

1-1-2003

An examination of socially constructed whole group storybook reading in three pre primary classrooms

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AN EXAMINATION OF SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED WHOLE
GROUP STORYBOOK READING IN THREE PRE PRIMARY
CLASSROOMS

By

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Dip.T., B.Ed., M.Ed.

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of
Doctor of Philosophy

At the Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the socially constructed context of whole group storybook reading in pre primary classrooms. The study is centred on the shared communications that occur between pre primary teachers and students before, during and after the storybook reading. In particular, insights are sought on the nature and extent of the pre primary teachers' and the pre primary students' communicative contributions and the opportunity provided for the inclusion of personal knowledge and personal experience in the communication. Whether there is a change in the nature of the contributions over time is also examined.

The study seeks to extend current understanding of the situated nature of socially constructed classroom communicative repertoires beyond the descriptions of teacher dominated communicative strategies in order to develop an appreciation of the potential that whole group storybook reading has for student communicative constructions. Moreover, the capacity of whole group storybook reading for encouraging reciprocal communicative opportunities between the pre primary teacher and students in the classroom is examined.

The study has been carried out in three phases. The initial phase involved the completion of an open-ended questionnaire by forty three pre primary teachers. The aim of the questionnaire was to establish an understanding of the importance pre primary teachers placed on the whole group storybook reading activity. Phase two was the pilot study containing a field of five pre primary classrooms where teachers were invited to share their whole group storybook reading sessions. The

storybook reading sessions were videotaped and analysed and a coding structure was developed from the communications that occurred between the teacher and students. The coding structure provided a framework which was used in organizing and analyzing the classroom communication that occurred during the final case studies.

Phase three involved year long case studies of teacher-student communication during whole group storybook reading in three pre primary classrooms. The three pre primary classrooms were drawn from high, middle, and low socio-economic suburbs in the Perth metropolitan area. The case studies involved videotaping a storybook reading session every fortnight in each of the classrooms totalling twenty. The whole year period was considered necessary to map changes that occurred to the context and communication exchange during storybook reading. A case study approach facilitated understanding of how teachers organize their whole group storybook reading and an appreciation of the repertoire of personal knowledge and experience pre primary teachers and pre primary students brought to the storybook reading context.

The case study research found the physical organization of whole group storybook reading in each of the pre primary classrooms to be similar. The main differences between the storybook reading activity were derived from the different goals the pre primary teachers had for storybook reading and the individual differences the students brought to the storybook reading context.

The teachers' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity were based on communications with the students that contained directives, questions, statements and responses. All three teachers used

the categories of communication but with differences in emphasis and use. One teacher adopted an approach that was interactive and encouraged learning through shared communication. Another teacher concentrated on shared communication to promote confidence with speaking and competency in language and literacy development.

The students' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity were based on requests, questions, statements, and responses. Students were not major initiators of the communication in any of the three pre primary classrooms, but contributed to collaborative communication when opportunities were presented to them. Differences noted in the students' contributions could be attributed to the approach taken by the pre primary teachers, the students' background knowledge and experience and the choice of book being read to the students.

The strategies adopted by the teachers to create opportunities for the students to develop communications around experience and knowledge were based on teacher questions, statements and responses, and student statements and responses that referred to background experience and knowledge. All three teachers occasionally presented some of their personal experiences to enrich storybook events, whereas students were enthusiastic and spontaneous about sharing personal and family events that related to the storybook.

Differences were noted in the teachers' overall approach to the level of shared communication which occurred during whole group storybook reading. Teachers provided additional opportunities for student participation and shared communicative contributions.

The differences in teachers' and students' contributions throughout the year could be related to changes in the teachers' goals for the students and how that impacted on the communication and the increased skill level of the students. The students' communication increased as the year progressed in each of the three pre primary classrooms.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature:

Date: 14th February 2003

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge the debt I owe to my principal supervisor Dr Dawn Butterworth, for her friendship and guidance throughout this study. Her enthusiasm and expertise in Early Childhood Studies have been instrumental in bringing this study effort to fruition.

I wish to express my appreciation to Dr Bill Loudon for his scholarship and valuable suggestions during the analysis stage of my study.

My sincere gratitude to Mr Kevin Dear, my mentor. His fine example of socially constructed teaching and learning has been a constant source of inspiration.

My grateful thanks is also extended to the principals, teachers and students who graciously gave of their time to assist me in gathering the information necessary for my study.

Finally, I offer my deep appreciation and gratitude to my husband Ross and my children Millicent, Nathan, Marcus and Anthea for their confidence, encouragement and patience throughout this study.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	2
Declaration	6
Acknowledgments	7
Appendices	11
List of Figures	11
Chapter	
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	
Introduction	13
Background to the study	13
Aim of the study	19
Research questions	19
Significance of the study	20
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	24
Emergent literacy	25
Storybook reading and literacy development	32
Storybook reading at home	36
Storybook reading at school	41
Summary	52
3 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	
Introduction	54

	Vygotskian theory of development	55
	Conceptual framework	62
	Theoretical orientation	71
	Summary	73
4	METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY	
	Introduction	75
	Qualitative and quantitative research methods	75
	Perspectives informing qualitative research	77
	Qualitative research methods	80
	Case study research	84
	Case study techniques for data collection	85
	Analysis of case study data	87
	Credibility of the case study	91
	Conclusions	94
5	METHOD AND PROCEDURE	
	Introduction	97
	Research background	98
	Stage one: the initial study	103
	Stage two: the pilot study	106
	Stage three: the case studies	110
	Summary	117
6	CASE STUDY 1: WHOLE GROUP STORYBOOK READING IN PRE PRIMARY CLASSROOM J	
	Introduction	118

	Teacher organization of storybook reading	122
	Teacher contributions to storybook reading	129
	Student contributions to storybook reading	145
	Teacher strategy to promote student communication	155
	Differences in teacher and student contributions	161
	Summary of findings	167
7	CASE STUDY 2: WHOLE GROUP STORYBOOK READING IN PRE PRIMARY CLASSROOM M	
	Introduction	178
	Teacher organization of storybook reading	184
	Teacher contributions to storybook reading	193
	Student contributions to storybook reading	204
	Teacher strategies to promote student communication	212
	Differences in teacher and student contribution	219
	Summary of findings	225
8	CASE STUDY 3: WHOLE GROUP STORYBOOK READING IN PRE PRIMARY CLASSROOM S	
	Introduction	234
	Teacher organization of storybook reading	241
	Teacher contributions to storybook reading	247
	Student contributions to storybook reading	258
	Teacher strategies to promote student communication	268
	Differences in teacher and student contribution	273
	Summary of findings	280
9	SUMMARY OF THE THREE CASE STUDIES OF WHOLE GROUP STORYBOOK READING IN PRE	

PRIMARY CLASSROOMS

Introduction	289
Answers to research questions	292
Relevance to the existing literature	328
Areas for further research	
Implications for teaching	339

REFERENCES	346
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Initial Study: Teacher Questionnaire	368
Appendix 2. Initial Study: Teacher Questionnaire Results	370
Appendix 3. Pilot Study: Summary Results	372
Appendix 4. The Case Study Coding Structure	373
Appendix 5. Classroom J Teacher Communication Frequencies	381
Appendix 6. Classroom M Teacher Communication Frequencies	385
Appendix 7. Classroom S Teacher Communication Frequencies	388
Appendix 8. Classroom J Student Communication Frequencies	392
Appendix 9. Classroom M Student Communication Frequencies	395
Appendix 10. Classroom S Student communication Frequencies	398
Appendix 11. Storybooks Read in the Three Pre Primary Classrooms	401

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Pilot Study Summary of Teacher and Student Communications	109
Table 2. Summary of Teacher J Communication	130

Table 3.	Summary of Students' J Communication	146
Table 4.	Summary of Teacher M Communication	194
Table 5.	Summary of Students' M Communication	204
Table 6.	Summary of Teacher S Communication	248
Table 7.	Summary of Students' S Communication	259
Table 8.	Comparison of Teachers' Communication Types to Whole Group Storybook Reading	303
Table 9.	Comparison of Students' Communication Types to Whole Group Storybook Reading	312

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	The Vygotskian Model of Cognitive Development for Storybook Reading in Pre Primary Classrooms	69
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

There has been considerable emphasis in recent years on the value of socially constructed learning in facilitating development in young children (Lennox, 1995; Renshaw, 1992; Vygotsky, 1976). Young children attending kindergarten, pre primary and primary schools are provided with substantial opportunities to participate in shared experiences in order to maximize their potential for development through social interaction. These shared learning experiences can be viewed as a natural extension of the social functioning young children engage in within the home environment.

This chapter provides background information to the study, which is set in the social context of pre primary classrooms. The aim and the significance of the study are addressed and the research questions, which the study has been designed to acknowledge, are presented.

1.2 Background to the Study

The family environment establishes an initial framework for developing social knowledge and social skills in young children. Much of their social learning takes place through observations of social behaviours that are modelled by family members. A number of young children extend

their social knowledge and social skills when they attend day care centres, nursery schools, and four year old play groups. The Scott Report (Scott, 1993) which examined the voluntary full time attendance of five year old children at pre primary, provided for four year old children to attend kindergarten for two half days in State Government schools in Western Australia in the late 1990s has further extended the opportunity for social interaction and social development in young children. Numerous studies have highlighted the value of social interaction in promoting development in the cognitive, affective and social domains in young children (Bruner & Harste, 1987; Cazden, 1988; David 1990; Piaget, 1932; Vygotsky, 1962; Wertsch, 1985).

Empirical observations at the commencement of this study indicate that four year old children attending kindergarten for two half days engage in social interactions which occur at two levels. Firstly, social interactions take place at a formal level when children engage in shared group activities which have been planned by the kindergarten teacher. These shared learning experiences include table top activities where the children engage in some form of hands-on tasks such as tearing and pasting, play dough modelling and cooking.

Social interactions also occur at an informal level when kindergarten children play freely with their peers. These freely chosen play sessions are considered an important part of the children's learning experiences and are therefore included in the daily program of kindergarten activities. Kindergarten children generally use freely chosen playtime to socialize with their friends. They may play together on the outdoor equipment, or in the sandpit, or in the home corner, or in the block area. A large part of

this play is dynamic, because the children move freely between their friends and the play activities available (Cleave, Jowett & Bate, 1982).

The social interactions in which kindergarten children participate provide them with a valuable opportunity to develop peer friendships. Parents encourage these friendships further through invitations for children to play together in the home environment, to attend birthday parties and to share in family social outings. Therefore when kindergarten children attend pre primary the following academic year, they generally commence with a group of peers with whom they have shared a variety of experiences.

Studies in the area of social interaction have emphasized the influence of communication, that is, the talk that is exchanged during the interaction. There is much support for shared talk in facilitating development. Research findings indicate a strong relationship between the communication that is shared between the adult/parent and the young child during adult-child interaction. The adult/parent guides the young child to task completion and success through the shared communication, which occurs during the interaction. In particular, the gains made by the young child are said to be substantial when the adult's/parent's communication is sensitive to the needs of the child (Heath, 1982; Lennox, 1995; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Rogoff, Ellis & Gardner, 1984; Vygotsky, 1962; Wertsch, McNamee, McLane & Budwig, 1980; Wood & Middleton, 1975).

There has been substantial support for teachers to create opportunities for socially constructed learning in their classrooms. Particular emphasis has been placed on opportunities for children to participate in shared learning experiences where they can communicate with each other, share

ideas and learn from each other's experiences. However, studies examining the extent of the communication which occurs during interactions has been found to be teacher dominated. Students are expected to respond to questions in situations where the teacher already knows the answers, and more importantly, there are significant limitations to the contribution students can make to the interaction (Bruner 1986; Cazden 1988; Dickinson & Keebler 1989; Dillon 1982; 1988; Good & Brophy 1984; Mishler 1975a; 1975b; Tizard & Hughes, 1984; Wood, 1989).

The informal atmosphere that is prevalent in most pre primary classrooms stimulates considerable communication between the young children and the adults who assist in the pre primary during the school day. Anecdotal evidence gathered through informal observations suggests that pre primary children are generally eager to communicate with their peers. They appear to be enthusiastic about relating and sharing personal experiences whenever they have an opportunity to do so. They are particularly interested in engaging in conversations, which involve family experiences. The children employ their repertoire of social knowledge and social skills to communicate competently in the shared activities which have been planned for them.

However, classroom observations also suggest that although pre primary students engage in a number of participative activities that present opportunities for social communication, the students never-the-less experience limitations to the communicative contributions they are able to engage in during the school day. For example, the communication during structured small group activity is predominantly teacher initiated and it is essentially made up of the pre primary teacher's instructions,

questions, explanations and affirmations which are emphasized to encourage the students to remain on task and complete their activity successfully. The situation is in stark contrast to the communication that occurs during unstructured activity or freely chosen play, that is, sessions where students are provided with opportunities to engage in self-selected activities and interact within friendship groups.

However, a study examining nursery school children's conversations during freely chosen play contends that young children are unable to continue conversations and share ideas when they are left to communicate on their own. It has been suggested that young children require some teacher guidance and supervision if they are to fully utilize their shared communicative skills efficiently (Sylva, Roy & Painter, 1980).

Focus has previously been placed on the communication that has been employed by the adult/teacher during interactions. In particular, the communicative strategies they enlist in order to guide the child/student through successful task completion and development has been examined. Current research has extended this focus to include the communicative contributions children make when they engage in social interactions. Emphasis has been placed on contributions that encompass personal experiences and personal knowledge (Cazden, 1988; Dillon, 1982; 1988; Fleer, 1992; Howe, 1992; Renshaw, 1992; Wells, 1985).

Anecdotal observations support the notion that young children are eager to share their personal experiences in a social context. However, there are a number of constraints within the pre primary environment which impact on the opportunities available to the children to include personal knowledge and personal experiences. These constraints include the

number of children in the class, the time available to listen to the children's communicative contributions, and the pre primary teacher's agenda for the lesson (Howe, 1988). If the pre primary teacher's approach to learning is based on socially constructed learning, it is essential that considerable attention be given to the daily programming of activities in order to establish learning experiences which have the potential for providing intellectually challenging communicative opportunities for the pre primary children.

There appears to be much support for teachers to relinquish their dominance over classroom talk. Teachers are encouraged to provide opportunities which facilitate an equitable distribution of communication between the teacher and the child. Some attention should also be placed on children to include personal knowledge and personal experience in their shared communication. Communicative interactions, which accommodate these considerations, encourage the young children to engage in purposive, meaningful learning experiences. Moreover, these interactions facilitate the development of conversational skills and discussion strategies that further enhance their academic growth.

Informal observations of pre primary classrooms suggest that the whole group story book reading activity has the potential for encouraging communicative contributions from young children. Pre primary teachers carry out the whole group storybook reading activity regularly. Indeed, the importance placed on this activity is indicated by the pre primary teachers' inclusion of storybook reading in the daily program of activities.

A significant feature of storybook reading is that time is allocated to shared communication. These shared contributions occur before, during

and after the story has been read to the children. During these shared communications, there is also an opportunity for the pre primary teacher to relinquish control of the communication. Through the use of perceptive guidance, pre primary teachers are able to invite young children to contribute to the shared contributions. They are able to create opportunities for the children to include personal knowledge and personal experiences into the context of the storybook discussion.

1.3 Aim of the Study

Recent emphasis on the value of socially constructed learning in classrooms has highlighted the significance of the communication that occurs during social interaction in enhancing development (Renshaw 1992; Vygotsky 1976). This study endeavours to describe the interactive nature of the whole group storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms. The focus of the study is on the communication that occurs during the whole group storybook reading session.

1.4 Research Questions

- How do pre primary teachers carry out whole group storybook reading in their classrooms?
- What is the nature and extent of the pre primary teachers' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity?
- What is the nature and extent of the pre primary children's contribution to the whole group storybook reading activity?

- What strategies do pre primary teachers employ in order to create opportunities for the children to include contributions around personal knowledge and personal experience?
- Can differences be noted in pre primary teachers' and pre primary children's contributions throughout the year?

This study seeks to extend current understanding of the situated nature of socially constructed communicative repertoires. It investigates the capacity that whole group story reading has for encouraging children's communicative contributions. More importantly, this study examines the opportunities that whole group storybook reading has for extending pre primary children's contributions to include their personal knowledge and personal experiences.

In order to address the research questions, a long-term study of whole group storybook reading in pre primary classrooms in Western Australia has been undertaken. The aim of the research is to contribute to teaching research and teaching practice, by investigating the capacity storybook reading has for encouraging reciprocal communicative opportunities between the pre primary teacher and the students. Also, the opportunities that whole group storybook reading has for capitalizing on communicative contributions which include background knowledge and background experiences of the children are investigated.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The practice of whole group storybook reading in the pre primary classroom, may be perceived as a ritualistic event, because it usually occurs at a scheduled time each day. The storybook reading activity is

also routinely carried out at the mat area in the pre primary classroom. For many children, the storybook reading activity is an extension of the storybook reading with which they are already familiar in the home environment. For example, a number of children regularly engage in a ritualistic bedtime sequence of bath, teeth, story, and lights out.

Fleer (1992) emphasizes the importance of Vygotsky's social construction of learning in early childhood education and in particular, the significance of the teacher's role in guiding development during social interaction. Pre primary children engage in socially interactive learning experiences throughout the day, but not all the interactions are guided by the pre primary teacher.

The focus of this study is the socially constructed whole group storybook reading activity, which is carried out under the pre primary teacher's guidance. The study provides information about the context of the storybook reading activity and identifies background factors which may impact on the storybook interaction. This study contributes to a growing understanding of the interactions among teachers and students, with particular emphasis on the socially constructed learning experiences which exist in the pre primary classroom.

There has been considerable research into the value of storybook reading in facilitating the development of language and literacy in young children (Chafe, 1982; Dickinson & Keebler, 1989; Elley, 1989; Hansen, 1981; Mason, 1984; Mason & Au 1990; Morrow, 1984; Morrow, 1988; Purcell-Gates, 1988; Snow & Ninio, 1986; Strickland 1989; Sulzby 1985; Tannen 1982; Wells 1985). Studies have also investigated the relationship between academic achievement in school and the home

environment that provides young children with literacy and language experiences through storybook reading (Bus & van Ijzendoorn 1988; Chomsky 1972; Snow 1983; Sulzby & Teale 1991; Teale 1984; Wells 1985). Research has further examined the interactional patterns of behaviour between mother-child dyads and the support structures provided by the mother in order to establish shared participation and successful completion of the storybook reading activity (Bus & van Ijzendoorn, 1992; Cazden, 1983; DeLoache, 1984; Goodsit, Raitan & Perlmutter, 1988; Heath, 1982; Heath & Thomas, 1984; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Renshaw, 1989; Snow & Goldfield, 1982). The results of the studies note the mother's ability to accommodate the needs of the child through communicative contributions during storybook reading. Studies investigating the approaches teachers adopt while reading storybooks to students, have noted variations in reading styles, which consequently influenced the communicative contributions which occurred during the storybook reading activity (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Dickinson & Keebler, 1989; Teale & Martinez, 1986).

Much of the research that has examined the interactive nature of storybook reading has targeted the communication and expectations of the parents or teachers for the activity. An area which has not been fully explored, is the nature and extent of the children's communicative repertoires that are constructed during storybook reading. In order to develop a meaningful account of the communication which occurs during the socially constructed storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms, it is essential that some consideration be accorded to both the teacher's and the students' communicative contributions.

Howe (1988) indicates a resurgence of attention to the significance of communicative constructions in facilitating development. However, concern is directed at the control teachers exercise over classroom communication and the lack of opportunity accorded to students to construct personal knowledge and experiences into the interactive communication. There has been little research into learning experiences in the classroom environment which create opportunities for reciprocal communication between the teacher and the students. This study provides information about the situated nature of the communicative repertoires that are constructed within the storybook reading activity, and identifies the pre primary teacher's role in facilitating the inclusion of personal knowledge and experience into the communicative repertoires of students.

The perspective on pre primary children's communicative repertoires which are constructed within the whole group storybook reading activity presented in this study, extends previous understanding of the communication which occurs during storybook reading. This study enriches current knowledge about the need to limit teacher communication and re-emphasize young students' communicative constructions. Through detailed classroom observations and systematic analysis of the communications that occur during storybook reading, this study provides valuable insight into the opportunities that can be created to improve the quality of students' participative communication. How storybook reading can be used to encourage the sharing of personal knowledge and personal experiences by the pre primary teacher and the pre primary students is also demonstrated by this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is presented in four sections: emergent literacy; storybook reading and literacy development; storybook reading at home; and storybook reading at school. It examines literature that has a bearing on young children's storybook reading, literacy development, social development and learning.

Emergent literacy, storybook reading and literacy development are explained by Vygotsky's theory of interaction in a social context which facilitates cognitive growth, and the central tenet that a child has the potential to attain higher levels of development with guidance from an adult or more capable peer. The section devoted to storybook reading at home reviews emergent literacy in young children and storybook reading in the home by parents. It is explained that during storybook reading, children begin to understand that illustrations are representations of objects and events. The children also learn that printed text carries meaning. The section about storybook reading at school, builds on the previous theory. It is proposed that teachers who build on the students' previous storybook reading experiences, will extend the students' role in the classroom storybook reading sessions. Students are encouraged to be active participants. Their communicative contributions, particularly those which include background knowledge and experience, are valued.

Participative contributions by the students may be used to scaffold and guide peer learning and understanding.

2.2 Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy refers to the gradual acquisition of reading and writing skills in young children as they progress towards literacy. The investigations into emergent literacy have examined children from birth to the time they are able to read and write. Literacy learning takes place in different contexts, for example, schools, homes, and wider community settings. According to Teale and Sulzby (1987), and Snow (1991) emergent literacy perspectives ascribe legitimacy to the earliest literacy concepts and behaviours of children, and to the variety of social contexts in which children become literate. They noted that emergent literacy broadened the scope of relevant research to include reading, writing and oral language because they develop concurrently and inter-relatedly in literate environments. As a consequence, research has moved from experimental laboratory environments to schools, homes and the wider community because a major part of literacy development takes place in these settings (Crawford, 1995; Hill, 1997).

An important feature of emergent literacy is that the early literacy skills acquired by young children are viewed as children's constructions that take effect within the influences of a social environment that includes them. This differs from the view that the acquisition of literacy skills by children is a proportional approximation of the literacy capabilities of adults. Emergent literacy contends that the child is an active constructor of concepts and as such is able to acquire advanced literacy skills whilst functioning in various social contexts. Contemporary research in the

field has focused on the child's contributions, the role of the social context in the literacy process, and how the child and the social context contribute to literacy development. Anstey and Bull (1996) contend literacy is an everyday social practice with participation by adults and children in a variety of social settings.

Three theoretical perspectives have guided the emergent literacy research. The first is that the child has a predisposition to becoming literate. This is developed as a result of an adult creating an environment containing literary activities. The second perspective is derived from Piaget and centres on the child's construction of literacy through interactions with the environment. This approach highlights how children's concepts are constructed, and are re-defined, and how they differ from adult concepts. The third perspective is based on Vygotsky's views about literacy and learning. Vygotsky contemplated literacy based interactions between a child and more capable adult where the adult supports the child and expands his or her literacy boundaries through purposeful literacy dialogue. He referred to the process of scaffolding whereby the more capable adult supports the child's performance during each interaction and progressively relinquishes control until the child demonstrates greater competence and is able to function independently.

2.2.1 Characteristics of Storybook Reading in Emergent Literacy

When a group of children are involved in the storybook reading activity it is considered to be a socially constructed activity because the interaction of each of the participants impacts on the storybook reading activity. In storybook reading the words of the author are encased by the language of the adult reader and the children, and the interaction

between them. During the interaction the participants cooperatively seek to negotiate meaning through verbal and nonverbal means. When storybook reading is viewed as social interaction it has been revealed that reading books aloud to children is an act of construction. The language and the social interaction that surround the text are fundamental to young children's literacy development.

Ninio and Bruner (1978) found mothers adopted a standardized approach when they read picture books to their young children. Similar results were obtained in later research undertaken by Heath (1982). Snow (1983) and Snow and Goldfield (1983) observed the routine nature of storybook reading in their research of parent-child readings of picture dictionary and alphabet books. According to Snow (1977), the finding that storybook practices follow routines helps explain how storybook reading contributes to literacy learning because routines create predictable contexts. As the contexts are repeated children are able to refer to communications and information they have heard others contribute in similar contexts. Rohl (2000) found a conscious knowledge of phonemic awareness when emergent readers analyzed the sound structure of syllables through repeated games and activities. Storybook routines also provide formats that children can use to assist them with their participation in storybook reading activities. According to Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), the repeated situations provide the scaffold for the activity that assists the children to extend the reading activity beyond their usual capability. The scaffolding involves the adult controlling aspects of the storybook reading activity that are beyond the child's capability thereby allowing the child to complete those aspects of the activity that are within their area of competence. Through these routine

interactions the child develops expectations about the kinds of language that will be found in storybooks.

During the storybook reading activities the interactional patterns change over time. Scaffolding is the concept that is used to describe the change. The dynamic and interactive nature of the scaffolding is a critical feature of the change in interactional patterns over time. The static view of scaffolding contemplates parents as adults helping children to perform literacy functions. However, during storybook reading parents appear to develop a moving target of performance for children that takes their development into account. Sulzby and Teale (1986) documented shifts in the interactional patterns of parent-child readings. Parents scaffolded the storybook reading and gradually shifted responsibility for the storybook reading onto the child. This was based on the parents' response to the child's increased literacy development. Bear and Templeton (1998) identified and described stages in the development of word reading. Early storybook readings were identified as highly interactive activities between parent and child, in which gradually the interactive patterns shifted to address larger chunks of text.

Heath (1982) found that parents she studied began to discourage highly interactive storybook reading with older children, and instead insisted the children sit and listen as an audience. There were few interruptions during the storybook reading although, after the completion of the storybook reading there were questions and discussions about the story. Martinez and Roser (1985) found that younger children talked more when the story was familiar, and the responses to the story indicated an increased depth of processing when children were read stories with similar or repeated endings. Deloache and DeMendoza (1987) examined

the structure and content of picturebook interactions and found that structural features of the interactions remained relatively constant across age levels. However, the content of the interactions varied as a function of age. Mothers structured the interaction so that their children performed at their potential. Older children initiated more communication turns that related to the discussion of a particular subject, the children's input became increasingly verbal, and the information provided by the mother became increasingly complex. Snow (1983), and Snow and Goldfield (1987) examined repeated readings of a storybook and found a shift from discussion concentrating on items, item elaboration events, and event elaborations in the early and middle phases of the study to a greater focus on motives, causes and issues at the end of the study. Bus and van Ijzendoorn (1988) demonstrated that different types of text affect the storybook reading activity. They observed in particular, that considerable reading instruction that focused on letters and sounds occurred when the storybook was an ABC book. Pellegrini, Perlmuter, Galda and Brody (1990) found different patterns of interaction across narrative and expository texts during interactive reading. During narrative texts the children initiated more of the communication and the mothers played more of a supportive role, guiding and responding to the children's communication.

Most of the researchers interpreted their results using Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical framework of cognition as internalized social interaction. The different roles adopted by parents and children during storybook reading activities recorded over time are examples of scaffolding. A facilitative framework within which children could operate was provided by the communication that occurred during storybook reading. As children became more familiar with the structure and routine of storybook

reading they had a framework and freedom to make literacy decisions within the framework. They assumed more control over the interaction, but at the same time adults altered the interaction as children developed to provide more literary challenge. The result of the storybook reading process was to encourage children to undertake the storybook reading task independently.

In emergent storybook readings children show behaviours that demonstrate an increased understanding of features of written language. The behaviours are an integral part of the process of learning to read and are derived from the interactive nature of storybook reading. Sulzby (1988) found from analysis of data from storybook reading re-enactments that individual children moved from strategies of labelling and commenting on items in pictures to: form an oral account of the pictures; create a story with the rhythm and wording of written language; use print in pre-conventional ways to read the story; read the story conventionally. Purcell-Gates (1988) investigated the speech of kindergarten students who had been read to regularly during their pre-school years. She found that the children created a lexical and syntactic knowledge about written stories and then used that knowledge to create language for wordless picturebooks. An overall conclusion from the research was that children's independent re-enactments of storybooks play a role in the acquisition of literacy by providing opportunities for the children to practise what they had gained from interactive storybook reading activities. They also provided children with an opportunity to develop new understandings through their experience with storybooks (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

The approach adopted by adults for storybook reading activities affects the children's learning that occurs during the activity. Ninio (1980) observed a relationship between dyadic interaction styles and language development. In particular, the eliciting style of reading, where questions were asked, was positively related to the development of vocabulary. Heath (1982) found greater parent interaction with their children during storybook reading produced a better understanding of basic reading concepts. The understanding was enhanced when information from the storybook readings was linked to other contexts in the children's lives. She concluded that early patterns of literacy socialization were related to the children's increased capacity to read storybooks at school. The manner in which parents mediated the books for their children determined the children's literacy attainment.

Other research undertaken on storybook reading in early childhood classrooms has demonstrated the variations in the way adults read to children. Martinez and Teale (1987) analysed three kindergarten teachers' readings of the same storybooks to their students. They found identifiable reading patterns used by each of the teachers during the storybook reading activity. Moreover, the teachers demonstrated a consistent reading style across storybook reading sessions and the research concluded that teachers have characteristic reading styles. The research of Dickinson and Keebler (1989) supported the findings of Martinez and Teale, but their analysis of children's communications during the storybook reading sessions showed that children tailored their communications to the teacher's style; thereby suggesting the teacher's style affected how children responded to storybooks.

It is evident that a major issue affecting storybook reading at home and at school is how the adult mediates the storybook reading in response to the child's initiations and responses. The link between social interaction and cognition is derived from the adult's mediation of the storybook and the child's learning or internalisation. The adult mediator therefore has an observable impact on what the child acquires during the storybook reading activity.

Emergent writing, a component of emergent literacy develops in a manner similar to emergent reading. The scaffolding acquired during literacy development provides frameworks that assist children to construct or comprehend written text. The introduction of frameworks through the discussion of content and structure of writing allows children to test new vocabulary and language structures in a supportive context. Scaffolding can vary from informal interaction with the adult while reading and writing, to frameworks based on predictable and repetitive structures that allow the children to construct a number of different literacy outcomes. The process of emergent writing, and emergent literacy skill development involves reciprocal learning events involving the child and adult.

2.3 Storybook Reading and Literacy Development

2.3.1 Theoretical Background

Children have opportunities to increase their understanding of the forms and functions of literacy by participating in thematic reading and writing activities (Christie, 1991; Pellegrini & Galda, 1993; Vukelich, 1994;

Walker, 1994). This type of thematic play provides opportunities for children to use multiple forms of literacy in a variety of ways.

Although social interaction with peers has been shown to be effective for learning in young children (Doise & Mugny, 1984; Rogoff, 1990), there are many issues outstanding with respect to the nature of the interactions that result in cognitive growth. Vygotsky's (1978, 1987) theory emphasizes the role of instruction in child development. This theory needs to be differentiated from theories that describe other methods for guiding children toward particular skills. The theory can be distinguished by examining the zone of proximal development as a concept, and the effects of social interaction. Vygotsky explained that each child functions independently at a particular level and has the potential to attain a higher level with guidance from an adult or more capable peer. The difference between the two levels is the zone of proximal development. The adult or more capable peer provides skills and understandings during shared communication and problem solving which is within the child's zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development does not exist independently of the social interaction process (Tudge, 1992). Also, development is not viewed as an independent movement toward an end point, but is considered to be growth within a particular social world. Therefore, the social context for interaction is of critical importance to learning. Vygotsky's perspective states that children who interact with adults usually progress developmentally in ways that are consistent with the adult culture (Ellis & Rogoff, 1982; Tudge, 1990).

Underlying interaction within the zone of proximal development, is the process of constructing and reconstructing shared opinions between the

child and the adult or more capable peer. Individuals examine particular tasks from their own perspectives, and their prior knowledge and experience will influence the manner in which they approach a task. However, during social interaction and shared problem solving, individuals communicate their thoughts and ideas to each other. Communicative contributions such as these, allow common reference points to be established by the individuals. Learning is facilitated as individuals use shared ideas to accommodate, reassess and adapt their own thinking and reasoning (Tudge,1990; Wertsch 1984). During the interaction, the individuals share opinions and meanings that neither would have created alone. Although most Vygotskian research has focused on adult-child interactions, more recent research has examined peer collaboration and cognitive development (Tudge, 1990).

2.3.2 Strategies for Constructing Meaning

Oral language is the foundation for the acquisition of reading and writing skills. Glazer (1989), and Strickland (1991) have highlighted the relevance of oral language as it relates to reading and writing. Learning the meanings of words and developing an understanding of the way words are ordered to make sense are complex processes that take place in oral language development and are later transferred to reading and writing. Cognitive activities such as understanding cause and effect relationships and chronological order, that are established through listening and communicated through speaking, are the same cognitive processes used in reading. Children usually have some foundation in oral language skills when they commence pre primary classes and this forms the basis for reading and writing skills. Oral language skills are expanded and developed through opportunities to share experiences at

news time, listening activities, particularly when storybooks are read aloud, and through reading experiences (Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Glazer, 1989). It has been found that there is a strong and significant relationship between listening, comprehension and reading comprehension. Listening to stories provides an opportunity to expand oral language patterns, extend thinking skills and build vocabulary (Ellery, 1989; Leung & Pikulski, 1990).

It has been demonstrated that participants use numerous strategies to construct meaning from storybook reading activities (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991). Among the most effective strategies are inferencing, monitoring, summarising, and question generation.

Inferencing involves the process of judging, concluding, or reasoning from given information and has been described by some researchers as the core of the reading process (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Researchers found that readers were able to improve their ability to construct meaning when they were taught how to make inferences (Hansen & Pearson, 1983; Raphael & Wonnacott, 1985). Inferencing is a process that is involved as children make predictions both before and during storybook reading.

According to Baker & Brown (1984), monitoring the process of knowing when the content of the storybook is not making sense and effecting some means to resolve the problem, is an important part of the children's metacognitive development. Children who are able to construct meaning from storybooks, are able to identify problems in their understanding of a story and correct them as they appear (Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983). Researchers have found that teaching students to monitor their reading

improves their ability to construct meaning (Palincsar & Brown, 1986). Strategies for monitoring include; asking whether the reading is making sense, rereading, reading ahead, looking up words in the dictionary and asking others for assistance (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991).

Summarising, which involves the collection of important information in longer texts, has been shown to be a helpful strategy to assist readers to improve their ability to construct meaning (Brown & Day, 1983; Rinehart, Stahl & Erickson, 1986). Distinctions have been made between narrative text structure and expository text structure. In narrative texts, the strategy involves focusing on the elements of the story grammar or the story map (Mandler, 1984). In expository texts, the strategy involves the identification of main ideas (Baumann, 1986).

Question generation is advocated by some researchers as being helpful to construct meaning (Davey & McBride, 1986). In using this strategy, children develop their own questions as they read. Brown & Palincsar (1985) demonstrated the effectiveness of student-generated questions in helping students to improve their ability to construct meaning. However, research also shows that there may be difficulties in teaching this strategy to young children (Denner & Rickards, 1987).

2.4 Storybook Reading at Home

2.4.1 Theoretical Background

Several factors have been identified in the literature as contributors to emergent literacy in young children. One of the factors is storybook reading in the home by parents of young children. Some of the positive

effects on children's later literacy development have been readiness to benefit from formal literacy instruction (Chomsky, 1970; Wells, 1985); greater ability to attend to text and school based learning (Rowe, 1991); an increase in print related knowledge (Snow & Ninio, 1986; Sulzby, 1985); and stronger interest in reading storybooks (DeBaryshe, 1993).

During storybook reading, children begin to understand that illustrations are representations of objects and events (Conlon, 1992). They also learn that print carries meaning and that the story remains the same throughout repeated readings (Schickedanz, 1986). Storybook reading also provides children with a chance to make sense of stories. Parents can facilitate children's understanding of literature by selecting storybooks with illustrations that support and extend the meaning of the story. This can be achieved by discussing what is occurring and what might occur in the story, and by making comments and answering children's questions to improve the children's comprehension of the story (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Roser & Martinez, 1985; Yaden, 1988). Research by Vivas (1996) found that young children significantly increased their language comprehension and expression when they listened to stories read aloud.

Parents generally have contributed to children developing language skills for reading. The importance of the family in facilitating literacy has been operationalized in the intergenerational nature of literacy programs (Nickse, 1990). McNaughton (1995) found families socialize their children into their literacy practices. It has also been asserted that the number and nature of parent-child joint storybook reading experiences during early childhood development is responsible for future differences in academic achievement (Cochran-Smith, 1983; Teale, 1981). Extensive research has been undertaken to examine the effect of parental storybook

reading strategies on young children's literacy (Pellegrini, Brody, & Sigel, 1985; Sulzby & Teale, 1991).

2.4.2 Parent's Contribution to Storybook Reading

It has been contended that storybook reading increased the children's interest in reading storybooks and that storybooks provided them with information and made them aware of letter-sound relations. However, the interest in parental storybook reading is based on the assumption that reading stimulates literacy development (Holdaway, 1979; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). According to Cochran-Smith (1984), storybook reading acquaints young children with story structures and schemes and literacy conventions that are prerequisites for understanding texts. Kook and Vedder (1995) found that interactive reading where meaning was constructed from the text, was more developmentally enriching than attending to the story. They argued that parents should be trained in dialogue that contributed to meaning construction and taught that reading should be enjoyable. Other research has studied the various approaches mothers used in reading to young children and demonstrated the importance of modelling interactive reading to help pre school children connect storybooks to daily experiences (Knoth, 1998). Renshaw (1992, 1994) found that literacy related experiences of children prior to the commencement of school, involved scaffolded dialogue when the children engaged in reading partnerships with a more expert participant.

Shared storybook reading also exposes children to written language. Although the grammatical rules for written and spoken language are the same, the options available with grammar are quite different in speaking than in writing (Tannen, 1982). Storybook reading contributes to early

literacy development by presenting young children with opportunities to listen to written language. Reading storybooks aloud exposes children to grammatical forms of the written language and displays literate discourse rules in ways not available in normal conversational communication. It is expected that storybook reading in particular, increases children's knowledge of the written language register and their reading achievements.

It has been assumed that interest in reading is as much a prerequisite as a consequence of storybook reading (Bus, 1993, 1994), so that the presence of storybooks and other materials may not stimulate children's development as effectively as parental support during storybook reading activities (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). However, research has shown that parent-pre schooler reading should not be encouraged unconditionally (Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995). In some studies, it was demonstrated that in insecure parent-child dyads, the parent was less sensitive to the needs of the child and in those cases the pleasures of sharing a storybook might be low (Bus & van Ijzendoorn, 1988, 1992). Under those circumstances, the type of storybook reading may affect the child's emergent literacy skills and interests negatively, because the storybook reading activity was undertaken in an environment that was unpleasant and ineffective. Documented interactions between parents and pre school children as they read storybooks together, showed diverse storybook interactions within a small sample, thereby discouraging generalizations about parent-child storybook reading interactions (Shapiro, 1997).

DeTemple (2001) described the nature of the communications between mothers and their children, and determined the communications that

were more likely to enhance language and literacy development. She found that most mothers used an interactive approach to storybook reading that produced conversations involving the mother and child. The mothers were the readers of the storybooks and therefore controlled the comments, questions and sequencing of the communication. Mothers who provided opportunities for child communication contributions had children who tended to talk during the storybook reading activity, whereas mothers who read the storybook with few interruptions had children who provided minimal contribution to the communication about the storybook activity.

An analysis of the mother's comments about the storybook revealed the focus of the conversation on descriptions of the illustrations and explanations and clarifications of the storybook events. DeTemple referred to this form of the mother's communication as 'immediate' talk. A lesser frequent category of the mothers' communications dealt with inferences and interpretations, questions that extended the children's understanding of the storybook events, and related some of the children's experiences to the storybook theme. This form of mother's communication was referred to as 'nonimmediate talk'. Nonimmediate talk involved longer and more complex language constructions than the simple descriptions and yes-no language of the immediate talk. It was concluded that not all talk between mothers and their children necessarily led to measured improvements in the child's language and literacy development. In DeTemple's study it was only the nonimmediate literacy that was positively correlated with the child's later literacy development. A set of storybook reading activities was labelled 'home support for literacy' and it was found a higher rating of

home support for literacy was a predictor of a child's later acquisition of literacy skills.

Most parents supported their children becoming literate, but highly literate parents and less literate ones differed on what they perceived as effective methods for literacy development (Spiegel, Fitzgerald, & Cunningham, 1993). Lennox (1995) found that there was not a single model of development, but there were many pathways to young children becoming literate. Literacy learning was an activity that involved the collaboration of parents and teachers as they worked with young children. Lewman (1999) discovered systematic re-reading of storybooks to young children improved the children's language and recall skills and increased their attention span.

Many of the children's out-of-school literacy activities are initiated by children and are focused on the child's needs or interests. For example, children who participate in storybook reading at home, frequently have a say in the book selection, the setting where it is read, and the duration of the reading.

2.5 Storybook Reading at School

2.5.1 Theoretical Background

Research has shown that peers provide a strong influence on student communications (Cazden, 1988; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Peterson & Eeds, 1990; Newkirk & McLure, 1992). Vygotsky (1978) argued that problem solving in collaboration with more capable peers enabled children to expand their understanding and learning. This occurred in the zone of

proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978, p.114) that exists when a child interacts with a more experienced mentor. The mentor leads the child through scaffolded information to reach a level of increased understanding. The phenomenon also occurs in peer interactions, when a more experienced child leads her peers to consider other perspectives and include prior knowledge to arrive at new interpretations of an event.

One way to incorporate the benefits of peer group discussions with peer scaffolded information, is to extend it to apply storybook reading strategies that enable students to view themselves as a resource for information, rather than as passive participants. When teaching students to find answers to textual questions, peers involved in whole group discussions could also be considered a potential source of information. If peers are included in collaborative storybook constructions of meaning, their contributions need to be acknowledged and valued. Scaffolded instruction helps students become independent. The assistance takes place in a collaborative context, as teachers evaluate student performance and adapt instructional responses, in order to develop the students' autonomy (Beed, Hawkins, & Roller, 1991).

Another strategy that builds on peer group discussions, is that of reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984, 1988; Palincsar, Brown, & Martin, 1987). Reciprocal teaching involves the classroom teacher modelling the strategies of predicting, clarifying, and summarising and then working with the students to enable them to independently apply the strategies. The rationale is that the tasks cause students to focus on the textual material and to monitor their own comprehension. After the students acquire an understanding of the strategies, then literary peer

groups can be formed to use the strategies, while reading storybooks and discussing different types of texts.

The positive outcomes of student collaborative communications based on storybook text, have demonstrated that the acquisition of knowledge was not only found in the personal construction of meaning from a text, but also in the context of social interactions with peers. Immediate feedback from the whole group provided the opportunity to examine differences in student contributions, as well as considering conflicting perspectives. Students are able to learn from peer group discussions, because they provide a means for transferring some of the responsibility for learning from the teacher to the students (Alvermann, Dillon, & O'Brien, 1987). Peer discussions in whole group situations provided an opportunity for students to claim ownership of the learning process and to communicate about personally relevant areas for clarification and collaboration.

Students looked for internal consistency and continually renegotiated the communication protocols with structurally new and less familiar text type. If the text did not provide the needed information, bridging the gap was accomplished by using prior knowledge with peer provided information, to make predictions about textual matters. The peer comments helped make useful connections to understanding textual information. In these situations the students appeared to be testing their prior knowledge of the world to determine if the descriptions and actions were plausible (Newkirk & McLure, 1992). This is demonstrated when fiction and nonfiction are examined. Students explored possibilities and inconsistencies in the content of a storybook, to construct a framework for understanding the story. They negotiated textual meaning through

exploratory collaboration of storybook events and concluded that the story was fictional, because of the absence of relevant facts.

2.5.2 Student Peer Groups and Prior Knowledge

It has also been found that when students express their personal prior knowledge, the prior knowledge of other whole group participants is activated. The shared thoughts stimulate further ideas from others in the group and usually results in the collaborative construction of meaning for all group members (Cazden, 1988; Peterson & Eeds, 1990). The shared prior knowledge about a particular event or text becomes classroom knowledge and part of the whole group's textual understanding. Research in first-grade classrooms by Leal (1992) showed students shared their prior knowledge and students submitted other ideas based on the initial student communication. Although the students did not achieve a consensus of understanding, their conversation revealed that negotiation was taking place. Moreover, the discussion of student initiated ideas gave the students an opportunity to take ownership of the topics considered.

Literary peer group discussions also provide an opportunity for assuming complementary problem solving roles (Cazden, 1988; Palincsar & Brown, 1984, 1988; Palincsar, Brown, & Martin, 1987; Vygotsky, 1962). During group communication, one student can find meaning or an explanation of a storybook event from another student. In effect, the students take turns instructing each other. The students assist each other to consider alternative ways of understanding textual information (Foreman-Peck, 1985; Golden, 1986). The interaction shows how students work within Vygotsky's zone of proximal development by

taking turns at instructing each other until they arrive at an increased understanding of the event. It is natural for students to interact with each other and peer group discussions provide an excellent opportunity to discuss and explore learning topics to establish whether ideas are being understood correctly. Such discussions provide a useful platform for uniting the cognitive and social aspects of learning (Cazden, 1988; Koeller, 1988).

Also evident in peer group discussions, is the acknowledgement and challenging of the plausibility of ideas. Instead of being corrected by a teacher, or being informed that their idea is wrong, a peer audience provides a less intimidating environment from which to explore the meaning. The interaction also demonstrates how peer group discussions involve student communication, where students are willing to contribute (Barnes, 1976). This type of exploratory communication emphasizes the process of learning, rather than the product of learning, which helps to create a framework for understanding. Gumperz & Field (1995) analyzed classroom communication in a cooperative learning program by using sociolinguistic methods to discover the content of classroom dialogue and how the participants infer the meaning of what is discussed. They concluded that when students were left alone, they involve themselves in the curriculum, but frame it to suit their own concerns. This contrasts with teacher led communication in a structured classroom situation where less exploratory communication is likely to occur. When students realize that there is no requirement on them to give the correct answer, they are willing to take risks. From a peer group discussion point of view, the overall outcome often includes new insights and connections to prior knowledge and background experience.

2.5.3 Teacher Strategies for Storybook Reading

In literature based instruction, the teacher assumes the role of decision-maker, mentor, and coach. The role includes planning themes, helping students retrieve appropriate prior knowledge, supporting students in reading and responding to the literature in appropriate ways (Martinez & Roser, 1991). In some circumstances, the teacher teaches, using the literature as a model for reading and writing. Also by reading aloud to students, the teacher models language to them. Thus, supporting the students with such activities as shared reading, the teacher plays the role of a guide and facilitator (Cooper, 1993).

Teachers have generally used some form of ability grouping to meet the individual needs of students during reading and language development. At junior levels, teachers have usually organized their students into high, middle and low ability groups. In some cases, ability groups can promote social and cultural differences, which may not encourage a positive classroom environment (Gamoran, 1992; Slavin, 1986). Teachers are encouraged to use whole class activities and flexible small group activities during language and literacy development. Whole group and flexible small groups can be used to accommodate the students' different interests and experiences, during storybook reading. Young students who are comfortable with their small group organization, appear to be more relaxed and are generally more participative in shared communications (Drabble, 1989).

Research has shown that ability grouping has not always been successful in meeting the individual needs of students during language and literacy development. The classroom teacher's knowledge and understanding of

her students' backgrounds, friendships, interests and abilities, will influence the decisions she makes about the make up of the small groups, the learning areas in which these small groups will work together and the length of time these small groups will remain together. Personal teaching experience suggests that much can be gained by the students when they are encouraged to participate in socially constructed learning. However, variety and flexibility are key considerations when small groups are being organized in the learning environment.

Most teachers rely on group discussion as a focus for student response to literature. In doing this, teachers are inclined to guide or direct the discussion, resulting in communication that is centred on the teacher's participation (Cazden, 1986). However, teacher dominated discussions inhibit the full expression of student responses to literature (Barnes, Barnes, and Clarke, 1984). As a consequence, teachers are experimenting with a variety of less controlling discussion frameworks, such as book clubs (Raphael et al., 1992) and literature circles (Short & Pierce, 1990), to delegate the responsibility for communication to the group. Students will engage in meaningful communication about text and will explore different text based interpretations, when provided with the opportunity to do so (Eeds & Wells, 1989). For students to develop autonomy, the teacher must find a role in the group that respects peer leadership and contributes to the group's social and interpretive development (O'Flahaven, Stein, Wiencek, & Marks, 1992).

Teachers of young students also arrange their learning experiences around themes or topics. Curriculum areas are organized and presented in an integrated manner. Adopting a thematic approach allows teachers an effective means for planning the learning experiences for their

students; providing a framework for the students to work within; and encouraging the students to make significant links between prior and new knowledge in all areas of learning (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Pappas, Keifer & Levstik, 1990; Walmsley & Walp 1990).

Pre primary teachers generally adopt a thematic or topic approach in their classrooms in Western Australia. The classroom environment, the learning experiences, the home corner, the storybooks and class excursions are all planned around the current theme. For example, a farm theme may include the incubation and hatching of chicks and ducklings, a visit to the pre primary classroom by Farm Yard on Wheels, and storybook reading sessions using storybooks such as Hattie and the Fox, Noisy Farm, and The Little Yellow Digger. When pre primary teachers choose their storybooks for the storybook reading session, the classroom theme or special calendar events such as Mother's Day, The Royal Show and Christmas, usually guide them in their storybook selection. Adopting a thematic approach encourages pre primary students to extend their learning beyond the classroom environment. For example, a camping theme can be developed further when students go camping with their families for the school holidays. Storybooks by a particular author, which are read by the teacher during storybook reading, could motivate young students to borrow other storybooks by the same author, when they visit their local library outside the school day.

Another dimension to whole group storybook reading is student listening. Although students spend more than half of each school day engaged in listening (Wolvin & Coakley, 1988), they often do it ineffectively (Jalongo, 1991). Some teachers are incorporating the

teaching of attentive listening into their classroom, in a way that is consistent with whole language philosophy (Brown & Mathie, 1990). They encourage good listening through a combination of authentic experiences and teaching interrelated strategies, each strengthened by the presence of the other. Students learn by imitating good listening habits, participating in specific listening strategy instruction and repeatedly practising what they have learned in meaningful contexts (Brent & Anderson, 1993). Listening is the principal means by which students receive directions and information from the teacher and their peers. According to Spiegel (1992), systematic and direct instruction has an important place in classrooms. By giving it a more prominent role, teachers can meet the needs of more of their students. Brett (1996) studied students listening to stories with a brief explanation of unfamiliar words, listening to stories with no explanation of unfamiliar words, and having no exposure to stories or to word explanations. It was found that simple word explanations in the context of an interesting story by the story reader, were a practical and effective technique for vocabulary acquisition.

Dickinson (2001) studied storybook reading practices in classrooms with students from low-income families. He found three distinct reading styles adopted by teachers; a didactic-interactional style where explicit instructional methods dominate the communication; a co-construction style where the communications between the teacher and students are characterized by cognitive demands about the storybook content, relating the storybook content to the students' own experiences, and grammatical and interpretive elements of the story; and a performance oriented style where the teacher and student communications encouraged reflection about the events of the storybook. The performance oriented style was

differentiated from the co-construction style by the increased teacher and student discussions after the completion of the storybook reading. The discussions reflected on the events contained in the storybook, but then linked the storybook events to the students' personal experiences.

Dickinson provided a more detailed account of a didactic instruction approach and a constructivist approach in a detailed examination of two classrooms. In the former, the teacher placed an emphasis on the students learning knowledge that was linked to academic skills. There was little time devoted to free time and the focus on academic skills underpinned all instructional communication. In the latter approach, the teacher placed an emphasis on socialization. There was no evidence of direct instruction from the teacher, particularly with reference to academic skills. Instead the focus was on play accompanied by rich teacher-student communication. Dickinson found that the performance oriented teaching style generally produced better results in measures of understanding vocabulary. Shared teacher-student communications further extended the cognitive abilities of the students because more time was spent on discussing the book and very little time was needed for encouraging on-task behaviours.

Other studies have focused on the language environments in pre school classrooms (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Dickinson et al., 1993). These studies suggest that the quality of adult-student communication is important, as is the amount of adult-student interaction. One study found that the amount of cognitively challenging discussion that students experience, is correlated with the amount of time they are given to communicate with adults (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). Given the significance of adult-student interaction, it is essential that young pre

primary students in particular, receive opportunities for teacher-student conversations and discussions in both formal and informal contexts (Kontos & Wilcox-Herzog, 1997). According to Whitehurst et al.(1994), any learning experiences which encourage communication and listening, will add to the students' language development and literacy skills.

For teachers concerned about placing students in social interactions which are most beneficial for learning, there is a need to establish a positive classroom environment where students are socially and academically comfortable with expressing their ideas and opinions, even when the ideas are different from those of their peers. Also, there is a need to create learning environments in which students can explore interacting with adults and other students. Interactions in which students collaborate, share perspectives, make decisions together in order to create a positive environment, facilitates optimal learning for all class members. These situations may include partner activities, group discovery lessons, or freely chosen play time (Cannella, 1993). A framework to use as a whole-language, literature-based learning approach to integrate learning and emerging literacy into all facets of the classroom through immersion in storybooks, was developed by McCord (1995). It extends the value of reinforcing learning through themes and the integration of learning areas. Hill (1998) argues teachers need to understand the students' range of prior-to-school learning experiences in formulating effective curricula. Rivalland and Hill (1999) produced an organizational framework that encouraged teachers to use texts that linked the student's home and community contexts and then extend the practices that were used in the texts.

2.6 Summary

Vygotsky (1978, 1987) has established the role of instruction in child development. He explained that each child functions independently at a particular level, but has the potential to progress to a higher level with some assistance from an adult or more capable peer. The difference between the two levels is known as the zone of proximal development. The underlying social context for interaction within the zone of proximal development is the process of constructing and reconstructing joint opinions between the child and adult or more capable peer.

At home, parents can facilitate children's understanding of literature by selecting storybooks with illustrations that support and extend the meaning of the story. This can be further achieved by the parent discussing what is occurring or what might occur in the story and by making comments and answering children's questions to improve their comprehension of the story. Reading storybooks aloud exposes children to grammatical forms of the written language and displays literate discourse rules in ways not available in normal conversational communication. It has been found that the number and nature of parent-child joint storybook reading experiences during early childhood development, is related to future differences experienced by children in academic achievement.

The positive outcomes from student shared communications based on storybook text have demonstrated that the acquisition of knowledge was not only found in the personal construction of meaning from text, but also in the context of social interactions with peers. During these processes, it was found that students looked for internal consistency and

continually renegotiated the communicative exchanges with structurally new and less familiar text type. It was also found that when students express their personal prior knowledge, the prior knowledge of other whole group participants is activated. The shared prior knowledge about a particular event or text becomes classroom knowledge and part of the whole group's storybook understanding. Literary peer group discussions also provide an opportunity for complementary problem solving strategies because during group communication a student can find meaning or an explanation of a storybook event from another student.

Arranging language and classroom activities around themes is a strategy employed by teachers. By organizing the curriculum around a thematic and integrated approach, pre primary teachers encourage the students to make links with prior and new knowledge. These links provide a valuable scaffold for the students. The pre primary students utilize the assistance given by the pre primary teacher, in order to take on more self responsibility for their learning.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the theoretical context of this study within a conceptual framework. The theoretical context describes the Vygotskian perspective of the social construction of development that examines the social interaction beyond what has transpired during the interaction. The conceptual framework endeavours to identify the background factors which teachers and young students bring to the socially constructed whole group storybook reading activity. The aim of the conceptual framework is to investigate the effect background factors have on the situated nature of communicative repertoires in the whole group storybook reading context.

Young students in the school environment are frequently placed in interactive situations with their peers. They are encouraged to work and play together, or may be organized into small groups in order to complete shared classroom activities. Such interactive situations expose the students to experiences, opinions and problem solving skills which are similar, or at variance to their own. Research into peer interaction and its subsequent influence on learning and development, has produced valuable information and implications for educators who encourage learning within a social context. The research stems from the theoretical

orientations of Vygotsky (1978) who examined the importance of social processes and the influence that social processes have on development. Vygotsky's approach emphasized the "collaborative" nature of social interaction: a social context within which peers work together for successful task completion

3.2 Vygotskian Theory of Development

The theoretical framework for examining the whole group storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms has been derived from Vygotsky's theory of development through social interaction, because the storybook activity encompasses three significant domains within Vygotsky's theory. Vygotsky's theory focuses on social interaction, the role of the adult during the social interaction, and the verbal communications that occur during social interaction. Each of the domains requires some consideration, because a relationship has been established between the domains and the conceptual foundations examined in the pre primary classrooms.

Vygotsky's theory contends that the child's social environment is instrumental in promoting development. Therefore, development is significantly influenced through interactions that occur socially between individuals, that is, inter-psychologically, and later intra-psychologically when the individual has internalized and made personal the procedures that occurred within a social context (Wertsch, 1985). The child working in an interactive problem-solving situation is exposed to certain procedures that encourage the successful completion of a problem-solving task. Through interaction, the child is able to take in the procedures and mentally reconstruct them into thought processes. These

thought processes are thinking and reasoning strategies that the child may be able to utilize in future independent problem solving situations.

3.2.1 Social Relationships Between Adults and Children

It is this focus on social relationships within the social environment that has led researchers to examine the interactions between adults and young children before they enter the school environment (DeLoache & Mendoza, 1987; Lennox, 1995; Ninio, 1980; Renshaw & Gardner, 1990; Wertsch, 1985). Studies of interaction between the adult and child suggest that the interaction can facilitate development for the child, even though the interaction has not been structured as a formal learning situation. For example, a mother playing a game with her child to pack away the toys after play, will encourage the child to internalize the procedures that occur during the interaction, through her verbal communication. Eventually, the child is able to complete the packing away of toys without the mother's assistance, or without the need to play a game in order to pack away the toys after use. This is the result of the child's ability to utilize the interactive procedures which have been reconstructed mentally into personal thought processes for independent problem solving (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976; Wertsch, Minick & Arns, 1984).

Interaction between the adult and child can further encourage development for the child in situations where the child is not even aware of the purpose for completing the task (Fleer, 1992). For example, the child may not appreciate the need to pack away the toys after use. However, through continual participation in packing away with the mother and the mother's communication to the child that the toys are

packed away after play for organizational purposes within the home, the child is able to develop an understanding about the purpose of the packing away activity.

A significant concept of the child's ability to internalize the procedures that have occurred within a social context, is the understanding that the child utilizes available opportunities to "practice and rehearse" these procedures in a variety of social and independent situations (Renshaw, 1992). If we continue with the example of the child packing away the toys after play in order to establish a level of neatness around the home, we can see that the child may later practise and rehearse the interactive procedures that have been acquired to further organize the bedroom, the school desk, and later the work place. Social interaction between the mother and child resulted in the successful completion of the packing away task. More importantly however, the interaction encouraged development for the child through the child's ability to shift the interactive procedures from an inter-psychological level to an intra-psychological level. Further development can be achieved when the child is able to reconstruct the internalized mental processes into thinking and reasoning strategies for use in other situations.

3.2.2 Significance of the Adult's Role

The role of the adult in facilitating the attainment of potential development is extremely important in Vygotsky's theory of development through social interaction. The adult establishes a framework of support for the child to operate within the interaction. The framework of support allows the child to complete a task that may not have been completed successfully without assistance. The adult

essentially creates a "scaffold" (Bruner, 1983), or a temporary support structure for the child. This situation, according to Vygotsky, extends the child's achievements beyond that produced by the child completing the task without adult guidance.

The principal component in Vygotsky's theory of development is the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is defined as the difference between the actual development achieved through independent problem solving and the level achieved through adult guidance and assistance (Wertsch, 1985). During the interaction, the adult guides the child through a sequence of procedures that are necessary for the successful completion of the task. The adult may have complete control of the task initially. However, as the child becomes familiar with the task, a level of competence develops. The child is able to internalize the procedures that occur in the interaction and assume some responsibility for the completion of the task. The adult gradually relinquishes control through the guidance given, until the child is eventually able to complete the task independently. Therefore, the achievement attained by the child through adult guidance exceeds any achievement the child may have accomplished through independent effort.

3.2.3 Verbal Communication

The verbal communication or speech that occurs between individuals as a consequence of social interaction is of fundamental importance to Vygotsky's theory of development through collaboration. Development for children is achieved through participation with others within a social context and further, internalising the shared procedures that occur during

the interaction. Central to this notion is the verbal communication or speech that the child is able to internalise and reconstruct into mental thought processes (Wertsch, 1985).

The initial purpose of speech for the young child is the facilitation of communication with other individuals. Vygotsky maintained that once a child was able to communicate with others, there was a shift in intention by the child to include "personal" speech into the communicative repertoire used. Personal speech is communicating with or talking to oneself. Vygotsky indicated that it was the verbal communication that transpired during the interaction that facilitated learning. This is not merely limited to the adult's speech which is used during the instruction, nor the child's verbal response to the adult guidance given during social interaction. The child's treatment of the social speech during the interactive experience is also essential to development. Through social interaction, the child gains an ability to reconstruct the verbal communication that originated within a social context into personal speech. The child's social speech during the process of reconstruction into personal speech becomes refined and succinct. This enables the child to take short cuts with personal conversations and focus specifically on the salient requirements of the task at hand. According to Vygotsky, the progression from an ability to utilize personal speech to one of employing higher thought processes, that is, using independent thinking and reasoning strategies, indicated a considerable advancement in the child's development.

3.2.4 Background Factors Within the Social Context

Vygotsky's theory of development does not singularly emphasize the collaborative activity that occurs during social interaction. That is, it

does not merely examine what is taking place when adults provide assistance to children during collaboration. Vygotsky's theory encompasses a far wider framework of social relationships. This includes an understanding of the background knowledge the individual brings to the interaction, the aim or goal the individual has for the activity, and the strategies the individual employs throughout the interaction. Consideration of the individual's background knowledge, that is, the information and the experiences the individual has available to contribute to the collaborative activity, is important because it provides an understanding of the nature of the contributions being made. An individual's background knowledge is further significant because of its influence on the approach and strategies adopted by the individual in the collaborative activity (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975; Renshaw & Gardner 1990).

The goal the individual has for the collaborative activity is the outcome the individual strives to achieve. Studies into the goals developed by adults for young children during adult guided activities suggest that the adult develops the activity around the child's perception of play. To encourage participation, adult guided activities are centred on games that are not stressful and can be completed in a short space of time (Wertsch, Minick & Arns, 1984; Wertsch, McNamee, McLane & Budwig, 1980; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976).

During collaborative activity, adults employ a number of instructional strategies to guide young children to task completion. The adult's perception of the assistance required by a child influences the instruction and adjustments the adult makes to the instruction during the interaction. In effect, the adult displays an awareness of the needs of the child and

operates within a "region of sensitivity". The adult's ability to maintain a balance between the needs of the child and the instructional strategies required assists in the development of the child (Wertsch et al, 1980; Rogoff, Ellis & Gardner, 1984). Instructional strategies used by the adult and instructional understanding and familiarity by the child focuses on the critical area of communication. During the interaction, the adult guides the child through the task, using verbal (instructional) and non-verbal (gestural) strategies. However, these strategies are of no benefit to the child if the child has not understood the significance of the assistance. The child's inability to interpret the adult's verbal instructions results in a failure to understand the assistance being provided by the adult. Therefore, it is essential for the adult to establish successful communication with the child during collaborative activity. This would allow the adult to provide guidance to the child through instructional strategies that can be understood (Ellis & Rogoff, 1982; Wertsch, McNamee, McLane & Budwig, 1980; Wood & Middleton, 1975).

In conclusion, the fundamental tenet of Vygotsky's theory is the social foundations of development. An individual's social relationships and social contexts facilitate the acquisition of mental processes, which are subsequently reconstructed into thinking and reasoning strategies. Independent thinking and reasoning strategies encourage the individual to become efficient in problem solving activities. Vygotsky's theory focuses on the role the adult plays in providing guidance and assistance through the verbal exchange that occurs within the social interaction. Consideration must also be given to the background knowledge, the goals and the strategies that individuals employ during the social interaction because of the influence they have on the quality of the interaction.

3.3 Conceptual framework

Pre primary teachers usually adopt a thematic approach to their planning and presentation. This allows them to integrate and reinforce developmentally appropriate learning experiences for the young students. For a number of weeks at a time, the pre primary environment is filled with theme related programming. Learning experiences such as tabletop activities and storybooks for the whole group storybook reading activity are selected to complement the theme. The appearance of the home corner or dramatic play area in particular, is generally transformed to reflect the theme.

The whole group storybook reading ritual in the pre primary classroom is routinely carried out at a specific time each day. Such as after fruit time and/or before home time. The pre primary children usually congregate in what is known as the "mat" area for the storybook reading. They learn very early in the school year that the location of the mat area is defined by the pre primary teacher's chair. The children use the teacher's chair as a "cue", in much the same way as they use the teacher's movements around the various locations in the pre primary classroom to indicate what is taking place and what may be following (Schultz & Florio, 1979). The pre primary teacher's chair generally signifies whole group mat area activities. Once the students are familiar with the daily classroom routine, they are able to organize themselves in front of the teacher's chair in readiness for the whole group storybook reading, without teacher supervision.

Empirical observation suggests that pre primary teachers often change the location of the mat area at the commencement of a new theme or a

new school term. Relocating the mat area is simple to achieve. It merely requires the movement of the teacher's chair into a different position in the pre primary classroom. Relocating the mat area need not necessarily alter the pre primary teacher's expectations, nor the student's understanding of the norms and expectations for the whole group storybook reading interaction. However, a review of research literature on social interaction in classrooms suggests that the context of the interactivity is affected by a number of factors.

3.3.1 Background Factors

The background factors the pre primary teacher brings to the whole group storybook reading interaction influences the approach that is adopted in the pre primary classroom. The pre primary teacher's belief, attitude and knowledge about whole group storybook reading may guide decision making about when the activity is to be carried out, the amount of time that is allocated to the session, and the frequency with which the activity is carried out. The aims and expectations the pre primary teacher has for the activity may affect the choice of book and how the whole group storybook reading activity is organized. The pre primary teacher's story book reading style may influence the teaching strategies employed and more significantly, the pre primary teacher's reading style may impact on the degree of communicative contributions that are encouraged.

The background factors the pre primary students bring to the storybook reading activity also impact on the reading context. The pre primary students' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, parental attitudes and knowledge concerning schooling and storybook reading may

contribute to the children's familiarity, experience and interest that has been developed in storybooks. These factors also impact on the expectations the students may have for the storybook reading session. Individual student factors such as cognitive ability, personality, social development, literacy and language competence and communicative skills may affect the level of participation and the extent of communicative contributions students contribute during the storybook reading interaction.

The context of the whole group storybook reading activity may be influenced by external considerations at the school level such as the school's development plan. Literacy and language programs and policies that are implemented at a school level generally include the pre primary teacher operating from a classroom based on site with the primary school. This inclusion allows the pre primary teacher access to staff development days and in-service training. The availability of current educational literature and practice may influence the pre primary teacher's curriculum practice. At a classroom level, the size and composition of the whole group is likely to affect the nature and extent of the communicative repertoire the pre primary students are encouraged to share. The pre primary teacher's perception of a student's ability and the subsequent questions that are asked by the teacher may influence the opportunities and limitations young children experience when they attempt to communicate in group situations. The cohesive manner in which the teacher and students relate to each other and the relationships they have established, may also have an impact on the social context of the storybook reading activity.

3.3.2 Classroom Communication

It has been indicated earlier that research into classroom communication has focused on teacher dominated talk and limited student responses. There are high demands on the pre primary teacher to provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences in the area of social, emotional, physical and cognitive development within the school curriculum. In addition to these demands, attention is also accorded to specific areas of development that are a part of the primary school's annual development plan. This leaves the pre primary teacher little room to introduce and include a new learning experience which will encourage and accommodate reciprocal communicative opportunities among pre primary students.

Therefore, there appears to be a need to examine the daily learning experiences that are routinely carried out in the pre primary classroom. This would allow an investigation into classroom contexts that may have the potential for inviting young students to genuinely contribute to the communicative constructions that occur throughout the pre primary school day. Evidence suggests that the whole group storybook reading context in pre primary classrooms generates communicative repertoires which extend beyond teacher dominated talk, or simple factual recall of information that has been gained from the storybook reading session. Whole group storybook reading would appear to provide an opportunity for students to initiate the communication and to include personal knowledge and experience into their communicative contributions.

An interactional approach based on the Vygotskian perspective of development through social interaction, particularly the speech that

occurs during the interaction, would most appropriately investigate the communication that occurs under adult guidance within the socially constructed context of the whole group storybook reading activity. By developing an understanding of the social context of the storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms, it may be possible to gain an appreciation of the situated nature of the communication and the types of communicative contributions that are made by the teacher and the students. By attempting to gain an understanding of the nature and the extent of the communications that are shared, it may be possible to determine the potential whole group storybook reading activity may have for encouraging communicative reciprocity in pre primary classrooms. The focus of this study is to describe closely the socially constructed nature of the whole group storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms. The social context of the activity is central to explaining the communication that is constructed by the teacher and the students, because communicative repertoires are determined by the social situation in which they occur (Cazden 1988).

3.3.3 Student Communicative Contributions

Young students commencing pre primary bring with them a communicative repertoire that is usually different from the communications they construct during social interaction in the classroom. Whilst a number of students may have encountered some classroom communication through sessional attendance at the pre primary as a four year old, their communications may never-the-less be at variance with the communications that are utilized in pre primary classrooms. This difference in use of communications may be attributed to the differences in social interactions and the situated nature of the

communication that occurs in pre primary classrooms. As a result of the students' general unfamiliarity with pre primary classroom interactivity and communication early in the school year a significant part of the whole group activity is allocated to establishing norms and expectations for the social interactions in which the students will participate. The initial focus of whole group interaction is on establishing the conventions of how the students are to sit; putting their hand up if they wish to speak; and only one child speaking at a time (Edwards & Westgate, 1937).

It is likely that initial directives and expectations given by the pre primary teacher during whole group social interaction develop into an abbreviated form once the teacher perceives that the children are able to participate in an appropriate manner. Moreover, directives and expectations used by the teacher shift from a whole group focus to an individual focus. The teacher communicates to individual students by name, in order to redirect the student's attention back to the interaction;

"Is everyone sitting beautifully?" changes to "Millicent sitting beautifully please".

Similarly directives take on a more individual approach.

"Now don't forget, I want all hands up please. No calling out."

This changes to "Nathan, I can't hear you if you call out. Please put your hand up if you want to say something."

The daily program in the pre primary classroom is essentially based on small group and whole group participative learning experiences. The interactional environment in which the pre primary students function is significant and therefore warrants consideration. It is through classroom

social interaction that pre primary students develop an understanding of participative norms and expectations. The students develop an awareness of the situated nature of classroom communication that is constructed during social interaction (Cochran-Smith 1984).

A focus of this study is the communication, particularly the communicative contributions which pre primary students contribute during the whole group storybook reading activity. The pre primary students require time to develop an understanding of the norms and expectations necessary for the interaction that occurs during whole group storybook reading. The students are spontaneous about contributing personal experiences into their communications that occur during social interaction. A number of students endeavour to communicate when they perceive a need, or when they perceive an opportunity to communicate, with little regard to the relevance of the communication to the storybook reading context.

For example, a teacher, after reading a story about a dog called Caddy's Birthday Adventure directs the following question to the students. "Why do you think Caddy (the dog) buried her bone under the lemon tree"? A number of children raise their hands, indicating a desire to respond. The teacher nominates a child. "Anthea, why do you think Caddy buried her bone under the lemon tree"? Anthea responds with, "Well Mrs Walter, um um my dog had puppies and mum said that we could keep one".

Edwards and Westgate (1987) contend that this situation arises because students have not developed an understanding of the protocol surrounding classroom communication. It is through familiarity with

classroom constructed repertoires that students develop some proficiency in adjusting their classroom communication to what they have learned the teacher is seeking from the communication.

The present study examines the social context of the whole group storybook reading activity and the communicative repertoires constructed by the pre primary teacher and the students throughout the school year. This provides an opportunity to explore and map any significant changes that occur in the situated nature of the storybook reading interaction. Figure 1 presents a conceptual model of the variables this study investigated in relation to the potential whole group storybook reading has for developing communicative reciprocity in pre primary classrooms.

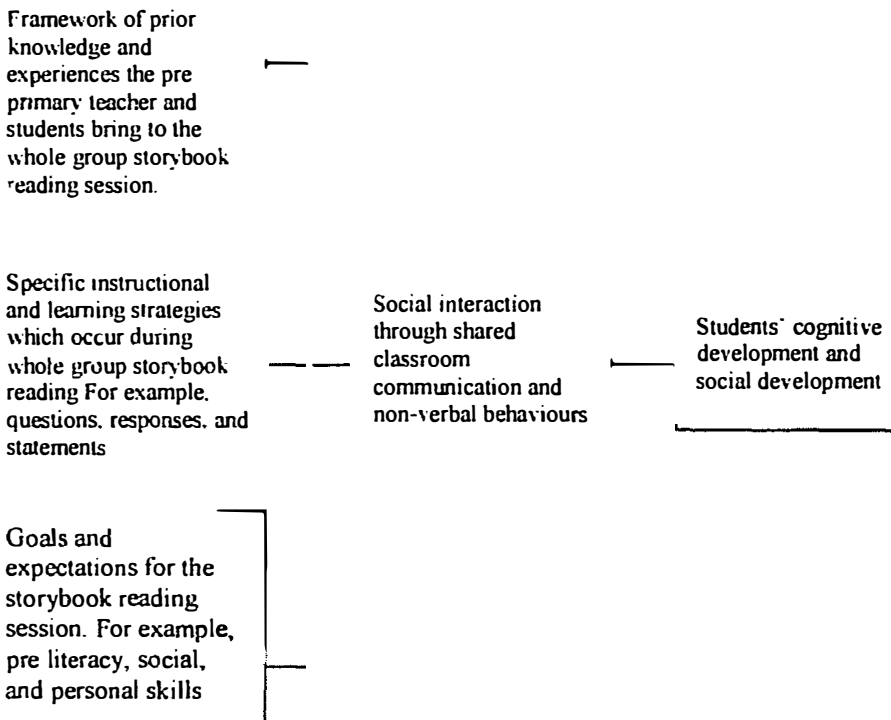


Figure 1. The Vygotskian Model of Cognitive Development for Storybook Reading in Pre Primary Classrooms

The model and the research centred around the social interaction that takes place during whole group storybook reading in pre primary classrooms. This social context is affected by the shared communications between teachers and students, and students and their peers. Non-verbal behaviours by the classroom teachers, such as fingers on lips, encourage on-task behaviours and are also important to the social context. The main variables that influence the social context are: the framework of prior knowledge and experiences the teacher and students bring to the storybook reading activity; the specific instructional and learning strategies that occur during storybook reading activities; and the goals and expectations for the storybook reading activity. Each of the variables independently and collectively influence the social context created during whole group storybook reading sessions. This also impacts on the students' cognitive and social development, because the presence of the variables in each of the pre primary classrooms creates a unique social context that assists the students' learning and development.

Evidence previously noted indicates a number of similarities in the whole group storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms. The storybook reading is carried out daily, the current classroom theme guides the teacher's choice in books to be read, and some time is allocated to shared discussion and communication. Differences noted occur in the timetabling and format the pre primary teacher adopts. A marked difference, which is significant to this study, is the variation in the communications that exist in different storybook reading contexts. Cazden (1988) and Dillon (1988) contend that classrooms following similar curriculum and content, continue to experience differences in classroom constructed communications because the communication that occurs is constructed within different social contexts.

classroom constructed communications because the communication that occurs is constructed within different social contexts.

3.4 Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical orientation for describing the socially constructed context of whole group storybook reading in this study has been based on Vygotsky's social construction of development. Principally because the Vygotskian perspective does not singularly focus on the immediate events that occur during social interaction, additional consideration is accorded to the background factors that individuals bring to the social interaction. Pre primary teachers bring to the storybook reading interaction background factors that include personal experience and interest in books. It is likely that the teacher's level of enthusiasm for book reading will influence the attention and interest pre primary students exhibit during the activity. Individual pre primary teacher's beliefs, knowledge and attitudes towards language and literacy development, and the particular function whole group storybook reading serves in attaining language and literacy, are background factors that influence the social context of storybook reading.

The introduction of the First Steps Oral Language Developmental Continuum (1992) in primary schools by the Education Department of Western Australia in the early 1990s has provided teachers with information on an integrated approach to language development. The Oral Language Developmental Continuum is developed around three modules specifically aimed at developing effective communication through socially constructed learning experiences (for example, news telling and group discussions). At the time information for this study

was collected, the First Steps Oral Language Developmental Continuum was available to pre primary and primary schools after an in-service into the use of First Steps had been completed by teachers.

It is likely that information acquired through the use of the First Steps Oral Language Developmental Continuum, adds to the background knowledge pre primary teachers bring to the storybook reading context. Familiarity and level of success experienced with First Steps, particularly in the area of developing effective communication in students, may affect the pre primary teacher's approach to language and literacy development during the socially constructed storybook reading activity.

Some of the issues to be considered with the application of the First Steps Oral Language Continuum are: that the sequential stages of learning outlined in the Continuum will not correspond exactly with the learning requirements of all students in a classroom because of the differential rates of learning for students in a pre primary classroom; and the strategies described in the Continuum need to be considered as a component of a much broader program for language development. The integration of the prior knowledge and experience that students bring to whole group storybook readings and specific curriculum requirements related to achievement within the framework of the Continuum are significant considerations for teachers.

All pre primary teachers involved in this study have used the First Steps Oral Language Developmental Continuum to some extent. The three case study teachers were familiar with the Continuum and had included particular aspects of the First Steps Oral Language Developmental Continuum into their teaching for at least two years prior to the study.

3.5 Summary

This chapter presented an explanation of the theoretical perspective from which this study has been developed. Vygotsky's theory focuses on the social construction of development in that development is influenced initially through social interactions in which individuals participate, and later through self-regulation of the processes that have been acquired through social interaction. Particular attention has been accorded to the communication that occurs during social interaction and the teacher's role in facilitating development through the communication that is exchanged during social interaction. The Vygotskian perspective does not singularly emphasize the social interaction. Consideration is given to the background factors individuals bring to the interaction, the strategies that are employed by individuals during the interaction and the aims and expectation individuals have for the interaction.

The second section of the chapter presented the conceptual framework addressed in the study. The factors investigated have been derived from the theoretical orientation of Vygotsky's social foundations of development. The socially constructed whole group storybook reading ritual is carried out daily in the pre primary classroom. The context of the storybook reading interaction is affected by the pre primary teacher's and the children's background knowledge, experience and attitude towards storybooks and storybook reading, the aims and expectations for the storybook reading activity; and the strategies employed during the activity. The situated nature of the whole group storybook reading activity is significant, because of the impact the context has on the communicative repertoires constructed during the interaction. Time is

allocated to discussion and shared communication during the storybook reading. However, the nature and extent of the communicative repertoires the students are encouraged to construct are affected by the role assumed by the pre primary teacher during the social interaction. The perception the teacher has of each student's language and literacy competence and the teacher's sensitivity to the developmental needs of the students further affect the opportunities available for communicative construction within the storybook reading context.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological issues affecting the design of the study. The chapter considers qualitative and quantitative research methods and concludes that a qualitative method within the naturalistic paradigm is the most appropriate for the study of whole group storybook reading in pre primary classrooms. The philosophical perspectives and research methods of qualitative research are also evaluated and it is further concluded the interpretive epistemology based on a case study research method provided the flexibility and opportunity for the researcher to adequately answer the research questions.

Chapter Four outlines the case study method with particular emphasis on case study data collection, analysis of case study data and the credibility of the case study approach, including references to the triangulation procedures adopted.

4.2 Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Research methods can be classified in various ways, but one of the most common distinctions is between qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research methods were originally developed in the natural sciences to study natural phenomena. Examples of quantitative methods

that are widely accepted in the social sciences include survey methods, numerical methods and laboratory experiments.

Qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable the researchers to study social and cultural phenomena. Examples of qualitative research methods are action research, ethnography and case study research. Qualitative data sources include participant observation (fieldwork), interviews and researcher interpretation. Data sources such as these allow qualitative research to be used in a variety of disciplines where a number of approaches, methods, and techniques can be adopted (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts in which they live and function. This understanding is developed around the participants' perspectives and the specific social and institutional contexts from which the information is gathered. Attempting to quantify data in such situations would not allow a full understanding of the situation being examined (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994).

Some researchers have suggested combining one or more research methods in the one study. This approach is generally referred to as triangulation. The application of triangulation procedures is further developed later in this chapter. The integration of two research methods has merit. It serves as a useful opportunity to use the two sets of information gathered to check and support the different findings against each other. Triangulation also allows the researcher to use quantitative methods to manage copious quantities of data collected in the initial stages of research. The researcher may then use the quantified data to

map out a general plan that can be examined closely using qualitative methods. The qualitative phase would focus on exploring and interpreting a specific set of participants and their perspectives in order to gain an understanding of the situation at hand. Useful discussions of triangulation can be found in Bryman (1988; 1992), Gable (1994), Lee (1991), and Sieber (1982).

As well as the qualitative and quantitative distinctions which are commonly made research methods have been described as objective versus subjective (Burrell & Morgan, 1979); as being concerned with general laws (nomothetic) versus being concerned with the uniqueness of each particular situation (idiographic); as aimed at prediction and control versus explanation and understanding; and as taking an outsider (etic) versus an insider (emic) perspective (Luthan & Davis, 1982; Morey & Luthans, 1984). Considerable controversy continues to surround the use of these terms in research.

Qualitative research methods are stressed within the naturalistic paradigm, because qualitative methods are more readily adapted to the researcher being the key instrument in the research procedure. Researchers, as humans, tend toward interviewing, observing, exploring and interpreting non verbal cues that are part of the context from which the information is gathered (Hakim, 1987).

4.3 Perspectives Informing Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is based on some underlying assumptions about what constitutes valid research and which research methods are appropriate. In order to conduct qualitative research, it is important to

know what the assumptions are. The most important philosophical assumptions are those that relate to the underlying epistemology that guides the research. Epistemology refers to the assumptions about knowledge and how it can be obtained (Hirschheim, 1992).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest the four underlying paradigms for qualitative research, of positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism. Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), following Chua (1986), suggest three categories based on the underlying research epistemology of positivist, interpretive, and critical. However, while the three research epistemologies are philosophically distinct, in the practice of social research, the distinctions are not always clear and therefore are subject to considerable disagreement (Lee, 1989).

Qualitative research can be positivist, interpretive, or critical. The choice of a specific qualitative research method is independent of the underlying philosophical position adopted. For example, case study research can be positivist (Yin, 1994), interpretive (Walsham, 1993), or critical, just as action research can be positivist (Clark, 1972), interpretive (Elden & Chisholm, 1993) or critical (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Positivist research assumes that reality is objectively given and can be described by measurable properties that are independent of the researcher and their instruments. Positivist studies generally attempt to test theory in order to increase the predictive understanding of phenomena. Research has been classified as positivist if there was evidence of formal propositions, quantifiable measures of variables, hypothesis testing, and the drawing of inferences about a phenomenon

from the sample to the stated population (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). Examples of a positivist approach to qualitative research include Yin's (1994) work on case study research.

Interpretive research assumes that access to reality (given, or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings. The philosophical base of interpretive research is hermeneutics and phenomenology (Boland, 1985). Interpretive studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them. Interpretive methods of research are aimed at producing an understanding of the context of the study, and the process whereby the study influences and is influenced by the context (Walsham, 1993). Interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994). Examples of an interpretive approach to qualitative research include Boland's (1991), Klein and Myer's (1999), and Walsham's (1993) work.

Critical research assumes that social reality is historically constituted and that it is produced and reproduced by people. Although people can act to consciously change their social and economic circumstances, critical researchers recognize that people's ability to do so is constrained by various forms of social, cultural, and political domination. The main task of critical research is seen as being one of social critique, whereby the restrictive and alienating conditions of the status quo are highlighted. Critical research focuses on the oppositions, conflicts, and contradictions in contemporary society and seeks to impact on the elimination of the causes of alienation and domination. Examples of the critical approach to

qualitative research include Ngwenyama and Lee's (1997) and Hirschheim and Klein's (1994) work.

An interpretive research epistemology is the most suitable for studying whole group storybook reading in the classroom because the research questions call for the determination of meaning from the teachers' and students' shared communications within a socially constructed classroom context.

4.4 Qualitative Research Methods

A research method is a strategy of inquiry which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design and data collection. Just as there are various philosophical perspectives that are part of qualitative research, there are also various qualitative research methods that can be used. The four most common qualitative research methods are action research, ethnographic research, grounded research, and case study research. Each of these research methods is discussed briefly.

Action Research

There are several definitions of action research, but one of the most widely cited is that of Rapoport who defines action research in the following way:

Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals

of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework (Rapoport, 1970, p.499).

The definition draws attention to the collaborative aspect of action research and to possible ethical dilemmas that arise from its use. It also makes clear that action research is concerned with adding to the knowledge that already exists within the social sciences (Clark, 1972). Useful overviews of action research can be found in Susman and Evered (1988), and Ytterstad (1996). Action research, including 4th generation Action Research, involves the examination of change in existing practice that is affected by an action phase aimed at bringing about a required outcome. For example, in an educational setting action research could be linked to observance and documentation of outcomes associated with curriculum development and professional development programs.

Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic research comes from the discipline of social and cultural anthropology where an ethnographer spends considerable time in the field. Ethnographers immerse themselves in the lives of the people they study (Lewis, 1985). After the early work of Suchman (1987), and Zuboff (1988), an ethnographic approach has now become more widely used in the study of classroom teaching.

Grounded Research

Grounded theory is a research method that seeks to develop theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. According to Martin and Turner (1986), grounded theory is an inductive, theory

discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations of data. The major difference between grounded theory and other methods is its specific approach to theory development. Grounded theory suggests there should be a continuous interplay between data collection and data analysis. Grounded theory approaches are becoming more common in classrooms, because the method is extremely useful in developing context based, process oriented descriptions and explanations of phenomena (Orlikowski, 1993).

Case Study Research

Case study research emphasises a desire for an holistic understanding of cultural systems of action (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1990). Cultural systems of action refer to sets of interrelated activities engaged in by the teachers and students in a social environment. Because case studies are multi-perspectival analyses, the researcher does not only consider the perspective of the classroom teacher and students, or the communication exchanged. Other significant considerations included in the analyses are the classroom context, and the social interactions that occur between the teacher and the students.

Although there are many definitions of case study research, Yin (1994) defines the scope of a case study as follows. A case study is an emperical study that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when

- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Case studies can be either single or multiple case designs. Single cases are used to confirm or challenge a theory, or to represent particular characteristics or features of a case. Single case studies are also useful for revelatory cases where an observer may have access to a phenomenon that was previously unavailable. Single case designs require careful consideration to avoid misrepresentation of events and maximise the observer's access to the evidence. Multiple case studies follow a replication logic. Each individual case study consists of a whole study in which evidence is drawn from various sources and conclusions are subsequently made from the information that has been collected. Sources of information for case studies in a classroom context are interviews, informal observations, and participant observations.

The research questions associated with this study directed the research method to a case study approach because the research questions were the 'what' and 'why' types; the focus of the study was on current rather than historical events; and the researcher had minimal control over actual classroom events. The case study method was considered to be most appropriate because the researcher collaborated with the teachers to review findings and clarify issues that arose during the whole group storybook reading sessions. The case study method was also relevant because the research was undertaken over a long period of time in multiple classroom environments.

Other research methods were considered and eliminated. For example, the action research method contemplated change-based actions related to

a planned or strategic communication initiative between teachers and students. Ethnographic research was not appropriate because the study did not require an in-depth and long-term record of cultural issues associated with whole group storybook reading in the classroom. Grounded theory research method was not relevant because the research questions were not aimed at formulating a theory about the communications between teachers and students during storybook reading sessions.

4.5 Case Study Research

The case study method is an accepted strategy for educational research when 'what' and 'why' questions are being asked and the researcher does not want to exercise significant experimental control over the real life classroom context being studied. Under these arrangements the researcher is able to identify a whole range of unique factors emanating from the interaction between pre primary teachers and their pre primary students during the whole group storybook reading sessions within a classroom context.

In this study the data were collected, analysed and discussed with the teachers within an interpretivist paradigm. The aim of the interpretivist approach was to explore the classroom communications during storybook reading and this provided an understanding of the various teachers' and students' contributions. Two fundamental reasons directed the study towards an interpretivist paradigm. It permitted the use of case study and naturalistic inquiry approaches and it allowed close collaboration between the researcher and teachers. The use of a case study within this paradigm allowed an analysis of the classroom

dynamics and, in particular, the communicative contributions of the teachers and the students.

Another reason for choosing an interpretivist paradigm was that it allowed for the complexities of different classroom situations to be examined. Throughout the duration of the study data were collected from three different schools and classrooms where teachers' and students' participation and interaction during storybook reading had the potential to emerge in different ways. The interpretivist approach was able to capture the complexity of communications within the classroom and encompass the subjective nature of a classroom context. This approach also permitted a more comprehensive and shared understanding through the embedded processes involving the researcher and the teachers for regular contact and discussion throughout the study.

4.6 Case Study Techniques for Data Collection

Case study research methods generally use one or more techniques for collecting empirical data. These techniques range from interviews, observational techniques such as participant observation and fieldwork. The variety of data that could be collected may be endless. As the process of data collection is progressed, the nature of the data allows the researcher to systematically select qualitative data analyses that could be used. For example, if data are collected in an interview which is deemed as the other persons story, then it would follow that the researcher would examine data analysis approaches which are generally used to study narratives (Riessman, 1993). If however, the interviews were considered to be collected conversations, the research may examine the choices available in the area of conversation analysis (Psathas, 1995). Another

option is to consider the information gathered through interviews as discourse. This would direct the researcher to analytical approaches that focus on discourse analysis (Schiffrin, 1994). Interviews are an essential source of case study evidence.

By making visits to the classrooms, the case study environments, created an opportunity for direct observations of teacher and student communications during the whole group storybook reading session. Classroom communication provides a rich body of interactions for analysis, along with a number of challenges for the researcher. One problem is the aspect of translating aspects of teacher and student behaviour into low inference variables, that is, defining explicit, directly observable behaviours as categories of behaviours to be examined (Gage, 1978; Murray, 1983; Sinclair & Coulter, 1975). Another problem is the complexity of teacher-student interaction and the number of variables that can affect the communications that occur in the classroom context. Some examples of variables that impact on the teacher question-student response behaviours include the teacher, the student, the teacher's agenda, the type of activity, the class size, the classroom climate, the topic, the cognitive level of the student, the interest the student has in responding, and affective domains (Kubota, 1989).

Most research on classroom communication focuses on the relationship between teaching behaviours and student responses (Gage, 1978). Flanders (1948) was one of the first to develop systematic observation techniques for coding interactions in the classroom, and his system has been adapted by other researchers (Stallings & Frieberg, 1991; Wilen, 1991). Other techniques involve the categorization of verbal interactions

between teachers and students as a series of pedagogical moves which researchers must know if they are to understand classroom communications (Lindsay, 1990). The expectations for communication in the classroom are usually established and modelled by the teacher. The teacher generally decides who is to speak and when students are to speak. The principal communication in the classroom is the teacher's question and the student's response. The teacher uses questioning strategies to motivate students at the commencement of a lesson, while questions are asked to maintain on-task behaviours during learning activities, and to check student understanding (Wilén, 1991).

4.7 Analysis of Case Study Data

During case study data analysis, the researcher takes a closer look at data that have been collected and begins to examine, interpret, and make meaning from the information. In the early stages of data analysis, the data can be organized in different ways so that sense can be made of it (Chenail & Maione, 1997). Sometimes qualitative researchers can go through several organizing approaches before they establish a reasonable fit for the data they have collected, and the subsequent meaning they are attempting to make from the information which has been carefully gathered.

There are many analysis tools that can be used to study qualitative data (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Tesch, 1992). Analysis tools are ways of organizing data into meaningful units. That is, they help the researcher to manage the data so the process of meaningful construction is facilitated in an efficient manner. It is essential that the data analysis tool selected by the researcher is consistent with the research questions the researcher

is attempting to answer, and the epistemological stance undertaken in the research study.

In order to analyze classroom communications, most researchers have categorized teacher questions on the basis of the level of thinking and reasoning the teacher's questions stimulate. Bloom's taxonomy is the most widely known system for labelling cognitive questions asked by the classroom teacher, and the responses made by the students to the questions being asked. However, there are other models that have been developed specifically for analyzing classroom communication (Ellis, 1993; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1989; Wilen, 1991). According to Cazden (1988), educational research has supported the value of higher order questions asked by the teacher in the classroom context. Higher order questions encourage students to draw on their prior knowledge and use creative and problem solving strategies to answer the teacher's question. Responses to higher order questions reflect the student's ability to transfer information using thinking and reasoning skills. However, the thinking and reasoning are reflected through language, but not necessarily constrained by it. The accuracy of the response tends to reflect the thinking and reasoning that has been applied in the process. Nevertheless, Dillon (1988) suggests the level of question asked by a teacher does not necessarily correlate with the level of response given by the student. Dillon indicates that a high order question can elicit a high or low order response from the student. For example:

TEACHER: Why do you think the puppy buried her bone under the lemon tree, Nathan?

NATHAN: I think she just did.

Or,

TEACHER: Why do you think the puppy buried her bone under the lemon tree, Marcus?

MARCUS: Well, because she thinks no one will find the bone there. The lemon tree is her secret hiding spot.

Different types, or levels of questions serve different purposes in the classroom. Factual questions and low order questions can be used effectively to check student understanding, to encourage students who may not be able to use thinking and reasoning skills effectively because of language competency, or to encourage students who may not feel confident about answering questions that are cognitively challenging. Open ended questions and higher order questions are generally used to challenge students to think and reason, to involve students by asking them their opinions, and to ask them to relate personal experience and personal knowledge. Another advantage of open ended questions is that they provide students practice and rehearsal of the sort of communication that they engage in outside the classroom context. Questions that usually make up casual conversations are generally open ended.

Despite the value of open ended questions, much of the research that has been carried out on classroom communication suggests that the teacher uses communication to maintain control. Opportunities for promoting independent thought and creativity through high order problem solving questions is minimal (Lemke, 1990). Teachers determined the direction of the communication, using a variety of control strategies. Even when open ended questions were being asked, Dillon (1988) suggests that the

teacher's agenda for the communication determined whether the questions were truly open ended or "pseudo" open ended. He explains that what may appear to be an open ended question could really be a closed question, because the teacher would direct the students' responses until a teacher desired response was given by the students.

The most common shared pattern that occurs in the classroom is a triadic pattern. It consists of a teacher question, student response, and teacher evaluation. This three part structure of initiation-response-evaluation has been recognized in all year levels and in many subject areas of the curriculum (Sinclair & Coulter, 1975; Edwards & Furlong, 1978; Stubbs, 1983; Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Cazden, 1988). Lemke argues that these patterns of communication inhibit the students' ability to learn the discourse of particular subject areas. He contends that students have limited opportunity to practice talking about ideas, describing phenomena, constructing explanations, or simply being allowed to justify their conclusions. Different data analysis methods can be adopted in qualitative case study research. The strategy adopted in this case study was to keep the analytical approach relevant and simple, whilst allowing the researcher to make meaning from information gathered. Data analysis methods used in this study are explained fully in Chapter Five.

Computerized qualitative data analysis programs can produce the same effects as audit trails, participant checks and journal keeping in a qualitative case study. The packages which assist in data analysis can affect confidence in any findings, depending on the relationship with previous sensemakings of the information gathered (Weitzman & Miles, 1994). The software package NUD*IST (Qualitative Solutions and Research, 1994) was used in this case study to undertake a wide variety

of forms of textual analysis. The most simple of these was the determination of frequency of key terms and phrases that occurred in shared communication during the whole group storybook reading activity in the pre primary classrooms. The analysis was used to identify the pre primary teacher's contributions and the pre primary students' contributions during storybook reading. The NUD*IST package recorded the frequency of use of particular questions and responses by both the pre primary teacher and the pre primary students. In addition, the package facilitated the identification of patterns in communication that occurred in the communicative contributions.

4.8 Credibility of the Case Study

Credibility is an issue for all forms of research, however it can be considered and achieved in different ways (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & McCormeck Steinmetz, 1991; Maxwell, 1992). A frequent criticism of case study methodology is that the dependence on a single case means it is incapable of providing credible conclusions. However, it can be argued that the relative size of the participants, whether 1, 10, or 100 cases, does not transform a multiple case into a macroscopic study (Hamel et al., 1993; Yin, 1994). Hamel et al. and Yin argue that the objectives of the study should establish the parameters, and then should be applied to all research. In this way, even a single case study would be regarded as acceptable, provided it met the established objective. Yin (1989) states that general applicability results from the set of methodological qualities of the case study and the rigour with which the case study is constructed. Moreover, he contends that case study research can be seen to satisfy the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining.

How a researcher establishes credibility is partly based on the epistemological assumptions guiding the research. Validity and reliability are terms commonly used in quantitative studies. They are based on positivist assumptions that underlie quantitative and experimental research (Salner, 1989). In qualitative case studies, researchers use several different terms to address issues of credibility with respect to how a study is conducted. Along with credibility are transferability, dependability, confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Zyzanski, McWhinney, Blake, Crabtree & Miller, 1992), and trustworthiness (Atkinson, Heath & Chenail, 1991).

One important issue related to credibility is researcher bias. In qualitative case studies, researchers view bias as unavoidable. Brody states:

"Since the naturalistic investigator is him – or herself, the research instrument, naturalistic inquiry cannot avoid observer bias by using the instrument to insulate the experiment from the preconceptions and assumptions that may have influenced data gathering, and processing becomes an inherent part of the conduct of the study" (Brody, 1992. p.539).

Triangulation methods were used where appropriate to establish the credibility of the research procedures by arranging data related to an aspect of the classroom communication from more than one source. Multiple sources of data from three different classrooms have been referred to previously and provided material for constant comparisons between the different sources of data. Other triangulation methods were the confirmation of data and findings through reviews and conversations

with the teachers. In this case study, several steps were taken to establish credibility. They were:

- The researcher examined personal and teaching preconceptions regarding whole group storybook reading in pre primary classrooms with a number of pre primary teachers before adopting a case study approach.
- The researcher examined accuracy of data. Transcripts of the shared communications during storybook reading and field notes were discussed with pre primary teachers regularly. Having access to original data pre primary teachers were able to determine the accuracy of the research findings. The teachers were able to understand how the study developed categories and distinctions between communicative contributions during the storybook reading sessions. This is known as data triangulation.
- Long term and repeated classroom observations during the study enhanced the credibility of the findings because it allowed a comparison of data at different times throughout the study. This is known as time triangulation.
- Data were collected from three different schools and classrooms throughout the study. This is known as site triangulation.
- The research procedure included a Pilot Study that provided useful insights to guide the three individual case studies.

The number of case studies under investigation is important in conducting case studies in qualitative research. Where there are limited cases to study, researchers have to maximize the number of observations made. Confidence in case study research findings is influenced by the number of observations collected, because it enables qualitative differences to be established between the teacher and student during whole group storybook reading communications. It also provides different perspectives of the same case. The researcher can also reflect on one observation at a time and make sense of it, and then use the sensemaking perspective to look for something qualitatively different in the phenomenon.

Another area to explore in these studies, is the multiple sources of data from the one case. For example, while observing the case develop over time, the researcher can generate field notes from participant observations, interview participants and study the tapes and transcripts, and conduct discourse analysis from tapes of the actual whole group storybook reading sessions. In the current study, in each of these data bases it was possible to conduct different analyses. All these actions can be brought together to construct a finding or impression that can be challenged. This challenge encourages the researcher to represent interpretations and understandings of a case study with a certain level of confidence. Techniques such as participant checking and journal keeping, were also used as challenges to the meanings of the phenomenon, as they may produce different interpretations to be explained by the researcher, while the case studies were being carried out.

The use of multiple sources of evidence in the case study ensured a convergence of different lines of inquiry into whole group storybook reading in the pre primary classroom. This process of triangulation increased the accuracy of the case study findings.

4.9 Conclusions

A number of research designs could have been used in this study of whole group storybook reading in pre primary classrooms. However, an examination of the methodological issues impacting on the research design and an alignment of the research questions to the research design options, confirms that a qualitative method within a naturalistic paradigm and based on a case study approach, is the most appropriate. A case study method of inquiry is suited to understanding the teacher's communicative contribution and the students' communicative contributions that occur in a socially constructed learning environment. However, when case study research is carried out, attention must be given to the quality of the research process.

Classroom research can be classified as naturalistic if it is assumed that the knowledge of reality is gained through social constructions such as language and shared meanings. Case study research does not predefine dependent and independent variables. It focuses on the complexity of human sense making as the situation between the classroom teacher and students emerges. In this case study, the method of research in the classrooms is aimed at producing an understanding of the context of the whole group storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms. The emphasis is on the communicative contributions that occur specifically in the storybook reading context. Naturalistic in-depth case studies are a

form of inquiry that relies on participant observer data as well as other sources of data which are gathered about the classroom context, such as the process of social interaction between the teacher and the students during whole group storybook reading in the pre primary classroom.

Case study research has a key task of seeking meaning in context. The contextualization issue requires that the subject matter of the research be set in its social and natural context. This allows independent observers to see how the current situation under investigation emerged. In case study research, it is generally assumed that any observable patterns of communication are constantly changing between the teacher and the students, between students and students, and according to subject areas that are being taught in the classrooms. Therefore, when the researcher undertakes the field research, the data that are gathered have already been influenced by the backgrounds the teacher and students bring to the whole group storybook reading sessions and the social context that has been created in the storybook reading activity. Contextualization requires that these phenomena be explicitly reflected in the research process.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCEDURE

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five describes the research methodology used in this study in order to address the research questions that focus on the socially constructed whole group storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms. The research carried out has been undertaken in three phases. This approach was deemed appropriate because it established a reliable framework for the study. It also helped to promote a meaningful appreciation of the social interaction and the communicative contributions that occur during the whole group storybook reading activity.

Phase one involved an open-ended questionnaire that examined pre primary teachers' attitudes, aims and expectations for the storybook reading activity. Phase two was carried out as a pilot study. A small number of teachers were video recorded during the storybook reading activity. Phase two provided an opportunity to examine the storybook reading context as it occurred in a usual classroom environment. The communicative contributions that were recorded in phase two were used to develop a coding system for the communication that occurred. Phase three was conducted as case studies. Three pre primary classrooms were selected to participate in a year long study. Storybook reading sessions

were recorded on a fortnightly basis in order to understand and explain the storybook reading activity. The year long approach allowed the researcher to map any changes that may have occurred in the storybook reading activity during the school year.

The research information for each of the three phases has been gathered from pre primary classrooms in the Perth metropolitan area of Western Australia. An explanation of each phase and the research design and procedures for data collection and data analysis are described.

5.2 Research Background

This study is developed around a naturalistic paradigm because it seeks to illustrate, explain and understand the whole group storybook reading activity as it occurs in a usual pre primary setting. Naturalistic inquiry is always carried out in a natural setting because the context from which the information is drawn has a major bearing on the meaning and interpretation that is made from the inquiry (Hakim, 1987; Schwartz & Ogilvie, 1978). This emphasis on context whilst conducting a naturalistic inquiry is supported by socio cultural theory outlined in Chapter Three. Socio cultural theory contends that studies that examine interactions between the teacher and students, the mother and child, or the expert and novice, should consider the significance of the social interaction and the role it plays in contributing to the learner's thinking behaviours and cognitive development (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Rogoff, 1990).

During storybook reading, the communication that is shared between the teacher and the student is socially constructed. The teacher interacts with

the students, scaffolding and facilitating learning through shared thoughts and ideas. The communication that is exchanged during whole group storybook reading is quite specific to the context in which it occurs. Informal observations in pre primary classrooms confirm that storybook based communication is very different from the communication that occurs during table top activities, home corner play, and free outdoor play. It is this emphasis on context and the significance of social interaction that supports the naturalistic research approach undertaken in this study.

5.2.1 Naturalistic Inquiry - The Human as Instrument

When a naturalistic approach is adopted, the human as instrument is fundamental in gathering information. The human as instrument builds on intuition and experience and uses qualitative methods of inquiry such as interviews, observations, data analysis and other clues which arise from the fieldwork that is carried out (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). A human as instrument in a natural setting can have considerable impact on the context from which information is gathered, because the presence of an observer, no matter how unobtrusive, can still alter the nature of the existing environment (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). When the human as instrument is undertaking research in the pre primary classroom, where young students are curious about visitors and video equipment, it can be anticipated that young students are going to react in a manner that may alter the usual storybook reading context. Therefore, several steps were taken to ensure that the classroom context remained as natural as possible.

In Phase Two of the research process, a single storybook reading activity was recorded in five pre primary classrooms during November. The researcher spent time talking to the pre primary students. The students were informed that a video recording was being taken of their pre primary teacher, because the researcher was aware of how much the students enjoyed the storybook reading session. The video recording was made to help the researcher understand more about whole group storybook reading in pre primary classrooms. A short time was spent answering the students' questions about the video equipment. The video camera was placed behind the mat area where the students sat for the storybook reading activity. The initial introduction, the placement of the video camera behind the students, and more importantly, the time of year, allowed the storybook reading activity in Phase Two to be recorded without operational variations between the pre primary classrooms. It was clear the pre primary teachers' expectations for the whole group storybook reading activity were firmly in place. The pre primary students settled quickly and the storybook reading activity was carried out in the usual manner for each of the five pre primary classrooms. Informal discussions and a viewing of the videotape with each of the five pre primary teachers involved in Phase Two of the research, confirmed that the video equipment and the researcher's presence during the storybook reading session did not have a significant influence on the storybook reading context.

During Phase Three, the year long case studies were carried out in three pre primary classrooms located in a high socio-economic area, a middle socio-economic area, and a low socio-economic area. The different socio-economic areas were chosen because it was anticipated they could provide a more diverse set of students with respect to background

experience and knowledge brought to the storybook reading activities. As the researcher was going to be involved with the pre primary classes for an extended period of time, it was important that the video recording sessions did not alter the storybook reading context in a significant way. It was also essential that the researcher did not impose on the pre primary teachers and the manner in which they organized their classrooms. The three pre primary teachers selected for the case studies were all familiar to the researcher, and to each other. All three teachers had been enrolled in an Early Childhood, Bachelor of Education unit at Edith Cowan University, for which the researcher took responsibility the year prior to the commencement of the case studies. A friendship between the three case study teachers and the researcher ensured that a positive working relationship existed throughout the year. The pre primary teachers were enthusiastic about participating in the case studies. They were comfortable with the researcher's presence in the pre primary classrooms, and more importantly, they were able to discuss any concerns they may have had about the storybook reading sessions with the researcher and the other pre primary teachers.

When the researcher visited the three pre primary classrooms for the first video recording session, the students were informed that the researcher was going to videotape the teacher during storybook reading, because the researcher wanted to learn about storybook reading in the pre primary classrooms. Once again, time was allocated to talking with the students about the video equipment and allowing the students to have a turn looking through the video camera. Curiosity satisfied, the students settled for their first video recording session. Because the video camera was placed at the back of the mat area, once the students became involved in the storybook reading activity, very little attention was given

to the video equipment. In order to gather information without impacting on the natural storybook reading context, the researcher spent considerable time regularly assisting the pre primary teachers with tabletop activities, on days when the storybook reading sessions were not being video recorded. This allowed the researcher to learn the students' names, develop a friendly rapport with the students, and to participate in any experiences the pre primary students wished to share. The pre primary teachers encouraged this approach, because it allowed the video recording sessions to become a natural part of the fortnightly whole group storybook reading activity.

Time allocated to the pre primary classrooms provided the researcher with a wider picture of the pre primary environment. Clear links were established between the theme adopted and the learning experiences that were presented for the pre primary students. Learning experiences guided by a thematic approach, provided interest and motivation for the pre primary students. The classroom paintings, murals, and activity corners usually reflected the current theme. An important aspect of a thematic approach adopted by all three teachers in the case studies, was that storybooks selected for reading were closely linked to the theme. The teachers conveyed that this approach allowed them to focus on particular words for vocabulary development, as well as providing the students with areas of interest they could follow up when they borrowed books from their school and local community libraries.

The three case study teachers were involved in viewing video records of whole group storybook reading, because the arrangement proved successful during the Phase Two pilot study. The researcher met with the teachers during each of the school term breaks. The purpose of these five

informal meetings at the researcher's home was to acknowledge firstly, the case study teachers' contributions, and secondly, to check that the researcher's explanations of the storybook reading sessions were similar to the pre primary teachers' interpretations. The meetings also provided some benefit for the pre primary teachers, because they provided an opportunity for the teachers to discuss with each other language programs, themes adopted, excursions taken and pre primary students' strengths and weaknesses. Coming together to share ideas, also resulted in a valuable opportunity for exchanging storybooks, resources, learning experiences and themes.

5.3 Stage One: The Initial Study

Ten years of teaching experience in primary schools, and experience with teaching practice supervision involving novice teachers in primary and pre primary classrooms for the past seven years, has reinforced the researcher's belief that whole group storybook reading is highly regarded in junior primary classrooms. However, it was considered that before a case study approach was adopted to examine, understand and explain the social nature of the storybook reading context, an initial stage of information gathering would be required to establish a sound working framework for the entire study. The aim of the initial study was to provide preliminary information about whole group storybook reading in pre primary classrooms. It was anticipated that information gathered in the initial study would provide evidence about how, why and when teachers carry out the storybook reading activity. An open ended questionnaire (Appendix 1) was hand delivered to 50 pre primary teachers at local pre primary schools that were functioning on a full time basis for four days each week. The teachers were asked about their

teaching backgrounds, the extent of storybook reading in their teaching programs, and their goals for the storybook reading activity. Of the 50 questionnaires distributed, 43 were returned to the researcher.

5.3.1 Findings from the Initial Study

The 43 teachers averaged 12.5 years of completed teaching service. All teachers had extensive experience in pre primary teaching, although 37 percent had also taught in years other than pre primary. All teachers had formal qualifications that were either in early childhood education or primary education. As a consequence of the similarities in teacher education, training and experience there were no fundamental differences between the teachers sampled. Detailed results from the Initial Study Questionnaire are contained in Appendix 2.

In response to the inclusion of whole group storybook reading in the daily programming of activities, all pre primary teachers stated that they read to pre primary students at least once a day. Approximately 20 percent of the teachers read to the pre primary students twice a day. The storybook reading sessions were usually conducted just before lunch, or the last period before the pre primary students left school for the day. Some teachers indicated that the whole group storybook reading activity was a useful learning experience when the students were unsettled, or over excited. Teachers also engaged in storybook reading when they had spare time during the day, due to a change in the usual timetabling of activities.

All teachers suggested that they used the whole group storybook reading activity for language development, highlighting areas such as extending

vocabulary, encouraging pre reading, encouraging the use of picture clues for comprehension, listening for understanding, developing confidence in speaking, and listening for enjoyment. Over half of the teachers mentioned the value of the storybook reading activity in developing social and communicative skills. The shared talk time provided many opportunities for the pre primary students to relate their personal knowledge and personal experiences, many of which had been linked to the storybook that had been read. For example, after listening to the story about the Rainbow Fish, students wanted to talk about the fishing they had done, or the goldfish they had at home. Almost 15 percent of the pre primary teachers reported the fantasy value of storybook reading. Certain types of books facilitated creative and imaginative ideas that the students used in role-play or dramatic play in the home corner.

The use of themes in the pre primary classrooms was considered valuable for the choices pre primary teachers made about the selection of storybooks to read to the students. The pre primary teachers usually selected books related to the theme under study, which extended to all areas of learning. Most teachers included an excursion to add to student interest and reinforce the learning that had taken place. Other reasons pre primary teachers cited for the selection of storybooks were teacher and student preference for particular authors; reading books that were requested by the students; and reading books students brought from home.

All pre primary teachers stated that they included discussion in their storybook reading sessions. The duration of the discussion was determined by the time available, the pre primary students' interest in the

discussion, and the teacher's agenda for the discussion. The discussion was usually the result of teacher initiated questions. The types of questions asked by the teacher included low order factual recall questions and open ended higher order questions which required the pre primary students to use their thinking and reasoning strategies. When pre primary teachers asked open-ended questions, they were often required to anticipate a probable response by the pre primary students. This occurred because the pre primary teachers did not know how the students were going to respond. Approximately 60 percent of the pre primary teachers reported that they enjoyed the discussion that took place during whole group storybook reading. They appreciated the opportunity the discussion provided to share and learn about each other's background interests and experiences.

Overall, the initial study provided a framework for the case studies. It supported the researcher's understanding that whole group storybook reading activity is considered relevant by pre primary teachers, because it is carried out at least once during the school day. The reasons cited by pre primary teachers for the value derived from whole group storybook reading included both the cognitive domain of language and literacy development, and the affective domain of personal enjoyment and social development.

5.4 Stage Two: The Pilot Study

The Pilot Study was undertaken to test the application of the research design, data collection and data analysis procedures proposed for the three case studies, before the commencement of the case study research. The results of the pilot study provided an acceptable framework for the

conduct of the three case studies, methods for the collection of data, and procedures for data analysis.

Five pre primary classrooms were purposefully selected to participate in the pilot study, because they were conveniently located in suburban areas within a 10km range from the Perth city centre. All the pre primary teachers involved in the pilot study had been interested participants in Phase One of the study and were familiar with the researcher and the study. The pre primary teachers in the pilot study were asked to nominate a day and time to enable the researcher to videotape one storybook reading session in the usual classroom environment. Each of the pre primary teachers selected a timetabled storybook reading session, in order to maintain established teacher-student expectations and classroom routine.

Transcripts of the communications, which occurred during the five storybook reading sessions, were taken from the video recordings and researcher field notes. The transcripts provided a valuable framework for organizing shared communications into three main areas. The first area was the shared communication which occurred before the storybook reading commenced. This included pre primary teachers re-stating the storybook reading expectations such as, "I hope everyone has their listening ears on", or "Please make sure all bottoms are on the mat and all hands are on laps before I start the story". The teachers frequently used this time to focus the students' attention on the storybook cover, the author and the illustrator. Prediction questions were the most frequently used during this time. Students were asked to try to guess what the story might be about, using the picture clues on the front cover. The students' contributions in this area were mainly centred around responding to the

teacher's questions. The second area was the shared communication which occurred during the storybook reading. Some examples of the communications which occurred in this area included teacher questions to check for word meanings; teacher questions to encourage predictions of what might happen next; and teacher requests for students who had become distracted to attend. The students' contributions in this area were mainly responses to teacher posed questions, along with questions about the story pictures and text. The third area of shared communication occurred after the storybook reading had been completed. Communications in this area included a large number of factual recall questions to test student understanding. Other types of questions asked by the pre primary teacher included open-ended questions and questions which required the students to relate to their personal knowledge and experiences. All five pre primary teachers concluded the after storybook communication with a question on student enjoyment of the books, such as, " Hands up the people who enjoyed the story" and "Which part of the story did you like best"? Each of the five pre primary teachers and their students engaged in before storybook reading, during storybook reading, and after storybook reading communications.

Transcripts of the shared communications which occurred in the pilot study were therefore organized into the communications which occurred within the broad areas of before, during and after the storybook reading of each of the five storybook reading sessions. These transcripts were then analyzed and coded using an initiation, response, evaluation structure as a framework to capture broad generic units of communication. However, new categories of communication units emerged as particular communication patterns unique to the whole group storybook reading sessions were analyzed. The coding that evolved from

the classroom communications that occurred during the pilot study was reviewed during and after the coding of data. At each stage, modifications were made to the coding structure to ensure that data collection, and analysis could be undertaken efficiently, and effectively and produce findings that were capable of answering the research questions. The results and coding structure that evolved from this process are shown in Appendices 3 and 4 respectively, and summarized in Table 1 below.

Communication Type	Teacher Communication Frequency	Student Communication Frequency
Directives Requests	32	3
Questions	123	14
Statements	35	19
Responses	34	153
Evaluative Responses	41	18
Total	265	207

Table 1. Pilot Study Summary of Teacher and Student Communications

The results of the pilot study revealed that there was a total of 472 communication turns by teachers and students. A significant 44 percent of total communication turns was attributable to students. This demonstrated that under the pilot study conditions, teachers and students contributed to the overall communication exchanges during whole group storybook reading. The teacher turns were categorized into directives, questions, statements, and responses. The student turns were categorized into requests, questions, statements, and responses. These categories of teacher and student turns were broken down into sub-categories. The main categories of teacher communication turns were teacher questions (46.2 percent), and teacher evaluative responses (15.6 percent). The main

categories of student communication turns were student responses (74.1 percent) and student statements (9.0 percent).

5.5 Stage Three: The Case Studies

The case studies were established in order to appreciate the whole group storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms, and to map any changes which may occur to the storybook reading activity throughout the school year. More importantly, the case studies provided the necessary information to address the five research questions, which underpin this study. Based on the previous chapter, the appropriate research design was a qualitative approach utilizing a case study method. The components of research design important for case studies were the research questions, the analysis of data collected, the logic linking the data with the research questions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings.

A case study approach was developed for the research and contained field notes detailing data collection issues and sources of information. The case study approach also addressed the case study questions, which this study has attempted to explore, explain, and understand. These were specific questions the researcher kept in mind during data collection.

5.5.1 Research Design

The three pre primary classrooms selected for exploring and understanding the whole group storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms were chosen from the 43 pre primary teachers who participated in Phase One of the study. As previously mentioned, the

three pre primary teachers were known to the researcher as all three were involved with completing a university degree in Early Childhood Education at Edith Cowan University. Social interactions the researcher had with the three case study pre primary teachers whilst they were completing their Early Childhood Studies, suggested that all three teachers were engaging in developmentally appropriate practice in their pre primary classrooms.

Another important criterion for selecting the three pre primary case study classrooms was that the primary schools the pre primary classrooms were attached to, were located in different socio-economic communities. Different backgrounds could have some bearing on the background knowledge and personal experience the pre primary students and their teachers bring to the whole group storybook reading sessions. Some differences could be anticipated in the students' prior knowledge and experience with storybooks and the subsequent communicative contributions the teacher and the students share during the storybook reading activity.

5.5.2 Research Instruments

The research environment was the natural setting of each of the three pre primary classrooms. The immediate subject matter was the study of whole group storybook reading sessions involving the pre primary teacher and the pre primary students located in the mat area with a teacher selected storybook. Different storybooks were read at each of the storybook reading sessions.

5.5.3 Data Collection

Information available during the whole group storybook reading was collected using a video recorder located behind the students on their mat. Field notes were also taken to record the context within which the storybook reading occurred. Open-ended interviews were held with the teachers to obtain insights into particular events that occurred during the whole group storybook reading sessions. Notes were also taken of the discussions, which were held with each of the three pre primary teachers during the study.

Data were obtained for each of the three pre primary classrooms. Records were taken on twenty separate occasions in each classroom over the school year. Five sessions were recorded for each school term. A data set consisted of a video record and documented field notes for each of the whole group storybook reading sessions.

5.5.4 Data Analysis

The data were organized according to the research questions, which in general explored and examined the social context of the whole group storybook reading activity. Focus was placed on the shared communication in which the pre primary teacher and students engaged. All the video recordings were transcribed, in order to identify both individual and collective contributions made by the pre primary students and the pre primary teachers. The video recordings and the transcripts were read and viewed to ensure the data were recorded accurately. The transcripts were then used to categorise the communications according to the schema developed from the pilot study and shown in Appendix 4.

The coded output was then analysed using the NUD*IST software package. The NUD*IST analysis assisted the identification of patterns and associations between the data. The field notes were then linked to the software analysis to provide a more complete picture of the shared communications occurring during the whole group storybook reading activity. The outcomes from the NUD*IST analysis were documented for the teachers and students in each of the three classrooms. The detailed results of the analysis are contained in the Appendices 5 to 10. In particular, Appendix 5 contains classroom Teacher J coded communication frequencies before, during and after the storybook reading. Appendix 6 contains classroom Teacher M coded communication frequencies before, during and after the storybook reading. Appendix 7 contains classroom Teacher S coded communication frequencies before, during and after storybook reading. Appendix 8 contains classroom J Student coded communication frequencies before, during and after storybook reading. Appendix 9 contains classroom M Student coded communication frequencies before, during and after storybook reading and Appendix 10 contains classroom S Student coded communication frequencies before, during and after storybook reading.

The research questions, the data sources, and data analyses have been brought together in the following section.

How do pre primary teachers organize the whole group storybook reading activity?

Information was taken from the field notes of the researcher's observations of the pre primary teachers, and the field notes taken during

discussions with the teachers on the whole group storybook reading activity in pre primary classrooms. Other information was obtained from the coded shared communications between the pre primary teachers and the pre primary students, recorded at each of the whole group storybook reading sessions taken throughout the year.

The information contained in the field notes was structured in order to identify key discussion points which related to how the pre primary teachers carried out whole group storybook reading in their classrooms. The data were then analyzed and organized to provide some understanding of pre primary teachers' approach to the whole group storybook reading.

The coded information was examined using NUD*IST and frequencies of teacher actions were documented. This provided a high level record of what the teachers' actions were during the storybook reading sessions. The information from field notes and coded records was then synthesised to provide an understanding of the teachers' conduct of the whole group storybook reading activity.

What strategies do pre primary teachers employ in order to create opportunities for the students to develop communicative contributions around personal experience and personal knowledge?

The information sources were the field notes and the coded data recorded during the whole group storybook reading sessions. The teachers were asked about their strategies during the research process and their responses were documented. The coded data were assembled into teacher questions, teacher responses, and teacher statements that

included background experience and knowledge, and student questions, student responses, and student statements that included background experience and knowledge. Each of these communication categories was examined to assess the communication patterns, and to identify the strategies pre primary teachers employed in order to include and encourage personal knowledge and experience. Another source of information was the pre primary teachers' programs and the lesson plans. The data sources were analysed and consistent findings concluded for each of the three teachers. The strategies took into account the links which were made between the storybook selected and other areas of learning, teacher management strategies for off-task behaviours and misbehaviours during the storybook reading sessions, and the techniques employed by the pre primary teachers in order to initiate and sustain communication with the students.

What is the nature and extent of pre primary teachers' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity?

The information obtained from the coding of communicative contributions was analyzed to obtain the main contributions made by the pre primary teachers. This consisted of frequencies of teacher turns and particular utterances that were initiated by the teachers. The material was then analyzed at a more detailed level through an examination of the communication chains that evolved from the teacher-initiated turns. This revealed a sequence of interactions involving both the pre primary teacher and the pre primary students.

What is the nature and extent of the pre primary students' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity?

The information obtained from the coding of classroom communications was analyzed to obtain the contributions made by the pre primary students. This consisted of frequencies of pre primary student turns and particular utterances that were made by the pre primary students. The pre primary students initiated some turns and other utterances which were noted, were in response to remarks made by other pre primary students or the pre primary teacher. The results were then examined at a more detailed level, in order to establish links between the pre primary students' storybook contributions and other areas of the pre primary students' learning.

Can differences be noted in the pre primary teachers' and the pre primary students' contributions throughout the year?

The data source used in this instance were the coded communications taken from the sixty whole group storybook reading sessions observed and recorded for each of the three pre primary classrooms over the school year. The data analysis examined all variables situated within the classroom context and noted both changes in contributions and structure over time. Where a trend was evident, it was highlighted. The coded information was sorted and the high frequency pre primary teacher and pre primary student communication categories and teacher-student communications based on background knowledge and experience were identified. The high frequency communication categories were then examined in detail, both in the context of continuous teacher-student communication, and as independent teacher and student communication turns. The communication patterns were analyzed in terms of participation rates, structure of communications, socialisation of the

whole group, and observable changes in the teacher and student contributions.

During the case study phase of the research process, cross checks were routinely undertaken to ensure that the data collection processes and information records were effective: that data were usefully collected and structured; and that data and information analysis were capable of answering the research questions.

5.6 Summary

The research method is based on a three phase approach. The first phase was an initial study. The second phase was a pilot study undertaken in five pre primary classrooms in the Perth metropolitan area. The aims of the pilot study were to test the case study research process and the data collection and analysis procedures and to implement any modifications to the research design and procedures before the commencement of phase three of the research. The three case studies were undertaken in three pre primary classrooms in the Perth metropolitan area.

The case study method has a tradition of investigating many classroom phenomena. It has been shown to be particularly useful for naturalistic inquiry, where the context is significant in meaning making. The Pilot Study proved to be a useful exercise, because it demonstrated that the research could be conducted in a non invasive manner; data collection was effective; and data analysis produced findings that were capable of answering the research questions.

CHAPTER SIX

CASE STUDY : WHOLE GROUP STORYBOOK READING IN PRE PRIMARY CLASSROOM J

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the classroom communications which occurred between Teacher J and her pre primary students, during the whole group storybook reading activity. Classroom J is a pre primary classroom located in a middle socio-economic community within the Perth Metropolitan area. Teacher J has formal teaching qualifications and eighteen years' teaching experience in Western Australian metropolitan and country schools. Most of the classes taught by Teacher J have been in the area of Early Childhood Education.

This chapter is structured around the study research questions. Each major section addresses a research question and presents data and information gathered during the twenty video recordings of whole group storybook reading in pre primary classroom J. A summary of the research findings for each of the research questions has been included at the end of this chapter.

Whole group storybook reading in the pre primary classroom by Teacher J was established in the pre primary setting by drawing on observations, anecdotes, interviews and discussions between the researcher and Teacher J throughout the twelve months of field work. Teacher J also

made available to the researcher her teaching programmes and daily lesson plans, which outlined the main objectives for language and literacy development for her pre primary students.

The nature and extent of Teacher J's communicative contributions to the whole group story book reading activity was explored from an analysis of coded data taken from the video recordings, and information gathered from teacher interviews and field notes. The research question was addressed by examining teacher directives; teacher questions that were text related; teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication; teacher statements that were text related; and teacher evaluative responses to student communications.

The nature and extent of the pre primary students' contributions to the whole group story book reading activity was determined by analyzing coded data taken from the video recordings, and information which had been gathered as field notes. The research question was explained by analyzing student requests; student statements that were text related; student responses to text related questions and statements; student responses that indicated a continuity of communications; and student evaluative responses which had been directed to peer communications.

Strategies employed by Teacher J to create opportunities for the students to develop communicative contributions around personal experience and personal knowledge were identified by examining teacher initiated communications and actions; and the consequential communicative contributions and social repertoires which were shared among pre primary J students.

Differences between pre primary Teacher J and the pre primary students' contributions throughout the year were determined by examining all coded teacher and student communications, and all field notes gathered throughout the academic year.

Teacher Profile

Name:	Teacher J
Age:	35 - 45 years
Gender:	Female
Teaching Qualifications:	Diploma of Teaching, Bachelor of Education Early Childhood Studies.

School Profile

Name:	Pre primary J
Age:	4 - 5 year olds
Number of students	28 students
Gender:	16 boys and 12 girls

Pre primary J consists of one extremely large room. The room is divided into two areas. The main area is used for all indoor learning activities. It is where the students carry out their table top activities, play in the dress up corner and sit on bean bags to read quietly. There are also small tables and chairs in this main area. The tables, which are placed in groups, are used for individual activities carried out by the whole class, and for morning fruit time. A small area at the back of the main room is sectioned off by a partition. This small area serves as a kitchen, where there is a sink, refrigerator, conventional oven, microwave oven and cooking utensils. The kitchen area is out of bounds to the pre primary students. There is no carpeted mat area in this large room for the pre

primary students to sit for mat time activities. Instead, in pre primary J, the teacher's chair defines the mat area. The pre primary students use Teacher J's chair as a guide to indicate where they are required to sit for the whole group storybook reading session.

The outdoor area for pre primary J is functional and shaded. It contains a clean sandpit and some climbing frames. There is another pre primary classroom located next to pre primary J. It is a demountable classroom, which was located on site three years earlier, because of the increasing number of young children in the area. There is a wire fence between pre primary J and the demountable classroom. The two pre primary classrooms do not share a common outdoor play area and appear to function independently of each other. Pre primary J and the demountable pre primary classroom did not participate in any shared experiences while this research was being undertaken.

Pre primary J is an extremely picturesque, colourful learning environment. The teacher aide at pre primary J is a very talented artist. She spends considerable time preparing and painting the back wall of the main area at the start of each new theme. The back wall becomes a backdrop for the students to display their work. For example, with the dinosaur theme, she painted a scene which transformed the back wall into a nature reserve, complete with vegetation and an oasis. When the students completed their art/craft activities of dinosaurs, they were displayed against this backdrop on the back wall. This back wall then became a focus point of the pre primary classroom. It served as a great motivator for the pre primary students, and it also reinforced the theme under study. The painted back wall also encouraged much interest and comment from the pre primary parents. Parents, and indeed

grandparents, frequently came into the pre primary classroom to view the back wall and compliment the students on their work. Pre primary Teacher J developed her learning experiences around themes, which were carried out for approximately five weeks each. In total, there were eight themes introduced to the pre primary students through out the academic year.

6.2 Teacher Organization of the Whole Group Story Book Reading

6.2.1 Overview

With respect to the role of the whole group storybook reading in the classroom, Teacher J cited increasing student knowledge about curriculum areas; encouraging shared social communications; and facilitating social skills; as the principal role of whole group storybook reading in her classroom.

Teacher J's main goals for whole group storybook reading were to increase the pre primary students' literacy and language skills; and to enhance student understanding of topics presented through a thematic approach. With regard to the changing nature of the teacher's goals for storybook reading over the school year, Teacher J responded that during the early part of first term, her aim was to encourage attentive listening skills. Once the pre primary students had developed an understanding of the listening expectations of the whole group storybook reading, considerable focus was placed on increasing the students' enjoyment and understanding of pictures, words and books.

During the year, the emphasis shifted from listening skills to communication skills and language skills, which included simple comprehension and vocabulary extension. As the year progressed, Teacher J provided greater opportunities for her students to participate in shared communications. She extended her questions beyond simple factual recall questions, to higher order questions, which encouraged the inclusion of the pre primary students' personal knowledge and personal experiences into the shared communications. In order to further facilitate language development, Teacher J included a more extensive list of words into her communicative repertoire when she was communicating with the pre primary students. The students were also encouraged to demonstrate their understanding of particular word meanings, as they appeared in the storybooks.

The interactive nature of the whole group storybook reading activity provided the pre primary students with examples of social and communicative behaviours. As the students demonstrated more confidence in sharing experiences, Teacher J allocated more time for shared discussions, during the whole group storybook reading activity. These shared discussions were initially prompted by an event in the storybook. The pre primary students would capitalize on these initial storybook discussions and extend the conversations to include personal experiences and personal background knowledge. Teacher J provided considerable opportunities for her pre primary students to interact and rehearse their social and communicative skills as they settled into the pre primary classroom environment. As strong peer friendships developed, the pre primary students employed more elaborate social and communicative strategies during classroom interactions.

Teacher J chose most of the storybooks which were read to the pre primary students during the whole group storybook reading session. Books were selected to link closely to the theme that was being studied in the pre primary classroom. Books selected were usually fiction, although some non-fiction books were included if they were meaningful to the learning experiences planned for the pre primary students.

At the start of each school term, Teacher J would indicate to the primary school librarian the theme and main areas that would be studied under the theme. The librarian would then select age appropriate fiction and non-fiction books, which related closely to the theme. Teacher J would place most of these books in the quiet reading area. Storybooks of particular interest to Teacher J would be kept and read to the students during the whole group storybook reading activity.

Teacher J found this to be an effective and efficient manner of selecting storybooks for reading. The school librarian was familiar with Teacher J's teaching style and reading interests. She was also able to purchase new publications for Teacher J's use. New storybooks added much interest to the storybook reading session. Teacher J had commented that she found it frustrating when students indicated that they had already heard the storybook she had selected to read.

S: I've had that book before.

S: I know what happens next.

S: My mummy already read that to me.

Quite often the students who had already heard the story would find it hard not to call out the ending to the story, or would not be as interested in the storybook reading session as they might have otherwise been.

Another reason for the choice of storybook read by Teacher J, was that the author had proven popular with the pre primary students during previous whole group storybook reading sessions. One such author was Shirley Hughes and her books about Alfie and Annie Rose. Teacher J had read a book called Alfie's Feet early in term one when the current theme was "All About Me". The aim of this theme was to develop positive classroom relationships. The pre primary students were going to share with their peers' information about their families, interests, likes and dislikes. The activities for the week had included tracing handprints and footprints, taking individual photos, creating a pre primary birthday calendar and making plasticine models of the students' family members.

Alfie's Feet is a delightful story about Alfie, a young boy about four or five years old. Alfie needs a new pair of wellington boots as he has outgrown his old pair. Alfie's new boots hurt his feet and his mother soon discovers that he has inadvertently put his new boots on the wrong feet. Alfie's mother paints a large R and a large L on each of his boots to assist Alfie with putting his boots on correctly and independently. The pre primary students were extremely interested in Alfie and his new boots, even though it was summer and most of them were wearing sandals. A number of the students commented about their wellington boots and how they splashed in the puddles. The pre primary students' enthusiasm and interest in Alfie books continued through out the year. Teacher J therefore continued to read Alfie books to her students. She

would seek out particular Alfie stories, which related to the particular theme and include them in her storybook selection.

It was interesting to note the fascination pre primary J students had for Alfie and his sister Annie Rose. The stories were set in England and the pre primary students would not have been familiar with the context or setting of the stories which were contained in the books. For example, the snowy winters, the slot in the front door used to deliver mail, and the English style homes. Even the names of particular items used in the story would be unfamiliar to these pre primary students. For example, push chair instead of stroller, anorak instead of raincoat. Nevertheless, Shirley Hughes' Alfie had endeared himself to the students and they were especially pleased when Teacher J selected an Alfie book. A number of students who had access to the local community library, continued their interest in Shirley Hughes' books. They often commented to Teacher J about the Shirley Hughes book they had borrowed and related their enjoyment of the story to her.

Teacher J also selected books which reinforced events on the calendar. For example, in the days leading up to Mother's Day, Anzac Day and Easter, the teacher would select books which linked closely to the special events, rather than the current theme.

There were times during the academic year when the pre primary students would bring in favourite books, or books they had received as gifts, for the teacher to read during whole group storybook reading. Teacher J stated that she always made an effort to include student selected storybooks into her storybook reading time, because it promoted positive classroom relationships; encouraged communicative

contributions about favourite authors and books; and more importantly, indicated that student interest in storybooks was being extended beyond the classroom environment.

Teacher J asserted that the pre primary students' main interests in storybook reading were fundamentally enjoyment, entertainment and relaxation. The pre primary students had demonstrated enthusiasm for the whole group storybook reading activity early in the academic year. They settled quickly in the mat area, and generally listened attentively during the story reading. Their pre storybook reading conversations suggested that they held some expectancy that Teacher J's choice of storybook would be determined by the current theme.

Teacher J reported that extensive discussion with the students was an integral part of the learning during the whole group storybook reading session. The discussion occurred either before, during, or after, the storybook reading session. The stated purpose of the discussion was to share personal views and experiences, to provide an explanation about storybook events, and to predict storybook related outcomes. The discussions also promoted much social interactivity between the pre primary students. Teacher J had regarded this as an important outcome for the pre primary students.

With respect to teacher questioning, it was Teacher J's aim to check for student understanding of the story, develop language skills, and encourage student participation. Teacher J asserted that the majority of her teacher initiated questions were higher order questions, which extended beyond simple factual recall questions based on the storybook

events. She preferred to ask questions which encouraged the pre primary students to share their personal knowledge and personal experiences.

6.2.2 The Physical Arrangements

As previously mentioned, Teacher J established the mat area for the whole group storybook reading activity by positioning her chair around the room. The storybook reading activity was usually carried out twice a day, and most storybook sessions were 15 - 20 minutes' duration. The first storybook reading activity was time tabled for 20 minutes in the morning, just before fruit time, after the students had completed the morning's learning experiences. Teacher J stated that she felt that this morning slot was ideal, as it gathered the pre primary students together as a whole group after they had been engaged in small group and individual learning experiences.

The fruit time after the storybook reading was also regarded by Teacher J as valuable, because it provided the students with an opportunity to continue with storybook conversations whilst they were eating their fruit. This extended storybook discussion time was informal and free of teacher control. Teacher J commented that the conversations during fruit time usually included some discussion of personal experiences, which related to the storybook.

The second time tabled whole group storybook reading session was 20 minutes before home time, at the end of the pre primary school day. Teacher J indicated that this storybook reading time allowed her to settle the students before their parents collected them. It also provided her

with an excellent opportunity to review and reinforce any key areas the pre primary students had participated in during the day.

The pre primary students were always seated in the area immediately in front of Teacher J's chair. They sat in informal rows close to the teacher in order to hear the teacher while she was reading the storybook. The only instruction given to the pre primary students, was that they needed to be seated in a manner which would allow them to see the storybook and hear the teacher as she read. If the reading had commenced and the students were experiencing difficulty seeing the pictures/storybook, they would seek Teacher J's permission to move to a better position.

- S: Mrs. J. Excuse me Mrs. J, can I please move. I can't see?
- S: I can't see because Millicent's head is in the way.
- S: Excuse me Mrs. J, Anthea is in front of me and I can't see the book.

Teacher J stated that the physical positioning of the pre primary students in front of her chair during storybook reading promoted much socially constructed learning. Sitting informally around the teacher's chair created a relaxed classroom atmosphere and encouraged the pre primary students to intimately share their personal experiences and personal knowledge with Teacher J and their peers.

6.3 Teacher Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

Teacher J's communicative contributions came from several areas. These included teacher directives; teacher questions that were text related; teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication; teacher

statement that was text related; and teacher evaluative response to a student communication. At a higher level of analysis, the teacher contributions were classified as directives, questions, statements, and responses. Each is discussed in the following sections and quantified in a summary form in Table 2 below. The data show the high proportion of teacher communications related to directives and questions. A detailed breakdown of Teacher J’s communication is contained in Appendix 5.

Communication Type	Teacher J Communication Frequency
Teacher Directives	423
Teacher Questions Text	213
Teacher Questions BEK	97
Teacher Questions C of C	295
Teacher Statements Text	60
Teacher Statements BEK	31
Teacher Statements C of C	10
Teacher Response Requests	97
Teacher Response Text	11
Teacher Response BEK	5
Teacher Response C of C	8
Teacher Response Student	783
Total	2033

Note

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

Table 2. Summary of Teacher J Communication

6.3.1 Teacher Directives

Teacher J's directives fell into directives before and after whole group storybook reading. There were very few directives issued during the

storybook reading session. Before the commencement of storybook reading, the teacher outlined the expectations for the reading session. The expectations addressed behavioural, social, and learning aspects.

T: Okay let's start then.

Cross those legs. Sitting up straight.

Can you come closer Marcus and Nathan because you are not going to be able to see my book.

T: Come closer Marcus. There's a beautiful spot next to Anthea.

T: Millicent, are you listening to this and Anthea as well?

Good. Let's see if you can listen and not talk.

T: Okay, hands down and we'll listen to our story about Wake Up Bear Its Christmas.

T: And sit comfortably with your legs crossed and your hands in your lap.

There were several management directives that were issued to relate Teacher J's expectations for the storybook reading session. The pre primary students were encouraged to listen attentively, and not to distract the other class members. Teacher J conveyed to the students that their role was to listen during the storybook reading session.

However, Teacher J's remark to the students about listening and not talking could be construed as an ambiguous instruction, because the teacher expected spontaneous communication from the students during the storybook reading session. Indeed, there were numerous occasions when Teacher J accepted the communicative contributions of the pre primary students without her inviting the students to do so. Teacher J

only reminded the pre primary students of her expectations if the noise level rose, or if there were too many students contributing at the same time and she was unable to hear their communications clearly.

Teacher J demonstrated effective classroom management practices during this stage of storybook reading. Pre primary students were requested to move closer to the teacher and the storybook, if they were considered to be seated away from the unmarked boundaries of the mat area. This resulted in the students and teacher all being in close proximity to each other, creating a social context. However, this social context also increased the likelihood of misbehaviour if the storybook reading session was not managed effectively.

Teacher J readily provided cues to the students about posture and behaviour. Acceptable posture included crossing legs, hands in lap, and sitting up straight. Acceptable behaviour involved listening and not talking. The teacher emphasised the listening role of the pre primary students before each storybook reading session.

After the storybook reading session, Teacher J was primarily involved in maintaining effective classroom management.

T: If you sit up you might be able to hear. Come on everyone.
Sit up everyone. I know it is the end of the day.

T: Marcus stand up at the back.
You have been warned too often.
Stand up.

T: But there are a lot of others who have been wriggling through our story today. Okay?

We don't do that.

You know how to sit properly.

Teacher J engaged in social learning instruction by pointing out behaviours such as wriggling and lying down that were unacceptable during the storybook reading sessions. The teacher also took action against some of the inattentive students and asked them to stand behind the other seated classroom students. Some of the students' inattention could be linked to tiredness at the end of the school day, the hot summer temperatures, and a general disinterest in the storybook being read.

Another type of teacher directive involved the teacher directing the pre primary students' attention to the text before and during the storybook reading session. Before the reading session, Teacher J drew the students' attention to the title of the book, the size and shape of the book, and the illustration on the front cover. Teacher J also included an explanation about the relevance of the physical characteristics of the book and its cover, to the story they were about to read.

T: And this is our story for today (points to book). What do you think our story is going to be about?

T: Well, let's have a look at our book. I wonder what the story's going to be about?

This was designed initially to motivate student listening by creating an interest in the storybook. Teacher J provided an opportunity for the students to ask questions, or make statements about the story subject matter. The teacher attached some significance to this activity, because it was an opportunity to reinforce the relevance of the storybook to a

current theme that was being studied in the pre primary classroom, as well as highlight potentially interesting features of the story to the students.

T: Today we've been talking about post offices and letters.

T: Well, today our story is about a postman. And this is a different postman to ours. So what does this book look like?

During the storybook reading session, the attention directed to text created an opportunity for the teacher to make the session interactive, by inviting the pre primary students to examine features of the storybook illustrations, and anticipate some of the storybook events. The text related communications maintained a continuity of teacher initiated dialogue about subject matter which was immediately available and obvious to the students. The actions of the teacher were useful in focusing the attention of the students on particular detail contained in the storybook.

T: A colourful fish. He does look very colourful doesn't he? There's something else he's got all over his body as well as lovely colours. What else can we see there Marcus?

3.3.2 Teacher Questions that were Text Related

Teacher J questions that related to the storybook text were centred in three areas. These were factual recall questions after the storybook reading session; predictive, interpretive and higher order questions before, during and after the storybook reading session; and yes/no questions after the storybook reading session. The highest number of text

related teacher questions were predictive, interpretive, and higher order questions. This reflected Teacher J's goal of using the whole group storybook reading session to enhance the pre primary students' learning and to improve their communication skills. The factual recall questions and yes/no questions were used by Teacher J to evaluate the pre primary students' level of understanding of the story, and to determine their level of knowledge of some of the story events and thematic concepts which were included in the book.

The factual recall questions tended to fall into what, how, when, where, and why categories and typically half of the questions were directed at a student for a response. In this way, the teacher was able ensure participation by all of the students.

T: How did she get them, Millicent?

T: And where did they fall. Nathan?

T: Why were they running so fast behind her, Marcus?

T: They all did in the end, but why were they chasing the farmyard cat, Anthea?

Teacher J would string together lengthy sequences of factual recall questions and yes/no questions, that created a series of rapid communication exchanges between the teacher and students. Teacher J explained that this arrangement was one of bringing together group learning and participation in matters which related to the storybook, and checking for pre primary students' understanding of the topic that was being reinforced by the storybook reading activity.

Teacher J asked text related predictive, interpretive, and higher order questions more than any other text related questions. Most of these questions were asked after the story had been read. A closer examination of the questions showed that the predictive and interpretive elements of the question were linked to storybook statements made by the teacher. For example, the teacher made a statement confirming a story was about a bear, then asked the students what sort of bear they thought it was. This sequence of a confirmatory statement followed by a predictive question was repeated regularly by Teacher J when predictive, interpretive, and higher order questions were asked.

Another characteristic of Teacher J's question sequence was that a correct response from a student would elicit a "very good", or "that's excellent" reaction from the teacher. It was as though the teacher's expectations regarding the student's response were exceeded every time a student answered correctly. Teacher J was interested in her verbal positive reinforcements to the pre primary students. She commented that she wasn't aware of her acknowledgement of the students' responses. Nevertheless, she was pleased with the students' reaction to her reinforcers. It was her intention to encourage as much communicative participation as possible from all her students. In order to facilitate communicative contributions, she stated that she generally accepted most responses from the pre primary students. If their responses were not quite accurate, she would evaluate them with a disguised acceptance. This approach was considered useful, because it did not hinder the pre primary students from attempting to respond to further questions asked by Teacher J.

T: Could be.

T: May be.

T: Mmm, could have been.

Teacher J's predictive, interpretive, and higher order questions asked during the storybook reading session were distinguished from the questions asked before the session, because of the context of the question. The scope of the questions asked before the session were generally confined to predictions about broad story or plot outcomes, whereas during the storybook reading session, a greater range of issues provided the subjects for questions. For example, the questions referred to main story outcomes, outcomes from sub stories within the main story, or outcomes relating to the characters and detailed events evolving with the story. Although there was greater diversity of predictive question types during storybook reading, there was double the number of predictive questions asked before the storybook reading commenced. The teacher questions asked after the storybook reading were couched in more lengthy dialogue, and usually sought the students' views on alternative outcomes for the story on the basis of some of the key parameters being changed. This approach allowed the students to use higher order thinking and reasoning strategies. Many of the students' contributions were linked to personal knowledge and personal experience.

The significant feature of the text related yes/no questions was the dominance of Teacher J's questioning approach after the storybook reading had been completed. The volume and timing of yes/no questions and factual recall questions were comparable.

6.3.3 Teacher Questions that Indicated a Continuity of Communication

The main kinds of teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communications were yes/no questions after storybook reading; questions that related to meanings of events or were predictive; and questions about the students, their family, or the teacher after storybook reading. The teacher question related to continuity of communication ranked the highest with respect to the number of turns of teacher communication during the whole group storybook reading session. This was not a surprising result, because Teacher J wanted to facilitate shared communication with, and among the students. The greater the student participation, the more likely the individual and joint student contributions would add to the socialisation of the pre primary classroom group, and a greater understanding of the storybook topic or theme would follow. Another recurring feature of Teacher J's questioning was the weight of questions asked after the completion of the storybook reading. Teacher J preferred not to interrupt her storybook reading with questions until the story had been read. However, if there was a word meaning to explain, or a need to direct the students' attention to a particular story picture/event, she would do so. She felt that learning the story in its entirety before shared communication, provided the pre primary students with less distractions and an increased opportunity for comprehension and appreciation of the story.

It was almost paradoxical that yes/no questions played a large part in a teacher dialogue set aimed at maintaining continuity of communications.

A deeper examination of the communication chains between the teacher and students provided some useful information.

T: No. The jungle is not extinct yet, is it?

T: Do you think a boa constrictor would be able to swallow an elephant?

T: Have a look at him here swallowing - is it Peter and the wheelchair?

T: Yes. there's a snake in there. Is it the same snake as our boa constrictor?

The structure of the teacher's questions revealed an invitation for the students to respond with more than a yes/no response. An examination of the sequence of communication initiated by the teacher question demonstrated that the students responded with a yes/no response but went on to elaborate and give opinions about the whole set of storybook circumstances that had evolved up to the time of the teacher question. In effect, Teacher J's question did stimulate ongoing communication by eliciting a response from the students that invited them to contribute further to the dialogue with a deeper and more descriptive answer.

The teacher questions related to meanings of events, interpretation or prediction were interesting to consider. The questions had a probing or inquiring character that caused the students to give careful thought to the question. Typically, the questions were not directed at any particular student, but presented as a challenge to the whole class. The social dynamics were interesting to observe following a teacher question of this type. The students would remain silent for a period of time to ponder a potential answer, and then, three or four students would volunteer an

answer. The scope of the questions can be gauged from the following communication after reading the storybook titled 'Brown Bear Brown Bear':

T: How did you feel?

T: And what did you do with daddy, especially just you?

Other features of meaningful, interpretive questions were the extended communication chains they initiated between Teacher J and the students and, as a consequence, the volume of communication devoted to this question type compared to all other questions asked by the teacher. The questions were effective in cultivating reasoned and thoughtful responses from the students, which in turn evoked more views and opinions from the students.

A closer examination of the teacher turns and utterances, showed that with this form of questioning, there were more teacher utterances in each turn than was evidenced in other question type. The questions were rich in content and information. The teacher suggested that although this was not consciously undertaken as part of the structure of the question, it did provide the students with more detail about the requirements of the question, and should therefore improve the quality of the students' responses.

Teacher questions involving the student, family or the teacher, were unique in that they brought together several familiar subjects under the activity of whole group storybook reading. Firstly, there was the theme of the storybook, and secondly, there was the personal event that thematically linked to the storybook topic. The students' familiarity with

the subject areas encouraged them to communicate more spontaneously to cues in the questions.

The teacher initiated factual recall questions, although present, were less prominent in maintaining teacher and student continuity of communications.

6.3.4 Teacher Statements that were Text Related

The teacher statements that were text related, centred on the storybook title, the author, the illustrator, and the book itself. The statements formed part of the preparatory work of the teacher prior to the commencement of reading the storybook. The statements were made by the teacher to focus the students' thinking about the story and the theme of the book, and create a degree of anticipation and interest. This is illustrated in the following.

T: I see. Well this story is called Dogger.

T: It's called Dogger. The word across there (points to title).

T: So I think it might be about this little dog.

T: And that's the front cover (points).

And Dogger was written by Shirley Hughes.

And there's a picture of Dogger.

Each time the class was read a storybook, the teacher adopted a routine of displaying the book, reading the title, showing the students the written words of the title, and informing the students about the names of the author and illustrator. In addition to affecting the anticipatory attitudes of the students, the teacher was also building up the students' knowledge

about preferred authors and illustrators. Teacher J's objective was to expand the students' knowledge base and provide them with information about books that they could take home to assist in decisions about purchasing books, or borrowing books from the library. This was particularly so for books on Alfie written by Shirley Hughes. A number of students requested books written by Shirley Hughes from the school library, or brought in books they had borrowed from their local community library.

The teacher statements about the text were used in conjunction with a re-capping of the theme being studied in the classroom. The teacher made references to aspects of the theme and linked them to the storybook to set up a potential integration of the theme and an event contained in the storybook. This added to the amount of interest in the storybook displayed by the students.

The statement making period during the storybook reading was a time when new information was presented by the teacher. Because the information was new and the students enjoyed whole group storybook reading, it was a time when they were most attentive. The teacher used this characteristic as a transition between the early settling-in, where the aim was to have the students seated properly and listening attentively when the reading commenced. According to Teacher J, the transition was an important step in preparing the students for the excitement and experience of the storybook.

6.3.5 Teacher Evaluative Responses to a Student Communication

The majority of Teacher J's communication turns during the whole group storybook reading session were evaluative responses. The teacher's response to the student communication confirmed the accuracy, or inaccuracy of the student communication. The teacher evaluative responses to student initiated communications fell into several different areas. They were; acceptance with reinforcer, acceptance that repeated the student response, acceptance with extension or explanation, and disguised rejection. These teacher responses are discussed in the following.

The teacher response of acceptance with reinforcer involved the teacher confirming the accuracy of the student communication, and an accompanying reinforcer response for the student. The teacher typically used "that's good", "good girl/boy" as a positive reinforcer. The teacher communications were extensive, with lengthy communication chains bringing together the teacher and student exchanges. Acceptance that repeated the student response was the response most regularly used by the teacher, both before and after whole group storybook reading.

T: You put your teddys on the bed.

T: You think she's got ten teddys.

T: It went in the washing machine. Well Dogger didn't quite go in the washing machine. Did he?

T: He came out all clean and then what did you do with him?

The purpose of teacher's responses that repeated the student response was not clear from an analysis of the communication patterns containing

the teacher-student exchanges. From notes taken at a teacher interview, Teacher J explained that she was unaware of the large number of communications of that type. The reasons put forward by Teacher J for the use of this kind of communication were that she repeated the student communication to ensure that the whole group knew and heard what the student had been communicating. Also, the teacher occasionally used the content of the repetition to ask a question.

Detailed communications from the teacher involved acceptance with extension or explanation. The teacher used the student communication to explain the words from the storybook more fully and thereby give greater dimension to the storybook reading.

S: Because he got exhausted of caring.

T: Oh, he got exhausted of caring. That's right. He did get exhausted of caring. When it was going up that lady's driveway wasn't it! He was too tired to worry about the elephant then, because he was exhausted. That's right.

Teacher evaluative responses of disguised rejection and explanation were corrections to student statements and responses, but couched in a teacher communication that was positive. The teacher explanation softened and corrected the student communication. In effect, the teacher response was the opposite of the teacher evaluative response of acceptance with explanation. The teacher's communication generally consisted of a rejection, followed by a detailed explanation of an event. According to the teacher, the reason for the detailed explanation was to impart knowledge to the students. An example of this is the teacher communication taken from the whole group storybook reading of 'Wake

Up Bear'. Teacher J had asked the students about locations in Australia where one was most likely to find snow.

S: Busselton (Western Australia).

T: Busselton, no not quite darling. You have to get up some pretty high mountains. Sometimes in the Porongarups in Western Australia it snows just a smidge, but over in New South Wales where the Snowy Mountains are, that's where it snows in the winter time.

6.4 Student Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

The pre primary students' contributions came from the areas of student requests; student statements that were text related; student statements that indicated a continuity of communications; student responses to text related questions and statements; student responses based on background experience and knowledge; and student responses that indicated a continuity of communication. The main categories of student communications were requests, statements, and responses. Responses represented the main category of student communication turns. Each is discussed in the following sections and quantified in a summary form in Table 3 below. The data show the emphasis on student communication is related to responding to teacher initiated communications. A detailed breakdown of students' J communication is contained in Appendix 8.

Communication Type	Students' J Communication Frequency
Student Requests	56
Student Questions Text	22
Student Questions BEK	2
Student Questions C of C	2
Student Statements Text	66
Student Statements BEK	69
Student Statements C of C	9
Student Responses Directives	11
Student Responses TRQ/S	399
Student Responses BEK	102
Student Responses C of C	431
Student Responses Student Com	33
Total	1202

Note

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

TRQ/S: Text related question/statement

Table 3. Summary of Students' J Communication

6.4.1 Student Requests

Student requests were about student initiated communications with the teacher, where the student made a request. The main areas of student requests related to improving the location or visibility for the students, and indications about a desire to communicate with the teacher. Before the storybook reading commenced, the students engaged in social

behaviours that were aimed at meeting the requirements of Teacher J (sit up straight, hands folded in lap, listening and no talking).

The period provided an opportunity for the students to demonstrate their compliance with the teacher's instructions and become the centre of an initiated communication or behaviour. The latter aspect was important for the students to establish a presence and behavioural traits within the pre primary classroom. This is illustrated in the following.

S1: I can't see it.

S2: I can't see it either.

S3: I can't see.

S3: My knees. My knees are going on everybody.

One of the difficulties the teacher faced with whole group storybook reading was ensuring that all students had reasonable visibility of the storybook. This was influenced by the location of the students relative to the teacher, the relative location of students as a group, the size of the illustrations, and the clarity of illustrations in the storybook. Because the students were all assembled on the floor, and within close proximity to each other, the second most common complaint from the students was about being "squashed ". Although the students usually occupied the same positions on the floor, any variation caused by a student occupying someone's spot, caused a chain of communication from the students. The main complaints from the students were that they could not see and were squashed by other students. The adjustments brought about by the teacher interventions invariably created another round of student reactions, such as "he stepped on my finger". Teacher J stated her goal was to minimize the classroom disruption during the settling-in period.

She relied on routines, procedures and teacher expectations for the storybook reading activity that were taught to the students early in the year to limit the reactions from the students and the time that was wasted settling them down. The teacher attempted to move into the teacher statement phase, where descriptions were given about the title, illustrator, and theme of the storybook, as quickly as possible.

The majority of student requests that indicated a wish to communicate, took place after the storybook reading session. The requests were typically designed to attract Teacher J's attention and allow the student to answer questions, add to answers provided by other students, or extend the answers provided by other students. The requests were orderly and enthusiastic.

6.4.2 Student Statements that were Text Related

The student statements that were text related, centred around factual recall statements, statements about storybook pictures, and predictive and interpretive statements. In the pre primary classroom, the text related statements were made after the storybook reading session. The students' factual recall statements were distributed across the group, with most of the students having an opportunity to contribute to the student turns. The statements varied between short direct statements about storybook events, and longer descriptions about those events. The students appeared to be quite comfortable making statements about the text, because the statements related to recently acquired knowledge that had been clearly presented by the teacher and had been explained by the teacher and students through their questions and answers about the story. The students who had answered questions about the storybook, were

among the first to make factual statements about the text. Their prior participation caused them to be more confident about maintaining an ongoing communication during the storybook reading activity.

Student text related statements that were predictive or interpretive, were mainly made after the storybook reading sessions. The interpretations applied by the students, were generally grounded in their own personal experience and prior knowledge.

S1: Maybe the little girl did a wee wee in her pants.

S2: When she is three she will become a toddler.

The students' knowledge base provided the source of material for interpreting and predicting outcomes that were similar to those already known to the students. A comparison of interpretive and predictive statements made by the students before and after the storybook reading session, clearly showed that predictive statements were more common before the storybook reading session, and interpretive statements were more common after the storybook reading session. Before the storybook reading session, the students' focus was on how the story would evolve, that is, predictions about future events. After the storybook reading session, the students' focus was on explanations and interpretations of events that had been read to them.

The students' statements about illustrations were mainly made after the storybook reading session. The statements tended to be straightforward descriptions of an illustration. Many of the students attempted a turn at contributing to the whole group communication because the communication was uncomplicated in terms of content. The students described what they saw, and the teacher encouraged the students to

participate by keeping the links between respective student communications relevant to the whole group and facilitating the continuity of communications from the students.

6.4.3 Student Responses to Text Related Questions and Statements

Student responses to Teacher J's questions and statements were the largest category of participation by the students during whole group storybook reading in the pre primary classroom. They demonstrated that students were not major initiators of classroom communications, but responded to teacher initiated communications. Student responses to teacher questions and statements about text, centred on the storybook title, author, and illustrator, factual recall responses, and predictive and interpretive responses. The student responses to teacher questions and statements about the storybook title, author, and illustrator, tended to be single turn, non-elaborative replies. In most instances, a single turn consisted of a single word or utterance.

Factual recall responses were mainly given after the storybook reading session because they related to recollections of storybook events. The characteristics of the recall responses were the wide distribution of responses amongst the students and the large number of student turns. Although there were many responses from the students, there was no evidence of students working together to respond to a teacher statement or question. The students appeared to work independently from the whole group but took cues from the responses provided by their peers to assist them frame a response. The students' responses were cumulative, not collective. This phenomenon could be attributed to the teacher's method of asking questions and making statements, the problem solving stage of development of the students, or the characteristics of the

question asked or problem posed to the students. There was nothing in the research results which explained this issue.

Predictive and interpretive student responses to Teacher J questions and statements about text were evident before and after whole group storybook reading. They represented the largest category of turns by the students throughout the whole of the storybook reading sessions and were equally represented between before and after storybook reading. The communications were characterised by the long strings of subject centred communication turns voiced by the students.

S1: Maybe they're exploring.

S2: Going to the forest.

S1: Maybe they are going exploring.

S3: Could be finding him.

S4: They might be going out for a camp with the class.

S5: Maybe the snakes got lost and they're going to find him.

S6: Maybe they're at the zoo.

S7: Maybe it's a pet.

An interesting feature of the passage of student communication was the way the whole group contributed to a solution by volunteering opinions on why the characters in the storybook were walking in the jungle. It seemed that the whole group gained momentum in proffering individual opinions on the story but were prepared to allow their imagination to take over. Their use of the word "maybe" indicated a lack of certainty about the correct answer. Therefore, the students tended to hypothesise, or predict reasons for the storybook characters being in the jungle. An examination of the opinions given by the students indicated an

associated collection of student responses. That is, although they were similar in many respects, there was still a degree of individuality or uniqueness about each student's response.

The student responses after the storybook reading session tended to focus on detailed events that arose during the storybook reading process. However, the number of student communication turns was still high and they were characterised by extended communication links in a communication chain. Overall, the pattern of student predictive and interpretive communications before and after whole group storybook reading was similar.

6.4.4 Student Responses that Indicated a Continuity of Communication

The student response that indicated a continuity of communications was the second largest student response category when measured by number of turns made by the students. The breakdown of responses showed that factual recall, predictive and interpretive, yes/no responses, and student responses that included self, family, teacher, or pre primary were the main types of student response. The majority of student turns took place after the storybook reading, although, a number of yes/no and predictive and interpretive responses were recorded before storybook reading. The interesting observation with respect to these results was the majority of student turns related the story events to their everyday lives that included self, family, friends, teacher, or the pre primary class in the student response.

The factual recall responses were accounts of storybook events. The communications consisted of lengthy linked student response turns that provided a continuity in the discussion about the content of the

storybook. The distribution of turns was widely spread among the students.

Student predictive and interpretive responses also contained lengthy linked student response turns with each turn consisting of several utterances to form logical descriptive sentences. The after storybook reading communication ensured the students were familiar with the detail of the storybook theme and specific events, and were therefore able to contribute to collaborative discussion about storybook events. The collaborative communication was also characterised by its continuity.

S1: But now they are going to be nice because he found all the presents.

S2: Santa Claus wouldn't have any presents to give to the children and when the children wake up on Christmas Day the children wouldn't have any presents.

From a more detailed analysis of the communication exchanges it was evident that the students demonstrated a capacity to predict both physical and behavioural outcomes from storybook events.

The yes/no student responses were used quite frequently to maintain continuity of communications between the teacher and students. Teacher J directed questions to named students and generally to the class. It was not uncommon for the whole group to respond in unison with a yes/no response. This was acceptable to Teacher J.

Student responses that indicated a continuity of communication and included references to self, family, friends, teacher, and pre primary featured as part of the repertoire of student communications. Because the subjects were familiar to the students, the communication patterns tended to be more detailed and longer than other communications. The majority of the references related to self and family, and usually detailed an historical family event or experience of siblings that paralleled some event in the story. The students appeared comfortable responding to teacher questions when using the familiar personal domains to assist them formulate responses.

S1: If we were at high school then we wouldn't see you.

S2: I had a bear and we couldn't find him (laughing) he was in the washing machine.

6.4.5 Student Evaluative Responses to a Student Communication

Student evaluative responses to another student communication generally fell into two areas: student acceptance of peer communication with a reinforcer, and the student rejects or disagrees with a peer. The exchanges were usually dyadic exchanges of short duration involving a limited number of communication turns from each student. The typical reinforcer was "Yeah, that's good", or an equivalent. The student rejection of another student's opinion provided one of the few opportunities to observe student-student communications. Although the incidence of this form of communication was low, it was interesting to observe. The communication demonstrated the fixed position held by the students, and the unwillingness to compromise their initial position.

S1: No there wasn't. There was a fox.

S2: No.

S2: No it was the same cat like that but in another book and I looked at the words and it said Farmyard Cat.

The exchanges involved a maximum of two turns for each student and had a structure consisting of a proposition, rejection of the proposition and presentation of an alternative proposition, and a summary response. The teacher considered the dialogue between the students an essential component of the classroom socialisation process. The students were able to use the exchanges to demonstrate their prior knowledge, their contribution to group problem solving, and their acceptance among peers.

6.5 Teacher Strategies to Promote Student Communications

This section examined the strategies pre primary teachers employed to create opportunities for the pre primary students to develop communicative contributions around personal experience and personal knowledge. The categories of communications that were considered are teacher questions, statements and responses that were based on background experience and knowledge, and student questions, statements and responses that were based on background experience and knowledge. The detail of teacher and student turns in each category was reviewed and linked to other associated communications to provide a comprehensive set of communication that relied on background experience and knowledge for its existence.

6.5.1 Teacher Questions

Teacher J's questions centred around the student, student's family, and pre primary schooling. Teacher questions related to the students and their family were asked after storybook reading, whereas questions related to pre primary, were asked before and after the storybook reading. Teacher J's questions involved a limited number of turns, but each turn contained a lengthy communication from the teacher. The teacher turns were structured around an elaboration of the storybook event, followed by a question which focused on the personal experience of the students. With questions which centred around the students and the students' family Teacher J could only anticipate the response students were likely to contribute, because she was not completely familiar with the students' personal experiences.

T: Whose gone out sometimes specially just with their dads by themselves?

T: Where did you go with your dad Nathan?

T: Millicent what happened to you when you went camping with your dad in a tent?

T: I wonder what you people would have done if you were in a tent like Alfie was and you heard a scary noise outside?

The teacher tended to ask the students questions that related to the students' family life. That is, activities they engaged in with other sibling members of their family, and parents. Wherever possible, the family experience was linked to the events and theme of the storybook. The pre primary students demonstrated an eagerness to contribute to these discussions and went to some lengths to elaborate on their contributions.

With regard to teacher questions that referenced the pre primary classroom, it was found that the majority of questions were about subject areas that had been discussed during classes. The teacher used this technique to link the theme of the current storybook to other similar themes previously considered in the classroom.

T: Now. Who can tell me what we are learning about at pre primary this week? Put your hand up if you can tell me what we are learning about.

T: Anthea, Anthea , what's a special sense we have been talking about this week? A special thing we have been talking about that helps us learn.

The teacher described the synthesis of the fiction, imagery and make believe attributes from the storybook and real life experiences known to the students around a common theme, as beneficial in establishing motivation and creating student interest in whole group storybook reading sessions. The teacher used the students' background experience and knowledge to enhance the benefit the students derived from whole group storybook reading by asking a limited number of questions aimed at the prior experiences of the students. The questions based on experience and knowledge of the students were equally distributed between questions relating to the students and their family, and questions relating to the pre primary classroom.

6.5.2 Teacher Statements

The Teacher J statements which called upon the students' background knowledge and experience were primarily directed at the pre primary

classroom. The teacher statements were made equally before and after storybook reading. The number of teacher statement turns was similar to the number of teacher question turns. The teacher communications were relatively lengthy and detailed, because they translated former pre primary activities into the storybook theme.

Teacher J also incorporated parallel activities into the whole group storybook reading session. During the reading of 'Brown Bear Brown Bear', the whole group made teddy bear biscuits that were baked while the story was being read. The teacher stated, "I know we can smell the teddy bear biscuits cooking", at a suitable time during the storybook reading. Parallel and associated classroom activities having a common theme with the storybook were a frequent strategy employed by the teacher. In addition to cooking, the students made models, produced picture books, and painted stories about different subjects that provided the theme for a whole group storybook reading session.

6.5.3 Teacher Responses

Teacher J responses based on her own personal background experience and knowledge was the least used strategy by Teacher J. An analysis of the teacher communications, revealed that only three teacher turns related to the teacher's background were used. When reading 'Alfie Goes Camping', one of the students asked the teacher about her experiences while camping. The teacher responded:

T: I remember once when we went camping and there was a snake under the mat in the tent.

S1: What did you do?

T: What happened? We ended up getting a big rock and dropping it on top of the snake's body and squashing it. But I didn't do it. There was another man who did it.

S2: Was he a hunter?

T: No it wasn't a hunter it was another person just like your daddy.

Observations of the students during this communication exchange with the teacher showed how keen they were to hear about Teacher J's personal experiences, and have the teacher's personal story overlay the theme of the storybook. Conveying the teacher's own experiences to the whole group promoted a positive social learning environment.

6.5.4 Student Questions

Student questions related to the background experience and knowledge of the teacher, student, family, and pre primary classroom were almost absent from the classroom communications. Only two student turns based on the background experience of the teacher were recorded. The student questions were part of the student-teacher communications regarding the teacher's camping trip when a snake was killed by a camper. The students asked the teacher what had happened, and whether the person who killed the snake was a hunter.

6.5.5 Student Statements

Student statements that called upon background experience and knowledge were centred on matters related to the student and the student's family. The majority of student statements was made after storybook reading and were about family situations the students had

experienced, and items they owned. The statements were typically initiated by the students as a result of cues from the storybook and statements made by the teacher and students. The students showed a propensity to elaborate on the subjects about which they had chosen to make statements. Therefore, the student turns were occasionally lengthy and contained many utterances.

S1: I've got lots of teddys and I put them on my bed.

S2: I've got ten teddy bears.

S3: We've got a purple teddy bear.

S4: I always share my toys.

The students were orderly in taking turns to make statements about their own experiences and the level of interest in statements made by other students played an important part in the classroom socialisation. Within the protection of a positive classroom environment, students openly made statements about personal and family matters. The mutual confidences that grew from the revelations provided a basis for tolerance, bonding and friendship between the students and teacher.

6.5.6 Student Responses

The student responses that included references to background experience and knowledge were primarily about the student and their family, and the pre primary classroom. References to the students and their families were made after storybook reading, and references to pre primary classrooms were made before storybook reading. The majority of student communications were about the students and families.

The student responses were in reply to Teacher J questions. However, the Teacher J questions were not directed at the backgrounds of students, their families, and pre primary classrooms. The students chose the subject matter to respond to the teacher and were comfortable replying about their own acquired experience and knowledge.

S: I have a sheep at my farm and um it keeps on head butting the gate and we have to get another gate.

The student responses that involved the student and family, usually included their parents. They seemed proud to have the opportunity to convey to the teacher and classmates events in their lives that were special to them. Although the events and experiences were quite conventional, they were experiences that were valued by each of the students who conveyed their story to the whole group.

Student responses that included the pre primary classroom as background to the response concentrated on themes with which the students had become familiar because of previous learning experiences in the classroom.

6.6 Differences in Teacher and Student Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

This section examined coded data for the main communication categories for teachers and students and analysed them to determine whether the composition of the communications changed during the pre primary school year. Field notes recorded from discussions with the teacher were also examined to determine whether this documentation

contained references to communication patterns between teacher and students. In addition, the whole group was evaluated according to socialisation and contextual criteria that were recorded in field notes.

6.6.1 Teacher Contributions

Teacher directives dealing with expectations for the whole group storybook reading were delivered throughout the year, although there was a higher number of directives during the first six months. This was consistent with Teacher J's aim of establishing class expectations and listening skills early in the year. There was no change in the communication structure of the teacher turns and the main behavioural content of the directive communication. Seating position and listening instructions were present in the same form throughout the year.

Teacher initiated text related questions were factual recall questions and questions that included a predictive, interpretive, or higher order dimension. During the year, both question types were uniformly delivered. Neither the content nor the structure of the questions showed any appreciable differences over time.

Teacher questions related to background experience and knowledge directed at the student and their family and the pre primary, showed minor variations in structure and content. Where the students and family were the subject of the question, the number of teacher turns was consistent throughout the year, and evenly distributed over all whole group storybook reading sessions. The teacher questions about the pre

primary class were concentrated during the first six months of the year. Also, there were large variations between the number of teacher turns when different storybook reading sessions were compared. The variations were attributable to the storybook theme and the teacher-student communications emanating from the theme.

Teacher questions aimed at maintaining continuity of communications included questions that were predictive or interpretive, involved the student and family, or factual recall. The predictive type of questions were more likely to be asked in the later part of the year and were characterised by large variations in teacher turns between different whole group storybook reading sessions. There was no marked difference in the content and structure of the questions. Questions to maintain continuity of communications that referenced the student and family were evenly spread throughout the year, and maintained a constancy of content and structure. The factual recall questions were more likely to be asked in the later part of the year and were noted to have wide variations in the number of teacher turns when whole group storybook reading sessions were compared.

Teacher statements that were text related did not change throughout the year. The teacher made statements that included the storybook title, author, and illustrator at every whole group storybook reading session. The number of communication turns by the teacher was comparable between sessions and the content of the turns was consistent in the way the storybook title, author, and illustrator were addressed.

Teacher statements that were based on background knowledge and experience were directed at the pre primary classroom. The statements

did not appear in the early storybook reading sessions but were evident in most of the remaining sessions. The teacher communications did show a slight variation in the number of teacher turns but this was randomly distributed across the storybook reading sessions. The content of the references to the pre primary classroom experience was similar in each storybook reading session.

The teacher evaluative responses to the student communication were centred about acceptance with reinforcer; acceptance that repeated the student response; acceptance with extension or explanation; and disguised rejection or explanation. The response acceptance with reinforcer was evident in all reading sessions. Although there were variations in teacher turns, the variations were spread uniformly across the year. The teacher response that repeated the student response was also noted in all reading sessions. The response was characterised by the consistently large number of teacher turns. Similarly, teacher responses that extended or explained a student communication appeared in each storybook reading session, although there were large variations in the number of teacher turns across the sessions. Teacher responses that were disguised rejections of the student communication occurred mainly in the early part of the year. There were significant variations in the number of teacher turns. In each of the types of teacher evaluative responses examined, the content and structure of the teacher response did not change over the school year.

6.6.2 Student Contributions

The student requests came in the form of indications that they could not see the storybook, or wished to communicate with the teacher. The student requests about visibility and desire to communicate with the

teacher varied in terms of student turns during each of the storybook reading sessions and were more likely to occur in the later part of the year. Therefore, student requests emerged as a communication strategy used by the students as the year progressed and they became more familiar with social protocols of the whole group. The structure and the content of the student communication showed no variation over the later part of the year.

The statements initiated by students that were text related covered factual recall, predictive, and illustration related statements. The factual recall statements were evenly distributed over a low number of storybook reading sessions. The predictive statements occurred mainly in the early part of the year. For both factual recall and predictive statements the students' turns were few. By contrast the students' statements about illustrations were made during the later part of the year and there were marked variations in the number of student turns for each of the whole group storybook reading sessions. This outcome is different from the outcome that was anticipated. It was expected that the student statements about pictures would have been made early in the year, and the more cognitively demanding predictive and interpretive statements would have occurred later in the year as the students' language and literacy skills developed. From an analysis of the coded data, there was no evidence of a change in the content or structure of the students' statements during the period they were recorded.

Student statements based on background experience and knowledge which referenced the student and their family were evenly distributed over most of the whole group storybook reading sessions. The number of student communication turns was consistent over the sessions. The

familiarity and understanding of the storybook theme that background experience and knowledge provided for the students, enabled them to utilise this communication strategy early in their pre primary year.

Responses from the students to teacher questions and statements that related to text, centred on the storybook title, author and illustrator, factual recall responses, and predictive and interpretive responses. All of the student responses showed moderate to large variations in the number of student communication turns during storybook reading sessions. There were variations in the occurrence of the student responses. Responses to the title, author, and illustrator occurred during the early part of the year; factual recall occurred mainly during the later part of the year; and predictive and interpretive responses occurred throughout the year.

Student responses on background experience and knowledge were based on the student and family, pre primary classroom activities and meanings of events from the storybook. The student communication turns were generally low in this category of response and therefore the data did not show any differences in the students' responses over time. The few student communication turns that were recorded for analysis showed the spread of communications were random throughout the year and the variations in the turns between successive storybook reading sessions were large.

Student responses that maintained a continuity of communications were factual recall, predictive/interpretive, and responses that included self and family. The student responses were recorded for all of the storybook reading sessions and all were characterised by the large variations in

student communication turns. There were no differences noted in the content of the students' communication, or the pattern of students' communication as the year progressed.

6.7 Summary of Findings

6.7.1 Teacher Conduct of Whole Group Storybook Reading

Teacher J's conduct of whole group storybook reading was assessed by examining coded video recordings and field notes that contained information from teacher interviews and the researcher's observations.

Teacher J believed the storybook reading sessions should be interactive. The primary role of whole group storybook reading in the classroom was to increase the students' knowledge, develop literacy and language skills, encourage expression and verbal communication, and facilitate interactive social skills. The whole group storybook reading sessions provided the context for the integration of learning and socialisation in the classroom.

Throughout the year, Teacher J's emphasis for the students shifted from listening skills to language skills. This was partially achieved through the selection of a storybook that had a theme or subject matter that corresponded with a theme or subject matter from another part of the pre primary curriculum.

The teacher stated that extensive communication with the pre primary students was an integral part of the learning during the whole group storybook reading session. The purpose of the communication was to

share personal views and experiences, provide an explanation about storybook events, predict story related outcomes, and integrate the thematic aspects of the story with the thematic aspects of other related classroom activities. With respect to teacher questioning, the teacher's objective was to check for the students' understanding of the story, encourage student participation, and develop the students' language and communication skills. Teacher J considered that the majority of teacher initiated questions were higher order questions, with the remainder being factual recall questions and questions related to the students' own experiences.

During the storybook reading session, the teacher sat in a chair directly in-front and slightly elevated above the students. The teacher held the storybook so the students could see the book and the illustrations, but did not seek assistance from any of the students during the presentation of the story. The students were located on the floor immediately in front of the teacher. They were close enough to ensure reasonable vision of the storybook and ensure the teacher's voice was audible during the reading session.

6.7.2 Teacher Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

Teacher J contributions to storybook reading were analysed in terms of teacher directives, teacher questions that were text related, teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication, teacher statements that were text related, and teacher evaluative responses to a student communication.

The teacher's directives issued by Teacher J occurred before and after whole group storybook reading. Only a minority of directives was proffered during the storybook reading session. Before storybook reading commenced, the teacher outlined the expectations for the reading session to the students. The expectations addressed behavioural, social, and learning aspects of the lesson. There were several class management directives related to the positioning of the students on the floor to ensure that the storybook reading session would proceed without unplanned disruption or off-task behaviours from the students. Cues were given to the students about posture and behaviour. Acceptable posture included crossing legs, hands in laps, and sitting up straight. Acceptable behaviour involved listening and not talking. The teacher emphasised the listening role for the students before each storybook reading session. The teacher engaged in social learning instruction by pointing out behaviours such as wriggling and lying down that were unacceptable during the storybook reading sessions.

Another type of teacher directive involved the teacher directing the students' attention to the text before and during the storybook reading session. Before the reading session, the teacher drew the students' attention to the title of the book, the size and shape of the book, the illustration on the cover, and an explanation of the appearance of the book and its relevance to the story they were about to read.

During the storybook reading session, the attention directed to text created an opportunity for the teacher and students to be interactive by inviting the students to examine features of the storybook illustrations and then forecast future story events. The text related teacher communications maintained a continuity of teacher initiated dialogue.

Teacher questions that related to the storybook text were centred around factual recall questions after the storybook reading session; predictive, interpretive and higher order questions before, during and after the storybook reading session; and yes/no questions after the storybook reading session. The factual recall questions tended to be what, how, when, where, and why types of question. Approximately half of the questions were directed at a nominated student for a response. This enabled Teacher J to ensure a prescribed level of voluntary or involuntary participation by all students. Teacher J would link lengthy sequences of factual recall questions and yes/no questions that created interactive communication exchanges between the teacher and students. According to Teacher J, this form of communication was useful in checking the students' understanding of the story, and effecting whole group socialisation and learning.

The teacher predictive, interpretive, and higher order questions asked during the storybook reading session, were distinguishable from the questions asked before the session, because of the context of the question. Questions asked before the session were usually confined to predictions about storybook outcomes, whereas, during the storybook reading session, a large number of story related events provided the basis for the questions.

The main feature of the text related yes/no questions was the dominance of this teacher questioning approach after the storybook reading had been completed. The incidence and timing of yes/no questions and factual recall questions was comparable.

The main type of teacher question that indicated a continuity of communication were yes/no questions, questions that related to meanings of events or were predictive, and questions about the students, their family, or the teacher. The teacher question related to continuity of communication ranked the highest with respect to the number of teacher communication turns during the whole group storybook reading session. Another recurring feature of Teacher J's questioning was the majority of questions asked after the storybook reading was completed, compared to a minority of questions asked during the storybook reading session.

The teacher questions related to meanings of events, or interpretation or prediction possessed a probing quality that caused the students to give careful thought to the question. Another characteristic of the questions was the extended communication chains they initiated between the teacher and students. The questions were effective in cultivating reasoned and thoughtful responses from the students, which in turn, evoked a greater diversity of views and opinions from the students.

Teacher questions involving the student, family, friends or teacher were on a subject area about which there was a common or shared knowledge that had some bearing on the storybook theme. As a consequence of the students' familiarity and knowledge with the experiences, they tended to be more spontaneous with their communications.

Teacher statements that were text related, centred on the storybook title, author, illustrator and the book itself. The statements were made by Teacher J to facilitate student interest and focus the students' attention on the storybook theme. Frequently, Teacher J statements were used in parallel with a review of the theme being studied in the classroom. The

integration of the storybook theme and the classroom event added to students' motivation and students' interest in the storybook.

The main form of communication by Teacher J during the whole group storybook reading session was evaluative response. The teacher evaluative response to student initiated communication comprised acceptance with reinforcer; acceptance that repeated the student response; acceptance with extension or explanation; and disguised rejection. Teacher J used the opportunity to respond to a student communication to confirm or refute the substance of the communication. Within the same communication turn, Teacher J offered an expanded view or explanation of the subject.

6.7.3 Student Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

The primary categories of whole group student communications were requests, statements, and responses. The students' contributions came from student requests, student statements that were text related, student statements that indicated a continuity of communications, student responses to text related questions and statements, student responses based on background experience and knowledge, and student responses that indicated a continuity of communication.

Student requests were usually about improving the location or storybook visibility for the student, and indications about a desire to communicate with the teacher. The majority of student requests that indicated a desire to communicate with the teacher took place after the storybook reading session.

Student statements that were text related included factual recall statements, statements about storybook illustrations, and predictive and interpretive statements. The text related statements were usually made after the storybook reading session. Students appeared comfortable about making statements about text because they were making statements about knowledge that had been recently acquired. Text related statements that were predictive or interpretive usually occurred after the storybook reading session. Statements made about illustrations tended to be straightforward descriptions of an illustration.

A student response to the teacher's questions and statements was the main form of communication by the students during the whole group storybook reading session. This demonstrated that students were provided more opportunity to respond to teacher initiated communication than initiating the communication themselves. The student responses centred on the storybook title, author, and illustrator, factual recall responses, and predictive and interpretive responses. The student responses to storybook title, author, and illustrator questions and statements from the teacher tended to be single turn, non-elaborative replies. The single turn usually consisted of a single word or utterance. Factual recall responses were widely distributed among the students, however, there was no evidence of students working together to respond to a teacher question or statement. Predictive and interpretive student responses about text represented the largest category of turns by the students throughout all of the storybook reading sessions. The communications were characterised by long strings of subject centred communication turns before and after storybook reading.

The student response that indicated a continuity of communication was the second largest student response category. The composition of the responses was factual recall, predictive and interpretive, yes/no responses, and student responses that included self, family, teacher, or pre primary. The factual recall responses were about storybook events. The communications consisted of lengthy linked student turns that provided continuity in the communication about the content of the storybook. Student predictive and interpretive responses also contained lengthy linked student response turns, with each turn consisting of several utterances to form logical descriptive sentences. The yes/no responses served the purpose of maintaining continuity of communications between teachers and students. Frequently, the whole group responded with yes/no responses. Student responses that referenced self, family, friends, teacher, and pre primary had communication patterns that had more content and were more detailed than other student communications.

Student evaluative responses to another student communication involved student acceptance of peer communication with some positive reinforcement, and student rejection or disagreement with peer communication. The exchanges were usually dyadic exchanges of short duration involving a limited number of communication turns from each student.

6.7.4 Teacher Strategies to Promote Student Communications

The main strategies Teacher J employed to create student communicative contributions around personal experience and knowledge were teacher questions, statements and responses that were based on personal

experience and knowledge, and student questions, statements and responses that were based on background experience and knowledge. The teacher questions centred on the student, their family, friends and pre primary class. Questions that referenced the pre primary class were about subject areas that had been discussed during previous learning experiences.

Teacher statements that were directed to the students' background experience and knowledge were generally based on the pre primary class. Teacher J communications were lengthy and detailed because they translated previous classroom activities and learning experiences to the theme of the storybook. Teacher responses based on their background experience and knowledge were the least used communication strategy.

Student questions that referred to the background experience and knowledge of the teacher, student, family, and pre primary classroom were almost absent from the classroom communications. Only two student turns based on the background experience of the teacher were recorded.

Student statements that relied on background experience and knowledge were centred on the student and their family. Most of the student statements were made after storybook reading and were about family situations that were comparable to the events contained in the story.

Student responses that included references to background experience and knowledge were about the student and their family, and the pre primary classroom. The majority of the student communications were about the student and family.

6.7.5 Differences in Teacher and Student Contributions

Differences in teacher and student contributions to the whole group storybook communications were recorded during the twelve month field research of the pre primary classroom.

Teacher directives about the expectations for whole group storybook reading were more likely to occur during the first six months of the year when the teacher was establishing class expectations for behaviour, and developing the students' listening skills. The teacher questions about background experience and knowledge based on the pre primary class were concentrated in the early part of the year and there were large variations between the number of teacher turns when different storybook reading sessions were compared. Teacher questions aimed at maintaining continuity of communications included questions that were predictive or interpretive, involved the student, family, and factual recall. The predictive type of questions was more likely to be asked later in the year and were characterised by large variations in teacher turns between different whole group storybook reading sessions. Factual recall questions were more likely to be asked later in the year and were noted to have wide variations in the number of teacher turns when whole group storybook reading sessions were compared.

Teacher statements based on background experience and knowledge of the pre primary classroom did not appear in the early storybook reading sessions. Teacher J communications showed a slight variation in the number of teacher turns but this was randomly distributed across the reading sessions. The teacher evaluative responses that were disguised rejections of the student communication occurred mainly in the early

part of the year. There were significant variations in the number of teacher turns.

Student requests about the visibility of the storybook and the desire to communicate with the teacher varied in terms of student turns during the storybook reading sessions, and were more likely to occur later in the year. Student statements that were text related and predictive occurred mainly in the early part of the year. The student statements about illustrations were made in the later part of the year and revealed marked variations in the number of student turns for each of the whole group storybook reading sessions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CASE STUDY: WHOLE GROUP STORYBOOK READING IN PRE PRIMARY CLASSROOM M

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the classroom communication between Teacher M and pre primary students engaged in whole group storybook reading in a pre primary classroom context. The pre primary classroom is located in a lower socio-economic community within the Perth metropolitan area, and for many of the pre primary students, English is a second language. Teacher M has formal teaching qualifications and five years' teaching experience in Western Australian metropolitan schools.

The chapter is structured around the study research questions. Each major section addresses a research question and presents data and information gathered during the twenty video recordings taken during whole group storybook reading in pre primary M. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings for each of the research questions addressed.

Pre primary Teacher M's organization of the whole group story book reading was established in the classroom by drawing on observations, anecdotes, interviews and discussions between the researcher and Teacher M throughout the twelve months of field work. Teacher M's language programs and daily lesson plans which outlined weekly

learning experiences and storybook reading activities, were also included in the information gathered from pre primary M.

The nature and extent of Teacher M contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity was explored from an analysis of coded data taken from the video recording, and information collected from teacher interviews and field notes. The research question was addressed by examining teacher directives; teacher questions that were text related; teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication; teacher statements that were text related; and teacher evaluative responses to student communication.

The nature and extent of pre primary students' contributions to the whole group story book reading activity was determined by examining coded data taken from the video recording, and information which had been gathered as field notes. The research question was explained by analysing student requests; student statements that were text related; student statements that indicated a continuity of communication; student responses to text related questions and statements; student responses that indicated a continuity of communication; and student evaluative responses which had been directed to peer communications.

Strategies employed by Teacher M to create opportunities for the pre primary students to develop communicative contributions around personal experience and personal knowledge were identified by examining teacher initiated communications and actions, and the consequential communicative contributions and social repertoires which were shared among the pre primary M students.

Differences between the Teacher M and pre primary students' contributions throughout the year were determined by examining all coded teacher and student communications, and all field notes collected throughout the academic year.

Teacher Profile

Name: Teacher M
Age: 25-30 years
Gender: Female
Teaching Qualifications: Diploma of Teaching
Bachelor of Education - Early Childhood Studies (completing)

School Profile

Name: Pre primary M
Age of students: 4-5 year olds
Number of students: 25 students
Gender: 16 girls and 9 boys

Pre primary M is a classroom located in a junior primary building which is on site with the local primary school. It is separated from the other primary classrooms and buildings by a large grassed playing field. The junior primary students have access to the weekly school assembly, school canteen, music room and school library. The junior primary building accommodates three other classrooms. There is a second pre primary classroom and two other year one classrooms. Each of the classrooms in the junior primary building are quite separate from each other. The year one classrooms share a wet area which is used for painting and craft activities. Each of the pre primary classrooms has a

wet area for their own use. The wet area for pre primary M is situated outside the main classroom door.

The wet area in pre primary M is used for small group tabletop activities, painting and cooking. The small tables and chairs are placed in groups of six which leaves very little space for movement around the wet area. A large collage trolley has been placed in front of a small upright stove and refrigerator in the far end of the wet area. The collage trolley creates a boundary between the pre primary students and the kitchen area. There is an ablution block with appropriately sized toilets and hand basins for the young students in the junior primary building. All four classrooms have access to this area.

The main classroom of pre primary M is quite large and carpeted. Teacher M has placed a number of wall hangings, which were created by her previous pre primary students, around the room in order to disguise the age of the walls and brighten the classroom. The quiet reading area is surrounded by colourful beanbags and a bookshelf. The pre primary students referred to the quiet reading area as the "read and relax corner".

Teacher M enthusiastically explained her preference for leaving the main area of pre primary M free from the students' tables and chairs because she wanted the space to allow free movement around the room. Her talent lay in the drama/literature area and she frequently involved her students in role plays and expressive movement. The spacious room allowed her the spontaneity and freedom she appreciated when the young students were engaged in creative learning and social interaction.

Teacher M would plan her term program around a thematic approach and learning experiences were integrated and linked to a main theme. Each theme would be carried out for approximately five weeks, and eight themes were introduced during the academic year. Teacher M considered a thematic approach valuable for the students in her care, because it provided a focus for their learning experiences. Teacher M would frequently explain to the pre primary students how particular activities in which they were participating were linked to the theme.

T: You know how we are learning about restaurants, well today, we are going to make a menu for our pre primary restaurant.

T: Can anyone tell me what a menu might be?

When Teacher M selected a theme, she would include a construction of some kind for the main classroom area. For example, when the pre primary students were studying farms, the students built and painted a farmhouse made from egg cartons. The farmhouse was used to display other activities the students had completed as part of the farm theme. There were plastic farm toys in the farmhouse for the students to play with, and farm books for the students to browse through. When the theme was food, the students created a restaurant complete with tables, chairs and menu. There were plastic plates, cutlery, paper serviettes and student designed place mats for the restaurant patrons (pre primary M) to use.

Teacher M also commented on her interest in cooking, and the inclusion of cooking in her weekly planning of learning experiences. By placing the students' tables and chairs in groups in the wet area, they were able to

be seated together whilst they participated in the cooking activity. The cooking activities were a significant part of her pre primary program, because they provided the pre primary students with a valuable and indeed, enjoyable opportunity to engage in shared conversations. The majority of students from pre primary M were from ESL (English as a Second Language) backgrounds. Therefore, teacher M would structure her learning experiences around lessons which encouraged social interaction and shared communication. This was regarded as essential if the students were to develop confidence and competence in speaking English.

Teacher M tried to encourage parental involvement in the pre primary classroom. Invitations were issued to the parents on a regular basis to come and admire the students' displays and constructions at the completion of each theme. Invitations for parent help during tabletop activities and fruit time were also issued at the commencement of each term. However, parents rarely responded to the invitations.

When parents brought the students to the pre primary in the morning, Teacher M would wait at the classroom door to greet the students. She found most parents, particularly the Asian parents, to be shy and reluctant to come into the classroom. Teacher M commented that the Asian mothers were friendly and always greeted her with a smile and a nod. The more confident mothers would say "Good Morning", and then they would be on their way. Teacher M considered that the parents' limited English speaking skills was responsible for their hesitancy in becoming more involved with the pre primary activities. However, despite their hesitancy, Teacher M found the Asian parents to be particularly appreciative of her efforts in developing English

language/speaking skills of their children. The pre primary students frequently brought in Asian foods such as spring rolls, rice paper rolls, fried rice and noodles for Teacher M's lunch. She regarded the beautiful lunches as a compliment: a token of gratitude from the Asian parents.

A small number of pre primary students were from Australian backgrounds. These students were either from single parent families, or families where both parents worked. Teacher M commented that this group of parents had little time to assist in the pre primary classroom. Most parents worked long hours and the pre primary students were either dropped off and picked up from school by older siblings or attended after school care.

7.2 Teacher Organization of Whole Group Storybook Reading

7.2.1 Overview

Teacher M stated that the primary role of whole group storybook reading in pre primary classroom M was the development of English language skills. The teacher was particularly interested in improving the students' literacy and vocabulary repertoire, and developing concepts through an understanding of the themes of the storybooks. Teacher M's stated goals during the year focused on improving the pre primary students' confidence and competence in oral language skills in all four terms. There was an intention to increase the degree of difficulty of language related learning for the students throughout the year. The aim was to progressively extend the pre primary students' spoken language by building on their prior knowledge gained through pre primary learning experiences.

Because the students came to the class with below average literacy and vocabulary skills, Teacher M placed a priority on social interactions within the classroom. She considered the social context of the whole group storybook reading significant, because it created opportunities for the pre primary students to engage in language and literacy development, and to participate in shared conversations within a friendly, relaxed atmosphere.

With regard to the changing nature of the teacher's goals for storybook reading over the school year, Teacher M responded that during first term, her aim was to develop student interest in storybooks. She established very early in the year that her pre primary students had very little experience with storybooks. Cultural differences in the students' backgrounds suggested that most of the pre primary students did not have a nightly ritual of bath, teeth and story before their bedtime. Moreover, the pre primary students did not take advantage of the local community library and borrow storybooks for home reading.

Teacher M spent considerable time during first term establishing expectations for the whole group storybook reading activity. The pre primary students lacked concentration and were not particularly good listeners. However, as the year progressed, their interest in her storybook reading sessions improved. They were more attentive and appeared to enjoy the stories. Teacher M indicated that there was a significant shift from directives about appropriate storybook reading behaviours to shared communicative contributions.

Teacher M's early goal of extending the pre primary students' vocabulary continued throughout the year. She adopted a very simple speaking

vocabulary initially, to facilitate student understanding. The pre primary students were provided with substantial communicative scaffolding in the form of prompts and explanations, to allow them to make meaning from the storybook words and events. As the year progressed, Teacher M explained that the pre primary students were more participative during the shared communications which were encouraged during storybook reading. Teacher M identified several reasons for an increase in student participation. These included students' improved confidence and competence in speaking English; friendships which had developed among the students; and the nature of the thematic topics which had been selected throughout the year.

Teacher M stated that her learning experiences were focused around promoting social interaction among the pre primary students. She considered social interaction and the subsequent communications which occurred, as pivotal to the students' language and literacy development. She considered the whole group storybook reading activity as an opportunity to extend the pre primary students' language and literacy development within a relaxed social context. Furthermore, the whole group storybook reading sessions provided the students with an appropriate context to practise and rehearse their communication skills.

The pre primary students demonstrated limited background knowledge and experience. Therefore, Teacher M based most of her learning experiences on usual five year old experiences and calendar events. Teacher M planned her farm theme to coincide with the Perth Royal Show in September. The pre primary students made their own show bags and filled them with jigsaws, plasticine, samples of wool, coconut ice and popcorn made in the pre primary classroom. The day Teacher M

read the storybook 'At The Show' was particularly exciting for the students, because they planned making toffee apples after the whole group storybook reading session. Most of the pre primary students were not going to the Show. However, Teacher M felt that it was important to discuss and explain the Show to the students to add to their knowledge about this significant local event even though they had not experienced it first-hand.

S1: I can't go to the Royal Show.

T: How come?

S1: Because it takes too much money for the rides.

T: Yes the Royal Show does cost a lot of money doesn't it.

T: And some mums and dads just don't have that much money.

T: And that's why we made our own show bags at pre primary.

When Teacher M introduced a new topic or event to the pre primary students through storybooks, she would regularly ask the students for word meanings. She would later include these words and their meanings in other learning experiences in order to reinforce learning.

T: Who knows what sideshow alley is at the Royal Show?

S: No response.

T: The place is called sideshow alley. Does anyone know what that is?

S: No response.

T: That's the place where you go on all the fantastic rides and play all the games.

Teacher M's main agenda during the whole group storybook reading activity was to encourage student participation in the shared communications. In order to facilitate communicative contributions from the students, Teacher M accepted all responses made by individual students in a positive manner. If the student's comments were inaccurate, Teacher M would still accept the response and disguise her rejection of the response by elaborating on the response herself, or further questioning the student in order to scaffold the student's thinking.

T: And do you remember what happened to the mum?

S1: Flipped over.

T: What's another word that sounds like flipped over?

S2: She fell over.

T: I think my mum would have fainted if she saw my room looking like that.

S1: She fainted, the mummy fainted.

An effective strategy employed early in the year by Teacher M, was to draw the pre primary students' attention to the cover of the storybook. She would invite the students to predict what the story was about by using the picture clues on the front cover of the book. This strategy provided a useful framework, because it guided the students' thinking before the teacher commenced the storybook reading. Teacher M also directed the students' attention to the author and illustrator of the storybook. She would frequently ask the students to identify the specific roles of an author and illustrator. In addition to drawing the students' attention to the picture clues on the front cover of the storybook, Teacher M would open the storybook and show the students the pictures inside. She would initiate some discussion with the students about what they

thought was happening in the pictures. Once the students had discussed the pictures in the book, Teacher M would conclude with "Let's see if we're right", and commence the storybook reading.

Teacher M's intention was to stimulate the students' interest in the storybook. She felt the students were able to establish early visual concepts about the storybook events and the sequence of events through shared discussion and the viewing of storybook pictures prior to the storybook reading. She further concluded that the initial viewing of pictures in the storybook was effective in facilitating links between the storybook events and the students' own personal experience and knowledge. The pictures provided a visual scaffold for students who may not have understood the spoken words.

Teacher M stated that she observed a significant increase in the pre primary students' motivation and interest in the storybook when she provided them with the visual framework to guide their thinking. She noted that the communicative contributions were more frequent and included shared personal experiences. As the students' vocabulary increased and their knowledge about using visual strategies improved later in the academic year, Teacher M no longer felt the need to provide a visual framework for the students. She remarked that the students were able to anticipate storybook events and story sequences from listening to the story and employing higher order thinking and reasoning strategies. Teacher M attributed the gains made in this area to the pre primary students' language and literacy development.

The teacher structured learning experiences around a theme. She would spend many hours in the primary school library and her local community

library selecting appropriate books to meet the needs of her students. During the first term, because of the pre primary students' limited concentration span and lack of interest in the storybook reading activity, she would select storybooks with bright and colourful pictures. Usually the books contained visual clues, because they assisted the students with their comprehension of the story. The language-weak students were able to comprehend the story without understanding the words that had been read, because they were able to rely on visual clues. With respect to the classroom theme, the teacher was able to reinforce key areas of the curriculum. The pre primary students learned early in the year that the storybook related to an ongoing theme in some way. Teacher M would always remind the students of the theme during the storybook reading activity, to enable the students to establish links between their pre primary learning experiences, the storybook reading session and their own personal experience and knowledge.

Early in the year, Teacher M selected books which had few words and more pictures. The teacher commented that in first term she would not necessarily read the printed words in the storybook. Some of the words would be substituted by simpler words she knew the pre primary students would understand. Reading printed words the students did not understand was considered to be distracting for the students, because Teacher M felt that she had to frequently stop reading to explain a number of word meanings. However, with the students' increased understanding of the words and word meanings, the teacher would read the printed words in the storybook and limit her word substitution. By the commencement of term three, Teacher M explained that she was able to read the storybook rather than tell the story with the aid of the storybook pictures.

The fundamental teaching strategy employed by Teacher M for the pre primary students, was socially constructed learning. She found the informal social context of the whole group storybook reading conducive to shared communications. Teacher M initiated shared communication by asking questions; making statements about the storybook pictures before the storybook reading; and encouraging general discussion after the storybook reading. Discussions after the storybook reading were considered significant, because they invited the students to share their own personal experiences and personal knowledge with the whole group. Teacher M phrased her after storybook reading questions to encourage the pre primary students to include their personal opinions in the communicative contributions.

T: What do you think you would have done with the glasses?

T: Where do you think the farmer would have put his new truck?

T: Which part of the Show would you like to go and see, do you think?

Teacher M indicated that these types of questions were asked to promote higher order thinking in the students. The students were initially shy and hesitant about including their personal thoughts in the shared communications. However, as they became familiar with the teacher's approach, developed friendship groups and confidence, they were more willing to contribute to the shared discussions and relate their own personal experiences.

7.2.2 The Physical Arrangements

The teacher was located in front of the group of students, seated in a chair and slightly elevated above the students. A low table and easel was located on the right hand side of Teacher M and used by the teacher to support the storybook and to display thematically related items the students had made, or were brought in by the teacher to explain and reinforce the storybook theme.

The students were seated on the carpeted floor (known as the mat area) that was positioned in front of the teacher. The mat area was close to the teacher to ensure the students could see the storybook and its illustrations, and hear the communications from the teacher and other students. The students sat close to each other and usually occupied the same place on the mat area at each storybook reading session. Teacher M stated that she did not move her chair, nor change the storybook mat area, because she considered the importance of routine in the students' day. Establishing a routine of where to sit, encouraged the students to settle quickly before the commencement of the storybook reading.

Whole group storybook reading was usually undertaken twice each day: the first lesson of the day and the last lesson of the day. Both storybook reading sessions were of approximately 30 minutes' duration. Teacher M stated that she commenced the pre primary day with a storybook session, because it encouraged social interaction and shared communication among the students. The storybooks were always linked to the theme. Therefore, the first storybook reading session provided a focus for the subsequent learning experiences in which the pre primary students would participate throughout the school day. The second storybook reading

session was carried out during the last 30 minutes of the day. Teacher M found the last reading session useful, because it allowed the pre primary students to settle before their parents and carers arrived to collect them. More importantly however, Teacher M would use the storybook reading session to tie together and reinforce the planned activities the student had engaged in throughout the day. She indicated the conclusion of the storybook session was valuable in encouraging the students to remember key areas learned. She frequently used the shared communication from the storybook session to motivate the pre primary students the following day.

T: Yesterday we were talking about eating at restaurants. Have a look at this picture today. What kind of restaurant do you think this might be?

7.3 Teacher Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

Teacher M contributions to whole group storybook reading were assessed in terms of teacher directives, teacher questions that were text related, teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication, teacher statements that were text related, and teacher evaluative responses to a student communication. Each is discussed in the following sections and quantified in a summary form in Table 4 below. A detailed breakdown of Teacher M's communication is contained in Appendix 6.

Communication Type	Teacher M Communication Frequency
Teacher Directives	395
Teacher Questions Text	226
Teacher Questions BEK	206
Teacher Questions C of C	214
Teacher Statements Text	210
Teacher Statements BEK	60
Teacher Statements C of C	20
Teacher Response Requests	116
Teacher Response Text	18
Teacher Response BEK	9
Teacher Response C of C	12
Teacher Response Student	650
Total	2136

Note

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

Table 4. Summary of Teacher M Communication

7.3.1 Teacher Directives

Teacher M directives were aimed at providing expectations for the storybook reading sessions and directing the students' attention to the text. Teacher expectations for the storybook reading were mainly made to the students before and during the storybook reading, although there was a significant number of teacher directive communications recorded after storybook reading. The content of the teacher directives related to storybook reading before, during, and after storybook reading, were all aimed at student behavioural issues such as sitting, listening, and paying attention to the storybook.

- T: And this is where the book is going to be, so if you can't see Nathan, you need to move to somewhere where you can see.
- T: This is where the book is going to be. If you can't see, move to somewhere where you can see.
- T: Is there a problem (to two boys moving)? Caddy move up really close sweetie okay! So I want you to tell me the story. But I'm going to choose people who are sitting really nicely and who are listening carefully. Turn around (turns boy around to face the front) and those people who don't call out.

Teacher M's communications consisted of a number of turns containing specific instructions to the whole group and to particular students who were not complying with behaviours that were acceptable to the group. The teacher initiated directives resulted in behavioural adjustments, rather than communicative responses, from the students. The usual pattern of actions involved a directive followed by behavioural accommodation, followed by a directive, followed by behavioural accommodation. The students did not refuse to accommodate the teacher's directive. However, Teacher M's directives constantly reminded the students about proper codes of behaviour in the classroom. They were used to bring the students' attention back to the storybook and the whole group storybook reading session.

The teacher communication that directed the students' attention to the storybook text were detailed communications from the teacher that generally included a related aspect of the storybook theme.

- T: While Marcus is having a look at the postcard and passing it around (from Anthea on holidays) I would like everyone to look at the book on the easel. I would like everyone to look at the front cover.
- T: Okay I will read you the title of the story.
- T: The Spring Time Rock and Roll - that's the name of the book. Have a look at this picture.

Teacher M routinely started the whole group storybook reading by drawing the students' attention to the illustrations contained in the storybook. The teacher explained that the approach provided the students with a visual overview of the story that assisted the students to understand the story, and increased their interest and attentiveness throughout the storybook reading session. The teacher's communication turns directed towards the storybook text were equally distributed before and during storybook reading.

7.3.2 Teacher Questions that were Text Related

Teacher questions related to text were based on questions about the storybook title, author and illustrator; predictive; interpretive; higher order questions; and yes/no questions. The teacher communications occurred before and during storybook reading.

Text related questions about the storybook title, author and illustrator, were mainly about illustrated events in the story and were asked before storybook reading commenced. As the storybook reading session progressed, Teacher M would identify a feature in an illustration and ask the students a question based on the feature. Teacher M read the

storybook's written words and described the story theme more fully by referring the students to the illustrations. The illustrations provided the focus for the storybook reading.

T: Have a look at the picture and see if you can guess what time of the year that is. Is it Winter, Summer, Autumn, or Spring?

Look at the picture. The picture gives you a clue about what time of the year it is.

Teacher M effectively used the story book illustrations to gain the students' attention and provide the opportunity for questions. The teacher cited the lower literacy skills of the students as the reason for emphasising and referencing the illustrations during storybook reading.

Teacher questions that were predictive, interpretive, or higher order, were asked before and during storybook reading. However, there were three times as many questions asked during storybook reading. This was the most frequently used form of questioning used by Teacher M. The predictive elements before storybook reading, used the storybook title and illustration on the cover as cues for questions, whereas the events of the storybook, provided the cues during storybook reading. The teacher questions were predominantly predictive and interpretive. There were very few higher order questions asked by the teacher. An example of teacher questioning before storybook reading is shown in the following extract of teacher communications recorded during the reading of 'Wombat Divine' by Mem Fox.

T: Sometimes when you look at a book you can guess what the story is about by looking at the front cover.

Would anyone like to guess what this story might be about?

T: What do you think might be happening to the wombat in this book?

Have a guess.

Millicent?

T: You know how you thought wombat might be dressing up as Father Christmas. How do you know it's a Christmas book?

What makes you think it's a Christmas book?

Teacher M's use of words such as "guess" were used to encourage the students to make a contribution to the whole group communication even if they were unsure of the correct answer. The teacher viewed student contributions to the class communication as an important part of students' learning and socialisation. The teacher questions that evoked a yes/no response were mainly asked during the storybook reading and their purpose was to check the students' understanding of the storybook events. According to the teacher, a question requiring a yes/no response was an efficient way of checking the students' comprehension of the story.

7.3.3 Teacher Questions that Indicated a Continuity of Communication

Teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication were yes/no questions before, during and after storybook reading, meaning of events and words, predictive and interpretive questions, and questions involving the student, family, or teacher. Questions about meaning,

predictions and interpretations, and student, family, or teacher, were asked before and during storybook reading.

Teacher yes/no questions did not have any particular properties and were not dissimilar to yes/no questions that were text related. The differences were in the additional student and teacher communications these questions evoked, compared to the text related questions. The subject matter of the yes/no questions shifted from storybook subjects to the students themselves.

The teacher questions about meaning of events and words, predictions and interpretations, was the main form of questioning used by Teacher M to maintain continuity of communications. The teacher questions were usually confined to meaning and predictions about immediate storybook events, and where reasonable, Teacher M would assist the students with their consideration of the question.

T: What's the clue that gave it away right at the beginning?

T: What makes you think it might be a special type of grasshopper?

T: What about the special wings?

Look at the different colours here.

T: What makes you think it's a butterfly?

What clue tells you it's a butterfly?

The teacher provided assistance to the students by directing their attention to particular features and clues. This was consistent with Teacher M's goal of using whole group storybook reading to develop

concept building skills. The teacher took special care with the students during this collaborative communication exchange.

Teacher questions about the student, family, or teacher, were asked by the teacher to personalise some of the storybook events. The teacher attempted to place the students within a set of circumstances that paralleled those of the story. The familiarity with personal associations promoted linked teacher-student communications.

T: What would mummy say if you didn't clean up your bedroom Nathan?

What would your mummy say if you didn't clean up your bedroom?

T: You know what my mum would say to me? She would say no T.V. until you tidy your room.

S1: That's what my mum always says.

The teacher was able to relate to the students by pointing out situations she had confronted as a student that were identical to those confronted by the students in their homes.

7.3.4 Teacher Statements that were Text Related

Teacher statements that were text related included statements about the storybook, title, author, and illustrator, meaning of events and words, and statements about the illustrations contained in the storybook. The statements about the storybook were made before reading the storybook, whereas statements about meaning of events, words and illustrations, occurred before and after storybook reading.

Teacher statements about the storybook were centred on the storybook itself. Teacher M used statements to clarify and explain what the story was about, and acquaint the students with the storybook title, author, and illustrator. She used statements to set the scene for the whole group storybook reading session. During this stage of storybook reading, the students listened to the teacher.

T: Our story today is about some people who I don't think have very good manners.

I don't think they eat very nicely at all.

T: Before I read the story.

Remember, we'll look through the pictures so we can see if you can tell me what's happening in the story. (Teacher turns pages so students can see all the pictures)

T: The story today is called The Dippy Dinner Drippers.

Teacher M always used statements to introduce the storybook. This occurred after the students had settled down and demonstrated they were ready to listen to the story.

Teacher statements that involved meaning of events and words were detailed communications from Teacher M that elaborated on some aspect of the story. The elaborations relied on the experience of the teacher and typically provided new information to the students and improved their vocabulary and general knowledge. Teacher statements provided the teacher with an opportunity to lead communications with the students. In the story book 'Santa Claus and the Wood Cutter', Teacher M gave an interesting account of why a donkey pulled Santa's sleigh.

- T: The reason Santa Claus has a donkey and not a reindeer is because this book was written in another country. This book was not written in Australia. This book was written in Switzerland.
- T: In Switzerland in the winter time it's very, very cold and it almost always snows and in Switzerland the children believe that Santa pulls the sleigh around with a donkey.
- T: So that's why Santa is walking through the snow along with a donkey, because this book was written in Switzerland.

Teacher M's statements appeared to be an effective way of transferring information to the students, when the content of the teacher communication was related to the events in the storybook, and the teacher was able to provide new information.

Teacher statements about illustrations from the storybook were directed to an illustration, or a feature contained in an illustration that the teacher wished to highlight to the students. The communication was primarily used by Teacher M to assist with an explanation of the story. The teacher communications were directed to the whole class.

7.3.5 Teacher Evaluative Responses to a Student Communication

Teacher evaluative responses to a student communication included acceptance with reinforcer, acceptance that repeated the student response, acceptance with extension or explanation, and disguised rejection with explanation. Teacher M's communications were usually

effected before and during storybook reading. Evaluative response was the most frequently used category of teacher communication.

Teacher acceptance of the student communication accompanied with a positive reinforcement was a frequently used teacher communication. The construction of the communication usually involved confirmation of the accuracy of the student's communication, and " good boy/girl " or " that's fantastic ". Teacher acceptance of the student communication and a repeat of the student response involved Teacher M confirming the accuracy of the student communication and restating the student's communication. For example, " Yes, there's cats out the front ". The teacher response based on acceptance with extension or explanation was the type of evaluative response most frequently used by Teacher M. The response typically produced a longer and more detailed communication from Teacher M. The elaboration of her response provided the students with more information.

- T: The postman puts them in there.
He rides around on his motorbike and he puts letters in your letterbox.
- T: Yes. Some postmen have a motorbike and some postmen have pushbikes - just depends on what they like and also on how big their area is. If their area is very big then they need a motorbike.

Teacher responses that were disguised rejections with explanations were the converse of acceptance with explanation. Teacher M's responses were detailed, because they introduced more information into the teacher-student exchange. Teacher responses that included acceptance or

rejection with explanations, were a catalyst for other whole group communications, because they used cues from the new information to initiate further shared communications.

7.4 Student Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

The students' contributions to whole group storybook reading were assessed in terms of student requests; student statements that were text related; student statements that indicated a continuity of communication; student responses to text related questions and statements; student responses that indicated a continuity of communication; and student evaluative responses to other student communication. Each is discussed in the following sections and quantified in a summary form in Table 5 below. A detailed breakdown of students' M communication is contained in Appendix 9.

Communication Type	Students' M Communication Frequency
Student Requests	96
Student Questions Text	22
Student Questions BEK	10
Student Questions C of C	8
Student Statements Text	148
Student Statements BEK	79
Student Statements C of C	74
Student Responses Directives	11
Student Responses TRQ/S	430
Student Responses BEK	171
Student Responses C of C	338
Student Responses Student Com	25
Total	1412

Note

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

TRQ/S: Text related question/statement

Table 5. Summary of Students' M Communication

7.4.1 Student Requests

The student requests encompassed indications about inability to clearly see the storybook and a desire to communicate with Teacher M and generally talking, chatting, and calling out. The student communications about being able to see the storybook occurred before reading; the desire to communicate occurred before and after reading; and talking, chatting, and calling out occurred before, during, and after storybook reading. Talking, chatting, and calling out were the main student communications.

The student requests related to seeing the storybook clearly, also included other behavioural aspects from the students, as they attempted to position themselves for the whole group storybook reading session. The pre primary students' inability to see the storybook resulted from annoying behaviour by other students and poor placement of the student in relation to the storybook displayed on the easel. The following student communications before reading 'The Dippy Dinner Drippers' was typical of the student initiated communication before the storybook reading commenced.

S1: I can't see.

S2: I'm tired.

S3: I can't see (gets up to move).

S4: I'm getting squashy because she's pushy.

S4: Anthea and Marcus are annoying me.

S5: And Nathan stepped on my finger.

The main student communication of talking, chatting, and calling out was distributed amongst most of the student group. The students issued unsolicited requests about the storybook theme. The requests ranged from descriptions of storybook events, to more intuitive assessments of storybook characters and events. The students were usually excited as they competed with each other during the preparatory phase of storybook reading. There was evidence of competition to gain Teacher M's approval, and competition amongst peers to be considered as a contributor to the whole group communication.

7.4.2 Student Statements that were Text Related

Student statements that were text related included predictive and interpretive statements made during storybook reading, and statements about illustrations before and during reading. The students' statements were mainly about illustrations. This reflected Teacher M's emphasis on illustrations as a means of encouraging student learning through visual scaffolding.

The pre primary M students' predictive and interpretive statements were related to the storybook events. Their communicative contributions about the storybook text flowed freely, with most students volunteering an opinion on events. After first term, the students gave the impression of wanting to predict and interpret outcomes associated with interesting

stories. This was attributed to the confidence they had developed in shared communication.

S1: He's going to touch it.

S2: He might get fat.

S2: He did get fat.

S3: He might have a baby.

Student statements about illustrations were usually about confirming the detail of the illustration. The students welcomed the opportunity to give an opinion on the content of an illustration, and their statements involved their interpretation of the meaning of an illustration.

S1: It's a moth.

S2: It doesn't look like a moth.

S3: Actually that looks like a goat.

S4: It's like a butterfly.

A number of the student statements evoked interesting patterns of communication that involved other students and the teacher. The students were comfortable volunteering diverse, and at times contradictory, interpretations of the same illustration. The teacher encouraged this form of student communication, as it encouraged an increase in student interest and an increase in shared communication.

7.4.3 Student Statements that Indicated a Continuity of Communication

Student statements that indicated a continuity of communication were formulated on a peer response, of meanings of events and words, as well

as the student, family, or teacher. The students' statements contained a limited number of unlinked student turns, and occurred before and during storybook reading. The statements formulated on peer responses were only occasionally represented in the student communication. Although infrequent, they were an interesting part of the overall student repertoire. The student statements added to the understanding of statements made by other students, and provided limited evidence of the students working together as a whole group to predict and explain storybook events. An extract of the students' communication from 'Caterpillar Diary' follows.

S1: It looks like a dragonfly.

S2: A flying boat.

Encouraged by the teacher, this form of student communication proved useful for developing confidence in participating in shared communication.

Student statements about meaning of events and words were comprised of a limited number of student turns, without any distinguishing characteristics. Statements that involved self, family, friends or teacher were the most common types of student communication, to achieve a continuity of communications. Students referred to themselves and their family as the subjects in their statements. The statements reflected many of the family values they had learned at home.

S: My sister broke the window and told the truth.

A majority of student statements based on self and family highlighted the importance of self and family in the students' lives. The experiences gained within the family environment provided useful stories that the students could draw upon to inform their teacher and peers.

S1: My dad always kills spiders.

S2: My big brother doesn't believe in Santa but I do cos mum says if you don't you can't get any presents.

S3: My uncle well, he has a, he has a farm like that

7.4.4 Student Response to Text Related Questions and Statements

The student responses to text related questions and statements included responses about the storybook title, author, and illustrator; factual recall; predictive and interpretive; and yes/no responses. The majority of student responses occurred before and during storybook reading.

Student responses based on storybook title, author, and illustrator were made before storybook reading and were responses to teacher questions about the storybook title, author, and illustrator. The responses usually consisted of single topic responses containing two or three utterances that did not lead to linked communication patterns.

T: What kind of shop do you think this book might be about?

S1: A lolly shop.

S2: A bun shop.

S3: A pet shop.

In each instance, the student communication did not extend beyond responding to the specific teacher question.

Factual recall responses were similar to the student responses about the storybook, except that in the former case, the teacher question and student response related to an earlier storybook event, whereas, in the latter case, the question and response related to a current storybook event.

Student responses that were predictive and interpretive occurred before and during storybook reading and were the most common type of student communication during the whole group storybook reading sessions. The student communication was characterised by the large number of student turns that varied in length from a single utterance to an extended sentence.

S1: Because he doesn't like it.

S2: Because he doesn't like people laughing at him because he doesn't think it's funny.

S3: Because he doesn't like the people teasing him. He doesn't like it because they don't believe him because they think he's lying.

The predictive and interpretive responses provided the students with an opportunity to express their own views and opinions. In many instances, when the response was a single utterance, the students responded in chorus. The students' yes/no responses to Teacher M's questions were predominantly chorus responses.

7.4.5 Student Responses that Indicated Continuity of Communication

Student responses that indicated a continuity of communications were based on predictive and interpretive responses, and responses that included the student, family, friends and pre primary classes. The student responses were effected before and during storybook reading.

The predictive and interpretive responses included linked communication patterns and a large number of student communication turns ranging in length from a single utterance to short sentences. Most students contributed to the student communication.

S1: It's good fun having boxes because you can jump in them and you can fall over.

And that's what I did with my box.

S2: And you can stand on them and look over the fence.

S3: We had a box for our new fridge and daddy put it in the back and we made a cubby with it.

The students at all times demonstrated a reasonable comprehension of the storybook theme and events, and were able to relate them to their own comparable personal experiences. This was typified in the student responses that included the student, family, friends, teacher, or pre primary class.

7.4.6 Student Evaluative Responses to Student Communications

Students' evaluative responses to peer communications were infrequently used by the students and occurred before and during storybook reading.

However, the majority of student responses recorded were rejections or disagreements with peer communication.

S1: They're not cats they're birds.

S2: No they're not.

S1: Yes they are.

The communication exchanges generally consisted of two or three student turns, and involved two or three students. After the student exchange was completed, the student communication moved to another subject and did not return to the subject of the rejection or disagreement.

7.5 Teacher Strategies to Promote Student Communications

This section examined the strategies Teacher M used to create opportunities for the teacher and the pre primary students to employ communicative contributions around personal experience and personal knowledge. The categories of teacher and student communication that were considered were teacher questions: statements and responses based on background experience and knowledge; and student questions: statements and responses based on background experience and knowledge. The analysis involved a detailed examination of the categories of teacher and student communication and established the extent and relevance of background experience and knowledge to the whole group storybook reading activity.

7.5.1 Teacher questions

The teacher questions were based on the student and their family, and the pre primary class. The questions about the student and their family were asked after storybook reading and questions relating to the pre primary class were asked before and during storybook reading. The majority of Teacher M's questions were about the pre primary class. During each teacher communication, the number of teacher turns was limited, but each teacher turn consisted of two or three sentences that described a familiar situation for the students. and around which it was assumed the students would be able to formulate an answer. For example, the teacher addressed the Royal Show, food preferences, student activities outside the pre primary school, and collective student and family interests. Teacher M's objective was to reference subject matter that would stimulate student communication.

T: Feel your feet.

What can you feel?

What does it feel like to you Anthea?

Can you tell us some words that you can say that come to your mind when you feel your feet?

What can you feel?

S1: Soft.

Teacher M's questions to the students were always related to the theme of the storybook in order to capture associations between the students' background experience and knowledge, and the events contained in the storybook.

Teacher M's questions about the pre primary class usually referred to similar themes being learned in other pre primary lessons. The questions were designed to cross-reference the whole range of pre primary classroom activities that were thematically linked to the theme of the storybook.

T: What were we learning about germs on our hands earlier this week?

T: Something else we have to remember when we're eating our dinner or your lunch?

Teacher M's questions about the student, their family, friends and the pre primary class commenced a pattern of communication from the students that involved communications from the teacher and students that were linked around the storybook theme. The construction of the teacher and student communication turns varied from a few utterances to extended communications consisting of interconnected sentences.

7.5.2 Teacher Statements

Teacher statements based on background experience and knowledge were formulated on the background experience and knowledge of the teacher, and of the pre primary class. Statements about the teacher were made during the storybook reading, and statements about the pre primary class were made before and during storybook reading. The use of teacher statements based on background experience and knowledge was one of the least used by Teacher M. However, it was used when Teacher M's background experience coincided with a storybook theme that the teacher understood to be of interest to the students. During whole group

storybook reading of 'At The Show', the teacher referenced both recent and past experiences in communications with the students.

T: That's my favourite bit of the Show really seeing all the animals.

T: Do you know what we saw at the Show last year?
My children and I saw some baby goats being born.
Isn't that incredible!

T: I don't think you are allowed to do it any more.
But when I was a little girl and we went to the Royal Show we were allowed to play on all the tractors and harvesters and that was great fun.

7.5.3 Teacher Response

Teacher responses based on background experience and knowledge of the teacher were an infrequent teacher communication. However, the limited records of this category of communication were analysed more deeply. The communication patterns that elicited a teacher response involved a student question directed to the teacher inquiring about the teacher's own background experience and knowledge. During whole group teacher-student communication about the Royal Show, Teacher M was asked about her recollections of the Show.

S1: What did you do? Did you get to ride them?

T: We used to just climb into the tractors and harvesters and pretend we were farmers. But I don't think they left the keys in the ignition.

The number of teacher response communication turns was low because the students did not routinely include questions about the background experience and knowledge of the teacher in their communication repertoire. However, Teacher M did include background experience and knowledge in responding to the students if the background experience and knowledge was relevant and interesting for the students.

7.5.4 Student Statements

Student statements based on background experience and knowledge consisted of statements about the student and their family, and statements about the pre primary class. The student statements occurred before and during storybook reading. The majority of student statements was about the student and their family and occurred during storybook reading. The statements about the student and family were references to their own experiences or situations at home, or involving other family members that paralleled an illustration or event from the storybook.

The large number of student turns during storybook reading showed how the events and illustrations provided the stimulus for the students to make statements based on their background experience and knowledge. The structure of the student statements consisted of a number of student turns, with each turn forming a statement. The statements were made by a majority of students from the class. It was evident that each student had a unique background experience and knowledge that was relevant to the storybook reading, and they wanted to communicate their experiences to the teacher and their peers.

- S1: We always put up our Christmas tree on the first day in December.
- S2: My mum cooks fried rice its yummy.
- S3: I go to a restaurant every day cos my dad he's the boss. He cooks everything yummy.

Another interesting feature of the students' statements was their initiation by the students. The students identified some aspect of the storybook and volunteered a statement based on their background experience and knowledge to expand the whole group communication on that aspect of the story. The statements improved the students' understanding of the storybook theme and events, and provided an opportunity for the students to understand and appreciate some of the personal experiences, qualities, and values their peers brought to the whole group storybook reading session.

- S1: I like messing up my room because then I can clean it up.
- S2: I like cleaning up my room too.
- S3: My room is never messy.
- S4: My sister and I have to clean up our room.

Each pre primary student statement provided a bridge for a following communication from a peer, or the teacher. The introduction of student statements during the storybook reading signalled to the students that it was permissible and indeed encouraged by Teacher M to depart from strict considerations of storybook events and illustrations, and include views and opinions based on their wider background experience and knowledge.

7.5.5 Student Response

Student responses based on background experience and knowledge comprised of responses about background experience and knowledge of the student and their family; and responses about background experience and knowledge of the pre primary class. The student response category that contained the largest number of student turns was the response based on the background experience and knowledge of the student and their family. Student responses from this category occurred before, during, and after storybook reading, and were equally distributed over each period of reading. Student responses based on background experience and knowledge of the pre primary classroom occurred before and after storybook reading. The students' yes/no responses usually occurred during the storybook reading.

The responses based on the background experience of the student dominated the student communication and typically relayed a domestic situation the student had experienced. The subject matter of the students' communication was generally confined to simple activities the student had experienced alone or with their families, and situations they had been informed about by other adults and children unrelated to their pre primary class. The responses communicated information pre primary M students had obtained through independent experiences, compared to the wider group in the pre primary classroom.

The student responses based on background experience and knowledge of the pre primary class referred to events the students were familiar with because of a prior experience as a member of the pre primary class. The student responses were based on recollections of pre primary teacher-

student discussions and activities that were in some way linked to the theme of the storybook. The student responses varied in length between a single utterance and short sentences. During the reading of 'Spring Time Rock and Roll' the students included comments which linked 'Spring Time Rock and Roll' to the 'Royal Show', as both books were included in the farm theme.

S1: That's like the sheep at the Royal Show (referring to sheep in 'Spring Time Rock and Roll'). They're parading like them animals at the Royal Show.

All of the students' responses were characterised by interpolations of their own background experience and knowledge that were basic in content and structure and presented in communications to the teacher and peers.

S1: At our restaurant (pre primary M) we have menus but not like that one. We um we have make up (make believe) food.

7.6 Differences in Teacher and Student Contributions

This section examined the characteristics of the teacher and student communications throughout the school year and identified relevant features of the communication. Teacher M's main communicative contributions involved directives, questions, statements, and responses. These key communications were comprised of questions that were text related; questions based on background experience and knowledge; questions involving a continuity of communications; statements that were text related; statements based on background experience and

knowledge; and evaluative responses to a student communication. Pre primary M's student communicative contributions mainly involved requests, statements, and responses. These student communications comprised statements that were text related; statements based on background experience and knowledge; statements involving a continuity of communications; responses to questions and statements that were text related; responses based on background experience and knowledge; and responses involving a continuity of communication.

7.6.1 Teacher Contributions

Teacher M's directives centred on the expectations for the storybook reading session. Before the storybook reading, the teacher directives were principally about behaviour, and were uniformly distributed over the year. Directives issued during the storybook reading were also uniformly distributed over the year. However, teacher turns increased in the later part of the year as the teacher placed greater emphasis on appropriate student behaviour. The teacher directives after the storybook reading occurred mainly in the later part of the year. Throughout the year the content of Teacher M's communication was about sitting and listening. Teacher M continued to reinforce behavioural expectations by routinely and regularly issuing directives to the pre primary students about appropriate behaviour.

Teacher questions that were text related centred on the storybook title, author, and illustrator, and predictive, interpretive, and higher order questions. The questions about the storybook only occurred before storybook reading. The questions were asked at most of the storybook reading sessions throughout the year and did not change in terms of

content or structure of the communication. The teacher stated that the form of questioning was a central part of the overall communication. Questions that were predictive, interpretive or higher order were more likely to be asked in the later part of the year. This coincided with Teacher M's planned transition from listening to learning through shared communication for the students. Neither the content nor the structure of Teacher M's questions changed throughout the year.

Teacher M's questions based on background experience and knowledge were about the student and their family, and the pre primary class. The students and their families were the subjects for the questions early in the year, and the pre primary class became the subject of the questions later in the year, as a history of events and experiences related to the pre primary class evolved for the teacher and students. There were marked variations in the number of teacher turns at different storybook reading sessions, when questions were asked about the pre primary class.

The teacher questions asked to maintain a continuity of communication included meaning, predictions, and interpretations of storybook events, and references to a student and their family. Questions about meaning, predictions, and interpretations were more likely to be asked later in the year. However, the content of the questions was consistent and the number of Teacher M turns varied between whole group storybook reading sessions. The teacher questions that related to the student and their family occurred in the later part of the year and showed some variation in teacher turns, but this was randomly distributed between storybook reading sessions.

Teacher statements that were text related included statements about the storybook title, author, illustrator, and meanings of events and words. Statements of both types were made at all storybook reading sessions and were characterised by the random variation in the number of teacher turns recorded at each session. There was a greater depth of explanation of the storybook offered by the teacher during the first term. The teacher provided detailed descriptions of storybook events and words to assist the students understand the story and increase their vocabulary.

The teacher statements that were based on background experience and knowledge were about Teacher M and the pre primary class. When the teacher was the subject of the statement the teacher communication was usually in the later part of the year. According to Teacher M, the effects of the socialisation of the whole group that had developed over the year made her more relaxed about conveying her background experience and knowledge to the students as part of the whole group storybook reading session. Teacher statements about the pre primary class were concentrated during the early part of the year and displayed no variation in the number of teacher turns and content of the communication.

Teacher evaluative responses to a student communication included acceptance with reinforcer, acceptance that repeated the student response, acceptance with extension or explanation, and disguised rejection or explanation. The teacher response that accepted the student communication and included an accompanying positive reinforcement occurred during most storybook reading sessions but with a higher incidence during the later part of the year. Although the content and structure of the teacher communication did not change between different reading sessions, or within a reading session, there were large variations

in the number of teacher turns between sessions. Teacher acceptance of the student communication accompanied with a repeat of the student communication occurred throughout the year. Acceptance of the student communication with an extension or explanation was more likely to occur later in the year and was characterised by large variations in the number of teacher turns. Teacher M's responses that were disguised rejections or explanations of the student communication were mainly found early in the year. The content and the structure of the responses did not change during the school year.

7.6.2 Student Contributions

Student requests included indications about the visibility of the storybook, desire to communicate, and chatting or calling out. Student requests to improve their view of the storybook occurred equally during each storybook reading session. The student's desire to communicate with the teacher consisted of a limited number of student turns, mainly confined to the later part of the year. Student requests comprising chatting and calling out varied between reading sessions but were also most likely to occur early in the year and towards the end of each school term.

Student statements about text included predictive and interpretive statements, and statements about the storybook illustrations. The predictive and interpretive statements occurred during the later part of the year, with some variation in the number of student turns. Student statements about storybook illustrations were recorded for all storybook reading sessions, however, there were large variations in the number of student turns during the reading. The content and structure of the student

statements about storybook predictions, interpretations and illustrations, did not vary throughout the year.

Student statements about background experience and knowledge were based on the student and their family. The statements occurred during most storybook reading sessions, and some variation in the number of student turns was noted at each reading session.

Student statements that maintained a continuity of communication were formulated on a peer response, and were about meaning of events and words. Both types of statements were characterised by the limited number of student utterances. In both instances, the student communications occurred later in the year. Because of the few utterances recorded, it was not feasible to make conclusions about the pattern of communication over time.

The student responses to questions and statements that were text related included the storybook title, author, and illustrator, factual recall, and predictive and interpretive responses. Responses about the storybook title, author or illustrator, were more likely to occur later in the year, and the student responses showed some variation in the number of student turns. Factual recall responses also showed some variation in the number of student turns, but were more evenly distributed throughout the whole year. The student responses that were predictive or interpretive occurred in every whole group storybook reading session and were characterised by the random distribution of large variations in the number of student turns recorded at each storybook reading session. The content and structure of individual student communications did not vary throughout the year.

The student responses about background experience and knowledge were based on the individual student and their family, or the pre primary class. Both types of student response occurred in the later part of the year. Although there were few recorded student communications, the variation in the number of student turns between storybook reading sessions was large. In some instances, there were extended communication chains, and in other reading sessions, the student communication was limited to a single utterance.

Student responses that maintained a continuity of communications, were based on communications that were predictive or interpretive, and included self or family. Both student communications occurred in most storybook reading sessions throughout the year and displayed large and randomly distributed variations in student turns at each storybook reading session. The content and structure of the student communication did not change during the year.

7.7 Summary of Findings

7.7.1 Teacher Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

Teacher M's contributions to whole group storybook reading were comprised of teacher directives, teacher questions that were text related, teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication, teacher statements that were text related, and teacher evaluative responses to a student communication.

Teacher directives during storybook reading focused on the students' interest in the story before the reading commenced. The content of the teacher directives was about student behavioural issues such as sitting, listening, and paying attention during storybook reading. The teacher directives did not elicit communications from the students, but resulted in changes in the students' behaviour. Directives related to text were generally detailed thematic teacher communications that were based on the storybook illustrations.

Teacher M questions that were text related, were based on questions about the storybook title, author, or illustrator; events; predictive, interpretive and higher order questions; and yes/no questions. The illustrations provided the centrepiece for the storybook reading and were referenced as the teacher read the storybook written passages and described the storybook theme. Teacher questions that were predictive, interpretive, or higher order, were asked before and during storybook reading. This was the form of questioning most frequently used by Teacher M. The predictive type of questions used the storybook title and illustration on the storybook cover, as cues before storybook reading, and storybook events, as cues during storybook reading. The teacher questions were mainly predictive and interpretive. There were very few higher order questions asked by the teacher.

Teacher M questions that indicated a continuity of communication were yes/no questions, before, during and after storybook reading; meaning of events and words; predictive and interpretive questions; and questions involving the student, family, or teacher. The questions about meanings of events and words, predictions and interpretations were the main types of questions used by the teacher to maintain continuity of

communication. Teacher M's questions were generally confined to meaning and predictions about storybook events that evolved as part of the storybook reading. Teacher questions about the student, family, or teacher, were asked by Teacher M in order to personalise and provide relevance and meaning to the storybook events.

Teacher statements that were text related, included statements about the storybook, title, or illustrator; meanings of events and words; and statements about the illustrations in the storybook. Teacher M used statements to clarify and explain what the story was about, and advise the students about the storybook title, and illustrator. The statements that involved meaning of events and words, were detailed teacher communications that explained some aspect of the story. The explanations provided the students with new information to extend their vocabulary and knowledge. Teacher M's statements about illustrations from the storybook, were used to explain the story to the students. The teacher communications were directed to the whole group.

Teacher M's evaluative responses to a student communication, included acceptance with reinforcer; acceptance that repeated a student response; acceptance with extension or explanation; and disguised rejection with explanation. Her communications usually occurred before and during storybook reading and comprised the most frequently used category of teacher communication.

7.7.2 Student Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

The student contributions to whole group storybook reading were assessed in terms of student requests; student statements that were text

related; student statements that indicated a continuity of communications; responses that indicated a continuity of communications; and student evaluative responses to other students' communication.

Student requests consisted of student indications about inability to clearly see the storybook, or a desire to communicate with the teacher; and talking, chatting, and calling out. The student requests that related to visibility of the storybook, occurred before and after reading. Talking, chatting, and calling out were the main student communications, which occurred before, during, and after storybook reading. Student requests related to visibility of the storybook, also included other behavioural communications as students positioned themselves around Teacher M's chair for the whole group storybook reading session. The student requests varied from descriptions of storybook events to more intuitive assessments of storybook characters.

Student statements that were text related, included predictive and interpretive statements made during storybook reading, or statements about illustrations before and during reading. Teacher M's emphasis on using illustrations as a means of encouraging student learning, was reflected in the predominance of student statements about illustrations. Several student statements showed interesting patterns of communication, involving the students and the teacher. There was also evidence that the students were comfortable volunteering diverse, and at times contradictory, interpretations of the same illustration. The teacher actively encouraged this form of student communication, in order to extend the pre primary students' thinking and reasoning skills.

Student statements that indicated a continuity of communications, were formulated on a peer response, meaning of events and words, and the student family, or Teacher M. The students' statements contained a limited number of unlinked student turns, and occurred before and during storybook reading. The statements formulated on peer responses, were occasionally represented in the student communication, and added to statements made by other students. They provided limited evidence of the students working together as a whole group, to predict and explain storybook events.

The student responses to text related questions, were based on responses about the storybook title, author, and illustrator; factual recall; predictive, interpretive, or yes/no responses. The responses usually consisted of single topic responses, containing up to three utterances that did not lead to linked patterns of communication. The majority of student responses occurred before and during storybook reading. In many instances, when the response was a single utterance, the students responded in chorus.

Student responses that indicated a continuity of communications were based on predictive and interpretive responses, and responses that included the student, family, and pre primary class. The student responses occurred before and during storybook reading. The predictive and interpretive responses included linked communication patterns and a large number of student communication turns, varying in length from a single utterance to short sentences.

The students' evaluative responses to other students' communications were the least used responses by the students. The communication

exchanges usually consisted of up to three student turns, based on a rejection or disagreement with another student's communication.

7.7.3 Teacher Strategies to Promote Student Contributions

The analysis of strategies that pre primary Teacher M used to encourage teacher and student communication around background experience and knowledge, involved an examination of the categories of teacher and student communication, and established the relevance of background experience and knowledge to the whole group storybook reading activity. The categories of teacher and student communication considered, were teacher questions, statements and responses, and student questions, statements and responses.

The majority of Teacher M's questions were about the pre primary class. Each teacher communication consisted of two or three sentences that described a situation familiar to the students and around which it was expected the students could formulate an answer. Teacher M's questions to the students were always related to the theme of the storybook and captured the association between the theme and the students' background experience and knowledge.

Teacher M's statements based on background experience and knowledge, were formulated on the background experience and knowledge of the teacher, and the pre primary class. Although teacher statements based on background experience and knowledge were among the least used teacher communications, they were used effectively when Teacher M's background experience coincided with the storybook theme.

Teacher responses based on background experience and knowledge of Teacher M, were an infrequent teacher communication, because the communication eliciting a teacher response involved a student question inquiring about the teacher's background experience and knowledge.

Student statements based on background experience and knowledge consisted of statements about the student and their family, and statements about the pre primary class. Most student statements were about the pre primary students and their family and occurred during storybook reading. It was evident that students had a unique background experience and knowledge relevant to the storybook reading, which they wanted to communicate to the teacher and other students. Features of the students' statements were their initiation by students and the fact that each statement provided a bridge for a following communication from the teacher or a peer.

Student responses based on background experience and knowledge, included responses about background experience and knowledge of the student and their family, or the pre primary class. The responses based on the background experience of the student, dominated the student communication. The subject matter of the student's communication was generally confined to simple activities the student had experienced, or had been informed about by other adults and children, unrelated to their pre primary class. The student responses based on the pre primary class, referred to the pre primary class learning experiences with which the students were familiar and were based on the students' recollection of the event.

7.7.4 Differences in Teacher and Student Contributions

Teacher M directives that contained behavioural instructions to the students, issued after the storybook reading, were more likely to occur later in the year. Teacher questions that were predictive, interpretive, or higher order were also more likely to be asked later in the year. This coincided with Teacher M's graduated emphasis on the students' confidence, literacy and vocabulary development. Teacher M's questions on background experience and knowledge were based on the student and their family, and the pre primary class. Early in the year, Teacher M's questions were about the students and families, whereas, the events associated with the pre primary class, became the subject of the questions later in the year. Teacher questions about meaning, predictions, and interpretations, were more likely to be asked later in the year. There were no changes in the content or structure of the teacher directives and questions throughout the year.

Teacher statements based on background experience and knowledge, were about Teacher M and pre primary M. When Teacher M was the subject of the statement, the teacher communication usually occurred in the later part of the year. Teacher statements about the pre primary class were more likely to occur during the early part of the year. The teacher statements did not change in content or structure during the year.

Teacher M's evaluative responses that involved teacher acceptance of a student communication, accompanied by a repeat of the student communication, and teacher acceptance of the student communication with an extension or explanation, occurred later in the year. Teacher responses that were disguised rejections or explanations of the student

communication, were more likely to be observed early in the year. The content and structure of the teacher responses did not change during the school year.

Pre primary student requests about wishing to communicate with the teacher, and chatting and calling out, occurred later in the year. The student statements about text that were predictive or interpretive, displayed some variation in the number of student turns, but were more likely to occur later in the year. Student statements that maintained a continuity of communication, were formulated on a peer response, and were about meaning of events and words. Both types of student communication were characterised by the limited number of student utterances and occurred later in the year.

Student responses to questions and statements that were text related and about the storybook title, author, or illustrator, were more likely to occur later in the year. Similarly, student responses about background experience and knowledge based on students and their families, or pre primary M, occurred in the later part of the year. There were substantial variations in the number of student turns between different whole group storybook reading sessions observed during the year.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CASE STUDY: WHOLE GROUP STORYBOOK READING IN PRE PRIMARY CLASSROOM S

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the classroom communications between Teacher S and pre primary students engaged in whole group storybook reading in a pre primary classroom. The pre primary classroom is located in a high socio-economic community within the Perth metropolitan area. Teacher S has formal teaching qualifications and eleven years' teaching experience in Western Australian metropolitan and country schools.

The chapter is structured around the research questions. Each major section addresses a research question and presents the data, information, and findings obtained during the twenty video recordings with Teacher S and students from the pre primary classroom. A summary of findings for each of the research questions has been included at the end of this chapter.

The manner in which pre primary Teacher S carried out whole group story book reading was established in the pre primary classroom by drawing on observations, interviews and discussions between the researcher and the teacher throughout the twelve months of field work.

Pre primary Teacher S made her language and pre literacy programs available to the researcher throughout the school year. The programs were examined and considered in the light of the research questions.

The nature and extent of the pre primary teacher's contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity was determined from an analysis of coded data taken from the video recordings, interviews with Teacher S, and field notes. The research question was addressed by an examination of teacher directives, teacher questions that were text related, teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication, teacher statements that were text related, and teacher evaluative responses to student communication.

The nature and extent of the pre primary students' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity was determined by examining coded data taken from the video recording, and information taken from field notes. The research question was answered through an analysis of student requests; student questions that were text related; student statements that were text related; student responses to text related questions and statements; and student responses that indicated a continuity of communication.

Strategies employed by Teacher S to create opportunities for the students to develop communicative contributions around background experience and knowledge, were identified by examining the teacher and student communications and social repertoires that arose from subjects that included background knowledge and experience of Teacher S and the pre primary students.

Differences in communicative contributions between pre primary Teacher S and the pre primary students throughout the year, were determined by examining all coded teacher and student communications, and all field notes gathered throughout the year.

Teacher Profile

Name: Teacher S
Age: 25 - 30 years
Gender: Female
Teaching Qualifications: Diploma of Teaching
Bachelor of Education
Early Childhood Studies.

School Profile

Name: Pre primary S
Age of students: 4 - 5 year olds
Number of students: 27 students
Gender: 14 girls and 13 boys

Pre primary S is a modern building which is well maintained. It consists of a large room, which is the main area of use by the pre primary students. At the rear of the main area, there are two small rooms. One room is used as an office. The other room is a small kitchen, which contains an upright stove, a microwave oven and a refrigerator. Both the office and the kitchen are out of bounds to pre primary S students.

The main area of Pre primary S is delightful. It is full of colour and energy. Teacher S puts considerable effort into creating huge

paper/fabric wall hangings to display the pre primary students' work. She carries out a thematic approach and organizes all her classroom learning experiences and excursions around the theme. Each theme is carried out for four to five weeks at a time. Eight themes were carried out during this study in pre primary S. When Teacher S was working with a Dinosaur theme, she drew six large dinosaurs on fabric and draped them around the room. Any work completed by the students on a particular dinosaur was then displayed from the specific dinosaur wall hanging. This created quite a spectacular effect, whilst reinforcing the special attributes of each of the dinosaurs the students were studying. For example, the students were able to identify and name dinosaurs by their long necks (apatosaurus), their three horns (triceratops), and the plates on their backs (stegosaurus).

There is a large fish tank with tropical fish located in one half of the room. The fish tank serves as a charming boundary between the students' tables and chairs and the free space area which is used for dance and movement, news telling and free indoor play. Attached to the main area, there is a smaller room, which is carpeted and referred to by Teacher S and the pre primary students, as the quiet room. The quiet room is an attractive, comfortable room with several large windows, which look out onto the pre primary play area. Two large gum trees provide a picturesque view from the windows, and provide shade over the quiet room. There are bookshelves, which contain a large number of books for the pre primary students to browse through in the quiet room. If the pre primary students find a book particularly interesting, they are able to borrow it for mum or dad to read to them at home.

Teacher S developed a pleasant rapport with the parents (P) of her students very early in the year. The parents provided valuable support in the pre primary classroom on a daily roster. Teacher S indicated that she did not expect her parents to stay in the kitchen preparing fruit for fruit time, nor cleaning away the students' dishes. This task was allocated to the teacher aide. She found it more beneficial to have the parents interacting with the pre primary students, whilst they completed the morning tabletop activities.

There were usually two parents on roster during the morning session. The parents were encouraged to interact freely with the students, engaging in shared communications. Shared communications included both formal conversations, that is, communication about the task at hand, and informal conversations, which comprised any topic about which students wished to talk. The parents provided valuable guidance in developing the pre primary students' thinking. More importantly, the students were provided with an opportunity to verbalize their thinking and to develop confidence in communicating their own thoughts and ideas.

- P1: What colour do you think you'd like to paint your dinosaur?
- S1: I like pink. It's my favouritest colour. But I can't paint it pink.
- P1: Why not! It could be a Barbie (Barbie doll) dinosaur (laughing).
- S1: That's silly, because then it wouldn't have any um um camouflage.

A noticeable feature of the parent help throughout the year was the number of fathers who participated on the roster. The fathers often came in their business shirts and ties, and happily spent an hour interacting and assisting the pre primary students. Teacher S commented on the support she received from the pre primary students' fathers. She observed that the fathers often added a fun element to the activities and the shared communications. An example is the shared communication between a father and a pre primary student during a paint and paste dinosaur activity, mentioned above. Teacher S supported this, stating that humour and fun enhanced the quality of the pre primary students' work, and contributed to the positive learning environment.

Teacher S ardently related one of the highlights of the pre primary calendar. A Father's Breakfast was held towards the end of first term in the pre primary classroom. The pre primary fathers were invited to a special breakfast of cereal, toast, coffee and milo with their children. The breakfast commenced at 7.30 a.m. in order to allow fathers to attend before they went to work. If a student's father could not attend, an uncle, grandfather or family friend was welcomed. The fathers spent time during the breakfast talking to their children and their friends and looking through the children's activity folders, art portfolios and displays around the classroom. Teacher S happily described the morning's events, stating that all pre primary students had been represented by a father or family member since the introduction of the Father's Breakfast four years earlier. It had now become a significant and much talked about event on the pre primary calendar.

Teacher S usually included an excursion in her thematic studies. She indicated that an excursion at the end of a theme motivated the students,

whilst they were engaged in the learning experiences that related to the theme. The pre primary students would eagerly count the days on the class calendar to determine the number of days before an excursion. An excursion at the end of a theme, also allowed the students to recall the key areas of learning and to link new knowledge to prior knowledge. For example, the Water theme finished with a visit to Underwater World. The focus point of this topic was that water was a valuable resource to both humans and animals. The Farming theme culminated in a visit to a hobby farm. The pre primary students saw first hand how fruit trees were grown, how cows were milked and how angora wool was hand spun for knitting. The focus point of this topic was the important role farmers play in our community.

Teacher S further explained that an excursion at the completion of a theme allowed an opportunity for learning outside the pre primary classroom environment. She commented that this was of significance, because she endeavoured to develop strong links between the acquisition of new knowledge in the pre primary context and the attainment of relevant new knowledge in the wider community, for the pre primary students. Teacher S perceived that these links were essential, if the students were to commit the new knowledge gained to their long-term memory. More importantly, links established between the pre primary classroom learning experiences and the wider community, facilitated high order thinking and reasoning strategies. The students were further encouraged to employ their knowledge in a variety of problem solving and creative learning situations.

8.2 Teacher Organization of Whole Group Storybook Reading

8.2.1 Overview

Teacher S's fundamental aim for the whole group storybook reading was to increase the general knowledge of the pre primary students. She would use the storybook reading session to identify areas of prior knowledge and understanding, by initiating questions about particular events and word meanings, which related to the storybook. When the students indicated a lack of understanding or unfamiliarity with particular word meanings, by not attempting to respond to the question, or provided an inaccurate response, Teacher S would respond to the question herself. She did this by providing an explanation with examples to the students, in order to facilitate meaning making and understanding.

Teacher S additionally used the storybook reading activity to facilitate the development of declarative knowledge. Her explanations of word meanings and particular events, allowed the pre primary students to integrate the new meanings and explanations that were introduced during the storybook reading activity, with their existing/prior knowledge.

T: Now, why don't you think there are many sea lions in the circus?

S: No response.

T: Now Miss S has never seen a sea lion. In this book there is a sea lion. But I doubt whether you would have seen a sea lion at the circus either. Why?

S: No response.

- T: Why? Think about it. Why don't we see sea lions in our circuses that come to Perth? Millicent?
- S1: Because they um they don't um the sea lions don't bounce the ball on their nose.
- T: Yes, sea lions bounce balls on their nose. But why don't we find sea lions in the circuses very often? Nathan?
- S2: Because some people are killing them too much.
- T: No. Some sea lions are being killed and they are becoming endangered. But that's not why. Why don't you think Marcus?
- S3: Because they live in the cold.
- T: Yes, they live in the cold. Where else do they live? Anthea?
- S4: In the zoo.
- T: No.
- S5: In the water.
- T: Where? (hasn't quite picked up what S5 has said)
- S5: In the water.
- T: In the water. Now sea lions have to have water. Now lots of circuses don't have water. They couldn't carry around a great big tank with a lot of water in it, could they? A sea lion must have a lot of water and it must have a lot of space so you probably only see sea lions in places like Underwater World where they can have a lot of space and a lot of water.

Teacher S explained that her knowledge based aim for the storybook reading was an extension of what the students were familiar with in their home environment. She commented that her students had a strong language and literacy base before they attended pre primary. They had

an extensive repertoire of experiences which had been acquired through family outings on weekends, and trips around Western Australia and Asia (Bali, Lombok, and Singapore). The students were confident in speaking and had demonstrated competent social and communication skills.

The pre primary students' family background encouraged language and literacy development through storybook reading. The pre primary students were familiar with storybooks and borrowed books from the local community library. At the introductory parent night, parents had indicated that they read to their children on a regular basis. Most had a daily ritual of dinner, bath, teeth and story time before bed. A number of parents read to the pre primary child and younger siblings together, in a favourite chair before bedtime. Some parents capitalized on quiet times. If the parents wanted to settle the children or there was some free time during the day, they would sit comfortably and read. Parents stated their child expected to be read to on a daily basis, often reminding parents that they couldn't sleep without a story.

In general, parents allowed the children some control in the choice of books borrowed from the local library. The children would browse through books, looking at the pictures and illustrations, before making their selection. Parents also included a few books to supplement the children's books. There were three parents who mentioned that their child had progressed from storybooks with a lot of illustrations to Chapter Books (storybooks with chapters and few illustrations). A reason given for this, was that the child was the youngest member of the family and had older brothers and sisters who were reading Chapter Books. Parents would read a chapter or two to the children each night.

Teacher S selected storybooks for the whole group storybook reading activity because they related to the current theme and they extended the pre primary students' factual knowledge and interest in books. Consequently, Teacher S would include fiction and non-fiction books into the storybook reading activity. For example, the Sea theme included a story about 'Green Peace' which was a story about the efforts of Green Peace in protecting the sea environment and sea animals. Teacher S explained to the students what Green Peace was and related some of the recent attempts they had made to protect the sea environment. 'The Rainbow Fish' was a delightful book about a fish with beautiful scales. Teacher S linked 'The Rainbow Fish' to the Sea theme, but also capitalized on the moral of the story which was about sharing and friendships, in order to further develop the social dynamics within the pre primary classroom.

The social nature of the whole group storybook reading encouraged shared communications. However, the teacher controlled the communications. Teacher S directed the shared communications in order to focus on her initial aim of using the whole group storybook reading session to develop the pre primary students' general knowledge. Teacher S did not view the storybook reading sessions as a relaxing fun-time. Instead, it was a valuable opportunity to extend the pre primary students' vocabulary, and pre literacy skills through an understanding of factual knowledge and word meanings.

8.2.2 The Physical Arrangements

Teacher S enjoyed the flexibility her spacious pre primary classroom offered in arranging the physical environment. She would relocate the students' tables, chairs and mat area for whole group mat activities at the commencement of each new term. For term one and three, Teacher S placed her chair in the free space near the fish tank to indicate the mat area. The students learned very quickly that they were to assemble in front of the teacher's chair for the whole group storybook reading session. In term two and four, Teacher S located her chair in the quiet room. The students demonstrated little difficulty in settling into the new mat area. Both locations provided an intimate social context for the story reading activity.

Teacher S carried out whole group storybook reading once a day. She did not have a scheduled time for the story reading, preferring to decide the most appropriate time once the school day was underway. However, times usually selected for the storybook reading were first session in the morning, after fruit or lunchtime, and last session before home pick up time. Teacher S considered that once a day was sufficient for the storybook reading activity, because of the students' home experience and familiarity with storybooks. The duration of the whole group storybook reading session was generally between fifteen and twenty minutes. It was carried out purposively and once Teacher S's objectives for the story reading had been met, the session was terminated.

The whole group storybook reading session was highly structured by Teacher S, and concluded very efficiently. However, informal observations made by the researcher on the after story reading activity

are worth noting. At the conclusion of the storybook reading session, the pre primary students would remain in the mat area and browse through storybooks which were selected by Teacher S and placed in colourful crates around the back of the mat area. Teacher S encouraged the pre primary students to browse in dyads and small groups. The browsing sessions were usually carried out for ten to fifteen minutes.

The pre primary students would select their books and sit on the beanbags or lie across the mat area for their browsing time. The students would use their browsing time to discuss with each other what the storybook they were looking at might be about. They also spent the time commenting on the illustrations in the storybooks. Very early in the year, Teacher S had demonstrated to the students how they could use picture clues to determine what may be happening in the story. These informal shared conversations were extremely interesting and revealed to the researcher the quality of the pre primary students' communications, which included much background knowledge and experience.

The researcher revealed her interest in the pre primary students' browsing time to Teacher S. Teacher S elaborated her intentions for the browsing sessions enthusiastically. A significant focus of Teacher S's language and literacy programme was to encourage reading skills in her students towards the end of the academic year. She had the support of the parents, and her students' familiarity with the printed word and general capabilities suggested that they were able to capitalize on the opportunity given to them to commence using picture clues to assist them with independent reading.

In term one, two and three, Teacher S's expectation for the browsing time was socially constructed learning through shared communications about the storybooks' pictures. In term four, Teacher S's expectations extended to include independent reading of the pre reading books. The students who wished to take the pre reading books home to read together with a parent, were encouraged to do so. All students keenly took a pre reading book home each week, in order to develop their independent reading skills. Over half the class was able to read these pre-reading books with confidence and ease, before the end of their pre primary school year.

T: Yes. Marcus.

S1: That was d and the start of divine is the start of d for dog.

T: Good. Divine starts with a d.

8.3 Teacher Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

Teacher S's contributions to whole group storybook reading were explored in terms of teacher directives; teacher questions that were text related; teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication; teacher statements that were text related; and teacher evaluative responses to a student communication. Each is discussed in the following sections and quantified in a summary form in Table 6 below. A detailed breakdown of Teacher S's communication is contained in Appendix 7.

Communication Type	Teacher S Communication Frequency
Teacher Directives	309
Teacher Questions text	103
Teacher Questions BEK	101
Teacher Questions C of C	131
Teacher Statements Text	73
Teacher Statements BEK	33
Teacher Statements C of C	9
Teacher Response Requests	48
Teacher Response Text	13
Teacher Response BEK	8
Teacher Response C of C	2
Teacher Response Student	196
Total	1026

Note

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

Table 6. Summary of Teacher S Communication

8.3.1 Teacher Directives

Teacher directives consisted of directives based on the teacher's expectations for storybook reading, and the reinforcement of appropriate behaviour. Teacher S's expectations for the storybook reading were made known to the students before, during, and after the storybook reading session, but the majority of teacher communications were made during storybook reading. The majority of teacher directives that were aimed at the reinforcement of appropriate student behaviour were issued during and before storybook reading. With respect to the teacher's expectations, there was a noticeable difference in the content of Teacher S's directives when teacher directives before, during, and after storybook reading were

compared. The emphasis before storybook reading was on the pre primary students sitting in the teacher expected way on the mat area and listening, in readiness for the commencement of the story reading. There was some attention given to student communication, such as calling out. During storybook reading, the emphasis of Teacher S's directives shifted towards the control of students calling out of turn, with less consideration given to the way the students were sitting in the mat area, and no references to student inattention and off task behaviours. After the storybook reading, Teacher S gave importance to directives that related to the way the students were sitting on the mat and the orderly termination of the whole group storybook reading session. Very little instruction was given regarding the students' shouting and calling out.

T: Okay, let's start then. Cross those legs. Can you come closer Nathan and Marcus, because you are not going to be able to see my book.

T: Come closer Nathan. There's a beautiful spot next to Anthea.

T: Millicent, are you listening to this and Marcus as well? Good. Let's see if you can listen and not talk.

Teacher S's directives aimed at the reinforcement of appropriate student behaviour for the whole group storybook reading activity, confirmed that changes made to the students' storybook reading behaviours were consistent with the codes of behaviour that were acceptable in the classroom during whole group storybook reading. The teacher directives took the form of acknowledgements and positive reinforcements.

T: Lovely sitting everyone.

- T: I like the way Anthea's sitting with legs crossed. Let's see who has legs crossed and hands on lap. Good girl, good girl. Look at Marcus' listening ears.
- T: I like the way Millicent's sitting with legs crossed.

The construction of Teacher S's directives usually consisted of one or more sentences in each communication turn and a relatively high number of teacher turns during each whole group storybook reading session. The teacher directives did not cause a communication response from the students. Directives about sitting, listening, and not calling out were issued by Teacher S and there was an immediate behavioural response from the pre primary students. Directives did not serve as a catalyst for collaborative communication between the teacher and students.

Teacher directives that referenced the expectations for whole group storybook reading, and reinforced appropriate student behaviour, were essentially a one-way communication from Teacher S to the students. The purpose served by the directives was primarily to gain appropriate behaviour from the students during the storybook reading sessions. This was achieved through direct instruction and acknowledgement of student behaviour that was acceptable during whole group storybook reading in the pre primary classroom.

8.3.2 Teacher Questions that were Text Related

The teacher questions that were text related, consisted of questions about the storybook title, author and illustrator; predictive, interpretive and higher order questions; and meaning of events and words.

Text related questions based on the storybook title, author and illustrator, were limited to teacher communications before storybook reading. Teacher S began storybook reading by pointing out the name of the book, author, and illustrator. She stated that the students' awareness of interesting books, authors and illustrators, was part of the process of learning about effective reading. Furthermore, it was useful for the students when they were selecting storybooks from their local community and the school libraries and also when the students were asked to recommend a storybook they would like to receive as a present from family members and pre primary school friends.

T: What's on every book? On the front of every book there's a title of the story and something else? Marcus?

T: Can anyone remember what you call the person who draws the pictures?

Teacher S repeated this routine at each storybook reading session, with questions that were specific, directed at individual students or the whole group, and required a specific response from the students. The teacher communication turns were controlled and did not cause extended responses from the students.

Predictive, interpretive and higher order questions were the principal kind of questions used by Teacher S and mainly asked during storybook reading. She referred to events from the storybook and sought opinions from the students about prospective outcomes likely to arise from the events, or feelings and emotions that characters and animals from the story might be experiencing but not described in the storybook. Teacher S's questions encouraged the students to draw on their prior knowledge

and experiences to interpret the questions before responding. According to Teacher S, questions that were predictive, interpretive and higher order were the cornerstone of the collaborative communications between the teacher and the students, and central to students acquiring language and literacy skills. Teacher S confirmed that she also employed this kind of questioning extensively in all other pre primary curriculum areas.

T: Can anyone tell me about these pictures? There's something special about these pictures. Just look at them for a minute. What's special about these pictures compared to the pictures in other books?

T: Why do you think it is good the caterpillar can blend in with the sticks? Why is it good he looks like a stick sometimes?

Teacher S routinely demonstrated a purposive approach towards the students having to think about the questions presented to them. The thinking was based on simple to abstract student constructions. The more complex questions required the students to establish links between their prior knowledge and new knowledge for successful problem solving of the questions asked by Teacher S.

T: Who knows what extinct means?

S1: Died.

T: Are they around any more?

S2: No.

T: No. When something becomes extinct it means it's not alive anymore. Everyone dies but extinct means not around any more.

S3: When a house gets extincted it goes black.

T: Demolished that is.

S4: It's when they were here (dinosaurs) but they're not anywhere now.

The teacher text related questions about the meaning of words and events occurred during storybook reading and referred to specific words and events contained in the storybook. The majority of Teacher S's questions were about the meaning of words, for example, "Does anyone know what company means?" An examination of the teacher questions and the words selected suggested that responding to the meaning of the words could have been quite difficult for pre primary students. However, Teacher S would provide guided assistance through reforming the question and giving examples to simplify the question. The construction of Teacher S's questions was straightforward and did not create extended communications between the teacher and students.

T: Who can tell me. I haven't told you. What does orchard mean? Who might know what orchard means? It's quite a hard word.

S1: I do. Its apples and fruit.

T: Yes. Put your hands up. Nathan?

S2: An orchard of trees with fruit on it.

T: Good Boy. An orchard is a group of fruit trees that grows together.

8.3.3 Teacher Questions that Indicated a Continuity of Communication

Teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication were based on meaning of events and words; predictive and interpretive; and questions involving the student, their family, friends or the teacher.

Questions that were predictive and interpretive, and about the meaning of events and words occurred before, during, and after storybook reading. Teacher S's questions focused on an aspect of the story as a basis for a question to the students. This was linked to her objective for the storybook reading activity. There was a greater dependence on the predictive and interpretive skills of the students who were required to predict likely outcomes arising from storybook events, or offer explanations designed to expand the collaborative teacher-student communications.

S1: It's just the reflection

T: How do you know that?

S1: Because when you look into a puddle you see your reflection. Not that you've fallen in.

T: Yes, he's looking into the water and it's a bit like looking into a mirror, isn't it?

S2: A mirror on the ground.

The sequence of teacher question and student response usually initiated a 'brainstorming' effect with the students, and was responsible for more detailed patterns of teacher and student communication. Each successive student response provided cues for other students to initiate a communication. Teacher S's turns were more detailed than the student

responses and consisted of more descriptive utterances that created student interest in the teacher's question.

Teacher questions that involved the student, their family, friends and the teacher occurred before storybook reading and were mainly about Teacher S's experiences that were in common with the events of the storybook.

T: (reading) Then he got bogged.

T: Miss S's dad he got?

S1: Bogged.

T: What did he get bogged in?

S2: Mud.

T: With mud.

T: And where did he get bogged?

S3: In the paddock.

S4: He was cross.

T: Yes he was very cross. My mum wasn't home and he had to wait till she came back.

The number of teacher questions of this type was limited and did not effect any particular communication response from the students. The number of teacher turns varied between different storybook reading sessions and did not exceed a single sentence.

8.3.4 Teacher Statements that were Text Related

Teacher statements that were text related included statements about the storybook title, author, and illustrator, and statements about pictures. The

statements about the title, author, and illustrator were made before the storybook reading, and statements about pictures were made during the storybook reading.

Teacher S's statements related to the storybook title, author and illustrator, were simple statements that informed the students about the title of the storybook, and the names of the author and illustrator. Other statements made by Teacher S referred to the theme of the story, the way the storybook would be positioned in front of the students, and any opinion she had about the story. The teacher statements varied between a single turn and multiple turns at each storybook reading session and the turns ranged from a single sentence to four sentences. The teacher statements provided the preliminary introductions to the whole group storybook reading. This is illustrated in the following teacher communication.

T: I'm going to read you a story about an animal that comes from a circus.

T: This book is called 'The Pedlar'.

The preliminary teacher statements were beneficial in providing the students with a conceptual framework to work within prior to the commencement of the storybook reading.

Teacher S's statements about the illustrations occurred during storybook reading and were used with an explanation to complement the storybook events. Teacher S would refer to features of the illustrations that were not described in the text and make some meaning from the illustration that was relevant to the story. The effect of the illustration-related

teacher statements, was to give greater depth to the students' appreciation of the storybook. The theme of the storybook was delivered by Teacher S reading the storybook text and the interpretations the illustrator achieved through the storybook illustrations. Teacher S believed there were advantages for the students in developing an understanding of both the author's and illustrator's interpretation of the story in written and visual formats. For some of the students, the visual format was less abstract and improved overall comprehension of the story.

T: " Beaming faces of the children ". That means the children are going to be really happy.

Teacher S also used the illustrations to provide an extension to the storybook themes, where the teacher's account of an event provided new information to the students. The teacher communication turns varied in length, but usually consisted of several sentences that described the features of the illustration, and then transferred meaning to the description.

8.3.5 Teacher Evaluative Responses to a Student Communication

Teacher S's evaluative responses to a student communication included a response that was an acceptance, accompanied with a reinforcer, and a response that was an acceptance and repeated the student response. Both forms of teacher response usually occurred during storybook reading. The teacher response that involved acceptance with reinforcer was used frequently by Teacher S and consisted of an acknowledgement that the student's response was correct and an accompanying positive reinforcement.

T: Good girl. You are so clever you people.

T: Good on you. You've got it under control.

The positive reinforcement was effective in maintaining the momentum of student communication and created extensive communication links between Teacher S and the pre primary students. The teacher responses that involved an acceptance and a repeat of the student response were acknowledgements by the teacher of the accuracy of the student response, accompanied by a repetition of the student response. According to Teacher S, the purpose of repeating the student response was to ensure that all students were able to hear what had been said. It was also considered by the students to be an acceptance that the teacher had acknowledged their response.

T: Does anyone know what waddle means?

Anthea?

S1: It means walking and wobbling.

T: Good girl, it means walking and wobbling.

8.4 Student Contributions to Whole Group Storybook Reading

Student contributions to whole group storybook reading were assessed in terms of student requests, student questions that were text related, student statements that were text related, student statements that indicated a continuity of communication, student responses to text related questions and statements, and responses that indicated a continuity of communications. Each is discussed in the following

sections and quantified in a summary form in Table 7 below. A detailed breakdown of students' S communication is contained in Appendix 10.

Communication Type	Students' S Communication Frequency
Student Requests	50
Student Questions Text	18
Student Questions BEK	11
Student Questions C of C	2
Student Statements Text	41
Student Statements BEK	31
Student Statements C of C	8
Student Responses Directives	3
Student Responses TRQ/S	251
Student Responses BEK	49
Student Responses C of C	168
Student Responses Student Com	7
Total	639

Note

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

TRQ/S: Text related question statement

Table 7 Summary of Students' S Communication

8.4.1 Student Requests

The student requests were based on indicated intentions to communicate with the teacher, and generally talking, chatting, and calling out. The student communications about indicated intentions to communicate took place before, during and after storybook reading, but with a higher number of student turns before storybook reading commenced. The

student requests communicated by talking, chatting, and calling out were more likely to occur after storybook reading.

The student requests to communicate with Teacher S usually involved a single turn, single utterance, or physically flagging the teacher's attention. The single turn and single utterance would typically include remarks such as " I know ", " ask me " or " me ". At times, this was also accompanied by students raising their hand or standing up. Physically flagging the teacher's attention involved students waving their arms and moving closer to the teacher. The student requests met with different responses from Teacher S and depended on the preceding teacher-student communication to determine whether the student communication was acknowledged.

S1: I know.

T: Yes, what is that Millicent?

S2: Me me (calling out loudly).

T: I only ask people who put their hands up and don't call out.
Nathan?

The student requests based on talking, chatting, and calling out involved single students and the whole group communicating in chorus. The main form of communication was calling out in chorus to the teacher. The content of the communication usually consisted of a single utterance shared by the group. The student requests did not influence Teacher S's conduct of the storybook reading sessions and were a very basic form of student initiated communication.

8.4.2 Student Questions that were Text Related

Student questions that were text related included questions that were predictive, interpretive and higher order, and questions about meaning of events and words. Although the number of student turns was not large, the relevance of the category of student questions was made apparent by the cognitive nature of the student questions. The predictive, interpretive and higher order questions were more likely to be asked after storybook reading, and questions about the meaning of events and words occurred during storybook reading.

Student questions that were predictive, interpretive and higher order were usually single sentence questions with one object. The questions were infrequent and sought to increase the students' understanding of an aspect or event from the storybook.

S1: Why can't he find him?

S2: Where will the rabbit go?

The questions were initiated by the students for the purpose of clarification of matters arising from the story. Teacher S encouraged this form of student questioning, because it highlighted areas of the story the students found confusing or unclear, and isolated areas of the story that were of interest to the students.

Student text related questions about the meaning of events and words were equally divided between events and words. The questions were what, who, and how questions that were asked by the students to expand their understanding of a word or storybook event. The number of student

turns varied between storybook reading sessions and was usually limited to turns containing a single sentence.

S1: What's a nativity play?

S2: Who's Green Peace?

S3: How would they get out of the cage?

S4: What does audition mean?

Student questions that were text related were useful communications for promoting on-going communication links with Teacher S and other pre primary students. The initial student question about the text would promote a response from the teacher and subsequent responses, questions, and statements from the other students. According to Teacher S, the attention given to interpretive and higher order thinking and shared communication was important for the students. This allowed them to construct elaborate responses based on the links they were able to establish between their prior knowledge and new knowledge.

8.4.3 Student Statements that were Text Related

Student statements that were text related consisted of statements that were predictive and interpretive, and statements about illustrations. Predictive and interpretive statements were more likely to occur during storybook reading, and statements about illustrations were more likely to occur before and after storybook reading.

Predictive and interpretive statements by the students were interesting, because the students overtly communicated their use of pieces of the text as clues during problem solving. The students used predictive and

interpretive text related statements when communicating with other students and the teacher. The statements usually consisted of a single student turn containing one or two sentences.

S1: There's another clue.

S2: That wouldn't be nice would it (not allowed to go to a party)?

S3: That's another clue. Cos the boy is near the door.

The student statements were effective in causing collaborative communications between the students as each student statement provided a foundation for each successive student communication. The patterns of student and teacher communication demonstrated how free-flowing discussion was promoted by statements that interested all of the students.

Student statements about storybook illustrations captured the observations of the students. The students offered explanations about their observations, and simple accounts of their interpretation of the illustrations. The students considered the story and the illustrations supporting the story separately. The construction of the student turns was usually limited to a statement containing a simple sentence. The statements were recorded at most storybook reading sessions.

S: Um this page has little people and the other page has big people. They're opposites.

Teacher S actively encouraged the students to initiate communication with their peers and the teacher through text related statements,

especially when it supported the initial aims she had for the storybook reading activity.

8.4.4 Student Statements that indicated a Continuity of Communication

Student statements that indicated a continuity of communication were formulated on a peer response and occurred during storybook reading. The statements were infrequent and did not add to the students' understanding of the topic being discussed. The majority of student statements had a similar content that informed the other students that the peer's response was identical to the response they proposed.

S1: That's what I was going to say.

S2: I was going to say that.

There was no evidence from the record of patterns of teacher-student communications that student statements formulated on peer responses were effective in continuing the communication link more than two or three student turns, because different perspectives were not brought to the shared communication.

8.4.5 Student Responses to Text Related Questions and Statements

Student responses to text related questions and statements were the largest category of student communication turns. It was comprised of responses about the storybook title, author, and illustrator; factual recall; predictive and interpretive responses; and responses involving the meaning of events and words.

Student responses that related to the storybook title, author, and illustrator occurred before and after storybook reading, although there was a limited number of student turns contained in the response. The responses before storybook reading were directed at the content of the story and storybook title and illustrator, whereas after the storybook reading, the content of the students' responses generally included references to storybook events. The structure of the responses before and after storybook reading consisted of student turns limited to a single utterance or sentence. The student responses did not prompt ongoing collaborative communication about the storybook between Teacher S and the students.

Students' factual recall responses occurred during and after storybook reading. The student turns usually consisted of a single utterance that formed the response to Teacher S's question or statement about some aspect of the story. There was strong competition between the students to provide a response, because the subject of the teacher questions and statements was familiar to them. The factual recall responses did not contribute to extended teacher-student communications. The students simply presented evidence that they had indeed comprehended the events of the story. Teacher S commented that the purpose of her factual recall questions was to establish the students' comprehension of the story and word meanings.

Student responses to text related questions and statements that were predictive and interpretive were, according to student turns, the most used kind of student communication. The responses occurred before, during, and after storybook reading, but were most frequent during storybook reading. The extensive student communication brought many

of the students into the classroom dialogue to provide an answer to Teacher S's question. The student responses were typically of a sentence in length and spontaneous. One student would immediately follow with an answer, if they thought the previous student had given an incorrect answer, or if they felt that they had a more interesting response. An analysis of communication patterns displayed broad student participation and multiple student communications in response to a single teacher question or statement. Teacher S's questions and statements that were text related were the most effective means of eliciting spontaneous and regular collaborative communication from the students. When asked to predict what made tracks in the snow.

S1: It's sleigh tracks.

S2: Um the sleigh blade tracks.

S3: Um they might be donkey or reindeer's hoofs.

S4: I think it's really the rabbit.

S5: I think it's the donkey.

To ensure continued communication, Teacher S balanced interventions through questions and statements with wait time. This time allowed the students to develop their own answers and benefit from the opinions offered by other students.

Student responses about the meaning of events and words occurred during the storybook reading, as events and words were being considered. This was a frequently used type of response by the pre primary students, and generally took the form of a direct answer to the question or statement, but did not involve any follow-on communication.

S: Green Peace are people who look after the environment.

Teacher S allowed the students to manage the agenda surrounding the students' responses.

8.4.6 Student Responses that Indicated a Continuity of Communication

Student responses that indicated a continuity of communication included predictive and interpretive responses; and responses about the meaning of events and words. The predictive and interpretive responses occurred during and after storybook reading, whereas the student responses to meaning of events and words, occurred during storybook reading. The predictive and interpretive responses were direct answers to teacher questions, but the nature of the student response led to further communication from either the teacher or peers. The communication chains usually terminated after two or three student exchanges. The student responses about meaning of events and words elicited a number of different student communications, because many of the students had different opinions about the various meanings that could have applied to events from the storybook. The students' participation was extensive.

T: You think you might know what happens to the bob cat?

S1: Its digging up the garden.

S2: I know.

T: Yes, Anthea?

S2: Um it gets stuck.

S3: It gets bogged

S4: No it gets a flattie (flat tyre).

8.5 Teacher Strategies to Promote Student Communications

Teacher strategies employed to create opportunities for the teacher and students to engage in communicative contributions around background experience and knowledge are examined in this section. The categories of teacher and student communication that were examined were teacher questions and statements based on background experience and knowledge; and student statements and responses based on background experience and knowledge.

8.5.1 Teacher Questions

Teacher S's questions were developed around background experience and knowledge of the pre primary classroom and teacher questions about the meaning of events and words. The questions based on the pre primary class were asked during storybook reading and teacher questions about the meaning of events and words were asked during and after the storybook reading.

Teacher S's questions that included references to the background experience and knowledge of the pre primary classroom were always about common themes and events discussed during previous pre primary lessons other than storybook reading. Teacher S used the thematic references to link different learning situations with the whole group storybook reading and integrate the different elements of the pre primary program. The type of questioning was not used frequently by teacher S and the number of teacher turns varied between storybook reading sessions. However, within each storybook reading session, the content of

the teacher turns was related and showed some evidence of providing a continuation of communication involving the students.

T: Can anyone remember what I was telling you this morning when we were painting?

T: Can anyone remember what the baby whale's called?

T: Who can name some other animals?

The teacher used the students' prior knowledge of pre primary classroom activities and the commonality with the theme of the storybook to reinforce the students' learning and understanding of the subject.

Teacher S's questions about the meaning of words and events covered a broad range of topics and subject areas of which, under normal circumstances, some of the students would have had prior knowledge. The teacher communication turns varied between storybook reading sessions and was a moderately used form of teacher communication. The communication turns were usually linked by subject area and consisted of one or two sentences framing the teacher question. Teacher S used the questions related to the meaning of words and events to bring forward new information that was introduced by the students.

8.5.2 Teacher Statements

Teacher S's statements based on background experience and knowledge, included statements about the background experience and knowledge of the pre primary classroom. The teacher statements were made before, during, and after storybook reading.

T: Now the reason I am reading it today (the storybook) is because we've just finished talking about farms. Now I thought we'd read this story. We'll talk about the animals.

T: Then we're going to have a little quiz at the end. Because we've read this story a lot. And you're very clever at reading.

Teacher S made regular use of statements about the students' prior pre primary experiences and usually contributed several communication turns at each whole group storybook reading session. Each teacher turn varied in length between one and four sentences, and Teacher S's communication statements were linked by the pre primary subject matter. The content of the teacher statements was confined to previous excursions, presentations by visitors, and other thematically similar subject matter from pre primary classes. Teacher S's statements were usually detailed references to the previous pre primary experience.

Sl: Illustrator.

T: Good boy Nathan. Illustrator.

T: Remember Mr Kendall came in and he drew the pictures of 'A Sausage Went For a Walk'.

8.5.3 Student Statements

Student statements based on background experience and knowledge included statements about the student and their family, friends and statements about the pre primary class. The statements about the students and their family occurred before, during, and after storybook reading and statements about the pre primary occurred during storybook reading.

The student statements about the background experience and knowledge of the student and the family contained statements of events the student and their family had experienced, and information that other family members had passed on to them. For example, " Pop told me that snakes are cold blooded ". In all instances, the event or information was relevant to the theme of the storybook.

S1: Once we saw a lizard on the holiday and it was stuck on the floor.

S2: We saw a lizard and it was on the floor. It was camouflaged.

There was a moderate number of student communication turns and some variation in the number of turns between storybook reading sessions. The statements formed short sentences and there was evidence of linking of student turns as successive student communications were aided in their development by the content of the preceding student's communication. The pattern of student communication demonstrated a build-up in the whole group content knowledge, as the students participated in conveying new information to the group. The opportunity to introduce personal experiences into the whole group discussion, assisted with the socialisation of the group and provided the students with learning opportunities, which were socially constructed. The students' use of background experience and knowledge to explain the meaning of events and words was an infrequent student communication. The limited number of communication turns drew on the students' experiences to clarify storybook events and words. The statements did not effect on-going communication between the teacher and students.

8.5.4 Student Responses

Student responses based on background experience and knowledge included responses about background experience and knowledge of the student and their family, and responses about background experience and knowledge of the pre primary class. Responses based on the student and their family occurred during and after storybook reading, and responses based on the pre primary class occurred before and after storybook reading.

The student responses to self and family contained references to family situations. The student-volunteered responses were made in reply to a Teacher S -initiated question about family activities.

S: My mum is special cos she doesn't um she um can't get me big toys cos they cost too much money but she buys me little toys.

The student communication consisted of a limited number of student turns and each turn was produced by a single utterance or a short sentence. There was variation in the length of student communication at each storybook reading session and some evidence of linked student responses. The content of the student responses provided personal insights into the students' background experiences and increased the pre primary students' cohesiveness.

The student responses based on the background experience and knowledge of the pre primary classroom were an infrequent communication. The student responses usually referenced previous pre

primary activities that were communicated as a single utterance. The student responses did not elicit on-going communications involving the teacher and students.

8.6 Differences in Teacher and Student Contributions

The differences in contributions between Teacher S and students were examined from the perspectives of the changes in the characteristics of communicative contributions from the teacher and the students throughout the school year, and differences in the communicative contributions that arose because of a communication from the teacher or students. The main communicative contributions made by Teacher S involved directives, questions, statements, and responses. Her communications were based on directives about expectations for storybook reading; teacher questions that were text related; teacher questions about background experience and knowledge; questions involving a continuity of communication; statements that were text related; statements about background experience and knowledge; and evaluative responses to a student communication. The main student communicative contributions involved requests, statements, and responses. The student communications were based on student requests about communications; statements that were text related; statements about background experience and knowledge; statements involving a continuity of communication; responses to questions and statements that were text related; responses to background experience and knowledge; and responses involving a continuity of communication.

8.6.1 Teacher Contributions

Teacher S directives were focused on the teachers' communications to the students regarding expectations for storybook reading. The content of the teacher communication was confined to behavioural expectations, and although this was strongest before storybook reading, the expectation was maintained during and after storybook reading. Teacher S had to maintain appropriate student behaviour for the storybook reading session throughout storybook reading by constantly issuing directives to the students about listening to the story, sitting up on the mat with legs crossed, and not interfering with other students. Teacher's communication turns were more in evidence early in the year as the teacher attempted to establish behavioural protocols among the students, but the communications persisted throughout the year. Teacher S remarked that the directives were essential in order to avoid any ambiguity with the students about the behaviours that she regarded as acceptable during whole group storybook reading. Teacher S's communication before storybook reading was designed to reinforce previously issued teacher instructions. The content of Teacher S's directives was about sitting in the correct mat location, listening to the teacher reading the story, and avoiding conflict with other students. This was unchanged throughout the year.

Teacher S's questions that were text related were founded on questions about the storybook title, author, illustrator, and questions that were predictive, interpretive or higher order. The questions about the title, author, and illustrator were mainly asked later in the year and were evenly distributed between title, author, and illustrator. Teacher S's questions that were predictive, interpretive, or higher order occurred

predominantly in the middle and later in the year. The construction of teacher questions that were text related did not show any change during the year. The pattern of the teacher and student communications was similar over all question and response communication chains. According to Teacher S, during the early part of the year, the objective was to develop the students' listening skills. Therefore, there was a tendency to commence the storybook reading immediately after teacher expectations and appropriate behaviour for the whole group storybook reading had been established. Later in the year, when the teaching emphasis shifted towards language and literacy development, Teacher S's questions about the storybook and word meanings increased.

Teacher S's questions based on background experience and knowledge were only directed at subject areas involving the pre primary classroom. The teacher communication turns were evenly distributed throughout the year, although, there was a marked variation in the frequency of teacher turns between successive whole group storybook reading sessions. Teacher S relied on background knowledge related to the pre primary classroom as a source of question topics, because there was a common knowledge held by Teacher S and the pre primary students about matters to do with the pre primary classroom. The classroom was raised as a question topic early in the year and continued to be a question topic throughout the year.

Teacher S's questions asked to maintain a continuity of communication consisted of meaning, predictions and interpretations of storybook events, and references to the student, their family, and the teacher. The questions related to meaning, predictions and interpretations were asked throughout the year, but occurred more often in the later part of the year.

There were no marked variations in teacher communication turns at each storybook reading session during the year. This demonstrated the vital role that Teacher S's questions about meaning, predictions and interpretations played in her approach to student learning, comprehension and vocabulary development. Teacher S questions that involved the student, their family or the teacher were infrequently asked during the year. However, when the questions were asked, there was evidence of large variations in the number of teacher turns at each storybook reading session. The content of Teacher S's questions was generally uniform throughout the year.

Teacher S statements that were text related, included statements about the storybook title, author, and illustrator, and meaning of events and words. The teacher statements about the storybook corresponded with the teacher questions on the same subject, and were more likely to occur later in the year. There was substantial variation in the number of teacher turns when the teacher communications between different whole group storybook reading sessions were compared. Teacher S statements about meaning of events and words from the storybook were evenly distributed throughout the storybook reading sessions and reinforced her strategy of cognitively stretching the students to further facilitate their development. Neither the communication patterns of conversation, nor the content of the Teacher S or student communication, showed any appreciable variation during the year.

Teacher S statements about background experience and knowledge were also confined to remarks about the pre primary classroom. There was a tendency to make more statements about the pre primary classroom early in the year, because it was an area of commonality between Teacher S

and the students. Referencing classroom events consolidated the students' understanding of prior themes that were relevant to the theme of the storybook. The content of Teacher S's statements was detailed, in order that there was a clear account of the background experience and knowledge and to support students' learning. The content of the teacher statements about background experience and knowledge did not vary during the year. There was no significant variation in the number of Teacher S utterances in the communication turns made throughout the year.

Teacher S's evaluative responses to a student communication included acceptance with reinforcer, and acceptance that repeated the student response. The teacher response involved an acceptance of the student communication, but accompanied the acceptance with a communication containing a positive reinforcement, which was more likely to occur later in the year. Teacher S relied almost exclusively on acceptance accompanied by a positive reinforcement as the evaluative response communication, and indicated the limited repertoire of teaching techniques employed by the teacher. An examination of Teacher S's responses showed there was a large variation in the number of utterances contained in each turn. The teacher response that involved acceptance and which repeated the student response, was a passive form of reinforcement of the student communication. According to Teacher S, repeating the student response was designed to ensure all students heard the student response and gave acknowledgment of the accuracy of the response. There were several occasions when Teacher S modified the repetition to demonstrate to the students how the student response should have been made, without necessarily rejecting the student's initial

response. Teacher S made the modification as part of the overall learning process.

8.6.2 Student Contributions

Student requests were based on communications about inability to see the storybook, and an indication of their wish to correspond with Teacher S. The student communications centred on matters related to their position on the mat, or the proximity of other students that impaired their vision of the teacher and the storybook. The student communications occurred later in the year and there were significant variations in the number of student utterances contained in each turn. The increase in student communications appeared to correspond with a slight reduction in the overt control exercised by the teacher. From field notes of student behaviours recorded throughout the year, it seemed that students progressed from seeking permission before speaking early in the year, to spontaneous communication later in the year.

Student statements that were text related, included predictive and interpretive statements, and statements about storybook illustrations. The predictive and interpretive statements occurred later in the year and confirmed Teacher S's use of cognitively based strategies for student learning. The content of the student communication did not change during the later part of the year. The student communication turns were characterised by a large variation in the number of student utterances in each student turn. The student statements about storybook illustrations usually occurred in the early part of the year and the incidence of their use was low.

Student statements about background experience and knowledge were only based on the student and their family. Although there were records of student communications about self and family throughout the year, the frequency of occurrence of student turns was low, and student communication turns consisted of only a few student utterances. The content of the student statements and the limited communication patterns emanating from the students' communication statements did not vary throughout the year.

Student responses to questions and statements that were text related were based on the storybook title, author, and illustrator; factual recall; predictive and interpretive responses; and meaning of events and words. The responses to Teacher S's questions and statements about the storybook title, author, and illustrator occurred predominantly later in the year and corresponded with the timing of the teacher's communication directed at those areas. There was a noticeable variation in the number of teacher S turns, and the number of utterances contained within each turn. Student statements related to factual recall were infrequently distributed throughout the year and were characterised by the large variations in the number of student turns and utterances. Predictive and interpretive statements from the students occurred in all of the whole group storybook reading sessions. The statements varied in the number of utterances in each turn, however, the variability was distributed evenly throughout the year. Statements by the students that related to meaning of events and words occurred later in the year and were also characterised by the large variation in the number of student turns at each storybook reading session, and the number of utterances contained in each student turn. The content and patterns of the student communication based on the storybook title, author, and illustrator,

factual recall, predictive and interpretive statements, and meaning of events and words did not vary throughout the year.

Student responses about background experience and knowledge were based on the student and their family, and the pre primary classroom. The student responses in this category of communication were infrequent, but evenly spread throughout the year. The number of student turns varied markedly between each storybook reading session, but did not show any particular trends during the year. The limited number of student communication responses meant that other communication links were also limited. The content of the student responses on background experience and knowledge did not change during the year.

Student responses that maintained a continuity of communication included predictive and interpretive responses, and responses that included the student and their family. The predictive and interpretive responses were evenly distributed throughout the year and were characterised by the large variation in student turns at each storybook reading session. Responses that included references to the student and their family occurred infrequently throughout the year. There was also less variation in the number of student turns during storybook reading sessions and in the number of student utterances contained in each turn.

8.7 Summary of Findings

8.7.1 Teacher Contributions to Storybook Reading

Teacher S's contributions to whole group storybook reading were based on teacher directives; teacher questions that were text related; teacher

questions that indicated a continuity of communication; teacher statements that were text related; and teacher evaluative responses to a student communication.

Teacher directives included directives based on Teacher S's expectations for storybook reading, and the reinforcement of appropriate pre primary student behaviour for the whole group storybook reading activity. Teacher S's expectations for storybook reading were communicated to the students before, during, and after storybook reading, whereas teacher directives designed to reinforce appropriate student behaviour were issued before and during storybook reading. The latter confirmed that modifications to student behaviour were consistent with acceptable codes of behaviour during whole group storybook reading sessions.

Teacher S questions that were text related encompassed questions about the storybook title, author, and illustrator; predictive, interpretive and higher order questions; and meaning of events and words. Questions about the storybook were confined to teacher communications before storybook reading. However, predictive, interpretive and higher order questions were the main form of questions asked by the teacher during the whole group storybook reading sessions. Predictive, interpretive and higher order questions formed the cornerstone of collaborative communications between the teacher and students, and were central to the student's learning. Teacher S questions about meaning of words and events usually occurred during storybook reading and referred to specific words and events from the storybook.

Teacher questions that indicated a continuity of communication were based on meaning of events and words, and questions involving the

student, their family, or the teacher. The questions about the meaning of events and words occurred before, during, and after storybook reading and there was a dependence on the predictive and interpretive skills of the students who were required to forecast likely outcomes arising from storybook events. Teacher questions about the student, their family, and the teacher were predominantly related to Teacher S's experiences that related to storybook events. The teacher questions were asked before storybook reading.

Teacher S statements that were text related included statements about the storybook title, author, and illustrator, and statements about pictures. The former were made before storybook reading as part of the preparatory work of establishing a conceptual framework for the students that preceded storybook reading. The latter was made during storybook reading and coincided with the attention being given to the storybook illustrations. Other statements made by Teacher S referred to the theme of the story, the way the storybook would be read, and a teacher's summary of the story. The statements about the text provided the preliminary introductions to the whole group storybook reading session. Teacher S statements about the illustrations occurred during the storybook reading and aided with the explanation of the storybook events. The teacher used the illustrations to provide an extension to the storybook themes when the description of the illustration presented new information to the students.

Teacher S evaluative responses to student communications included responses that acknowledged the accuracy of the student's response or statement. They also had an accompanying positive reinforcer, or acknowledged the accuracy of the student response or statement and then

repeated the student statement. Both forms of teacher response were most likely to occur during storybook reading.

8.7.2 Student Contributions to Storybook Reading

Student contributions to whole group storybook reading were assessed in terms of student requests; student questions that were text related; student statements that were text related; student statements that indicated a continuity of communication; student responses to text related questions and statements; and responses that indicated a continuity of communication.

The pre primary student requests were based on intentions to communicate with Teacher S, students talking and chatting to peers, and students calling out. The student communications that involved intentions to communicate caught Teacher S's attention when spoken before, during and after the storybook reading.

Student questions that were text related encompassed questions that were predictive, interpretive, and higher order; and questions about meaning of events and words. The questions that were predictive, interpretive, and higher order had an object of clarification of matters arising from the story. The questions about meaning of events and words were what, who, and how questions asked by the students to expand their understanding of a word or storybook event. Text related student questions promoted on-going communication links with the teacher and other students.

Student statements that were text related consisted of statements that were predictive and interpretive, and statements about illustrations. Predictive and interpretive statements occurred during storybook reading, and statements about illustrations occurred before and after storybook reading. Student statements about storybook illustrations captured the observations of the students. Both types of statements were effective in creating collaborative communication between the students.

Student statements that indicated a continuity of communication were formulated on a peer response and were more likely to occur during storybook reading. The statements were infrequent and did not appear to contribute to the students' understanding of the topic being discussed. From the record of Teacher S-student communication there was no evidence that student statements formulated on a peer response were effective in creating continuing communication.

Student responses to text related questions and statements were, by number of communication turns, the largest category of student communication. The responses included responses about the storybook title, author, and illustrator; factual recall; predictive and interpretive responses; and responses involving the meaning of words and events. In particular, student responses to text related questions and statements that were predictive and interpretive were the most frequently used student communication. Teacher S and pre primary student communication patterns provided evidence of broad student participation and multiple student communication in response to a single Teacher S question or statement.

Student responses that indicated a continuity of communication included predictive and interpretive responses, and responses about the meaning of events and words. The student communications were effective in eliciting, albeit limited, subsequent patterns of communication between the teacher and students.

8.7.3 Teacher Strategies to Promote Student Contributions Around Background Experience and Knowledge

Teacher S strategies used to create opportunities for the teacher and students to engage in communicative contributions around background experience and knowledge were teacher questions and statements based on background experience and knowledge, and student statements and responses based on background experience and knowledge.

Teacher S questions were based on background experience and knowledge of the pre primary classroom and teacher questions about the meaning of events and words. The questions that included references to the pre primary classroom were always about common themes and activities discussed during previous pre primary lessons other than storybook reading. Teacher S used the thematic references to integrate different pre primary learning situations. Teacher questions about the meaning of words and events addressed a range of topics. Teacher S communications were usually linked by subject area and contained one or two sentences framing the teacher question.

Teacher S statements based on background experience and knowledge included statements about the background experience and knowledge of

the pre primary classroom. Teacher S statements were usually detailed references to a previous pre primary activity.

Student statements based on background experience and knowledge included statements about the student and their family, and statements about the pre primary classroom. References to the student and the family were about events the student and their family had experienced, and information that other family members had passed on to them. The opportunity for the students to introduce personal experiences into the whole group discussion, assisted with the socialisation of the group and improved learning. The use of background experience and knowledge to explain the meaning of events and words was an infrequent student communication.

Student responses based on background experience and knowledge included responses about background experience and knowledge of the student and their family, and responses about background experience and knowledge of the pre primary class. The student responses usually contained references to past family situations that were relevant to the story. The content of the student responses provided personal insights into the students and increased the group's cohesiveness. Student responses based on the pre primary classroom were only used occasionally and did not elicit on-going communication involving the teacher and students.

8.7.4 Differences in Teacher and Student Contributions

Teacher S directives were about communications to the students with respect to teacher expectations for storybook reading. The teacher

directives were more likely to occur early in the year as the teacher established and reinforced codes of behaviour.

Teacher S questions that were text related were based on questions about the storybook title, author, illustrator and questions that were predictive, interpretive or higher order. Questions about storybook title, author and illustrator were evenly distributed between title, author, and illustrator and usually asked later in the year. The questions that were predictive, interpretive or higher order mainly occurred in the middle and later in the year. Teacher S questions about the storybook increased later in the year to correspond with the teacher's shift in emphasis from instruction to learning. Teacher questions asked to maintain a continuity of communications consisted of meaning, predictions and interpretations of storybook events, and references to the student, their family, and the teacher. Questions about meaning, predictions and interpretations occurred throughout the year, but were asked more frequently during the later part of the year.

Teacher S statements that were text related included statements about the storybook title, author, and illustrator, and meaning of events and words. Statements about the storybook corresponded with teacher questions on the same subject, and occurred later in the year. Teacher statements, based on background experience and knowledge, were limited to remarks about the pre primary classroom. There was evidence of more statements about the pre primary classroom early in the year, because of subject commonality and consolidation of thematic issues raised during classes.

Teacher S evaluative responses to a student communication included acceptance with reinforcer, and acceptance that repeated the student response. Both forms of teacher communication were more likely to occur later in the year.

Student requests were based on difficulty seeing the storybook and indications of intention to communicate with Teacher S. The student communications based on sighting the storybook occurred later in the year, and student communications about their intentions to speak with the teacher were more likely to occur earlier in the year.

Student statements that were text related included predictive and interpretive statements, and statements about storybook illustrations. The predictive and interpretive statements were more likely to occur later in the year. This confirmed Teacher S's use of cognitively based strategies to promote the students' literacy and language development. Statements about storybook illustrations were infrequent, but usually occurred early in the year.

Student responses to questions and statements that were text related centred on the storybook title, author, and illustrator, and meaning of events and words. The student responses to questions and statements that were text related occurred later in the year, which corresponded with the teacher's questions and statements, communicated later in the year.

CHAPTER NINE

SUMMARY OF THE THREE CASE STUDIES OF WHOLE GROUP STORYBOOK READING IN PRE PRIMARY CLASSROOMS

9.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the findings from the previous three case study chapters to produce comparisons between the whole group storybook reading activity, which was undertaken in the natural context of three pre primary classrooms.

The research found the physical organization of whole group storybook reading in each of the pre primary classrooms to be similar. The teacher sat in the "teacher's" chair in front of the students, and the students seated themselves in a mat area to ensure they could clearly see the storybook and hear the pre primary teacher read and communicate with them. There were also similarities noted in teacher expectations for the storybook reading activity and the general manner in which whole group story reading was carried out in the pre primary classrooms.

Significant differences were noted between the goals each of the case study teachers established for the storybook reading activity. The teachers organized the storybook reading activity around the needs of the students in order to accommodate their socio economic and cultural differences. Teacher J's pre primary students came from a middle socio

economic background. The students were confident communicators who were familiar with storybook reading and shared communicative interaction. Teacher M's students were from a low socio economic background. The majority of the students were from non-English speaking home environments. They were not accustomed to adult-child storybook reading sessions. Teacher S's students came from a high socio economic background. They had already acquired strong social and communicative skills. The students were confident and enthusiastic about participating in shared communications. Pre primary S students frequently included background knowledge and personal experience in their shared communication.

The teachers' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity was based on communications with the students that contained directives, questions, statements, and responses. All three teachers used these categories of communication but with differences in emphasis and use. Teacher J adopted an approach that was interactive and encouraged learning through shared communication, for her middle socio economic pre primary students who were already confident communicators. Teacher M concentrated on shared communication to promote confidence with speaking and competency in language and literacy development for her shy students who were mainly from non-English speaking family backgrounds. Teacher S demonstrated a controlled and structured role in order to facilitate general and declarative knowledge in her high socio economic students who had come to pre primary with extensive prior knowledge and personal experience.

The students' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity were based on requests, questions, statements, and responses. Students

were not major initiators of the communication in any of the three pre primary classrooms, but contributed to collaborative communication when opportunities were presented to them. Differences noted in the students' contributions could be attributed to the approach taken by the pre primary teachers, the students' background knowledge and experience and the choice of book being read to the students.

The strategies adopted by the teachers to create opportunities for the students to develop communications around experience and knowledge were based on teacher questions, statements, and responses, and student statements and responses that referred to background experience and knowledge. All three teachers occasionally presented some of their personal experiences to enrich storybook events, whereas students were enthusiastic and spontaneous about sharing personal and family events that related to the storybook.

It could be anticipated that the pre primary students' needs would change as the year progressed. Maturity, confidence and an increase in cognitive, social and physical skills would necessitate some modification in the pre primary teachers' goals for the students' learning and development. Differences were noted in the teachers' overall approach to the level of shared communication which occurred during whole group storybook reading. Teachers provided additional opportunities for student participation and shared communicative contributions. The pre primary students, who were initially enthusiastic and spontaneous about participating and sharing their thoughts, capitalized on this additional opportunity to communicate and eagerly shared their background knowledge and experiences in the storybook context.

The differences in teachers' and students' contributions throughout the year could be related to changes in the teachers' goals for the students and how these impacted on the communication and the increased skill level of the students. The students' communication increased as the year progressed, in each of the pre primary classrooms.

9.2 Answers to Research Questions

The following section details the answers to the five research questions

9.2.1 How do pre primary teachers organize the whole group storybook reading activity?

All three teachers demonstrated a similar approach to the organization of whole group storybook reading. The study found similarities in the physical organization of whole group storybook reading in each of the pre primary classrooms. All three teachers sat in the "teacher's" chair in front of the students. The pre primary students settled on the floor in front of the teacher. This area for whole group activities is known as the mat area. There were no specific boundaries to the mat area. Instead the students positioned themselves in front of the teacher's chair to ensure they could clearly see the storybook and hear the teacher reading and communicating during the storybook reading activity. If the pre primary teacher wished to bring in the boundary of the mat area, she would ask the students to move in closer towards her chair.

The students learned very early in the year where they had to assemble for the storybook reading activity. Once they were familiar with the

daily routine of the pre primary classroom, the pre primary students would usually organize themselves in the mat area in front of the teacher's chair in readiness for the storybook reading session.

Similarities were also found in the general organization of the storybook reading activity. All teachers indicated their expectations to the students early in the story reading. They were quite firm about how the students were to be seated, where they should place their hands and feet, how they were to listen when someone was talking, and how important it was to take turns. The teachers would remind the pre primary students of their expectations at the commencement of the storybook reading activity. This ensured that once the teachers had begun the story reading, the students were attending and listening to the teacher and the story.

TJ: Sit up straight please and hands on laps.

TM: Cross your legs so everyone can sit close.

TS: When you are all sitting up straight, with your listening ears, I'll know you're ready to start.

Another common teacher expectation was the need for the students to put their hand up if they wished to contribute to the communication during storybook reading. The teachers would remind the students of this expectation when the students called out, or there was a chorus of responses, making it too noisy or difficult to hear. However, all three teachers were not always consistent with this expectation. They frequently accepted the students' communications without the students putting up their hands. Teacher divergence from this expectation may have been confusing to the students. This confusion, together with the pre primary students' enthusiasm to communicate, reluctance to wait to

put up their hand, and given that putting up one's hand to speak is not part of the usual social repertoire that pre primary students bring with them, could account for the high number of teacher directives of this kind.

TJ: Put up your hand if you have something to say.
Nathan?

TM: Now, put up your hand if you think you know this answer.

TJ: Shhh. I only listen to people who have their
hands up.

The teachers' expectations for the storybook reading were elaborated upon at the commencement of each new school term. On the first storybook reading session after each of the school holidays all three teachers would go to some length to remind the pre primary students about what was required of them once the storybook reading activity was underway.

All three teachers identified the needs of their students as fundamental in deciding the approach to be adopted for the whole group storybook reading activity, and indeed, much consideration was given to the students' needs for any learning experience they had planned for the pre primary classroom. The teachers embraced a thematic approach, which was carried out for approximately five weeks at a time. Introducing learning experiences around a theme was regarded as an effective and efficient way of reinforcing the key areas of learning, as it provided the pre primary students with direction and focus for the activities in which they engaged.

The storybook reading activity was considered a valuable extension of the language and literacy program in the pre primary classroom. Teachers generally used the storybook reading activity to facilitate cognitive development by promoting the students' concentration and listening skills; by increasing vocabulary, comprehension and oral language; by using pre reading strategies such as picture clues; by enabling the students to construct new knowledge on prior knowledge; and by facilitating reasoning and thinking skills based on the events depicted in the storybooks.

The three pre primary teachers also engaged in the whole group storybook reading activity in order to encourage much development in the affective domain of learning. This was achieved by establishing the students' interest and motivation in reading storybooks; by promoting positive social and communication skills; by encouraging peer friendships; and by acknowledging and valuing the pre primary students' communicative contributions through the use of positive evaluations and positive reinforcement.

The pre primary teachers demonstrated similarities in the general organization of the whole group storybook reading activity. They also reflected similarities in the significance of storybook reading in language and literacy development and social development. However, specific differences could be noted in the teachers' approaches and the subsequent emphases they placed on the various areas of language and literacy, as they endeavoured to meet the specific cognitive and affective needs of their students.

Teacher J stated that the students commenced pre primary with a positive attitude to storybook reading. They were familiar with storybook reading in the home environment. Parents had been regularly reading to their children at home and some communication about the storybook usually occurred during the storybook reading. There were a few times throughout the year when students would indicate to the teacher that they had already heard the story, or that they had the book that the teacher was about to read, at home.

S1: I already heard that book.

S2: That book, I got that um book for (from) my nana. For my birthday.

S3: I know what happens now.

T: I know you've heard this story before Millicent, but let's keep it a secret.

Let's see if the others can guess what happens.

It may be seen that Teacher J identified her students as needing extension and development of the learning and socialization they were experiencing in the home environment. She used the storybooks to extend the students' understanding of word meanings and events; to check for simple comprehension; and to encourage thinking and reasoning skills, by providing opportunities for the students to include considerable contributions which related to their personal knowledge and experience.

Teacher J used the storybook reading activity to meet the social needs of the pre primary students. She perceived the storybook reading context as an opportunity for the students to learn more about their pre primary

peers. Participative communication, especially communications which encouraged a sharing of personal knowledge and experiences, facilitated this. Teacher J stated that the social nature of storybook reading also added to the warm positive atmosphere that she worked hard to establish. The students were comfortable about sharing their experiences with the group and would often continue their social conversations after the storybook reading, while they were eating fruit.

S1: I was a shepherd in the play (Nativity play).

S2: Me too, but not, not at your nativity.

S1: Did you get a stick? I had a real walking stick.

S2: No, I had um my toy sheep stuck here
(points to under arm and laughs).

In comparison, Teacher M commented that the majority of her students were from non-English speaking backgrounds. The students were very gentle and quiet and had little experience with storybook reading in the home environment. None of the students borrowed books from the local community library, although they did borrow books from the school library on a weekly basis. Therefore, Teacher M identified the needs of her students as one of promoting an interest in storybooks, in order to facilitate language and literacy development.

The students had demonstrated limited background experience and knowledge. Teacher M addressed this need by establishing a framework for the students to listen to the story and construct meaning. She would ask the students to look at all the pictures in the book before she commenced the storybook reading. The pictures provided the students with a scaffold for understanding what was happening in the story.

- T: Let's have a look at the pictures in this really exciting book
- S1: He's eating all the food.
- T: Shh Anthea. Don't say anything darling.
Let's look at all the pictures first.
- T: Good. Now who can tell me what's going to happen in the story?
- S2: They um going to a restaurant to eat their dinner and they get messy and all the food goes Splat! Every where (Laughs).
- T: Good boy. Let's all listen to see if Marcus is right.
- T: Ready. Let's start the story.

Teacher M used the storybook reading activity to extend the vocabulary of the pre primary students. She would frequently explain the meaning of words in the storybook. The pre primary students were encouraged to use the new words in their shared communications.

- T: This wombat's divine (Wombat Divine).
Can any one tell me what they think divine means?
Divine. It's a very new word. I don't think we've used it before.
- S: No response.
- T: Divine means really terrific. If I said you were divine that means you are really wonderful.
So this wombat must be really special and wonderful.
(At the end of the storybook reading activity).

S1: Excuse me. Excuse me.

I think that story was um divine.

T: Yes Marcus. Good boy. The story was divine.

Teacher M explained that she provided considerable opportunity for her students to interact with each other throughout the pre primary day in order to attend to their social needs. She found the storybook reading activity particularly valuable in developing the students' confidence in speaking. She would always acknowledge a response the students gave. If the responses were inaccurate, she would disguise her rejection because she regarded the students' attempts at contributing more beneficial to their needs than providing the teacher with an accurate response.

T: What do you think Millicent?

Why do you think they're going into the jungle?

S1: Maybe the snake's got lost and they're going to find him.

T: Yes he could be lost.

Does any one else have an idea?

Nathan?

S2: Maybe they going exploring

T: Exploring.

Another good idea. Let's see what really happens.

T: ("They were going for a walk to find the bear")

So we were nearly right. Good guessing.

Teacher S described the needs of her students as elaborating and expanding the students' prior knowledge and experiences. They were already confident, capable students when they commenced pre primary. They demonstrated good social and communicative skills and were familiar with storybook reading and shared storybook communications.

Teacher S used the storybook reading activity to add to the pre primary students' general knowledge. She would frequently ask the students the meanings of words and provide factual information to the students.

T: Does anyone know what shimmer means?

S1: Shine.

T: Good girl Anthea. Shimmer means to move and shine.

T: Can anyone remember?

I did tell you once before. How many times does a caterpillar grow a new skin before it spins a cocoon?
Millicent?

S1: No response.

T: Remember how many times?

S1: Four.

T: Good girl four times.

The caterpillar will do this four times.

It will eat, grow very big, its skin will split. It will grow a new skin, it will eat and it will do this four times.

It will grow four new skins.

Right.

Teacher S would capitalize on the pre primary students' prior knowledge to facilitate the construction of new knowledge. The students were also

encouraged to use and develop declarative knowledge by drawing on their prior knowledge and experiences.

T: Do you think this is a life cycle of a male butterfly?

S: (Chorus) Yes.

S: (Chorus) No.

T: What is it a life cycle of?

S1: A mummy butterfly.

T: Putting up hands.

What is it a life cycle of?

Nathan?

S2: A mummy butterfly.

T: How do you know it's the mummy and not the daddy?

S2: Cos the mummy always lays the eggs.

T: Good boy Nathan. Because the mummy lays the eggs.

Teacher S additionally used shared communications to check for meaning and understanding. Developing confidence and social skills were not really a focus, as the pre primary students had demonstrated considerable ability in this area.

The three pre primary teachers stated that the organization of the whole group storybook reading reflected the needs of their students and indeed this was found to be the case. However, some consideration should be given to the teaching and reading styles of the teachers and the impact teaching styles have on the social nature of the storybook reading context (Teale & Martinez 1986). Anecdotal evidence gathered from the three case study classrooms suggests that the interactive reading style and personalities of Teacher J and Teacher M invited greater personal

communicative contributions from the pre primary students than did Teacher S.

The reading style of Teacher S was controlled and structured, reflecting her overall aim of cognitive development, or essentially the acquisition of new knowledge. This was in contrast to the aim of Teacher J and Teacher M which was to promote general cognitive and social development. The emphasis on social development and the teachers' individual personalities may have contributed to the consideration they gave to establishing a social context which was conducive to shared personal communication during the whole group storybook reading activity.

9.2.2 What is the nature and extent of the pre primary teachers' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity?

A summary of the teachers' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity is contained in Table 8 below. More detailed information is available in Appendices 5 to 7.

Communication Type	Teacher J Communication Frequency	Teacher M Communication Frequency	Teacher S Communication Frequency	Mean Teacher Communication Frequency
Teacher Directives	423	395	309	375.7
Teacher Questions Text	213	226	103	180.7
Teacher Questions BEK	97	206	101	134.7
Teacher Questions C of C	295	214	131	213.3
Teacher Statements Text	60	210	73	114.3
Teacher Statements BEK	31	60	33	41.3
Teacher Statements C of C	10	20	9	13.0
Teacher Response Requests	97	116	48	87.0
Teacher Response Text	11	18	13	14.0
Teacher Response BEK	5	9	8	7.3
Teacher Response C of C	8	12	2	7.3
Teacher Response Student	783	650	196	543.0
Total	2033	2136	1026	1731.7

Note

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

Table 8. Comparison of Teachers' Communication Types to Whole Group Storybook Reading

The data contained in the table show all of the teachers rely on controlling communication strategies such as directives and questions and the questions indicate strong representations across text, background experience and knowledge, and continuity of communications. All teachers employed more questions to link previous communication and maintain a continuity of dialogue with their students. The teachers

generally displayed similar profiles of communication, but varied markedly in the absolute number of communications. Teachers J and M delivered in excess of 2000 recorded communication types whereas Teacher S recorded approximately 1000 communication types. Teacher communication responses to student communications were also significant. They were predominantly teacher acknowledgements and acceptance of a student communication, or acceptance and further explanation provided by the teacher. Overall, Teacher S had a lower number of communication contributions during the storybook reading activity.

The teachers' communication contributions are discussed more fully in the following sections.

9.2.2.1 Teacher Directives

Each of the teachers gave directives about their expectations for whole group storybook reading. In classroom J the directives were issued before and after storybook reading; in classroom M before and during storybook reading; and in classroom S during and after storybook reading. Although all of the teachers extensively issued directives to their students, they differed in the timing of issuance. The content of the teachers' directives was similar and included references to student behaviours such as sitting position, posture, and listening to the teacher. Classroom Teacher J conveyed to the students that their role was to listen to the storybook, and sit quietly with their hands in front of them. Classroom Teacher M's directives contained specific instructions to the whole group of students, as well as particular students exhibiting behaviours not acceptable to the group. The teacher directives resulted in

behavioural adjustments by the students. Teacher S issued directives to the students about the same matters as Teacher J and Teacher M, however, the emphasis of the teacher directives shifted from listening, towards greater teacher control over student behaviour.

Classroom Teacher S issued directives during storybook reading that reinforced appropriate student behaviour during whole group storybook reading. The directives confirmed that modifications made to the students' storybook reading behaviours were consistent with acceptable codes of behaviour displayed during whole group storybook reading.

Teachers J and M also issued directives that directed the students' attention to the storybook text. In classroom J and M, the directives were made before and during storybook reading. Teacher J drew the students' attention to text and illustrations, which created an opportunity for the teacher to make the storybook reading session interactive, by inviting the students to examine the illustrations and anticipate some of the storybook events. The actions of Teacher J focused the attention of the students on particular detail contained in the storybook. Teacher M commenced whole group storybook reading by drawing the students' attention to the illustrations in the storybook. The teacher provided the students with a visual summary of the story to assist with their understanding of the story and increase their attentiveness.

Generally, the different types of teacher directives issued in classrooms J, M, and S did not stimulate teacher-student communications, or extended patterns of communication involving the teacher and students. The purpose of the directives was to establish suitable student behaviour and learning environments during the whole group storybook reading

session. Teacher directives provided evidence of the teachers issuing instructions to control both the social and learning contexts, before the commencement of whole group storybook reading.

9.2.2.2 Teacher Questions that were Text Related

The main text-related questions asked by the three teachers were predictive, interpretive, and higher order questions. In classroom J, questions were asked before, during, and after storybook reading; in classroom M questions were asked before and during storybook reading; and in classroom S questions were asked during storybook reading. In each classroom, teacher questions were comprised of predictive and interpretive elements, and few higher order references. In classroom J, the questions asked during the storybook reading were distinguished from the questions asked before storybook reading, by the question context. Questions before storybook reading were confined to predictions about plot outcomes, whereas during storybook reading, a greater range of storybook events provided the material for the teacher's questions. In classroom M, the predictive elements before storybook reading used the storybook title and front cover illustration as cues for questions, whereas the events of the storybook provided the cues during storybook reading. Predictive and interpretive questions were the main type of question asked by Teacher S. The teacher referenced events from the storybook, and feelings and emotions that characters from the story might have experienced. According to Teacher S, predictive and interpretive questions were the cornerstone of collaborative communications between the teacher and the students, and central to the students acquiring thinking and reasoning strategies.

Teacher J made extensive use of factual recall questions after storybook reading as an efficient method to gauge the students' understanding of the content of the storybook. Lengthy sequences of factual recall questions were strung together to create a series of rapid communication exchanges between the teacher and students. The method was not employed by Teacher M or Teacher S.

Teachers M and S asked questions based on the storybook title, author, and illustrator before storybook reading. In classroom M, the questions were mainly about illustrated events contained in the storybook. The teacher identified features in an illustration and asked the students questions based on the features. The illustrations provided the focus for the storybook reading. Teacher S commenced storybook reading by asking questions about the storybook title, author, and illustrator. The teacher believed the knowledge was important for the students, because they could use the information when they selected storybooks from the library, or nominated storybooks as gifts.

Classroom Teacher S also asked the students questions about the meaning of words. The questions were asked during storybook reading and referred to specific words contained in the storybook. The construction of the teacher's questions did not lead to extended communications between the teacher and the students. Teachers J and M did not use this form of questioning.

9.2.2.3 Teacher Questions that Indicated a Continuity of Communication

This category of teacher question was extensively used by the three teachers and ranked highest in terms of the number of teacher turns. The

main type of question was based on meaning of events and words, prediction and interpretation. The questions were asked before, during, and after storybook reading in each of the classrooms. Although Teacher J asked the majority of questions after storybook reading, and Teachers M and S asked the majority of questions during storybook reading. In classroom J, the teacher's questions probed events from the text and were rich in content and information. The questions initiated extended patterns of communication and cultivated reasoned and thoughtful responses from the students. In classroom M, the questions were usually confined to meaning and prediction of immediate storybook events. The teacher provided assistance to the students by directing their attention to particular clues in the story. The questions promoted patterns of teacher-student communications. In classroom S, the teacher questions were about storybook events and constructed to expand the teacher-student communications. The teacher communications were more detailed than the students' responses and consisted of detailed utterances that created student interest in the topic.

Teacher questions that were based on the student, their family, or the teacher were asked regularly by the three teachers. These questions were asked by Teacher J after storybook reading; by Teacher M before and during storybook reading; and by Teacher S before storybook reading. The questions from classroom Teacher J brought together the theme of the storybook and a personal event that related to the storybook topic. In classroom M, the teacher placed the students in circumstances similar to those of the story. The students' familiarity with the situation promoted linked teacher-student communications. In classroom S, the teacher's questions were mainly about the teacher's experiences that were similar to the events of the storybook. It was an infrequently used form of

questioning by Teacher S and did not effect any significant communication response from the students.

Teachers J and M made regular use of yes/no questions before, during, and after storybook reading. In both classrooms the subject matter of the yes/no questions covered the students and the storybook. In classroom J the teacher question stimulated ongoing communication by eliciting a response from the students that caused them to contribute further to the dialogue with elaborate and more descriptive responses.

9.2.2.4 Teacher Statements that were Text Related

Teacher statements that were text related were not a main form of communication used by teachers J, M, and S. All three teachers made statements about the storybook title, author, and illustrator before storybook reading. In classroom J, the statements were made to focus the students' thinking about the theme of the storybook, and create student interest. The teacher's statements formed part of the preparations prior to storybook reading. Teacher M used statements to explain what the story was about, and acquaint the students with the storybook title, author, and illustrator. This set the scene for the whole group storybook reading session. In classroom S, the teacher statements informed the students about the names of the author and illustrator and provided the preliminary introductions to the whole group storybook reading session. Each of the teachers viewed text related statements as an efficient method for transferring information to the students.

Teacher M and Teacher S made statements based on the meaning of events and words. The statements were made before and during

storybook reading by Teacher M, and during storybook reading by Teacher S. In classrooms M and S, the teacher statements elaborated on some aspect of the story and provided new information to the students.

Statements about illustrations were made by Teachers M and S before, and during storybook reading. In classroom M the teacher directed the communication to the whole group and used the statements to assist with an explanation of the story. In classroom S the teacher referred to features of the illustrations that were not described in the text and made some meaning from the illustration that was relevant to the story. The effect of the teacher's statements was to give greater depth to the students' appreciation of the storybook. Teacher S also used illustrations to provide an extension to the storybook themes when the teacher's account of an event provided new information to the students.

9.2.2.5 Teacher Evaluative Responses to a Student Communication

Teacher evaluative responses to a student communication were used extensively by the three teachers. All teachers' responses included acceptance of the student communication with an accompanying reinforcer, but there were variations in the timing of the responses. Teacher J responses occurred after storybook reading; Teacher M responses occurred before, during, and after storybook reading; and Teacher S responses occurred during storybook reading. The content of the teachers' responses was similar and involved the teacher confirming the accuracy of the student communication, with an accompanying positive reinforcer. The positive reinforcement from the teacher maintained the momentum of the student communication and created extended patterns of communication between the teachers and students.

Teacher responses that involved an acceptance of the student communication and a repeat of the student response occurred in the three classrooms. Teacher J responded before, during, and after storybook reading; Teacher M responded before and during storybook reading; and Teacher S responded during storybook reading. The teacher responses contained an acknowledgement of the student communication and a repetition of the student communication.

Teacher responses that contained an acceptance of the student communication and provided an extension to the communication were issued by Teacher J and Teacher M. Teacher J responses were recorded before and after storybook reading, and Teacher M responses were recorded before and during storybook reading. The teachers developed the students' communications to explain the words and events contained in the storybook in greater detail. Extensive and patterned teacher-student communication flowed from the initial student communication and teacher response.

A teacher response to a student communication based on disguised rejection and explanation, was made by Teachers J and M. Teacher J responded before and after storybook reading, while Teacher M responded before and during storybook reading. The content of the teachers' communication consisted of corrections to student statements and responses. The teachers' responses caused wider involvement by the whole group, as they used cues from the correction to initiate further communication.

9.2.3 What is the nature and extent of pre primary students' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity?

A summary of the students' contributions to the whole group storybook reading activity is contained in Table 9 below. More detailed information is available in Appendices 8 to 10.

Communication Type	Student J Communication Frequency	Student M Communication Frequency	Student S Communication Frequency	Mean Student Communication Frequency
Student Requests	56	96	50	67.3
Student Questions Text	22	22	18	20.7
Student Questions BEK	2	10	11	7.7
Student Questions C of C	2	8	2	4.0
Student Statements Text	66	148	41	85.0
Student Statements BEK	69	79	31	59.7
Student Statements C of C	9	74	8	30.3
Student Responses Directives	11	11	3	8.0
Student Responses TRQ/S	399	430	251	360.0
Student Responses BEK	102	171	49	107.3
Student Responses C of C	431	338	168	312.3
Student Responses Student Com	33	25	7	21.7
Total	1202	1412	639	1084.3

Note

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

TRQ/S: Text related question/statement

Table 9. Comparison of Students' Communication Types to Whole Group Storybook Reading

The data contained in the table show student communications are primarily in response to a teacher initiated communication, although approximately 15 percent of recorded student communications was in the statement category. Student communication responses involving text related questions and responses aimed at maintaining the student-teacher dialogue were the most frequently used methods of communication. The student statements were text related and referred to their background experience and knowledge evidencing the students' willingness to contribute to whole group communications when the subject area is familiar to them.

The pattern of student communications was similar in each of the classrooms, but the absolute number of student communications in classroom S was approximately 50 percent of the number of student communications in classrooms J and M respectively.

The students' communication contributions are discussed more fully in the following sections.

9.2.3.1 Student Requests

Student requests were student initiated communications and were made by students from classrooms J, M and S. The student requests were based on indications about the visibility of the storybook, indications about an intention to communicate with the teacher, and talking, chatting and calling out.

Students from classrooms J and M made requests about the visibility of the storybook before storybook reading commenced. The student

requests also referenced behavioural aspects of other students that impeded their ability to see and hear the storybook reading session. The student communications were of limited duration and did not account for extensive communications involving the teacher and students.

Students from classrooms J, M, and S made requests that involved an indication of an intention to communicate with the teacher. The students from classroom J made the requests after storybook reading, while the students from classroom M made the requests during, and after storybook reading. Students from classroom S made the requests before, during, and after storybook reading. The content of the students' requests was similar in each of the classrooms and indicated that they wished to respond, although their response was not always accurate. There were limited on-going communications arising from the student requests.

Students from classrooms M and S were involved in requests based on talking, chatting and calling out. The requests were made before, during, and after storybook reading in classroom M, and after storybook reading in classroom S. In both classrooms, the student requests were about events from the storybook and involved the participation of most students. However, the classroom requests were mainly individual requests from classroom M, and whole group or chorus requests from classroom S. In most instances, the student requests consisted of single turns and single utterances.

9.2.3.2 Student Questions that were Text Related

Student questions that were text related, included questions that were predictive, interpretive and higher order. Questions about the meaning of

events and words were material only in classroom S. However, the number of student turns was low in this category of student communication. The student questions that were predictive, interpretive and higher order had the object of increasing the students' understanding of a storybook event. Questions asked about the meaning of events and words were principally about an expanded understanding of words that arose during storybook reading. Both types of student text related questions promoted further student communication with the teacher and other students.

9.2.3.3 Student Statements that were Text Related

Student statements that were text related included statements that were based on factual recall, prediction and interpretation, and statements about storybook illustrations.

Student statements based on factual recall occurred in classrooms J and M, and were asked after storybook reading and during storybook reading respectively. Most students participated in the communication statements that varied from short direct statements about storybook events and longer descriptions of the events.

The student statements about predictions and interpretations were made by students in classrooms J, M, and S. In classroom J, the statements were made after storybook reading, and in classrooms M and S the statements were made during storybook reading. There was twice the number of student turns from students in classroom M. In classrooms J and M, the students' predictions about storybook events were volunteered by the students. In classroom S, the students used parts of

the text as clues to predict outcomes from the storybook events that had been read. The student statements were effective and resulted in collaborative communication between the students, because each student statement provided a foundation for each successive student communication.

Student statements based on the storybook illustrations were evidenced in each of the three classrooms. In classroom J, the statements were made after storybook reading; in classroom M the statements were made before and during storybook reading; and in classroom S the statements were made during storybook reading. The students from classroom J made statements that described the storybook illustration and most students contributed to the communication. Communication links developed between the students. Statements made by students from classroom M confirmed the detail of the storybook illustration and evoked patterns of communication that involved other students and the pre primary teacher. In classroom M, the students' statements explained the content of the illustrations and provided an account of their interpretation of the illustration. The construction of the student turns in classroom S consisted of a statement containing simple sentences.

9.2.3.4 Student Statements that Indicated a Continuity of Communication

Student statements that indicated a continuity of communication were only apparent in classroom M. The student statements were based on a peer response, meaning of events and words, and the student, family, or teacher. Statements based on peer response were made during storybook reading, meaning of events and words before storybook reading, and

student, family, or teacher before and during storybook reading. The student statements formulated on a peer response demonstrated how prior student communications acted as a foundation for subsequent student statements. Statements about the meaning of events and words were only used occasionally. However, statements about the student, family, or teacher were the most commonly made and drew upon prior knowledge of the student, family, or teacher to inform others in the group. The number of student turns in this category of student communication was generally less than for other categories of student communication.

9.2.3.5 Student Responses to Text Related Questions and Statements

Student responses to text related questions and statements were the largest category of student communication for each of the classrooms. The category was comprised of student responses based on the storybook title, author, and illustrator, factual recall, prediction and interpretation, and meaning of events and words.

In classrooms J, M and S, students responded to questions and statements about the storybook title, author, and illustrator before storybook reading. In each of the classrooms, the students' responses were characterised by simple answers to a teacher initiated question or statement, that referenced the storybook title, author, or illustrator. The responses generally contained a single student turn, containing several utterances.

The student responses based on factual recall, occurred after storybook reading in classroom J, and during and after storybook reading in

classrooms M and S. In classrooms J, M and S, the students' responses were single utterances that provided evidence that the students comprehended the events contained in the storybook.

Student responses based on prediction and interpretation were the most common type of student communication, and occurred before, during and after storybook reading in each of the classrooms. In classroom J, the student responses were characterised by the continuity of the students' ongoing responses. The students' responses from classroom M varied in length from an extended sentence to a single utterance, or as a chorus. The responses contained an expression of the students' opinion about particular storybook events. In classroom S, the communication patterns demonstrated broad student participation and multiple student responses to a single teacher question or statement.

Students from classroom S also gave responses about the meaning of events and words, as the words and events appeared during the whole group storybook reading session. This type of response was used frequently by the students, but did not include other linked teacher or student communication.

9.2.3.6 Student Responses that indicated a Continuity of Communication

Student responses that indicated a continuity of communication were based on responses about factual recall, prediction and interpretation, meaning of events and words, and self, family, teacher or pre primary.

Factual recall responses occurred after storybook reading in classroom J. The student responses consisted of linked student turns that provided a

continuity in the discussion about classroom recollections from the storybook. There were no apparent student factual recall responses from the students in classrooms M and S.

The students' predictive and interpretive responses were made before, during and after storybook reading in classroom J. Before and during storybook reading in classroom M, and during, and after storybook reading in classroom S. Students from classroom J produced linked response turns, consisting of several utterances that formed logical descriptive sentences that were particularly evident after storybook reading. The collaborative communication was characterised by the continuity of the student-teacher communication. In classroom M, the responses consisted of linked communication patterns and a large number of student turns varying in length from a single utterance to short sentences. The students' responses from classroom S were direct answers to a teacher question that led to further communication from the teacher or peers. The duration of the linked student communications was two or three exchanges, involving the students and the pre primary teacher.

Student responses based on the meanings of events and words occurred during storybook reading in classroom S. An examination of the student responses showed the different meanings that different students gave to storybook words and events.

Student responses that included references to self, family, teacher, or pre primary, occurred in each of the classrooms. In classroom J, the responses were made before and after storybook reading; in classroom M the responses were made before, during, and after storybook reading; and in classroom S the responses were made before and after storybook

reading. The student responses in classrooms J, M, and S were mainly references to self and family and generally detailed a former family event that paralleled a storybook event. The students' communications were detailed and lengthy.

9.2.3.7 Student Evaluative Responses to a Student Communication

Student evaluative responses to a student communication were an infrequent category of student communication in classrooms J and M. In classroom J, the student responses were based on acceptance with reinforcer after storybook reading, and rejection or disagreement before and after storybook reading. The exchanges were usually dyadic and of short duration, with a limited number of communication turns from each student. In classroom M, the student responses were based on rejection or disagreement before and during storybook reading. The communication exchanges consisted of several communication turns, involving two or three students.

9.2.4 What strategies do pre primary teachers employ in order to create opportunities for the students to develop communicative contributions around personal experience and personal knowledge?

9.2.4.1 Teacher Questions

Teacher questions based on background experience and knowledge were asked by Teacher J, Teacher M, and Teacher S. The main questions asked related to background experience and knowledge of the student and their family, or the pre primary class, as well as the meaning of events and words.

Teachers J and M asked questions about the student and their family after storybook reading.

Teacher S questions about background experience and knowledge were based on meaning of events and words and asked during and after storybook reading.

9.2.4.2 Teacher Statements

Teacher statements based on background experience and knowledge were asked by each of the three teachers. The types of statements made included the background experience and knowledge of the teacher, and background experience and knowledge of the pre primary class.

Teacher M made statements during storybook reading that drew on the background experience and knowledge of the teacher.

Teachers J and S made statements before and after storybook reading, and Teacher M made statements before and during storybook reading that referenced previous activities from the pre primary class.

9.2.4.3 Teacher Response

Teacher responses based on the background experience and knowledge of the teacher were the lowest frequency of teacher responses. They occurred after storybook reading in classroom J and during storybook reading in classroom M. In classroom J, the students showed interest when the teacher relayed their experiences to the whole group. This

strategy promoted the cohesiveness of the class. In classroom M, the teacher included references to the student's experiences when the references were interesting and relevant to the storybook theme.

9.2.4.4 Student Statements

Student initiated statements that included references to the student and their family occurred in all three classrooms. However, there were almost twice the number of student turns in classrooms J and M compared to classroom S. The student statements occurred before and after storybook reading in classroom J; before and during storybook reading in classroom M; and during and after storybook reading in classroom S. The students from classroom J referred to family events that the students had experienced or items that belonged to them. The statements enhanced the social dynamics of the group. Statements made by students from classroom M were also based on previous family related experiences and provided an opportunity for students to appreciate the experiences and values that their peers brought to the whole group storybook reading session. In classroom S, the pattern of student communication demonstrated a build-up in student content knowledge, as the students conveyed information to the group. The student contributions also assisted with the socialisation of the group.

9.2.4.5 Student Responses

Student responses based on background experience and knowledge were the most frequently used student communications that relied on background experience. The responses were recorded in each of the classrooms, although there were approximately four times as many

student turns in classrooms J and M, compared to classroom S. The main types of student responses consisted of background experience and knowledge of the student and their family, or the pre primary class.

Student responses that relied on the background experience and knowledge of the student and their family and the pre primary class, were recorded in each of the three classrooms. In classroom J, responses that referred to the student and family were made after storybook reading. In classroom M the student responses were made before, during, and after storybook reading. In classroom S the student responses were made after storybook reading. Responses based on experiences related to the pre primary class occurred before storybook reading in classroom J; before and during storybook reading in classroom M; and during storybook reading in classroom S. Students from classroom J responded with events that were only familiar to the student and included their parents. Although the experiences were conventional, they were valued by the students who conveyed the stories. There was a variation in the content of responses from students in classroom M, because the student communications included information they had obtained from others. Students from classroom S responded about personal events that had common elements with the storybook theme. In classrooms J, M and S, student responses about prior experiences in the pre primary class concentrated on themes the students had experienced previously during pre primary classes.

9.2.5 Can differences be noted in the pre primary teachers', and pre primary students' contributions throughout the year?

This section examined the differences in the teachers' and students' contributions by categories where there were recorded differences in the respective contributions by category throughout the year. The teacher contributions were assessed in terms of directives, questions, statements, and responses. The student contributions were assessed in terms of requests, statements, and responses.

9.2.5.1 Teacher Contributions

Teacher directives were primarily about expectations for the whole group storybook reading session. Each of the classroom teachers issued directives to establish acceptable classroom behaviours before and during storybook reading. The directives in each classroom addressed the student's position on the mat, sitting correctly on the mat (legs crossed and hands on lap), and listening to the teacher for further instructions and taking turns. In classrooms J and S, the directives were more frequent during the early part of the year, as the teachers deliberately established acceptable classroom codes of behaviour. In classroom M, the directives were uniformly spread throughout the year. In all classrooms, the content of the teachers' communication remained constant.

Teacher questions that were text related were used extensively by each of the teachers. In classroom J, the questions were asked throughout the year, whereas in classrooms M and S, the teachers asked the text-related questions during the later part of the year. In classrooms M and S, the

increased occurrence of teacher questions throughout the year coincided with a shift in emphasis from student listening skills to language and literacy skills. The content and structure of the teachers' questions did not change throughout the year.

Teacher questions based on background experience and knowledge were not asked often by any of the teachers. In classrooms J and M, the frequency of teacher questions increased during the later part of the year, particularly in relation to questions about the pre primary class. According to both teachers, this was based on the accumulation of experiences of the pre primary class activities over the year, which provided useful background experience and knowledge for the students, and a source of teacher questions. The teacher questions to students in classroom S, were uniformly distributed throughout the year. The content and structure of the teachers' questions did not vary significantly during the year.

Teacher questions aimed at maintaining a continuity of communication were regularly asked by all of the teachers. In classrooms J and M, the questions were more likely to be asked later in the year, and in classroom S, the questions were asked uniformly throughout the year. The teacher questioning in classrooms J and M, was characterised by large variations in the number of teacher turns recorded between different storybook reading sessions. The content of all of the teacher questions was similar.

Teacher statements that were text related, provided a regular teacher initiated communication to the students. All of the teachers displayed large variations in the number of teacher turns that occurred during storybook reading. The teachers in classrooms J and M tended to make

text related statements to their students throughout the year, whereas the teacher in classroom S made more statements later in the year. The statements made by the teacher in classroom M contained a greater depth of information for the students to aid their understanding of the storybook theme.

Teacher statements that were based on background experience and knowledge did not occur frequently in the overall teacher-initiated communications. In classroom J, the teacher statements occurred throughout the year, and in classroom S, the teacher statements were more likely to occur early in the year. The statements made by the teacher in classroom M varied according to the subject of the teacher's statements. Statements based on the pre primary class were made early in the year, and statements based on the teacher occurred later in the year.

Teacher evaluative responses to a student communication were significant communications and were more likely to occur later in the year in each of the classrooms. This was related to the teachers' assessment of the students later in the year, as the teaching emphasis shifted towards student learning. All teacher responses were characterised by constancy of content, and large variations in the number of teacher utterances and turns at each of the whole group storybook reading sessions.

9.2.5.2 Student Contributions

Student requests were communications initiated by the students. In each of the classrooms, the students' requests occurred later in the year after

the students had become familiar with each other and the teacher (their social context). In classroom S, the increase in unsolicited student requests corresponded with an observable reduction in overt control exercised by the teacher. The content of the student requests was similar between each of the three classrooms and the structure of the student communication did not change during the later part of the year.

Student statements that were text related, varied according to the subject matter of the text about which statements were made. In classroom S, student statements containing elements of cognition were generally made later in the year. In classrooms J and M, there was a more uniform distribution of the student statements throughout the year. All of the students' statements were characterised by the limited number of student utterances contained in each turn and the variation in the number of student turns between different whole group storybook reading sessions.

Student statements about background experience and knowledge were evident in each of the classrooms during storybook reading throughout the year. The constancy, content, and structure of the student communication did not vary during the year.

Student statements that maintained a continuity of communication were generally infrequent and limited to classroom M. The student statements occurred mainly in the later part of the year.

Student responses to questions and statements that were text related were the most frequently used form of student communication. In classroom J, responses to the storybook title, author, and illustrator occurred during the early part of the year; responses to factual recall occurred during the

later part of the year; and predictive and interpretive responses occurred throughout the year. In classroom M, responses to the storybook title occurred later in the year, and responses to factual recall and predictive and interpretive responses were uniformly distributed throughout the year. In classroom S, responses to the storybook title, author, and illustrator occurred later in the year, and factual recall and predictive and interpretive responses were observed throughout the year. In most instances, the student responses corresponded with a teacher question or statement on the same topic.

Student responses based on background experience and knowledge varied between the three classrooms. In classrooms J and S, the student responses were infrequent and distributed unevenly throughout the year. In classroom M, the student responses were more likely to occur later in the year and were characterised by the large variation in the number of student turns and the extended patterns of communication that were elicited. The content of the student responses in each of the classrooms did not change during the year.

9.3 Relevance to the Existing Literature

This section examines the relevance of the existing literature within the umbrella framework of Vygotsky (1962; 1978), and the specific operational theories of Dickinson (2001), Snow (1977), and Sulzby (1988) because of their focus on literacy development in storybook reading environments involving a more capable adult and a child or student. These were the primary research backgrounds that influenced this study. It is therefore appropriate to consider the relevance of the study findings to that literature.

Findings of this study suggest that the pre primary classroom is a social environment where there are numerous opportunities for the pre primary students to regularly participate in shared learning experiences. These shared learning experiences may be teacher directed or student initiated. A common feature of shared learning experiences is the inclusion of the pre primary students' conversations and discussions. The three teachers were observed settling the students in the mat area with a discussion of the link between the storybook and the classroom theme being studied, and providing an opportunity for all students to recall prior knowledge and experiences that had some bearing on the theme. The social context was further developed through the links created between the theme, the storybook topic and activities such as excursions and special visits to the school by farmyard friends and other special visitors planned by the teachers. The teachers deliberately created a social setting for the whole group storybook reading context.

There was also evidence of scaffolding by teachers and peers in each of the classrooms. The teachers made links with other storybooks previously read that related to the theme, and referenced specific events. For example, a reference to a nativity play, "You know when I was a sheep and you were a donkey" provided a platform for more detailed and extended communications between teacher and students. Students in each of the classrooms built on the communications of their peers based, on prior knowledge to gain better insights into the subject area of the theme and extend learning. This facilitated the construction of new knowledge. Teachers used picture clues in the storybooks, guided questions, and provided clues such as sounding out the start of answers to scaffold the students' learning.

The learning processes initiated by each of the teachers achieved a better understanding of the storybook through the teachers' guided discussion of storybook events. The whole group storybook reading activity was regarded as an extension to the language and literacy program by enabling the students to construct new meanings about storybook themes and language, and facilitated thinking and reasoning skills based on storybook events. Teacher S operated within the students' zone of proximal development by offering explanations of word definitions and providing examples of word meanings, for example, 'Greenpeace'. Teacher S used predictive questions to increase the collaborative communication with the students. All of the teachers' questions to the students that were text related contained predictive and interpretive elements that operated within the students' understanding, but also extended the boundaries of the students' learning and development of language.

The study demonstrated how the teachers used whole group storybook reading for cognitive development by promoting oral language and listening skills, increased vocabulary and comprehension through the use of pre-reading strategies such as the reference to picture clues. Storybook events were used as the catalysts for the development of thinking and reasoning skills

Generally, it can be concluded that the Vygotskian framework of the social construction of learning was evident during whole group storybook reading in the three classrooms. However, the presence of the more abstract aspects of Vygotsky's theory such as scaffolding and student learning operations within the zone of proximal development

could only be inferred from a limited amount of teacher and student communications. In these areas, the application and relevance of Vygotsky's theory are more tenuous when tested against the findings of this study because the instruments used in the study were not set up to specifically record those areas. On that basis, apart from the identification of a general conformity between theory and practice, nothing can be concluded about the adequacy of the theory or the research procedure and findings.

Dickinson (2001) identified three teaching style typologies: a didactic interactional style based on instructions; a co-constructional style based on cognitive demands; and a performance oriented style that encouraged reflection. This researcher observed the three different teaching styles being displayed by each of the three case study teachers in similar circumstances during the whole group storybook reading activity. The three teachers portrayed a didactic style when they issued directives to their students. Typically this was early in the year and early in a particular storybook reading activity when directives were issued as part of the teachers' class management practices. At that time teachers were more controlling and seeking students' conformity with the classroom codes of appropriate behaviour for the storybook reading activity. Some of the teacher questions aimed at factual recall of storybook events. Closed questions that elicited yes/no responses from the students also underpinned a didactic teaching style. However, this didactic style was less evident later in the year.

The co-construction teaching style was the most readily observed. All teachers regularly used questions that probed storybook events, initiated linked teacher-student, and student-peer communications that reinforced

the social context of the storybook reading activities and aided learning. Teacher S placed more emphasis on questions about storybook events that inquired about the meaning of words and events, and required predictions about event outcomes. Although, similar strategies were employed by Teachers J and M.

To a lesser extent the performance oriented teaching style was evidenced through the teachers' use of questions that relied on the students' linking their background knowledge and experience to the storybook events when framing their responses. The teachers also suggested the students imagine being in the same set of circumstances as those of the storybook events when formulating their responses to the teacher's questions. The performance oriented teaching style became stronger towards the end of the year and corresponded with the teachers' goals emphasizing student learning and literacy development.

It can be concluded that evidence of Dickinson's three teaching styles was observed during the whole group storybook reading activities, but the styles were associated with each of the three classroom teachers throughout the year. There was also some evidence that the teaching styles changed subtly during the year as the teachers' approaches changed from class management and class procedural issues to learning and development. The findings of this study suggest the typologies put forward by Dickinson may be less distinct in actual teaching practice. The circumstances surrounding the social context of each of the storybook reading activities had considerable impact on the approach adopted by the teacher.

This study has demonstrated the social nature of the whole group storybook reading activity. Information gathered in all three phases of the study confirmed that for the three teachers studied the whole group storybook reading session was socially constructed. Sulzby (1988) highlighted the importance of the social context for literacy development and identified several characteristics of the adult-child relationship during the learning process. Teachers acknowledged that they included some time before, during and after the story reading for shared communicative contributions, as they perceived this approach to be beneficial to the pre primary students' development. The pre primary teachers included the whole group storybook reading activity as part of their language and literacy program. They perceived the storybook reading activity to be valuable in developing listening skills, vocabulary, meaning making, comprehension and pre reading strategies such as picture clues, familiarity with text and word recognition. The social context of the whole group storybook reading activity facilitated confidence with speaking and sharing personal experiences, established friendship groups, promoted motivation and interest in storybooks, allowed the students to discuss emotions and feelings by reflecting on the characters in the storybook, and reinforced positive relationships between the pre primary teacher and the pre primary students through laughter and a sense of fun and excitement during the storybook reading activity.

Students were found to actively construct concepts through statements about predictions and interpretations of events, and using the text and illustrations as clues to predict outcomes. Student responses based on prediction and interpretation of storybook events were the most common form of student communication that resulted in extended and linked

communications involving the teacher and students. Teachers and students were also found to cooperatively negotiate the meaning of words and storybook events. Teacher J used the storybook to extend word meanings and events, and allowed students to contribute their own background knowledge and experience to the whole group discussions. Teacher M frequently explained the meaning of words in the storybook and encouraged her students to use the new words in their communications. Teacher S elaborated and expanded upon the students' background knowledge and experiences. All of the teachers used evaluative responses to their students' communications in the form of positive reinforcements to create cooperative linked communications about the meaning of storybook events.

The interactional patterns observed between the teacher and students changed over time, but this was due to the changed teacher goals for the students over the period of the school year. The teachers provided additional opportunities for student participation in shared classroom communications through the different types of questions asked. The teachers also encouraged the students to independently re-enact storybook events by assuming hypothetical roles in the storybook events. The three teachers used mediation in response to a student-initiated communication. Teacher M used illustrations to aid the students' understanding of language and learning, whereas Teacher S regularly elaborated and expanded the student's prior knowledge and experience and asked her students the meanings of events and words. These observed characteristics of the teacher-student relationships are consistent with Sulzby's findings. However, difficulty exists in establishing complete congruence between Sulzby's previous research and the study findings because this study is not a longitudinal study and

the scope did not contemplate the identification of sequenced events inherent in literacy development as proposed by Sulzby. However, like Sulzby, this study identified scaffolding strategies employed by teachers in order to encourage student initiated shared communications. There were also opportunities for students to assume greater responsibility for the communications that occurred during the storybook reading session.

The work of Snow (1977) found that storybook reading activities follow routines, storybook routines provide formats that a student uses to participate in storybook reading, and repeated storybook readings show a shift from discussion and elaboration of events to focus on motives and issues. With respect to routines it was observed that all three teachers had a thematic link to the storybook reading activity, and the classroom theme lasted for approximately five weeks. The conduct of the storybook reading activity was led by the teacher, students positioned themselves in the mat area, and the teachers offered explanations and their expectations for storybook reading prior to the commencement of the activity. The teachers' use of themes provided the students with a structure for participation in all thematically linked classroom activities. The storybook reading was an extension of the language and literacy program in the pre primary classroom. Teacher questions that evoked responses from students, and student questions that were text related contributed to the students' increased understanding of storybook events.

The observed shifts in discussion were the switch from teacher directives aimed at improving on-task behaviours early in the year towards teacher questions and evaluative responses, and student requests and responses. The teacher text related questions later in the year were in response to a shift from student listening to learning, in particular higher order

learning. Teacher questions based on background experience and knowledge, and teacher evaluative responses to a student communication were constructed to elicit interpretive and predictive responses from the students about events from the storybook, other thematic links, or personal experiences. This arrangement of teacher questioning and student response was effective in extending the number and complexity of the shared teacher-student communications. The study findings did conform with Snow's research, although the patterns varied between teachers and classrooms.

This case study research differentiates itself from previous research and adds to the existing body of knowledge about the subject of literacy development and learning in pre primary classrooms through the inclusion of student perspectives during the study of whole group storybook reading activities. The key findings with respect to student participation in the discussion of storybook events are:

- Students are more likely to engage in extended shared communications about storybook events when they are familiar with the circumstances of the event through their own independent background knowledge and experiences.
- Students are interested in hearing about the experiences of their teacher when the experiences are relevant to the events contained in the storybook. The conversations arising from the teacher's personal contributions extended the positive relationship shared between the teacher and her students and assisted with literacy development.

- Students are assisted with their learning and literacy development from peers within the whole group because they use shared peer communications to scaffold their own learning experiences.
- Teacher questions that take advantage of thematic links and student's background knowledge and experience are more likely to cause extended shared teacher-student communications.

Each of these situations provided opportunities for the creation of positive and enhanced learning environment for pre primary students.

9.4 Areas for Further Research

The conduct and reporting of the study revealed a number of opportunities for extending research into whole group storybook reading activities in pre primary classrooms. Three main opportunities are outlined below.

Firstly, the whole group storybook reading is generally a single event within a thematic framework being studied by the students. Teachers have stated the selection of storybooks is frequently based on a current theme being studied in the classroom. In this context, whole group storybook reading has two main objectives for pre primary teachers. Firstly, it provides an opportunity to consider different perspectives and explanations of the theme, and secondly it provides an opportunity for students to increase their literacy skills. However, whole group storybook reading forms only part of a thematically oriented learning process. How should different thematic events in the classroom be linked to optimise the student's learning? What is the relative importance of

whole group storybook reading activity in a set of thematically related learning events in order to achieve effective learning and learning skills in students? How does the theoretical framework for storybook reading accommodate a broader thematically linked learning process? Does the thematic orientation detract or assist the student's acquisition of literacy skills?

Secondly, this study examined the teacher communications, and student communications during whole group storybook reading activity in a classroom context. The three case study teachers' contributions were validated through feedback sessions with the researcher. This contributed to the robust nature of the study and provided additional information about the teachers. However, there was no corresponding validation of the students' contributions through the involvement of the students in a validation or feedback process. It is feasible a rich body of information about the effective participation of students in whole group storybook reading activities could be elicited from a meaningful engagement of the students during the research process. Under what circumstances do students feel comfortable contributing to whole group discussions that draw on their own personal experiences? Are all students in a whole group situation likely to benefit similarly when they are involved in discussions that stretch their capacities to contribute to the storybook communications? What are the students' views about the most effective whole group storybook methods to expand their knowledge and literacy skills during storybook reading?

Thirdly, another opportunity addressed raised the question of whether whole group storybook reading activities are able to provide opportunities for students to initiate the communication about their

personal experiences and background knowledge, and whether they could provide opportunities for reciprocal communication. Are there opportunities for teachers to be more responsive to the limited students' initiations and assist them to contribute more reciprocal and initiated communication? Why did the pattern of student initiations remain unchanged over the duration of the study? Would the teacher's promotion of shared peer-to-peer communication during the whole group storybook reading activity increase the students' knowledge and learning?

5 Implications for Teaching

This study highlights several important areas which pre primary teachers may like to consider when they are formulating their teaching programs. The areas include the relevance of the social context as a pre condition for the effective learning of language and literacy skills; facilitation of student communicative contributions which link their own personal knowledge and personal experiences to the events of the storybook; allowing the students some control in the selection of the storybooks; and extending the students' social communication beyond the discussion which may have occurred during the storybook reading context.

9.5.1 The relevance of the social context

Teachers have indicated that the emphasis for storybook reading is literacy and language development and some consideration is given to the social development of pre primary students. The goals for the storybook reading activity are based on the teachers' perception of their students' needs. If teachers shifted their emphasis from language and

literacy development to social development, greater gains may be made in understanding the cultural and family backgrounds that students bring to the storybook reading context. This understanding is essential, as it provides teachers with a valuable framework for structuring their storybook reading: in particular, the manner in which they encourage shared communication in order to meet their students' needs. Emphasizing social development will not limit language and literacy development, because students are still encouraged to increase their vocabulary and comprehend what is being read during the whole group storybook reading activity.

9.5.2 Facilitation of student communicative contributions

Information gathered during the three case studies indicates that teachers spend a considerable amount of their communicative contributions on relating their expectations for the storybook reading to the students. However, as the year progressed, the teachers relinquished some control and presented more opportunities for the students to engage in shared communication. When the students were invited to include personal knowledge and experiences, this stimulated lengthy conversations among the students. Therefore, teachers who want to promote shared communication through social interaction and relinquish some control over classroom communication, should include questions which require the students to relate their personal knowledge and experience. When students relate personal experiences, teachers can only anticipate what the student is going to say. This situation allows the student to be in control and guide the direction of the communication.

9.5.3 Allowing students control in the selection of storybooks

Pre primary teachers select their storybooks to relate closely to the current classroom theme. The teachers use the events in the storybooks to scaffold their students' learning. They are sensitive to the needs of their students and therefore structure their communication in a manner which allows the student to understand and make meaning of the storybook events. However, this scaffolding which occurs during storybook reading is not only teacher initiated. Pre primary students also scaffold the teachers' understanding of their needs, through their communicative contributions during the whole group storybook reading activity. If pre primary students were given some influence in the selection of storybooks, this would scaffold the teachers' knowledge of the students' favourite authors, interests and level of language and literacy development.

9.5.4 Extending storybook communication beyond the storybook context

Two of the three case study teachers encouraged the shared storybook communication beyond the storybook reading context. One teacher organized a ten-minute browsing session where pre primary students informally browsed through books which related to the current theme, in dyads and small groups. Anecdotal evidence showed that the students spent their browsing time in conversation about the pictures and storybook events. These conversations were student initiated and free from teacher control. The pre primary students commented on what they liked about the pictures and what they thought was happening in the pictures. They also related personal experiences which were linked to the storybook pictures. This enabled the students to further their emergent

literacy skills, to practise their language and to scaffold one another's learning.

Storybook communications were also extended beyond the storybook context when fruit time was scheduled immediately after the storybook reading activity. The pre primary students would use the fruit time to talk about the storybook events, what they liked about the story and personal experiences that related to the story. Opportunities such as these encouraged the students to initiate the communication and construct new knowledge from the shared communications. An awareness of the value of such opportunities by early childhood educators would be beneficial in increasing young students' cognitive and social development.

In conclusion, this study has established that pre primary teachers consider the whole group storybook reading activity a valuable learning experience in facilitating language and literacy development, and to a lesser extent social development. The storybook reading ritual is carried out at least once each day in pre primary classrooms. The three case study teachers have demonstrated that they organize the storybook reading activity around the socio-economic and cultural needs of their students. Furthermore, differences in pre primary teacher goals have been identified because of the teachers' accommodation of the pre primary students' needs.

Teacher J organized her storybook reading to extend her students' communicative skills and language development. Teacher M used the storybook reading activity to promote confidence in speaking in English and to develop an interest in storybooks in order to facilitate competence in language and literacy. Teacher S structured her storybook reading

activity to encourage her students to use the information gained from storybooks to construct new knowledge and declarative knowledge.

As the year progressed, the pre primary teachers' modified their goals for the storybook reading activity to accommodate the changes in the pre primary students' maturity, confidence, cognitive development and social development. The social nature of the storybook reading is significant to the pre primary teacher as it provides valuable opportunities for developing an understanding of the pre primary students' family background, prior knowledge and personal experience. Moreover, a shift in emphasis from language and literacy development to social development is a worthy consideration as it encourages the students to include personal knowledge and experience in the shared communicative contributions, which occur during the storybook reading activity.

A focus of this study has been the shared communicative contributions, which occur during storybook reading. Teachers indicated that they used the communication during the storybook reading activity to promote reasoning and thinking skills in the students by presenting higher order questions. Findings of the shared communications gathered during this study support Dillon's (1988), work which suggests that a teacher can ask a higher order question, however, the teacher should expect the student to answer with a high or a low order response.

T: Why do you think I might be reading you a story about a farm today?

S: Because the pig has whiskers.

When the pre primary teachers encouraged the students to include personal knowledge and experience in the shared contributions, there was a noticeable difference in the quality of the communication. The students' dialogue was lengthy, it was interesting to listen to, it motivated other students to contribute to the communication and more importantly, it scaffolded the teachers' understanding about the pre primary students' background knowledge and experience.

T: How did the water get on the floor?

S1: It moved.

S2: Water can't move.

T: Water can't move?

S1: Yes it can. My poppa told me. It's like the waves on the woks (rocks). It moves up and then it moves down.

S3: Yeah, I seen that. When we were at the beach, fishing. The tide. It's the tide It's the tide coming in and going out.

S4: I like it when the water moves out and then I catch pipis (small shellfish). If we don't eat them daddy uses them up.

S5: Yuk. I had some mussels. It was all slippery.

T: Was it in a mussel soup?

S5: Yes. It was Italian. At the restaurant when we went for daddy's birthday. I liked the bread.

S3: Yum. I like restaurant bread.

T: Okay, let's have a look at the water on this page.

Therefore, findings of this study highlight the significance of whole group storybook reading. It can be regarded as a valuable resource in developing an understanding of the pre primary students' cultural and family background. This understanding is essential if pre primary

teachers are to establish appropriate and purposeful goals for their students. Providing opportunities for shared communication, particularly communication that invites personal experience and knowledge has the potential to greatly enhance the quality of the social context and the learning outcomes for pre primary students.

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APPENDIX 1

INITIAL STUDY: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

A. Teacher Background

- 1. Number of years teaching experience.....
- 2. Year levels taught.....
- 3. Teaching qualifications.....
- 4. Currently undertaking further studies yes/no. Degree.....
- 5. Early childhood training yes/no. Please describe.....
.....

B. Teacher Background - Storybook Reading

- 1. Do you include whole group storybook reading in your daily learning activities?.....
- 2. Why do you include whole group storybook reading in your daily learning activities?.....

C. Storybook Reading Activity

- 1. How many times do you read to your whole class in a day?.....
- 2. When do you usually read to your students?.....
- 3. How long does your usual storybook reading session last?.....
- 4. Do you include time for discussion in your storybook reading session?... ..
- 5. What role does discussion have in the whole group storybook reading session in your classroom?.....

D. Please feel free to make any comment on the whole group storybook reading activity in your pre primary classroom.

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APPENDIX 2

INITIAL STUDY: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Activity	Frequency of Response
Teacher Background	
Teaching experience (average years)	12.6
Year levels taught	
Pre primary	14
Primary	29
Teaching qualifications	BEd or equivalent
Undertaking studies:	
Yes	13
No	30
Early childhood training:	
Yes	42
No	1
Teacher Background Storybook Reading	
Whole group storybook reading included in daily learning activities:	
Yes	43
No	0
Reasons whole group storybook reading included in daily learning activities:	
Increase general knowledge	10
Model language and meaning	25
Encourage expression	15
Role modelling	3
Understand topic or theme	18
Fantasy value	3
Storybook Reading Activity	
Regularity of reading each day:	
One time	20
Two times	16

Three times	7
Whole group storybook reading session:	
First lesson	16
Morning other	9
After lunch	6
Last lesson	27
Afternoon other	15
Duration of storybook reading activity:	
5-15 minutes	18
16-30 minutes	22
Greater than 30 minutes	3
Time allocated for discussion during storybook reading:	
Yes	41
No	2
Role of discussion during storybook reading:	
Develop concepts	22
Predict outcomes	11
Explain storybook events	27
Share common experiences	8
Develop language	31
Reinforce themes	16
Other Comments	
Positive aspects of storybook reading:	
Shared time as a group	21
Provided a link between pictures and language	11
Students were able to express themselves	15
Provided teachers with an insight into learning	6
Negative aspects of storybook reading:	
Weak language students had limited focus	6
Required student interest and concentration	12
Varying ability levels of the students	6
Basis for selecting storybooks:	
Author	16
Students selected	12
Perceived learning opportunity	13
Compatibility with current learning theme	36

APPENDIX 3

PILOT STUDY: SUMMARY RESULTS (FREQUENCIES)

Communication	Teacher Before SBR	Student Before SBR	Teacher During SBR	Student During SBR	Teacher After SBR	Student After SBR
<u>Directives</u>	13	0	16	1	3	2
<u>Questions</u>						
Text	19	1	49	1	0	3
BEK	9	1	1	2	10	2
C of C	7	4	17	0	11	0
<u>Statements</u>						
Text	13	1	14	6	1	0
BEK	4	2	1	5	1	1
C of C	0	2	0	2	1	0
<u>Responses</u>						
Text	15	3	11	2	3	2
BEK	2	27	3	65	0	14
C of C	0	15	0	9	0	16
<u>Evaluative Response</u>	17	13	20	5	4	0

Note

SBR: Storybook reading

Text: Text related communication

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

APPENDIX 4

THE CASE STUDY CODING STRUCTURE

TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Teacher Directives

Expectations for storybook reading

Reinforcement of appropriate behaviour

Directs attention to text

Directs attention to others

Attention gaining words

Teacher Questions Text Related

Title, author, illustrator, storybook

Factual recall

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Yes/no questions

Questions requiring non-verbal response

Teacher Questions Background Experience and Knowledge

Background knowledge and experience of the teacher

Background knowledge and experience of the student/family

Background knowledge and experience of the pre primary

Yes/no questions

Meanings of events and words

Questions requiring non-verbal response

Repeat of initial question

Teacher Questions That Indicate Continuity of Communication

Question extends student response

Yes/no question

Meanings of events and words

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Repeat of initial question

Question involves student, family, teacher

Factual recall

Teacher Statements Text Related

Title, author, illustrator, storybook

Factual recall

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Yes/no statements

Meanings of events and words

Statements about illustrations

Repeat of initial statement

Teacher Statements Background Experience and Knowledge

Background experience and knowledge of teacher

Background experience and knowledge of student/family

Background experience and knowledge of pre primary

Yes/no statement

Meanings of events and words

Repeat of initial statement

Teacher Statements That Indicate Continuity of Communication

Formulated on student response

Yes/no statement

Meanings of events and words

Repeat of initial statement

Statement involves student, family, teacher

Teacher Responses to Requests

Response to functional requirements

Response to indicators hands up, I know

Response to talking chatter

Teacher Responses to Text Related Questions/Statements

Title, author, illustrator, storybook

Factual recall

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Yes/no response

Meanings of events and words

Repeats response

Incorrect response

Teacher Responses Background Experience and Knowledge

Background experience and knowledge of teacher

Background experience and knowledge of student/family

Background experience and knowledge of pre primary

Yes/no response

Meanings of events and words

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Repeats response

Incorrect response

Teacher Responses That Indicate Continuity of Communication

Text

Factual recall

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Yes/no response

Meanings of events and words

Repeats response

Incorrect response

Asks for repeat

Response includes student, family, teacher

Teacher Evaluative Responses to Student Communication

Acceptance with reinforcer

Acceptance that repeats the student response

Acceptance with extension or explanation

Acceptance with correction to accuracy or grammar

Rejects explicit

Disguised rejection, explanation

Prompts to assist student

Presents desired response herself

Evaluates behaviour

Rejects response

STUDENT COMMUNICATION

Student Requests

Functional toilet, drink

Indications can't see, squashy, tired

Indications wishes to communicate

Talking, chatting, calling out

Student Questions Text

Title, author, illustrator. storybook

Factual recall

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Yes/no questions

Meanings of events and words

Questions directed at peer

Repeat of initial question

Student Questions Background Experience and Knowledge

Background experience and knowledge of teacher

Background experience and knowledge of student/family

Background experience and knowledge of pre primary

Yes/no questions

Meanings of events and words

Question directed at peer

Repeat of initial question

Student Questions That Indicates Continuity of Communication

Question extends teacher response

Yes/no questions

Meanings of events and words

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Question directed at peer

Repeat of initial question

Question involves student, family, teacher

Student Statements Text

Title, author, illustrator, storybook

Factual recall

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Yes/no statement

Meanings of events and words

Statements directed at peer

Repeat of initial statement

Student Statements Background Experience and Knowledge

Background experience and knowledge of teacher

Background experience and knowledge of student/family

Background experience and knowledge of pre primary

Yes/no statement

Meanings of events and words

Statements directed at peer

Repeat of initial statement

Student Statement That Indicates Continuity of Communication

Statement formulated on teacher response

Statement formulated on peer response

Yes/no statement

Meanings of events and words

Repeat of initial statement

Statement involves student, family, teacher

Statement does not relate to the communication

Student Responses to Directives

Expectation non verbal

Expectation verbal

Text non verbal

Student Responses to Text Related Questions/Statements

Title, author, illustrator, storybook

Factual recall

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Yes/no response

Meanings of events and words

Repeats response

Incorrect response

Response directed at peer

Student Responses Background Experience and Knowledge

Background experience and knowledge of teacher

Background experience and knowledge of student/family

Background experience and knowledge of pre primary

Yes/no response

Incorrect response

Response directed at peer

Response does not relate to the communication

Student Responses That Indicate Continuity of Communication

Text

Factual recall

Predictive, interpretive, higher order

Yes/no response

Meanings of events and words

Repeats response

Incorrect response

Response includes student, family, teacher, pre primary

Response does not relate to communication

Student Evaluative Responses to Student Communication

Ignores, no evaluation required

Acceptance with reinforcer

Acceptance with extension or explanation

Rejects, disagrees

Repeats evaluative response

.

APPENDIX 5

CLASSROOM J TEACHER COMMUNICATION FREQUENCIES

Teacher Communication	Utterances Before SBR	Utterances During SBR	Utterances After SBR
Teacher Directives			
Expectations for SBR	46	79	45
Reinforce behaviour	2	10	14
Attention to text	33	37	1
Attention to others	2	0	8
Attention words	45	42	59
<u>Teacher Questions Text</u>			
Title, author etc.	1	0	0
Factual recall	4	4	52
Predictive, interpretive etc	30	13	54
Yes/No	6	3	44
Meanings of events/words	0	0	2
<u>Teacher Questions BEK</u>			
BEK of teacher	0	0	0
BEK of student/family	2	0	13
BEK of classroom	10	0	4
Yes/No	8	1	22
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Non-verbal response	0	0	0
Repeat question	2	0	35
<u>Teacher Questions C of C</u>			
Extends student response	7	0	0

Yes/No	18	2	71
Meanings of events/words	16	8	72
Predictive, interpretive etc	3	0	8
Repeat question	5	3	27
Involves student/family	2	0	35
Factual recall	0	0	18

<u>Teacher Statements Text</u>			
Title, author etc.	35	1	4
Factual recall	0	1	6
Predictive, interpretive etc.	2	0	3
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Illustrations	2	1	5
Repeat statement	0	0	0

<u>Teacher Statements BEK</u>			
BEK of teacher	0	0	1
BEK of student/family	3	0	2
BEK of classroom	13	0	12
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Repeat statement	0	0	0

<u>Teacher Statements C of C</u>			
Based on student response	0	0	3
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	1
Repeat statement	0	0	0
Statement student/family	0	1	5

<u>Teacher Response Requests</u>			
Functional requirements	6	0	4
Indicators: hands/I know	15	2	67
Talking/chatter	0	0	3

<u>Teacher Response Text</u>			
Title, author etc.	1	0	1

Factual recall	0	1	1
Predictive, interpretive etc.	1	0	2
Yes/No	1	0	1
Meanings of events/words	1	0	0
Repeats response	0	0	0
Incorrect response	1	0	0

Teacher Response BEK

BEK of teacher	0	0	3
BEK of student/family	0	0	0
BEK of classroom	0	0	1
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	0	0
Repeats response	0	0	1
Incorrect response	0	0	0

Teacher Response C of C

Text related	4	0	0
Factual recall	0	0	1
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	0	1
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Repeats response	0	0	0
Incorrect response	2	0	0
Asks for repeat	0	0	0
Student/family/teacher	2	0	0

Teacher Response Student

Acceptance reinforcer	7	1	56
Acceptance repeats	129	27	231
Acceptance with explanation	27	4	109

Acceptance with correction	0	0	1
Rejects	3	1	9
Disguised rejection	29	5	42
Prompts to assist student	3	1	10
Teacher responds	12	2	65
Evaluates behaviour	0	0	9
Rejects response	0	0	0

Note

SBR: Storybook reading

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

APPENDIX 6

CLASSROOM M TEACHER COMMUNICATION FREQUENCIES

Teacher Communication	Utterances Before SBR	Utterances During SBR	Utterances After SBR
<u>Teacher Directives</u>			
Expectations for SBR	79	77	20
Reinforce behaviour	10	15	6
Attention to text	37	37	7
Attention to others	0	1	0
Attention words	42	50	14
<u>Teacher Questions Text</u>			
Title, author etc.	23	1	0
Factual recall	0	13	15
Predictive, interpretive etc.	39	95	5
Yes/No	7	24	0
Non-verbal response	0	2	2
<u>Teacher Questions BEK</u>			
BEK of teacher	0	0	0
BEK of student/family	6	4	9
Meanings of events/words	5	11	1
Non-verbal response	0	2	2
Repeat question	72	88	16
<u>Teacher Questions C of C</u>			
Extends student response	4	2	0
Yes/No	16	26	16
Meanings of events/words	8	24	16
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	3	1
Repeat question	25	16	0
Involves student/family	11	25	11
Factual recall	4	6	0

Teacher Statements Text

Title, author etc.	29	17	1
Factual recall	3	2	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	4	8	1
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	16	48	2
Illustrations	15	61	3
Repeat statement	0	0	0

Teacher Statements BEK

BEK of teacher	3	14	0
BEK of student/family	1	5	1
BEK of classroom	13	13	4
Yes/No	0	1	0
Meanings of events/words	3	2	0
Repeat statement	0	0	0

Teacher statements C of C

Based on student response	2	1	0
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	3	3	4
Repeat statements	0	0	0
Statement student/family	4	0	3

Teacher Response Requests

Functional requirements	9	10	16
Indicators: hands/I know	20	49	11
Talking/chatter	1	0	0

Teacher Response Text

Title, author etc.	0	1	1
Factual recall	0	1	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	5	1
Yes/No	0	2	0
Meanings of events/words	0	7	0
Repeats response	0	0	0
Incorrect response	0	0	0

Teacher Response BEK

BEK of teacher	0	3	0
BEK of student/family	0	0	0
BEK of classroom	1	1	0
Yes/No	1	2	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	0	0
Repeats response	0	1	0
Incorrect response	0	0	0

Teacher Response C of C

Text related	0	0	0
Factual recall	0	0	1
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	3	1
Yes/No	0	0	1
Meanings of events/words	1	1	0
Repeats response	0	0	0
Incorrect response	0	0	1
Asks for repeat	0	0	0
Student/family/teacher	1	2	0

Teacher Response Student

Acceptance reinforcer	37	72	22
Acceptance repeats	55	104	0
Acceptance with explanation	67	121	0
Acceptance with correction	1	1	0
Rejects	12	17	5
Disguised rejection	20	39	1
Prompts to assist student	14	10	4
Teacher responds	10	15	2
Evaluates behaviour	11	6	3
Rejects response	0	0	1

Note

SBR: Storybook reading

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

APPENDIX 7

CLASSROOM S TEACHER COMMUNICATION FREQUENCIES

Teacher Communication	Utterances	Utterances	Utterances
	Before SBR	During SBR	After SBR
<u>Teacher Directives</u>			
Expectations for SBR	30	62	43
Reinforce behaviour	19	24	13
Attention to text	8	14	3
Attention to others	0	3	3
Attention words	29	33	25
<u>Teacher Questions Text</u>			
Title, author etc.	7	1	1
Factual recall	0	12	12
Predictive, interpretive etc.	9	33	12
Yes/No	0	7	9
Non-verbal response	0	0	0
<u>Teacher Questions BEK</u>			
BEK of teacher	0	0	1
BEK of student/family	0	1	2
BEK of classroom	5	11	3
Yes/No	0	1	0
Meanings of events/words	0	10	20
Non-verbal response	0	0	1
Repeat question	1	10	35
<u>Teacher Questions C of C</u>			
Extends student response	0	0	0
Yes/No	3	8	5
Meanings of events/words	8	24	16
Predictive, interpretive etc.	1	5	1
Repeats question	9	28	6
Involves student/family	9	2	1

Factual recall	0	5	0
<hr/>			
Teacher Statements Text			
Title, author etc.	22	2	0
Factual recall	0	1	1
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	4	1
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	3	20	4
Illustrations	1	10	4
Repeat statement	0	0	0
<hr/>			
Teacher Statements BEK			
BEK of teacher	2	3	0
BEK of student/family	1	1	2
BEK of classroom	10	8	4
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	1	1
Repeat statement	0	0	0
<hr/>			
Teacher Statements C of C			
Based on student response	0	0	0
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	2	0	3
Repeat statement	0	0	1
Statement student/family	0	3	0
<hr/>			
Teacher Response Requests			
Functional requirements	3	4	4
Indicators: hands/I know	9	13	15
Talking/chatting	0	0	0
<hr/>			
Teacher Response Text			
Title, author etc.	1	0	1
Factual recall	0	0	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	3	2
Yes/No	0	2	0
Meanings of words/events	0	3	1
Repeats response	0	0	0

Incorrect response	0	0	0
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Teacher Response BFK

BEK of teacher	0	0	2
BEK of student/family	0	0	1
BEK of classroom	1	3	0
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	0	0
Repeats Response	0	0	1
Incorrect response	0	0	0

Teacher Response C of C

Text related	0	0	0
Factual recall	0	0	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	0	0
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	1	0	0
Repeats response	0	0	0
Incorrect response	1	0	0
Asks for repeat	0	0	0
Student/family/teacher	0	0	0

Teacher Response Student

Acceptance reinforcer	3	35	9
Acceptance repeats	0	64	0
Acceptance with explanation	0	3	0
Acceptance with correction	0	0	0
Rejects	2	9	8
Disguised rejection	6	11	9
Prompts to assist student	2	6	6
Teacher responds	1	5	0
Evaluates behaviour	0	14	3
Rejects response	0	0	0

Note

SBR: Storybook reading

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

APPENDIX 8

CLASSROOM J STUDENT COMMUNICATION FREQUENCIES

Student Communication	Utterances Before SBR	Utterances During SBR	Utterances After SBR
<u>Student Requests</u>			
Functional: toilet/drink	1	0	4
Indications: visibility/comfort	7	0	3
Indications: to communicate	6	2	25
Talking/chatting	1	1	6
<u>Student Questions Text</u>			
Title, author etc.	3	0	1
Factual recall	0	1	2
Predictive, interpretive etc.	2	2	4
Yes/No	1	1	4
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Questions to peer	1	0	0
Repeat question			
<u>Student Questions BEK</u>			
BEK of teacher	0	0	2
BEK of student/family	0	0	0
BEK of classroom	0	0	0
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Questions to peer	0	0	0
Repeat question	0	0	0
<u>Student Questions C of C</u>			
Extends teacher response	0	0	0
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	1
Question to peer	0	0	0
Repeat question	0	0	1
Involves student/family/teacher	0	0	0

Student Statements Text

Title, author etc.	3	0	4
Factual recall	0	0	12
Predictive, interpretive etc.	7	3	13
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	2
Statement to peer	0	0	0
Statement illustrations	3	4	15

Student Statements BEK

BEK of teacher	0	0	0
BEK of student/family	5	1	47
BEK of classroom	3	0	5
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	1	0	0
Statement to peer	2	0	0
Repeat statement	0	0	5

Student Statement C of C

Based on teacher response	2	2	0
Based on peer response	1	3	0
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Repeat statement	0	0	0
Involves student/family/teacher	0	1	0
Unrelated to communication	0	0	0

Student Response Directives

Expectation non-verbal	0	0	1
Expectation verbal	4	0	5
Text non-verbal	0	0	1

Student Responses TRO/S

Title, author etc.	10	0	0
Factual recall	4	6	76
Predictive, interpretive etc.	91	18	96
Yes/No	7	3	8

Meanings of events/words	1	0	2
Repeats response	5	1	2
Incorrect response	15	3	46
Response to peer	0	1	4

Student Responses BEK

BEK of teacher	0	0	1
BEK of student/family	7	2	38
BEK of classroom	12	0	0
Yes/No	8	2	19
Incorrect response	6	0	15
Response to peer	0	0	2
Unrelated to communication	0	0	0

Student Responses C of C

Text related	7	1	1
Factual recall	4	1	53
Predictive, interpretive etc.	21	8	76
Yes/No	26	1	83
Meanings of events/words	3	0	4
Repeats response	1	0	3
Incorrect response	7	6	27
Includes family/teacher/class	11	0	87
Unrelated to communication	0	0	0

Student Response Student Com

Ignores	0	0	0
Acceptance with reinforcer	2	0	9
Acceptance with explanation	0	0	1
Rejects/disagrees	9	1	11
Repeats response	0	0	0

Note

SBR: Storybook reading

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

TRQ/S: Text related question/statement

APPENDIX 9

CLASSROOM M STUDENT COMMUNICATION FREQUENCIES

Student Communication	Utterance Before SBR	Utterance During SBR	Utterance After SBR
<u>Student Requests</u>			
Functional: toilet/drink	9	9	7
Indications: visibility/comfort	16	3	0
Indications: to communicate	17	26	9
Talking/chatting	0	0	0
<u>Student Questions Text</u>			
Title, author etc.	0	2	0
Factual recall	0	0	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	9	3
Yes/No	0	2	0
Meanings of events/words	0	4	0
Questions to peer	0	2	0
Repeat question	0	0	0
<u>Student Questions BEK</u>			
BEK of teacher	1	1	0
BEK of student/family	0	1	1
BEK of classroom	0	0	0
Yes/No	0	3	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Questions to peer	0	0	0
Repeat question	0	3	0
<u>Student Question C of C</u>			
Extends teacher response	0	0	1
Yes/No	1	3	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	1
Question to peer	0	0	0
Repeat question	0	0	0
Involves student/family/teacher	1	1	0

Student Statements Text

Title, author etc.	4	3	1
Factual recall	0	8	1
Predictive, interpretive etc.	6	26	3
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	1	1	0
Statement to peer	1	0	0
Statement illustrations	31	58	4

Student Statements BEK

BEK of teacher	0	1	0
BEK of student/family	9	41	5
BEK of classroom	5	4	2
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	2	0
Statement to peer	0	3	1
Repeat statement	0	5	1

Student Statements C of C

Based on teacher response	2	9	0
Based on peer response	3	11	0
Yes/No	0	2	0
Meanings of events/words	4	1	0
Repeat statement	2	1	0
Involves student/family/teacher	11	22	3
Unrelated communication	0	2	1

Student Response Directives

Expectation non-verbal	4	1	0
Expectation verbal	2	0	3
Text non-verbal	0	0	0

Student Response TRQ/S

Title, author etc.	24	0	0
Factual recall	0	12	16
Predictive, interpretive etc.	72	158	15
Yes/No	7	30	0

Meanings of events/words	3	9	0
Repeats response	8	9	2
Incorrect response	32	27	5
Response to peer	0	1	0

Student Responses BEK

BEK of teacher	0	0	0
BEK of student/family	24	30	24
BEK of classroom	17	28	0
Yes/No	6	25	3
Incorrect response	10	3	0
Response to peer	1	0	0
Unrelated to communication	0	0	0

Student Responses C of C

Text related	4	1	0
Factual recall	6	5	1
Predictive, interpretive etc.	55	48	6
Yes/No	25	35	12
Meanings of events/words	10	4	2
Repeats response	3	0	0
Incorrect response	12	13	2
Includes family/teacher/class	24	55	15
Unrelated to communication	0	0	0

Student Response Student Com

Ignores	0	0	0
Acceptance with reinforcer	1	3	0
Acceptance with explanation	1	1	0
Rejects/disagrees	8	10	1
Repeats response	0	0	0

Note

SBR: Storybook reading

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

TRQ/S: Text related question/statement

APPENDIX 10

CLASSROOM S STUDENT COMMUNICATION FREQUENCIES

Student Communication	Utterances Before SBR	Utterances During SBR	Utterances After SBR
<u>Student Requests</u>			
Functional: toilet/drink	1	4	4
Indications: visibility/comfort	4	3	0
Indications: to communicate	15	7	11
Talking/chatting	0	0	1
<u>Student Questions Text</u>			
Title, author etc.	1	0	0
Factual recall	0	0	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	0	3	0
Yes/No	0	3	3
Meanings of events/words	1	4	1
Questions to peer	2	0	0
Repeat question	0	0	0
<u>Student Questions BEK</u>			
BEK of teacher	1	0	0
BEK of student/family	0	0	0
BEK of classroom	0	1	0
Yes/No	1	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	1
Questions to peer	0	0	0
Repeat question	0	7	0
<u>Student Questions C of C</u>			
Extends teacher response	1	0	0
Yes/No	0	1	0
Meanings of events/words	0	0	0
Question to peer	0	0	0
Repeat question	0	0	0
Involves student/family/teacher	0	0	0

Student Statements Text

Title, author etc.	3	1	0
Factual recall	0	0	0
Predictive, interpretive etc.	1	13	4
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	1	0
Statement to peer	0	1	0
Statement illustrations	6	11	0

Student Statements

BEK of teacher	0	0	0
BEK of student/family	4	13	8
BEK of classroom	1	2	0
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	2	1
Statement to peer	0	0	0
Repeat statement	0	0	0

Student Statement C of C

Based on teacher response	0	1	0
Based on peer response	1	4	0
Yes/No	0	0	0
Meanings of events/words	0	1	0
Repeat statement	0	0	0
Involves student/family/teacher	0	1	0
Unrelated communication	0	0	0

Student Response Directives

Expectation non-verbal	2	1	0
Expectation verbal	0	0	0
Text non-verbal	0	0	0

Student Responses TRQ/S

Title, author etc.	6	0	5
Factual recall	0	7	14
Predictive, interpretive etc.	35	81	20
Yes/No	0	8	0

Meanings of events/words	4	23	0
Repeats response	0	0	0
Incorrect response	5	33	10
Response to peer	0	0	0

Student Responses BEK

BEK of teacher	1	0	0
BEK of student/family	1	5	12
BEK of classroom	5	13	0
Yes/No	1	1	1
Incorrect response	0	9	0
Response to peer	0	0	0
Unrelated communication	0	0	0

Student Responses C of C

Text related	1	0	0
Factual recall	2	5	1
Predictive, interpretive etc.	9	39	17
Yes/No	4	11	8
Meanings of events/words	2	11	4
Repeats response	0	5	1
Incorrect response	13	14	2
Includes family/teacher class	9	10	0
Unrelated to communication	0	0	0

Student Response Student Com

Ignores	0	0	0
Acceptance with reinforcer	1	2	1
Acceptance with explanation	0	0	0
Rejects/disagrees	2	0	1
Repeats response	0	0	0

Note

SBR: Storybook reading

BEK: Background experience and knowledge

C of C: Continuity of communication

TRQ/S: Text related question/statement

APPENDIX 11

STORYBOOKS READ IN THE THREE PRE PRIMARY CLASSROOMS

Classroom J

Dogger by Brad Humphrey

An Evening At Alfies by Shirley Hughes

Alfie's Feet (1st reading) by Shirley Hughes

I Went Walking by Suzie Machin

Brown Bear Brown Bear by Bill Martin

Alfie's Feet (2nd reading) by Shirley Hughes

When Dad Did The Washing by Jamila Gavin

The Postman's Race by Susan Gates

The Shopping Basket by Anne Forsyth

Alfie Camping by Shirley Hughes

Lorngneck And Thunderfoot by Holly Keller

A Nice Walk In The Jungle by Nan Bodsworth

The Fig In The Pond by Nathan Waddle

The Farmyard Cat by Christine Anello

Alfie's Feet (3rd reading) by Shirley Hughes

The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister

Alfie At The Beach by Shirley Hughes

Wake Up Bear by Julie Smith

Wombat Devine by Mem Fox

Santa Claus And The Woodcutter by Marcus Pfister

Classroom M

The Three Little Bears by Grace Conlon
Jillian Jiggs (1st reading) by Phoebe Gilman
Little Hippo Gets Glasses by Mary McDonald
Brown Bear Brown Bear by Bill Martin
The Dippy Dinner Drippers by Joy Cowrey
A Present For Mummy by Carens Italiano
Animal Clues by David Drew
Jillian Jiggs (2nd reading) by Phoebe Gilman
Noisy Farm by Rod Campbell
Franklin In The Dark by Paulette Bourgeois
The Jolly Postman by Janet Ahlberg
Bernard The Bikie by Joan Goodman
The Spring Time Rock And Roll by Ellen Conford
Jillian Jiggs (3rd reading) by Phoebe Gilman
At The Show by Katherine Lasky
Caterpillar's Wedding by Shen Roddie
Strega Nona by Tamie De Paola
Wombat Devine by Mem Fox
Santa Claus And The Woodcutter by Marcus Pfister
Wake Up Bear by Julie Smith

Classroom S

The Little Red Hen by Louise Pfanner
Hattie And The Fox (1st reading) by Mem Fox
The Lucky Glasses by Kingsley Amis
Green Peace by Andrew Dexter

The Biggest Animal Ever by Hiawyn Oram
The Way Mummies Are by Alan McDonald
Hattie And The Fox (2nd reading) by Mem Fox
The Little Yellow Digger by Betty Gilderdale
Tog And Leftover In Trouble by Joan Lingard
Dinosaurs by Jenny Griffiths
What Am I ? by Iza Trapani
Butterfly by Ann Harper
The Rain Puddle by Karen Hesse
The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister
Hattie And The Fox (3rd reading) by Mem Fox
Circus by Madeleine Gilbert
The Pedlar by Ted Hughes
Rose Meets Mr Wintergarten by Bob Graham
Grandpa Grandpa by Douglas Hill
Mr Nic's Knitting by Peni Griffin
Life In The Air by Sarah Hayes
Hairy Maclary's Bone by Lynley Dodd