first sight and site of the *inscription* and *embodiment* of dominant ideologies in the education system. Bourdieu, Wittgenstein and Foucault all argue that the child's body is used to transfer ideologies and to shape subjectivities (Cregan, 2006). Literacy learning is one such dominant ideology and the body is used in schools for the inscription of dominant power relationships related to text. This lays down a *memory trace* that enables ideologies to exist in time and space (Luke, 1992). McDermott et al. suggest that "postures embody the contexts participants create for each other and which exist over time and space" (1978, p. 256). Together participants create a reading practice that can be seen and experienced by them all.



Figure 17: Reading on the Mat: a physical formation

A contrasting perspective suggests that such socializing benefits early literacy teaching. Literature on teaching reading emphasizes the importance of structure, routine and order in

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<sup>9</sup> In classroom interaction, Bernstein distinguished between instructional discourses used to teach and inform, and regulative discourses used to control and direct.

early learning environments. In an assessment of excellent teaching Rivalland, Rohl, and Statkus maintain that “the quality of structure concerns the maintenance of an orderly and predictable environment” (2005, p. 212). The assessment continues: “These routines, which become part of the tacit landscape of the classroom, provide taken-for-granted structures for the introduction, monitoring, maintenance, conclusion and follow-up of activities” (2005, p. 212).

An examination of the Norms shows how rules and expectations express teachers’ purposes for activities on the Mat. As the examination of Act Sequences also demonstrates, the teachers in this study place their emphasis differently from each other and from the recommendations in the curriculum and the literature. Their emphasis suggests what they value in reading and this has implications for reader identity positions.

### **6.3 Phase One: Creating Reading on the Mat**

This section describes the Norms teachers promote on the Mat to create a physical literacy learning space. It presents the assumptions and expectations with which teachers and children enter this space, first by outlining the norms common to all teachers and then by looking at variations promoted by individual teachers.

The initial indicators of Reading on the Mat are all physical: coming to the Mat, sitting with legs crossed and leaving an open space in the middle. To this extent the bodies of the participants create the environment of learning. The teacher sits so that she can view the rest of the classroom and have *my place* (Mrs Samuels) with her back against the wall or furniture. From here she controls the class and can attend to children outside the circle. The open space between them is the arena of the group’s activities and is defended by the teacher. Opening instructions often include *move back* or *sit back* and gestures waving children away. Teachers are consistent about this Norm and hold children accountable for remembering it. The transcription below shows how contested an opening negotiation can be:

**Mrs Mitchell. Weak readers. Early in the year. Ladder books. E50.**

Mrs M            Bongani, Bongani. Look at me. **You’re in the middle of the group. If you’re in the middle, then nobody else can find a place to sit. So can you move back a little bit?**  
*Children making noises*

Mrs M ...And look behind you because Kallen's there. **Now, Kallen can you and Jordan move over a little bit then you can fit in there. Jesse ...**

C I'll be squashed up!

Mrs M ... **If Singobile moves a little bit forward and then back, then Regan will fit in.**

C Mrs Mitchell (indistinct)

Mrs M **Right? Can Regan fit in?**

C Yes.

C Mrs Mitchell...

Mrs M Whose book bag's that? Put it underneath here.

C Mrs Mitchell...

Mrs M There we are.

C AAAAHH!

C Mrs Mitchell?

Mrs M **Regan? Do you think that Jesse can fit in?**

C Ah, man!

Mrs M **Thank you because everybody fitted in for you.**  
*Children talking*

C Mrs Mitchell?

Mrs M Right, Kallen? Give me that book.

C You mustn't sit next to him all the time.

Mrs M Now, can everybody stop? Jordan? **Can everybody move back? Just a little bit... a little bit more? A little bit more? Oh, well done! Sivu is doing it right! Now, Kallen, can you move that way? Oh good! Good!**

C (Indistinct).

Mrs M **Regan, move back.**

C I'm sitting here because... everyone's SQUASHING ME!

Mrs M **Move back.**

C Not me!

C Your book is squashing me! (indistinct)

Mrs M **Fold it back. Fold it back.**

C Like this.

C Mrs Mitchell, there's no space!

Mrs M **Right, Regan? Then I want you to move back just a little bit more. There we are! That's it. Jesse, fold it back.**

The Norm which requires an open central space is sanctioned: the strongest recorded reprimands are for entering the circle uninvited. Mrs Mitchell says to outsiders "Please boys, can you go back to your seats! Off you go!" (C101). Mrs Samuels shouts at a boy: "No-one can stand in the circle!" (Observation note, 16 March) and also says "Please! I

didn't say you must come here! Go away!" (A39). Mrs Dean says "Please get out of my reading circle. Go away" (Video 105). Jordan and Henderson comment that "ownership of territory affects the mobility of participants – whether they can move around at will or have to ask for permission. It also affects rights to structure the event, to initiate the beginning and end, and probably other aspects as well" (1995, p. 42). Their claim to the open space of the Mat is therefore also the teachers' assertion of the power to direct activities on it.

On coming to the Mat, children place the materials for the first activity on the border of the space and then sit *nicely* to indicate readiness. The seating requirement is quickly relaxed as activities get under way, and in some groups children mostly lean or kneel, as Figure 41 illustrates. Children are close enough to each other to read over each other's shoulders, and at arm's length from the teacher. Teachers exploit this, tapping children to get their attention, turning pages or pointing to words in their books. Children may not leave until given an instruction to start another activity, often to select a book for additional homework reading. As they do this they may interact with each other. It is important to note that children are positioned less in relation to each other than in relation to the teacher and she is the one who mediates their relationship with the text. As children enter this space there may be conflict as they assert themselves socially, and the transcription from Mrs Mitchell's teaching, above, shows normative negotiation on this issue.

Opening obligations for the participants are that the children should prepare and attend. They take out and arrange texts and face inward. While on the Mat they must follow events in the circle with close attention, and "Focus, focus, focus" (Mrs Mitchell, 302). Norms further suggest that the teacher should open the session with a brief statement and supply texts: most apologies were about being late or not having books. After that she nominates a child to begin the activity. She may first insist on certain behaviour, as Mrs Samuels does: "I'm only gonna choose you to read if you're sitting flat on your bum" (C105). Mrs Dean waits silently for children to unpack, greets them briefly and immediately starts the activity. She may give children the opportunity to volunteer by asking who is *ready* or she may nominate a child: "Right, it's Ellerine's turn. Sound?" (C37). The following transcription illustrates her businesslike openings and shows her setting up the *winner* metaphor she frequently uses.

**Mrs Dean. Weak group. Midyear. Word cards. A52.**

Mrs Dean           **Right madam P. How're you today?**  
Geri                 Fine  
Mrs D               **Who's going to win?**  
Geri                 Me!  
Mrs D               **I bet you, you won't!**  
Geri                 I will!  
Mrs D               **Come on, shake.**  
Geri                 Hmm (*smiling*). Reads: At ...

Mrs Samuels allows bids and suggestions. The transcription below shows the style of her opening interactions:

**Mrs Samuels. Strong group. End of the year. Reading 360 "Boys and Girls." C107.**

Mrs S     Is it only you guys?  
C         Can I start?  
C         No, I'm starting!  
Mrs S     What... what page did we get up to?  
C         Uhm... to this page.  
C         Up to the song. Up to the song.  
C         Up to the song.  
C         Can we start the song again, Mrs Samuels?  
Mrs S     Okay, what page is it on?  
C         *Whispers:* I want to sing.  
C         Here! Page fourteen. Page fourteen! Page fourteen Mrs Samuels.  
Mrs S     Do you want to sing it again?  
Cs        Yes!  
Mrs S     Okay, go! One, two, three!

Mrs Samuels's Norms allow for children to suggest who should begin, as is visible in the children's vigorous negotiation for that honour. Their claims show that they recognize the turn-taking norms on the Mat, for example:

**Mrs Samuels. Undifferentiated readers. Early in the year. A42.**

Mrs S Shshshsh. Page twenty.  
C1 **I'm first here. I'm first here. I was first.**  
C2 **I was second!**  
C3 **I... I was third.**  
Mrs S *To C3: Right, do you wanna start here? Let's go. Shhh! Follow now, please?*

By contrast Mrs Mitchell seldom accepts bids by children, although they make them. For example:

**Mrs Mitchell. Weak readers. Midyear. Ladder books. C60.**

Mrs M Right, can you please go to ladder number forty five?  
Earl **I'm already there, Mrs Mitchell!**  
C **Me too!**  
Mrs M Quick-quick-quick!  
*Children talking amongst each other*  
Mrs M **Right, I see that Earl was ready first.**  
C *Making noises*  
Mrs M **Okay, can we have Vuyo, ladder number forty five, please.**  
Vuyo Reads: *cross, cross, cross...*  
Mrs M Oh, sorry, sorry... everybody's pointing. Just start on your other worksheets.  
C **I'm third...**  
Mrs M *Talking to another child (indistinct)*  
C **... now I'm fourth. Giovanni's last.**

Mrs Mitchell waits for everyone to be seated satisfactorily before she nominates. She may clarify her instructions by adding details, for example, "I'll tell you when to stop" (D47). She may require children to open the book only on her cue, for example, "Right, did I say open? Now, can you all look at the book and put it down in front of you... put it down in front of you with it closed" (C60).

These opening Norms all combine to close the circle to others, and to focus the group members inward on texts. The circle on the Mat is a protected space, and once there

children are seldom reprimanded and never dismissed. Their reading is interrupted only by the teacher instructing, co-reading or questioning. All reading performance is met with approval or praise (see Section 7.3.1). The inward-facing formation and the absence of reprimand combined with constant affirmation for reading performance establishes reading as the sole focus of teaching on the Mat. Inevitably within these general Norms each teacher differs from her colleagues and I detail these below.

Mrs Dean's *external border work* (McDermott et al., 1978) is strong. Children, staff or the principal sit or stand silently and wait for her to finish a phase. Her hunched posture emphasizes that she should not be *bugged* (her term). Her interaction with outsiders is in a discreet aside.



Figure 18: Teacher waiting to talk to Mrs Dean

Within the circle the Norms that Mrs Dean establishes are egalitarian: she takes her turn in word games and appears to ponder over choices as seriously as the children do. These signals of equality are offset by the way in which the group forms itself around her: when they approach or leave the group they approach or leave *her*. A balance between an egalitarian Key and teacher-centered control continues once the reading activities begin.

Mrs Samuels is the most accommodating about being interrupted, but also the least visited. She seldom gestures outsiders away and interacts with them openly over the heads of the group. She leaves the group to attend to people outside the circle and at those times



children might continue reading without her. She breaks the circle formation into pairs and might move the group into the corridor or the library. Mrs Samuels's practice is the most interactive, as evidenced by the constant negotiation between children regarding the rights of individuals to read alone or to join each other's reading (discussed in Section 6.4). In her groups children bid for or claim the right to begin an activity. She may ask who is beginning or where they have got to, as she does in the transcription above. She quickly hands over turn-taking to the group, nodding or looking up to cue a child to read.

Mrs Mitchell's practice is the most formal and unified: all children must be present before activities can begin and the group waits for members to arrive and be appropriately seated. Only *smartness*<sup>10</sup> (Mrs Mitchell) entitles a child to read first, and she judges whether individuals are sufficiently smart. Books must be placed on the floor and Mrs Mitchell prefers to make all instructions verbal and explicit; of the three, she is the most verbal in her communication. Her instructions may include whether reading will be individual or in unison. Poor performance is not reprimanded but a weak child may be asked to re-read a section, whereas in other classes children are not asked to repeat. Mrs Mitchell stops the group activity with a *hushing* gesture, patting the air to request silence when visitors arrive.

In summary, the opening Norms of Reading on the Mat are fairly standard for all the teachers in the study, with some teachers' practice suggesting a more closed group than others. The Norms exclude others and allow the teacher easy access to the reading child. The rights of the teacher to monitor, control and assess are emphasized, as is the duty of each child to focus on the reading task. The opening norms offer identity positions that highlight the importance of the activities on the Mat and of the children there. Strong external borders, established and maintained by the teacher, accentuate the group nature of the activities and intensify the significance of work that is done in this formation.

Depending on the Key or tone set by the teacher, being with her in an intimate group may be social for a young reader, as the joking, laughter and banter children initiate with all the teachers before and after sessions indicates. These interactions suggest that even the weakest readers may enjoy this social space. On the other hand, being close to the teacher

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<sup>10</sup> *Smartness* means that the child is sitting with legs crossed, facing forward attentively with books in front and book bag behind him.

may be stressful, particularly when children are asked to read individually. This possibility was not investigated, but is likely to be the case. The same may apply when the teacher emphasizes the assessment or monitoring aspect of the interaction, as described in Section 6.4, below. Teachers counteract this possibility with consistent praise, as presented in Section 7.3.1. No teacher was heard criticizing reading performance. Instead they modeled reading or praised children who were reading in a desired style. It is likely that the Key generated by each teacher will determine how children experience close contact with her.

## **6.4 Phase Two: Performing Reading on the Mat**

Once the group has been established with the Norms described above and the implications for identity construction that they suggest, the performance aspect of the group begins. Whether the session is long (44 minutes) or short (10 minutes), further Norms suggest how participation should take place. These Norms control entering and sharing the activity, and prescribe the role of the teacher on the Mat. They are established by the teacher, who provides children with structured opportunities to interact and take part in the group. Jordan and Henderson observe that

[i]n formal educational settings, the rules for turn-taking tend to be highly stylized and ritualized. Officially, the teacher is in charge of turn allocation. The teacher speaks (explains, lectures, demonstrates), and then specifically assigns turns to students by calling on them. Student self-selection is frowned upon, since it is considered disruptive to the sequence of activities planned by the teacher. (1995, pp. 34–35).

The first Norm of participation, and one that teachers and children hold each other accountable for remembering, is that children have equal opportunities to read and to answer questions. For example, Mrs Mitchell asks: “Who hasn’t had a turn?” (E50), and “Have you had a turn, Vuyo? ... When we started, you went first” (C64). Children also claim their right to read, indicating they are aware of the expectation that each should have the same opportunity. For example:

**Mrs Mitchell. Weak group. Late in the year. C100.**

C            **I didn’t read mine!**

Mrs M        This is... **Oh, sorry!**

C           **And me!**  
Mrs M       **Oh! Sorry!** There's still Lelethu.

Mrs Samuels's children similarly remind her who should read. A Norm of class participation is that children may bid to answer by raising their hands, but on the Mat questions are usually addressed only to the individual who has just read. Mrs Dean was not recorded using general questions on the Mat, but Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels were. The teachers prefer to nominate a reader or responder by name or to give a nonverbal cue such as a glance or nod. Teachers establish a pattern for reading, such as left to right, and children are alert to this and cue each other, for example "Regan! Watch out! It's you! It's you!" (C64). These elements ensure equal participation and emphasize the principle of equal opportunity on the Mat.

Children may bid or claim their share of the activity, as they do in the extract above, but entering the activity relies on the teacher's endorsement and bids are directed to her. Analysis of the discourse presented in Chapter Seven shows teachers repeatedly calling for children's attention by naming them. This habit expresses two overlapping Norms: that all the children should have equal opportunities, as mentioned earlier, but also that children should pay attention. Goodwin points out that "the use of a summons to someone who is only a couple of feet away ... is clearly not dealing with issues of co-presence (for example, a summons to call an absent child to dinner), but rather of alignment to the activity being pursued by the summoner" (2007, p. 64). Names are used repeatedly to move the activity from one child to another. For example, over the course of six sessions, a total of 2 hours and 10 minutes, Mrs Mitchell names individual children 362 times, nearly three a minute, and Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels are not far behind. This suggests the importance to the teachers of both regular turn taking and reader attention.

Once the reading starts, another Norm, that of following or pointing, once again emphasizes the related principles that every child should participate and that all should pay attention to the group's activities. Analysis of the discourse presented in Section 6.4 shows teachers repeating *point* and *follow* to enforce this Norm. The unmarked way in which children apply patterns of participation shows that they accept them. For example, Mrs Samuels's children read from left to right round the circle and the teacher confirms turn-taking with a glance or nod.

As I mentioned in Section 6.3, the children's duty is to focus on the group activities, and the inward-facing group structure on the Mat makes this easier. Every child is meant to attend to the words on the page and to the reading of others. Each teacher, however, requires different outward manifestations of that focus.

Mrs Dean is not recorded as asking children to follow each other's reading, although she may call children's attention: "Come, noo." They did follow each other's reading attentively and the unmarked nature of their interaction suggests that they are conforming to a Norm. Mrs Dean points to a word to focus the reading child, but does not verbalize the request. Her children have less opportunity to follow each other's reading as she seldom asks children to read the same text in round robin reading.

Mrs Samuels also models pointing, making explicit a Norm that applies only to extended text: "And I want you to watch how I follow, all the time. This is how you need to follow when someone else reads. 'Kay? Put your finger here, like that, under the gap..." (A42). She insists that children follow as others read: "Keira, you must leave that and you follow in the reading book, my baby!" (A42). *Follow* is one of Mrs Samuels' commonest imperatives and she gives the reason a number of times: "You are now supposed to be following! Because you can learn from her! And you can learn from everybody else! I want to see you following the words! Okay?" (A39). Later in the year she explains: "You can learn from everybody. So you need to follow when they read" (B85).

Mrs Mitchell similarly emphasizes the need to follow, and like Mrs Samuels she makes the Norm explicit on a number of recorded occasions. Children must point to the words, whether in lists or extended text, as visible proof that they are attending. She suggests that it promotes expression: "Right, try now and let your finger run across so that we can get that interesting story coming out. Let's go" (C100). Both following and pointing are frequently stressed by all the teachers (see list of transitivity analysis in Appendix 7).

Reading theory suggests that following while others read increases children's exposure to the text. It does however mean that speed is determined by the reading child, not the following child. However, pointing to words as one reads oneself is seen as a transitional habit, useful for focusing the eyes and attention of early readers, but one that children lose as they become more fluent (CAPS, South Africa, 2010). After that, finger pointing may slow down reading and impede comprehension by keeping reading at a word-meaning level.

Norms of attending and following dominate participation on the Mat. A significant decision that teachers make for this participation is whether reading will be done in unison or by the individual, or in a combined pattern. Each teacher sets up Norms of participation differently in this regard, and the teachers in the study promote three basic interactions with extended text:

- Silent individual reading
- Round robin reading, in which each child reads a section of text while the others listen, following the words in their own copy
- Unison reading by the whole group. The teacher may or may not join in.

Silent individual reading on the Mat is a Norm established only by Mrs Dean, as I described in Section 5.6.1. She does this through explicit request: “Read in your heads, noos, then read for me. When you’re finished, choose two pages that you really like” (B21). Her groups also do more silent individual reading on the Mat because they read the whole book to choose their pages. Because the texts of the *Little Books* are all different, her children do less round robin reading than in other classes. The strongest reader internalized this Norm quickly and early in the year insisted on reading the rest of the book herself (102). By contrast, silent individual reading in Mrs Samuels’s classroom happens off the Mat. There is no record of silent individual reading in Mrs Mitchell’s classroom. I have discussed the implications of this for identity positioning in Section 5.7. At the same time as establishing a Norm for silent individual reading, Mrs Dean is least likely to ask for unison reading: the first example was recorded late in the school year. Children’s interactions with cards or books are structured by Mrs Dean as an individual project. For example, “Walk the word wall,” the card activity described in Section 5.6.2, is done alone and the only role for group members is as observers.

Round robin reading is a feature of both Mrs Samuels’s and Mrs Mitchell’s practice, but with different Norms in each classroom. It is combined with unison reading in different patterns. Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels may cue unison reading nonverbally by starting to read with a distinct, loud, slow intonation which children recognize and read along with. Mrs Samuels starts reading any extended text with round robin reading. Children show their awareness of this by bidding to start, as the transcription quoted above shows. Each child then reads a page. They re-read the text as many times as it takes for each child to be heard. Unison reading may finish what is left of the text after all have read once or twice.

In Mrs Samuels's class there is considerable negotiation around the issue of reading with another child, which is both supported and subverted by the teacher in ways that suggests normative negotiation is taking place. This is therefore a contested midpoint between the options of group unison and individual reading. The vigour of the debate between Eben and an unnamed child below shows suggests a Norm under construction:

**Mrs Samuels. Undifferentiated group. Early in the year. Ladybird "Things we like." A42.**

- C1 *Reads: Peter and Jane like to help... Daddy...*  
 C2 *Helps C reading: they! They help Daddy.*  
 Mrs S Eben?  
 Eben **(Indistinct) is reading with me.**  
 Mrs S **Okay, we're gonna help you! We all help you. Let's go.**  
 C1 Yes!  
 C2 **I helped you with Daddy.**  
 C3 **He didn't do it!**  
 Mrs S **Shh! Just let him read (Indistinct).** *Reads: They help?*

Norms of whether children are allowed to help each other remain contested in this classroom, as an exchange between Jaypee and Siya eight months later shows. Siya knows the Norms and accepts Mrs Samuels's ruling good-naturedly:

**Mrs Samuels. Weak readers. Late in the year. Ladybird "Things we like." C107.**

- Jaypee *(Softly spells word out): D-O....*  
 Siya Don't!  
 Jaypee **DON'T! Huh-uh man, Siyabulela!** *Continues reading: Is... likes... eh... a... who... WHOA!*  
 Mrs S Yah!  
*Shortly afterwards Mrs Samuels warns Siya:*  
 Mrs S Don't help him.  
 Siya **Okay, okay, okay.**

Although she supports Jaypee's appeal, Mrs Samuels is herself the one most likely to co-read. The normative negotiation may arise from children following her example. Like her, they chorus softly or prompt each other despite ongoing protests of the kind quoted in C107 above. Mrs Samuel may tacitly allow the soft vocalization because it shows they are

obeying her constant injunction to *follow*. They also read over each other's shoulders and off the Mat may read to or with each other socially (see Figure 20). By contrast, children in Mrs Dean's groups seldom read with or to each other, although they can be seen reading over each other's shoulders. There is no record of children objecting to others reading with them, but at their desks they read alone. In Mrs Mitchell's classroom co-reading diminishes towards the end of the year, when the Norm of individual reading is strongly established and children are more able to follow silently.

Mrs Mitchell, like Mrs Samuels, begins sessions with round robin reading. Unison reading is more common at the end of the session, with both Ladder books and graded readers. However, she may break the round robin pattern at any time with a teaching comment or question, or a request to repeat. She may also ask for a short section of unison reading before returning to individual reading. Mrs Mitchell provides the most instruction on the Mat: a transcription of her dialogue without the children's contribution is twice as long as either of the other two teachers. This self-interrupting style means that she must continually refresh round robin reading by naming the next child, as this transcription shows:

**Mrs Mitchell. Weak group. Late in the year. Ladder books. C101.**

<b>Mrs M</b>	<b>Right, Regan, can you do that?</b>
Regan	Reads: <i>hello, hello, hello, eggs, eggs, eggs... (pauses)... help-ed...</i>
Mrs M	Helped
Regan	Reads: <i>helped...think, think...</i>
Mrs M	Uh...
Regan	Reads: <i>think, think, think, tent... who... oh...oven, oven, oven</i>
C	<b>Whispers to Regan: <i>think, think, think</i></b>
Regan	Reads... <i>think, think, think!</i>
Mrs M	Yes! Well done! <b>Right, the last column, everybody together.</b>
Mrs M/Cs	<b>Read together: <i>call, call, call, fan, fan, fan, from, from, from, sung, sung, sung...</i></b> <b>(pause)</b>
Mrs M	Break it up.
Mrs M/Cs	<b>Read: <i>wasn't, wasn't, wasn't...</i></b>
Mrs M	Good, <b>Jordan!</b>
Mrs M/C	<b>Read: <i>wasn't, wasn't, wasn't, under, under, under, gingerbread, gingerbread, gingerbread.</i></b>
Mrs M	<b>Right, on your own please, Daniel. And, let's have Jordan with you.</b>

Mrs Mitchell makes her Norm for participation in round robin reading explicit: “Nobody is allowed to help anybody,” (302) and “You’re not allowed to tell” (ibid.). To enforce this she frequently names the child who is to read, for example, “Right, on your own please, Daniel” (C101). By contrast, Mrs Samuels signals that readers should change with a nod, glance or a brief “Good ... Right ... Okay...”. Mrs Mitchell requires unison reading of extended sections and she switches between individual and unison reading; the movement from unison to individual reading always depends on her signal. Unlike the other teachers she presents unison reading as an important skill in its own right: “Fantastic, alright, one page together boys so that we learn to read together” (C100). Although she establishes and enforces the Norm of individual reading clearly, she may also disregard it by asking the group to help a weak reader: “Okay, let’s help...let’s help uhm... Lelethu” (C100). Interestingly, the children’s behaviour suggests that for them the Norm of not helping overrides the instruction: the boy who helps Regan in the transcription above does so surreptitiously.

The Norms of participation described above shape children’s relationship to text in five ways, and this in turn provides particular identity positions for them. To the extent that a number of Norms support the same identity position, they overlap and distinctions between them are subtle. First, the normative behaviour on the Mat suggests who is an appropriate audience for a reader. Norms secondly emphasize assessment opportunities for the teacher. Thirdly, Norms in some classrooms emphasize reading as performance. Fourthly, in round robin reading the text is fragmented in a way that emphasizes the decoding aspect of reading. Finally, unison reading emphasizes both performance and decoding rather than comprehension. These features and their identity positioning effects are discussed in more detail below.

The Norms of individual or unison reading demonstrate that teachers are indicating the appropriate audience for reading. Mrs Dean’s Norms promote two audiences: the child to herself and the child to the teacher. Children demonstrate that they understand this when Mrs Dean’s attention moves away: the reader invariably stops. At the same time, children in her classroom have a well-developed sense of themselves as audience, as Angie shows when she says “I want to read it” (Video 102) and moves away to finish the book. Children at their desks read silently to themselves rather than to each other. In Mrs Dean’s classroom, therefore, children are offered a degree of agency as readers.



The Norms of Mrs Samuels's and Mrs Mitchell's practice provide for regular unison as well as individual reading, and this implies another audience. Mrs Samuels's children co-read and insert words as others hesitate (the children may or may not object to peer assistance). This indicates that they have a sense of other children as an audience, and of reading as a shared oral activity. Mrs Samuels promotes this conception when she sends pairs into the corridor for *buddy reading*. Her children often spend time reading to or with each other as well as silently to themselves (see Figure 20).

Mrs Mitchell calls for unison reading most frequently but maintains control over the movement between individual and unison reading, thus presenting herself as the only audience for reading. Children never read silently on the Mat or in the classroom, nor do they read to each other. Her ideal reader is one who in Grade One "confidently reads in front of his peers or at an assembly" (Interview, 2010), and her aesthetic is a fairly slow chant: "Right, can we try and read together again without anybody rushing off?" (C100). Norms established by Mrs Mitchell emphasize the performance aspects of reading, such as participation, speed, volume and style.

In classrooms where Norms suggest the teacher as an audience the identity constructed for the children is as subjects of the teachers' scrutiny. Reading becomes primarily a vehicle for assessment. Norms that further emphasize the public performance of reading invoke firstly an identity position in which children submit to the scrutiny of the group as well as the teacher. Neither of these offers the children the identity position of private meaning maker, or promotes a view of text in which children interrogate meaning, genre or bias. Only Mrs Dean's practice offers normative work promoting silent, private reading by the individual, based largely on individual choice. The identity offered through assessment features of Reading on the Mat derive from four elements of their practice. Retaining the teacher as the primary audience, as Mrs Dean and Mrs Mitchell do, broadly suggests monitoring or assessing. Other Norms of participation support assessment opportunities on the Mat. Firstly, there is the common insistence that there should be no *helping*, made most explicit by Mrs Mitchell. Secondly, teachers respond immediately to inaccuracy, even when there is little difference in meaning, for example a child who reads "Mom" for "Mum" (Mrs Mitchell, D47), and Mrs Dean: "Remember, it's an "uh" so it's mum. Not mom. Come. Lulama!" (B21). In other examples the correction is equally small, for example, Mrs Mitchell insists on a plural: Is it "rabbit" or "rabbits"? ... Okay, be

careful!” (D47) and “Read! Is it ‘sock’ or ‘socks’? ... Because it’s got a *s* on the end” (E50). A third Norm that implies assessment is Mrs Mitchell’s request to repeat reading, as does her praise of practicing:

- Let’s give Glen a clap, we can hear he has practised! (C100).
- I can hear you’ve been practising, Kayden! Well done! *Other child*: Mrs Mitchell, I practised! (C100).

Norms of questions, presented in Section 6.6.4, also suggest that assessment is a priority in the minds of the teachers. Literature on Guided Reading indicates that monitoring is an appropriate emphasis for a small group literacy event, and that the practice “involves ongoing observation and assessment that inform the teacher’s interaction with individuals in the group and help the teacher select appropriate texts” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 2). The Norms presented above, which enable teachers to monitor reading, construct an event which is about the teacher listening, not about children sharing or about individuals making meaning. Once again this offers children an identity as subjects of scrutiny and judgment.

A second set of Norms that affect identity positioning are inherent in notions of performance. These are emphasized by Mrs Mitchell more than the other teachers, although they all praise *beautiful* reading and ask children to read more slowly or loudly. For example, Mrs Samuels says: “I can’t hear you at all. Please start again. Ssht. Please be quiet” (A42). The construction of reading as performance is inherent in notions of audience, and so performance elements are least obvious in Mrs Dean’s classroom, where the audiences are the child (silently) and herself (as monitor), and most obvious in Mrs Mitchell’s where the audience consists only of the teacher. The identity position offered to children as performers emphasizes the individual, but in an exposed public role available for evaluation. These Norms also suggest that text is a source of performance rather than for private contemplation.

A third set of Norms affecting identity positioning on the Mat are present in round robin reading. This practice significantly positions young readers as code breakers rather than meaning makers because each child reads only part of the text and the story is fragmented. Constant instructions to follow and point show the extent to which children’s attention wanders. Easily distracted children may never hear the text as a whole, and daily lose opportunities to engage with continuous text. In addition, questions are usually based on

those small individually read sections rather than the whole book, and the closing discussion required by Guided Reading practice almost never occurs, as Section 5.6.1 shows. Sloan and Latham summarize the consequences of this by saying that “In terms of listening and meaning-making, this strategy [round robin reading] is a disaster” (1981, p. 135). Instruction or questions can further fragment the experience and make meaningful comprehension impossible. In one session, for example, Mrs Mitchell interrupts the story by asking children to find rhyming words and returns to the text after thirteen rhyming pairs have been identified. Any Norm that sanctions round robin reading therefore promotes an identity position for children which meshes with that identified in Chapter Five: as code breakers rather than meaning makers. On the other hand, round robin reading may promote a stronger sense of group identity because children help, co-read and alert each other more in this pattern.

A final contributory factor of Norms of participation to identity positioning is the unison reading Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels add to round robin reading. Unison reading slows the pace of the reading and produces a chanting style. This practice also militates against comprehension because the slow pace keeps reading at word-level comprehension rather than at phrase- or sentence-level. It lacks the rhythms of natural speech which follow meaning and promote comprehension (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). Mrs Mitchell in particular requires unison reading to follow her cue, and she manages page turning to ensure this:

- **Turn over**, read Glen (D47).
- Right, **everybody turn over. Everybody together now**, please (D47).
- **Don’t turn**, Eben, please? (E50)
- Please **don’t turn if we don’t ask you to**, Vuyo? (E50)

Unison reading promotes an identity in which the individual is subsumed into the performance of the group. It suggests, like individual performance reading, that the role of the reader is a public one and that the text is there as the material enabling the performance. It is less about assessment of the individual than about making sure of the uniform involvement of a large number of children. Unison reading in Grade One therefore suggests a practice that prepares children specifically for the school.

## **6.5 Making participation work: The role of the teacher**

The Norms of participation described above all rely on the teacher to direct and control activities on the Mat. Section 6.5 focuses on the Norms that enable her to direct and control, to observe and to be a resource for the children.

It is important to emphasize in this regard that Grade One classrooms are fluid social spaces in which children are exploring rules and permissions. Teachers make both explicit and tacit expectations an aspect of children's learning. Audio and video tapes capture negotiation and status-seeking behaviour both on and off the Mat. In all classrooms social place-finding may emerge on the Mat as conflict between children who try to read first, to see, to sit close to the teacher and so on. Some of these have already been quoted in this chapter and show the teacher asserting her controlling role. Norms suggest two additional roles for the teacher: to observe and to be available as a reading resource.

The control of the teacher and the strong normative work described in this chapter mean that inexperienced participants are not challenged to maintain the coherence of the session and need only follow the teacher's lead. As maintaining an exchange is a complex feature of conversation, needing the skills of insertion, repair, feedback and an understanding of logical, thematic or syntactic links (Wardhaugh, 2010), it is appropriate for the teacher to generate a strong frame for the event that keeps the focus on the teaching rather than on the complexities of free conversation. Furthermore, research on effective Grade One instruction (Morrow et al., 1999), has found that teacher effectiveness is strongly linked to management skills, in this instance deployed to ensure that the children spend more time on literacy activities.

Norms of participation such as ensuring turn taking depend on the teacher claiming her right to control activities. All three teachers defend this role from child interlopers: "Stop being the teacher" says Mrs Dean (Observation notes 2). Mrs Samuels reacts similarly: "Shush Lusiba. Don't tell them what to do. You think you are the teacher but you're not" (Observation notes 2). Mrs Mitchell has a rule that children do not correct each other, that is, they may not usurp her role, and she makes it explicit: "Lovey, we've just said that you never ever correct. Right, what did you do?" (C100). These comments reveal teachers asserting their sole right to direct what happens on the Mat.

Mention has been made in Section 6.3 of the closeness and closedness of Reading on the Mat. Within the circle each teacher watches and listens to the reading child. Their attention expresses a central conundrum of assessing early reading development: that reading is a mental process which can only be inferred from performance. The report of the expert panel on early reading in Ontario indicates that:

Young children show their understanding by doing, showing, and telling. Assessment strategies need to capture this doing, showing, and telling by watching, listening, and probing. Hence, observation is an integral part of all other assessment strategies. Reading assessments should not generally require the child to use writing strategies. (Armbruster & Osborn, 2003, p. 28)

This explains teachers' focus on each reader and the importance of the teacher's supervision, which literally requires her to see all reading behaviour. The child's role is to pay attention to text; the teacher's role is to pay attention to the reading child, and both these principles are expressed in normative work on the Mat. The South African handbook "Teaching reading in the early grades" (South Africa, 2008) confirms that this as an appropriate role for the teacher in Guided Reading. Once again, however, the teachers in this study interpreted the role of observer in various ways. Analysis of the discourse as presented in Chapter Seven shows that Mrs Dean wants to *listen* to their reading.



Figure 19: Mrs Dean listening

Mrs Dean also wants the children to watch the words, not her, unless she is demonstrating pronunciation. For example, she says: “Here, are you watching? Put your words down, Nick, you need to watch the new words coming up” (B53). Her hunched, attentive posture, shown in Figure 19, expresses nonverbally her focused listening.

Mrs Samuels’s attention is less focused, and the group takes on some of her role as observer and corrector. Mrs Mitchell is the most aware of the power of her gaze, which she justifies: “Right Glen, can you come and sit here, because... then I can see what you have done and what you haven’t done” (C101). Mrs Mitchell’s gaze is a reprimand or reward in its own right, as these additional examples suggest:

- I see **group three**... and group four! Well done to those boys! (D47)
- And Sivu, **I’m watching you**...and Bongani. (C100)
- Sivu **I can see is doing it** that’s why he’ll know all his words today (E50)
- It’s Bongani’s turn, **and I’m looking who’s next** (E50).
- Right, **I see that Earl** was ready first (C60)
- Because **I see... let’s see now, I see** Earl’s doing it smartly, ... (C60)
- Oh! **I see Earl’s** there. (C60)
- **Let’s see** who’s going to be first... Ross! Go! (C64).
- Then, pack everything away and you sit quietly so **I can see** which group can go out first (C101).

At the same time she requires children to watch her. For example, she says:

- Boys, **look at me** (D47).
- Bongani, Bongani. **Look at me** (D47).
- **Look at my hand** (E50).
- Alright, we’ll stop there... **look at me** (E50).
- Right then, Earl, **look at me**, lovey? (E50)
- Alright boys, very quietly, I’m going to ask you to go to the back, **look at me**. (C64)
- Right, boys, **look at me, look at me**. (C100)

Mrs Mitchell’s insistence that children watch her supports the suggestion that she sees herself as director and generator of activities, as well as observer.

The Norms of Reading on the Mat also appear to require that teachers offer themselves as resources as soon as children start reading. The teachers in my study demand accurate decoding, and they all correct or help the reading child. Children turn to them freely for help, using nonverbal signals such as pauses, glances and upward intonations. These interactions have an unmarked, automatic quality which suggests a strongly held Norm.

Children are most likely to help or correct each other's accuracy. Their confident interventions in each other's reading also suggest that the Mat is a space in which children expect to receive help. At the same time, each teacher sets up different normative responses to any breakdown in reading and these give a different flavour to her interactions with children on the Mat. These are detailed below.

Mrs Dean has developed nonverbal cues for problematic words and signals them as a child hesitates. This enables her to coach decoding in silence and to keep the text meaning paramount. She seldom uses word-level teaching while children are reading, and is the least likely to co-read or to offer a word until the child asks explicitly for it. Her cues are further discussed in Section 7.4.4.

By contrast, Mrs Samuels's practice has a coaching flavour and she gives tips or supplies words during reading. The transcription below captures her style.

**Mrs Samuels. Undifferentiated group. Early in the year. Ladybird "Things we like." A39.**

Khazimla I can't read that.  
Mrs S **Where are you now?**  
Khazimla Here.  
Mrs S **Helps Khazimla: With.**  
Khazimla *Reads: With... (pauses)*  
Mrs S **What are they playing with?**  
Khazimla Toys.  
Mrs S **Good! Carry on. Shht!**  
Khazimla *Reads: He... (pauses)*  
Mrs S **Look, it says?**  
Khazimla *Reads word: (Indistinct)*  
Mrs S **Ya?**  
Khazimla *Reads: Play...*  
Mrs S **Plays, with an "s," nê?**  
Khazimla Plays...

Mrs Samuels uses pictures to predict words, for example, "Look at the picture. It helps you, see?" (A42). She gives contextual tips also, for example, when a child reads "She ..." she interjects "Peter's a boy, so what's that?" Child: "He ..." (A39). While Mrs

Samuels's style suggests individual coaching, Mrs Mitchell supplies help in the style of whole class teaching, as this transcription demonstrates:

**Mrs Mitchell. Strong group. Early in the year. Reading 360, "The bee." D47.**

- Vuyo Reads: *No Lad, stop... look... out.*
- Mrs M **Look? That new word?**
- Vuyo *Look out.*
- Mrs M Look out! **And can you see that little line, everybody? That little line with the dot underneath?**
- C Look out!
- Mrs M **What did I tell you about it last time?**
- C You must... you must say... uhm... loud.
- C You must stop and then you say it again.
- Mrs M **Good boy! It's an exclamation mark...**
- C Stop!
- Mrs M **And we don't just say: (*monotone*) look out. We... we're warning him...**
- C Shouts: *Look out!*
- Mrs M **Okay, now let's say it all together, don't shout it though, but let's say it together.**

Norms promoted on the Mat thus establish the teacher's role as a resource for children in their reading as well as a standard of correctness.

Norms described in this section emphasize the teachers' roles as controllers, observers and resources. Inevitably, therefore, children are positioned as subject to that control. The teachers show that control can have different qualities, however, and to discuss this I suggest a distinction between *control* and *direction*. Mrs Dean, for example, exerts a high level of control with little overt direction, partly because she does much of her coaching nonverbally. In every session she offers herself as a participant in a game which children will win against her: the rules of the game appear to control behaviour while she participates. This is intentional: she says that Grade One is "a little people's world and most adults don't get to go into a little people's world. I do every day" (Interview, August 2010). The positioning work in her classroom suggests that children are independent and have some agency within the control mechanisms Mrs Dean has established.

Mrs Mitchell, on the other hand, exerts high levels of both control and direction because she is so verbal in instructing and managing the group. Her style is admonishing, with



triple repetitions of instructions, for example, “Can you all go and practise, practise, practise today?” (C64). She reminds children of her minatory gaze. These practices make both control and direction more evident in the Norms she establishes, and in turn suggests identities for the children as dependent on her and subject to the direct exertion of her authority.

Mrs Samuels presents the least obvious control or direction, preferring to cue readers nonverbally and to allow the group to operate to some extent on its own. She does not offer herself as a participant like Mrs Dean, and the democratic qualities of her practice are extensions of Norms in which she allows children to take on some of her own coaching roles. This offers children an identity which is independent and self-monitoring, and which they express by experimenting with different modes of literacy in their free time.



Figure 20: Voluntary reading in Mrs Samuels’s classroom late in the year. The girls left and left far back are reading silently to themselves; the girl right is reading aloud to herself and the boys middle right back are co-reading in unison

The different mechanisms of control lead to significant differences in the identity positions offered to children as readers. In Mrs Dean’s classroom reading is presented as the private cognitive project of the individual, and children who achieve in this regard are given a positive identity as readers. For example, three Grade Three children approached Angie, reading silently alone on the Mat early in the year. They commented admiringly to each other on the Level 3 book she was reading (Observation notes 1). They were acknowledging the high value of silent individual reading in this classroom, where they

had learned to read two years before. Their admiration (and Angie's tacit acceptance of it) further suggests that silent individual reading maintains its status later in the Foundation Phase. In Mrs Mitchell's classroom only public reading performance is given that value, and only the teacher awards accomplishment. Again by contrast, the Norms in Mrs Samuels's classroom suggest a positive reading identity for children who participate in reading as a group social event. This they frequently do voluntarily, as Figure 20 shows.

## 6.6 Norms of the pedagogy: Teaching and learning to read

Section 6.4 describes Norms of participation on the Mat and the implications these have for identity construction. The following section reports on the normative work contained in pedagogic practices. As Chapter Five also demonstrates, the pedagogic choices of teachers have implications for the identity positions offered to children. Norms of the pedagogies emphasize the skills that are valued in the classroom and suggest to participants both what teaching is and who children are as learners and readers. This section examines Norms that are set up by the teachers in regard to reading: Norms of pronunciation, accuracy, explaining and teaching decoding strategies, and asking and answering questions.

### 6.6.1 Norms of reading: What is beautiful?

All teachers praise *gorgeous* reading (Mrs Samuels, C105), thereby constructing a Norm for what good reading is on the Mat: naturally inflected fluent reading with standard received South African pronunciation. But pronunciation issues are dealt with differently by the three teachers. Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels mostly ignore accent varieties or pronunciation differences that are not related to accuracy, although Mrs Mitchell reminds children of South African English rather than American pronunciation in the example below. Early in the session she says "Remember what we said about can't (ɑ:) and can't (æ)?" and this exchange follows later:

**Mrs Mitchell. Strong readers. Beginning of the year. Ladder books. D47.**

Mrs M	Good boy! You remembered ca:n't! Well done! Darrell.
Cs	Cæn't. It's not cæn't, it's ca:n't. Cæn't, ca:n't.

At Mrs Dean's school all the Foundation Phase teachers coach standard received pronunciation carefully (Pilot study, 2009). They explain that mispronunciation confuses phonics instruction and may promote habitual mis-reading (Pilot discussion with Mrs Dean and a Grade Three teacher, 2009). Mrs Dean corrects Ellarine's Afrikaans pronunciation of *fat* according to this school practice: "No, that's a *v*. That's a *vat*. *Aff*. Good girl. Look at me, don't say *v*, say *f*" (C37).

Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels do not provide explicit instruction on reading style, but praise those who are reading *beautifully*. They model expressive fluent reading daily in classroom story time. Mrs Dean's children display the highest standard of natural inflection or intonation.<sup>11</sup> Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels's children read at their own volume, which may be very softly. The teachers make the effort to follow, leaning forward and *shushing* other children.

In line with observations on Mrs Mitchell's sense of herself as audience and reading as a performance activity, Norms established by her on the Mat emphasize performance-related aspects of reading such as keeping up with the group, speed, volume and style. In the following examples she makes each requirement explicit:

- "Sorry, stop (indistinct). We have one rude little boy who's forgotten how to **read with us**. Right, number ten please?" (D47).
- "Pardon? You're **going too quickly**, start again" (D47) OR "**Hurry on please**, Earl. Next page" (C64) OR "Right, one page together. Remember, **nobody rushes**" (C101).
- "Okay, now let's say it all together, **don't shout it** though, but let's say it together" (D47) OR "Bongani, a **little bit louder** please?" (E50).
- "And boys, I don't want... you all know how to read now, I don't **want-any-one-to-read-like-that**. We're gonna make it interesting" (E50).

While Mrs Mitchell values the rise and fall of natural intonation, the Norms of unison reading, which produces a slow chant, override her later attempts to teach it. She tries to erase monotonous chanting (see last quote above), but unsuccessfully. At the end of the year she says "Now listen, sweetie pie, you're reading fast and beautiful, but I want expression" (C100).

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<sup>11</sup> With natural inflection or intonation the reader approximates the rise and fall of speech. In English, which is not a tonal language, inflection also follows meaning.

In two strikingly similar interactions, *beautiful reading* is explicitly equated with rendering punctuation by Mrs Samuels and Mrs Mitchell in the exchanges below:

**Mrs Samuels. Strong readers. Late in the year. Reading 360 “Boys and girls.” C107.**

- C            *Reads: Come and see...*
- Mrs S        What’s that little thing there?
- C            Full stop.
- C            *Reads: Come and see the surprise said Penny.*
- Mrs S        No, but what is that?
- C            It’s a full stop!
- Mrs S        It’s not a full stop. I’m not even asking you!
- C            (*Giggles*)
- Mrs S        It’s a...? Comma. That means you need to take a breath.
- C            (*Makes noise*)
- Mrs S        It’s like... it goes like this; “*Come and see the surprise (pauses) said Penny.*” Then there’s a full stop, then you take another breath. “*It’s a grasshopper for mom.*” You’re doing it nicely, that’s why she’s reading with lots of expression. She’s looking to see where the full stops and the commas are. So, if you go from the top.
- C            *Reads: A grasshopper, says dad.*
- Mrs S        *Reads: A grasshopper!* But look! There’s an exclamation mark. Look after “*grasshopper.*” So that’s ... “*A grasshopper!*”

Mrs Mitchell also teaches punctuation in context on the Mat, and like Mrs Samuels relates it to a desirable reading style. Also, like Mrs Samuels, she responds to a teaching opportunity, in the transcription below:

**Mrs Mitchell. Weak readers. Late in the year. Link Up series. C101.**

- Mrs M        Can we read it together? What did Glen do and he did it right? If you have a look at the end of the sentence, what do you see ...?
- C            Full stop!
- C            No.
- Mrs M        Do you see a full... no full stop! If there’s no full stop it means ...?
- Mrs M/C     Don’t stop.
- C            Carry on.
- Mrs M        And Glen did that very well. Can we do it like this same way? Let’s go.

Mrs M/        Read together: *So the rat and the hen and the cat and the dog went into the new house.*  
Cs  
Mrs M        You will have to take a deep breath! Let's try again.  
Cs        *Loud gasp.*  
Mrs M        And again! Read it. Breathe in.  
Mrs M/        Read together: *So the rat and the hen and the cat and the dog went into the new house.*  
Cs

In contrast, the recorded example of Mrs Dean teaching punctuation below is in the context of sentence building. It has a confirming rather than a informing quality:

**Mrs Dean. Strong reader. Early in the year. Word cards. A102.**

Angie        *Ben said I don't like those* (indistinct).  
Mrs Dean    Would you put a full stop or a question mark at the end?  
Angie        Full stop.  
Mrs Dean    'Kay. And if he shouted it? What d'you call it?  
Angie        Exclamation mark.  
Mrs Dean    'Kay. Let's pack up, noo, and read your books.

In conclusion, the Norms that teachers promote for reading suggest that accurate decoding is the most valued aspect of reading, and later in the year this includes rendering punctuation. In one classroom a high value is placed on reading as a public performance. In neither case do the Norms accord an important place to meaning making, genre or critical awareness.

## 6.6.2 Explaining individual word meanings

The three teachers in the study operate according to different Norms for explaining word meanings, an activity that they are recorded as doing most often in vocabulary and word-building activities (Mrs Dean's cards, Mrs Samuels's Flip file and Smook phonics, and Mrs Mitchell's Ladder book). These sources present words out of context, chosen for their phonetic value, and teachers check that children understand the meaning of individual

words. Very occasionally teachers are asked for meaning but children are more likely to ask for help with decoding when they read extended text. The characteristic explanatory style of each teacher is exemplified in three transcriptions below. When Mrs Dean explains a word she contextualizes it in a sentence rather than providing a synonym. If she can, she finds a physical example in the room. There are examples of both in this extract:

**Mrs Dean. Strong readers. Early in the year. Small letter cards. B33.**

- Mrs D        **Ok, then I want peg. That thing mom uses on the washing line.**
- Cs            *Sound word individually: p-e-g peg*
- Mrs D        That's "pag." I want peg. That's "e.g." It's your turn love.
- C             *Sounds word: p-e-g peg*
- Mrs D        P-e-g. Peg. Ok, I want ... peg
- Cs            *Sound word individually: p-e-g peg*
- Mrs D        Right, let's hear (Indistinct) Anele.
- C             *Sounds word: p-e-g peg*
- Mrs D        Ok, then I want this one... uh, **smile at me Ayla. Big smile, I want to see your mouth, Let's see... Ok, Anele's got one, there's a place where (indistinct)... we call it a? Gap! G-a-p, gap. You have a g-a-p. (Claps with each sound) Gap.**

Like Mrs Dean, Mrs Mitchell explains words by providing a context, for example, "Out. Right, let's, when say, a doggy has come into the house and he is full of mud and Mommy says "OUT! OUT!" Let's say "OUT" three times" (D47). More usually her explanations are abstract, for example:

**Mrs Mitchell. Weak readers. Mid-year. Phonics cards. C64.**

- Mrs M        **What is a RACK, Kallen?**
- Kallen        It's a... you... you put something like... to... to hold onto it! Like a coat?
- Mrs M        Yes?
- Kallen        And something wet, like... or like a coat... dryer?
- Mrs M        Yes, okay, **you could put that on, your coat could hang on a rack. It's something that you can hang something on.**

In contrast, when Mrs Samuels thinks a word may not be understood, she first elicits an explanation from the children. In the example below a child offers a real context, which Mrs Samuels exploits. She ends with a translation into Afrikaans, the home language of

the child (vrot = rotten).

**Mrs Samuels. Weak readers. Late in the year. File story with “ee” focus. C103.**

- Mrs S No, tomorrow. **‘Kay, what does “rotten teeth” mean?**
- C It means... like mine are rotten!
- Mrs S No yours aren’t rotten... Oh! You’ve got one that’s a little bit brown. **What does “rotten teeth” mean? When you’ve got rotten teeth, what’s wrong with your teeth?**
- C It’s brown...
- C It’s brown and thin.
- Mrs S And?
- C Ugly.
- Mrs S “Vrot,” hey?
- C Vrot!

Generally speaking however, Mrs Samuels, like Mrs Mitchell, prefers to give an explanation or synonym than to give meaning in a contextualizing sentence, as she briefly does in the example below. These are also examples of teachers moving the children from a restricted (contextualized) code to the elaborated code required at school (Bernstein, 1996).

- C1 Mrs Samuels? Uhma... what... **what... are creepy crawlies** look like?
- C2 (*Talking to another child*)
- Mrs S **Insects.**
- C1 Insects?
- Mrs S Insects.
- C2 I know it!

Norms of explanation by teachers highlight the importance of knowing the meaning of individual words, especially in exercises which use decontextualized words, but they do not suggest the same status for words in longer texts. Apart from the phrase *incredible speed* (Mrs Samuels, C103) there is no record of teachers explaining more than a single word. In this way, the Norms of explanations overlap with other practices on the Mat to suggest the value of understanding single words rather than whole stories.

### 6.6.3 Teaching phonics and word recognition

A second cluster of pedagogic Norms is brought to bear on teaching phonics. Phonics instruction, described also in Sections 5.6.2 and 5.6.3, may be done formally with individual words, or may arise as a response to a breakdown in the reading. Teachers use children's growing knowledge of phonics rules and tell children to *break it up* so that they can hear the sounds. It is worth noting that all three teachers draw attention to phonics rules far in advance of those recommended by the curriculum, in response to children's needs: Mrs Dean teaches the *funny ea* in *eat* and contrasts it with *me* in an early session. She also explains the *fairy e* to Jenny: "Ok, all we have to do is put the fairy e at the end, it doesn't say anything. Go. H-a-v. Have" (B33). Mrs Mitchell also teaches the *fairy e* and the *twin ll* early on, in response to mispronunciation. The teachers pre-empt confusion between homophones as Mrs Dean does in this example with *hour ... our*: "This is a funny word... don't do that to my... We can't... I'm busy! We can't sound it. It's **our**. o-u-r. Our. **It's not this time one**. It's **our** reading group. This is **our** house, **our** school..." She sweeps her hand round the group in an inclusive gesture (B53). Mrs Samuels does the same with *meet* and *meat* in C103 below. C103 also illustrates the active role that children play in teaching each other, and reveals how Mrs Samuels's teaching is responsive rather than carefully planned like Mrs Dean's.

**Mrs Samuels. Late in the year. Weak readers. Flip file story with "ee" focus. C103.**

- C            *Reads: Mate*
- C            No, look at it again?
- C            I want this... means that word.
- Mrs S        Look at it, carefully.
- C            *Reads: Meet*
- Mrs S        MEET. I will MEET you after school for a discussion or a talk!
- C            No! You should...
- C            Or... or MEAT! That one you eat! Or meat that you eat!
- Mrs S        Okay, but that's not the same meat you eat, hey?
- C            Yeah.
- Mrs S        That's "I will meet you, Jaypee, for a..."
- C            Talk.



Mrs S            A talk about your marks or I will meet you at Kingsmead. Or, I will meet you on the sports field. Okay? Meat that you eat, we write like this, MEAT (*writes on board behind her*).

Mrs Dean's phonics teaching is part of a carefully structured programme of introducing and revising the vocabulary of the graded readers. As she introduces cards of new words she distinguishes between words they can *sound* and those they *know*. After showing cards to five children and saying "This word you can sound," she moves to sight words as the transcription below illustrates. She provides an association (by shouting) to make the word memorable.

**Mrs Dean. Strong readers. Late in the year. Word cards. B53.**

Mrs D/Cs        Read word together: *there*

Mrs D            Not here,...

Mrs D/Cs        Repeat word together: *there*

Mrs D            **Far away, over there. Okay? Now we've got the harder words.**

Cs                *Reading/speaking individually*

C                 I want to... hold the words.

Mrs D            Here comes the first one. Are you ready?

Cs                Yes!

*Noisy in background*

Mrs D            **JENNY, MAN!!**

Cs                *Giggles*

C                 **You shouted!**

C                 Huh! You scared me!

Cs                *Chuckles*

Mrs D            (*Chuckles*) I know!

C                 **You shouted!**

Mrs D            Reads: ***Shouted, Mrs Dean.***

Cs                *Giggles*

Mrs D            What's your... Shhh! What's your word?

C                 **Shouted.**

By contrast, Mrs Mitchell models phonics by verbalizing her thinking, as she does in this example:

**Mrs Mitchell. Weak readers. Midyear. Phonics cards. C64.**

- Mrs M           What can I put in front here? I'm going to have ECK ECK ECK, and I'm going to have UFF UFF UFF. Now look, I'm going to say: Oh, I know, I know! I'm gonna have... put a D and I'm going to make DECK DECK DECK. And I'm going to have a H H H and I'm going to make HUFF.
- C                HUFF
- Mrs M           Now, what can you do with your letters? Do it!

She alerts children to different sounds by comparing words:

**Mrs Mitchell. Strong readers. Early in the year. Ladder books. D47.**

- Mrs M           Number fifteen, please, from the top down, everybody.
- Mrs M           Put your finger on SWIM. Good! Put your finger on SWING. Put your finger on SWIM. Who can tell me what's different? Giovanni?
- Giovanni       SWIM doesn't have a "G".
- Mrs M           SWIM doesn't have a "G".

When she teaches sight recognition words she uses triple repetition together with an explanation of meaning as a memory aid:

**Mrs Mitchell. Strong readers. Early in the year. Ladder books. D47.**

- Mrs M           Put your finger on "out", everybody.
- C                Out!
- Mrs M           Out. Right, let's, when say, a doggy has come into the house and he is full of mud and Mommy says; "OUT! OUT!" Let's say "OUT" three times.
- C                Or when you're out in a cricket match!
- Mrs M           Or, when you're out in a cricket match, let's say it three times.
- Mrs M/ Cs       Read together: Out, out, out.
- Mrs M           Now, put your finger on it and say it.
- Cs              Read together: Out, out, out

Mrs Samuels's phonics work is based on the Smook Phonics which she uses to teach the whole class as well as on the Mat. Her phonics teaching is usually in the context of

reading breakdown, and in the example below she models *breaking it up* with fingers covering the letters on a card.

**Mrs Samuels. Ungraded group. Early in the year. Ladybird reader. A39.**

- Mrs S            Look at the word “into”, everybody. Point to the word “into.” Look at it? Point to it.  
C                 *Continues reading sentence (Indistinct)*  
Mrs S            Sivu, point to the word “into.” If you break it up into two words, what does that say? (*covers TO with fingers*)  
Cs                *IN!*  
Mrs S            In! And that?  
Cs                *TO!*  
Mrs S            It says? To! Look. That says “in”, look ...  
C                 To!  
Mrs S            Look! In... and then it says? To!  
Sivu              *Reads: Into the shop...He likes...*

As I mentioned in Section 6.5.4, Mrs Samuels also refers children to pictures to help achieve accurate decoding:

**Mrs Samuels. Ungraded group. Early in the year. Ladybird reader. A39.**

- C                 *Continues reading: ...an apple...three*  
Mrs S            **Tree. Look, they’re in a tree. Tree.**  
C                 Reads: three.  
Mrs S            No not three, tree!  
C                 *Repeats: tree*  
Mrs S            Tree. Okay.

Generally speaking, apart from Mrs Dean’s teaching of word cards, phonics teaching on the Mat is responsive, involving sounding a word that the teacher knows is new or where a child’s hesitation signals a problem.

#### 6.6.4 Interrogating text: Teachers' questions

Each teacher is recorded when engaged in long meaning-building passages in which she integrates questions with text and promotes the understanding of the group or an individual. This is a recommended feature of Guided Reading, and each teacher shows skill in generating conversation around text. However, in spite of their obvious familiarity with principles of questioning, this is a relatively rare occurrence and was most often recorded at the end of the year. The same applies to questions on pictures, the *picture walk*, or *picture talk*, an introductory prediction activity recommended by literature on Guided Reading. Wardhaugh (2010) points out that classroom exchanges violate the usual principles of conversation, because they are entirely dominated by the teacher. She selects and maintains topics and decides how a discussion will proceed. She asks most of the questions, and the questions are usually ones to which she has the answer. Listeners are required to bid to answer and the answers are for the benefit of all present; teachers evaluate answers in terms of accuracy as well as in accordance with how they want to develop that topic.

Teachers set up different Norms for asking and answering questions on text, presenting two separate issues for investigation. Firstly, there is the issue of placing, that is, where in the sequences of Reading on the Mat the questions appear. This influences integration, timing, planning and how systematic teachers' questions are. Secondly, Norms are established for the questions themselves and for answering them. Children's questions also reveal how they understand the role of teachers' questions.

A broad distinction can be made in the teachers' practice between questioning as a separate phase in the sequences of Reading on the Mat, and questions integrated with reading: Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels will sometimes avail themselves of opportunities as they arise, while Mrs Dean asks each child a question after they have read. Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels may ask questions only in the introductory picture talk and stop asking them once reading has started. Placing questions in a separate phase at the beginning or end of the Act Sequences makes the process more systematic and ensures that all children answer a question. It therefore supports one of the Norms mentioned earlier: that each child should enjoy an equal opportunity to be monitored. This is the case in recordings of Mrs Dean, who asks each child a comprehension question as they finish

reading. The extract below shows how steadily she pursues this purpose, while her rebuke to Callie (“Eh, not so fast!”) makes explicit her Norm that each child should answer a question.

**Mrs Dean. Weak readers. End of year. Reading 360 Little Books. B53.**

- Mrs D        **Who’s he hiding away from?**  
C1            From the dinosaur.  
Mrs D        From the dinosaur. Well done. Go and change. Read please. Read your book! Read for me?  
C2            Reads (indistinct)  
Mrs D        **Do you think...**  
C             Jenny! Look there!  
Mrs D        **... that she looks like a tortoise?**  
C             Look here!  
Mrs D        **Don’t you think that that looks like a tortoise?**  
C             HERE!  
Mrs D        Go and get my sticky tape, Jenny. **Do you think she looks like... he looks like the rabbit?**  
              Okay, go and change the book. Who hasn’t read this book yet? Start reading...  
C             I did!  
Mrs D        All of it? Okay, I’ll be with you now.  
C3            I read here...  
Mrs D        Okay, choose for me.  
C3            Reads: *Come on. Run fast. It... will... go... up...*  
Mrs D        Shh!  
C3            Continues reading: *...and up. Yes, up... it comes. Up and up. Yes, yes, yes, yes.*  
Mrs D        **What’s going up and up?**  
C             I think it went here!  
C3            A balloon.  
Mrs D        **A balloon?**  
C3            A parachute or something.  
Mrs D        **Or it could be a...?**  
C3            Kite.  
Mrs D        This is my favorite page. **What are they having here?**  
C4            Argument?  
Mrs D        An argument! Let’s read it.  
Mrs D/ C4    Read together: *I can get it down. No you can’t! Yes I can! Can’t! Can!*  
C4            Reads: *Yes, I can! No you can’t! Yes, I can! No you can’t!*  
Mrs D        Okay, go and change your extra book. Read for me, Fezeka.

*Class noisy*

Mrs D Uh, excuse me, Callie, let me see your book?

Cs *Talking/reading*

C *Reading fast (indistinct)*

Mrs D **Why doesn't...** Eh, not so fast! **Why doesn't Mom want them to play there?**

C5 Because, she has a baby.

Mrs D **And?**

C5 The baby's crying.

Mrs D **Okay, and why couldn't they play inside?**

C5 Because they're... they'll make a noise.

Mrs D **And? Who's inside?**

C5 Dad.

Mrs D **What is he doing?**

C5 Watching TV?

Mrs D Eh! So they are going to disturb him. Put these in your reading bags so you don't make a mistake and change that. Read for me, please Jade.

Jade Reads: *Mom can see us. Look at us playing.*

Mrs D **Were they good children or naughty children?**

Jade Naughty!

Mrs D **What did they steal?**

Jade Mom's broom!

Mrs D Right, go and change. Let's hear, Anele.

Anele Reads: *This is the (not clear). I can run and... I can run... and ride, swim... and ride swim...*

Mrs D Let's try. Reads: *I can run and ride and swim here.*

Anele Reads: *I like to play in the park.*

Mrs D **Where did he (indistinct) and ride? On what? On the what? What's this?**

C I know what it is but I won't tell.

Mrs D You know this word? Airplane. **What did he try and ride?**

Anele Hippo.

Mrs D Hippo! **Where did he try and swim? In the...? Fountain!**

C6 How many pages must we choose?

Mrs D Two. Well done, go and change. Right, let me hear (not clear)

C6 Reads: *Come here, Lad...* This is the same as the front! *Come here, Lad. Look at this. Mom, come and look at this.*

Mrs D **What are they looking at?** Okay.

C7 Reads: *Look, Lad, stop! (comments – not clear). Continues reading: I can't stop you but I...*

Mrs D I?

C7 Reads: *... can't...*

Mrs D Uh-uh-uh! I can... try it again.

C7 Reads: *I can stop you...*  
 C Sneezes loudly.  
 C7 Continues reading: *but I can't stop Lad.*  
 Mrs D Right, and check... **does the bee sting him?**  
 C7 ...Yes?  
 Mrs D **Where do you think he got stung?**  
 C7 Here... somewhere here.  
 Mrs D Right, Ayla.

This transcription shows each child receiving a question or a few related questions on the whole text she has just read silently or on the page she has just read aloud. The weakest child in the group, Callie, receives the most questions. The questions are on the pictures as well as the text, for example “What are they looking at?” and “What is he doing?” Mrs Dean explains that she plans questions of different levels for each book, including abstract interpretive questions such as “Is the unicorn real?” relating to a story of a dream sequence. She selects from this mental list depending on the child’s ability to work with abstraction (Interview, December 2011).

By contrast, the extract below shows Mrs Samuels asking questions of the whole group to generate interest. The transcription is from a picture talk, a pre-reading activity when she does most of her questioning: once reading starts she tends not to ask any more. This Norm may therefore suggest that interrogation is most appropriately done of visual text. When she helps children with decoding she explicitly refers to pictures as a source of clarification (see Section 6.5). In the picture talk the general nature of her questions may also suggest that asking and answering questions is a less valued activity. At the end she tellingly dismisses the whole process with the words *doesn't matter*.

**Mrs Samuels. Strong readers. Late in the year. Reading 360 Reader: “Animals,” Picture talk. C10**

Mrs S **What d’you think this book’s about?**  
 C Animals.  
 Mrs S Animals. **What kind of animals?**  
 C Rabbits.  
 C I know! Kangaroos and monkeys.  
 C And rabbits.

Mrs S           **Where do kangaroos come from?**

C                I don't know.

C                I know! Australia! Australia!

Mrs S           Where's my group gone now? Stand up again? Must I make you stand up all the time?

C                *(Giggles)*

C                Noooo...

C                I know! I know, Mrs Samuels.

Mrs S           Australia! **How did you know that?**

C                *(Talking softly to friend)*

C                The music teacher told us.

Mrs S           The music teacher told you? Sit down. **Does anybody know what these animals are called?**

C                I know! Uhm...a carola bear!

Mrs S           A koala bear. **How did you know that?**

C                I know it.

Mrs S           **Have you read it in a book before? Have you read about Koala bears before? Have you read about Kangaroos before?**

C                *(Sings: Itho-tho-tho-tho...)*

Mrs S           **What's this (indistinct) called?**

C                It's a kudu!

Cs               *(Speak at once)*

Mrs S           **If Father Christmas rides in his sleigh?...**

C                It's a... it's a...

C                Goat.

Mrs S           **Rein... it's a reindeer.**

C                *(Speak at once)*

Mrs S           **Doesn't matter.** Let's read the poem together. "*Animal... Animals' houses.*"

A second transcription shows her using questions to build understandings for the group, blending children's responses with her own in making meaning, and using pictures and text together. These questions are less systematic, less evenly distributed, and more responsive in their style.

Mrs Mitchell's questions in the picture talk are similar to those of Mrs Samuels. Like Mrs Samuels, she asks questions on pictures as a separate phase at the beginning of reading, often asking "What do you see?" Again like Mrs Samuels, she may refer children to the pictures as a resource during reading. Her questions, like those of Mrs Samuels, are more responsive and less systematic than Mrs Dean's, and also less evenly distributed through the group. She may direct a number of questions to one child and like Mrs Dean asks



more questions of weaker readers. In one session Mrs Mitchell asks a weak child to “tell us the story” of the pictures. He fields fourteen questions (E50). After a picture talk she may or may not ask questions during reading. This extract portrays her presenting a picture talk:

**Mrs Mitchell. Strong readers. Midyear. Additional reader, Link Up series. C60.**

Darrell        *The paper shop is in Hill Street.*  
Mrs M        **Vuyo, what is in Hill Street? Which shop?**  
Vuyo        The paper shop.  
Mrs M        The paper shop. **Earl, what do you think the paper shop sells?**  
Earl        Papers!  
Mrs D        **And? What kind of papers? Wha-what do we get from...**  
Darrell        Newspapers!  
Mrs D        Darrell, let’s ask Earl first.  
Earl        Newspapers.  
Mrs D        **Newspapers, Glen, can you think of anything else?**  
C        Bee papers.  
Dean        Scrap papers.  
Mrs D        Scrap paper. Alright, Glen carry on.

This section demonstrates how Norms of timing the questions on the Mat influence the text that is interrogated (picture or text or both) as well as the distribution of questions among the children. Although the teachers show during the research that they are skilled questioners, only Mrs Dean makes questions a regular feature of her daily practice. Questions are often incidental or responsive, and this may well suggest to participants that questions and answers on the Mat do not constitute a highly valued activity.

When it comes to the actual types of questions, the *what*, *where*, and *who* retrieval questions are the most common, whether on the text or the pictures or both (see Appendix 8.5). *Why* questions are less common, as is “What do you think...?” but both are also used by all three teachers. Children’s answers to the latter two question types show more sophisticated interpretation and worldly knowledge. All three teachers use prompts, as Mrs Dean does above: “It’s called the ...?” and “Or it could be a ...?” They accept

answers with a firm approval that suggests they have been thinking of an answer that the child has given successfully. See Mrs Dean:

Mrs D                    **Who's he hiding away from?**  
C                         From the dinosaur.  
Mrs D                    **From the dinosaur. Well done.** Go and change. B53

While there is a broad similarity among the questions the teachers ask, their different responses to children's answers suggest contrasting Norms for answering. Mrs Mitchell drives responses towards her own answer. In one example she wants the answer *feathers* to the question of what will keep a bird warm. The child replies *nest* but she insists on *feathers*, even though the child defends his answer by pointing out: "There's a nest over there" (E50). In the example below she insists on *cross* over its synonyms *mad* and *angry*.

**Mrs Mitchell. Strong readers. Early in the year. Reading 360 "The Bee," Picture talk. D47.**

Earl                    The... the bee's chasing the dog... and now the bee's **mad**.  
Mrs M                 The bee got very **cross**... what else... Glen? What else..?  
Earl                    And there's a lot of bee... uhm... bees following them.  
Dean                   The bees follow him because they're **cross** with each other.  
Mrs M                 Because they got very?  
Dean                   **Angry**  
Mrs M                 **Cross!** Right, Craig let's start...

Mrs Mitchell tends to present additional information with her questions, and this fragments her questioning as much as her round robin reading practice fragments the reading. Questions that explore new information not clearly related to the text may be confusing for children, as this transcription suggests:

**Mrs Mitchell. Strong readers. Mid-year. Additional reader, Link Up series: "Look around." C60.**

Mrs M                 To Hill Street now, just stop there a minute. Who knows, do we have a Hill Street in town?  
Some Cs              **Yes!**

Some Cs      **No.**

Mrs M      Who knows where that street is? What is in that street?

C            **I've... I've been past there but I forgot what was there. I went there when I was a baby.**

Mrs M      Right, yes Darrell?

Darrell      **I think it's a park.**

Mrs M      You're quite right, you can turn left into the park... **the parking lot** but it's as you go past the cathedral.

C            **You must go through the (indistinct)!**

Mrs M      Yes, there's a car... and it's... you know?

C            Twenty!

Mrs M      Oooh!

C            Twenty!

Mrs M      Eben, do you know where the library is?

Eben        Yes.

Mrs M      In Grahamstown?

C            **Yes! I know where it is! This one! It's this one!**

Mrs M      **No, not in your book. This is not a book about our town! I'm asking you about Hill Street in our town. There is a library in Hill Street.** Now, this Hill Street, let's see what they have. Can you carry on reading, Darrell please?

In the extract above the children's early answers (*yes, no, park ...*) are guesses. There is no park or parking lot in Hill Street in their town, and the last response of the sequence shows that the child is looking for information in the text, rather than drawing on experience as Mrs Mitchell requires. When Mrs Mitchell makes informative digressions in this way she retains knowledge in her hands and models an interaction with text which does not necessarily clarify it. It confirms the tendency of children in all the classes to make text-based statements which are tangential to the text rather than interrogative of it. Examples of these are presented at the end of Section 6.4.

By contrast, Mrs Samuels's questioning, exemplified in the extract on Animals above, shows her fielding answers from the whole group, selecting some answers (kangaroo) and correcting others (carola bear) in an unstructured way. For this reason it is worth looking at the effects of Mrs Samuels's Norms on her children's learning, as exemplified in the transcription below. Here long exchanges are unmediated by the teacher, and the children use her as a resource in their own meaning making ("What is this thing?") rather than waiting for her direction. They answer the questions in the text without her prompt and make suggestions on what is depicted in accompanying pictures without her. This seems

to indicate that they have internalized some of the rules of discussion based on text and are becoming responsible for their own learning. They show ownership of the process and self-monitoring, for example *that* corrected to *it*.

**Mrs Samuels. Strong readers. Late in the year. Reading 360: “Animals.” C105.**

- C1 *Reads: Don't you want to put food... in the tree... to...*  
Mrs S *tree top*  
C1 *Reads: In the tree top*  
C2 **(Outsider speaks to Mrs S)**  
Mrs S **(Sighs) Thomza...**  
C1 *Reads: Rabbits... don't live in tree...*  
Mrs S **I'm gonna come talk to you now...**  
C1 *Reads: No, they don't, said mom, but you can put food...*  
C3 **I don't love you.**  
C1 *... in the tree, and we will see who finds that... it*  
C4 **Haaaaaah!**  
C5 *Continues reading: Mom... come... come and see the rabbits.*  
C6 **Okay let me hold it.**  
C7 **Let me hold it.**  
C5 *Reads: They are in the tree. Yes... they are, said Mom. Look in the tree... Who is eating the food...?*  
C8 **The rabbit.**  
C5 *Continues reading: You put in the tree...?*  
C9 *Reads expressively and fluently: A squirrel, says Pat, in the (indistinct), in the tree. What is a (indistinct)?*  
Mrs S How beautiful! The way you read is gorgeous. Go, you must read.  
C6 Okay... let me...  
Mrs S No, no, let me hold this.  
C9 Friskals!  
C10 WHISKERS  
Mrs S The squirrel... (indistinct) Frisky.  
*(Sound of pages turning)*  
C11 *The squirrel.*  
Mrs S Whiskey... Frisky...  
C11 Okay... *Reads: The squirrel Mr. Frisky... and what is that?*  
Mrs S *Hippety-hop*  
C11 *Reads: Hippety-hop... up he goes to the tree...*

Mrs S/C11	<i>Read together: whirly-twirly.</i>
C11	Reads: (Rrrrlwa...) <i>round and round... down he...</i>
Mrs S	<i>Scampers</i>
C11	<b>Reads:... to the crowd.</b>
C9	<b>Let me see!</b>
C6	<b>And I can't read it.</b>
C9	<i>Reads: Swirly-twirly, what a tail... tall as a feather... broad as a sail... Where's his... supper?</i>
C9	<i>(Sighs) Mrs Samuels? What is that thing?</i>
C6	<i>Reads: Snappety...</i>
Mrs S	<i>Crackety</i>

To conclude, children's questions of the teacher indicate that different Norms are operating in each classroom. Mrs Dean's children are recorded asking only twelve questions over six transcribed sessions, and these are management questions of, for example, how many pages they should read. The low number suggests that children are secure in the Norms of activities and have little need to check teacher expectations. It also suggests that they see questioning as a teacher's function rather than a reader's. Similarly, children ask Mrs Mitchell questions to confirm the management of reading, such as who reads next, or where they should start from. There is only one recorded text-related question in her classroom, when Glen seeks confirmation: "The bee is making honey?" (D47). Thirty other questions are concerned with group order and correct behaviour.

Mrs Samuels is the only teacher of whom the children routinely ask text-related questions. The first five questions, below, check understanding and are asked during a picture talk by weak readers mid-year (B85). In the last two, from other sessions, strong readers check items mentioned in the text.

- Why do they use a box? [for the kittens] ... What if it rains? (B85).
- How he's gonna walk? (B85, sic).
- Look, what's that there? (B85).
- Who's this? Lad's gonna beat this dog (B85).
- *To other child, prediction on the text:* You see? I told you (B85).
- Who's Bonzo, Mrs Samuels? (C107)
- Mrs Samuels? Uhma... what... what... are creepy crawlies look like? (C103).

Mrs Samuels's children ask more questions than the children in other classes, sixty-one in total, though in most recorded examples they are checking management of the group and asking for favours, usually to start the reading session. They also ask questions of other children. This is unsurprising considering the robust, interactive Key of Mrs Samuels's practice and the Norms of participation which promote co-reading and helping. While Norms of participation ensure that each child will read and respond to teachers' questions, Norms for children volunteering questions on the Mat are less clearly established in all classrooms. Children feel free to ask directly for help with decoding at any stage in the year, but there are few recorded examples of children asking teachers to clarify meaning. This suggests that the Norms of Reading on the Mat suppress rather than encourage children's interrogation of both the text and the teacher.

In conclusion, the Norms established for where questions belong in Reading on the Mat, for whether questions are appropriately asked of text, image or both, for who is asked and how they answer, all contribute to the interpretation that posing questions and answering them are activities less valued than accuracy and decoding. While Abadzi (2008), quoted in Section 2.5.3, suggests that this is appropriate in early reading, the teachers in the study do not markedly increase the number or level of their questions towards the end of the year, in spite of assertions in the literature that Guided Reading is an opportunity to promote comprehension and discussion. Given what said in Section 2.5.4, about the importance of explicitly teaching comprehension skills, the absence of these questions is a significant omission in all cases.

Finally, I have mentioned the children's tendency to comment tangentially on texts, usually by referring to their own experience. Given what has been said about the social quality of Mrs Samuels' practice it is not surprising that most of the recorded interjections are made to her. The example of *vrot* teeth appears in Section 6.5.2; the example below records a child initiating a conversation from a picture.

**Example 2: Mrs Samuels. Weak readers. Midyear. Reading 360 Big Books. B85.**

- C            My dad has a pig!  
Mrs S/Cs    *Read: Is it in here?*  
C            My dad has a piglet.

Mrs S/Cs     *Read together: No, not in here.*  
Mrs S         Hey?  
C             My dad has a piglet.  
Mrs S         Piglet? He's got a piglet?  
C             Yes...

Apart from its undeniable sociable quality, this example seems to be an early attempt by the speaker to explore meaning by linking it to his own experience. As such, questions may be an unrecognized opportunity to engage with individuals in meaning making.

### **6.6.5 Implications of norms of pedagogy for identity construction**

At the beginning of this section I suggested that the Norms that teachers assert for pedagogic elements promote particular views of reading and teaching. Overlapping in different ways, the Norms of teachers' explanations, of questions and the handling of answers, promote a view of reading which does not value understanding highly. It presents teaching that is various and complex but values decoding above all other aspects of reading.

The impression that reading is about decoding rather than comprehension is suggested by a cluster of features of teaching on the Mat. To begin with, for all the teachers, teaching phonics or word recognition is the main activity on the Mat, especially (and appropriately) at the beginning of the year. The single word is prioritized over the extended text. This does not change markedly as the year progresses. Other features that lower the profile of longer texts include the fact that explanations focus on decontextualized words. Additionally, discussion and questions usually focus on the pictures, and this may suggest to the children that discussion is not appropriate in relation to text. In individual classrooms other practices reinforce the importance of single words: repetition, a focus on performance rather than meaning and introducing additional information while reading. Finally, children's questions, almost exclusively for help with decoding, suggest that they have internalized the perception that reading is decoding. Their questions and nonverbal signals when asking for help with decoding are confident and habitual. It is important to

emphasize that the pedagogic profile of activities on the Mat stems from teachers' choice, not children's lack of skills.

Decisions at the root of the different pedagogic profiles in each classroom seem to come from normative work in three areas: whether the teacher promotes reading as a public performance or individual experience, whether questions are integrated with the reading or separate from it, and whether pictures are also interrogated for meaning. In addition, while for all teachers Reading on the Mat provides a daily opportunity to monitor reading progress, an examination of the pedagogies also suggests that each teacher has a different perception of what constitutes teaching in the small intimate circle on the Mat.

For Mrs Dean, the Mat is an opportunity to introduce and revise the vocabulary of the Reading 360 series and afterwards to monitor individuals' reading. It means systematic interactions with text in which, after giving explanations contextualized in sentences, her role is to listen, to cue but not to co-read, and to offer each child a few questions after each individual reading.

For Mrs Mitchell, teaching on the Mat is an opportunity for word recognition practice under her supervision, and for coaching reading performance. Pictures are a separate source in their own right, although she may also refer to them during reading. She uses time on the Mat to provide additional information and to teach word patterns not related to comprehension, such as rhyming pairs.

For Mrs Samuels, the Mat provides a smaller arena for coaching the reading of texts which are also used in the whole class, and for the opportunistic teaching of language or phonics from those texts. Children explore their own relationship to texts in a creative, unsystematic way. They also explore different modes of reading: silently, aloud, in unison with a friend or with the whole group.

## **6.7 Conclusions regarding Norms and identity positioning**

An investigation of the Norms of Reading on the Mat shows that, although the category applied to the event in this chapter is different from that in Chapter Five, the results are much the same. Categories of Hymes's S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. mnemonic continue to provide additional facets of the same structures.



Reading on the Mat is a complex and dynamic space, and the Norms which govern it may vary considerably in the practice of individual teachers. This means that the experience is a different one for participants in each of the three classrooms, and the identity positioning work is correspondingly varied, but in line with previous observations made.

Although the children are brought together in this formation daily and the closeness and closedness suggests group work to an outside observer, in fact the Norms function to give the teacher access to individual children. The opening structure makes texts central and establishes the primacy of the teacher. It is the teacher who is free to interact with the children, not the children with each other. Questions flow from the teacher to the children, not the other way. An examination of Norms reveals that the purpose of Reading on the Mat is to give the teacher the opportunity to monitor the children's reading closely, to put the children within her reach and to enable her to intervene in the reading skills they are developing, such as their manner of holding a book. Each teacher's practice includes a mechanism for maintaining control over activities. In Mrs Dean's case, control depends upon the exercise of variation: children depend on her to initiate one of many different patterns. Mrs Mitchell's control rests on the way in which she breaks and reestablishes patterns. Children's dependence on her is at a similar level to their reliance on Mrs Dean. Mrs Samuels's practice is somewhat simpler and the Key of her interaction more casual. With her, children take more responsibility for the event, and this seems to affect their literacy learning positively: they experiment with reading literacy and find authentic personal uses for it.

Generally speaking, therefore, the positioning work done by the teachers suggests for Mrs Dean's children an identity that values reading above all other activities. Using a careful, methodical approach, she exerts very high levels of control over every aspect of Reading on the Mat, even though her directions are often invisible and her Key appears egalitarian. Her Norms focus children on the texts and their associated activities, particularly silent reading. The Mat is not a space for associative interjections or observations like those she promotes in whole class reading. Children come to the Mat to be monitored and to receive approval for their performance, but that performance is between the teacher and the child. Norms establish these two as the only appropriate audiences for reading.

The Norms in Mrs Mitchell's practice suggest an identity position for children as public performers, and of text as the means for that performance. Reading on the Mat is a

blended opportunity for the teacher to monitor children's progress, to provide additional practice, to teach decoding skills and to teach additional information. Mrs Mitchell is the director and monitor of all text-related activity and she alone is the appropriate audience for reading. The identity position offered to children is as subjects of direction and monitoring.

The Norms in Mrs Samuels's practice on the Mat establish an identity position for children as group members who are active in text-related exploration. They are expected to take responsibility for their engagement with text. Mrs Samuels models teaching that is the least monitoring and assessing, and in which she is used by the children as a resource for help with many different kinds of text.

In all three cases, however, reading is presented overwhelmingly as a decoding exercise. A strong positive identity is offered to readers whose decoding is quick and accurate, rather than those who show most understanding of the text, or those who are most able to draw conclusions and engage in discussion. The mechanisms underpinning the Norms suggest that identity positioning is once again a consequence of the pedagogic choices that teachers make.

## Chapter Seven: Instrumentalities

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Constructing readers in the words of the books
  - 7.2.2 Identity position offered in the texts
  - 7.2.3 The role of images
  - 7.2.4 Identity positions offered through the readers
- 7.3. Angels or wild horses? Identity positioning in the words of the teachers
  - 7.3.1. Who are you? Naming practices in Reading on the Mat
  - 7.3.2 Teaching the individual while training the group
  - 7.3.3 What is reading?
- 7.4 In word and deed. Constructing readers nonverbally
- 7.5 Conclusions regarding instrumentalities and identity positioning

### 7.1 Introduction

Chapter Five portrays participants holding together a literacy event through its Act Sequences. It shows how these are determined by pedagogic decisions based on text choice. The identity positions provided to children through the sequences and texts promote a concept of reading as code breaking. These Act Sequences tend to omit two significant activities recommended in the literature: teachers modeling comprehension and interrogation strategies, and silent reading, which is supposed after all to be the goal of the group reading structure.

Chapter Six describes the Norms that teachers enforce on the Mat, producing a similar picture. The Norms established by teachers on the Mat also give children an identity as code breakers rather than as interrogators of text. Norms also suggest a strong monitoring function for the Reading on the Mat formation.

Chapter Seven probes the words teachers use on the Mat more closely. It examines ways in which teachers promote certain identity positions for children through the texts they use, their spoken language and their nonverbal postures and gestures. In his categories, Hymes names these media *Instrumentalities*, which he defines as “forms and styles of speech” (1974, pp. 58–60), but which include all the modes and media used by

participants to communicate. Using methods derived from Discourse Analysis, this chapter examines how these modes confirm or add to the identity positions offered to children. The three main sections of the chapter offer a detailed analysis of the three dominant communicative modes used on the Mat: the books that are read, the verbal exchanges, and the nonverbal features accompanying the verbal exchanges. As the analysis becomes more detailed, general trends emerge as well as contrasting details that contribute towards the creation of a subtly textured picture.

## **7.2 Constructing readers in the words of the books**

The CAPS suggests that the first step for a teacher using Guided Reading is selecting an appropriate text: “Graded readers will mostly be used for group reading. They should be at a lower level than the texts used for Shared Reading” (South Africa. 2010, p. 16). In line with this requirement, teachers in this study base their teaching on commercial graded readers, the Reading 360 series, though they do not use it exclusively. In Section 2.5.5, I present views both in support of graded readers and critical of them. Two features of the readers give them a significant role in forming the identity positions offered to children.

Firstly, although the Reading 360 series consists of at least six core books in each of thirteen levels, the appearance, illustration and style is uniform and maintains the in-house style of the publisher. In addition, the principle of a graded reader is that selected words are introduced and repeated in a controlled, incremental way (Weir & Doherty, downloaded 2011). This increases the stylistic and contextual uniformity of early readers, as writers work with the permutations of a restricted vocabulary. The same settings are used in a number of readers in each level, for example, the park or the toyshop. This stylistic uniformity means that the positioning work done by texts in the reading groups is not various, differentiated or intermittent. McKinney argues that “LSMs [Learning Support Materials] play a central role in socializing children and in legitimating cultural norms” (2005, p. 11). Daily contact with these books on the Mat and as homework means that the socializing impact of these readers is increased by its context of use. This also applies to other books used on the Mat.

A second feature of the graded readers which gives them a significant role in identity positioning on the Mat is that they represent the collective decisions of textbook writers

and publishers as well as curriculum and policy designers. Reed suggests that

Designers and producers of textbooks imagine learners as particular ‘kinds’ of subject (for example, as more or less self or ‘other’ regulated) and construct particular subject positions for them (and for their teachers) through choices of discourse(s) and visual design, selections of knowledge(s) and choices of activities. (2006, p. 141)

McKinney (2005) supports Apple’s (1989) claim that a curriculum is located in texts in use, rather than in curriculum statements. As a combined interpretation of the curriculum, the policies of the school and the results of teacher training, these books represent a powerful socializing voice. They are the “interface between the officially state-adopted and sanctioned knowledge of the culture, and the learner ... textbooks are a specialized means for the ritual introduction of children into a culture’s values and knowledge” (Luke 1989, in McKinney, 2005, p. 5). In this role the graded readers offer children identity positions on the Mat, through the mediation of teachers. Observation indicates that, to the extent that they were never problematized by the teachers in this study, the cultural values presented in the reading series are implicitly or effectively endorsed by the teachers who choose them and the school which buys them. Analysis of the texts and pictures in the books presented in this section shows how they construct readers as particular kinds of *children* rather than as particular kinds of *readers*. The story lines and illustrations of graded readers offer identity positions which the teachers do not engage with, but which are present nevertheless. The analysis of the graded reader texts which follows in Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2, below, is based on categories developed by McKinney (2005).

### **7.2.1 The verbal and visual texts of the books**

Riverside, Oakhill and Greenbanks use the Reading 360 series (Ginn, 1987) and its later edition, New Reading 360 (Ginn, 1993), pictured in Figure 21, for teaching on the Mat throughout the Foundation Phase. There are thirteen levels in the series with six books in each, and at each level there are also eighteen to twenty supplementary *Little Books*. Only Mrs Dean had a full set of the Little Books. Mrs Samuels used the Ladybird series (Murray, 2004) in the first term as there were insufficient copies of Reading 360 (Ginn, 1987), and Mrs Mitchell used the Gay Way (Boyce, 1985) series and the Link Up (Reid &

Low, 1972)<sup>12</sup> readers as consolidation at the end of the year. At all three schools the strongest group is reading Book 4.1 or 4.2 by the end of Grade One, with one or two individuals reading Level 5 and weaker readers at Level 3.

### 7.2.2 Identity positioning offered in the texts

The Reading 360 series presents the lifestyle and activities of an idealized nuclear family in an American suburb or village setting, for example, walking in the park, visiting the zoo or playing in the snow. This family lives in a semi-detached house with a garden and consists of Mum, Dad, Ben, Liz and their dog Digger (Lad in the early series). Stories follow the brother and sister, Ben and Liz. In later levels friends, community members and Sparky the horse are introduced as well as texts of different genres.

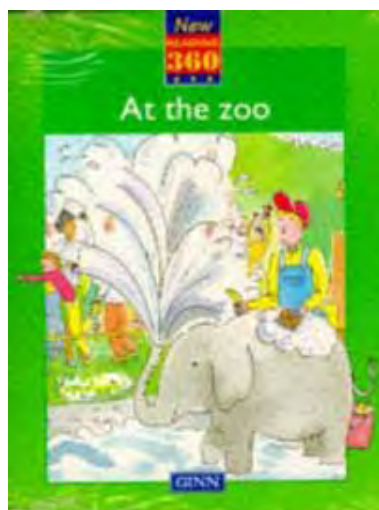


Figure 21: Cover of New Reading 360

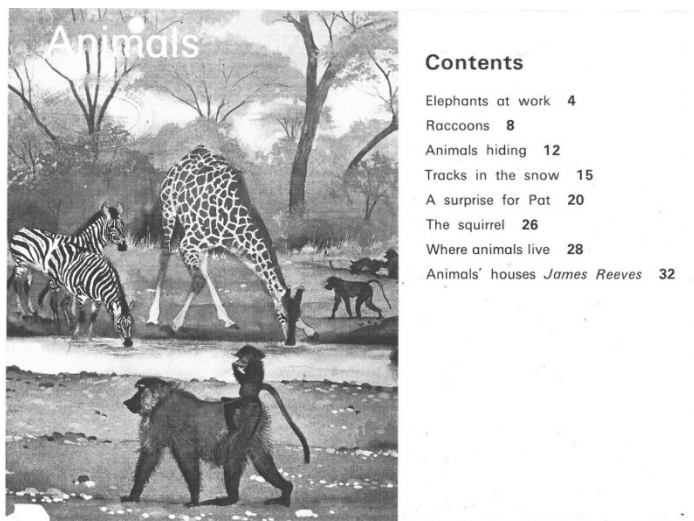
At the broadest level of identity positioning, the reading books offer representations of ideal children and intimate that their activities are appropriate to their readers also, thus suggesting moral and social identity positions for the children in my study. McKinney maintains that “[t]he extent to which children are able to identify with the selections of culture in textbooks, including the representation of the social world, impacts on their ability to take on the identity of learners, and to feel the sense of belonging within the school context necessary for success” (2005, p. 18). The section below examines the

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<sup>12</sup> The reading series will not be referenced in the rest of the thesis, for ease of reading.

nature of the social world with which children are presented, and the values thereby promoted.

The Reading 360 series shows women engaged in home-related activities and men, less in evidence, doing maintenance and repairs or helping at celebrations. Parents are accepting and nurturing and they hold, touch and carry their children. Children's activities are less gendered than adults'. The Reading 360 books show a racially diverse community, members of which are friends but not relatives, and who are usually voiceless in the background. Representations of racial diversity increase in the New Reading 360 series and this is Mrs Dean's reason for choosing the series (Interview, 2010). Homeless, poor, disabled or unwell people are not depicted or even mentioned. Some stories avoid stereotyping by using animal characters. The images are watercolor illustrations (see Figure 21). By Level 4, factual texts, songs, poems, traditional tales and simplified versions of commercial stories have been introduced. The contents page presented in Figure 22 below shows the range of texts included in the later readers.



**Figure 22: Level Four Reading 360 reader content page: Animals**

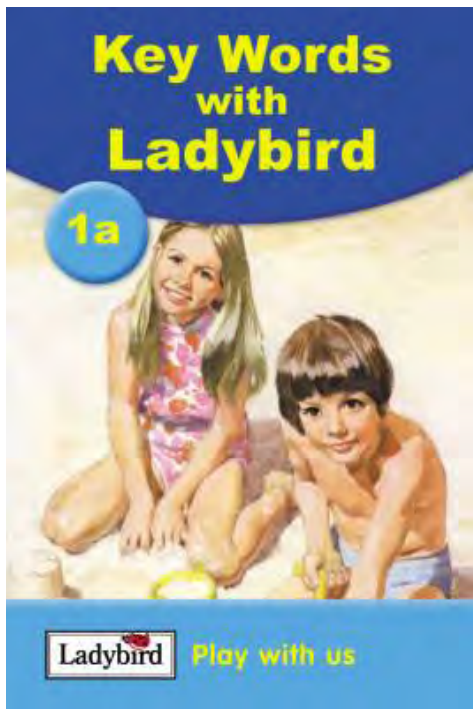


Figure 23: Cover of the Ladybird Key Words series, showing the illustrator's style

The Keywords with Ladybird series, pictured in Figure 23, was used in the first term by Mrs Samuels at Oakhill. It presents a similar world to the Reading 360 but with fewer settings and characters. Ethnic diversity is depicted in the community but not in the speaking characters. Activities take place in domestic and suburban contexts. Ladybird books are longer than Reading 360 readers– for example, books 1a and 1b are 50 pages each. They comprise rather jerky statements with little story line, for example, “A shop. I like shops. Jane is in a shop and Peter is in a shop. Here is a ball in a shop. Jane likes the ball. Jane has the dog and Jane has the ball. The dog has the ball. The dog likes the ball”. Ladybird books used during the study do not include factual texts, poems, fantasy or animal characters.

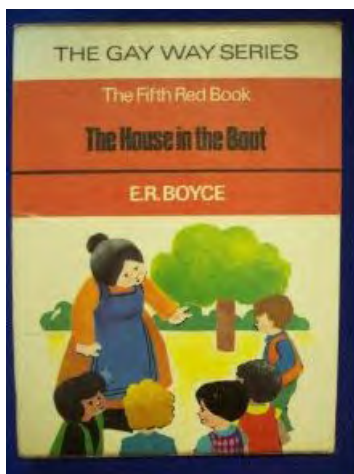


Figure 24: Cover of Gay Way series



The Gay Way series used by Mrs Mitchell at Riverside for consolidation presents a fantasy world of animal and fairy tale characters such as a pig, a giant and the old woman in the shoe. Diversity is implied by the different animal characters; the old woman speaks of “Big children, little children, black children, brown children, white children, fat children, thin children” who all contribute to building a home.

To summarize, the world presented by the readers used on the Mat is to some extent unfamiliar to any young South African reader. Nevertheless, the text and images express values and relationships which teachers offer uncritically to the children in my study. The three series most used in the classrooms each presents slightly different values, with different implications for identity positioning in each case, and these are presented below.

In both the new and old Reading 360 series, each narrative presents a didactic, value-laden message. Family members cooperate and children are obedient and helpful. If they are not, the story suggests that the absent traits are desirable. Boys are more likely to be disobedient than girls, but either child may initiate the story line. Children interact most often with parents, who instruct, help, rescue, and take them on outings. Within this milieu, each story offers an identifiable message, for example, that persistence pays (Level 1.4 and 1.5), that rules or parents should be obeyed (Level 2.5 and 4.1), that you should not disturb wild animals (Level 3.6), or that it is possible to correct mistakes (Level 5.4).

The Ladybird series has a narrower range of characters and is less explicitly didactic. The brother and sister interact little with adults, even their parents, and seem to have full agency in their environment, which is also an idealized Northern hemisphere suburban setting. Adults like shop assistants or policemen are depicted but are not mentioned in the text. Parents look on or instruct and the father is more active than the mother, storing fruit, repairing and driving. Gendered roles are stronger in the Ladybird series, particularly if the children are interacting with their parents: Jane helps her mother in the kitchen and Peter helps his father with maintenance. Jane is more passive than Peter and is often depicted with eyes cast down, while Peter may look directly out of the page in a challenging way. Jane and Peter’s actions are based on the title theme of each book, such as *Have a go* (2b). While there is no strong message, a constant theme is that children are helpful, *like* things and *have fun*.

The Gay Way books used by Mrs Mitchell at Riverside present fantasy characters. Social groups include nuclear families, friendship groups (*The fat pig*) and a grandmother–

headed matriarchy (*The house in the boot*, Figure 24). Relationships show cooperation and hard work in which one character takes the lead. Themes suggest that persistence pays and that collaboration is the way to achieve goals.

### 7.2.3 The role of images

All the reading series used in the classrooms in this study are illustrated in colour, with images covering at least half of every page. For example of the illustrator's styles see the cover pages in Figures 21, 23 and 24. Sample pages below show the principle on which the three sets of books are constructed.

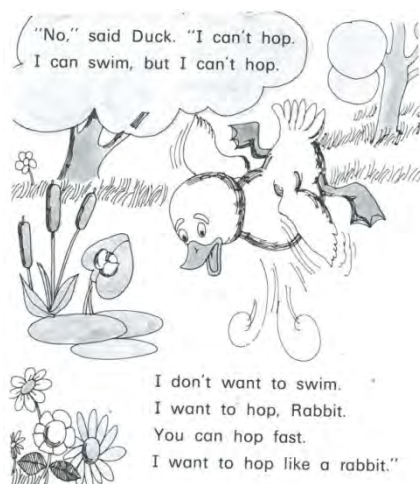
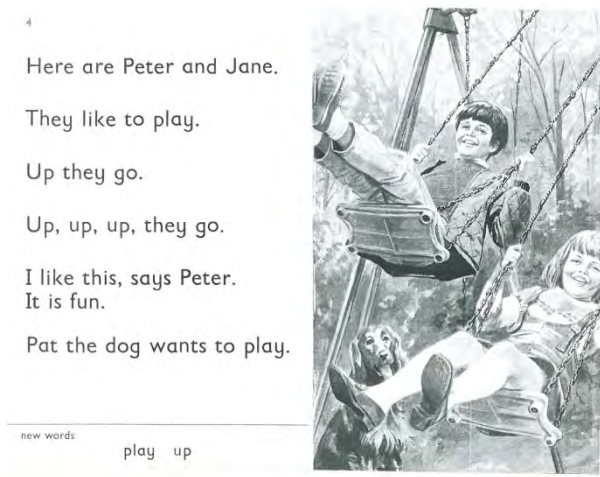


Figure 25: Page 8 from Reading 360 Level 3 Book 3

The Reading 360 factual texts are accompanied by photographs; other series used during the study had no factual texts or photographs.

Figure 26: Key words with Ladybird. 3a: Things we like, Pages 4 & 5. All Ladybird readers have the same visual structure: print on the left with illustrations of the text on the right



The Reading 360 and the Ladybird series start with an *establishing shot* showing the context and the main characters of the story. Together with the title it suggests a story line. In illustrations the perspective is always of a viewer, someone outside the story who sees the whole action, and this suggests authenticity and realism (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The expressions and gestures of characters in the images match the accompanying dialogue. In the Ladybird series the images, always a full page opposite the text, (Figure 26, above) are semi-photographic. They show the actions stated in the text: a shop, Jane in the shop, the ball in the shop. In this regard the Ladybird series is substantially different from the Reading 360 shown in Figures 25 and 28, because images demonstrate the words rather than expand their meaning.



Figure 27: Level 5.4 page 23

This is what Mr Pine saw.

In the Gay Way readers the illustrations are both less realistic and less explanatory of the text: for example, it would be difficult to interpret the text from the image above. Images are rounded, stylized but not cartooned representations, and the text is placed among images, like the Reading 360 series, and also over them, so that text and image form a semiotic whole, as they do in Figure 28 below.

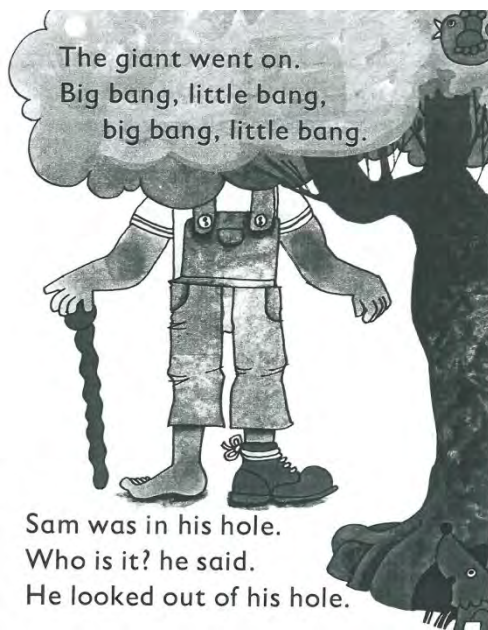


Figure 28: Gay Way: The seventh Red Book: The giant's new boot. Page 7.

The images in the Reading 360 series are as important as the text. Level 1 books in particular contain few words and comprehension depends on reading the pictures simultaneously for information. For example, the full text of Level 1.6 reads: “Ben. Come here, Lad. Stop here, Dad. Here, Lad. Stop! Stop, Lad! Come here. Help!” The pictures show Lad chasing a pheasant in the park and knocking Ben into the mud, a setting and actions which could not be imagined from the text alone. In the introduction to each reader, the designers of Reading 360 explain the role of pictures in meaning making:

The text plays an important part, especially for children who are experiencing the printed word for the first time .... However, the illustrations are more important. They are there to tell the story as well as to stimulate language development and foster visual awareness, and they are designed to encourage the reader to predict what may happen next before turning the page. (Ginn, 1993)

The Ladybird books suggest a similar approach, with the crucial difference that the picture illustrates the meaning but does not add to it: “The pictures in this book are intended to make the words easier to understand. Point to the pictures on the page as your child says the words to build the connection between words and what they describe” (Back page of A set readers, 2004).

Every book in all the reading series therefore presents the reader with a multiple semiotic. It is the designers' intention that the images will be understood as an additional story line

to be read concurrently with the text. Kress and van Leeuwen speak of text book pages arranged as

a single semiotic unit, structured, not linguistically, but by principles of visual composition. In such pages verbal text becomes just one of the elements integrated by the codes of information value, salience and framing, and reading is not necessarily linear, wholly or in part, but may go from centre to margin, or in circular fashion, or vertically, etc. (1996, p. 185)

In the early Reading 360 books the text is placed below the image so that the trained eye will travel first over the image. The untrained eye needs to be reminded to pay attention to everything on the page, as Mrs Samuels frequently did: “Look at the picture. It helps you, see?” (A42). Pictures therefore provide crucial information regarding the settings, contexts and characters. This feature highlights the importance of the *picture talk*, which is largely omitted from the classrooms in the study (Section 5.6.1).

The teachers in this study offer images uncritically as aids to understanding the story line. Where children lack cultural references, images may in fact provide less information than the text, and teachers seem unaware that they are teaching mixed systems of meaning. These practices exist also in whole class teaching, where pictures and symbols are associated with letters and words, for example, Mrs Dean’s *g* for *ghost*, and the images Mrs Mitchell uses to test vocabulary, shown below:



Figure 29: *g for ghost*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Look at the picture and write the words.

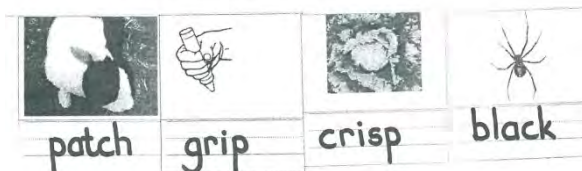


Figure 30: Quiz, November 2010

#### **7.2.4 Identity positions offered through the readers**

The assumed reader of these series is a white middle-class child from a stable nuclear family who explores the world in an active and appreciative way, and learns from encounters and experiences. He or she lives in a secure, caring, supportive home and community. This ideal child is helpful, cooperative, well-intentioned, generous, grateful, patient, obedient and persistent. Problems in the children's world are easily and quickly solved, sometimes with the help of adults but often without. Adults in the community are friendly, supportive and prosperous, and environments are neat, clean and function effectively. Children are not reprimanded but learn through their mistakes.

In terms of identity positioning work, there is some benefit to presenting an ideal, positive world, as these series do, rather than a less comfortable reality. However, in addressing the question of how to ensure that cultural differences are not barriers to educational success, Reed (2006) argues that all learners should find their collective identities represented in texts. The reality presented in these graded readers does not support the collective identity of even the middle-class South African children in this study, although the attributes and values presented in the books were certainly endorsed by their teachers and schools through posters of rules, reiterated definitions of children's obligations to each other and sanctions of behaviour. Some children in the year of the study were struggling with the death of a family member while others were experiencing dysfunctional family relationships, and these realities are also ignored in the series. Furthermore, there is no record of teachers being critical of any aspect of these readers, even though the majority of children in all classes were of groups not given prominence in the series. According to Reid, the Reading 360 designers acknowledge that

The role of the teacher is considered crucial to the success of the programme. While much is provided in the way of materials and suggestions, they are thought to be of secondary value to the guidance and direction of an alert, sensitive teacher. (1971, p. 2)

Recent work on the graded readers used in South African schools is critical of the world view presented in imported readers, particularly with regard to race and gender. These criticisms apply also to the readers used in my study. McKinney affirms that "all learners should be able to find themselves and their life worlds (or social worlds) represented in the books from which they learn" (2005, p. 15). She points out that most South African

children come from rural homes, and their caregivers may be grandparents or other relatives. The children in my study are middle class (see Section 1.3), and may share many of the experiences they read about, but some settings and activities would be unfamiliar to all South African children. Teachers nevertheless assume that children will relate to the situations in the books; they also assume that the children have had some experience of picture books and understand the images as part of the information provided on the page. Finally, all three reading series offer an ideal rather than an actual world to emergent readers, and this never comes up for discussion. The focus on decoding discussed in Chapter Five reduces the time available for interrogating the text and allows the values and ideals of the books to be transmitted without mediation.

The choice of texts in these classrooms shows that another dimension of identity positioning on the Mat is directed to socializing young learners, and to constructing them as white middle class children. Rules displayed in classrooms and sanctions emphasize the values expressed in the readers: the importance of cooperation and supportive behaviour such as not pushing, hurting feelings, or bullying, as well as more pedagogically driven requirements like working quietly and taking turns.

In these classrooms the teachers model socially dominant literacy forms while ignoring the marginalized vernacular forms that inevitably exist in the homes of the learners (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, see Section 2.2) and the text resources in the classrooms reflect this. The graded readers provide middle class values as well as models of dominant literacy forms as a framework for other identity work done on the Mat. With this in mind, the next section presents an analysis of the spoken discourse of teachers when they use these readers in Reading on the Mat.

### **7.3 Angels or wild horses? Identity positioning in the words of the teachers**

This section presents an analysis of what the teachers say on the Mat as they direct and teach the children there, and as they read the books described above. It uses categories of Discourse Analysis to analyze trends in the identity positions offered to children during Reading on the Mat.

The dominant Instrumentalities used on the Mat are the texts in readers described above, the texts used for phonics practice and whole word recognition, and verbal and nonverbal interaction based on them. Teachers direct and monitor children's behaviour at the same time. Social interactions are kept to a minimum and all the sessions on the Mat recorded and observed in this study have a high work focus, with a positive identity offered to successful readers. This has been noted as a feature of normative interactions described in the previous chapter, and an example of a brief, business-like opening is given there (Section 6.3). It is important to remember that comparatively little time on the Mat is spent with the graded readers: most of the time is devoted to word recognition and decoding, as mentioned in Sections 5.6.2 and 5.6.3.

The language items chosen for investigation are those which suggest identity and relationships: naming practices, modality, pronouns and verbal transitivity patterns. An initial examination of transcriptions showed that teachers seldom use metaphor, idiom, connotation or allusion. Exchanges operate on a literal level and provide a clarity and directness appropriate in the teaching of young children (Snow & Juel, 2004).

### **7.3.1 Who are you? Naming practices in Reading on the Mat**

Naming may be the most direct way in which a teacher can assign identity, and in a classroom naming may take a number of forms, all of which contribute to constructing an identity for emergent learners. Three aspects of naming are prevalent in the classrooms in this study: group naming, nicknaming, and assigning qualities. Interviews show that the teachers are aware of the importance of affirming children and their performance, and much of the identity work done with naming deliberately seeks to construct a positive reading identity for children. However, other naming practices may be less consciously employed. The habitual use by teachers of certain nouns, pronouns and demonstrative pronouns, as presented in this section, serves to complicate the positive reader identities that they consciously seek to construct for the children.

Moje and Luke suggest that schools are places where identity labels (struggling, proficient, creative ...) are used to stereotype learners: "Because the institutions in which people learn rely so heavily on identities to assign labels of progress, particularly in relation to reading and writing skills, these identity labels associated with certain kinds of



literacy practices can be especially powerful in an individual's life" (2009, p. 416). In this regard the habit of establishing ability groups which remain unchanged for the year is particularly significant. These issues are raised in Section 2.5.6. All the teachers in the study were conscious of the disadvantages of giving status labels to ability groups. Mrs Dean explains this clearly:

They choose their colour and group name – this year they are the Silver, Purple and Red Fairy groups. I realized that older children were classifying and labeling the children in Grade One because they knew the coding: "You are in the stupid group". Now children decide the groups. Each group votes on the colour so no-one ever labels a group. (Interview, November 2011)

At Oakhill, Mrs Samuels experimented by not forming ability groups in the first half of the year of the study. Mrs Mitchell used food names, Pizza, Bacon, Egg, Sausage and Toast for her groups to avoid associations with status (Conversation, Observation notes). In her class the two top and the two bottom groups read books at the same level, so the differentiation, and therefore the sense of strong or weak readers is reduced. Such devices do not appear to render the status of groups invisible, especially when few children move from group to group in the course of the year, against the recommendations of Guided Reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Potentially, the division into ability groups for work on the Mat has the most significant impact on the identities of children of all the classroom naming and grouping practices. Collins relates the differential experiences that teachers provide for children in weak and strong ability groups and warns that "[t]he consequences of these differential reading experiences in reading may have longer and greater effects on children's continuing performance than the initially small and subtle difference may suggest" (2006, p. 137). Placing children in ability groups, however they are named, may have unintended consequences.

In this regard, Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels counteract negative constructions by spending additional time with weak readers in favoured contexts: Mrs Dean holds the weakest reader in her lap and gives her the same time as the strongest reader: compare the figures below.



Figure 31: Geri after June, when she was not able to keep up with the weakest group

Figure 32: Angie in March. Note the children reading over her shoulder



Mrs Samuels takes the weakest group into the corridor for additional games and reading practice. Mrs Mitchell, on the other hand, spends less time with the weakest readers than with the strongest readers. She also focuses more on drill with weaker readers: only 24% of the time in the recorded video sessions is spent on reading extended texts. It would be wrong to generalize from three weeks' recording, but the trend in her classroom certainly appears to be that weaker readers get less time reading. This trend has been observed in other classrooms also, and Collins describes how "low ability students are given instruction different from that of their high-ranked counterparts" (2006, p. 118). He ascribes this to weaker group members being less attentive and more easily distracted. Collins also reports on weak readers being given more instruction in phonics drill, and this applies to Mrs Mitchell's classroom too.

Another naming practice common in classrooms in the study is the idiosyncratic naming of classroom equipment and practices. There were *carpet lines*, *fairy books*, *fishy books*, *box books*, *busy books*, *mat books*, *ladder books*, *thin and fat waxies*, *cloud lines*, *busy books*, the *fairy e*, *kicking k*, and *curly c*, a *vowel man*, a *talking chair*, *maths spiders*, a *dippy bag*, a *grow-good mat*, *snacky time*, and practices such as *criss-cross*, *hook and look*, and *walking the word wall*. Some names seem to have been chosen with a young listener in mind: they are alliterative (busy books), diminutives (waxies) or descriptive (spiders). This practice enhances group cohesion and provides a strong identity for group members who alone understand these terms.

Teachers also rely on in-group knowledge for participation and incorporate this into the Norms described in Chapter Six. Teachers reduce instructions to their basic components, for example, “Good. **Go**, Lulama” (Mrs Dean, C37) or “Alright, Glen. **Let’s hear**” (Mrs Mitchell, C100). The management of turn-taking has been codified and relies on group members’ knowledge of the expectation behind these essentialized communications: that the child named should read. This practice increases as the year passes; a new child in Mrs Mitchell’s classroom needed instructions in full sentences to take part in group activities. Such directions may be further reduced to a nod or glance, and this is discussed in the section on nonverbal communication.

As I mentioned in Section 6.4, teachers request children’s attention most often by saying their names. After that, the second most common naming of individuals is as *girl* or *boy*, also a literal and therefore potentially neutral identity. Together with first names, these account for the majority of the appellations teachers use. Usually they are combined in phrases which make the Key or tone warmer, for example:

- **That’s right. Jenny**, sound for us (Mrs Dean, C37)
- **Good girl**. What’s that part? (Mrs Dean, B54)
- **Right**, it’s going to be **Steve** but you are following in your books, **Carlo**. Following in your books. **Right, David**, are you ready? **Steve** ... (Mrs Mitchell, E50)
- **Right, quickly boys**, are we ready? (Mrs Mitchell, E50)
- **Right, Nick**, are you ready to read? (Mrs Samuels, A39)
- **Good boy**. ‘**Kay** (Mrs Samuels A42)

Wardhaugh (2010) points out that in classrooms normal conversational turn-taking rules do not apply. The teacher nominates either verbally or by gesture so that children do not have to engage with the complexities of turn-taking: the teacher does it for them. In

particular, “[a] speaker’s use of gaze, i.e., looking at a specific individual, or of a name (‘honey,’ or ‘John,’ or ‘coach’) or even a plain ‘you’ may suffice, but such usage varies widely by group and situation” (Wardhaugh, 2010, p. 319). All of these turn-taking strategies are prevalent on the Mat.

As the examples above also demonstrate, the teachers punctuate reading with *good + name*. They also signal turn taking with *right* and *okay*, which mean “you are right”, “your reading is okay”. While *good* is always ascribed to children and their reading, *right*, *okay* and *well done* are interchangeable turn-taking markers which may or may not intentionally signal approval. The repetition of these positives ascribes a moral quality to a child who can read: goodness and rightness. It also communicates a general sense of the teacher’s satisfaction. There is no record of a child’s reading being described as wrong or bad. Negatives (*no*, *not*, *don’t*, *stop*) account for 12% of Mrs Dean and Mrs Mitchell’s interactions, and 18% of Mrs Samuels’s, and are directed at minor errors in decoding. Mrs Mitchell tells children that their reading is *better*, which suggests it was not good the first time. She also gives the brief instruction *again*, which similarly suggests that the first reading needs improvement.

As well as naming practices that ascribe unspecified goodness, nicknames and affectionate diminutives like *sweetie* or *love* attach specific qualities to children. In this regard teachers show more personal variation, and these, described below, contribute strongly to the Key or mood each establishes on the Mat.

Mrs Dean has the most idiosyncratic and extensive nick-naming habits. She calls children *Poopy-noos*, often shortened to *Noos*, (*Noo* in the singular), a name whose origin she cannot recall (Interview, August 2010). She nicknames with diminutives (*Callie*, *Robbie*), shortenings (*Vee*, *Em*), titles (*Madam P*), doublets (*Jam-jam*) or a combination (*Jenny Mac*). She is more confident in nicknaming with English names: Lulama, Anele and Zahida all get full names. As nicknames signal affection and approval and full names may signal reprimand, the additional language speakers in her classroom may feel excluded by her naming practices.

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) suggest that names or nicknames in another language may be traumatic for learners, as these approximations of or replacements for their real names separate them from their identity in their home language or home community. The prevalence of nicknaming may indicate teachers’ desire to reconstitute the identities of

learners as they arrive in the new environment. However, there was no evidence of teachers' anglicizing children's names or renaming or nicknaming them to make pronunciation easier. Mrs Samuels used abbreviations that came with them from home: Pele and JP (Jean Pierre).

Some naming practices ascribe qualities to the children. In Mrs Dean's classroom they are *angels*. They are *clever*, usually *clever girl* or, e.g., *clever Ayla*. Visitors are often called on to witness their cleverness. Their goodness and cleverness are rewarded by her love, and this is another common appellation: *my love* and *love*. At the end of a session with the weakest reader she calls out "Goodbye. I love you!" (A52). A less common appellation is *baby*. Her praise may be extravagant: "It's very clever Vicky. I love you so, so much!" (B21) or "Fantastic. Well done" (C37).

The link of reading with moral and intellectual qualities and then with love seems a combustible combination because it makes the weak reader potentially *bad*, *stupid* and *unlovable*. However no counterbalancing *badness* is ascribed to struggling readers. There is no record of Mrs Dean reprimanding a child for reading poorly, although she threatens Callie with "If you lie down on me again, you're going to the grow-good mat, okay?" (C37). Mrs Dean refers to *manners* which suggests an obligation to behave considerately, rather than to *naughtiness* which is a teacher's assessment.

The key here may be *baby* which, with *angels*, suggests they are the faultless children of a doting parent (herself). The nicknames bind them to her in a special relationship into which they are born as they enter her classroom. Tellingly, one of her metaphors for the Grade One year is a gestation: at the end of about nine months they are *born* as readers and school members (Interview, August 2010). This maternalism is visible in her easy physical relationship with children. She holds single readers in her lap and demonstrates on their bodies. Figure 33 below shows her holding a sleeping child throughout a news session and also demonstrating where the kidneys are, on another child.



Figure 33: Mrs Dean holds Geri and explains kidneys on Jenny, late in the year

In comparison, Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels use few nicknames. They prefer full first names with approving additions like *good boy* and *well done*. Mrs Mitchell calls individuals *darling*, *sweetie*, *sweetie pie*, *love* and *lovey*. She calls the group to attention as *boys* or with the South Africanism *boytjies* (little boys). She links goodness and performance tightly, for example, “Well done to those boys. ... They are very, very good. I’m proud of you” (D47). Like Mrs Dean she offers an emotion as a reward for their goodness, but in her case it is pride in them, which she mentions eight times. Good reading is also rewarded more formally with stars towards a *Lion Award*.

Mrs Samuels calls Candace *my baby*, and also says “Thanks *my boy*”, invoking a parental relationship similar to but less warm than that evoked by Mrs Dean. She uses one disapproving appellation: *silly billy*. She too punctuates reading with *good boy ... good girl ...* but does not use nicknames.

Iwamoto (2011) suggests that attitudinal epithets, such as the nicknames described above, and the repeated *good ... well done* represent an “interpersonal element”, serving an “attitudinal function”. So too do adverbs and adjectives. Teachers tell children that their reading is *lovely*, *fantastic*, *beautiful*, *gorgeous* and *wonderful*, for example “How beautiful! The way you read is gorgeous” (Mrs Samuels, C105). This praise is often intensified by *very*, the most common adverb.

The effect of the naming described so far is to create a strong community identity for those who know these terms and practices, and a strong individual identity for readers who

receive approving appellations. Interviews show that the teachers are conscious of identity construction through the positive naming of groups and individuals. They are also aware of their role in constructing positive associations for reading. Nevertheless, children are also enjoined by all the teachers to be fast (*quickly, now...*) and to do things *nicely*, which suggests that they are often *slow* and *not nice*.

Mrs Mitchell is the only teacher on record reprimanding children, and she indicates her displeasure through naming: “Oooh, Mister Darrell is not pointing today? Hmm? Right, let’s go” (D47). *Mister* signals irony and disapproval, as the rest of the transcription indicates. She calls a misbehaving child *wonder boy* (E50) and refers to “these smart-marts and rude-boys” (C60). Misbehaviour is *rude*. Being well mannered, smart or polite are such valued qualities that rudeness is easily equated with badness. Children make this link themselves: for example, when Mrs Mitchell says: “No, Carlo! We don’t like rude boys at Riverside!”, another child immediately rejoins: “Ah! Carlo! That’s not... that’s rude!” (C101).

Observations previously made about teachers’ work focus (Section 6.5) and the performance of each child (6.4) are reinforced by their characteristic use of nouns and demonstrative pronouns or adjectival determiners (see Appendix 6). The identity position thus offered to children has already been delineated: they are the focus of effort and care, and also subject to evaluation. The large majority of the nouns have to do with the task in hand. The top five nouns for all teachers (in different proportions) are *word, book, page, sentence, work, top* and *number*. After these the frequency of any particular noun falls sharply. Body parts most frequently named are also those used in reading: *finger, hand, breath* and *voice*. Nouns are frequently replaced by demonstrative pronouns, and *that, here, there* and *this* account for nearly 90% of the pronouns used by each teacher. *This* and *that* are also used as determiners when the teacher points and questions. The prevalence of deictic forms reveals the closed, concrete and referential nature of the groups on the Mat. In performance teachers do not need to be more elaborate, and close physical access makes it possible for them to be explicit about concrete things in this way, for example:

- **This** one you can sound, Jenny. ... **This** one you can sound, Anele. ... **This** one you can sound, Jade. ... **This** word you can sound, Ayla. ... **This** word you should know, (unclear)... **This** word you can sound, Vicky (Mrs Dean, B53).
- What is another word? C’mon. I don’t like **that** one! Think of another one. **This** one’s nice! What is **this** one, Jesse? (Mrs Mitchell, C100)

- Ja! Who knows what **that** word says? ... At school! What is **that**? ... **That's** a fish, but is the fish in? And what's **this** child doing? (Mrs Samuels, B85).

Because teachers mostly make simple reference to things located within the visual range of the group, they can drive the activities forward with verbs rather than more complex structures. They can also depend on children understanding meaning from the context of the group, in many deictic forms. All pronouns, for example, have to be understood either in the context of the story (“What is *he* doing?”), or of the group (“It’s *your* turn”). Relying in this way on environmental factors to clarify meaning tightens the group identity and strengthens the borders of the formation. Videos of participants’ interaction further demonstrate how gestures like pointing and nodding supplement the meaning of the demonstrative pronouns named above, as well other language items.

Finally, Mrs Dean and Mrs Mitchell signal the seriousness of the event and the central place of reading through the formality and conventional politeness of their exchanges. All teachers are respectful of the children, especially those in the group. No teacher was recorded or observed calling a child’s attention rudely with, for example, “You!” This politeness balances the effect of the relentless instruction and imperative verbs which drive it, a feature of other pedagogic contexts (van der Mescht, 2005). If the flow of commands and instruction were not moderated, the effect in such extended passages would be overbearing, even taking the relative power positions of the teacher and children into account. Politeness is expressed by all three teachers through three language items: the use of polite request forms: *please* and *thank you*, the modal verb *can*, and the moderating effect of general group requests. These forms are discussed below.

Teachers’ use of *please* and *thank you* consciously modeled the conventionally polite behaviour that they expect of the children. Mrs Dean asks a child “What do you say?” and gets the response “Thank you, Mrs Dean”. Mrs Mitchell’s warmest response was to a boy who thanked her: “Pleasure, darling”. She models *please* and *thank you* in her own use, for example, “Good boy! Right, what happened at the end, **please** Darrell? ... Right, carry on then **please**, Vuyo... Right, Vuyo... uhm, **thank you**. Earl.” (D47)

Creating a polite or formal relationship is often the task of modal verbs. “In English we often give orders, and make requests and pleas in the form of elaborate questions (“Would you mind...”) which give the option of refusal” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 33). Modality suggests the extent to which the speaker is making an effort to be polite or deferential. As



mentioned in Section 2.4, the power relationship between teacher and children is not open to much negotiation in the real world of classroom interaction. There are subtle influences on the use of modality, however. Teachers need to be direct with young learners, to make instructions clear and expectations obvious, in order to induct them into a community of practice. Ambiguity does not help a Foundation Phase teacher-pupil relationship. Directness with little modality may also be a choice for openness and informality and the warmth that they connote, in contrast with the formality apposite to adult discourse. At the same time, teachers in this study promote a discourse of equality, for example, *we* are going to learn to read, and they use structures associated with politeness to convey this.

In addition to request forms, therefore, teachers use the modal verb *can* to express politeness. *Can* accounts for over half of all the modal verbs used by each teacher (in Mrs Mitchell's case nearly 90% of all modal verbs). It is often used in question form, for example “**Can** anybody else make a sentence for me?” (Mrs Dean, B21), “Who **can** tell me what's different?” (Mrs Mitchell, D47), “Who **can** remember what this word says?” (Mrs Samuels, B85). Leech and Svartvik explain that “[i]t is often more tactful to use a request rather than a command: i.e. to ask your hearer whether he is willing or able to do something” (1975, p. 147). Teachers may favour this structure because other modal forms like *would*, *could* or *will you...?* could be ambiguous to young listeners. Only one other modal verb is used with comparative frequency, and that is *must* as used by Mrs Samuels, which accounts for 28% of all modal verbs used by her, for example:

- They should be there. You **must** look for it nicely.
- Candace, you **must** leave that and you follow in the reading book, my baby!
- Okay, do the next one please? No, she **must** read. Read it. This one.
- We **must** read this book again today.

Leech and Svartvik suggest that *must* expresses an obligation that “involves the speaker's authority” (1975, p. 144). This usage helps construct Mrs Samuels's vigorous, casual style, in contrast to the more formal phrasing of Mrs Dean (who only uses *must* once) and Mrs Mitchell.

A third structure that balances the imperatives and creates a polite, formal effect is the use of plural pronouns. These appear most frequently as *we* and *let's*, ambiguously indicating individuals or the group with or without the teacher. The politeness of this form comes from the way in which it blurs the sense of obligation and spreads the expectation to

conform over the group. It allows the teacher to include herself in the activity and present herself as a group member. At the same time it does not disguise individual obligation, as these examples show:

- Right, are **we** sitting nicely on our bums Ellarine please? (Mrs Dean, B21)
- **Let's** just wait for everybody to get... Ross? How do **we** sit? Legs crossed. (Mrs Mitchell, D47)
- **Let's** go. One at a time. This is for Kamlesh. (Mrs Samuels, A39)

Instructions that are unambiguously intended for the group as a whole are signaled with *everyone*, *everybody*, *together* and *all*. Mrs Mitchell asserts group activity most strongly, for example, “Right, **everybody** turn over. **Everybody together** now, please” (D47). Her usage supports her practice of unison reading, discussed in Chapter Six.

In summary, the naming practices of the teachers, their use of demonstrative pronouns and the politeness they show while teaching, all combine to produce an impression of the important and privileged position of children on the Mat, and of the serious focus of the teachers while they are there. Confirming the status of the Mat as a protected but highly regulated environment, children there may be corrected, but not reprimanded.

### 7.3.2 Teaching the individual while training the group

Pronouns serve both to create groups and to separate individuals from groups. Pennycook observes that pronouns are “very complex and political words, always raising difficult issues about who is being represented” (1994, p. 173). In particular there is the problem of *we*, which is “always simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, a pronoun of solidarity and of rejection, of inclusion and exclusion” (Pennycook, 1994, p. 173). The movement from *we* and *us* to *you* and *I* signals a movement in the teacher’s focus from the group to the individual and back. A table of these pronouns is presented in Appendix 8.5.

In the previous section it was suggested that pronouns used on the Mat position the interlocutors in a particular way. Plural pronouns evoke the “complex and political” context mentioned by Pennycook. Earlier I suggested that plural pronouns soften the directness of imperatives and spread the sense of obligation over the whole group. In addition, pronouns function in overlapping ways to offer children four interlocking identities as group members, as well as to position the teacher in relation to them. First, *we*, *our* and *let's* declares repeatedly that children are group members with a common

identity and obligation as readers and learners. The ubiquitous use of *us*, *our* and *we* suggests a habitual conscious movement against *othering* (Janks 2010, p. 111) in these classrooms.

Secondly, it promotes a common goal for the children and the teacher and simultaneously endorses the power of the teacher by unifying the group behind the activities she is suggesting. Janks writes that “[p]ower can be gained by unifying people and by establishing a group identity based on the things they have in common” (n.d., p. 6). Thirdly, by using these plural pronouns inclusively the teachers claim the right to speak on the children’s behalf. Janks suggests that “[s]ometimes people using the pronoun ‘we’ feel that they have the right (or the power) to speak for somebody else as well as for themselves” (n.d., p. 8). Finally, this usage continually aligns children with the activity of the group by suggesting that it represents their common purpose. Like the continual use of children’s names it serves as a reminder of the focus required of each group member. In sum, the use of plural pronouns supports a complex web of positions on the Mat, partly suggesting inclusivity but also partly asserting the teacher’s power to direct the group.

In face-to-face interaction singular pronouns operate as a naming practice. They identify groups and individuals as the subjects of the instructions, receivers of knowledge, those who must answer questions. *You* reminds children of their obligations and position: they must respond to the demands of teachers. Potentially this makes pronouns a rich source of identity construction. The previous section mentions that teachers frequently remind children to focus on the work in hand. It also describes how plural pronouns are used to signal politeness rather than true group involvement. These considerations suggest in turn that the teacher’s primary interest in Reading on the Mat is the individual rather than the group, a perception reinforced by teachers’ characteristic use of the pronoun *you*. *You* refers overwhelmingly to individual children in the case of Mrs Dean (89% of usage) and Mrs Samuels (74% of usage). This shows the extent to which Reading on the Mat is a structure that enables the teacher to be in direct interaction with individuals, an observation made of the normative work in Section 6.3. The picture however is more subtle than this, as Mrs Mitchell’s contrasting practice shows, and as an examination of other language items also suggests.

Section 6.4 reports on Mrs Dean’s establishing Norms that promote reading as a silent, individual activity. This emerges also from an analysis of her instruction. While she

names children relatively seldom, the pronoun *you* usually refers to individuals. She is the least likely to suggest a group identity through the use of other pronouns (*us, we, our*) or to use grouping names like *everyone, all* or *everybody* (no recorded occurrences). Yet she explicitly includes herself in the group as an active participant, using the pronouns *I* and *me* to claim her place there. This aspect of her practice appears also in normative signals which establish her as a group member, and the egalitarian nature of her Key. In her role as a participant, however, she most commonly says *I want*, which suggests that her wishes in all matters on the Mat are paramount. Mrs Dean's second most common use of the singular pronoun is *let me ...* which shows her in the service of readers and supports Norms characterizing her as a resource to the group (Section 6.5). An analysis of processes shows her claiming existential qualities such as *liking* and *being sorry*. She also promotes relationships (relational processes) and is active in the role of the teacher (material processes). As a group member she asserts mental processes and *knows, loves, thinks* and *forgets*.

Mrs Mitchell's practice contrasts with this, and the analysis of her exchanges shows that she constructs Reading on the Mat as a group as well as an individual activity, with *you* signaling the individual and the group in an even 50:50 ratio. The reason she names individuals frequently (362) is that this typically signals the end of unison reading and the return to individual reading. A movement in the other direction, to group activity is signaled with *we, all, everybody, let's* and *together*. Like Mrs Dean she claims her place in the group by using *I, me* and *I'm* as often as she signals the group or the individual. As a group member she presents herself as someone who is *proud* and *pleased*, who *likes* and *owns*. She is also *sorry* more than any of these, but this signals displeasure rather than apology. Like Mrs Dean she actively constructs relationship with the children, *wanting, begging pardon, helping, waiting* and *apologizing*. Unlike Mrs Dean she emphasizes her right to a voice: as the most verbal of the teachers she *asks, says, tells* and *writes* frequently.

Mrs Samuels's practice is different again. Analysis shows that, although she uses the fewest first names to summon children's attention, like Mrs Dean she constructs children as individuals rather than a group. In parallel with Mrs Dean's practice, *you* usually refers to single children, and she seldom uses *we* or *let's*. At the same time she inserts herself least of all the teachers into group activities, so the deep text supports the observation,

made in Chapter Six, that she hands the activity over to the children. When she is present, she is active in her teaching role, *giving, getting, showing, doing* and *working*. She presents herself as one who *thinks* and *says*, but she also shares in the mental/ material behaviours of the children, *hearing, choosing, looking* and *following*.

In summary, Reading on the Mat is used by two of the teachers to instruct individuals rather than the group, and this is demonstrated by their characteristic use of first names and individual pronouns. To enable the individual interaction they insert themselves into the activities of the group, constructing a strong relationship with their learners and taking an active role in directing reading. The third teacher discursively provides a strong construction of the group of which she is a significant member and teaches the group as much as she instructs the individual.

The conflict in Mrs Samuels's class over whether the group or the individual reads is mentioned in Section 6.4. An examination of the discourse of the teachers shows that they may be less ambiguous about co-reading than the analysis of Act Sequences or Norms suggest. Their language acknowledges that the Reading on the Mat formation serves individual tuition, and constructs reading as an individual project, unless, like Mrs Mitchell, their pedagogic practice favours unison reading.

### **7.3.3 What is reading?**

Finally, an analysis of the participants (or nominal groups) and transitivity processes (realised by verbal groups) provides information on what reading means to Mrs Dean, Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels. As mentioned in Section 7.3.1, teachers use the nouns *word, book, page, sentence, work, top* and *number* most frequently. After that the frequency drops sharply, but *mat, bottom* (of page), *end* (of book), *bag, picture, ladder, story, homework* and *full stop* also feature. Most nouns used on the Mat therefore locate the text, the child or the reading equipment, which suggests that the teachers are careful to help young readers settle and to locate their task physically. The metalanguage terminology of reading shows that teachers focus on fragments rather than whole stories: words, sentences, vowels and numbers (of lists). This analysis confirms observations in other chapters that teachers focus on decoding rather than whole text comprehension, supplying

children with an identity position as code breakers in the discourse of their interaction and withholding from them other aspects of reading such as genre, character, plot or intention.

Verbal transitivity analysis complements this picture. Halliday observes that the term *process* is used in an extended sense, “to cover all phenomena... and anything that can be expressed by a verb: event, whether physical or not, state, or relation” (1976, p. 159). He further suggests that processes are the product of our conception of the world or point of view:

Our most powerful conception of reality is that it consists of “goings-on”: of doing, happening, feeling, being. These goings-on are sorted out in the semantic system of the language, and expressed through the grammar of the clause... The clause evolved simultaneously in another grammatical function expressing the reflective, experiential aspect of meaning. This... is the system of TRANSITIVITY. Transitivity specifies the different types of process that are recognized in the language, and the structures by which they are expressed. (Halliday, 1985, p. 101)

As well as providing “our most powerful conception of reality”, processes have an important role on the Mat because imperative and modal verbs drive the instructions, directions and prohibitions of teachers’ practices. A random sample from Mrs Dean, excluding children’s responses, demonstrates this:

**Go color** it in, please **don’t eat**. **Are you stuck?** Jenny, you **haven’t tried** at all yet. **Have you got** something? **Have you got some...** **Shhhh!** Okay, Fezeka. Jenny? What **have you got**, love? Okay, **come let’s see** if you **can build**. **Put it down** for her. Help? And you **must...** **that’s** beautiful! You **must go over** and **fill in** your word (B21).

Or, Mrs Samuels:

**Look** at the word “into,” everybody. **Point** to the word “into.” **Look** at it? **Point** to it. ... Savu, **point** to the word “into.” If you **break** it up into two words, what **does that say?** (A39).

Halliday (1985) argues that these verbs construct participants as particular kinds of people, people who exist, who think, who speak, who do. The implications of this for teachers’ practice are described in Section 7.3.2, above. The wheel below depicts visually the way in which processes shade into and out of each other, in particular how mental and material processes blend into behavioural processes.

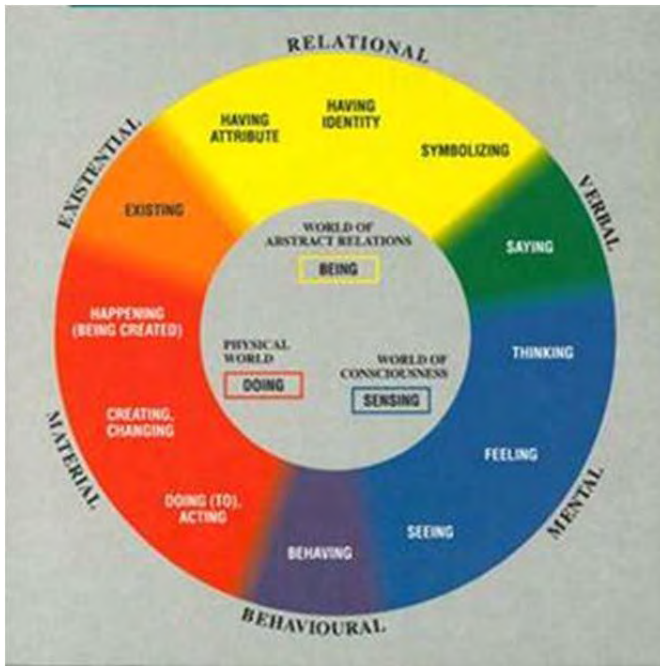


Figure 34: Halliday's conception of processes in a wheel, in which Behavioural processes lie between Mental and Material processes (Halliday, 1994, Edition 2 cover)

Janks asserts that “there is nothing intrinsically superior or inferior about material, mental, verbal or relational processes” (1997, p. 337). Nevertheless, whether the teacher suggests predominantly material, mental, verbal, relational or existential actions for the children positions them in relation to reading. The analysis shows that processes of instruction on the Mat construct young readers in two main domains, firstly in their relationship with the teacher and secondly in the behaviours of reading. Mrs Dean spends the most time (39% of processes) on relationship, while Mrs Mitchell spends 23% of her time and Mrs Samuels 26%. The table below summarizes the processes to which each teacher has recourse when speaking to the children. The most prevalent groups are in bold.

Processes used by teachers speaking to children	Mrs Dean	Mrs Mitchell	Mrs Samuels
Behavioural processes	7%	10%	12%
<b>Behavioural - mental /material combined</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Total behavioural processes</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>44%</b>
Existential processes	-	.03%	-
Material processes	14%	29%	16%
Mental processes	6%	4%	10%
<b>Relational processes</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>26%</b>
Verbal processes	5%	6%	3%

Table 10: Processes used by teachers speaking to children.

The behavioural processes captured in the table above are subdivided into obvious behaviours such as *wait, help, try, leave, shush* or *try*, and behaviours that express a combination of mental activity and material activity (in the physical world), like *do it*. Combined mental-material processes suggest physical activity and therefore a material process, but in fact refer to a mental process, in this case reading. Iwamoto (2011) suggests that by definition behavioural processes are on the borderline between material and mental processes, as Halliday's diagram above also shows; Halliday declares that they "represent outer manifestations of inner workings, the acting out of processes of consciousness and physiological states" (1994, p. 107). Iwamoto (2011) suggests that the boundaries of behavioral processes are indefinite, a claim also borne out in this analysis. Teachers use mental/ material behavioural processes in a significant proportion of exchanges, as the table shows. For Mrs Dean they represent 29% of all processes, for Mrs Mitchell 27% and for Mrs Samuels 32%. When added to other behavioural processes, these proportions jump to 36% for Mrs Dean, and 37% and 44% for Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels respectively. This weighting is predictable considering that reading is a mental process, but one which the teachers assess by what children do. Processes teachers use on the Mat which combine the mental and material are: *do, go, start, come* (meaning pay attention), *choose, look at, follow, break it up* (phonetically), *(be) ready, work* and *carry on*. Teachers further locate reading in the material world through instructions which surround the activity: *put, sit, change, take, get, see, close, point, pick up, move, give, stand, find, open* and *borrow*, for example.

By contrast, verbal and mental processes which construct the children as thinkers and speakers, are proportionately low. Mrs Dean suggests mental processes for the children in 6% of the occurrences and verbal processes in 5%, Mrs Mitchell 4% and 6% and Mrs Samuels 10% and 3%. Nor are existential processes attributed to children in these groups: their right to "being" is denied on the Mat. The lack of mental, verbal and existential processes applied to children seems a problematic trend in a reading lesson, which focuses on a cognitive process, and where the literature recommends that children are encouraged to express their own viewpoints and understandings. A counter-argument in the literature on reading is that this balance is appropriate when teaching young children, and that it shows teachers locating reading in the accessible physical world rather than in abstractions.



The trend for teachers to emphasise material and behavioural processes and to underplay verbal and mental processes is also present when they address groups using *Let's ...* and *We ...*, with some significant variations between the teachers, as the tables below indicate:

Processes for the group: <b>Let's + process</b>	Mrs Dean	Mrs Mitchell	Mrs Samuels
<b>Behavioural processes: mental /material combined</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>88%</b>
Existential processes	-	-	-
<b>Material processes</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Mental processes	-	-	-
Relational processes	-	-	2%
Verbal processes	-	3%	-

**Table 11: Processes used by teachers to speak of the group: Let's+process.**

Processes for the group: <b>We + process</b>	Mrs Dean	Mrs Mitchell	Mrs Samuels
<b>Behavioural processes - mental /material combined</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Existential processes	-	11%	-
<b>Material processes</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>17%</b>	-
Mental processes	8%	8%	-
Relational processes	8%	-	-
Verbal processes	-	32%	-

**Table 12: Processes used by teachers to speak of the group: We+process.**

The Tables 11 and 12 above show that, when addressing the group rather than the individual, teachers construct reading as a physical and behavioural activity. Mrs Samuels' practice is particularly strong in this regard, with 88% and 100% of processes used to signal behaviours rather than mental or verbal processes. Mrs Samuels's direct, vigorous style is grounded in this usage (Section 4.2.5). Mrs Mitchell's practice is in contrast to this. She constructs reading in the group as a strongly verbal activity, and this is grounded in her preference for unison reading, already discussed.

Finally, the teachers present themselves in contrast to the way in which they refer to the children or group, as Table 13 below demonstrates:

Process teachers use to refer to themselves	Mrs Dean	Mrs Mitchell	Mrs Samuels
Behavioural processes - mental /material combined	2%	4%	12%
<b>Existential processes</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Material processes</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>27%</b>
Mental processes	16%	6%	14%
<b>Relational processes</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Verbal processes	2%	24%	14%

**Table 13: Processes used by teachers to refer to themselves.**

The teachers are active in the teaching, and suggest this through material processes such as *sorting, making, giving, putting, showing* and *getting*. They also work on the relationships: they *want, need, bet, apologise, wait* and *watch*. Both of these categories apply to children as well. Unlike the children however, teachers present themselves as having mental and existential attributes: they *like, feel, need, are busy, proud and pleased*. They are more verbal, and *ask, say* and *tell*. They present themselves as thinkers also, but not strongly. They *forget, think, wonder* and *know*.

In conclusion, an analysis of the processes shows a strong overlap of trends between the teachers in identity positioning. It is more than can be explained by training or background, and seems rather to be a consequence of two factors. The first factor is the perception that when teaching young children it is important to remain in a concrete, physical domain, treating the activity of reading as a behaviour, which can be monitored, rather than as a mental process, which cannot. This is in line with philosophies of teaching and learning such as behaviourism and more recently enactivism which stress the importance of the environment and the value of active engagement in learning. These theories have particular implications for learning activities and on the Mat the practical application of these theories may result in young readers being offered positions as doers and denied the roles of thinkers and speakers.

A second factor has to do with the social structure of Reading on the Mat itself. It seems that this formation may restrict teachers' choices as much as it allows others. The very access it allows, which is expressed in the weight of behavioural and material processes, may skew the teaching in that direction. It may correspondingly disallow discussion and conversations based on text. Certainly it is noticeable in Mrs Dean's and Mrs Samuels' practice that discussion of text and genre is a feature of whole class story reading. The

lack of this dimension of reading in Reading on the Mat is a significant omission in all cases.

#### **7.4 In word and deed. Constructing readers nonverbally**

The verbal exchanges described above do not take place in a vacuum. Communication on the Mat is multimodal and nonverbal elements complete the verbal mode. The discourse described above already suggests a physical and material engagement with texts and participants. It hints at the embedded and referential quality of exchanges, in the extensive use of deictic forms such as *here*, *that* and *this*. The meaning of these forms is clearer when teachers are viewed pointing to and touching texts and children. Some words are completely replaced with gestures, a trend which McDermott et al. also observed in young readers with a teacher:

Such clear [verbal] signals are usually used at the beginning of a behavioural context or when something goes awry. Thereafter, either through the duration of the context or on repeated occurrences of the context, the signals can be considerably shortened; precise verbal formulation can be replaced by a no less precise, but far simpler head nod or hand gesture. On occasion, a gesture can stand on its own as the sole signal for a prolonged context. The condition for the description of any signal as a feature of the work members do to contextualise each other is that it is responded to (1978, p. 248).

These observations could have been made of the classrooms of this study, where Mrs Samuels uses a nod to mean “Please read now,” in just the way he describes. Mrs Dean puts a finger to her lips for silence; a look may be a rebuke. These practices give the verbal exchange a physical form. The nonverbal therefore provides a complementary text for analysis, and the nonverbal modes in Reading on the Mat are the focus of Section 7.4. Jordan and Henderson distinguish between *talk-driven interaction*, which is predominantly accompanied by gesturing and gazing, and *instrumental interaction*, which dominates activities on the Mat. They suggest that “Where interaction is instrumental, the nature of production tools, display spaces, and other aspects of the material environment significantly enter into the interaction and become an important part of the analysis” (1995, p 33). Nonverbal forms are therefore a significant mode for analysis. There are three reasons for including an analysis of the body movements of the teachers in this research. In the first place, the social context created on the Mat is also a physical context

created by the bodies of the participants, and as Section 6.3 shows, the opening moves of Reading on the Mat focus on establishing the physical Norms of the formation.



Figure 35: Reading on the Mat ring in action

A second reason for including the nonverbal is that critical studies have highlighted the importance of the body as a site of power negotiation through which individuals are inducted into dominant or subservient roles in social hierarchies. Hospitals, prisons and schools require individuals to exhibit their compliance to dominant values not only by saying but also by doing and being. Reading on the Mat provides just such an arena, in which children's bodies are trained in the physical habits associated with reading in the schools and the society. Some of the nonverbal practices on the Mat emphasise compliance and control, others relate directly to the skill of reading.

A third reason for including the nonverbal comes from work by McDermott et al. (1978) who suggest that analyzing posture and gesture provides important information to the ethnographer. Through posture, gesture and glance participants signal to each other what they are doing. They adjust to each other and take on the postures characteristic of their current activity. Furthermore, they do this at the same time in an "elaborate postural-kinesic dance, in which the children and the teacher quietly round each other up until all return to the book to read" (McDermott et al, 1978, p. 251). This *dance* confirms to group members, in a micro, second-to-second stream of information, what the current purpose of the group is, enabling individuals to align themselves to that purpose or to

withdraw from it. For example, the child who sits with legs crossed and eyes directed to the book says “I am (we are) reading.” These nonverbal behaviours are therefore a rich source of data to the researcher, who is offered members’ perceptions about the work of the group and the roles of individuals in it on an ongoing basis. Nonverbal information about roles and expectations may be reinforced verbally, for example when the teachers instruct children to *read now*, but is more commonly expressed nonverbally. Erikson suggests that nonverbal signals indicate who is *doing the work* of the event. He notes that “As the nature of social participation changes, so does the division of labour” (1982, p. 221).

Finally, in the events of this study the nonverbal mode completes verbal interaction in an important way. Goodwin remarks on “the simultaneous use of structurally different kinds of semiotic practices (language, gesture and the structure of the page being worked with) in different media which mutually elaborate each other to create a whole that is different from, and greater than, any of its constituent parts” (downloaded 2010, p. 55). This suggests that the researcher cannot fully understand the event by attending to one mode alone; the analysis presented in this section therefore reports on the nonverbal signals teachers give regarding the activities of the group, and the *work* that they require from young readers on the Mat.

Methodologically, the analysis follows a similar process to that of the analysis of the discourse reported on above. After viewing the whole corpus of video data for each teacher I selected sessions which were representative of that teacher’s nonverbal style. These I viewed repeatedly, creating categories on which to base the observations below. With regard to the validity of this data, Jordan and Henderson remark on the analyzing video data that

For the participants themselves, different behaviors are on different levels of awareness. As a consequence, some are more readily modifiable if and when people take note of the camera. Gestures and body positioning are difficult to manipulate and control for any length of time, and microbehaviors such as gaze and head turns are usually out-of-awareness. In talk, people make greater attempts to modify what they say than how they say it (1995, p. 22).

Nevertheless, significant problems emerge from the subjective and imprecise nature of nonverbal data and the impossibility of making a gesture - to - meaning correlation. Different researchers in this area have suggested different groupings to avoid entering the

analysis at the level of individual elements. For this analysis I use the work of McDermott, Gospodinov and Aron (1978) who analyze the interactions of reading children under broad functional clusters of nonverbal signals which announce the *work* of the group or an individual in it. They maintain that “Most single actions can be understood as constitutive elements of the positionings” (1978, p. 254).<sup>13</sup> In their study of young children reading they identified four of these: *reading, waiting, bidding for a turn to read* and *anarchic*. Analysing through functional categories such as these provides information about broad trends and avoids individual idiosyncratic details.

In the sections below I firstly discuss features of archetypal mentor-novice interactions, then look at the postures taken on by teachers during Reading on the Mat and finally examine some of the differences in the detail of their interactions which have implications for identity positioning.

#### **7.4.1 The mentor-novice relationship**

Goodwin suggests that the interactions exemplified in the Reading on the Mat formation “are particularly important in the process of education and apprenticeship through which newcomers gain mastery of the practices that constitute being a competent member of a relevant community” (2007, p. 57). He further comments that small groups of this kind are an archetypal structure for inducting novices into the practices of a community, a “primordial site for the organization of human action, knowledge and cognition” (2007, p. 60).

Just as there are considerable overlaps in the verbal choices the three teachers make, so there are significant overlaps in teachers’ nonverbal behaviours on the Mat. These can be explained by the notion of an archetypal formation. The body positions, the eye contact and gestures are typical of human mentor-novice interactions observed and described also by other researchers (Goodwin, downloaded 2010, Luke, 1992). In this formation, teachers sit close to the children, lean forward, demonstrate on and point to the focus

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<sup>13</sup> *Positionings* is the term McDermott et al coined for clusters of nonverbal signals with a single functional purpose. In this study I use the term *posture* to avoid confusion with *identity positioning*.

object, in this case the text. They use similar gestures for approval and disapproval (nodding and shaking the head), for silence (fingers to lips) and to draw attention (pointing). They all tap children on the knee to ask for attention. Sweeping arm movements demonstrate inclusion, for example Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels demonstrating *our*. The hand held palm out or a pushing movement with the whole arm indicates *stop* or *go away*, (Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels) while an outward wave means *sit back*. There are also idiosyncratic uses: Mrs Dean signals successful reading by offering a *low five* palm to palm. These gestures are drawn from standard nonverbal communications and derive from the archetypal nature of the activity. If they are not understood immediately then the teacher gives the instruction verbally. The verbal instruction also identifies the work of the group to the researcher.



Figure 36: Mrs Mitchell gestures *stop*.

The daily repetition of these actions at close proximity ensures that children are quickly inducted into the appropriate responses to teachers' nonverbal signals. At the end of the year all groups were more confident of the Norms and expectations on the Mat and teachers spent less time reinforcing rules. Strong readers had internalized and maintained many of the postural rules, such as sitting with legs folded, and the signals, such as those for turn taking. Weaker groups very often had not.

## 7.4.2 Teachers' postures in Reading on the Mat

In addition to sharing generic movements and gestures described above, the three teachers of the study share four basic postures while on the Mat. There they *attend*, they *teach*, they *direct* and they *disengage*. Each of these is expressed in its own cluster of nonverbal signals and may in addition be identified verbally to the participants: "I can't hear you" (attending), "I hope you're watching, you two" (teaching), "Follow. You must follow," (directing) or the social conversations associated with the disengaged posture. The behavioural features of each function are tabulated in Appendix 8.

### 7.4.2.1 Posture One: Attending

This posture is used during children's reading and it signals that teachers are monitoring an individual child's reading. The *attending* posture has two variations. The first is a *listening* one (head down, leaning forward towards the reading child). The second is an observing or *watching* posture. The teachers, Mrs Dean in particular, pay close attention to the faces of reading children and in Section 6.3 I mention that her posture is one of the barriers to outsiders. In this position the teacher watches the child's eyes and lips as he or she forms words, and any body movements which may signal cognitive process, frowning, looking away, pointing to words and direction of gaze. The teacher's gaze flicks between the text and the child's face. Goodwin observes:

Such gaze shifting is common in acts of pointing (Goodwin 2003a) and provides some demonstration of how, in order to build action within face-to-face interaction, participants frequently attend to multiple visual fields simultaneously, including both objects being worked with, and each other's bodies. Seeing how the addressee is responding to the current action is clearly consequential for the organization of subsequent action (downloaded 2010, p. 56 – 57).

The strong external border work that exists on the Mat is because teachers are attending to the child as well as the reading. This posture is accompanied by frequent instructions to look and point, as was the case with Goodwin' subjects also.





Figure 37: Listening and watching. Mrs Samuels early in the year.

Jordan and Henderson observe that “Gaze clearly plays an important role not only in coordinating conversational interaction (a topic that has been studied extensively) but also in carrying out physical tasks” (1995, p. 44).



Figure 38: Mrs Mitchell watching; midyear.

In the attending posture the teachers’ faces are immobile, even during praise. This fixity, and the continuous glancing between the text and the child gives the posture an evaluating quality which confirms other modes which simultaneously present the Mat as an arena of assessment. Teachers’ head-eye orientation is towards the reading child and their focus is intense and exclusive. They may become rigid in this posture until the child has finished reading. Teachers’ vigilance of the rest of the group is reduced until the reading ends. Talk associated with this posture is minimal and Mrs Dean allows longer pauses than the other teachers to allow the child to decode unfamiliar texts. While the child reads the

teacher may or may not assist by falling in with the reading or providing a correct word. In this posture she controls turn-taking, often nonverbally with a nod or glance. In this posture Mrs Samuels mimes *expectation* with open eyes and raised eyebrows and Mrs Dean mimes *thought* with finger to brow when she builds words or sentences.

In the attending posture children may or may not conform to the seating rule, but in all cases the reading child's head-eye orientation is to the book, and other participants' postures usually copy this. In this posture children who are not reading are most likely to take on postures of distraction or resistance. If she feels the distracted or resistant child is disruptive, the teacher signals her displeasure, entering the *directing* posture if necessary. One of the benefits of round robin or unison reading to regulating behaviour is that, as all group members are meant to be involved in the activity, children who do not conform to the postures of attention are easily visible to the teacher.

Where the vigilance of children needs to be high, that is, when they must focus on the teacher for direction, they are distracted from the text and they may more easily lose their place. Children's focus benefits when they are used to the sequences, norms and interactive patterns of Reading on the Mat and when these can flow in a predictable, unmarked way.

#### 7.4.2.2 Posture Two: Teaching

The *teaching* posture is used by teachers when they explain or demonstrate on textual elements and is directed towards the whole group. In this posture they ask questions and ask for repetition. It is the most dynamic posture of those used on the Mat, associated with larger gestures and more mobile expressions. There is more variation in the paralinguistic properties of the voice: speed, volume and pitch. Teachers may exaggerate the face movements necessary for correct pronunciation.



Figure 39: Mrs Mitchell demonstrating in front of the new data projector; late in the year.

In this posture teachers' focus on the group is intense and they appear unconscious of outsiders. Their head-eye orientation is directed to different children in turn. They may reduce the distance between themselves and the children by moving into the centre of the circle. Gestures are larger and more animated, for example Mrs Dean explaining *our* (201, 51:58) and Mrs Samuels explaining *broad* (302, 43:50). Movements become faster or more aggressive, for example, Mrs Samuels *jabs* cards at children in an emphatic way. The figure below shows her demonstrating on her hands.



Figure 40: Mrs Samuels demonstrates the difference between *b* and *d*. Children imitate her.

The teaching posture is characterized by more attention-getting behaviour like pointing, shrugging, twisting, finger clicking and clapping. The Key or mood intensifies. Mrs Dean puts her head on one side, smiling sideways and looking up at participants. Mrs Mitchell becomes more urgent; Mrs Samuels becomes more vigorous, kneeling, crawling and reaching across children. In the teaching posture, eye contact increases and teachers scan the whole group as well as making deliberate, focused eye-contact with individuals. Teachers touch books, texts and children more in teaching than in other postures. Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels use pens as pointers and shake or tap them.

All of these features are more noticeable when the teachers focus on phonics work and explain decoding strategies and punctuation than when children are reading longer texts. Mrs Dean is most animated when working with cards in her game sequences, Mrs Mitchell is most emphatic in word hunts and rhyming words, and Mrs Samuels is most energetic when identifying ee-sounds in the tree game. This confirms observations made in Chapter Six that the teachers are putting their greatest effort behind decoding. This confirms

observations made in other cycles of analysis that decoding is valued over other activities with text. In this posture children's focus on the teacher is high and she ensures that it remains so, as long as she keeps this posture.

#### **7.4.2.3 Posture Three: Directing**

The *directing* posture is associated with enforcing behaviours, instructing, correcting and reprimanding, and corresponds to the nonverbal mode in Bernstein's *regulative discourse* with which teachers create and maintain order in their classes. Teachers use this posture at the beginning of Reading on the Mat sessions and it is also triggered by noise or inattention, so it frequently blends with elements of the *teaching* posture. It lasts as long as necessary for approved behaviours to reappear. In this position teachers' head-eye orientation is directed to the misbehaving individual and they may pat or touch inattentive children. The body becomes rigid and tense. They use gestures like frowning, head-shaking or finger-to-lips to suppress disruptive behaviour and may also clap (Mrs Mitchell) or click fingers (Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels). These gestures may be abrupt or aggressive. The most vigorous of these gestures are the big hand and arm movements which *push* outside children away from the group.

Significantly, the reprimanding aspect of the directing posture seldom makes its way into the verbal domain in Mrs Dean's and Mrs Samuels' practice. Their regulative discourse is therefore strongly nonverbal. The consequence for their teaching is to reduce the word load (as I mention in Section 6.4, Mrs Mitchell uses nearly twice as much speech) and to enable teaching or reading to continue uninterrupted while direction and control happens simultaneously. It establishes a separate mode for controlling children's behaviour. Mrs Mitchell uses the verbal mode for control and behavioural issues while she is also teaching and this fragments the pedagogic flow, as has been mentioned in Sections 4.2.5 and 6.4.

When teachers are in the *directing* posture they frequently instruct children to sit, to sit back or to sit nicely. The most obvious purpose of this instruction is to draw children's attention to the seriousness and formality of the event by insisting on postural uniformity, and it is therefore marked in the opening Norms (see section 6.3). Mrs Mitchell believes that this posture makes reading easier (informal conversation) and will not start until every child has taken up this position. For Mrs Dean *sitting nicely* means the school *hook and look* posture which ensures forward-facing attention. However, it is also a Norm which

teachers immediately relax and children on the Mat sit sideways, kneel or sit on their ankles without reprimand.



Figure 41: Breaking the sitting "rule" in Mrs Samuels' class

In Mrs Samuels' class children may lie on their stomachs, with shoulders in the circle. Teachers allow this only while children's focus on the work is high. As soon as a child is inattentive, the teacher uses the well-established *sit nicely* rule as a euphemism for *pay attention*. Mrs Samuels demonstrates the link in the following sequence: A child is focused on a book, and the instruction to *leave it* is followed by "Sit up straight for me, come!" A minute later she calls another child's attention and similarly enforces the seating rule as a replacement reprimand: "Nolundu, we are reading this now. Put that down. Come, sit up! What is this, Nolundu?" (C103).

Like the constant use of children's names to call attention, the sitting rule seems to have a function other than constructing the group. In his study, McDermott suggests that the reading posture (head-eye orientation directed to book, head lowered, gaze on text) is "the most significant organizational device" (1978, p. 251) because it expresses the core purpose of the group. In Reading on the Mat teachers model the correct *reading* posture for the children as legs crossed, finger pointing to book and head-eye orientation to the text. They interpret this posture as compliance with and attention on all activities on the Mat. This explains Mrs Samuels' responses quoted above. It also explains why teachers

relax the rule so quickly: as long as children's focus is observably high, signaled by successful performance, the postural signs of compliance are not needed. When teachers are in *directing* posture children's vigilance is high. They are alert and immobile and their head-eye orientation is towards the teacher.

#### 7.4.2.4 Posture Four: Disengaged

Finally, teachers express relaxation through a posture of *disengagement*. This posture may also communicate satisfaction with children's independent activities on the Mat such as silent reading, word building or the fish game.



Figure 42: Mrs Dean disengaged

The disengaged posture is not associated with an identifying verbal instruction, as the other three are. In this posture teachers respond to children's questions and comments and the responses may be social as well as instructional. There is little monitoring of the group. Characteristic of this posture is that teachers increase distance by leaning back. If they have been cross-legged they may stretch out their legs (Mrs Dean and Mrs Samuels). There is no particular head-eye orientation and all gestures are slower, reduced in scale and less emphatic. Teachers raise their heads and their gaze travels over the whole class rather than being focused on the group. In a variation they may lower their gaze and attend to admin or the work of other children. Their faces relax and they nod and smile more readily, including at children some distance away. They may call out instructions to children in the class to pack, eat or finish their work. They accept outsiders openly and

conduct conversations with them. In this posture children may pat or tap the teacher for attention or lean against her: touch in this posture is often initiated by children.

The teachers in the study use the posture of disengagement differently in their practice on the Mat. Mrs Dean enters this posture after any instruction that children should work by themselves, particularly after her instruction at the end of a session to “read in your heads, noos.” She is also in this position as she waits for children to depart or arrive. Even in this posture her interactions with those outside the group are discreet and aside. In contrast, Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels move in and out of this posture when children are reading to them by attending to homework admin or to the requests of outsiders. This creates a mixed nonverbal message for viewers. It is not possible easily to answer the question “What is the group doing now?” by looking at these teachers. Early in the year children stop reading when they see this posture. When teachers are in this posture children’s vigilance is at its lowest. They are usually absorbed in their own occupation, which may be packing, reading silently or socialising with other participants.

### **7.4.3 Details and differences**

The most noticeable difference between the teachers is in the clarity and coherence of the nonverbal communication of the four postures. Mrs Dean signals the activity of the group not only by entering the postures according to the function of that phase of Reading on the Mat, but also by holding each posture for extended periods. While with all teachers the *teaching* posture is always easily identifiable, there may be confusion between the *reading* and *disengaged* postures in the practice of Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels, as mentioned above. In addition, Mrs Dean moves clearly between two variations of *attending*. She marks *listening* with a hunched, downward-facing pose, and *watching* with a raised head and often intensely focused gaze on the lips of the reading child. This is particularly noticeable when a child stands over her and “walks the word wall.” She may purse her lips in readiness to say a coming word. Because Mrs Dean’s postures are defined from each other they provide ongoing information about the work of the group and her expectations of the children. In Section 6.6.4, I note that children ask few questions, even on management, and her clear signals may be the reason.

Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels are more likely to follow the reading child in their own text, rather than to watch the child or adopt a listening posture. Bending over their own text may suggest disengagement. They also blend listening and watching rather than

move between them. The distinction between attending and disengaging is also less clear, and for Mrs Mitchell the difference between teaching and directing may also be blurred.

A second difference between the teachers is the extent to which they use gestures when they explain words. All the teachers do this. Mrs Mitchell, for example, holds her hand like a pistol pointed at the child to associate the Y-shape of the thumb and forefinger with pointing at *you*. Mrs Samuels gets Jake to hold his fists in a hitch-hiker's gesture to demonstrate the difference between *b* and *d* in the figure below:



Figure 43: Mrs Samuels shows David the difference between *b* and *d*

With Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels these moments are unplanned but Mrs Dean has developed gestures into a coherent system of nonverbal meaning which characterizes her teaching on the Mat.

Mrs Dean uses her body to signal the differences in the group work in the clear, strategic way described above, but she identifies her special teaching invention as “all my crazy mnemonic hooks.” These are nonverbal cues to help children remember words that cannot be broken down phonetically. She describes them as follows:

I put [them] to words like **duck** (flaps elbows). Nonverbal language that hopes to make associations to words. Higher up I say to them “Read pig-e-on. Say pigeon.” Anything I can think of to make them learn a word. **Shout** is fun. I just yell at them and everybody waits until they get that word and they can have me shout (Mrs Dean, Interview August 2010).

The transcription of a session in which she teaches *shout* appears in Section 6.5.3.



Further examples of such words are *out* (point to door), *come* (fingers in a forward-scooping gesture), *home* (arms over her head like a roof), *here* (downward point to herself), as well as words like *away*, *Digger* (scratches at the ground), *key* (mimes inserting a key in a lock and opening the door) and *wanted* (mimes stamping feet in a tantrum). She introduces the nonverbal mnemonic together with the new word on a flash card and may give additional information to aid memory. For example, with *here*, she points downward between her eyes and says that the e...e in the word is like her two eyes. *Come* is a scooping gesture “like a curly c.” After she has introduced the words the children use them in various card games before they meet them in their readers. If children hesitate in the games or the reading she says “Look at me” and performs the mnemonic action. If they still hesitate she gives the word verbally. For a weak reader she may perform the actions as they read to keep their fluency high (Interview, August 2010). Children glance at her for this guidance and may also perform the gestures as they read, showing that they have successfully internalized the memory cue. In contrast Mrs Samuels and Mrs Mitchell use repetition to teach the same words.



Figure 44: Mrs Dean mimes *help*.



Figure 45: Mrs Dean mimes here. Note the child at back imitating her

Mrs Dean's practice shows that the nonverbal domain is available to interested teachers as a conscious teaching resource, rather than the instinctive, inaccessible communication it is sometimes viewed as. Mrs Dean shows how the dance or *choreography* of the event (Erikson, 1982) can be taught to young children and then harnessed as a teaching and learning resource.

## 7.5 Conclusions regarding instrumentalities and identity positioning

An examination of the Instrumentalities provides different facets of the identity positions offered by teachers to children on the Mat, both adding to and confirming findings reported in other chapters.

The textbooks frame the reading event with middle class values and assumptions which the teachers do not engage with, even though some of these assumptions have implications for children's understanding. Teachers expect children to understand what is presented in the pictures, for example, and this may be problematic. Questions on the text and pictures are largely literal. The identity position provided by these texts suggests that children should strive to be what the books portray: actively engaged in exploring their environment and acquiring the values of the Western middle class.

An analysis of the discourse on the Mat shows that teacher's interactions with children

have two broad overlapping functions: relational and pedagogic. A third function, control, appears as an aspect of both of these. Teachers can be seen consciously building positive relationships with the children on the Mat with nicknames, positive appellations and other affirmations. Teachers are polite and respectful of those in the group and avoid reprimanding children there. This positive reading identity is mostly constructed in the verbal domain; in the nonverbal domain teachers signal that they are open to social exchanges when teachers are not teaching. It is important to note though that the relationship that is being built is a pseudo-social one: affirmation, approval and positive constructions are all in the service of learning and teaching. Children approach with social interactions only when the teachers signal nonverbally that they are *disengaged*.

The purpose of the relationship teachers build is to facilitate learning, and this is the second function of teachers' exchanges: the pedagogy. The language deployed for teaching is more complex than that used for relationship building, suggesting its greater importance. Teachers drive their instruction with imperatives and verbs all related to reading. Their directions may be essentialised into single verbs for efficiency and the association between a single word or gesture and an action is part of the normative work of the event. Prominently used nouns are all work related and direct children's attention to the activities of the group. Teachers expend considerable verbal resources on ensuring children's attention and they use names and pronouns repeatedly for this. They also expend nonverbal resources on the pedagogy. They are most energetic when they teach, and most focused when children read to them.

At the same time, verbal and nonverbal aspects of both the relationship and of the pedagogy express teachers' need to control and direct events. Names and nicknames have this function as well as a relational one. The imperative verbs and the pronoun *you* also serve the need to control and direct. Teachers may use the nonverbal domain largely for this regulative aspect of teaching.

At the same time as constructing these identity positions for children on the Mat, teachers reveal that their interest is largely in individuals. When interacting with individuals teachers focus on observable behaviours and physical attributes of reading rather than the young readers' mental, verbal or existential properties. They do this both in the words they use, and nonverbally in the close attention they pay to children in the group.

Finally, teachers deploy their verbal and nonverbal resources to teach word recognition and decoding skills rather than comprehension. This overlaps with observations that have been made elsewhere. Nouns reveal a focus on text fragments rather than whole text; negatives correct reading mistakes at a decoding level. Nonverbally, teachers are most energetic in relation to decoding and when they are working with decontextualised words.

The significance of the analysis recounted in this chapter is to confirm, at a micro-level of discourse and the nonverbal, the identity positioning trends which have been suggested in previous categories.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusions

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Positioning children positively as successful readers
- 8.3 Offering children a positive identity as code breakers
- 8.4 Text type as a determiner of identity construction
- 8.5 Children as active, but not agents
- 8.6 Avoiding diversity
- 8.7 Implications of this study for practice
- 8.8 Limitations of this study
- 8.9 Opportunities for future research
- 8.10 Final thoughts

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter returns to the research questions which guided the study (Section 1.5) and concludes the thesis. The central finding is that Reading on the Mat is an important site of identity construction in the Foundation Phase. The close-knit formation, its regular performance and the strong normative work done by teachers in this formation all strengthen its central place in creating notions of what reading is and who readers are as children learn to read in Grade One. The detailed analysis in Chapters Five to Seven shows a community creating and being created by its literacy practices. The conceptions of reading modeled in this repeated literacy event are likely to become deeply embedded in young participants.

Although teachers actively offer a positive identity position to children as successful emergent readers, this identity is largely restricted to that of *code breakers* (Luke and Freebody, 2011), and teachers do not offer children many opportunities to develop agency in their identity as readers. Teachers' choice of text type is the most significant determiner

of children's identity. Finally, teachers avoid issues of diversity on the Mat, and there is no recognition of the bilingual identity of isiXhosa- and Afrikaans-speaking learners.

The findings presented in this chapter confirm the multiple, changing, fluid nature of identity construction. They indicate that some aspects of identity positioning overlap, strengthening a particular position in several modes or dimensions together. These are main or central identity positions. Other aspects are offered weakly or peripherally and suggest less central identities for participants, for example, those presented in graded readers. Identity positions may also oppose or balance each other. Finally, it needs to be recognized that certain identities will be taken up by some children and not by others.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings, the limitations of the study and opportunities for future research.

## **8.2 Positioning children positively as successful readers**

The literature on Foundation Phase teaching emphasizes the importance of creating a positive learning environment for young children, and the teachers in this study are observably conscious of this aspect of their teaching. A number of features combine to offer children positive identities as successful readers on the Mat. Firstly, there is the institutional and provisioning support, visible in the well-equipped classrooms, especially the thousands of books needed to support this practice. Additional materials are made, managed and stored by the teachers: sets of alphabet and word cards for the children and teacher to use daily, flip files, Ladder Books and Yellow Books. Teachers buy commercially produced cards and posters out of their own funds and the time, energy, planning, money and effort they expend all highlight the importance of activities on the Mat. The support materials enable teachers to enact lessons as they wish, to allow for the responsive variety they all display, to avoid boredom in their daily teaching, and to give them a sense of agency. They communicate these affective elements to the children nonverbally, especially when they assume the vigorous engagement of the *teaching* posture.

The verbal mode is a second source of teachers' active construction of children as successful readers, and this is reported in Section 7.3. In particular, naming practices signal the high value placed on activities on the Mat, whether these are the full names used

by Mrs Mitchell that suggest formality, or the nicknames of Mrs Dean that connote intimacy. Teachers constantly draw attention to the activity of the group, and signal turn-taking with affirmatives: *good girl ... well done ... okay....* These affirmatives dominate all activities on the Mat and account for much of the Key of the event.

In addition, habitual exaggerated praise for good reading, for cleverness, for being smart and for practising all highlight the value of the activities taking place on the Mat and offer successful readers a positive identity. Teachers are polite and respectful to children on the Mat, and while there are personal variations in the Key established by each teacher, children's achievements are affirmed in a steady, systematic way. Teachers do not show impatience or irritation with readers, and negatives are elicited solely by decoding inaccuracies.

Nonverbal elements also suggest a positive identity for the children, including the strong nonverbal border work for the group that establishes a privileged, sequestered environment. The exclusionary postures of teachers, described in Section 6.3 and reinforced by instructions not to be interrupted, suggest the value of what happens on the Mat, and of the participants there. Other aspects of the group-forming Norms described in Chapter Six underline the importance of the event for participants, for example that all the children have to have a turn on the Mat every day, and that once on the Mat they all have an equal opportunity to read.

Another nonverbal aspect which provides children with a positive identity as successful readers is the high work focus on the Mat. Once the activities of the group have started, teachers continue to highlight the importance of what happens on the Mat through the Key of their performance, which is described in Section 4.2.5. The variety in Act Sequences show teachers' efforts at engaging responsively as learning unfolds, or employing varied strategies on the Mat. The work focus is confirmed by the analysis of discourse set out in Section 7.3.3. Verbal processes that predominate on the Mat construct relationship (with the teacher) and drive the work of the group forward with imperatives such as *choose, look at, follow, break it up, (be) ready, work and carry on*. The most frequently used nouns are also related to reading, for example, *books, fingers and pages*.

The underlying mood on the Mat is one of seriousness and the postures most used there, as described in Section 7.4.3, support that mood by being intent and focused. Each teacher adds her own characteristic tone to the underlying seriousness, whilst not detracting from

the sense of the importance of the practice. On the Mat, teachers are energetic and animated, engaging directly and physically with children. The analysis of Act Sequences in Chapter Five shows how regularly they change activities and provide interest and variety. While their benefits for literacy learning have been questioned, strategies like round robin reading and unison reading have positive affective consequences for group solidarity.

Finally a Norm of interaction on the Mat, described in Section 6.5, is that the teachers present themselves as a resource there. Children claim teachers' attention confidently and teachers respond to them readily, falling in with the reading child, cuing and pointing to help them with their task. A reading child has a right to teacher time and attention on the Mat and can expect praise when he or she performs well there. Teachers who make themselves available in this way offer an outlay in energy and patience which should not be undervalued.

### **8.3 Offering children a positive identity as code breakers**

While affective elements described in Section 8.2, above, offer children a positive reading identity as successful readers, Chapter Five shows that the main activity in this formation is decoding practice in various forms rather than reading and discussion. Children's identities as code breakers (Luke and Freebody, 1999) are confirmed in several modes. This means that *decoding* is presented to participating children as the main focus of reading instruction and as the practice that ranks highest in the repertoire of successful readers. Other potential roles or resources of the reader, as meaning makers, text users or text critics are downplayed or ignored. The identity position offered to children as code breakers is grounded in teachers' pedagogic decisions; many modes and practices come together to construct this as the dominant identity position. As the analysis in Chapter Five shows, the main generative factor in this construction, underlying the Act Sequences, is the type of text that teachers choose for activities. Certain text types only permit decoding practice and frequently these dominate activities. This means that teaching choices regarding text are symbiotically linked to identity positioning work, a finding that is given further consideration in Section 8.4, below.



In addition, postural analysis shows that teachers are most animated when they teach with cards rather than with graded readers. The high energy delivery, the animated gestures and the eye contact, also affirm the value of accuracy and decontextualized word recognition. An analysis of the length of time teachers spend with different kinds of texts, presented in Section 5.3, shows that most time is spent with texts that allow decoding practice only. Mrs Dean's mime cues demonstrate a high level of investment in decoding accuracy. These dimensions affirm readers as code breakers rather than in other roles and present decoding as the most important activity on the Mat.

In Chapter Five an analysis of the Act Sequences suggests that the strongest positioning work is done through the selections and omissions of teaching: what teachers choose and choose not to do on the Mat. Many options are determined by fundamental choices regarding texts. Teachers also disregard some of the recommended exchanges that apply only to books, such as the Picture Talk and a closing discussion, and this confirms that decoding practice has prime place in literacy learning on the Mat. The emphasis on decoding finds its way into teachers' questioning practices, which tend towards the posing of retrieval-type questions rather than open-ended, discussion or critical questions. The details of questioning practices are presented as Norms in Chapter Six, and show that both the placing of questions in the event and their scope tend to downgrade their importance. Children seem to have internalized this implication and are not on record asking many questions of texts themselves. This finding is an important one for researchers investigating identity construction in classrooms, as it suggests that pedagogic decisions rather than social interaction may have the most significant impact on identity positions offered in classrooms, especially with regard to school-based identities such as *learner*, *reader* or *mathematician*.

It is important to emphasize at this point that I do not reject phonics or decoding practice. The National Association for the Education of Young Children Research (1998) affirms the benefits of mastering these skills, and points to research which shows that such instruction in Grade One enhances reading achievement. Many reading theorists would therefore assert that the teachers' emphasis is an appropriate one. Nor do I underestimate the dedication, experiential knowledge, application and commitment of the teachers of this study. Nevertheless, the findings of my study suggest that comprehension activities should be given greater emphasis, especially in the core literacy practice of this

community of emergent readers. This would furnish emergent readers with more rounded reading identities as meaning makers, text users and text critics.

#### **8.4 Text type as a determiner of identity construction**

Section 8.3, above, identifies teachers' choice of text type as the decision that dominates activities on the Mat, as texts provide or deny opportunities for certain learning opportunities and interactions. I submit that this is a significant finding in its own right, with applications in the field of teacher training. The effects of teachers' choice in this regard emerge especially clearly from the consideration of Act Sequences presented in Chapter Five.

To recap observations made with regard to the texts used on the Mat, teachers choose or inherit the books but they make the cards, Yellow Books and Ladder Books mentioned in Section 5.6. Their effort suggests a strong investment in the teaching that they do with text types intended for decoding practice. This investment is accentuated by the games and activities that they have developed for using cards, lists and phonics-based texts. The activities' patterns are deeply embedded in the normative work and group expectations on the Mat. That is, the work with cards, Ladder Books and Yellow Books described in Chapter Five dominates the identity positions offered to children on the Mat.

By choosing certain kinds of text, teachers steer the event away from interrogating meaning, genre or asking critical questions. This confirms Jordan and Henderson's view that "artifacts and technologies set up a social field within which certain activities become very likely, others possible, and still others very improbable or impossible" (1995, p. 4). This finding highlights the critical role of text types in both the teaching of reading and the identity work done in literacy events and communities of practice. Texts create opportunities for certain activities and deny others, thereby becoming a vehicle for the teacher's modelling and the ideological position they take up in regard to reading. It is the prime mechanism through which the teachers in my study express an Autonomous view of reading, as discussed in Section 2.5.1. In particular, if a text is a fragment, or is presented to the group in a fragmented way – as it is in round robin reading, for example – children cannot respond to the whole text; teachers' opportunities to ask questions of meaning, implication, genre or cultural bias are also limited.

In my study, teacher choices related to text types have implications for both pedagogy and for ideology in the classroom. The focus on decoding means that crucial skills are ignored or under-taught, even though theorists presented in Chapter Two affirm that comprehension is the goal of literacy learning. At the same time, a position offered to emergent readers as code breakers constructs them as literate subjects with a limited or reduced conception of reading. This is disempowering, especially for readers who do not have alternative routes to other literacy practices because they do not belong to dominant groups.

### **8.5 Children as active, but not as agents**

Children's positive identity as successful readers is undercut by an additional feature of Reading on the Mat. Although children on the Mat are actively engaged with a high work focus as a consequence of the teachers' investment of energy and planning, they do not have *agency* there. Activities are tightly controlled and negotiation happens on peripheral matters only, such as where to sit and who begins. The strong normative work discussed in Chapter Six shows teachers emphasizing rules and expectations and ensuring that interactional patterns are followed.

In particular the teachers' preoccupation with assessing reading and tracking progress positions children as subjects of investigation and thereby removes their agency as readers and members of this community. Monitoring is appropriate and one of the recommended purposes of Guided Reading (see Section 5.3) but its consequences need to be noted. It moderates the positive identity position that teachers communicate (Section 8.3, above). Below I review the evidence supporting the claim that teachers prioritize evaluation on the Mat.

The analysis of discourse on the Mat and of the postures associated with activities there in Chapter Seven show teachers' interest in assessment in two aspects of their interaction with the children. First, there are the many verbal and nonverbal signals that teachers give to show they are monitoring the children, for example, the alert, immobile postures teachers adopt as children read. Secondly, there is the emphasis on uniformity and equal opportunity, a principle of assessment that both children and teachers enforce as Norms. Teachers offer an identity to children as subjects of investigation, assessment and

monitoring through four interlocking aspects of their practice, and these are described below.

In the first instance, an analysis of the discourse presented in Chapter Seven shows teachers asserting the importance of the reading individual over the group. Children are named as individuals, not as group members, and the pronoun *you* refers most often to individuals. Norms of the event described in Chapter Six show teachers and children in constant negotiation over the relative value of unison and individual reading, with teachers emphasizing the individual. In one classroom, while the norm of *no helping* is strongly asserted, children still co-read and prompt each other. In another classroom the norm is less strongly established and the issue of co-reading remains contested all year. In the third classroom silent reading and textual variety reduce the opportunities children have to help each other. An insistence on individual reading suggests teachers are focusing on assessing the children and offers participants an identity position as subjects of grading and investigation.

A second aspect of practice that offers children a position as subjects of assessment is that teachers assert their roles as observers and listeners. Analysis of the discourse highlights the importance of teachers *seeing* and *hearing*. Teachers' postures reinforce this role in the nonverbal domain. Norms presented in Section 6.5 assert teachers' roles in the same area. In particular, the opening Norms expect the children to focus on the activities and the teachers to focus on the children. Once again, this offers children an identity position as subjects of inspection. The game structures used by one teacher provide a Key which masks the serious assessment purpose behind her practices on the Mat. At the same time she is alert to reading behaviours and offers instant diagnosis of children's reading styles and problems (Mrs Dean discussion, April 2010).

A third feature of teachers' practice which offers children the role of subjects rather than agents appears in the Norms of questions presented in Section 6.6.4. Questioning patterns offer children a role only as responders and they are not recorded as interrogating either the teacher or the text. Children and teachers alike endorse the expectation that questioning is the prerogative of the teacher. Section 7.3.3 shows that verbal transitivity patterns construct teachers as participants who *think* and *feel*, but not children. Once again this suggests a monitoring focus for activities on the Mat.

Contradictorily, two practices on the Mat which provide much of the positive affect also support the argument that a monitoring focus undercuts positive identity construction. The first is the ubiquitous praise dealt out by the teachers' – *good ... well done ... good boy* – which betrays their interest in evaluation. The second is the embedded assumption that all on the Mat will have equal opportunity to display their ability. As participation is monitored and performance suggests skill, the principle of equal opportunity also implies that assessment is an important aspect of Reading on the Mat in the minds of the teachers. Mrs Dean says that she “scans the class like radar” for children who might have problems, and this is confirmed by other aspects of her practice. The Key that teachers generate on the Mat will largely determine how children interpret their purpose there, and it is possible to speculate that children will experience Mrs Dean's practice as the least and Mrs Mitchell's practice as the most evaluative.

Finally, some teachers emphasize the performance aspects of reading, which indicates that the evaluation of speed, volume and expression is important to them. In particular, requests to repeat or to read more loudly reveal that the teacher is interested in hearing whether the child is reading accurately, and this has an evaluative dimension.

In contrast to these practices which reduce children's agency, Mrs Dean's children are given greater independence and control through several features of her work on the Mat. These are, first, the game structures identified in Section 5.6.2 which mask the teachers' monitoring focus. Through these game structures Mrs Dean is able to present herself to children as an equal. A third aspect of her practice which promotes children's agency is *choice*. Personal decision-making is a feature of all the games and sentence building practice, and extends to choosing Little Books and pages to read. Within the confines of the activities set up by Mrs Dean, children exercise this independence daily. Finally, children are given agency in individual silent reading, when they are expected to develop and exercise personal taste and to read alone uninterrupted. The data shows them availing themselves of this opportunity from early in the year (Section 6.4).

A final aspect of teachers' practice which reduces children's agency is, as I assert in Chapter Five, that Act Sequences on the Mat are largely unpredictable and patterns are hard to detect. This keeps the children dependent on the teachers' direction and maintains control of the event in her hands. In Mrs Dean's practice children wait for her to initiate a game pattern. This is in spite of teachers' claims that they are training the children in

classroom patterns; in reality they are training the children to depend on them for direction.

In conclusion, while children in these classes are actively engaged in their literacy learning, the high levels of control that teachers exert, largely deriving from their desire to assess readers' progress on a daily basis, deprive children of agency in these environments. Although time is always a constraining factor, this may be an argument for suggesting that assessment takes place in some other grouping.

## **8.6 Avoiding diversity**

The effort that teachers put into constructing an identity position for children as successful readers is undercut by a third dimension of their teaching: that the Reading on the Mat literacy event is structured to avoid issues of diversity and difference. In interviews and according to my observation notes, teachers did not allude to cultural or language diversity among their learners, although it was an area that I asked them about (see Appendix 2A, Section Two). On the Mat, teachers' choices, practices and interactions minimize difference and are based on assumptions of homogeneity. This feature of Reading on the Mat is embedded in choices teachers make in the two areas already presented as findings: choices that emphasize decoding, and choices that reduce children's agency on the Mat (in particular through teachers' focus on assessment opportunities).

Teacher choices that favour decoding activities and offer children a limited identity position as code breakers enable them to ignore or minimize diversity in four ways. First, the texts presented for decoding are fragments and therefore more culturally neutral than extended text or the pictures in graded readers, which present realities which contrast with the life experiences of the children. Section 7.2 provides details of this. Secondly, when children or teachers engage with word cards, ladder lists or phonics primers, no understanding or interpretation beyond single word meaning is required. Norms presented in Chapter Six show that teachers' most frequent explanation is of this kind. Further evidence that understanding is the least important aspect of teaching lies in the words selected for phonics practice, which are often not related to children's life experience. Once again, Mrs Dean's practice is the exception, as the words she uses on the Mat are from the Reading 360 series and will be therefore presented to children in many

explanatory contexts as they move through the series. A third way in which decoding enables teachers to avoid diversity is that they are able to construct their children as successful readers, and themselves as successful teachers, through effortful but easily monitored skills transmission. The ANA results (South Africa, 2011) suggest that they are extremely successful in this regard.

Teachers' reluctance to engage with diversity is most visible when they use texts of the Reading 360 graded series (Ginn, 1987, 1993), and this material is presented in Section 7.2. The world of the graded readers is not problematized or questioned as a version of reality. References to cultural elements like "The house in the boot" (Boyce, 1985), a version of the old woman who lived in a shoe, are not explored as part of an introductory or closing discussion. These two phases recommended for Guided Reading are the most obvious points to engage with children on contrasts and similarities between the worlds of the texts and their own lives, but the Act Sequences presented in Chapter Five show that they are largely omitted. In terms of handling diversity, teachers' focus on decoding can be seen as a safe option that enables them to side-step awkward questions arising from children's background dissimilarities or dissonances with the school environment. The same process can be seen operating with the images teachers use to teach alphabets and words. They seem unaware that this is another system of meaning and one to which some children in their classes will not have access. For example, a photograph of Russell Crowe in "The Gladiator" is used as a visual stimulus for the word *chink*, but the phrase "*chink* in his armour" is unlikely to be recognized by many children.

Section 8.5 explains the role that teachers' monitoring focus plays in reducing children's agency on the Mat. This focus also serves to minimize difference by concentrating on performance and other visible signs of children's reading progress. Many of the aspects of Reading on the Mat which support the assessment focus also minimize children's agency and at the same time avoid diversity.

Principles of equal opportunity that also underpin the assessment focus show that differential instruction on the Mat is not an option in these classrooms, in spite of a curriculum which celebrates diversity (RNCS, South Africa, 2002). Children come to the Mat largely for surveillance, and once there are not respected as resources in discussion or meaning building. Teachers' interest in individuals, presented in the analysis of verbal elements in Chapter Seven, lies mainly in assessing them. In addition, although these are

ability groups that are constantly monitored for reading progress, children remain members of the group for the year and possibly for the Foundation Phase, further suggesting that teachers, while they assess individuals on the Mat, are not as interested in their inevitably differential growth. Mrs Samuels's practice was the exception to this, but the experimental groups were abandoned after six months.

Other aspects of practice on the Mat also enable teachers to ignore difference. For example, the Norms of round robin reading and unison reading recounted in Section 6.5, both enable reading to happen without close engagement by the teacher in interpretive issues. Unison reading in particular makes reading a group experience in which teachers need not engage with diversity.

Interactions reported on in Section 7.3.1 support the observation that teachers avoid engaging with diversity. Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Samuels call children by their full given name or home nickname, while other naming is general: *boy, girl, angel, love*. Mrs Dean's nicknaming seems an attempt to give them a new identity as class members. Another feature of the teachers' practice which can be interpreted as avoiding diversity is that the teachers' interaction on the Mat is controlled, steady and polite, even formal.

It seems therefore that teachers have put a number of practices in place which operate against engaging with diversity in their classrooms. Janks suggests that "teachers have to balance access to prestige varieties with respect for diversity and students' identity investments; linguistic capital has to be balanced by the value of linguistic variation" (2010, p. 147). Instead, the teachers practice a benign homogenizing which, while it does not have an exclusionary intention, may nevertheless be alienating to additional language children who find their experience unacknowledged in their classrooms and schools. Although the teachers are recorded speaking single phrases of isiXhosa and Afrikaans to individual children, on the Mat children's identities as bilinguals are not affirmed. Children in Mrs Samuels's class speak their home languages to each other freely, but not to her, and not on the Mat, the site of their literacy experience (see Section 6.5.2 for an example of Mrs Samuels using the Afrikaans word *vrot*). To these teachers, access means skills training, and skills training, in their practice, does not recognize diversity. Working with difference and celebrating diversity may in the end be more inclusive of children who come from homes unlike the Northern hemisphere middle class environments depicted in the Reading 360 series.



## 8.7 Implications of this study for teaching practice

The findings discussed above emphasize ideological issues in reading literacy appropriate to an investigation of communities of practice and identity construction. The analysis also revealed aspects of teaching reading which, while not expressed in the Research Questions, are worth noting. This section therefore relates my study to pedagogic practice and highlights certain practical implications of using Reading on the Mat. In particular, the finding detailed in Section 8.3 above, that teachers offer children an identity position primarily as code breakers, shows a community of practice sustaining and perpetuating literacy events. Through their daily performance, teachers interpret the curriculum and recommendations in the literature regarding teaching reading. As they do this they emphasize aspects of the event and signal to children which aspects of the experience should be valued. In South Africa, this has three implications for curriculum design.

A first implication is for the Department of Education intervention plans. In Chapter One I refer to the CAPS curriculum, the detailed workbooks which support it in the Foundation Phase and the ANA testing which tracks its success. These are offered as solutions to the low performance in literacy assessments throughout the country. The ANA report concludes that

The unprecedented step of providing all Grades 1 to 6 learners with national workbooks in 2011 has, according to preliminary reports, shifted classroom practices in the right direction. The 2012 wave of ANA, to be conducted early in the 2012 school year, will serve as a critical instrument with which to monitor the degree to which national workbooks and other interventions, such as the streamlining of the national curriculum, have had an impact on learning. (South Africa, 2010, p. 36)

But my study demonstrates the extent to which teaching methods can be altered from the designers' intentions, and how historic practices have a lifespan beyond curricula. The teachers of this study believe that they are enacting Guided Reading in line with curriculum requirements, although the comparison presented in Table 9 (Chapter 5) suggests that they are not. It also suggests that teachers rely on membership of communities of practice rather than on curriculum or materials. Teachers' unwillingness to engage with diversity and change may be unacknowledged additional factors that maintain particular practices. This finding suggests that change in the area of literacy learning requires policy writers to address teachers' *current* understanding of literacy

practices. Curriculum change and materials development may not be enough to engage with teachers' deeply held beliefs and practices.

A second implication for pedagogy of the strong influence of established practices, is that curricula need to foreground the function, principles and goals of a method or practice. Documents on policy which seek to influence practice should urge teachers to be constantly aware of the goals of practice, as a guard against the distortions that are otherwise possible. The recent CAPS document and the NRCS it is replacing do not offer this kind of guideline, without which a description of the methodology may be empty, mechanical and open to misinterpretation. My study confirms Mehan's observation that a study of practice will suggest "models of mutual accommodation in which both teachers and students modify their behaviour as they move together in the direction of common goals" (1998, p. 256). If curriculum designers wish to ensure a certain kind of literacy experience for children in South Africa, a list of activities will not be enough.

A third implication of this finding for teaching practice is that, if teacher practice overrides curriculum, then teacher education is the most direct route into the classroom, rather than curriculum and materials development expressed in documents such as Teaching reading in the early grades (South Africa, 2008) or the CAPS (South Africa, 2011). This study shows the gap which can exist in good practice environments between policy document requirements and practice. Professional education can give teachers a deep understanding of the purpose of what they are doing, on the Mat and off it. South African teachers need to be inducted into the literacy practices of dominant groups and develop a deeply held understanding of the practices they are modelling for learners.

A further finding of my study which has application for pedagogy is that Reading on the Mat creates opportunities which inventive teachers take up for other purposes. The small group circle makes it possible to teach in a concrete, direct way, with close demonstration, touch and the intimate modelling of desired behaviours. This formation enables teachers to follow principles of concrete learning, such as those promoted by behaviourism and enactivism. Jordan and Henderson remark that "[a] crucial point to consider for Interaction Analysis is that in any given environment some spaces provide more interactional resources and others less" (1995, p. 40). On the Mat, the concrete, physical nature of the interaction may lure teachers away from abstractions that are equally necessary. Observations made during my study suggest that, as teachers take up the

opportunities for the concrete realization of concepts, they lose the opportunities for abstraction. Unless discussion and higher order thinking is deliberately added, children are in danger of staying at a literal level in their engagement with text.

A third finding which is important for teaching is that the characteristic answer to the question “What is reading?” is a confused one, and that in Grade One classrooms some teaching practices have more to do with school needs than with the multiple, varied uses of literacy in South African communities. Unison reading, for example, is a practice which creates uniformity, offers group support and ensures that daily practice will not be too time consuming. These are valuable reasons to initiate children into its patterns, but the transitional, class management purpose of a reading pattern like this should be acknowledged. Round robin reading similarly prepares children for daily institutional assessment but does not reflect an authentic way of reading text. It is inevitable that powerful, socially dominant organizations will promote their own discourses and practices, but these should not be allowed to replace the authentic, vernacular uses of literacy within their own society. If this does happen, additional language children, who do not have access to literacy practices in English communities, will be marginalized and excluded from social mobility and empowerment. In South Africa, where there is a strong equity policy that finds expression in the school curricula, this serves as a warning that under close inspection some apparently benign practices may in fact turn out to have exclusionary effects.

The findings of this study related to pedagogy go some way toward explaining the PIRLS results, which played a role in early design decisions. The PIRLS study showed South African children from all schools performing poorly in reading literacy, compared to children internationally. Children in the Eastern Cape performed worst of all. If the literacy practices in some of the best performing schools in the region value decoding over interpretation in the way that my study describes, this may offer an explanation for the PIRLS (2007) results.

The children in the present study are constructed in the same way as poor readers in English-speaking environments elsewhere in the world. Collins describes how low ability readers are offered more decoding practice with few comprehension questions and little discussion. He observes that “an instructional process that consists primarily of children reading in a word-by-word fashion and teachers providing isolated decoding cues will

leave the beginning readers without much practice in applying their knowledge of spoken language to the task of reading” (2006, p. 137). He warns that “the consequences of these differential experiences in reading may have longer and greater effects on children’s continuing school performance than the initially small and subtle differences may suggest” (2006, p. 137). Both these warnings should be brought to the attention of Foundation Phase teachers in South Africa.

## **8.8 Limitations of the study**

An obvious limitation of the present study is that it focuses on former model-C schools, and these do not represent the experience of the majority of children in South Africa. Chapter One justifies my choice in this regard. Educators and teacher educators urgently need insight into the many local practices that have arisen in learning environments other than these good practice environments, and to gain a more extensive understanding of how teachers interpret the curricula there. Policy needs to speak to local practices and curriculum designers need to know what these practices are.

A second limitation is that this study does not engage with a question crucial to educationists, of whether one kind of literacy practice or set of identity positions promotes children’s literacy acquisition more effectively than another. This proved impossible to assess because in Grade One children’s reading relies on their having been exposed to particular words: the vocabularies they were taught were different in the three classrooms. In addition, they are not yet proficient enough writers for their comprehension to be tested. Details are presented in Section 3.4. This limitation was partly a consequence of the decision I took not to override principals’ permission by seeking the permission of individual parents. As I mention in Section 3.11, documentary data such as test results, reports and other potentially useful statistical data was given or denied by the teachers who placed themselves *in locus parentis*.

This study is deliberately framed as an investigation into identity positioning by teachers and uses some of the tools of critical theory to make claims in this regard. It argues that for reading literacy learning in South Africa it is crucial to understand what teachers are doing *while they give* instruction. Research (Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996) suggests that methods may be less important than other aspects of teaching, such as class

management or time on task, and children's uptake will always be differential. Nevertheless, these parameters disregard the other half of the identity construction equation, which is the extent to which children take up, negotiate or contest the identities offered to them, and how therefore teachers affect their long term identity as learners and readers in these environments. To answer this question would require examination of the long-term consequences for learners of the identity positions offered them by teachers, a task that I could not undertake within the scope of this research project. Because of the complex multiple uptake of identity positions by individuals over time, it may in fact be impossible to draw conclusions without employing different research tools and methodologies. In addition, because of the multiple, fluid nature of identity, it is impossible to say after a single year which of the identity positions offered in early reading experiences will dominate as children progress through the school.

The previous paragraph describes one of the limitations inherent in centering the study on a single, dominant participant in the community of practice: the teacher. This means that perspectives are limited. In Section 3.8 I write of the difficulty of accessing teachers' perceptions of their own practice which goes beyond the pedagogic. The focus on the teacher also affected the analysis of the Key: it was not possible to assess Key fully without confirming from the children how they actually experienced the teacher's tone and mood. For ethical reasons, especially because of the children's age, this seemed too sensitive an area to investigate. Therefore, although the Key of the interaction is clearly important, my emphasis on the teacher limited the range and perceptiveness of the insights possible in that category.

The analysis presented in Chapter Seven reveals a limitation in the analytic instruments available to researchers in specific categories. In this study there is a contrast between the detailed analysis possible in the verbal mode, using methods grounded in linguistic theory, and the more general categories available for a study of the nonverbal. Constraints imposed by the instruments therefore create a bias in the analysis towards the verbal which is problematic when research takes place in the richly physical milieu of a Foundation Phase classroom.

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that this study, of three individuals, is not generalizable. I argue in support of Stake (1995), however, that where the data presented is sufficiently detailed and the analysis sufficiently nuanced, the research has value

because it adds to similar other studies. He writes of “naturalistic generalizations” which are “conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves” (Stake, 1995, p. 85). Merriam similarly argues for the strength of “concrete universals” and suggests that the “[t]he search is not for abstract universals arrived at by statistical generalizations from a sample to a population, but for concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail” (2001, p. 201). It is in this spirit that I offer the analysis and interpretation of data in this study.

## **8.9 Opportunities for future research**

The present study offers a number of avenues for further research. First, following on from the last point raised in the previous section, a longitudinal study of children’s negotiation of identity in these or similar environments would suggest the consequences of the positions teachers supply as children enter Grade One. Do children retain these identities, and how do these identities affect their long-term success in the school?

A related opportunity is to investigate the effects of the practices presented in this study on the literacy achievement of this cohort of learners. Assessing their performance at the beginning and end of each year as they progress through the school might answer important questions, for example, how much progress each learner makes, whether the gap between weaker and stronger readers widens or narrows, and how these learners fare higher up the school. The ANA results for this cohort to which I had access supplied intriguing insights in this regard.

Further research opportunities also exist in the possibility of exploring other kinds of classrooms with the same question: what are the literacy practices there, and what identities and views of reading do these practices promote? Sites for future research could be selected to represent literacy teaching in other South African languages, to represent other kinds of schools, for example rural multi-grade classrooms, or to represent poor practice rather than good practice environments. Pilot visits to township schools in 2010 for the present study showed that teachers there engaged in very different practices and offered their learners correspondingly different identity positions. These findings could describe literacy practices that educationists need to engage with and understand.

A second, related opportunity is for research into good practice Foundation Phase classrooms which do not use Reading on the Mat. The same categories used in my study could reveal identity positions offered through the pedagogies of whole class instruction in literacy. In my study, for example, Mrs Dean did more questioning and elicited children's experiences more in daily Shared Reading.

Thirdly, little research has been done into aspects of nonverbal communication in classrooms, although such research as there is indicates that this is an important aspect of classroom interaction (Kress et al., 2001). The methodologies and categories for examining nonverbal elements need further exploration and development. This will only happen if numerous studies take up the challenge and investigate this powerful mode of transmission.

A fourth opportunity for research would be a more critical approach to established classroom practices such as Reading on the Mat, in order to provide insights into the social history which produced them and the social mechanisms which maintain them. This research could relate core literacy practices in privileged schools to participants' understandings of dominant and academic literate forms. Embedded, naturalized practices such as Reading on the Mat should be interrogated for what they say about South Africans' conceptions of reading and writing literacy.

Finally, an unexplored aspect of this research suggests that the notions that teachers hold of what it means to be literate may be a powerful engine of their practice. A study of narrative identity which investigates the reading histories of teachers and relates it to their practice may offer intriguing insights.

## **8.10 Final thoughts**

It was not the purpose of the present study to investigate the generative mechanisms which have created Reading on the Mat as the core literacy experience in these three examples of high status schools in the Eastern Cape, or the structures which operate to maintain it and other dominant literacy practices. A consideration of access to dominant genres can disguise the question of how those literacies or genres came to be dominant in the first place and how they remain so. South Africa's apartheid power dispensation is likely to be operating invisibly in all our educational institutions in ways which implicate the deeper

structures of our society and which are manifested in the lack of transformation apparent everywhere. Gee asserts that “Those in power retain domination while appearing to give access to the disempowered” (1990, p. 13) and this seems to be true of the classrooms featured in the study.

In my study this assertion is exemplified by teachers’ belief in the principles of autonomous literacy learning and a view of literacy as uncritical skills training. It is equally manifest in Department of Education interventions that are in line with Street’s observation that “the dominant account of literacy programmes remains concerned with ‘effectiveness’, often measured through statistics on skill outcomes, attendance, etc., and justified through correlations with important development indices such as health, agricultural production and economic take off” (2001, p. 1). In a society struggling with past inequities this cannot but be problematic. While my research examines elements of skills training – the teachers’ emphasis on decoding is partly a skills issue – in order to understand literacy practices, it also asserts the need to investigate identity and other ideological aspects of what is happening in classrooms. Meanwhile the findings of this study bear out Street’s comment that “[t]he findings of the ethnographic approach may lead to different curriculum and pedagogy than in many traditional programmes” (2001, p. 1).



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## Appendices

1. Letters to principals
2. Questions for interviews with teachers (late 2010)
3. List of audio recordings
4. Video viewing list
5. Table of Act Sequences samples: one from each teacher
6. Table of Norms
7. Transcription samples: one from each teacher
8. Tables of discourse analysis results
- 8.3 Naming and participants, all teachers
- 8.4 Processes for all teachers
  - 8.4.1 Transitivity analysis for children, all processes
  - 8.4.2 Comparative table of transitivity by process
- 8.5 Statistics for other language items: modality, conventional politeness, question tags, pronouns, adverbs
9. Table of nonverbal behaviour
10. Children's drawings, one from each classroom, titled "The researcher, the teacher, the classroom and me".
11. CD of sample video material: two from each teacher, for examination only.

## Appendix 1a: Letter seeking permission before interview

November 2009

The Principal  
*Greenbanks*  
PO Box XXX  
TOWN

Dear Mrs Green

### DOCTORAL RESEARCH AT *GREENBANKS*

I am now in a position to approach you formally to ask if I can use *Greenbanks* as a site for a PhD study of how reading is taught.

The details of the research, as well as the formal title and dates, still need to be finalised with my two supervisors, but it is likely that I would visit classrooms to observe and video reading lessons over a few weeks. There would be interviews with teachers both before and after the visits and probably also with yourself and the school librarian. I would ask to borrow examples of the reading books. The teachers who would be involved are those who teach Grade One. The focus is on what the teachers do when they teach reading, and how they view what they are doing, rather than the learners. At this stage I do not intend to do any testing or questioning of learners or their parents. Teachers would be given an opportunity to comment on anything I capture on video or in interviews. Pseudonyms would be used for the school and participating teachers.

I know this is a big commitment for busy teachers and I am sure you will want to discuss their involvement in the project with your staff. There may also be formalities I know nothing of, such as consulting the school board or informing the DoE. I would be happy to come and explain to any group what the style and purpose of the research is.

I very much hope that you will agree to let me do this research at *Greenbanks* Primary as I think such a study will cast light over important aspects of teaching reading literacy in South Africa today. I believe and hope that the relationship we can build in the course of the study will be mutually beneficial.

Thank you for considering this proposal.

Sincerely

Caroline van der Mescht

## Appendix 1b: Letter following formal meeting

25 February 2010

The Principal  
*Riverside*  
TOWN

Dear Mr Rivers

### PHD RESEARCH IN EARLY LITERACY LEARNING

You may recall our meeting a few weeks ago to discuss my proposed doctoral research. My research proposal has now been approved by Rhodes and I am ready to embark on this project. The purpose of this letter is to obtain formal permission for some of my data collection to take place in the Grade One classroom at *Riverside*.

The PhD research is entitled: *Positions on the mat: a micro-ethnographic study of teachers' and learners' co-construction of an early literacy practice*. My interest is in looking at a best practice environment and trying to understand some of the detail of literacy learning in a Grade One classroom. The data collection will be done with the minimum disruption to the class and to teaching.

If there are any aspects of the proposed study which need further explanation please let me know. I am very happy to share my findings or any insights I gain during my research with members of the *Riverside* community.

I look forward very much to being at *Riverside* and to working with *Mrs Mitchell*.

Regards –

Caroline van der Mescht

## Appendix 2 A: Questionnaire

### POSITIONS ON THE MAT Research into reading literacy in Grade 1 classrooms Questions for teachers: One

There seemed to be a consensus that writing answers to some of my questions would fit better into your busy schedules. So, here goes! I have allowed some space but please add more if you need it (e.g.: question 2).

The questions are in two sections: the first asks for biographical information about you and the second captures information about the children.

The best deadline for this will be 23 July or as I visit you at the beginning of the third term. I would like at that time to arrange a short (break time) interview to go more deeply into your own insights into teaching reading.

*Thanks once again for your time and commitment to the project – Caroline.*

#### SECTION ONE: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please list your qualifications and the dates on which you completed them:

..... Completed:

..... Completed:

..... Completed:

2. Please list any additional training / short courses you have done and the dates on which you completed them:

..... Completed:

..... Completed:

..... Completed:

3. How many years' experience do you have teaching Foundation Phase?

..... years in total including 2010.

4. How many years' experience do you have in each grade you have taught?

Grade 1 ..... years;    Grade 2 ..... years;    Grade 3 ..... years

5. How long have you been teaching at the school you are at? ..... years



6. Please circle the age group that applies to you: 25- 30 years; 30 – 35 years; 35 – 40 years; 40 – 45 years; 45 – 50 years; 50 – 55 years.

**SECTION TWO: GRADE 1 / 2010**

1. Are the demographics of this class similar to those of previous years in terms of race, religion, home language ...? (Yes / No) .....  
Give details if you can:

.....

2. Describe your “typical” pupil. Feel free to focus on any aspects of this fictional child’s skills, behaviour, attitude or ability.

.....

.....

.....

3. How many of the 2010 class seem to have perceptual (e.g.: dyslexia) problems? .....

4. How many of the 2010 class seem to have behavioural (e.g.: ADD) or other problems? .....

5. Are the numbers captured in 3.2 and 3.3 MORE or LESS or THE SAME as previous years? .....

6. How many of the class were in Grade R or at a pre-school? .....

7. Are there any advantages associated with teaching BOYS ONLY or GIRLS ONLY or MIXED GENDER classes?

.....

.....

8. Are there any problems associated with teaching BOYS ONLY or GIRLS ONLY or MIXED GENDER classes?

.....

.....

*I have also emailed these questions to you: if the space is too small you can expand it on the email document – C*

## **Appendix 2b: Questions for interview**

*NOTE: These guided the focus of interviews but were not rigidly adhered to.*

### **POSITIONS ON THE MAT Research into reading literacy in Grade 1 classrooms Interview questions for teachers**

With the focus on teaching reading, but also on the whole Grade 1 teaching experience, please answer these questions:

#### **1. Motivation and influences:**

- 1.1 Which of these would you say most influences your teaching at the moment: your training / your experience / the curriculum (or any combination?)
- 1.2 In which area of the curriculum or which area are you most conscious of applying your training / theoretical knowledge?
- 1.3 What motivates you to teach grade 1 as opposed to grades 2 and 3?
- 1.4 Complete this simile to describe teaching Grade 1: Teaching Grade 1 is like ...
- 1.5

#### **2. Teaching priorities:**

- 2.1 What would you identify as the most important skill to teach in grade 1? Why?
- 2.2 What would you identify as the least important skill to teach in grade 1? Why?
- 2.3 What would you identify as the most important behaviour to teach in grade 1? Why?
- 2.4 What would you identify as the least important behaviour to teach in grade 1? Why?

#### **3 Interpreting language policy:**

- 3.1 What is the school language policy on speaking English / other languages in class?
- 3.2 When you are teaching do you keep strictly to the school language policy?
- 3.3 How do you feel about the school language policy?
- 3.4

#### **4. Teaching reading:**

- 4.1 In a typical day, how much time do you spend on each of literacy / numeracy / life skills? (approximate percentages)
- 4.2 How would you define "reading literacy"?
- 4.3 Complete this simile to describe teaching reading: Teaching reading is like ...
- 4.4 How would you assess the relative value of phonics vs whole word approaches to teaching reading?
- 4.5 Describe something that you do that you have developed as your "own" special method of teaching reading.
- 4.6 What do you think are the relative benefits of individual and whole class reading?
- 4.7 What makes a good reader in Grade 1?

### Appendix 3: Audio recording

(Olympus digital voice recorder WS 6505)

CODE PROVIDED BY AUDIO RECORDER: Folder A, File WS450021 = A21

*Bolding indicates transcribed sessions: audio recording was clearer than video and was therefore used for transcription.*

CODE	Teacher	Starts at..	Minutes
A20	Mrs Dean	Angie sounds letters	17:45
A24	Mrs Dean	<i>(Mrs Dean reading Big Book on Oceans)</i>	30:55
A29	Mrs Dean	“Can I help?”	13:14
A34	Mrs Dean	“Go for it, Noo.”	8:50
A35	Mrs Dean	Child sounding letters, then “Can you build me FAT?”	33:09
<b>A52</b>	<b>Mrs Dean</b>	<b>“Right madam P...”</b>	<b>32:17</b>
<b>B21</b>	<b>Mrs Dean</b>	<b>“Does anybody know what this word could be ..</b>	<b>26:01</b>
B28	Mrs Dean	“Out...”	
<b>B33</b>	<b>Mrs Dean</b>	<b>OK noos I would like the word get</b>	<b>16:35</b>
B38	Mrs Dean	Child starts saying letters	
<b>B53</b>	<b>Mrs Dean</b>	<b>Greenbanks 23 May</b>	
<b>B54</b>	<b>Mrs Dean</b>	<b>Gold reading group Greenbanks 26 May</b>	
B105	Mrs Dean	Geri at Greenbanks 14 Nov	
C22	Mrs Dean	“Let’s go ...”	
C25	Mrs Dean	“Tell me when you’re ready ...”	
C27	Mrs Dean	<i>Talking about cooperative learning.</i>	
C32	Mrs Dean	Quite far in “Right, let’s hear G ...”	
<b>C37</b>	<b>Mrs Dean</b>	<b>3 min in. “Can anyone see the word FAT?”</b>	<b>22:45</b>
C55	Mrs Dean	Playing a word game	
E 56	Mrs Dean	<i>Interview about reading preferences</i>	
<b>C60</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell</b>	<b>I just want one diary today boytjies</b>	<b>34:25</b>
C61	Mrs Mitchell	Look how nicely Jordan’s sitting ...	
<b>C64</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell</b>	<b>Now, I’m going to ask Ross ...</b>	<b>12:12</b>
C65	Mrs Mitchell	Talking about L2 speakers in the class	
C100	Mrs Mitchell	You know what I think it is boys? ...	
C101	Mrs Mitchell	Right. Can you all open up your red book?	
C102	Mrs Mitchell	My lovie then you didn’t hear ...	
<b>D47</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell</b>	<b>Right Darrell, you give all the books to me</b>	<b>21:36</b>
D49	Mrs Mitchell	Right are we ready Eben?	
E 48	Mrs Mitchell		
<b>E 50</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell</b>	<b>Everybody go to ladder number one please</b>	<b>16:27</b>
E 51	Mrs Mitchell	Can you turn to the story please	
<b>C 100</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell</b>	<b>Don’t worry I will choose you to read. Remember you sit in your order ...</b>	<b>33:07</b>
<b>C101</b>	<b>Mrs Mitchell</b>	<b>Can you all open up your red book.</b>	<b>27:02</b>
C102	Mrs Mitchell	Right sorry boys. Once more.	29:42

<b>A39</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels</b>	<b>Go to page sixteen – a one and a six</b>	<b>22:09</b>
<b>A42</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels</b>	<b>Noise. “Right we’re going to start here. ”</b>	<b>27:54</b>
A43	Mrs Samuels	“Who’s reading first?”	27:25
A46	Mrs Samuels	“Get your cards ...	8:50
B40	Mrs Samuels	Right this reading group...	
B41	Mrs Samuels	Take out your reading books ...	
B44	Mrs Samuels	Don’t rush it. Look at the first picture	
<b>B85</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels</b>	<b>Weak group in the corridor</b>	<b>19:11</b>
<i>B86</i>	<i>Mrs Samuels</i>	<i>Conversation about groups</i>	
B103	Mrs Samuels	9 November 2010	
B104	Mrs Samuels	9 November 2010	
<b>C103</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels</b>	<b>Okay, let’s see. I want you all to follow, eh?</b>	<b>21:20</b>
<b>C105</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels</b>	<b>What d’you think this book’s about?</b>	<b>14:58</b>
C106	Mrs Samuels	Child reads:	
<b>C107</b>	<b>Mrs Samuels</b>	<b>Come can come</b>	<b>20:22</b>

## Appendix 4: Video viewing list

**Code: 101 = First tape of first site visit**

\*\* = good for nonverbal

*Bks* = Books. Time spent with books in italics contrasted to whole session

<b>Mrs Dean</b>	<b>Group.</b>	<b>Brief description of session</b>
<b>Tape &amp; time</b>	<b>Time with books</b>	
GREENBANKS101 <b>Transcribed</b> 22:23 – 34:00	Strong 18 min <i>Bks 7 min</i>	Little <b>letter</b> cards <b>Red</b> and <b>Orange</b> (new) word cards. Out and into sentences; sentences and words walked and read. Little books returned. Extra book for homework.
GREENBANKS 101 ** 39:19 – 1:02:13	Weak 22 min <i>Bks 3 min</i>	Little <b>letter</b> cards <b>Red</b> cards shown round the group. Mrs D keeps those they can't do for special teaching: help, home, here. Run fast made physical. Books revision
GREENBANKS 102 ** <b>Transcribed</b> 3:09 – 22:02	Weak 19 min <i>Bks 6 min</i>	Little <b>word</b> cards. Read them and build sentences Little books handed out, read silently then 2 pages aloud to Mrs D
GREENBANKS 102 34:45 – 56:36	Strong 23 min <i>Bks 5 min</i>	Little <b>word</b> cards. Read them and build sentences. Little books handed out, read silently then 2 pages for Mrs D
GREENBANKS 103 30:00 – 1:06:00	Weak 36 min <i>Bks 9 min</i>	Little <b>letter</b> cards – g <b>Red</b> card revision out, build sentences. Walk them. Little books. Read silently then choose two pages to read aloud
GREENBANKS 103 <b>Transcribed</b> 1:05 – 1:23:00	Strong 30 min <i>Bks: 5 min</i>	Video incomplete – starts after little letter cards Word revision. <b>Red</b> cards out, build sentences. Walk them. Little books. Read silently then choose two pages to read aloud
GREENBANKS 103 1:23 – end	Angie alone 10 min+	Little <b>letter</b> cards (adds g). Builds words. Own word is <b>give</b> . <b>Blue</b> word cards first view. She gets most of them. Walks the words. Sentence with a few orally. Books out. Reads.
GREENBANKS 104 1:19 – 1:34:	Angie alone 15 min + 9 silent	Little <b>letter</b> cards - f <b>Blue</b> word cards, starting with 3 recognition words. Turns them over and A chooses and says them. 2 books. Reads whole book 1 unseen; whole book 2 silently on the Mat while Mrs D revises with Gem, another 9 min
GREENBANKS105 00:00 – 12:40	Geri revision <i>Bk 2 min</i>	<b>Red</b> cards. Shows Mrs D teaching and using the gestures. Geri watches her rather than the words. Reads alone with Geri
GREENBANKS 105 <b>Transcribed</b> 1:01:34– 1:23:00	Weak 21 min <i>Bks 4 min</i>	Little <b>letter</b> cards – new letter f and building words with it. <b>Red</b> and <b>Orange</b> cards Little books. Read alone then 2 pages aloud
GREENBANKS 105 1:22 – end	Strong ?? min	Little <b>letter</b> cards – f <b>Red</b> and <b>Orange</b> cards Reading books returned and laid out choose. 2 pages aloud
GREENBANKS 201 32:00 – 45:02	Weak 15 min <i>Bks 4 min</i>	<b>Orange</b> big cards round the group for revision + new words explained and read. Swop places and get new words to say. Read <b>big orange</b> books round robin with all following + little books for homework. They choose and start reading silently.
GREENBANKS 201 ** <b>Transcribed</b>	Strong 20 min	<b>Blue</b> big cards – new. Teaches each word. Swop words around the circle. Revises again.

45:48 – 1:04	<i>Bks 8 min</i>	<b>Orange little</b> books.
GREENBANKS 202 53:00 – 1: 10:51	Strong 18 min <i>Bks 5 min</i>	<b>Blue</b> big cards – revision. Checks their reading, puts words into space. Walk them. <b>Little orange</b> books offered silently. Start reading as they receive. Read 2 pages to Mrs D then leave. Children are reading fast, therefore reduced time.
GREENBANKS 202 1:11:46 –1:20:19	Weak 9 min <i>Bks 4 min</i>	<b>Orange</b> big cards revision round the circle. Offers fan. Big orange books for round robin reading. Library books for homework.
<b>GREENBANKS 301 and 302</b>		<b>No RoM groups – testing and whole class</b>
GREENBANKS 303 ** 0:00 – 15:56	Strong 15 min <i>Bks 7 min</i>	<b>Green</b> big cards – clap syllables of supermarket. Choose from fan. Ask each other. <b>Little blue books.</b> Read whole book silently or softly aloud then to Mrs D. Swop library books for homework. One question each.
GREENBANKS 304 ** 0:00 – 16:45	Geri 16 min <i>Bk 5 min</i>	<b>Blue</b> cards. Fan and walk the ladder. Turned over card game. Read <b>orange</b> book to Mrs D, then another book alone on the mat + homework “extra” book.
GREENBANKS 304 17:33 – 27:30	Angie 10 min <i>Bk 6</i>	List of words in flip file <b>Purple big</b> book – Level 5 – aloud to Mrs D. All happens very efficiently – she reads fast and confidently, knows the deal.
GREENBANKS 304 28:00 – 42:24	Weak 14 min <i>Bk 8</i>	<b>Blue</b> big cards round the group. Fans to ask each other. Big <b>blue</b> books –“Horses.” Round robin reading. Library books for extra.
GREENBANKS 304 1:05:19 – 22:30	Strong Min 17 <i>Bk 6</i>	<b>Green</b> big cards on the floor. Choose one to ask another child. <b>Blue</b> little books swopped. Read silently then 2 pages to Mrs D. Swop extra books (library) for homework.

<b>Mrs Samuels Tape &amp; time</b>	<b>Group. Time with books</b>	<b>Brief description of session</b>
Oakhill 101 <b>Transcribed</b> 0:00 – 20:07	Mixed ability Blue 20 min <i>Bks 16 min</i>	Books – Ladybird - round robin Small word cards
Oakhill 101 23:16 – 42:58	Mixed ability Yellow 20 min <i>Bks 16 min</i>	Flip files with sentences and words. Unison. Does this count as a book? Books – Ladybird. 4 get extra tuition with little word cards and further reading.
Oakhill 101 1:20:00 – end	Yellow 14+ min <i>Bks 6 min</i>	Books – unison reading of first page then round-robin Blue Smook – sounds and words in unison and sentences
Oakhill 102 00:0 – 06:00	Zach 5 min	Letter cards with Zach
Oakhill 102 <b>Transcribed</b> 29:39 – 57:07	Blue 28 mins <i>Bk 19 min</i>	Book – round robin reading Smook phonics. NOISY TAPE Nick alone for coaching
Oakhill 103 00:00 – 13:45	Yellow 14 mins	Fish card game. Missed books?
Oakhill 103 15:40 – 38:48	Blue 23 mins <i>Bk 3 min</i>	Little Ginn readers unison reading unseen text. No indiv. reading. Fish card game.
Oakhill 104 31:00 – 41:05	Yellow 10 min <i>Bk 10?min</i>	Poetry books – four poems. Does this count? Get new box books
Oakhill 104 42:00 – 52:30	Blue 11 min <i>Bk 11+min</i>	Poetry books Swop box books
Oakhill 201 <b>Transcribed</b> 0:00 – 38:00	Weak 4 38 min <i>Bk 34 min</i>	Fish cards to warm up Big books Ginn – 5 of them
Oakhill 201 43:0 – 1:05:0	Weak 4 23 min <i>Bk 21 min</i>	Sentence cards Small Ginn books round robin reading Big Books then new smaller books
Oakhill 201 1:05 – 1:22	Strong 17 min <i>Bk 12+ informal</i>	Read Big Books to themselves as they arrive Flash cards to “warm up.” Not book words. Group then indiv. Blue Ginn little books round robin. 2 books for homework Poetry individual and unison
Oakhill 301 ** <b>Transcribed</b> 11:14 – 30:50	Weak 19 mins <i>Bk: 6 min</i>	Ladybird readers round robin EE sounds game
Oakhill 301 <b>Transcribed</b> 32:00 - 46:53	Strong 14 mins <i>Bks 14 min</i>	Purple Ginn individual round robin and unison
Oakhill 302 47:00 – 60:00	Weak 13 mins <i>Bks 13 min</i>	Little books round robin reading then by themselves
Oakhill 302 ** <b>Transcribed</b> 22:00 – 34:47	Strong 12 mins <i>Bks 12 min</i>	Ginn purple readers round robin reading

<b>Mrs Mitchell Tape &amp; time</b>	<b>Group. Time with books</b>	<b>Brief description of session</b>
Riverside 101 poor audio <b>Transcribed</b> 40:00 – 01:03	Strong 23 min <i>Bk 12 min</i>	Riverside Ladder book Ginn reader – the bee – round robin
Riverside101 ** 01:12:48 – 1:27:32	Weak 15min “Bk”? 10 /0	Ladder books 5 min “Yellow” books – phonetically based texts and words Swop box books for homework
Riverside102 ** 59:00 -1:33:47 +	Strong 35+ mins <i>Bk 4+min</i>	Swop Ginn readers and gold box books Ladder books 14 min “Yellow” books 17 min Ginn readers –“I can hide” – round robin
Riverside103 00:00 – 13:14	Weak two 13 min <i>Bk 0 min</i>	Ladder books Swop box books for homework
Riverside103 1:26:20 – 33:48+	Strong 8+ mins <i>Bk 8+min</i>	Ginn readers – I can hide – round robin reading
Riverside104 <b>Transcribed</b> 0:00 -	Weak 14 min <i>Bk 6 min</i>	Ladder books Ginn readers – the Blue Tit Box books
Riverside104 28:00 – 41:50	Strong 13 min <i>Bk 0?min</i>	Yellow book “story” unison, then letter families (same book).
Riverside104 42:00 – 52:00	Weak 10 min <i>Bk 0?min</i>	Yellow books “story” same as Strong group – same ques. Letter families practice
Riverside 201 **? Long <b>Transcribed</b> 50:00 – 1:24: 14	Strong 34 min <i>Bk 21min</i>	Link Up reader Blue Ginn reader Ladder books “Green Books” – phonics texts
Riverside 201 <b>Incomplete</b> 1:27:35	Weak	Ladder books only
Riverside 203 00:00 – 12:00	Weakest 2 12 min <i>Bk 0 min</i>	Ladder books Swop box books for homework
Riverside 302 00:00 – 23:14	Weak 23 min <i>Bk 12 min</i>	Smook phonics – ch-sounds x3 Gay way readers Swop box books for homework
Riverside 302 24:39 – 36:00	Strong 12 min <i>Bk 8 min</i>	Ginn reader – “Helicopters” round robin reading Smook phonics – ch-sounds x3
Riverside 303 0:00 -	Strong 16 min <i>Bk 8 min</i>	Gay way reader round robin Word search exercise on screen and pages
Riverside303 ** 17:07 – 49:50	Weak Min 32 <i>Bk 11 min</i>	Gay Way readers round robin Word search exercise on screen and pages Page on Jake’s trip round robin
Riverside 303 54:00 – 1:00	Strong 6 min <i>Bk 0 min</i>	Word search exercise on screen and pages



## Appendix 5: Act Sequences (Chapter Five)

### Sample sequences Mrs Dean, Greenbanks, Session 1- 2010 - weak and strong groups

**CODES:**        **T = teacher**                      **Q = question**  
                      **L = learner**                        **RoM = Reading on the Mat**

Move	Description of move	101 Angie – Strong	101 Strong group – 8 Vicky, Jenny, Isla, Vee, Zahida, Anele, Fezeka,	101 Weak group – 6. Geri, Ellarine, Caitlyn, Storm, Fatima, Lulama	102 Weak group next day	102 Strong group	102 Angie
1	<b>Constituting group – through materials: They share the same reader. Arrange group – circle and seating.</b>						
2	<b>Admin - Hand in homework books, take out books. Give in homework books for T to write in</b>						
3	TEXT	Sound box, word cards, books	Two books and a sound box. Word cards	Sound box and books. Word cards			
4	Preparation for reading through word recognition OR phonics practice	Letter recognition. T gives words to build – rat, rap, Gets her to do any actions, feel things like rim. Cards (level three? For word recognition – laid out to walk)	Letter recognition. Same words as Angie	Letter “sounds” Each child reads through theirs and receives “r.” Same as Strong group. Make T’s words: <i>rip, rap, rim</i> . Chant r-a-n (not in strong group). Make a word of their own, then high 5 and pack.	Eventually as they know all the letters this section drops away – phonics gets done on the mat instead and word recognition		
5	Preparation for reading through word recognition	Walk the word wall – revision and game element. Make words into sentence. While this is	Words into sentences, then “choose a sentence to walk and say.” Each L does it.	Words cards to individuals – get them if they can say them. Unison: r-u-n run. Do the action.	Small sight words for each child. Adds run and fast. Each child reads through whole list. T gives	Small sight words for each child. Each reads whole list. Shows big card word then gives each a	Small sight words – 80 – Angie reads them. T and Angie build sentences alternately.

		happening T attends to queries. T alternates with Angie		Shows card <i>fast – run fast</i> – do it. Shows mnemonic aids for <i>home, help, here</i> . Words into sentences. Ls pick named words out of sentences	sentence for each to build: Digger can run fast. One child reads it aloud, then whole group.	small card of the same. Gives group 4 sentences to build using new words. Each reads their own. Then build and read own 2 sentences	
6	<i>Metalanguage of reading</i>						Stop and exclamation mark
7	Introduction through pictures	None					
8	Metalanguage of books: cover, contents etc	None					Reads title
9	Individual reading	Angie takes out homework book. Sits in T's lap who turns pages for her and points as she reads whole book through. Same with second book.	8 "little books" laid out for each L to choose + extra book "What a mess" for homework. Read whole book unseen, then choose two "favourite" pages to read to T	New "little books" are put out for them to choose. Puts them in pairs to read alternately. Choose favourite page to read to T – repetition	Choose new "little books" for reading. Read alone and then choose a page to read to T	Lays out different "little books" for L to choose. T leaves and Ls start reading. Ls read any double-page spread, then leave.	Ginn level 3 – A reads whole book to T. Library reader for homework – reads first pages of "The lion and the mouse" to T then the rest of the book silently.
10	Comprehension ques (Happens in whole class story reading)	On text as Angie reads	On pictures and text, one Q for each child	No Q	On pictures and text – one for each child	No Q	No Q
11	Unison reading	None	None	None	None	None	None
12	As they finish they pack and leave without prompting. No final admin – complete the task and leave						

Sequences Mrs Dean, Greenbanks, Session 1 / 2010 continued - Strong and Weak groups

Move	Description of move	103 Weak group	103 Strong group	103 Angie	104 Angie	105 Geri (weakest child)	Weakest group
1	<b>Constituting group – through materials: They share the same reader. Arrange group – circle and seating.</b>						
2	<b>Admin - Hand in homework books, take out books. Pack out cards, either phonics (green) or sight words colour-coded for Ginn level, in big cards for the teacher and small cards for each child.</b>						
3	TEXT	Sound cards, big cards, books	Sound cards, big cards, books	Sound cards, big cards, books	Sound cards, big cards, books	Sound cards, big cards, books	Sound cards, big cards, books
4	Preparation for reading through phonics practice	Green sound cards. Adds g (sound of the day). Read all own cards. Build words first from T, using new sound g: <i>g-e-t - get</i> . Chant together <i>rag, sag, pig, gap</i> , Then “any word you like”	Green sound cards. Adds g (today’s sound). Build T’s words then own words from cards	Green sound cards. Adds g. Build T word, then own words - gift	Green sound cards. Build T’s words with <i>f – fit, fat, fact, frog, fish,</i>	Green sounds read to T	Pages for flip files and homework diary. Green sound cards. Build f-word for T – <i>fat, fan, fit, fish, fact</i> , Sound each word then say it. Make own word then sound and say it.
5	AND word recognition	Return books Big cards – start with new words from yesterday. Do the action of run and fast. Shows a word to each child who receives it if they can say it. Cues with gestures. T creates 7 sentences for the whole group. Each chooses a sentence to walk the words	Big cards – orange new words. Walk the words up and down then sit – “like hopscotch.” Each child.	Big cards – blue 3.2 words. She gets the words she knows. Walk the wall. Chooses 3 words and speaks a sentence.	Blue cards A didn’t know yesterday. T explains and sounds each word. Spoken sentence with each, then familiar ones in a wall. A says each as it goes down. Turns them over and reads them again – T chooses then A chooses. A “keeps” the ones she knows	Red cards – she knows 21. T goes through the ones she doesn’t know with cues and explanations. Asks Geri to touch words she names. Turns them over – if she reads them she gets to “keep” them. Geri then reads “her” words back to T as she puts them down	Red and orange cards. Receive the ones they know, then read them back to T. Red cards T just checks they know them. If they don’t, go down on the floor with the orange ones. T explains this is consolidation (105). Walk the wall (orange).
6	<i>Meta-language of reading</i>	None					

7	Introduction through pictures	None					
8	Metalanguage of books: cover, contents etc	None	None	None	None	None	None
9	Reading	Small books laid out to choose diff one (eeny meeny miny). Read whole book silently. Choose double page spread to read to T. Choose an "extra book" for homework	Small books handed out – no choice today. Read whole book silently. Each child reads one double page spread to T	2 books – one to T, one to self	Angie reads whole new Ginn reader unseen to T. Shouts at exclamations etc – good expression.	Geri reads whole little reader to T – T reads with her. Holds her in her lap. Doesn't want to "hold the others back"	Little books handed out. Ls read whole book then choose "favourite" page to read to T. T reads to the end with some who finish more quickly
10	Comprehension Questions		One or two Q to each child. Uses words and pictures as source		Two Q, then reads another whole book silently while T gives weakest child individual attention		One or two Qs to each on what they have read
11	No finishing admin. May leave as they finish reading. Sometimes collect an extra book as they leave. No dismissing of group, only of individuals. May pick up another reader as they leave, but books are given out as a prelude to silent reading						

### Sequences Mrs Mitchell, Riverside, Session 1 April 2010 - Top and bottom groups

Move	Description of move	Group ... 101 Top group	101 Bottom group	Group ... 102 Top group	Bottom group	Group ... Top group	Bottom group
1	<b>Constituting group – through materials: They share the same reader. Arrange group – circle and seating.</b>						
2	<b>Admin - Hand in homework books, take out books</b>						
3	Word recognition practice and phonics- based	Ladder book group reading. Ladder lists nr 8 each word x3 individual reading	Yellow book 2. Start with table of words at the top x3	Ladder book group chant reading. No individual reading	Yellow books vocab ladder	None	Ladder books. Words top down and bottom up individually, no group
4	<i>Meaning</i>	Some incidental teaching of word meanings	None	None	None	None	Box books for homework reading.
5	Introduction through pictures – waken schemata	Books handed out but not opened. Look at cover Ginn “The bee.” Predict story and suggest setting	Yellow book – no pictures. Texts written by teacher using “ladder words.” Start by group reading of vocab table at the top of the text x 3	Yellow Book – no pics. Start with word table at the head of the text, also x3 Metalang of punctuation.	No pictures	Ginn Reader only – cover – what is it about? Individual questions	
6	Metalang of books: cover, contents etc	Metalang of books – cover etc	Metalang of books	No metalang of books	No metalang of whole text		
7	Reading	Individual reading of single sentences. T approval and help for each. All must show they are following by pointing to the words.	Only individual reading in weak group	Group reading of new text then individual reading round group	Read sentence together then metalang on punctuation	Individual reading round the group of single sentences	Chooses three to read whole book to the group individually. Others follow by listening only as they don’t have copies. Chooses by A ... B ... C Others will read next session.

8	Comprehension Q	After once through asks general Q of individuals – one Q each	No Q	No Q with yellow book	No Q	No questions	Q of the individual who read
9	Individual reading	Returns to individual reading from the beginning – more focus on metalanguage e.g.: the expression suggested by an exclamation mark	Doesn't go through this second cycle	Ginn readers – reminder of metalang – cover etc Individual reading of one double page.	Individual reading – one sentence each	Only one cycle	Only one cycle
10	Compr Ques	To individuals	No second cycle	None	None		
11	Group reading of text	Slow, chanted reading of story	Chanted reading of last sentence only				
12	Admin - Swop books out of the “box books” for individual homework reading. May leave as they get their book. Sometimes T supervises, sometimes not						
13	Dissolve group. As teacher relaxes control they pack and start interacting socially						

**Sequences Mrs Samuels, Oakhill, Session 1 2010** *Not in ability groups at this point. Experimental.*

Move	Description of move	101 Blue lions	101 Yellow lions	101 Blue lions 2	102 Blue lions	102 Yellow lions	103 Blue lions
1	<b>Constituting group – through materials: They share the same reader. Arrange group – circle and seating.</b> Sit close ... must be space for books which are central to the activity. Spends time arranging this. T has “my place”						
2	<b>Admin - Hand in homework books, take out books. Give in homework books for T to write in</b>						
	Texts	Ginn	Plastic sleeve books with sentences. Sentence nr 49	Ladybird	Ginn	Ladybird	Fish cards
			Explains system – 101 “going to go from one child to the next. You go”	Sends two weakest into the corridor to read to each other as “reading buddies” – whole Ginn reader once through each			
3	Preparation for reading through word recognition	None	Sentences, nr 65. Everyone chant together. Some retrieval questions for general answer	Ladybird from the beginning again.			Fish game – turn over the fish. If you can read the word, the “fish” is yours.
				Whole first page unison with T. Ls repeat what the group has read.			
4	<i>Metalanguage of reading at any stage.</i>	Breaking up words: in-to. New words introduced		<i>None</i>	<i>None</i>	None	Metalang re breaking words up Demonstrates in-to
5	Intro – picture talk	None		None			
6	Metalang of books: cover, contents etc	None		T leaves group to discipline conflict in another part of the room	None	None	None
7	Reading	Goes immediately into reading from	Books out (Ladybird page 12). 4 read	Individual reading round group. Each	Ginn book reading by individuals.	Ladybird books p20. Reading round the	

		book round circle left. Individuals reading new sections.	books to themselves, silently, outside group. Those inside the group read individually and in no particular order	has a page, about three short statements, then go round again.	Choose books from box and leave	circle from T right. Particular focus with struggling readers – sends Ntosh back to redo it. T attention is less with stronger readers – knows they will struggle less. Back to p4 and read again, right to left	
8	Comprehension Q	None	.None	None	None		
9	Unison reading	None	None	None	None		
10	Sight Words on small cards	Flash cards for “Sight Words.” Goes round the circle for individuals but also shows group for chanted sounding and recognition	For weaker Ls only – 4 stay behind (Ntosh, Jade, Hamid and Carrie). Individuals read flash cards round the group	Smook blue book p12 reading of sounds – group chant. Group chant of first sentence, individual of next – chooses weaker Ls for indiv first. Repeats	Three weaker learners (Ntosh, Jade, Hamid) with large letter flash cards to make words, e.g. pot, get. T names word L must form.	Smook p 11 reading sounds group chant lead by T, then p12. Individual and the group reading same sentence. Nick stays behind for extra reading with Ginn reader	
11			For weaker Ls only – Ladybird reading. page 40. Right to left individual reading				
12	Admin - 101 “When I give you your homework book you may pack and go, okay?” May leave as they get their book. Sometimes T supervises, sometimes not. Hands out reading homework cards to signal end of book reading						
13	Dissolve group. As teacher relaxes control they pack and start interacting socially. others enter the group or bring work for teacher’s inspection						



**Continued: Sequences Mrs Samuels Oakhill, Session 1 2010 - strong and weak groups**

Move	Description of move	103 Yellow lions Ginn reader, first reading	104 Yellow lions with box books in the middle.	104 Blue lions, same as Yellow on left.
1	<b>Constituting group – through materials: They share the same reader. Arrange group – circle and seating.</b>			
2	<b>Admin - Hand in homework books, take out books. Give in homework books for T to write in</b>			
	TEXT		Poetry books	Poetry books
3	Preparation for reading through word recognition			
4	<i>Metalinguage of reading at any stage</i>			
5	Introduction through pictures – waken schemata	Look like me – what do you think the book is about?		
6	Metalang of books: cover, contents etc			
7	Reading	Unison of whole book interrupted by T Qs	Straight into unison reading of first poem “I like books” Read again. “Five little monkeys ” “The frog”	Straight into unison reading of poetry on the instruction “Let’s go” T does not lead but joins later
8	Comprehension Q	Retrieval Q for whole group	None	None
9	Individual reading	None – books away. Repeat the reader for Hwk	None	None
10	Unison reading			
		Fish game (main activity)	Get new book from reading box	Get new reading book for homework
11	Admin - Swop books out of the “box books” for individual homework reading. May leave as they get their book. Sometimes T supervises, sometimes not			
12	Dissolve group. As teacher relaxes control they pack and start interacting socially			

## Mrs Dean, Greenbanks, Card Sequences only

### Session 1

<p>Walk the word wall – revision and game element. Make words into sentence. While this is happening T attends to queries. T alternates with Angie</p>	<p>Words into sentences, then “choose a sentence to walk and say.” Each L does it.</p>	<p>Words cards to individuals – get them if they can say them. Unison: r-u-n run. Do the action. Shows card <i>fast – run fast</i> – do it. Shows mnemonic aids for <i>home, help, here</i>. Words into sentences. Ls pick named words out of sentences</p>	<p>Small sight words for each child. Adds run and fast. Each child reads through whole list. T gives sentence for each to build: Digger can run fast. One child reads it aloud, then whole group.</p>	<p>Small sight words for each child. Each reads whole list. Shows big card word then gives each a small card of the same. Gives group 4 sentences to build using new words. Each reads their own. Then build and read own 2 sentences.</p>	<p>Small sight words – 80 – A reads them. T and Angie build sentences alternately.</p>
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<p>Big cards – start with new words from yesterday. Do the action of run and fast. Shows a word to each child who receives it if they can say it. Cues with gestures. T creates 7 sentences for the whole group. Each chooses a sentence to walk the words</p>	<p>Big cards – orange new words. Walk the words up and down then sit – “like hopscotch.” Each child.</p>	<p>Big cards – blue 3.2 words. She gets the words she knows. Walk the wall. Chooses 3 words and speaks a sentence.</p>	<p>Blue cards A didn’t know yesterday. T explains and sounds each word. Spoken sentence with each, then familiar ones in a wall. A says each as it goes down. Turns them over and reads them again – T chooses then A chooses. A “keeps” the ones she knows.</p>	<p>Red cards – she knows 21. T goes through the ones she doesn’t know with cues and explanations. Asks Geri to touch words she names. Turns them over – if she reads them she gets to “keep” them. Geri then reads “her” words back to T as she puts them down</p>	<p>Red and orange cards. Receive the ones they know, then read them back to T. Red cards T just checks they know them. If they don’t, go down on the floor with the orange ones. T explains this is consolidation (105). Walk the wall (orange).</p>
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## Session 2

Big blue cards revision of level 3 – laughed, eating, oven, etc Choose a word (held out in fan by teacher and say it). Read them to T again. L “asks” another and shows cards like T	Big blue cards – revision “New words tomorrow” (303)	No teaching – just book swop. Geri gets revision little book and Angie a new book	Big cards held up in a fan – Geri chooses and says them. Who’s going to win? Walk the word wall of the words she did not get. Mixes them up and turns them over and goes through them again	“Word list” in flip file - reads through, then “give me a word and a sentence – you choose” T responds with comment. Then T chooses and A makes sentence with the word.	Cards of 4 words they didn’t know – choose one each and say it: find, off, Also draws on small whiteboard. Then other words. Ls ask each other across the circle.
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## Session 3

Large blue cards “If you remember these today we’ll do green ones” YAY. T shows cards and keeps – revision for whole group. Tests some individuals on words she thinks they might not know. Large green cards next. First the new words they can sound, then simpler words with explanation, cues and gestures. Read two new words each again. Pick up one word and pass it on. Read again. Pass again, read again.	Green cards (Level 4) shown to individuals then placed in the circle face up. Choose a word, say it and ask someone else, until all words have gone.
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## Appendix 6: Norms (Chapter Six)

Norms – conventions of the interaction – and interpretation of those norms

L= Learners / children; T= teacher/s; RoM = Reading on the Mat; R = researcher

	Riverside – Mrs Mitchell		Oakhill – Mrs Samuels		Greenbanks – Mitchell	
Norm	Description of norm	Interpretation of norm	Description of norm	Interpretation of norm	Description of norm	Interpretation of norm
<i>Constituting group</i>	Whole group is constituted at the beginning and continues to the end	Uniform teaching. Methodical – meets principle of every child every day. Groups are stable over the year	Whole group. May allow most Ls to leave then do extra with an individual or weaker group. Sends some outside the group in “reading buddies” so that she will be left with weaker pupils. Groups changed in June 2010	Is this because of the undifferentiated groups	Whole group. Groups are stable over the year, but Strong and Weak are one child.	Wants Ls to be at their ability level and not “held back” (201) by others. Immensely proud of high achieving Ls in every grade. Groups are stable over the year except for weakest who makes her own “group” after June
<i>Dissolving group</i>	Formal: instruction to pack or get another “box book.” May leave circle herself and Ls stay behind	<i>How is the box book reading monitored?</i>	T gives homework cards back OR another box book. T often leaves the circle herself.	Looks ahead to next reading activity for each L, i.e.: homework	Children leave group as they finish. No formal leave-taking or end of activity.	T is the centre – Ls come and go. Homework not monitored in RoM. When?
<i>Using the group space – keeps the</i>	The centre of the group is a pedagogic space for the Ls books and admin. Their books must be placed in front of them on the floor.	Because the texts used are books not cards (never saw cards in RoM in this classroom)	The centre of the group is a pedagogic space for books to be placed or cards laid out. Also an admin space – box books, homework diaries are put there.	Pedagogic space with a variety of uses, exploited flexibly (“What do I mean?”)	The centre of the circle has a pedagogic purpose. It is the teacher’s space (see quote below), used by the teacher to lay out books, cards etc.	Mrs D exploits its teaching possibilities more than others, As she uses card and game structures in every RoM. L’s work appears in it for her to view.
<i>Language of</i>	Classroom code words	Transfer of in-group	Some classroom code	Transfer of classroom	Code words for	

<i>the group</i>	for RoM – box books, ladder books ...	codes from classroom	words for RoM – box books,	in-group codes	activities – walk the word wall ...	
<i>Naming group members</i>	Individuals – full name, some nicknames for isXhosa boys – Soso. Group is “the boys” (instead of YOU) boytjies. Constant reminder that they are “Riverside boys”	Ingroup names and ID construction	Individuals – full names – not a lot of nicknames and pet names. There is one in which she teases and plays with names but not in RoM)		Nicknames of Ls, plus Noos, Poopynoos, Angels, “Love” – to individuals	Nicknames idiosyncratic – personal. Used constantly in RoM. Noos / Poopy Noos, Angels,
<i>Formality in language</i>						
<i>Denotation/ connotation</i>					Literal. Clear. No allusion, implication. Direct ...	
<i>Norm of involvement</i>	T starts with L to her left or right and goes round the circle. Once the direction has been established, is maintained for the session	Teaching patterns, regularity	T starts to her left or right and goes round the circle. May change order (why?)	Teaching patterns, regularity	T starts with the one who is “ready” – i.e.; has cards placed in a row in front of her/ has read book etc. “Okay, who’s ready?” (105, 303) Then the next “ready” one.	Time convenience – doesn’t want to wait for whole group to be ready
<i>Turn-taking: Cuing an answer</i>	T marks phases and cues by pointing / touching child or book. Signals group or individual responses	T control. Pedagogic: Ensures each individual does each task, gets practice at each activity -	Touches for attention or reprimand – tugs, pats. More likely to touch the book than the child – point to words	T control. Pedagogic purpose: ensures each individual does each task and is “following”	Verbal: “your turn” 304: When passing on word cards “always this way round” (left round the circle).	
<i>Cuing an answer</i>	T look, but also name.	Not necessary, because patterns are simple, but reinforces control	Look/ look + nod as a cue to answer. More nonverbal than Mrs M	May be a result of high ambient noise	Name – identifies who is “ready” e.g. 304 “Ready Madame Zaz?”	L has the choice of refusing the cue
<i>Control of process</i>	T keeps high level of control but lets some processes run by themselves, e.g.: ladder	Habituating. Creating rhythms, habits, patterns she can rely on	T moves in and out of reading. Pays attention to homework books, other learners, ...	Maintains control but allows Ls to read by themselves	High level of teacher control, but egalitarian style – choose books by “eeny meeny...” then T	Habituating, creating rhythms, habits, teaching patterns she (and others) can rely on

	words, chanting x3 – initiates then withdraws		Medium level of control.		names. Choose words they want to make sentences with, pages to read. Level of discipline increases through the year: expects more focus.	
<i>Teacher response</i>	T praise for each contribution immediate and standard: Good boy ... well done ... Right	Signals that that contribution is ended	“Kay...” “Good” (rarely) 301 High Fives	Signals that that contribution is ended	Varied – good girl, clever girl, you’re a star... a champion, wonderful, well done.. First prize = high fives	Signals that that contribution is ended
<i>Following the mental process</i>	Ls must point to words – constant insistence, continued all year, especially with weaker group. Very attentive and chimes in when an individual hesitates	“The boys who are not doing it will not know what the words are” 203 37:00	Ls must “follow” which may / may not mean pointing. Teaches pointing as a strategy to weaker readers (201). Models pointing. If they miss their place in reading they are not following 101 “Let’s all follow. Follow with him please.” “You should be following, like I am” 101 “Point as you read then you can learn from her”	Ensures focus. Weaker readers are often those whose attention wanders, or for whom the pointing finger may be help the eye.	Mrs D points to words to make sure L is keeping pace with her – non verbal way of drawing attention. Doesn’t insist that they point, although some do.	Ensures focus
<i>Appropriate posture and distance - Ls</i>  <i>(Children tend to sit too close than too far)</i>	Legs crossed, book on lap /floor. Close to each other and to teacher.	Physical reading – best reading distance.	Legs crossed, books on floor but children have own handling styles. Some sit sideways, lie on stomach / back ... With flash cards often kneel close around T	Fits generally with her less prescriptive style	They start in the “Hook and Look” position and usually stay there. T models it. Can be told to “sit nicely” or told “sit on bums please,” but this fades as session	Focus on reading – might insist on sitting if the reading is not progressing, but otherwise not. Discipline in the form of bodily posture.

					progresses. Holds individual Ls	
<i>Appropriate posture Teacher</i>	T sits in corner facing class with boys' backs to the room. Sometimes has small chair	Children not distracted, T can observe rest of class and door	T has "my place" (102) in the ring, left of class with back to board, facing class. Sometimes has small chair.	Children not distracted, T can observe rest of class and door. Teaches in corridor if possible, e.g. when student T is present.	T has back to board. Always sits on floor, sometimes on cushion. Mostly cross-legged like them. Models "hook and look".	Children not distracted, T can observe rest of class and door.
<i>Entering the circle - adults</i>	No interruptions. Visitors must wait. Children are given enough work to stay busy.	Central importance of activity. Shared reading theory requirement (ref)	Least visited classroom. This T has very few adult visitors, comparatively.	Looks up and interacts freely.	No interruptions. All visitors must wait. Lots of these – principal, remedial, other colleagues ...	Central, almost sacred importance of activity. Suggests absorbed focus on each child
<i>Entering the circle - children</i>	Children seldom approach – are meant to focus on worksheets. Can be silently gestured away.	Doesn't want to be bothered – focus on reading and performance	Children who want T's attention approach and display work over the heads of other Ls. Get a nod or a gesture. Seldom gestures Ls away	Accepts work-related interruptions as necessary.	Children (incl those from other classes) sit or stand silently outside the circle on T's left or right. Gestures them to sit. 105: "Please get out of my reading circle. Go away". Ls participate vicariously	Doesn't want to be disturbed; doesn't want reader to be disturbed.
<i>Staying in the circle</i>	T may leave group to discipline rest of the class or interact with visitors, but not children. Ls stop activity. R took groups	Control; adult independence vs L submission. No discourse of equality?	T calls out of group. T may leave group to discipline other Ls or interact. Ls very often continue. Ls leave on instruction.	Control. T's gaze travels over the whole class as well as the group	T seldom leaves group. Insisted that R take one. Does direct instructions outside circle, usually to enforce silence.	Enters the circle as a different teaching "mode"
<i>Participation</i>	Each child does everything – "Who hasn't had a turn?"	Uniformity	Doesn't check this. Children will remind her.	Fairness rather than uniformity	Each child does everything, but in random order. Don't all read every card.	Constant repetition rather than turn taking ensures uniform exposure to texts. T is less concerned about everyone doing everything.

<i>Participation - bidding</i>	May volunteer to answer with raised hands but usually not	To answer a question. Applying whole class behaviour to the small group	Raise hands to bid for general Q. Some bid to start an activity.		Bid to answer Q with raised hands	
<i>Participation</i>	Ls volunteer comments, especially towards end of year. T accepts offerings and interacts	Seems to be more about acknowledging than text interaction	Ls volunteer comments, especially towards end of year. T accepts offerings and interacts	Seems to be more about acknowledging than text interaction	No volunteering	Not a RoM activity to chat – kept for daily / weekly news
<i>Participation</i>	T inserts herself into chanting then withdraws	Cue-ing behaviours but promoting independence. Models and corrects	T starts off chanting with a particular, slow, loud intonation. Inserts herself or not	Models and corrects	Leads chanting in phonics but is either in or out of chanted group reading.	Full participant: Not just prompting
<i>Participation Group chant</i>	Group chant is a regular feature – long passages are read together as well as spelling out words. Can be asked to “read together” at any stage - last few sentences, when an indiv lags ...	Repetition and modeling conflated	Varies. Sometimes individual, sometimes group chant in RoM and whole class.		None in Mar / July. November group reading of alternate pages. Maintains sense of audience	Is focused on the individual child and has an “authentic” model of reading which emphasizes the individual.
<i>Supervision</i>	T very alert and observes all behaviours of all children	Uses the physical to interpret the mental process, e.g.: no finger on page = not following reading	Close surveillance of L and reading material. Judges reading attention by their READING. 301 – lowest group plays fish game alone	Independence in some aspects	Close attention and focus on learner’s reading. Knows books very well.	Alert to L performance and reading behaviours – tailors some teaching to individuals
<i>L behaviour in the circle</i>	Others are expected to be silent. 302 “focus, focus, focus.”		T often says "ssh ssh" but Ls do interact quietly in the group	Allows text focused interaction	Others are expected to be silent	Disciplined and serious



<i>"Helping"</i>	No "helping." 104 – "nobody is allowed to help anybody" 302 "You're not allowed to tell" (if he has the answer) 302 1:11:15 "No cheating. No telling."	Monitoring the individual performance. In opposition to the group chant	Ls help each other from time to time and T allows. Other times insists on individual work. Sometimes softly chorused word as child pauses – shows they are following? Follow in each other's books.	Allows social participation but not dominance.	Help is seldom offered from L to L – T is main resource	Keeps reading focus with her
<i>Audience</i>	T's presence is one of surveillance not communication - 3x rule – rock and say. Rhythmic repetition. Audience is an assessing one.	Reading is for assessment and performance	Ls keep reading when T is not there – less of a sense of audience	Reading is for a wide variety of audiences and purposes (This info is not in RoM)	Ls read to T – they stop when her attention is elsewhere – meaning and audience important	Reading is for T who is interested and attentive
<i>Reading Accuracy</i>	T is very vigilant about this	Pedagogic – checking that the reading is correct	Follows each L's reading over shoulder. Accuracy is important.	T follows reading so she can insert a word and keep the flow of meaning going.	Accuracy – very vigilant about this. Never lets any mis-reading get past her	Vigilant about diagnosis of possible reading problems or trends
<i>Reading Pronunciation</i>	Pronunciation coaching? Don't think so	Doesn't have a pedagogic position on this	Pronunciation coaching? Don't think so. Accepts non-standard pronunciation unless it interferes with meaning	Doesn't have a pedagogic position on this.	Vigilant re accurate pronunciation – for reading recognition. e – a – i, demonstrates f not v (105)	Believes that non-standard pronunciation leads to incorrect decoding and hampers reading ability
<i>Reading Expression</i>	Read "with expression" = sing-song over-emphasis	T's own style is singsong rather than meaning driven.	Never heard coaching expression, only modeling it – daily story reading. Praised expression 301	Evolves with fluent decoding?	Angie makes different voices for mouse and lion. Never heard T coaching expression – only modeling it – daily story reading	Evolves with fluent decoding?

<i>Pedagogy</i>	T responds to L questions with metaling teaching. Explains.	Meaning needs explanation	T responds to L observations with social response	Meaning needs explanation	Rare metaling teaching of Strong group. Models words in context rather than explaining.	Meaning emerges from context
<i>Pedagogy Phonic sounding of words</i>	Sound words out. Chant: M-e-g Meg. Expects Ls all to join her.	Practice of blending sounds	Sounds words out when L gets stuck. Main metalanguage of Sam's classroom. Demonstrates but does not ask for chorus.	Modeling strategy – Ls break down word into their component syllables. 301: L manipulates cards to show this	Sounds words out – m-a-t, mat. Includes this in other exchanges – “Tiptoe to the m-a-t mat now Noos.” (102)	Modeling strategy.
<i>Pedagogy Repetition</i>	All single words x 3. T adopts this norm with her own instructions: “Stop, stop, stop” etc  Also repeats activity and text	Repetition = practice. (Does it become TOO automatic?)	Will go through a whole unit again, but no micro-repetition	Doesn't seem to be carefully thought through – varies	Repeats words, but varies activities. “Embedded repetition.” Is not systematic for the individual but for the group. Possible not to receive a certain word in the time it is being taught	Structured and strategic teaching without obvious repetition
<i>Pedagogic - meaning</i>	Some explanation of meaning in each ladder words session	Pedagogic BUT not systematic because ladder words are not systematic – they belong to a non-comprehension system, although many are common words	Seldom any explanation of meaning, except with lower group (after June)	Allows discussion rather than explanation	Seldom explanation – rather uses word in sentence or demonstrates. Example words are carefully chosen so that they will know them	Aware of Ls limitations
<i>Answering questions</i>	Children answer questions individually and completely	Reading is an individual experience and a performance	Children answer with comments and incomplete sentences	Reading is informal and answers are also	Children answer with incomplete sentences	Understanding text is the focus not the form of the answer

<i>Controlling text – Teacher</i>	T stops Ls from reading ahead or turning over pages ahead of her instruction to “turn over” -	Ensures unified focus and that learning happens (BUT frustrating for more advanced learners)	T handles L books, points to words. Turns pages for Ls	Pedagogic	T handles book – may pull it down and point at word. Turns pages.	
<i>Controlling text - Learner</i>	Each L has own book. Sometimes share. Lots of handling of little letters and words to build sentences		Children handle cards – break up a word as a reading device. T encourages Ls to handle cards		Lots of handling of small text – words and letters and playing games with cards	Mrs D’s children seem to stay with word cards longer – building with complete units of text for quite a while
<i>Interacting with texts</i>	Particular kinds of interaction with each kind of text allowed		Ls choose their own way of interacting with texts in social time before and after. Read books of earlier groups, play with cards etc		Particular kinds of interaction allowed, but own choice with elements – make own word, own sentence etc	
<i>Medium for interacting with text</i>	Aloud and group		Aloud and group		Aloud and silent dominate – first unison reading captured only in Nov, only one sentence.	
<i>Choosing texts</i>	Choice: of box book		Choice: of box books. In Fish game, choose card. May use texts as they wish out of RoM		Choose words to make into sentences, words to say, little books, pages to read, “extra books”	
<i>Choosing mechanism</i>	Own choice, unmediated by Ts		Own choice unmediated by T		Eeny-meeny for the first, then round the circle.	

<i>Nonverbal</i>	No touching or handling of children	Verbal rather than physical nature shows in all her teaching – not fluent with hands or demonstrations. Prefers words	Handles children quite vigorously e.g. the b...d with Zach (101)	Relaxed and casual	Holds children especially single readers – Angie and Geri. Allows Ls to lean on her, to stroke her shoulders. Demonstrates on their bodies. (301)	Understands the importance of the nonverbal and has woven it into her cueing and teaching
<i>Nonverbal cuing</i>	Claps for attention and displeasure	T's communication style is verbal – seldom demonstrates; rather explains	Can run a whole section (e.g. cards) nonverbally: points and glances to cue Ls		Nonverbal cues for sight words – another semiotic. Mime of actions	
<i>Teacher control</i>	Nothing happens without teacher	T takes complete responsibility for teaching and Ls learning	Sometimes children just keep going – have picked up the pattern. Read although T's attention is off them		Unpacking happens without teacher. Word cards rely on T to initiate the activity and signal how the event will continue	Depend on T to initiate the card games and the particular sequences. Variety = Ls do not learn patterns as easily
<i>Other</i>	No eating or drinking except at “snacky time”	Discipline? School norm? Eating under supervision in the classroom. Makes sure all eat before break	Children may drink (water or juice, no soda) in circle. Eat in the classroom under supervision before break	Classroom and school norm – water at any time. Makes sure all eat before break	Eating and drinking allowed at desks but not in RoM. Instructs children to eat when they are running out of energy	Food is about energy not discipline. Makes sure all eat before break but also at other times

## Appendix 7.: Sample Transcriptions, Chapters Six and Seven

### Appendices: Sample transcriptions

1. Mrs Dean with strong group March 2010 B21
2. Mrs Mitchell with strong group April 2010 D47
3. Mrs Samuels with strong group April 2010 A42

<b>Mrs Dean, Greenbanks, strong group March 2010</b>	
Starts 00:23	<b>Audio B21</b> <b>Video</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Verbal exchange: word cards and Ginn 360 Little Books</b>
Mrs Dean	Does anybody know what this word could be? What do you think, Anele?
Cs	[Indistinct. Sound words].
Mrs D	No you can't sound this one.
Cs	[Individually say] <i>Out</i>
Mrs D	It's <i>out</i> . You naughty girl, out!
Cs	[Giggling] <i>Get out!</i>
Mrs D	Get out! It's <i>out</i> . Okay, we are in, get it? Out! Okay? What does it say?
Cs	[Individually say] <i>Out</i>
Mrs D	This one I think you know. It's the boy word
Cs	<i>He!</i>
Mrs D	This one you definitely know; sound for me Ayla?
Ayla	<i>Mum!</i>
Mrs D	Mum. M-U-M, mum. This one you love at break time...
Cs	[Individually say] <i>Break</i> . [Shuffling amongst children]
Mrs D	Vicky?
Vicky	<i>Play!</i>
Mrs D	Play.
C	Oooh I like play!
Cs	[Individually say] <i>Word</i> .
C	[From other group] Mrs Dean?
Mrs D	And this one... If you've broken your leg... if you - uhmmm - play?
Cs	[Individually say] <i>Can't</i> .
Mrs D	What's that little word?
Cs	[Say in chorus] <i>Can</i> .
Mrs D	And now?
Cs	[Say in chorus] <i>Can't</i> .
Mrs D	You can't. It says <i>c-an-t</i> . <i>Can't</i> . It's... very clever, Vicky. I love you so, so much!
Cs	[Giggles. Excited.]
Mrs D	<i>Can't</i> is a funny word, because what we've done is, is we've done this, look; <i>c-a-n...n-o-t</i> . <i>Cannot</i> . When we've taken these out and we've just left the <i>teh</i> and we put the apostrophe in, to show that we have left some words out. And we say? <i>Can't</i> . If you break your leg you can't play on the jungle gym.
Cs	Ouch!
C	But if you break your arm you can still play.
Mrs D	Yes! Okay, who would like to start?
Cs	[Individually say] <i>Me!</i> [Excitement].
Mrs D	Start <i>me-me-me</i> . Up, walk up.
C	<i>Me-me-me</i> .
Mrs D	Go colour nicely and eat some food, please? Lulama, eat!
Cs	[Soft mumbling].
Mrs D	Good. Ayla.
Ayla	[Reads words slowly] <i>Can't play mum please walk out</i> .
Mrs D	Jade. Robbie, don't eat at your desk, please.
Jade	[Reads words slowly] <i>Can't play....</i> [Indistinct]... <i>out</i> .
Mrs D	Isisvele. Jenny.

Fezeka	[Reads words softly].
Mrs D	Right. Anele. Jenny! I'm not talking to you again.
Aza	Reads words <i>can't play...</i> [Indistinct]... <i>out</i> .
Mrs D	Good. Come. Jenny, have you done your [Indistinct] body? Go and eat, please?
C	[Reads words softly].
Mrs D	Remember, it's an <i>uh</i> so it's <i>mum</i> . Not <i>mom</i> . Come. Lulama!
Cs	[Noisy].
Mrs D	Robin! Shhhh! Okay, old words.
C	Reads words <i>at, run, but</i> .
Mrs D	Put them down in front of you.
C	Okay I've put them down in front of me.
Other C	Down in front of you. Flip it.
Cs	[Reads words individually].
Mrs D	Natasha!?
Cs	[Continues reading words individually].
C	I just took... <i>aahhh</i> , I just want yes.
Mrs D	Saza! Okay, let's see what sentences we can build.
C	I know how to build my sentence!
Mrs D	Okay, let's... what do you think?
C	I know how.
Different C	But we need to help me build my sentence, please?
Mrs D	But you've got a sentence right there! You start with <i>yes</i> , and you borrow <i>it</i> from Anele.
Cs	[Softly mumbling].
C	<i>I...like... Yes, I like...</i>
Mrs D	And then, what about that one that you're leaning on, Jenny? Clever girl! Would you like to read that sentence?
Jenny	<i>Yes, I like it here.</i>
Mrs D	Can anybody else make a sentence for me? What have you got, Ayla?
Ayla	<i>No</i> [Indistinct] and <i>at home</i> .
Mrs D	Don't you think you should use <i>is</i> as well?
Cs	[Discussing sentence].
Mrs D	Who's...who's got... And maybe, yes. Oh, we've used <i>yes</i> , okay.
C	I've got one! I've got one!
Mrs D	What have you got?
C	<i>Can we run fast.</i>
Mrs D	Okay, who's got ...
C	We didn't use <i>is</i> !
Mrs D	Okay, who's got <i>run</i> ? You'll have to borrow <i>run</i> .
Cs	[Talking softly].
Mrs D	Put it out.
C	[Reads words] <i>We run</i>
Mrs D	Good?
C	[Continues] <i>Fast</i> .
Mrs D	Okay, Vicky would you like to read love?
Vicky	[Reads words] <i>Can we run fast</i>
Mrs D	Okay, what can you make?
C	[Reads words very softly].
Mrs D	You can borrow some of these new words if you can remember them.
Cs	Reads words individually. [Giggles].
Mrs D	Okay? Where's in... there... Fezeka is hiding in.
Cs	[Giggling].
Mrs D	<i>Play, in?</i>
C	<i>I want to hide my...</i> [indistinct].
Mrs D	Play?
C	Reads <i>Play in here</i>
Mrs D	Okay, let's borrow <i>in here</i> and then what are you going to put? Could you use <i>you</i> in this sentence?
C	[Reads words – random].
Other C	Yes!
Mrs D	Okay, pop <i>you</i> in the front of your sentence, clever girl. Right let's ... Anybody else got a sentence, they think? Anele? Look around the words, there are lots.
Cs	[Individually read words as they try to build sentences].
Mrs D	Wait, have you got something, As?

Cs	[Soft mumbling].
Mrs D	Go colour it in; please don't eat. Are you stuck? Jenny, you haven't tried at all yet. Have you got something? Have got some... Shhhh! Okay, Fezeka. Jenny? What have you got, love?
Jenny	<i>How ... me and</i> [indistinct].
Mrs D	Okay, come let's see if you can build. Put it down for her. Help? And you must...that's beautiful! You must go over and fill in your word.
C	<i>Help me and ...</i> [Indistinct]... at...
Mrs D	At? Clever Ayla. And what's the last one you are going to put on? At?
Ayla	<i>Her</i>
Mrs D	Right! Uhm...
Cs	[Talking. Indistinct. Laugh].
Mrs D	Yes! Have you got something you can do with the <i>come</i> ? What, Fezeka? Have we got all those words floating around? Built?
Cs	[Softly reading words individually as they build sentences].
Mrs D	Oh we've used <i>and</i> , okay, <i>Ben</i> , <i>and</i> ? Okay, why don't you use <i>mom</i> ? Haven't you got <i>mom</i> there?
Cs	[Talking].
Mrs D	And where's <i>help</i> ? Okay, <i>Ben</i> and <i>mom</i> ... <i>help</i> ? Then let's pop [Indistinct] here. Okay, read for us Fezeka?
Fezeka	<i>Ben and mom help...</i> [indistinct].
Mrs D	Okay, I'm going to be... Who can read my one?
Cs	Me, me, me!
Mrs D	What does it say, Ayla?
Ayla	<i>He... can't look... out.</i>
Mrs D	Okay, let's fix this, yes? [Indistinct.] <i>Can we run fast? You play in here.</i> [Indistinct].
C	I got [Indistinct].
Cs	[Reading words individually].
Mrs D	<i>Ben and mom help</i> [indistinct]. <i>He can't look out.</i>
C	These are my two words.
Another C	These are mine.
Mrs D	Let's go. Where... is...?
Cs	...my...
Mrs D	No, who's got a name? Where is?
Cs	[Noisy].
Mrs D	Sparky?
Cs	<i>Where is my Sparky?</i>
Mrs D	Okay, you've got that now. Okay, uhm, who's sitting nicely? Jenny? Choose a sentence to walk and say for us, love? Stick please [indistinct]. Sit, Caitlyn. Don't eat.
C	I made that one.
Mrs D	Yes, right. Come Vick. <i>Ben</i> ?
Vicky	[Softly reads words].
Mrs D	Right, Jenny?
Jenny	[Softly reads words].
Mrs D	Ayla.
Ayla	<i>Where is Sparky?</i>
Mrs D	Jay-Jay. Uh, Angie? Shhh-shhh-shhh. [Indistinct].
C	[Reads words] <i>Ben and Mom help</i>
Mrs D	Good, Anele last one.
C	Mrs Dean, are we having dolphin king [indistinct]?
Another C	I'm hungry.
C	[Starts humming softly].
Mrs D	Okay, poopey-noos, just hang on. Let me sort out our new words.
C	New words!
Mrs D	Uh, Angie! Uh, Natalie! That voice of yours... Oopsy, don't, don't ...don't fold them. Right, are we sitting nicely on our bums [Indistinct] please?
Cs	Yes.
C	Bums? You're not sitting on your bum.
Mrs D	Come. Thank you, noo. Right, can we have our books please?
Cs	[Talk softly].
Mrs D	Just...just hold... uh-uh, Fezeka. Don't [indistinct].
Cs	[Talking].
Caroline	Are they not under the boxes?
Mrs D	Ah! Nice. Zahida, you hid the books! You can't stay.
C	Gasp! They're new books!

Mrs D	Okay, this is your extra book tonight, it's <i>What a mess</i> . You see [Indistinct], put it away. One, two, three, four, and you've got <i>Going to school</i> .
C	I love this ... [Indistinct]
Mrs D	Right, now we're going to go... <i>My books</i> , okay. Wait noos, let go... Eeny meeny miny mo, catch a tiger by her toe...
Mrs D/Cs	[Read together] <i>If she hollers let her go, o-u-t spells out..</i>
Mrs D	Vick... Jam... Anele... Fezeka... Pirate treasure... Jade...
C	<i>Where is it?</i>
Mrs D/C	<i>Where is it?</i>
Cs	[Reading/talking individually].
Mrs D	Reads: <i>The day happy?</i>
C	<i>Got lost.</i>
Mrs D	Great. <i>The king's sock</i> . Right, noos, you know the rules? Read...
C	[Talks ... indistinct].
Mrs D	You at the parade?
Cs	[Read individually. Giggling].
Mrs D	The [indistinct]. Good! Go and eat. Read in your heads, noos. [Indistinct] read for me. When you're finished, choose two pages that you really like.
Cs	[Read out softly].
Mrs D	Why do they need...why does he need help?
C	[Replies softly. Indistinct].
Mrs D	Okay, another page? Why does he want them to stop?
C	His house is burning.
Mrs D	Good girl. [Indistinct] Vick.
C	[Reads words softly].
Mrs D	And another one?
C	[Reads words softly].
Cs	[Noisy].
Mrs D	How is he going to help? With the what?... Clever girl. Right, are you ready, Anele? Okay, you ready, Jade?
C	[Reads words softly].
Mrs D	And?
C	[Continues reading. Indistinct].
Mrs D	Who... who is saying <i>stop it?</i> Why is she saying that, love? ... And? What is happening with the balloon?
C	It's ... blowing away. [Softly].
Mrs D	When someone does this, what do they think is going to happen? A big...? A big noise. Geri, you shouldn't be there. Right, are you ready? That's one of my favorite pages. Okay, cool.
C	<i>Is it here? Where is it?</i>
Mrs D	Where's, where is it? Who's saying where is it? Okay?
C	<i>Where is it, where-is-it. Stop it. It...is not...here.</i> [Indistinct].
Mrs D	Who is saying <i>I can help you look?</i>
C	<i>The</i> [indistinct].
Mrs D	<i>The</i> [indistinct]. Great. Anele.
Aza	<i>It is not in here. Where is it? Can...can you help...we can help you.</i>
Mrs D	What does the man hide, Anele? A? An egg. Where do you think the egg is? Where do you think it's hiding?
Aza	No idea.
Mrs D	Take a guess. Is it in his hat? Where is it?
Aza	Uh, this man has magic.
Mrs D	[Indistinct] Magic, okay. Come.
C	<i>Where is it? Is it here? No, not in here.</i>
Mrs D	What's not in there? What are they looking for?
C	A treasure.
Mrs D	The treasure's not in here. Right, Ayla.
Ayla	<i>Look in here.</i>
Mrs D	Yes, what...what? What are they looking for?
Ayla	Uhm, the butterfly.
Mrs D	Yes.
C	My book, my books...my doll...my teddy...
Other child	[Reads back to teacher. Indistinct].
Mrs D	Where are they looking? In the...? The what?
C	[Continues reading. Slow and indistinct].



Mrs D	Here! What's he looking for?
C	A [indistinct].
Cs	[Noisy].
Mrs D	And, one more page. Uh... Shhh!
C	[Continues reading].
Mrs D	Where is it? Keeping the air...? Warm.
Other C	What is this name?
Mrs D	Brother. My...brother. Jade...you've... Jade!
C	Jade! Hello!
Mrs D	[Indistinct]. Is all your work finished, baby? Noo, have you eaten all your food? Anele, have you eaten? Get food, please.
Mrs D	Noos, you should have your lunch at your desks and you should be eating
Ends 26:01	

## 2. Mrs Mitchell, Riverside, strong group April 2010

Start 00:00:50	<b>Audio D47 - Toasts - Glen, Earl, Darrell, Vuyo, Julio, Ethan, Chris Video</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Verbal exchange: Ladder books [ladder 8] and Ginn reader The Bee</b>
Mrs Mitchell	Boys, look at me. Pass your books to Darrell. Pass! No throwing. Pass it...pass it in the row. Pass it to the person next to you.
C	[Whispers. Indistinct].
Mrs M	Right Darrell, you just give all the books to me [Indistinct]. Julio, you've got lots because you were in the Sausages now you're in the Toast, so give all your books back. Did you read all of them? Good boy. Darrell, just give me all of Julio's books. Now, take out your ladder books...please boys! Your ladder books first...
C	Miss [indistinct], I've got all my books out!
	Shuffling noise of books and papers
Mrs M	Can you all please go to ladder number...
C	Eight!
C	[Making noises].
Mrs M	We will go to ladder eight first.
C	[Humming softly].
C	Come, come, come...
Mrs M	Let's just wait for everybody to get...[Indistinct]? How do we sit? Legs crossed.
C	Legs crossed!
Mrs M	Right, Darrell? Here's your ladder.
Cs	Talking amongst each other
Mrs M	Ask Chris if you can share with him, please?
Cs	[Talking].
Mrs M	Ready? Okay! Group one, two... I see group three... and group four! Well done to those boys! We are about to start our reading now, and they are very, very good. I'm proud of you.
Cs	[Talking amongst each other].
Mrs M	Julio move please... Right, let's go.
Cs	Read together: <i>Come, come, come, comes, comes, comes, please, please, please, see, see, see, sees, sees, sees.</i>
Mrs M	Right, uh-uh, turn over.
	[Sound of pages turning].
Mrs M	Go to number nine. Let's go to the...
Cs	Read together: Run, run, run, like, like, like, this, this, this, but, but, but, fast, fast, fast,...
Mrs M	Sorry, stop [indistinct], we had one rude little boy who's forgotten how to read with us. Right, number ten please?
Mrs M/Cs	Read together: <i>Run, run, run, at, at, at, the, the, the, birds, birds, birds, squirrels, squirrels, squirrels, down, down, down, up, up, up, run, run, run, runs, runs, runs, three, three, three, two, two, two, mine, mine, mine...</i>
Mrs M	Oh, what's that last word?
Cs	<i>Me!</i>
Mrs M	Why? What's on the end?
C	Eeeh.
Mrs M	Eh. Spell me the e.
Cs	Eeee.
Mrs M	So we say...?
Mrs M/Cs	[Sound word together] <i>Me, me, me.</i>
Mrs M	Again?
Cs	[Sound word together] <i>Me, me, me.</i>
C	<i>One, one, one, two, two, two</i>
Mrs M	Number eleven again, please.
Cs	[Read together] <i>Run, run, run.</i>
Mrs M	Uh-uh?
Cs	[Read together] <i>Up, up, up, run, run, run, runs, runs, runs, three, three, three, two, two, two, me, me, me.</i>
Mrs M	Right, ladder number twelve.
C	<i>Rabbit...</i>
Cs	[Read together] <i>Rabbits, rabbits, rabbits, one, one, one, two, two, two, like, like, like, Tom, Tom, Tom, Jack, Jack, Jack.</i>
Mrs M	Stop!

C	Next page please?
Mrs M	Stop. Right, Eben, ladder number nine. On his own.
Ethan	<i>Run, run, run, like, like, like, this, this, this,...this, this, this, but, but, but, fast, fast, fast.</i>
Mrs M	Right, ladder number ten, Chris.
Chris	<i>Run, run, run, at, at, at, the, the, the, bird, bird, bird, squirrels, squirrels, squirrels, down, down, down.</i>
Mrs M	Darrell, eleven.
Darrell	<i>Up, up, up, run, run, run, wants, wants, wants...three, three, three...</i>
Mrs M	Pardon? You're going too quickly. Start again.
Darrell	Reads: <i>Up, up, up, run, runs...I mean, run, run, run, ones, ones, ones, three, three, three, two, two, two, me, me, me.</i>
Mrs M	Right, ladder number eleven again, please Julio.
Julio	<i>Up, up, up, run, run, run, runs, runs, runs, three, three, three, two, two, two, me, me, me.</i>
Mrs M	Earl, number twelve.
Earl	<i>Rabbit, rabbit, rabbit, one, one, one, two, two, two, like, like, like, Tom, Tom, Tom, Jack, Jack, Jack.</i>
Mrs M	Number twelve from the Weak up, please.
Earl	<i>Jack, Jack, Jack, Tom, Tom, Tom, like, like, like, two, two, two, one, one, one, rabbit, rabbit, rabbit.</i>
Mrs M	Is it rabbit or rabbits?
Cs	Rabbit.
Mrs M	Okay, be careful! Right, Glen, from the bottom up, ladder number eleven now.
Glen	<i>Me, me, me...</i>
	Loud noise
C	Uh-uh!
Glen	<i>Me, me, me, two, two, two, three, three, three, runs, runs, runs, run, run, run, up, up, up.</i>
C	[Whispers]: <i>Run, run, run.</i>
	[Noise of pages turning].
C	<i>Gel, gel, gel...</i>
Mrs M	Right, everybody number thirteen. Let's go. Oh, is it gel?
C	Gel! [giggles]
C	Mrs [Indistinct] I've got past this!
Mrs M	Let's sound it;
Mrs M/Cs	<i>G-i-ll...</i>
C	I got to this part!
Mrs M/Cs	[Read together] <i>Gill, Gill, Gill...</i>
C	<i>Hide, hide, hide...</i>
Mrs M	Do you know boys, go to ladder number thirteen again, and let's sound it together.
Mrs M/Cs	Sound word together: <i>G-i-ll.</i>
Mrs M	<i>Gill... no; Gill, Gill, Gill.</i> Because that's how I [indistinct]
C	It's supposed to [indistinct] <i>Gill-lll.</i>
Mrs M	But we don't... I'm so glad Ethan said that. You see it's got two LL's, now those are called the twins, and when we have the twins, they say the LL together. You know that you only get one L. We don't hear <i>Gilllll</i> , we just hear <i>Gill</i> .
C	You don't say <i>Gill-Gill</i>
Mrs M	You just say <i>Gill</i> . Let's say it together.
Mrs M/Cs	<i>Gill, Gill, Gill.</i>
Cs	[Continue reading together] <i>Hide, hide, hide, let's, let's, let's, where, where, where, but, but, but,...but, but, but, can't, can't, can't, what, out</i> [indistinct].
Mrs M	Again.
Mrs M/Cs	<i>Out, out, out, fun, fun, fun, swim, swim, swim, park, park, park...park, park, park...</i>
Mrs M	Stop! From the bottom up, quickly. Number fourteen.
Cs	Read: <i>Park, park, park, swim, swim, swim, fun, fun, fun, out, out, out, can't, can't, can't.</i>
Mrs M	Put your finger on <i>out</i> , everybody.
C	<i>Out!</i>
Mrs M	<i>Out.</i> Right, when, say, a doggy has come into the house and he is full of mud and Mommy says; <i>Out! Out!</i> Let's say <i>Out</i> three times.
C	Or when you're out in a cricket match!
Mrs M	Or, when you're out in a cricket match, let's say it three times.
Mrs M/Cs	<i>Out, out, out!</i>
Mrs M	Now, put your finger on it and say it.
Cs	<i>Out, out, out!</i>
Mrs M	Number fifteen, please, from the top down, everybody.
Cs	<i>Jump, jump, jump,...play...play, play, play, swim...</i>
Mrs M	<i>Swing!</i>

Cs	<i>Swing, swing, run, run...run...</i>
Mrs M	Alright, stop! Now we're gonna do one word at a time. Go to <i>Jump</i> , put your finger on it; let's sound it.
Mrs M/Cs	[Sound word together] <i>J-u-mp, jump, jump, jump. P-l-ay, play, play,...</i>
Mrs M	Look at <i>swings</i> .
Cs	<i>Swing, swing, swing...</i>
Mrs M	Can you see it is not <i>swim</i> ?
Cs	<i>Swing, swing...</i>
C	There's <i>swing</i> !
Mrs M/Cs	[Read together] <i>Swing, swing, swing</i>
Mrs M	Put your finger on <i>swim</i> . Good! Put your finger on <i>swing</i> . Put your finger on <i>swing</i> . Who can tell me what's different? Julio?
Julio	<i>Swim</i> doesn't have a g.
Mrs M	<i>Swim</i> doesn't have a g.
C	And also Mrs [Indistinct]!
Mrs M	Sorry, don't shout!
C	Because it has two...ssswi...ssss
Mrs M	Okay, the same that's got <i>swiss</i> , right? And an I
C	And then, and then...
C	[Giggling].
C	And then, it makes you...that one's much different.
Mrs M	Yes, and these different...what do you see at the end of the <i>s</i> ?
C	Mrs [Indistinct], because the...the...the <i>swing</i> doesn't have...has got a <i>m</i> at the end as SWIM...and that's got a .... <i>Swing's</i> got a <i>ng</i> at the end.
Mrs M	A <i>n</i> and a...?
Cs	<i>G!</i>
Mrs M	We haven't learnt the <i>n-g</i> that makes <i>ng</i> . Can you all go? <i>Ng...come? Ng</i> . Can you all say it?
Mrs M/Cs	<i>Ng!</i>
Mrs M	Alright, let's say <i>swing</i> three times...
Mrs M/Cs	<i>Swing, swing, swing, ride, ride, ride, rides, rides, rides, ride, ride, ride</i>
Mrs M	Only up to there. Close your ladder books for me.
C	Mrs [Indistinct]! That's the easy part... that's why I didn't want us to do these books.
C	Well, that's easy.
C	[Singing].
Mrs M	Shh-shh-shh...right, Chris's not sitting nicely; Eben is not sitting nicely...
C	<i>The...bee...</i>
C	Thank you Mrs [Indistinct].
Mrs M	Pleasure, my darling.
C	<i>The bee.</i>
Mrs M	Right, let's look at the...
C	Thank you Mrs [Indistinct]
Mrs M	Uh-uh! I have not said <i>open</i> ! Let's close our books. Put them down in front of you. Quickly, quickly. [Thumping noises in the background/children talking softly].
Mrs M	Who can tell me, what do you see, in that picture on the cover?
C	Hmm...
Mrs M	Julio?
Julio	Uhm, the boy pointing to the butterfly.
Mrs M	A little boy pointing to a butterfly. What else do you see, Earl?
C	[Gasps].
Earl	A bee.
Mrs M	Where's the bee?
Earl	Here.
C	[Mumbling in background].
Mrs M	Yes! Is he sitting on a flower?
Cs	No.
Mrs M	No, what's he doing, Glen?
Glen	He's...he's pointing at it.
Mrs M	Yes, the little boy is pointing at it. What else do you see?
C	A...and...and he's [indistinct]
Mrs M	Okay, what else do you see...Glen?
Glen	I see...the dog behind the hill.
Mrs M	Alright, the dog at the back, but what's in his mouth, Glen?

C	Uhm, a bone!
C	A stick!
Mrs M	Glen! A stick?
C	Uhm,...
Mrs M	Uhm, Vuyo? What else do you see?
Vuyo	Flowers.
Mrs M	Lot's of flowers! Darrell?
Darrell	The bee is making honey?
Mrs M	The bee must be making honey. And, Earl? You saw the little boy has got a sore...?
C	And the big hill.
Mrs M	And there's a big hill. What...what's hurting on the little boy?
C	And there's a pathway.
Mrs M	What's sore?
C	His knee.
Cs	Knee!
Mrs M	His knee, yes! His knee! Okay, alright. What do we call this part of the book?
C	Cover!
C	Cover!
Mrs M	The cover.
C	And the spine!
C	Spine!
Mrs M	Spine! And, what is the name of the book?
C	The spine is this!
Cs	<i>The bee.</i>
Mrs M	<i>The bee.</i> Alright, let's open up...
C	<i>Bee, bee, bee, bee, bee...</i>
	[Sound of books being opened].
Mrs M	And can I ask you...
C	The bee.
Mrs M	Glen, on your own, you're gonna read.
Glen	<i>The bee.</i>
Mrs M	I'll tell you when to stop.
	[Sound of some pages turning].
Mrs M	Everybody's pointing...?
Glen	<i>Mom...can...we...play here? Yes...but...you...can't...run.</i>
Mrs M	Good boy. Vuyo.
Vuyo	<i>Look...Lad...we...can...play here. You can...run fast...but I...can't run fast...like you.</i>
Mrs M	Good boy.
C	<i>Eh...come here Lad...look...</i>
Mrs M	I'm sorry, Earl, stop! Some boys are not pointing. Where are you, Darrell? Can you please point now? And, as he reads.
C	<i>Look...a-and...this.</i>
Mrs M	Can you read that whole page, please Earl, for Darrell? [Shuffling noises in the background].
Earl	<i>Come here Lad. Look...</i> [pause]
Mrs M	Sound it. [Shuffling noise].
Mrs M	Sounds word: A-T
Earl	Reads: <i>AT this.</i>
C	Loudly whispers: AT
Mrs M	Right, now read it once more please, Earl.
Earl	<i>Come here Lad. Look at this.</i>
Mrs M	Good boy! Next page.
Earl	<i>Mom...</i>
Mrs M	Is it <i>Mom</i> ? Sound it.
Earl	<i>Mum...</i>
Mrs M	Good boy!
Earl	<i>Mum come and look at this.</i>
Mrs M	Good boy! Right, Julio.
C	[Giggles loudly and makes noises].
Julio	<i>No, Lad...stop. Look out.</i>
Mrs M	Good.

Julio	<i>Ben... [sounds words out softly as he reads] can't...</i>
C	<i>Can't!</i>
Julio	<i>Can't...run.</i>
Mrs M	<i>Run.</i> Remember what we said about can't and can't [pronounced American]? Carry on Darrell. [Cellphone starts ringing].
C	Eh!
Mrs M	Sorry boys, just leave it.
Darrell	<i>Help me Dad...</i>
C	Stop [indistinct].
Darrell	Continues: <i>Can...</i>
Mrs M	Uhm-hmm?
Darrell	<i>I can stop you...but I can't stop Lad.</i>
Mrs M	Good boy! Right, what happened at the end, please Darrell?
Darrell	Uuhhhm...Lad is uhm...running away from the bee.
Mrs M	Right, can you tell me what the story is about, quickly, Earl? Before we get Chris to read. What happened in the story?
Earl	The...the bee's chasing the dog...and now the bee's mad.
Mrs M	The bee got very cross...what else...Glen? What else?
Earl	And there's a lot of bee...uhm...bees following them.
Glen	The bees follow him because they're cross with each other.
Mrs M	Because they got very...?
Glen	Angry.
Mrs M	Cross! Right, Chris let's start...now, Chris's gonna start and I want you to listen carefully when we read this time. I'm going to ask you questions. Go from the beginning, Chris.
Chris	<i>The bee...the bee. Mum...can...we...play...here? Yes...but... you can't run.</i>
Mrs M	Carry on, Eben.
Eben	<i>Look Lad, we can play here.</i> [pause]
Mrs M	Carry on, Eben.
Eben	<i>You can run fast but I can't run fast like you.</i>
Mrs M	Turn over, read Glen.
Glen	<i>Come...here Lad.</i> [clears throat] <i>Look...at this. Mum, come and look...at this.</i>
Mrs M	Right, Vuyo.
Vuyo	<i>No Lad, stop...look...out.</i>
Mrs M	Look? That new word?
Vuyo	<i>Look out.</i>
Mrs M	Look out! And can you see that little line, everybody? That little line with the dot underneath?
C	Look out!
Mrs M	What did I tell you about it last time?
C	You must...you must say...uhm...loud.
C	You must stop and then you say it again.
Mrs M	Good boy! It's an exclamation mark...
C	Stop!
Mrs M	And we don't just say: [says monotone] Look out, we...we're warning him...
C	Shouts: <i>Look out!</i>
Mrs M	Okay, now let's say it all together, don't shout it though, but let's say it together.
Mrs M/Cs	Say together: <i>Look out</i>
Mrs M	Right, carry on then please, Vuyo.
C	Reads: <i>No lad!</i>
Mrs M	Ben?
Vuyo	<i>Ben...you can't run.</i> [another boy reading with him].
Mrs M	Right, Vuyo...uhm, thank you. Earl.
Earl	<i>Help...me...Dad. Stop me.</i>
Mrs M	Now, look at that little line again. <i>Stop me.</i>
Cs	Repeats together: <i>Stop me!</i>
Mrs M	Good, still Earl.
Earl	<i>I can stop you...but...I can't stop Lad.</i>
Mrs M	Well done! Right, everybody look at the last picture.
C	[Making siren noises].
Mrs M	Go once more to the beginning and, Julio read.
C	Oh, come on...
Mrs M	Come, quickly, quickly. Let's go...pointing...
C	Mrs [indistinct]

Mrs M	<i>The...Bee.</i> Carry on, Julio.
Julio	<i>Mum can we play here? Yes but you can't run.</i>
Mrs M	Good boy! You remembered <i>Can't!</i> Well done! Darrell.
C	<i>Can't</i> [incorrect pronunciation] It's not <i>can't</i> , it's <i>can't</i> [correct pronunciation]. <i>Can't, can't.</i>
Mrs M	Shh-shh.
Darrell	Is it here?
Mrs M	Oooh, Mr Darrell is not pointing today? Hmm? Right, let's go. <i>Look...</i>
Darrell	<i>Look Lad, we can play here. You can't...you can run fast but I can't run fast like you.</i>
Mrs M	Very good! Right, Chris?
Chris	<i>Come here Lad.</i> [clears throat] <i>Look at this. Mum, come and look at this.</i>
C	[Giggles].
Mrs M	Right, Eben?
C	Talking to Mrs M [Indistinct]
Eben	<i>No Lad, stop...look...out!</i>
Mrs M	Good boy, carry on.
Eben	<i>Ben you can't run.</i>
Mrs M	Stop there. Why do you think, Eben, Ben can't run?
Eben	Because if he runs then the..he'll go so fast and then he'll fall.
Mrs M	Might fall, okay?
C	And then he...and then he's gonna <b>broke</b> a bone.
Mrs M	But what's happening to Mr....to little Ben? What's happening to him?
C	Ben he wants...he wants to get the bee away from Lad.
Mrs M	Yes, maybe that's a good idea! He didn't want poor Lad to be stung so he said; <i>Come, Mr. Bee, come! Rather chase me!</i> Who else has got an idea about that? Glen?
Glen	Lad is running away from the bee.
Mrs M	Lad's running away from the bee and what do we do when a bee comes?
Glen	I don't know.
C	We stand still then uhm the bee goes away then we won.
C	No! He's gonna <b>stung</b> you!
Mrs M	Right, you wait for the bee to go away.
C	You know what I just do? I run and I take my knife out and then I kill him!
Mrs M	Woah! But we...hopefully we don't carry knives?!
C	That's God's creatures! We don't kill God's creatures!?
Mrs M	Right, everybody turn over. Everybody together now, please.
C	Starts reading: <i>Help me Dad...</i>
Mrs M	Let's just...sorry, Mr Mitchell, one minute, let's do it together quickly. <i>Help me...together, come on.</i>
Mrs M/Cs	<i>Help me, Dad. Stop me! I can stop you but not...</i>
Mrs M	<i>But?</i>
Cs	<i>But I can't stop Lad.</i>
Mrs M	Turn over. Right, boys, close your books...
C	Barks??
Mrs M	And what I'd like you to do...are you listening? We're going to swop books very carefully. Say good morning Mr Mitchell
Cs	Good morning Mr Mitchell.
End 21:36	<i>Teacher leaves group and pays attention to visitor.</i>

3. Mrs Samuels strong group April 2010 A42

Start 00:00:46	Audio Oakhill 1 A42 [Yellow group]
<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Verbal exchange</b>
Mrs S	Okay. Go to page twenty. It's a two and a zero. [Sound of pages turning].
Mrs S	Shshshsh. Page twenty.
C	I'm first here. I'm first here. I was first.
C	I was second!
C	I...I was third.
Mrs S	Right, do you wAngie start here? Let's go. Shhh! Follow now, please?
C	Mrs Samuels? [Mumbles]
Mrs S	I can't hear you at all. Please start again. Shht! Please be quiet. [Reads] <i>Here is...?</i>
Cs	[Shuffling, mumbling].
C	Where are we Mrs Samuels? To the station?
C	Huh-uh! Here!
C	<i>Bunny rabbits. I'm a pretty big ball of...</i>
Mrs S	Look at this one.
C	Uh-uh, you passed it!
Mrs S	Candace, sit there, fold your legs...
C	Mrs Samuels! [Indistinct]
Mrs S	There. Can't you read loud? Try. Sizopho? Shht!
Mrs S/C	[Read together. Child reading very softly]: <i>This ...the one... this is the one...we ...we</i>
Mrs S	Okay, next one? Follow now, hey?
C	<i>Peter and [indistinct] he wants a rabbit.</i>
Mrs S	Please follow!
C	Hi-hee!
Mrs S	There! I showed you! Yes! <i>Into...?</i>
C	<i>Into the shop. We went ...</i>
Mrs S	<i>That ...</i>
C	<i>That...[pause]</i>
Cs	[Talking, reading individually].
C	Mrs Samuels?
Mrs S	Yes?
C	[Mumbles].
Mrs S	It's fine. Carry on.
C	I made the [indistinct] this way!
Mrs S	Just carry on. I'll fix it just now. [Recorder being moved around].
Mrs S	<i>Rabbit...</i>
Mrs S/C	Read together: <i>Says...</i>
C	[Continues reading. Very soft and indistinct].
Mrs S	Candace, you must leave that and you follow in the reading book, my baby!
C	Mrs Samuels!
Mrs S	<i>That.</i>
C	<i>That ... one ...</i>
C	Mrs Samuels!
Mrs S	<i>Please</i>
C	<i>Please... here...</i>
C	Stop it Kieran!
Mrs v/dM	Sam, where are the pictures of Jonah?
Mrs S	No, they must draw their own picture.
Mrs S	<i>You said...</i>
C	<i>Here... [pauses]</i>
Mrs S	[Helps child]: <i>It?</i>
C	<i>It is.</i>
Mrs S	Okay, next one? You! [Turning of pages, shuffling, constant talking].
C	[Very softly] <i>Jane and Peter like to help Mummy...</i> [indistinct]
Mrs S	[Busy tending to another group of children]. Look for a pencil!



C	Mrs Samuels? [Indistinct].
Mrs S	You know what? I'm not even gonna talk to you! You weren't listening
C	[Still reading from book].
Mrs S	You are one of the kids not listening! So now,... Go and get your book!
C	What does it do?
Mrs S	Breaking the spine.
C	<i>Come on, Peter...</i>
C	What's a spine?
Mrs S	<i>Says...?</i>
C	<i>Says ...</i> [reading softly, indistinctly].
Mrs S	<i>Fish shop!</i>
C	<i>Yes, says Jane. It...</i>
Mrs S	<i>Helps...</i>
C	<i>Mom...</i>
Mrs S	<i>Mommy...Mommy...</i> look at it. Look at the words here at the bottom.
Cs	Say word individually: <i>Mommy</i> .
Mrs S/Cs	[Read together] <i>Help</i> and <i>mommy</i> .
C	No it's not [Indistinct].
Mrs S	Right, let's look at the next page.
C	Siya!
C	<i>Peter and Jane like to help...Daddy...</i>
C	Helps C reading: <i>They! They help Daddy.</i>
Mrs S	Nick?
Nick	[Indistinct] is reading with me.
Mrs S	Okay, we're gonna help you! We all help you. Let's go.
C	Yes!
C	I helped you with <i>Daddy</i> .
C	He didn't do it!
Mrs S	Shh! Just let him read [Indistinct]. <i>They help...?</i>
Nick	What?
Mrs S	<i>They help...?</i>
Nick	<i>They help Daddy...</i> [pauses]
Mrs S	<i>The...</i>
Nick	<i>The... the...</i>
Mrs S	<i>Car</i> . Look, help him with the car! Look at the picture.
Nick	<i>Car...Jane...</i>
C	Mrs Samuels?
Nick	<i>Jane is in the car ...</i>
Mrs S	Okay? <i>Daddy...?</i>
Nick	<i>Daddy and Peter ... are...</i>
Mrs S	<i>Have...</i>
Mrs S/ Nick	[Mrs S helping Nick]: <i>Some Peter...likes ...to play with ... water.</i>
Mrs S	Look at the picture. It helps you, see?
Nick	<i>I like to...</i>
Mrs S	Uh-uh, go back!
Mrs S/ Nick	<i>I like to...</i>
Mrs S	Uh-uh, go back! <i>I like it!</i>
Nick	<i>It... helps...</i>
C	Helps Nick: <i>He ...</i>
Nick	<i>He...</i>
Mrs S	<i>Says ...</i>
Nick	<i>He says... it is fun.</i>
Mrs S	Now you must follow, please, Candace!
C	Are we on this page? Are we on this page?
Mrs S	I'll ask [indistinct]. No, [Indistinct]. Okay, Candace? Let's go.
C	[Moaning].
Cs	[Shuffling around].
Candace	<i>Here they get...</i>
Mrs S	<i>Go...Here they go.</i>
Candace	<i>Here they go... in the park...</i>
C	[Helps Candace read].

Candace	<i>Daddy...sss...says...</i>
Mrs S	[Corrects Candace] <i>Is ...</i>
Candace	<i>is in ...the car...car...</i>
Mrs S	Okay, you know what? Right back to the beginning...beginning of the book. Look what you did to my book! You mustn't go like that with it. Right back to the beginning!
C	Where?
Mrs S	Right back to the beginning.
C	The first one?
Mrs S	Hey?
C	The first... here?
Mrs S	Page number four! Let's go! You go first.
C	I got first one! Mrs Samuels?
C	I was first!
C	You have to start again!
Cs	[Talking amongst each other - rowdy].
C	[Sings] <i>Bah-beeh-bah-beeh...</i>
C	Don't do that [Indistinct].
Mrs S	Shh!
C	[Indistinct]... says Peter, it is fun. Peter likes...
Mrs S	'Kay. Pat!
C	Pat [indistinct] want to play.
Mrs S	Okay, stop! Right, then look here. Look at the Weak of your page. What words do you have there?
C	Play.
Mrs S	Play and?
Cs	Play and up.
Mrs S	Okay, Khazimla, next?
Khazimla/Cs helping	<i>Jane and Peter likes to play...here the car...</i>
C	Mrs Samuels? I'll read...this one?
C	What's that?
C	I don't know
C	[Reads. Softly].
C	Khazimla! You're in the wrong place!
Mrs S	Shht!
Cs	[Reading individually].
Mrs S	Here we go... go ...
Mrs S/C reading	<i>Down...up and down...up and down we go</i>
Mrs S	Okay, Savu, you're next. Read please?
C	No it's Sinovuyo!
Mrs S	Read, Sinovuyo.
Sino	<i>Jane and Peter... Jane and Peter play in the water. They like to play on the boat. Come on says Peter, come on the boat...come and play...</i>
C	[Helping Sino to read some words].
Sino	Don't tell me! [Continues reading] <i>Jane up... Jane up here...</i>
C	Excuse me... [shuffling noises around recorder].
C	Don't mess that...
Sino	<i>Dad is in the water...</i>
C	[Squealing in background].
Sino	<i>And Peter is in the boat.</i>
Mrs S	Good CJ, good Siya! I like the way you're working! Just cut around it.
Sino	<i>Here...here...</i>
C	Mrs Samuels?
Mrs S	Okay, Nick! Can I have that book? I want you to stay with me after they've finished, okay? Okay? Go.
Cs	[Very rowdy].
Sino	<i>Look at ... Peter...</i>
Mrs S	[Talking to other group. Indistinct]. Okay, did I not explain that part, now I feel bad! Okay, children! You must cut around your whale! It's part of your picture! It's what I've told you just now. You cut around it, you stick it in! You draw a Jonah, and then you draw the sea!
C	Must we draw Jonah?
Mrs S	Yes! Okay, Candace go!
C	I can't draw Jonah.

Candace	<i>Look at me says Peter, look at me, Jane. Look at me in the boat. Come on the ... come on...he says. Come and play in the... in the boat, Jane, come on Pat.</i>
Mrs S	Good girl! Xolisa? Shh-shh-shh! On the next open page! Okay, Xolisa.
Xolisa	<i>I want... I want... I want a cake please, says Peter, a cake for me.</i>
Mrs S	Jade! Shht!
Xolisa	<i>Here is ...</i>
Mrs S	Ntosh, you're working nicely, thank you!
Xolisa	<i>Here are some cake ...some cake for ... I like cake and you like cake.</i>
Mrs S	Siya, well done!
C	<i>Here is the station. Peter... Peter and Jane are at the station. They like the station. The ...train...comes in and look at this...says Peter, the train...I like trains...he says</i>
Mrs S	Trains.. Okay, next one?
C	<i>Peter likes to play with toys. He plays with the toy station and toy train. Jane says... please can I play... please can I play with you. Yes says Peter...I have a train...the train. You play with the station.</i>
Mrs S	Good boy. 'Kay.
Cs	[Rowdy - talking individually].
C	<i>Here is here is the shop... Peter and Jane look...at...</i>
C	[Making noises].
Mrs S	Lusiba!
C	<i>Peter...Peter and Jane look...at...the...</i>
Mrs S	[Corrects reading child] <b>Dance.</b> Nick! You should be following in your...oh no, you don't have a book. Sorry. [Laughs] Carry on.
C	Naaathaaan!
Mrs S	<i>This...</i>
C	<i>This look...</i>
Mrs S	No, <i>they.</i> Sorry, <i>they.</i>
C	<i>They look at the rabbit.</i>
Mrs S	<i>Rabbits.</i>
C	<i>Rabbits. Look at ... [pauses]</i>
Mrs S	<i>This...</i>
C	<i>This...</i>
Mrs S	<i>One...</i>
C	<i>One...</i>
Mrs S	<i>Says...</i>
C	<i>Says Peter.</i>
Mrs S	<i>This...</i>
C/Mrs S and Cs helping	<i>This is ... the one we want. Yes this is the one we want.</i>
Mrs S	[Says to another child]. No take it back! 'Kay. Right, put those books away. Here... Finished? Sorry. [Continues reading] <i>This...</i>
C	<i>This rabbit.</i>
Mrs S	Sizwe? Xoliswa? Hlati? Sibul... Kamlesh, Chad...
C	No man!
Mrs S	Candace. Put those books away please? Take out [Indistinct]. <i>Smook phonics.</i>
C	Where were we?
Cs	Talking independently
Mrs S	Don't talk to him...[Indistinct]. Candace?
C	What page?
C	[Speaking in IsiXhoza].
Mrs S	I want you to go to page eleven. It's a one and one. And I want you to watch how I follow, all the time. This is how you need to follow when someone else reads. 'Kay? Put your finger here, like that, under the gap...
C	Dah-dah-dah-dah-dah...
Cs	[Speaking isiXhoza and English].
C	Is this a <i>d</i> ?
Mrs S	A <i>g</i> ! Page eleven.
Cs	[Reading individually].
Mrs S	Okay, let's go?
Mrs S/Cs	[Spell word out together] <i>G...</i>
Mrs S	Let's wait for Candace.
C	Chi! People lost one...[starts speaking isiXhoza].
Mrs S	Now you point as someone reads. You follow with them! Good, Ntosh, I'm going to give you

	another tick! Good boy.
C	Tick? How many ticks does he have?
Cs	[Reading individually].
Mrs S	Kay, you ready? Sa...eh, Sizwe, thank you! Let's go.
Mrs S/Cs	[Spell together] <i>G-D-F-H-A-N-E-P-S-A</i>
Mrs S	Let's go.
Mrs S/CS	[Read together] <i>I-have-a-pen-</i>
Mrs S	<i>Pen? The...?</i>
Mrs S/Cs	<i>As-a-pen.</i>
Mrs S	Sound it.
Mrs S/Cs	<i>P-e-n. Pen. Dad has a dog. I have a can for the dog. Pat has a cat. I have a pot for the cat.</i>
Cs	<i>Come feed the pen hen.</i>
Mrs S	<i>Pen-hen</i>
C	Pen-hen rhymes!
Mrs S	No, no! Stop! Read that again. Second last one?
Mrs S/Cs	[Read together]. <i>Come to the can-dog. Come to the card-cat</i>
Mrs S	And the word?
Mrs S/Cs	<i>For have the bring ... the bring have the ...</i>
Mrs S	Kieran! Right, page twelve. Who said you could pack away?
C	[Giggles].
Mrs S	I didn't say pack away?!
C	Cele, the last one.
Mrs S	Page twelve. She just does what she wants to.
C	Yes, 'cause she's tired.
Mrs S	Page twelve.
C	There's page twelve.
C	[Giggles].
Mrs S/Cs	[Spell together] <i>F-G-F-H-D-S-N-E-A-T-P-K.</i> [Read together] <i>Mom has a pen for Pat. Come Pat come see the pen.</i>
Mrs S	Stop! Xolisa just point where we are? <i>Mom...</i> under <i>Mom. Mom!</i> There.
Mrs S/Cs	<i>Mom has a pen for Pam.</i>
Mrs S	Okay, do the next one please? No, she must read. Read it. This one.
C	<i>Come see... the...</i>
Mrs S	The same word.
C	<i>Come Sam come.</i>
Mrs S	Okay, carry on.
Mrs S/ Cs	<i>Come Sam. See the fan. Bring the pen Pat, bring the fan Sam.</i>
Mrs S	Okay, let's just go, point <i>pen. Pen.</i> Point to <i>pen</i> on the second last sentence. Point to it. Let's sound it. Sound it.
Cs	<i>P-e-</i>
Mrs S	Everybody!
Cs	<i>P-e-n. Pen.</i>
Mrs S	<i>Pen, not penne. Pen.</i> Okay? Right, close.
	[Sound of books closing. Shuffling noise].
Mrs S	This is mine.
Cs	[Talking individually].
C	Uh-uh...I waaannnt! Is it okay we can go now?
Mrs S	Nick, I want you here. You can go. Go pack away.
C	Pack away, pack away!
C	I wAngie pack this away.
Mrs S	Nick, come! I want you. You can go pack away in your bags. Uhm, Kamlesh? Pack in your bag. Kamlesh! In your bag! Mandla ! In your bag!
Cs	[Shuffling, talking, coughing, noisy].
Mrs S	Read this for me.
Eben	<i>Peter and...</i>
Mrs S	Is that <i>Peter</i> ?
Eben	I mean <i>Ben and Lad...</i>
Mrs S	Good boy.
Eben	<i>Ben can run.</i>
Mrs S	Good!
C	We don't have that picture!
Eben	<i>Look we can run. We can run like this.</i>

Mrs S	That's good!
Eben	<i>Yes...</i>
Mrs S	Just hang on... Cetu! You can draw your own picture!
Cetu	Draw my own picture?
Mrs .S	Yes.
Nick	<i>Yes ...</i>
Mrs S	Sound it. It's okay. You can stick it in. Hey? It's <i>b, beh!</i>
Nick	<i>But...</i>
Mrs S	Look at the <i>b</i> .
Nick	Reads: <i>b... but here...</i>
Mrs S	[Says to another child] Now where's Jonah? Where's the other sentence? Go write it properly! [Back to Nick]: <i>B?</i> Let's go back here.
Nick	<i>But ... not here.</i>
Mrs S	We must read this book again today.
Nick	<i>Come here Lad. Help... we can run, we can run fast. Come we run here? No ... Ben, no...</i>
Mrs S	[Sounds word] <i>N-o-t.</i>
Nick	<i>Not here. L-a-d ...Lad, not here...</i>
Mrs S	Thandi! You can [indistinct] and work here quietly.
Nick	[Still reading] <i>...but not here...</i>
Mrs S	[Says something to Thandi – Indistinct].
Nick	<i>Look lad, you can run here. Run, Lad...run fast.</i>
Mrs S	Good.
Cs	[Rowdy in background].
Nick	<i>Come here Ben. Come here Lad. I like Lad.</i>
Mrs S	Well done. I'm gonna give you this for today, hey?
End 00:27:33	Practise it at home. 'Kay?

## Appendix 8: tables of discourse analysis results

### 8.1 Naming and participants, all teachers

<b>Mrs Dean</b>		<b>Mrs Mitchell</b>		<b>Mrs Samuels</b>	
<i>Individual names</i>	186	<i>Individual names</i>	362	<i>Individual names</i>	92
Nicknames	23	(Reecie, Jess)	3	Cetu, Jaypee, Pele	
Noos; poopy noos	23	<i>No special group nickname</i>		<i>No special group nickname</i>	
Girl ...	24	Boys	47	Boy / girl 14+5	19
Good girl	15	Lovie, Love	23	Good boy / girl 11+5	16
Love	14	Well done	19	Well done	5
Clever girl	6	Good boy	14	You guys	4
Clever	3	Sweetie/ Sweetie pie	3	kids	1
Well done	3	Boytjies	2	Baby	1
Angels	2	Darling	1	My boy	1
Baby	1			Love	0
Darling	0			Sweetie	0
<b>Participantss to do with reading</b>		<b>Participants to do with reading</b>		<b>Participants to do with reading</b>	
Word	69	Book	73	Book	36
Book	26	Page	56	Page	36
page	14	Top	49	Word	36
Sentence	10	Number	43	work	22
work	10	Word	39	Picture	17
mat	4	Ladder	22	Homework	11
Bottom	4	Bottom	21	full stop	8
End	4	Story	20	Top	7
Homework	4	work	11	(a) sound	7
Picture	3	End	8	End	6
Bag	3	Diary/ies	8	comma	5
Number	2	vowel	5	Bag	5
Top	2	Chance	4	Sentence	4

vowel	2	full stop	4	Story	3
(a) sound (others are processes)	2	Picture	3	Bottom	2
full stop	1	Bag	3	Diary/ies	1
Ladder	1	Beginning	3	Beginning	1
Chance	0	Homework	2	Chance	1
Comma	0	(a) sound (others are processes)	2	Number	1
wall	0	Gold	2	Gold	0
Diary/ies	0	silver	2	silver	0
Story	0	Sentence	2	Ladder	0
Reader (book)	0	Reader (book)	1	Reader (book)	0
Beginning	0	star	1	star	0
		Comma	0	vowel	0
<b>Participants to do with bodies</b>		<b>Participants to do with bodies</b>		<b>Participants to do with bodies</b>	
voice	2	hand	28	breath	4
Finger/s	1	Finger/s	17	hand	3
hand	1	breath	5	Finger/s	1
Ear/s	1	Ear/s	4	Ear/s	0
breath	0	voice	1	voice	
<b>Deictic forms</b>		<b>Deictic forms</b>		<b>Deictic forms</b>	
here	74	that	107	that	110
that	69	here	74	here	103
this	63	there	44	this	79
there	27	this	40	there	45
this one	23	these	7	these	15
these	7	those	6	next one	10
those	5	this one	8	this one	7
next one	0	next one	1	those	3
<b>Environment names</b>		<b>Environment names</b>		<b>Environment names</b>	
Fairy e		Fairy e		Mat lines	
Grow good mat		Vowel man		Criss cross	
Hook and look		Waxies			
Orange books					
Orange / red words					

## Appendix 8.2: Processes for teachers in order of use and grouped in processes

Mrs Dean – processes for teacher			Mrs Mitchell – processes for teacher			Mrs Samuels processes for teacher		
I want you to; to see; to play; to be with	Relational	11	I am going to ask/ can I ask you ...	Verbal	24	I want to see you follow; I want you to; I want to show	Relational	13
Let me sort/ find / see	Material	6	I'm sorry	Existential	21	I think	Mental	5
(I'm) sorry	Existential/ Rel?	3	I want; didn't want us; What I do want; I just want	Relational	14	(I'm) sorry	Existential /Rel	4
I know	Mental	3	I have; can I have	Existential	8	I'm going to give	Material	4
I can pop them away	Material	3	Can I have (= X to read )	Relational?	8	hear	Behav (m/m)	4
I'll be with you	Existential	3	I am proud	Existential	8	I'm going to ask / not asking	Verbal	3
I'd like NB: modal – I would	Existential	2	I say/going to say/have said ..	Verbal	6	I'm going to get	Material	3
I need you =come to Mat	Relational	2	I know	Mental	4	I like	Existential	2
I love (you)	Mental? Rel?	2	I think	Mental	4	I know ... I know you can	Mental	2
I'm busy	Existential	2	I'm going to give	Material	4	Say (I didn't say)	Verbal	2
I think	Mental	1	Let me hear	Behav (m/m)	4	I told	Verbal	2
I didn't hear	Behav m/m	1	I see	Material	4	I'm going to show	Material	2
I see	Material	1	I like, don't like	Existential	3	What I'm going to do	Material	2
I forgot	Mental	1	I will tell you	Verbal	3	I'm working	Material	2
I bet you	Material/ Rel	1	I'll give you	Relational ?	3	Gonna choose (you)	Behav (m/m)	1
I will tell (Mommy)	Verbal	1	I beg your pardon	Relational	3	I see	Material	1
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>43</b>	I'm going to make	Material	2	I'm looking	Behav (m/m)	1
			Let me help	Relational	2	I did not explain	Verbal	1
			I need	Existential	1	I feel bad	Existential	1
			I'm going to choose	Behav (m/m)	1	I wonder	Mental	1
			I have done	Material	1	I follow	Behav (m/m)	1
			I have written	Verbal	1	I'm going to use	<b>Material?</b>	1



			I'll move it like this ...	Material	1		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>
			Can I put ...	Material	1			
			I apologise	Relational	1			
			I am waiting	Relational	1			
			I am so pleased	Existential	1			
			I'm listening	Material	1			
			I am watching you(threat)	Relational	1			
			I preferred	Mental	1			
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>137</b>			

Mrs Dean processes for teacher			%	Mrs Mitchell processes for teacher			%	Mrs Samuels processes for teacher			%
I didn't hear	Behav m/m	1	<b>2</b>	Let me hear	Behav (m/m)	4	<b>4</b>	Hear	Behav (m/m)	4	<b>12</b>
I'll be with you	Existential	3		I'm going to choose	Behav (m/m)	1		Gonna choose (you)	Behav (m/m)	1	
I'd like (modal – I would)	Existential	2	<b>23</b>	I'm sorry	Existential	21	<b>30</b>	I'm looking	Behav (m/m)	1	
I'm busy	Existential	2		I have; can I have	Existential	8		I follow	Behav (m/m)	1	
(I'm) sorry	Existential	3		I am proud	Existential	8		(I'm) sorry	Existential	4	
Let me sort/ find see	Material	6	<b>23</b>	I like, don't like	Existential	3	<b>10</b>	I like	Existential	2	<b>12</b>
I can pop them away	Material	3		I need	Existential	1		I feel bad	Existential	1	
I see	Material	1		I am so pleased	Existential	1		I'm going to give	Material	4	
I forgot	Mental	1	<b>16</b>	I'm going to give	Material	4	<b>27</b>	I'm going to get	Material	3	
I know	Mental	3		I see	Material	4		I'm going to show	Material	2	
I love (you)	Mental	2		I'm going to make	Material	2		What I'm going to do	Material	2	
I think	Mental	1		I have done	Material	1		I'm working	Material	2	
I want you to; to see; to play; to be with	Relational	11	<b>32</b>	I'll move it like this ...	Material	1	<b>6</b>	I see	Material	1	<b>14</b>
I need you =come to Mat	Relational	2		Can I put ...	Material	1		I'm going to use	Material?	1	
I bet you	Relational	1		I'm listening	Material	1		I think	Mental	5	
I will tell (Mommy)	Verbal	1	<b>2</b>	I know	Mental	4	I know ... I know you can	Mental	2		
				I think	Mental	4	I wonder	Mental	1		
				I preferred	Mental	1	I want to see; I want you to; I want to show ...	Relational	13	<b>22</b>	
				I want; didn't want; What I do want is; I just want	Relational	14	<b>24</b>	I'm going to ask / I'm not asking	Verbal	3	<b>14</b>
				I beg your pardon	Relational	3		Say (I didn't say)	Verbal	2	
				Let me help	Relational	2		I told	Verbal	2	
				I apologise	Relational	1		I did not explain	Verbal	1	
				I am waiting	Relational	1					
				I'll give you	Relational ?	3					
				I am watching you(threat)	Relational	1					
				Can I have (= X to read )	Relational?	8					
				I am going to ask/ can I ask	Verbal	24	<b>24</b>				
				I say/going to say/have said ..	Verbal	6					
				I will tell you	Verbal	3					
				I have written	Verbal	1					

**Appendix 8.3.1 Transitivity analysis for children all processes.\_Comparative table by frequency. Italicised processes are used by more than one teacher**

<b>Mrs D for children</b>			<b>Mrs M for children</b>			<b>Mrs S for children</b>		
<i>Okay</i>	<i>Relational</i>	52	<i>Right</i>	<i>Relational</i>	144	<i>Okay</i>	<i>Relational</i>	93
<i>Read</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	50	<i>What can you do? Doing it</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	60	<i>Read it / you're going to read it / just read</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	65
<i>Do it / do your work</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	38	<i>(let's) go, go to (ladder)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	58	<i>Good (you are/ it is )</i>	<i>Relational</i>	64
<i>Got / have (= possess)</i>	<i>Relational</i>	28	<i>See (can you see)... you see? (marker) See if ...</i>	<i>Material</i>		<i>Look at (words) must look</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	58
<i>Shush! Ssh ...</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	27	<i>Put books away/your finger on/down/up hands</i>	<i>Material</i>	44	<i>Go = start reading</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	57
<i>Put away/ down/back</i>	<i>Material</i>	26	<i>Got = possess.</i>	<i>Material</i>	42	<i>Sshh... Ssht!</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	42
<i>Come (= pay attention)</i>	<i>Behav.(m/m)</i>	24	<i>Carry on</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	42	<i>Going to have / You've got</i>	<i>Relational</i>	30
<i>Go = start reading</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	23	<i>Read</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	41	<i>Who knows ..</i>	<i>Mental</i>	28
<i>Sound (words)</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	22	<i>Say =pronounce; say =speak</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	39	<i>Follow/following</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	26
<i>Look (less than S)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	46	<i>Stop</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	39	<i>Help (other child) Don't help</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	25
<i>Good / great</i>	<i>Relational</i>	17	<i>Good</i>	<i>Relational</i>	35	<i>Come =pay attention. Also come here; Come in a little bit</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	24
<i>Make (sentence)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	17	<i>Stop (reading)</i>	<i>Material</i>	33	<i>Put (books away)</i>	<i>Material</i>	22
<i>Sit ... nicely ... here</i>	<i>Material</i>	14	<i>Look at words/ Look at me</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	29	<i>Sound it</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	20
<i>What do you think</i>	<i>Mental</i>	14	<i>Come (= pay attention)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	27	<i>What do you think ...</i>	<i>Mental</i>	19
<i>Do you know?</i>	<i>Mental</i>	12				<i>Take it/ a book/a breath</i>	<i>Material</i>	18
<i>Say</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	12	<i>Sit outside/flat/smartly</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	22	<i>Go and stick; go to page Also go = leave. Don't go.</i>	<i>Material</i>	17
<i>Choose</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	11	<i>Turn (over page)</i>	<i>Material</i>	22	<i>sit there/ flat/up/come sit</i>	<i>Material</i>	16
<i>Change (books)</i>	<i>Material</i>	11	<i>Start (reading)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	21	<i>Stop... must stop</i>	<i>Material</i>	15
<i>Start</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	10	<i>Find</i>	<i>Material</i>	19	<i>Go back</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	14
<i>Like ... do you like</i>	<i>Mental</i>	10	<i>Ssh-ssh</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	18	<i>Like</i>	<i>Mental</i>	14
<i>Like – like this</i>		9	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	18	<i>Remember</i>	<i>Mental</i>	12
<i>See</i>	<i>Material</i>	9	<i>Give me/other / yourself,</i>	<i>Material</i>	17	<i>Right / you are right</i>	<i>Relational</i>	12
<i>Go back / move back</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	8	<i>Okay</i>	<i>Relational</i>	16	<i>Carry on</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	10

Wait / hang on	Behav.	8	Do you know; Who knows	Mental	16	Stop	Behav.	9
(be) ready	Behav. (m/m)	7	Who can tell; can you tell me; tell me; tell = read	Verbal	15	Point (to word)	Material	9
Play	Behav.	7	Wait	Behav.	14	Leave	Behav.	8
Work (imperatives)	Behav. (m/m)	6	Why/what do you think	Mental	14	Say (What does IT say)	Verbal	8
Need, need (to tiptoe)	Relational	6	Take out, take (books)	Material	13	Pack / go pack	Material	8
Take	Material	6	Get = obtain	Material	12	Wait	Behav.	7
Great = good	Relational	4	Move back/that way	Material	12	Get = obtain	Material	7
Stop (not reading)	Behav.	4	Make	Material	12	Wait	Behav.	6
Go sit /away	Material	4	Help (other child)	Behav.	11	Start	Behav. (m/m)	5
Stop talking, sharpening	Material	4						
Remember	Mental	4	Hear	Behav. (m/m)	11	Find	Material	5
Show	Material	4				Can play	Behav.	5
Use	Material	4	Try	Behav.	10	Listen/ not listening = attend	Mental	5
Walk (word wall)	Material	4	Point (to word)	Material	10	Work	Behav. (m/m)	4
Borrow	Material	4	Close (books)	Material	10	(be) ready	Behav. (m/m)	3
Wait	Behav.	3	Listen / listening	Mental	9	Open	Material	3
Get it = understand	Mental	3	Follow/ following	Behav. (m/m)	8	Stand	Material	2
Try	Behav.	3	Open	Material	8	Move back/ a little bit back;	Material	2
Build sentence/ word	Material	3	Swop (books)	Material	8	Mustn't shout (at me)	Relational	1
Carry on	Behav. (m/m)	2	Off you go, Go and sit	Material	7	Close	Material	1
Leave	Behav.	2	Share	Relational	7	Break it up (a word)	Behav. (m/m)	1
Find	Material	2	Pass (books)	Material	6	Stay flat	Material	1
Stand	Material	2	Be careful	Behav.	5		TOTAL	
Finished	Behav. (m/m)	2	(be) ready	Behav. (m/m)	5			
Cool = good	Relational	2	Fold (page) arms / page	Material	5			
Get out of my circle	Material	2	Fit in (the reading circle)	Material	5			
Cover (part of a word)	Material	2	Leave	Behav.	4			
Open (bags)	Material	1	Go back	Behav. (m/m)	4			
Be careful	Behav.	1	Choose	Behav. (m/m)	4			
Tell	Verbal	1	Break it up (a word)	Behav. (m/m)	4			
Win	Material	1	Keep	Material	4			
Shake	Material	1	Breathe in ... out	Material	4			
Don't get worried - Gem	Relational	1	Remember	Mental	4			

Pop word into sentence	Behav. (m/m)	1	<i>Like</i>	<i>Mental</i>	4		
(Are you) stuck	Behav. (m/m)	1	Practice	Behav. (m/m)	3		
Guess	Mental	1	Have a chance	Existential	3		
Pick up	Material	1	Rub (ears) – brain gym	Material	3		
Hurry	Material	1	<i>Need (a letter)</i>	<i>Relational</i>	3		
Come (literal)	Material	1	<i>Don't shout (reading)</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	2		
	TOTAL		Spell me	Behav. (m/m)	1		
			Be kind	Existential	1		
			Shake fingers – brain gym	Material	1		
			Fix (your voice)	Material	1		
			Lose (a star)	Material	1		
			Cross (legs)	Material	1		
			Hurry	Material	1		
			Forgotten	Mental	1		

**Appendix 8.3.2 Comparative table of transitivity by process. Italicised processes are used by more than one teacher.**

<b>Mrs D For children</b>			<b>%</b>	<b>Mrs M for children</b>			<b>%</b>	<b>Mrs S for children</b>			<b>%</b>
<i>Shush! Ssh ...</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	27	<b>7%</b>	<i>Stop</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	38	<b>10%</b>	<i>Sshh... Ssht!</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	42	<b>12%</b>
<i>Wait / hang on</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	8		<i>Sit outside/flat/smarty</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	22		<i>Help (other child)</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	25	
<i>Play</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	7		<i>Ssh-ssh</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	18		<i>Stop</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	9	
<i>Stop ( not reading)</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	4		<i>Wait</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	14		<i>Leave</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	8	
<i>Wait</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	3		<i>Help (other child)</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	11		<i>Wait</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	7	
<i>Try</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	3		<i>Try</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	10		<i>Play</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	5	
<i>Leave</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	2		<i>Be careful</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	5		<i>Read</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	65	
<i>Be careful</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	1		<i>Leave</i>	<i>Behav.</i>	4		<i>Look at (words) must look</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	58	
<i>Read</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	50	<b>29%</b>	<i>Do (it)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	60	<b>27%</b>	<i>Go = start reading</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	57	<b>32%</b>
<i>Do it / do your work</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	39		<i>(let's) go, go to (ladder)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	58		<i>Follow/ following</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	26	
<i>Go =start reading</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	23		<i>Carry on</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	41		<i>Come = pay attention.</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	14	
<i>Come = pay attention</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	25		<i>Read</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	39		<i>Go back</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	14	
<i>Look (less than S)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	18		<i>Look at</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	29		<i>Carry on</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	10	
<i>Make (sentence)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	17		<i>Come (= pay attention)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	27		<i>Go = read</i>	<i>Behav.(m/m)</i>	5	
<i>Choose</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	11						<i>Start</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	5	
<i>Start</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	10		<i>Start (reading)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	21		<i>Work</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	4	
<i>Go back</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	8		<i>Hear</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	11		<i>(be) ready</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	3	
<i>(be) ready</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	7		<i>Follow/ following</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	8		<i>Break it up (a word)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	1	
<i>Work (imperatives)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	6		<i>(be) ready</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	5		<i>Put (books away)</i>	<i>Material</i>	22	
<i>Carry on</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	2		<i>Choose</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	4		<i>Take it/ a book/a breath</i>	<i>Material</i>	18	
<i>Finished</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	2		<i>Break it up (a word)</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	4		<i>Stop... must stop</i>	<i>Material</i>	15	
<i>Pop word into sentence</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	1		<i>Practice</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	3		<i>Sit there/ flat/up/come sit</i>	<i>Material</i>	16	
<i>(Are you) stuck</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	1		<i>Go back</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	4		<i>Go (literal)</i>	<i>Material</i>	12	
<i>Put away/ down/back</i>	<i>Material</i>	26		<i>Spell me</i>	<i>Behav. (m/m)</i>	1		<i>Come (literal)</i>	<i>Material</i>	10	
<i>Sit ... nicely ... here</i>	<i>Material</i>	14	<i>Have a chance</i>	Existential	3	<i>Point (to word)</i>	<i>Material</i>	9			
<i>Change (books)</i>	<i>Material</i>	11	<i>Be kind</i>	Existential	1	<i>Pack / go pack</i>	<i>Material</i>	8			
<i>See</i>	<i>Material</i>	9	<i>See (can you see)... you see?</i>	<i>Material</i>	44	<i>Get = obtain</i>	<i>Material</i>	7			



Cool = good	Relational	2		<i>Like</i>	<i>Mental</i>	4				
Don't get worried	Relational	1		Forgotten	Mental	1				
<i>Sound (words)</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	22	<b>5%</b>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Relational</i>	210	<b>23%</b>			
<i>Say</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	12		<i>Good</i>	<i>Relational</i>	35				
<i>Tell</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	1		<i>Okay</i>	<i>Relational</i>	16				
				Share	Relational	7				
				<i>Need (a letter)</i>	<i>Relational</i>	3				
				<i>Say = pronounce /speak</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	39	<b>6%</b>			
				<i>Sound</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	18				
				<i>tell; tell = read</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	15				
				<i>Don't shout (reading)</i>	<i>Verbal</i>	2				



**Appendix 8.4 Statistics for other language items: modality, conventional politeness, question tags, pronouns, adverbs**

<b>Negatives TOTAL= 65</b>	<b>19 no 23 not 19 don't 4 stop</b>		<b>Negatives TOTAL = 104</b>	<b>28 no; 33 not 5 don't 38 Stop</b>		<b>Negatives TOTAL = 94 = 12%</b>	<b>47 no 23 not 15 don't 9 stop</b>	
<b>Group identities</b>								
Everyone	Least likely to construct a group ID – reading as a matter between her and the individual	0	Everyone	Strongest construction of children as a group: also most present in it. Wide range to construct group.	0	Everyone	Moderate construction of group based on we and let's	2
All (not of group)		0	All		39	All		13
Everybody		0	Everybody		38	Everybody		5
We		27	We		78	We		19
Us		2	Us		5	Us		3
Our		10	Our		14	Our		0
Let's		13	Let's		69	Let's		46
Together		10	Together		19	Together		3
<b>Other pronouns</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>		<b>262</b>			<b>91</b>	
You/ you're/ your (sing)		251	You/ you're/ your (sing)		222	You/ you're/ your (sing)		224
You/ you're/ your (pl)		27	You/ you're/ your (pl)		225	You/ you're/ your (pl)		59
	<b>Total</b>	<b>278</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>283</b>
I	Inserts herself strongly into the group	42	I	Strongly present in the group	95	I	Least strongly into the group	51
I'll		4	I'll		7	I'll		3
I'm		10	I'm		37	I'm		22
Me		52	Me		66	Me		10
my		16	My		16	My		10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>		<b>221</b>			<b>94</b>	
Own (his/ your own – constructing individual)		2			10			8
<b>he, she, it, they usually refer to characters in the texts Mrs D – none Mrs M – 5 he referring to boys; 4 they referring to boys. Mrs S – 3 he; 0 she; 0 they</b>								
<b>QUESTIONS</b>								
What		60	What		95	What		72

Why		19	Why		7	Why		15
How		7	How		9	How		10
Where (of pictures rather than text)		16	Where (of pictures rather than text)		8	Where (of pictures rather than text)		14
Who (in text)		6	Who (in text)		2	Who (in text)		3
Does / do ...?	18 + 31 =	49		9 + 56 =	65		22 + 44 =	66
	<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>			<b>152</b>
<b>Modality and conventional politeness</b>								
Can		32	Can		153	Can		51
Could		3	Could		3	Could		3
Will		2	Will		6	Will		5
Would		4	Would		4	Would		3
Must		1	Must		7	Must		26
Have to		5	Have to		4	Have to		0
Need to		5	Need to		1	Need to		5
Should		4	Should		1	Should		4
Please		6	Please		24	Please		6
Thanks / thank you		12	Thanks / thank you		75	Thanks / thank you		7
<b>Adverbs and adjectives</b>								
Quick/ly		0	Quick/ly		50	Quick/ly		7
Fast		0	Fast		2	Fast		0
Now		23	Now		38	Now		24
Nice/ly		7	Nice/ly		8	Nice/ly		7
Quiet/ly		0	Quiet/ly		8	Quiet/ly		4
Ready		8	Ready		8	Ready		1
Good (never marker)		43	Good (never marker)		35	Good (never marker)		64
Clever		8	Clever		1	Clever		0
Little		19	Little		33	Little		7
Rude		0	Rude		5	Rude		0
Silly		0	Silly		1	Silly		1
Very		4	Very		30	Very		11
Wonderful		1	Smart/ly		5			
Fantastic		3	Better		5	Better		0
			Lovely		9	Lovely		3

			Again		19		
<b>Ambiguous words</b>							
Right as marker		3	Right as marker		66	Right as marker	16
Right as relational process		2	Right as relational process		144	Right as relational process	12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>			<b>210</b>		<b>28</b>
Okay as marker		39	Okay as marker		23	Okay as marker	36
Okay as relational process		52	Okay as relational process		16	Okay as relational process	93
	<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>			<b>39</b>		<b>129</b>

## Appendix 9: Nonverbal behaviour

Behavioural features of the postures (based on categories from McDermott et al. 1978, p. 259)

	<b>Posture ONE: ATTENDING</b>	<b>Posture TWO: TEACHING of group</b>	<b>Posture THREE: DIRECTING of individual</b>	<b>Posture FOUR: DISENGAGED</b>
<b>CONTEXT of the posture.</b>	Listening reading/observing reader. Monitoring /assessing.	Explaining texts / pictures. Questioning. Variations: 1. working with single words. 2. individual coaching vs group teaching (ignores Cs to side)	Enforcing behaviours. Signals disapproval.	Allowing/ approving. Signals relaxation.
<b>INDICATORS:</b>				
<b>TALK</b> – the degree to which the teacher consistently produces a particular kind of speech act	Child reader/ children in unison. Teacher assists by joining or leading. Mrs D allows silence.	Explanation and demonstration on text. Pointing to draw attention. Rhetorical and real questions. Repetition. Vocal variation.	Reprimand (very seldom) Mrs D and S not at all; M seldom. Use nonverbal to discipline and verbal to teach (D most, M least).	Little talk. This is where social conversation takes place. Relaxed face, smiles, nods.
<b>EXTERNAL BORDER WORK</b> – the degree to which teachers actively mark themselves off from others by gaze aversion, etc. G’s attention to others is discreet; M&S more public	Intense, but Mrs D: permeable to silent Cs who read over the shoulder. T is not unconscious of others, just appears to be.	Intense, to the extent of being unaware of outsiders rather than merely ignoring them.	Intense, until behaviours are at an acceptable level.	Weak border work: accepts outsiders openly and conducts conversations. M not. S and D signal that they are available for interaction. Even in this stage, M focuses on admin – not available to outsiders
<b>INTERNAL BORDER WORK</b> – the degree to which teachers have access to learners and resources. Approach. Touch.  Is the insistence on seating part of this?	Generally: established through seating at the beginning of RoM. The ability to see the child is prime. Touch draws attention. Mrs S: most emphatic with weakest. Careful not to obscure text. Mrs D handles books for Cs, not for herself. Blocks strategically.	Decreases distance by entering the middle of the circle with materials or body. Increased size of gestures (e.g.: Mrs D “our”, Mrs S: “broad” etc) High levels of touch of books, cards, children. S and M use pens/ pencils	Touch. Finger to lip. Head or finger shake. Movements may be abrupt or vigorous.  May deflect discipline onto seating – see Mrs S	Increases distance by leaning back, raising head OR bending over writing etc. Touch initiated by Cs – hand on shoulder (S, D) For Mrs D signals a “your choice” activity/ silent reading before pages to teacher

	Mrs S and Mrs M use pencils. S adept at demonstrating on text.			
<b>FOCUS</b> – the degree to which the teacher directs her head-eye orientation towards children.	Generally: intense, alert, focused. Glance quickly from text to child (M and S) appears more assessing G: Two modes: 1. the listener (hunched, head lowered). 2. the observer: intense focus on the child’s FACE M and S: Watching and listening go together. Watch TEXT and child together. During unison text reading M withdraws her focus	Animated. Attention-getting body language – pointing, eye contact. Glances sharply round group to check attention. G: More emphatic in card-work M: More emphatic in word hunts and rhyming words S: More emphatic in word focus; animated for “good reading.”	Intense. Locked on misbehaving child.	Gaze is withdrawn from circle. No particular head-eye orientation.
<b>VIGILANCE</b> – the degree to which the teacher actively monitors group members for response	Little, unless in round-robin / unison reading M shows “scanning gaze” most during reading rather than child-to-text	Intense - check constantly for attention. M: After instructions monitors closely to see individuals are complying.	Triggered by noise or inattention – vigilance relaxes when the levels are acceptable	Weak – little monitoring; casual.
<b>CONCERTED ACTIVITIES</b> – the degree to which the teacher moves in apparent response to identifiable contexts. Also: the size of the gesture; vigour OR rigidity and immobility. Mouth and face animation.	Minimal, within individual variation (S = restless; M+D still). Face immobile. D and S: when Cs are reading may become more rigid and immobile: locked onto the reading child. D: high five for finished reading S: Over-enunciation with exaggerated facial movement. S: “cuing look” mimed expectation with open eyes & raised brows. Also silent nod = “read” D shapes mouth to coming word. Gestures may be more emphatic with word work / cards	Maximal. Most animated. Big gestures, click fingers  Individual styles emerge: D: flirtatious, coy, teasing: head to side, with Cards = S: vigorous. Big. Energetic. With cards kneels, crawls, twists etc. M: intense, urgent	Body rigid and tense (M and S). Aggressive finger pointing.  M: claps hands for emphasis, or pats hands together	Slower head turns and hand gestures  NB: M and S mix attending and disengaged postures, usually because they attend to outsiders (Sam) or admin (M) DURING READING.



<i>Vigilance of children: the degree to which the children must monitor the teacher for instruction/ guidance</i>	<i>Problematic during reading – Cs need to attend to the text not the teacher. If this is high their focus is likely to be fragmented</i>	<i>High focus on teacher</i>	<i>High: alert and immobile</i>	<i>Low – usually absorbed in own occupation. Little attention to teacher</i>
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## Appendix 10a





Appendix 10b



Appendix 10c

Picture of this class room  
Mrs vldm.

