

**CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCES
IN THE DISCOURSE OF EARLY YEARS
READING INSTRUCTION**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a research project investigating how a sample of eight teachers of P2 children in Scotland encouraged dialogic interaction in their reading groups while following prescriptive policy. The research is based on a detailed analysis of the discourse of reading sessions conducted by the eight teachers, and is informed by previous research on oral language development, the role of dialogue in children's learning, and the relationships between reading development and classroom discussion.

The project uses mixed methods, applied to a framework derived from exchange structure research. Patterns of interaction have been examined quantitatively and qualitatively, with a particular focus on learners' initiations, the making of text-life links by learners and teachers, and the extent to which these are integrated into the reading experience by the teachers' use of contingent responses. The discourse analysis section of the findings is preceded by a preliminary examination of the teachers' beliefs about classroom talk, and is followed by discussion of their views on the usefulness and adaptability of the research process itself as a means for enabling them to make their reading sessions more interactive.

The project finds that the interactivity of the reading sessions is shaped by the teachers' moment-by-moment decision-making about the control of centrifugal and centripetal forces in discourse; in particular, how far to allow children's personal responses to the text to deflect group attention from the central goals of skill development and text coverage laid down by reading policy. The teachers reported their own experiences of teaching reading as being characterised by a tension between encouraging children's personal engagement with, and responses to, reading material, and fulfilling the demands of a prescriptive curriculum within severe time constraints.

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DECLARATION

I declare that I have written this thesis, that the work it represents is my own, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As this thesis is concerned with relationships between teacher and child group talk and the teaching of reading in the early years, I will open it with a summary of naturalistic observations of reading lessons, based on twelve years direct experience of classroom practice as a primary school teacher, and nineteen years of observations as a trainer of primary teachers. I will begin with some general descriptive comments which I hope will provide a composite picture of shared features of group reading instruction. This picture has been assembled from over thirty years of observations in England and Scotland. The key features I describe below have endured the broad changes in reading policy that have occurred during this time, and have been observed in schools following a range of different policies.

After presenting the composite picture, I will then describe five specific episodes which motivated my research project. At this stage, I will provide references only for those comments which go beyond the scope of personal observation.

1.1 A general picture of group reading

The majority of British children participate in group reading on virtually every school day of their lives during the early years of their education.

A visitor unfamiliar with this procedure would recognise similarities in its routines regardless of the school or region in which it was taking place. At a particular time of day, usually in the morning, the class are ordered by the teacher to take out their reading books and go into their groups. This often follows a whole class session in which the teacher has conducted practice in letter-sound relationships, word recognition or recall of details from a story or other type of text. During this plenary session, the children are usually seated without any form of fixed organisation in a carpeted area of the classroom, but when the order to 'go into your groups' is given, a definite form of trained manoeuvre begins.

Individuals move to the areas where their books are kept, collect them, together with whatever related material is required for the work to be done, and then reassemble into preset groups at specified tables or other reading spaces. Groups have seldom less than four or more than eight members. All of the children in a specific group have the same book. These books most frequently contain simple stories, or verses. Less frequently, they contain non-fiction information.

Once the groups have settled into their places, they begin to engage in activities related to the book. These have been prescribed by the teacher according to their group membership. The prescription may follow a daily routine set out at the beginning of the week, term or half term, or instructions may be given at the end of the plenary, or may have been communicated to the children at the end of the previous group reading session. The activities usually include reading the book or portions of it, and performing related tasks, such as completing worksheets. These often require children to fill in missing letters or letter patterns in incomplete words from the story, or to fill in missing words from incomplete sentences or phrases. For younger or less accomplished readers, they may involve colouring, matching or labelling tasks. For older or more accomplished readers, they may involve writing answers to questions requiring recall of text details or, more rarely, the making of inferences about aspects of content.

Though the children in each group are sitting in close proximity to each other, and are invariably doing the same task, the most common practice is for each child to work independently. The teacher frequently reminds the children that they should work quietly. Sometimes, she attempts to impose a complete silence. Less frequently, she may remind the children that they are allowed to help each other as long as they keep their voices down.

Meanwhile, she summons one group to a space designated for direct instruction or guidance, or she may go over to where a particular group is working and join them for this form of teaching.

The content of the interactions that the teacher initiates with children in the small group varies according to the text and the attainment level of the children, but these variations occur within very well-defined routines. Typically, the teacher initiates the interaction by asking the pupils about the title of the book, its cover picture, and sometimes its author and illustrator. If the book is new to the group, the teacher may ask the children to predict on the basis of this preliminary information what it might be about. If the children are part way through the book, they are usually asked to recount and summarise the content so far, and to predict what will come next. Pupils are then required to read aloud from the book one by one. If a child falters over a word, the teacher may provide clues, usually based on the first letter of the word or on subsequent letters or letter-patterns according to the teacher's perception of the location of the difficulty. Sometimes, but much less frequently, the teacher directs the child's attention to context or picture clues. The other children in the group may be called upon to help or correct. The teacher asks frequent questions during and between children's turns. These require children to identify similarities and differences between the spellings of words, to speculate on the meanings of unfamiliar words, to name and state the function of punctuation marks, to comment upon events and characters, and to predict what will happen next. Thus, most of these questions invite answers which are either straightforwardly correct or incorrect, or fall within a narrow spectrum of relevance. They do not usually demand much cogitation or creativity. The teacher provides feedback for each answer. This, given the nature of the questions, is usually positive, and is most commonly expressed in terms and tones of praise.

At the end of the book, the children are usually asked, as a group, to make some summative comment on its content, and are sometimes asked if anything in their own lives relates to this content.

The teacher usually devotes between five and twenty minutes to a group. At the end of this time she reminds them of what they must do during the rest of the reading lesson and for homework. She then dismisses the group before summoning or visiting another group and repeating this set of interactions.

When the teacher has worked with as many groups as she has had time for, the reading session ends, sometimes with a return to a whole-class closing phase.

There are variations to this pattern. Sometimes the teacher will conduct the group through a 'Big Book', an enlarged version of a text that is visible to all the children in the group. In Big Book sessions, the teacher may sometimes take more of a lead, doing most of the reading and inviting individual children, or the group in unison, to read along or take over at strategic points. Sometimes, children's books that are not part of the reading scheme - in some circles these are referred to as 'real books' - may supplement or replace books from schemes.

The practices that I have just described are clearly to do with the teaching of reading - children are engaged throughout with the processing of printed symbols and their meanings. However, there seems to be much more of an emphasis on the former than the latter. Children's attention is constantly drawn towards graphophonic relationships, even when their pronunciation of words is accurate and fluent.

Although all of the children usually have books of an appropriate level of challenge, a large proportion of their time is spent in doing things with these books other than reading them. The tasks that are set for the children to do when the teacher is not directly working with them require various peripheral interactions with the text (gap-filling and answering questions, for example) but it is relatively rare to see children simply reading their books without peripheral activity, and even rarer to hear children talking about their reading with fellow young readers in a way similar to the conversations that go on between readers beyond school walls.

The lack of conversation is striking, given that the children have been trained to sit in a configuration, facing each other around small tables, which lends itself to collaborative talk. That is, talk aimed at enabling children to solve a shared problem or complete a shared task together. Collaboration is sometimes encouraged, as long as the children can do this quietly, but it is far more common for children to work individually, and even competitively: it is common for the teacher to ask the group a

question, then to select a child to answer from those who have raised their hands in a bid to be the person who supplies the answer.

Child-to-child interaction in the teacher-led group is also rare, even though everybody is looking at the same book and the teacher usually wants everybody to read from the same page at roughly the same pace. The vast majority of interactions consist of dyadic exchanges between the teacher and individual children, usually the one who is doing the reading aloud. Teacher remarks directed to other children during these read-alouds are usually aimed at correcting behaviour which threatens to disturb the structure and pace of the interactions, such as inattention or talking out of turn. Even when children are called upon to help a group member who is struggling with an element of the task, the helping contribution is usually directed to the teacher rather than to the struggler, and it is the teacher who evaluates and redirects these contributions. In effect, the members of each group turn their backs on the members of other groups, without really turning their faces to each other.

There are clearly factors of power and status operating here. Children are stratified and segregated according to attainment level; who is to talk and what they are to talk about (turns and topics) are decided by the teacher; the teacher's decisions are, to a varying extent, constrained by a policy imposed by somebody else.

These factors are well-established. Though the details of what is said by the teacher, and hence by the children, vary from group to group and from age level to age level, the overall sequence and shape of these interactions are very enduring, and can be observed in areas of the curriculum other than reading instruction. The ORACLE studies in England during both the 1970s and the 1990s found this pattern (Galton et al 1980, 1999), as did studies by Alexander (1991; 2000).

Alexander (2000, pp 414-415) ascribes the general pattern of children sitting in groups but working as individuals to a collision between a token child-centeredness, demanding a classroom layout conducive to child-to-child interaction, and an historical preference for solitary reading and writing over interactive speaking and

listening as media for learning, consolidated by a preoccupation with management and control. He exemplifies these tensions by quoting a remark made by one teacher to a class, 'I don't mind if you co-operate, as long as I can't hear you.' (Alexander 2000, p 524)

The details of the procedures, such as those used for assigning children to groups, and the subsequent assigning of particular books to those groups, is determined by the reading policy of the school, which may be determined in turn by higher authorities at regional or national level. Classroom teachers usually have little say in this, but they have to abide by the consequences of the policy choice. These include, most prominently, the requirements of the reading scheme identified by the policy. This is the commercially produced set of graded reading books and supplementary workbooks, worksheets and teaching materials that form the core of the child's early reading experiences. Reading schemes are expensive in terms of both money and of the time and effort that are expended by teachers in getting to know the content and structure of the scheme. They also represent a major investment in the child's reading future, an investment which has some risk attached to it, since if a child does not enjoy the materials, or the methodology does not suit him or her, the child's progress in reading is likely to suffer.

Similarly, mismatches may occur between what the reading policy tells the teacher to do, and what she may believe about effective reading instruction. Some schemes allow the teacher a degree of freedom in this respect, the school itself may allow teachers some freedom in the use of alternative or supplementary methods and materials, or the teacher herself may adapt materials and procedures autonomously. International research into teacher effectiveness in literacy suggests that teachers deemed to be effective by various outcome measures tend towards autonomous adaptation of prescribed procedures, grounded in reflections on accumulated knowledge and experience (Medwell et al 1998; Snow et al 2005).

Some schemes, however, known as scripted programmes, discourage autonomy by dictating exactly what a teacher has to do on a lesson-by-lesson basis, sometimes to

the extent of stipulating the questions to be asked by the teacher and the expected responses from the children.

This level of prescription is more common during the earliest stages of reading instruction, when children are drilled in decontextualised letter-sounds and word recognition. When they begin to read coherent texts, and are expected to make comments and answer questions about them, it is clearly impossible to sustain this level of control over what is said and done in the reading lesson. Some degree of variation in responses is inevitable, as is a greater degree of variation in the responses that the teacher makes in turn to the children. Thus, in contrast to the unanimous repetition and recitation typical of the earliest lessons¹ the discourse of the reading lesson becomes more interactive. When the text changes from decontextualised words to connected narratives, no matter how simple, we begin to hear, or at least overhear, a dialogue between what the text says and what the children *think* of what it says. In the terminology of Bakhtin, the centripetal force of the teacher's instructional language, aimed at achieving an accurate reading and homogenous understanding of the text, interacts with the centrifugal force of the children's varying responses and interpretations (Bakhtin, 1981, pp 272-273).

However, the quality of this dialogue, in terms of the distribution of participation, the range of turns and topics initiated by the participants, and the imbalance of contribution types and durations between teacher and children, remains severely restricted by the power relations and policy imperatives typical of classroom interactions in general, and predominant approaches to reading instruction in particular.

My decision to research these issues is based on a long-term interest in possible relationships between classroom talk, literacy and creative engagement in learning. Like many teachers, I see such engagement as a good in itself, as well as a

¹ I wish to emphasise that not all early reading lessons are as monologic as this simplified introductory account implies. The degree of conformity to this stereotype is also determined by reading policy, and by the quality of interaction brought to the policy by the individual teacher.

prerequisite for the ability to adapt to a changing world. I believe that the ability and propensity to read widely and critically is an aspect of engagement in learning. If classroom talk accompanying reading affects children's engagement, then it is important to try to work out what constitutes quality in this talk and how it might be supported.

My interest also extends beyond literacy to the ways in which early experience of talk might affect both language and thought. If 'higher mental processes' develop, as Vygotsky (1978) argues, from the internalisation of social speech, then classroom talk is an important resource for developing thought. Literacy learning and the sharing of texts provide opportunities for making classroom talk richer and wider ranging (Norman, 1992). So the project is motivated by what seems to be a reciprocal relationship between literacy talk and learning. Both talking about shared texts, and the subsequent autonomous reading that such talk facilitates, might contribute to the development of more versatile language and more creative thinking.

I decided to set the research within the early years classroom because I am also interested in the way that attitudes towards reading are shaped at this stage. If, as Trevarthen (1998; 2006) has suggested, the earliest, pre-linguistic dialogues between mother and child begin to shape both the communicative competence and general well-being of the child, it is at least arguable that the earliest dialogues around reading construct the 'readerness' of the reader. By 'readerness' I mean a set of capacities and dispositions that extends beyond an ability to decode towards orientation to literacy in the broadest sense: motivation, curiosity, empathetic engagement, a readiness to learn, and a critical appreciation of all texts encountered. The early years classroom can therefore be regarded as one of the places - perhaps, for some children, the most important place - where the child's future as a reader and a thinker is forged.

It is also the place where the tension between a command curriculum of targets and stipulated lessons and a more flexible curriculum featuring opportunities for play, choice and affective involvement is at its tautest. Sipe has argued that acceptance of

playful, empathetic and idiosyncratic responses to literacy events like story reading can lead to a broader conception of what it is to be a reader:

From the traditional view that literary understanding comprises knowledge of narrative elements like plot, characters, setting, and theme, certain responses might be considered simply off-task. However these same responses might be prized and positively valued from the perspective of a broader and more inclusive conceptualization of literary understanding afforded by these theories.

(Sipe, 2000: p256)

The establishment of such a conceptualisation is difficult, given the prominence of pupil time on task as a criterion of teaching quality in primary education in general (Alexander 2000), and the increasing emphasis on accurate decoding as the *sine qua non* of reading in early years classrooms in particular (DSCF, 2006; Adams, 2001).

I am interested in investigating the ways in which teachers might work within these centripetal constraints while at the same time allowing time and space for a parallel discourse of divergent and playful interpretation to flourish. Informal observation suggests that some teachers are more committed to this than others. In the section that follows, I describe five specific episodes of interaction between children, teachers and texts. These episodes motivated my research, and, I hope, exemplify the main issues I wished to investigate.

1.2 Specific episodes

1.2.1: Tim dug in the mud.

In Autumn 2003 I supervised the infant placement of a group of PGDE students in Edinburgh schools. In the reading lessons they conducted, the students had to adhere strictly to the schedule of the Edinburgh Early Intervention in Literacy Initiative. This stipulates a sequence of lessons for all pupils in P1 and the first two terms of P2, focussed on the learning of letter sounds in isolation, in isolated CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words, and in the context of very simple sentences. One day, I visited two students teaching P1 at neighbouring schools, and because of the

uniformity of the programme, found myself observing identically prescribed lessons conducted by different individuals. At one point, the lesson plan demands that the teachers write the sentence '*Tim dug in the mud*' on the board, and get children to repeat it and copy it out.

Student A wrote the sentence out, read it to the children, got them to repeat it several times, then told them to copy it out. Two of the children found the sentence comical, and began to chant it to each other rhythmically, in funny voices, while giggling and moving their upper bodies and hands to the music they were making. They were sternly corrected and told to get on with their copying in silence.

Student B wrote the sentence out, read it to children, then said, "What a funny thing for him to do. Now why do you think he did that? Have a wee talk with your neighbour about it." There were two or three minutes of conversation in which the children seemed to be creating mental images of Tim and a context for his excavations. Some of the children shared their responses, the teacher commented on them, and then the lesson proceeded as officially prescribed. Some the children continued to chat casually about the imaginary digger as they went about their handwriting.

I am aware that the students' behaviour would inevitably have been affected by my judgemental gaze, but the different approaches to what constitutes a good performance of a reading lesson remain interesting. It is clear from the way in which I have described these events that I am more sympathetic towards the Student B approach, but it would be irresponsible to declare that this approach is 'better'. Student A suppressed some potentially fruitful language play which might have sensitised the two boys to the sounds and rhythms of the target words as well as providing a light-hearted motivation for their reading. Teacher B encouraged collaboration and shared imagination as well as helping children create a context for this isolated and rather vapid piece of text. However, student A's brisker and more businesslike approach might save precious time for creative work in other parts of the curriculum; silent concentration on the task might lead more rapidly to the

learner's acquiring the required level of automaticity in letter-sound processing; there is even research evidence to suggest that comprehension of a text depends in part on the suppression of capricious interpretations (Pressley 2000).

This episode also demonstrated three themes that will feature throughout the thesis. Firstly, the tendency of children to engage in what Bakhtin (1986) refers to as 'carnival', the parodic mockery of official forms of discourse. This aspect will be discussed more fully in the course of episode five. Secondly, the fact that even strictly prescriptive policies leave teachers with *some* scope for choice in moment-to-moment interactions. Thirdly, this modicum of choice includes decisions about the emotional atmosphere in which the lesson is to be conducted. In this episode, the central decision involves the teacher's attitude towards children's humour and propensity for language play: is this potentially disruptive energy to be suppressed, or allowed to add a little dangerous joy to the lesson?

This serendipitous opportunity to compare two different approaches to identical material revealed issues that challenged my own preferences, and motivated the desire to investigate these issues further with teachers. I had witnessed a clear distinction between a commitment to getting texts and tasks covered, and a commitment towards getting children to open up the possibilities of the text as a way of making the task more meaningful and enjoyable. Again, the wording of my summary displays a preference, but not a conviction.

1.2.2 The egg

In the course of a small-scale project on one-to-one interactions between adults and children reading together (Hunt and Richards 2001), I recorded several conversations, all of which showed asymmetry of participation between adults and children. Child initiations were very rare, and when they did occur they were only briefly acknowledged, and not allowed to divert the direction of the discourse away from the route directed by the teacher's preoccupation with helping the child to reconstruct an accurate decoding of the text. In the example below, the child and

teacher are looking at the illustrations which accompany the penultimate line of a simple, line per page non-fiction book.

TEXT

Most birds can fly.
Some birds can't fly.
Most birds fly in the day.
Some birds fly at night.
Some birds eat berries.
Some birds eat animals.
Most birds make nests.
All birds lay eggs.
All birds have feathers.

DIALOGUE

Teacher: that's a humming bird egg; that's small. That's a hen egg. And a /o/ - /o/ - /o/

Child: ostrich

Teacher: ostrich is big isn't it?

Child: yeah

Teacher: and there's the little baby forming in the egg, look; and when it's ready to come out, it comes out at the end.

Child: that's when it's little, then bigger and bigger and bigger.

Teacher: just like a human baby when it's growing inside the mummy's tummy isn't it?

Child: yeah.

Teacher: It starts off very small then gets bigger.

Child: does it start off with just the head?

Teacher: a human baby?

Child: yes.

Teacher: it starts off as a tiny little ... cell and then it gets bigger. I'm not sure whether the head comes first or all the parts gradually ... develop.

Teacher: all ...

Child: all birds have babies.

Teacher: no, look, it doesn't begin with /b/ does it?

Here, by encouraging the child to enjoy the vivid illustrations of the book, the teacher succeeds in motivating the child to make connections between the content of her reading and the wider world that she lives in. Her question about the human baby shows inquisitive thinking, and appears to take the teacher by surprise. The teacher's expression of uncertainty signals an opportunity for teacher and child to work together to find out the answer to the child's question. The distance between teacher and child in terms of knowledge appears to narrow, and there emerges a rare opportunity for the collaborative resolution of genuinely shared uncertainty. However, the teacher's priority is helping the child to complete an accurate reading aloud of the book, and she soon returns the child to the graphophonic level of decoding.

1.2.3 The sausage

In episode three, collected during the same project, the child has just read the text below aloud to the teacher. The story is accompanied by pictures of a stray sausage being snatched by each of the creatures in turn until the shark finally claims it for his dinner.

TEXT

That's my sausage said the mouse.

That's my sausage said the cat.

That's my sausage said the dog.

That's my sausage said the seagull.

That's my sausage said the shark.

DIALOGUE

Teacher: Can you find the word 'the' on that page? 'The?'

(Child points to the word 'the'.)

Teacher: Yes that's right. What's that word?

Child: This.

Teacher: Good. I think you're pretty good on that.

Child: Yes.

Teacher: Yes. Well done. What was your favourite story in that little book?

Child: Erm I'll tell you. (Turns pages.)

Teacher: You liked the one about the dinner best did you? Yes, that's quite good.

Child: I like all of them really.

Teacher: Yes I do. I think they're quite funny. Well done that was really good reading.

Child: (comments on picture) No you can't get the sausage ...

Teacher: They're all after the same thing aren't they?

Child: The mouse is too tiny to get it. I think -

Teacher: I think he wants a bite though doesn't he?

Child: I better - They should've put in the end, they could all *share* it.

Teacher: Now that would've been a much better ending.

Child: Yes they could - it should've said on the last page - it should be 'they *shared* it'.

Teacher: That would have been good wouldn't it? But who got it in the end that sausage? Can you remember? Who got the sausage in the end?

Have a little look then.

Child: The seagull.

Teacher: No.

Child: The shark.

Teacher: The shark, with the biggest teeth. Not going to argue with him. That was good, well done. Let's stop now.

I consider the child's suggestion for an alternative ending to the story to be both creative and critical. It suggests a happier resolution that her fellow readers might find more satisfying, and it makes a rudimentary point about social justice. In

Bakhtinian terms, the child engages in ‘internally persuasive discourse’ with the story, disputing its authoritative finality, and assuming a critical stance which involves ‘questioning the author, imagining alternatives, evaluating diverse discourses, and challenging the text’ (Matusov, 2007, p 230).

It is interesting that the teacher clearly supports the child's efforts in this respect on the one hand, but frames them with attention-directives, focused on word recognition at the beginning of this exchange and literal recall at the end, the latter truncating the exchange with a move which potentially positions the child, in spite of her accurate, appreciative and reflective reading, as inattentive.

In both of these examples, we see children treating the texts as open-ended resources for thinking about further aspects of the world. The teachers support this to some extent, but it is clear that their priority is to get the book closed, both literally and metaphorically. Here we see exemplified two related factors which will loom large throughout the thesis: teachers’ preoccupation with time as a scarce commodity in relation to the tasks that they have to accomplish, and the inclination of children to say unexpected things that deserve more attention than is available in the lesson.

1.2.4: The Motorway.

The Motorway is a story from level 7 of the Oxford Reading Tree, the most widely used graded reading scheme in the UK. In this story, Biff and Chips, the brother and sister who feature in all of the core stories, go to visit their grandmother, who lives in a rural area. They find this normally cheerful character depressed and anxious, because she has received a letter informing her that the riverside area across from her house is going to be concreted over to become the foundation for a motorway extension. Biff and Chips decide to try to cheer her up by going out and picking her a bunch of wild flowers. When they present it to her, she sees that it contains a flower she has never seen before, so she and the children go to the library to consult a book about wild flowers in order to identify it. They discover that the flower belongs to a

rare and endangered species. Consequently, the plans for the motorway have to be cancelled in order to protect its habitat.

In Spring 2006 I observed a student-teacher conducting a group of children through the reading aloud of this story, each child reading a paragraph until, with some help from the teacher on the sounding out of unfamiliar words, the book was finished. The teacher then asked the children a series of questions about the events that had occurred in the story. The children supplied correct answers. The teacher asked if the children had enjoyed the story, and they said that they had. The teacher then assigned the children the next book in the scheme to read, before calling another group over.

I later asked the student-teacher how she felt that this lesson had gone, and she said that she was pleased that the book had been at an appropriately challenging level for the groups and that they had enjoyed it. She made no mention of what I considered to be the ethical paradox at the heart of the book, a recognition of which I would argue is essential to the comprehension and appreciation of this story. From the standpoint of the environmental concerns that would be embraced by most people in primary education, it is clearly wrong that the children should have picked wild flowers, yet this very act of innocent eco-vandalism is the plot device which brings about not just a happy resolution for Granny, but the preservation of the flora that the children have inadvertently damaged.

My dismay that the complexity inherent in the simple story was not taken up by the student-teacher arose not just from the lost opportunity for the children to talk about the rights and wrongs of picking wild flowers, but the lost opportunity to develop insights into some of the ways in which fiction works. Again, the student-teacher appears to see the text as an object to be reconstructed and enjoyed, but not *talked about* in the sense of being explored and integrated into a wider vision of literature and its links with living concerns. I am aware that my comments here could be interpreted as a supercilious ‘that’s not how I would have done this lesson’, but I would argue that the episode represents how the prioritisation of accuracy and coverage can limit the learning potential of texts and talk.

1.2.5: A jam session

This episode occurred while I was observing a very experienced Edinburgh teacher, who later became a participant in this research project, during an earlier visit to her school. She was teaching a class of P1 children on a morning when the prescribed lesson plan from the City of Edinburgh literacy policy demanded that children read the two sentences below from the board. One of the children had misread the final word as 'sock', and the following conversation ensued:

TEXT

Sam put the lid on the jam.

He put the jam in the sack.

DIALOGUE

T: He didn't put the jam in his sock, he put it in the sack, but I'm wondering, why he did that?

Ch: Perhaps he was going on holiday.

T: Oh, maybe he was, and he was taking it along for a treat.

----- {*unison reading*}

T: All I can say is I'm glad he put the lid on first, or there'd be an awful mess in the sack. I wonder what kind of jam it was?

Ch: {*mingled responses*}.. raspberry strawberry.... apricot

T: That's my favourite. Any others? You can make jam out of anything - any kind of fruit that is.

Ch: {*mingled responses*} peach plum

T: Lovely.

Ch: Carrot jam!

T: That would be interesting...

Ch: {*mingled responses*} cabbage jam lettuce jam... pea jam ... q jam ...

Ch: Mrs. Lawson- you know my favourite is letter jam!

{*laughter*}

T: Oh dear - let us get on with our reading.

{*louder laughter*}

As with student B in the first example, the teacher here actively encourages the children to speculate about the text, as if she is trying to help them to bring interest and coherence to potentially dull sentences whose composition is determined not by considerations of creative storytelling, but as exemplifications of the graphophonic relationships to be taught. The outcome of this invitation to make creative, text-life links is a chain reaction of playful associations as different types of fruit jam morph into different types of vegetable jam and then, via a pun on p/pea, into jam made out of letters of the alphabet. The first two words of the teacher's 'let us get on with our reading' appear to be interpreted by the children as a pun on both "lettuce" and "letters". It is as if the children are jokily mingling the graphophonic subject matter of the lesson - sounds and letters - with the meagre semantic content of the isolated sentences, to create a surreal metalinguistic cuisine. The vigour and suppleness of the language play going on here attest to the readiness with which children are able to turn the driest text into what Sipe (2000, p 268), glossing Bakhtin (1986), refers to as 'a platform for children's creativity, becoming a playground for a carnivalesque romp'. Although there is much evidence in the literature that language play has educational benefits (Crystal 1998; Cook 2000; Roskos & Christie, 2001), the extract exemplifies the subversive and potentially anarchic nature of such play, and therefore the threat that it might be seen to present to the achievement of tightly prescribed curricular goals.

1.3: Summary

To summarise, my observations in schools have convinced me that there is an important struggle played out in early years reading instruction between the urgent, policy-driven imperative to help children read prescribed texts accurately and fluently, and the less urgent, but no less important, policy-neglected imperative to allow children to express their own ideas and to help them reflect critically, creatively, collaboratively and playfully on what they read, connecting it to other aspects of their lives.

Although I have highlighted instances where the power structure of the classroom and the policies which impinge upon it restrict children's talk, it is important to note that for dialogue in the sense of exploratory, learning-directed talk to flourish, a balance of both centripetal and centrifugal forces is essential. Excessive centripetality creates a teacher and policy dominated regime of rote-reproduction; excessive centrifugality creates classroom chaos. The literature reporting on dialogue-based teaching programmes (see for example Mercer and Littleton 2007, Alexander 2005, Wells 1999) suggest that the teacher's role is indeed to maintain a central focus while attending and responding contingently to learners' contributions; the learners attend to the teacher, but also to each other as they comment, challenge and suggest changes of focus. But even this assignation of the centripetal to the teacher and the centrifugal to the learners is an oversimplification: there are episodes in the data to be discussed here where the teacher's tangential diversions from the matter of the text have been refocused by children's comments².

Individual teachers have different levels of awareness of this struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces, but all of them are inevitably involved in it, and go about attempting to resolve it in different ways. The purpose of the research project is to investigate the particular ways in which a small group of teachers strive to encourage dialogue while at the same time following policy, teaching skills, and maintaining classroom control.

As teachers' practice is in itself a product of the interaction between their own professional beliefs about how teaching should be conducted and what policy and specific circumstances pragmatically demand of them, I thought that the project should begin with a preliminary investigation into this interaction.

Accordingly, my first research question is:

² Bakhtin (1981) argues that every spoken exchange, and, indeed, every utterance, inevitably involves the interplay of the centripetal and the centrifugal. Every utterance represents the speaker's attempt to express a more or less definitive meaning in words which are inhabited by the usages of previous speakers. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

What do the teachers say about the conflicting factors involved in encouraging dialogue during their reading sessions?

My second (and central) research question is:

To what extent and by what means do the teachers encourage dialogical interaction in their management of the centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in the discourse of their reading sessions?

This question highlights certain ethical implications of the project. Buzzelli (1996) argues that the type of classroom discourse used by teachers in early years classrooms has moral implications, in that it plays a formative role in establishing the stance towards learning that these young learners will carry with them throughout their education. Much of the research to be cited in the literature review supports the view that dialogic approaches *can* help learners at all stages of education to become better at learning. Mercer and Littleton (2007), for example, are blunt in their assertion that their programme of dialogue-based activities:

... can make an important contribution to the development not only of children's language and communication skills, but also to their reasoning and learning.
p 141

They also make the point that:

The nature and value of exploratory talk is appreciated, albeit implicitly, by many people, perhaps most. Yet it remains an elusive occurrence in many encounters when it would be a useful tool (and not only in schools, or amongst children).
p 141

If this is the case, it seems desirable that the process of dialogue about reading should occur not just between children, and between children and teachers, but also between

teachers, and between teachers and researchers. Accordingly, my third research question is:

What do the teachers have to say about the value to themselves of the process of analysis that my research has subjected them to?

The research is in three phases. The first phase seeks to discover the beliefs held by the teachers about literacy and dialogue, the second to investigate how these beliefs are applied during the conduct of reading sessions, and the third to share the outcomes of the first two phases with the teachers, and to engage them in discussion about the value of my investigation and of their own participation in it. Therefore the research, as well as investigating dialogue, strives to be dialogic in itself by encouraging all the participants, starting with the adults, to engage in interactive reflection on their own practice. My hope is that it will help us all consider possibilities for doing things differently and better.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

My central research question concerns the centrifugal and centripetal forces which encourage and impede the emergence of dialogue between teachers and children in eight early years reading groups. In the following pages, I will try to show why I regard dialogue as a desirable element of both classroom talk generally, and discussions during reading instruction in particular. I will also discuss some criteria for assessing the quality of talk in relation to the task of helping children to read, converse and learn.

The review will present an account of the relationship between talking, learning and literacy. As there is some interesting but potentially confusing overlap between the usage of certain terms used in describing classroom talk, I will begin with a brief account of my understanding of the similarities and differences between two of the most widely used of these: dialectic and dialogue. This account should, I hope, throw some light on my subsequent use of these and other terms, but will not attempt to divest them of their provocative ambiguity. My argument is, in short, that Vygotsky's more centripetal (dialectic) emphasis and Bakhtin's more centrifugal (dialogic) model represent two essential aspects and directions in talk within the context of learning to read, and that overemphasis on one or the other can be limiting.

I will then provide a brief summary of research into the factors involved in individual language development (learning to talk) followed by a summary of research into the socio-cultural relationships between speech and learning in school settings (talking to learn). In the final section of the review, I will try to relate historical and contemporary issues in reading instruction to the foregoing sections on talk (learning to read). Throughout, I will attempt to link key concepts to my description of group reading set out in the introduction, and to the research questions guiding the investigations reported in the rest of this document.

2.2 Dialectic and dialogue

In this section, I will outline a simplified and selective historical background to the usage in education of these related but, in some important contexts, distinct terms. The contexts I focus on here are the educational implications of the ideas of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and Mikail Bakhtin (1895-1975). This is because in recent decades these ideas have become very influential in the field of educational discourse. I will refer to both Vygotskian dialectic and Bakhtinian dialogue in my comments on the reading group discussions I observed. I present here a provisional disambiguation of these concepts, but in the rest of the thesis will inevitably re-ambiguate them in referring to the various contemporary advocates of ‘interactive teaching’ or ‘exploratory talk’ who have sought to claim ownership of either or both terms.

2.2.1 Dialectic

From an historical perspective, both ‘dialectic’ and ‘dialogue’ have been used to denote philosophical arguments between interlocutors holding different opinions. The dialogues of Socrates, as recorded by Plato, are the best known examples. The word dialectic can be defined as the underlying method of truth-seeking, the *dialektike tekne* or ‘art of debate’, (from *dialegomai* I converse, discuss, dispute) which structures the sequence of exchanges constituting the actual spoken dialogue. The structuring consists of the posing of a problem, and the elicitation, by question and answer, point and counterpoint, of the participants’ beliefs about the problem. In Socratic dialogue, Socrates leads the process as ‘midwife to the truth’ rather than teacher, helping his interlocutors to detect their own errors. The exchange of assertion and counter-assertion exposes conflicts and contradictions in their beliefs, leading, ideally, to the refutation or correction of the faulty position (Scott, 2003).

Dialectic is therefore an educational process. Its key feature is a socially constructed, incremental homing-in on confusions and contradictions between propositions, and the subsequent resolution of these problems in the acceptance of a more logically

defensible position. Its goal is to bring the disputants to a shared understanding, closing the argument with agreement or synthesis.

It is important to note that consensual synthesis, the *telos*, or ultimate aim, of the *dialectic*, is not necessarily achieved in the actual *dialogue*, not even in the Socratic dialogues recorded with inevitable artistic licence by Plato, which often end with Socrates' initially confident interlocutors feeling confused, or even angry. The point relevant to my project here is that any system of educational discourse, if it is to maintain authentic attention to what speakers actually say from turn to turn, inevitably comes up against what the novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch has called 'the rough contingent rubble' of human consciousness (Murdoch, 1993, p17). The inchoate, centrifugal messiness of passion and prejudice is seldom quite controlled by a centripetal insistence on rational consistency.

Because the term dialectic labelled the underlying structure of rational argument, its application gradually broadened to denote the process of logical reasoning in general. Furthermore, because the historical aim of this process is the acquisition of truth about existence, the term also became associated with the interaction between human reason and the reality, 'out there', that human reason seeks to comprehend. It is in this sense that the term came to be used in modern philosophy. With Hegel, the 'dialectic is expanded to explain the entire progress of historical development, albeit understood in idealistic rather than materialist terms as the development of *Geist* (mind or spirit) (Singer, 1983).

Hegel's dialectical idealism became the foundation for Marx's dialectical materialism. As a Young Hegelian, Marx accepted the account of history as a teleological progression towards higher states of organisation, each state the result of the resolution of contradictions in earlier states. However, Marx, in his own words, 'turned Hegelianism on its head' by arguing that the process is not grounded in self-reflection by an ultimately impersonal *Geist*, but in human action applied to an actual physical environment. In the Marxist dialectic, humanity acts on the world and changes it, and in turn is changed by the economic and ideological forces which are

produced by these actions. Crucially, Marx asserted that interaction between humanity and the world generated tool-use, the faculty constituting the ‘species-being’, or very essence, of what it is to be human. And as a result of the dialectic between physical action and its social-psychological consequences, the tools which humanity used to shape and make things came to include the social-psychological tools of culture and language (Marx, 1970).

It is through Vygotsky’s application of the tool-use aspects of Marxist dialectic that this rather metaphysical conception of dialectic returns to the realm of educational discourse between teacher and learner. Vygotsky’s basic premise is that thought and language begin as separate faculties, but, through the dialectical process of socialisation between child and carer in the early years, speech becomes internalised, and thought verbalised (Vygotsky, 1962).

For Vygotsky, the spoken word, consisting of *material* events, such as muscular articulation, neuronal activity and the trajectory of vibrating air molecules between speaker and listener, was just as much a physical tool as a hammer or sickle, a fact disguised only by the transience of the word in spoken discourse.

The patterns and functions of external dialogue shape and develop thought, and the ‘higher mental faculties’ that result from this activity are then available to inform speech (spoken and written) between individuals and groups, thus furthering cultural progress. Vygotsky believed that:

... in mastering nature we master ourselves. For it is the internalization of overt action that makes thought, and particularly the internalization of external dialogue, that brings the powerful tool of language to bear on the stream of thought. Man, if you will, is shaped by the tools and instruments that he comes to use, and neither the mind nor the hand alone can amount to much ... And if neither hand nor intellect alone prevails, the tools and aids that do are the developing streams of internalized language and conceptual thought that sometimes run parallel and sometimes merge, each affecting the other. (Bruner, in Vygotsky 1962 p. vii)

Like both Hegel and Marx, Vygotsky believed that the dialectic operates between the individual and the culture of which he or she is a part.

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (intermental) and then inside the child (intramental). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978 p 57)

Vygotsky's account of the dialectic has clear educational implications, and since his work began to spread beyond the boundaries of the Soviet sphere following the translation into English of *Thought and Language* in 1962, his ideas have become increasingly pervasive in educational discourse (Wertsch, 1991; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2003).

Much contemporary discussion of the role of collaboration and support in the classroom can be traced to the idea that cognitive tool-use implies the need for cognitive apprenticeship, a concept captured in Vygotsky's maxim, 'What a child can do with help today, he or she will be able to do independently tomorrow' (1978 p 90). The child's apprenticeship is served within that child's Zone of Proximal Development (hereinafter ZPD) for specific tasks, a concept defined as:

... the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978 p 86)

It is important to point out that for each child, the ZPD is a set of socio-psychological spaces, localised in real classrooms and other cultural building-sites, that will vary for the child according to the specific task that needs to be mastered, and the nature of the support that is provided by teacher intervention and/or peer collaboration. Bruner (in Vygotsky 1962) uses the metaphor of a 'loan of consciousness' from the adult or peer to the child, which acts as a 'scaffold' to support the child's internalisation of knowledge until it can be used independently as a mental tool.

The main means of scaffolding in classrooms is spoken discourse, aimed towards

... achieving common understanding through structured and sequenced questioning, and through 'joint activity and shared conceptions' which guide, prompt, reduce choices and expedite handover of concepts and principles. (Alexander, 2000, p 527)

We can witness this process every time we observe a teacher help a child sound out an unfamiliar word, draw an inference from a text, or construct a critical response to an author. I will discuss further classroom applications of these ideas in the 'Talking to Learn' section of this review. In the meantime I wish to summarise the main features of Vygotskian dialectic in order to identify similarities and differences between it and Bakhtin's conception of dialogical discourse, another Russian model which has become influential in educational circles in the last few decades.

Vygotsky's account of the development of consciousness, based on his empirical research into children's problem solving, is an attempt to apply Hegelian and Marxist dialectic to children's learning and development. It retains the teleological impetus of these earlier systems, in that the transmission of expertise in the ZPD is aimed at the enculturation of the child, and, reciprocally, the advancement of the culture to which the educated child contributes. The aim is always ever 'higher mental processes' as tools for the ever greater mastery of culture over nature. The process is convergent, or centripetal, in that the job of the mentor in the ZPD is to narrow down uncertainties and bring the learner to the same standpoint as an expert cognitive tool-user within the culture. However, the enhanced competence of the learner once this standpoint has been achieved affords opportunities for further refinement and elaboration of both the child's thinking and the culture of which he or she is a part. It is important to recognise that teacher-pupil interaction can be exploratory or heuristic, even though this was under-developed in Vygotsky's account (Moll, 1990). Centripetal process can provide a foundation for more centrifugal thinking or speaking processes in which learners are able to refine and elaborate both their own thinking and the culture of which they are a part. However, the danger also exists that initiation through schooling into more constraining centripetal forms of thinking

and speaking can become part of the learner's habitus, and therefore have long-term limiting effects.

The main implication of all this for the research project is that the forms of discourse that the child participates in (or is subjected to) in the classroom, become forms of thinking, including forms of thinking about reading. As Wood remarks:

Talking to others and being addressed by them are destined to become mental activity as the child 'takes on the role' of others and holds inner dialogues with himself. The *form* that this dialogue takes depends upon the characteristic ways in which the child talks to and controls others, and in turn, is talked to and controlled by them.

... social interaction and such experiences as talking to, informing, explaining, being talked to, being informed and having things explained structure not only the child's immediate activities but also help to form the *processes* of reasoning and learning themselves. The child learns not only 'local knowledge' about given tasks but, gradually, internalizes the *instructional process* itself. Thus he learns how to learn, reason, and regulate his own physical and mental activities. (Wood, 1998, p165)

2.2.2 Dialogue

Dialogue is a far more frequently encountered and, at first glance, more straightforward term than dialectic. As Lefstein (2006) remarks, it is also a word with very positive and commonly agreed connotations, but no clear agreement about its denotations:

Like 'community' ... 'dialogue' feels good. Even prior to agreeing what it means – or perhaps because agreement has not yet been attempted – there is a general consensus that 'dialogue' is beneficial, an ideal worth striving toward, and that it doesn't happen as often as it ought. (Lefstein, 2006, p 2)

Amongst the connotations that the word evokes are those of openness, plurality and an active, respectful, engagement with others. All of these meanings are central to the thinking of Mikail Bakhtin, whose work on the relationships between dialogue,

culture and identity has recently become influential, or at least popular, in the field of literacy education.

Bakhtin's account of the relationship between discourse and consciousness is grounded not in empirical psychology, but in meditations on the nature of communication, particularly in relation to aesthetic experience and literature. His work is based on the realisation that individual consciousness requires the presence of, and interaction with, *a permanently distinct and different* 'Other' in order to create awareness of the open boundaries of the self.

In what way would it enrich the event if I merged with the other, and instead of two there would now be only one? And what would I myself gain by the other's merging with me? If he did, he would see and know no more than what I see and know myself ... let him rather remain outside of me, for in that position he can see and know what I myself do not see and do not know from my own place, and he can essentially enrich the event of my own life.
(Bakhtin in Cheyne and Tarulli, 1999 p12)

It follows from this that our very existence is grounded in dialogue:

The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eye, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium.
(Bakhtin 1984, p 293)

According to Bakhtin, the external voices by which we come to know ourselves and the world do not speak in a unitary language, but a 'heteroglossia' of stratified and differentiated speech genres, reflecting and refracting the perspectives and interests of groups such as social classes, occupations and ages. Set against the diversifying, centrifugal tendency of heteroglossia, there is always a centripetal pull towards the 'monologic' imposition of a dominant meaning.

In each epoch, in each social circle, in each small world of family, friends, acquaintances and comrades, in which a human being grows and lives, there are always authoritative utterances that set the tone ... which are cited, imitated and followed. In each epoch, in all areas of life and activity, there are particular traditions that are expressed and retained in verbal vestments: in written works, in utterances, in sayings, and so forth. There are always some verbally expressed leading ideas of the 'masters of thought' of a given epoch. (Bakhtin, 1986, p 88-89)

As thought itself constitutes a 'hidden dialogicality', this implies that every text and textual encounter, every social exchange and individual thought, is a product and an expression of the struggle between heteroglot and monologic voices:

... stratification and heteroglossia widen and deepen as long as language is alive and developing ... Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralisation and decentralisation, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance. (Bakhtin 1984 p100)

Bakhtin makes a distinction between *authoritative discourse* and *internally persuasive discourse* as a measure of the relative strength of these two forces. In authoritative discourse, the monologic voice predominates (though it can never completely silence heteroglossia): 'it demands our unconditional allegiance' (Bakhtin 1994, p 78). On the social plane, this is the language of political and religious dogma, or of a command curriculum; on the psychological plane, it is unquestioning faith, compliance or the dictates of conscience. Internally persuasive discourse is more open to reservation and negotiation; on the social plane it corresponds to forms such as advice and debate; on the psychological to reflection, doubt and critique.

Bakhtin agrees with Vygotsky that individual speech and thought is grounded in the internalisation of social dialogue.

... the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others' individual utterances. This experience can be characterized to some degree as the process of assimilation – more or less creative- of others' words. Our speech ... is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of 'our-own-ness',

varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and reaccentuate.
(Bakhtin, 1986 p 89)

So, for Bakhtin, internal speech, that is to say, thought itself, is ineluctably double-voiced – our words are partly our own and partly somebody else's - and external dialogue with others is essentially unfinalisable. Every utterance is a rejoinder to every preceding utterance in a particular tradition of discourse. Moreover, every utterance is characterised by *addressivity*:

'from the very beginning, the utterance is constructed while taking into account possible responsive reactions, for whose sake, in essence, it is created"
(Bakhtin, 1984, p87).

Thus, utterances always imply refutations of, agreements with, supplements to, and other types of comments on preceding utterances, while at the same time *anticipating* the response of the addressee. Just as the first speaker in an argument 'is not, after all, the first person to break the eternal silence of the universe', any eventual agreement, or any termination of a dialogue in real time, 'is actively responsive, and constitutes nothing other than the initial preparatory stage of a response' (Bakhtin, 1986 p 69).

This contrasts markedly with the Vygotskian dialectic, which is 'basically a co-operative enterprise aimed at ever greater agreement' (Cheyne and Tarulli 1999 p13) exemplified by the progress of learners, guided by the monologic voices of their mentors, through the ZPD towards a consensual view of reality. Cheyne and Tarulli summarise the contrast thus:

... a very basic difference between the Bakhtinian and Vygotskian notions of dialogue hinges on the status of the other and the relationship between the self and the other. In the Bakhtinian version the distance and difference of the other is not only retained but deemed essential. It is in the struggle with the difference and misunderstanding that dialogue and thought are productive and that productivity is not necessarily measured in consensus. Vygotsky, on the other

hand, emphasises the need for interlocutors to occupy the same epistemological space, and how communication strives for congruence. (Cheyne & Tarrulli 1999 p 13)

2.2.3 The Vygotsky – Bakhtin dialogue

The differences of emphasis between Vygotskyan dialectic and Bakhtinian dialogic have been rather glossed over by proponents of collaborative and exploratory talk in education, who tend to use the term ‘dialogic’ to refer to peer and teacher scaffolding of learning through talk (Alexander, 2005; Skidmore, 2006). The thrust is therefore mainly Vygotskyan, though Bakhtin is often recruited to emphasise the struggle involved in finding one’s own voice in the voices of others, or in striving to come to a shared perspective, particularly when classroom discourse takes the form of discussion between peers with little or no teacher scaffolding, or when the purpose of the discourse is to talk and listen without necessarily coming to a conclusion (Skidmore 2000; Alexander 2005). Others have been more critical of the conflation of their ideas (Wegerif, 2005, 2007; Matusov, 2007).

Matusov, in particular, expresses some scepticism about the relevance of Bakhtin, a literary scholar, to education, pointing out that much of what has to be taught and learned in classrooms is ‘just there’. Propositions like $2 + 2 = 4$, he argues, do not require ‘internally persuasive discourse’ for their appropriation³. He reminds us that the notion of a struggle between internally persuasive and authoritative discourse, and other Bakhtinian concepts, were forged in the context of meditations on the anguished dilemmas faced by Dostoyevskyan characters like Raskolnikov and the Karamazovs. This seems a long way from the child’s struggle for accurate word-identification, speculations on the embryogenesis of a chick, or disagreement about the fate of a stolen sausage.

³ Some Maths educators would dispute this, arguing that mathematical propositions are just as contingent on culture and history as those of literature (Brown, 2001). Langer (1989) for example, problematises the ‘obviousness’ of $1 + 1 = 2$ by presenting the example of two lumps of blu-tac being rolled together.

At first glance, the Bakhtinian resistance to closure and resolution does seem antithetical to common classroom literacy practice as I presented it in the introduction, determined as such practice is by policy, timetabling and accountability. The classroom teacher is bound by these brute realities to aim for closure at the end of every lesson or group-session, and, even within these teaching periods, to achieve a series of small closures consisting of mutual understandings of everything from letter names, through word pronunciations, to text interpretations.

At the end of a lesson, the children should, of course, have acquired knowledge and skills that they did not have before the lesson began, or at least have consolidated the knowledge and skills that they did already had. In Vygotskian terms, they should have acquired new tools, or at least sharpened and practised the use of old ones. However, it seems reasonable to expect that at the end of the lesson, in the simplest terms, they should also go away with something to think about. To stay with the Vygotskian metaphor, if the lesson has provided them with tools, it should also have provided an impetus for open-ended speculation about what to use the tools on and for. There is a link here with the dialogic perspective: authoritative discourse in the ZPD provides the means for internally persuasive discourse in the learner's zone of independence.

Although the Bakhtinian dialogue deems complete consensus impossible, and rejects the notion of a teleological progression towards a state of finalised higher consciousness, it is not nihilistic. Bakhtin asserts that the appropriation of other's words, followed by the gradual elaboration of those words for our own purposes in dialogue with others, affords 'ever newer ways to mean' (Bakhtin 1984, p 51).

Relating this back to literacy, and anticipating some of the points to be made in the Learning to Read section, we can state that some aspects of literacy have a more or less 'just there' quality to them. On a gradient of ambiguity, these aspects would include the names of letters, the complex but specifiable relationships between spelling and pronunciation in English orthography, and the slippery but roughly agreeable-upon meanings of many words. There are as well, other things that are less

specifiable. These include the connotations that particular words have for individual readers, the multiple inferences that might be drawn from certain words on the page, and all of those aspects, such as authorial intention and the consequences of texts, that come under the heading of critical literacy, a term that will be discussed further in the Learning to Read section.

Returning to our Egg and Sausage examples might help to throw some light on how dialectical and dialogical perspectives on these aspects of literacy might be related. The episode of the child inquiring about the chick embryo is one which lends itself to a Vygotskian approach. There is a definite answer to the child's question. The teacher is unsure of the answer, but she knows how to use the tools which will find the answer. In helping the child to use them, she can satisfy both the child's curiosity, and induct her into general strategies for finding information from texts. (She could also of course simply find the answer herself and tell the child.) This is not a case where Bakhtin's notion of internally persuasive discourse has an *immediate* part to play, although the child is enabled to formulate all sorts of other questions as a result of her work with the teacher in the ZPD. The authoritative discourse by which she acquires information-finding tools, *eventually and potentially*, empowers her to enter internally persuasive discourse with the whole universe of non-fiction genres. She has acquired 'ever newer ways to mean'.

Now let us recall the second child's dialogue with text and teacher about the fate of the sausage. Note that her exact words, underlined here,

'They should have put in the end, 'they could all *share* it' ... Yes they could – it should've said on the last page – it should be 'they *shared* it'

show that she is aware that somebody ('they', an indefinite pronoun for one or more authors) has made a decision about how the story will end. Her use of modals, particularly her shift, mid-clause, from 'could' to 'should' in the second half of her utterance, expresses her strong opinion that this decision is wrong, and that she has a better idea. The child has initiated a dispute with the monologic voice of this prescribed text. Her perspective is less *authoritative*, in the order of educational

power, than the official one, but it is no less *authorial*, in Bakhtinian terms. It is not, however, definitive. It could be offered for aesthetic evaluation to her fellow readers, some of whom might prefer the brutal finality of the original; it could also be related to similar stories concerning theft or the survival of the fittest.

I am aware that all I have done in the above paragraphs is to present *redescriptions* of the data (Rorty, 1989), borrowing Vygotskian or Bakhtinian vocabulary in order to give the episodes a particular colouring. I have used the theories to provide merely a retrospective interpretation of what has already happened, but little that would count as useful guidance for a teacher seeking ways to conduct discourse in the classroom.

There is a more general problem here. The theories described so far have proved influential in certain sectors of educational research, and, to a lesser extent, in practice. Theoreticians can provide inspiring, even visionary, accounts of the way in which a universe operates, but the process of moving from an ontology – a particular account of the nature of existence - to a set of pedagogical strategies which can be empirically supported is highly problematical.

Thus, when Bakhtin asserts ‘the dialogical nature of reality’, he is making a statement about his vision of the universe (and thus also about human communication), but he is not directly advocating one way of doing education over another. His work is grounded not in education but in literary and aesthetic theory. His profound interest in both the philosophical and scientific developments of his youth, including, respectively, a neo-Kantian rejection of Hegel and the advent of relativity theory, inspired him to extrapolate his reflections on dialogue to a universal scale (Holquist, 2002). Although he was a widely experienced and accomplished teacher himself, and did indeed write a single unfinished paper on how to teach children to use conjunctions in complex sentences (Bakhtin, 2004; Matusov, 2004) we can read off neither from this paper, nor from his more rhapsodic work, a comprehensive set of suggestions for the use of language in education.

In attempting to derive a normative way of doing things in the classroom from an account of the way things are in the world, we risk committing a pedagogical version of the naturalistic fallacy: the tendency to take the characteristics of one's preferred version of reality as a guide to human action. This is to fail to recognise the difference between fields, or that there may be specific requirements of a learning process which are needed to provide the foundation for higher-level learning or action.

Pedagogy needs a more careful grounding than this, in empirical investigation. There is extensive empirical evidence concerning the application of Vygotsky's ideas to education (Wells 1999; Lee & Smagorinsky 2000; Mercer & Littleton 2007; Alexander 2005) and a lesser amount concerning Bakhtinian applications (Ball & Freedman, 2004; Skidmore, 2000; Matusov 2004, 2007) In the next three sections of this review, I will summarise some of this research.

On the other hand, I wish to suggest that empirical evidence alone will not settle questions about how best to conduct classroom discourse, or any other pedagogical matter. As Cook (2004) has asserted, living classrooms resist reduction to finite sets of variables that can be investigated objectively. Furthermore, one of the variables that *must* affect research, I would argue, is the researcher's own vision of how things should be. Vision, in both its literal and figurative senses, involves aesthetics, and it is difficult to free oneself from the attraction of images and metaphors from theory that appear to give an *aesthetically satisfying* account of reality from one's own point of view. Dialectic, understood as inevitable progression, provides one such metaphor; I find the Bakhtinian concept of unresolvable dialogue more convincing. I am aware however, of what Sfard (1998) has called the dangerous effects of 'choosing just one metaphor' for learning. Holquist (2002 p 117) refers to Kant, Hegel and Bakhtin as 'lyrical thinkers', a term which suggests the Syren-like attraction of certain ideas. The rest of the literature review will present perspectives that *picture* learners as explorers, negotiators, navigators, creative constructors and so on. The challenge will be to maintain a dialogue between such satisfying pictures and the evidence arising from actual observation of real children in real classrooms.

2.3 Learning to talk

In this section, I will summarise some of the suggestions that have been made about the conditions that facilitate children's learning to talk in the pre-school years, and will discuss any implications that might inform the development of children's spoken language in the classroom.

2.3.1 Associationism and Innateness

A traditional view of language development is that children learn to speak their first language by listening to adults and reproducing their sounds in progressively more accurate approximations. The children make associations between spoken words and the objects to which they appear to refer, and their early efforts to imitate are guided and refined by adult feedback. Theories based on associations, imitation and reinforcement have had a long history, and retain some influence, in spite of the fact that they can explain only a sliver of the spectrum of language use (Bohannon and Bonvillian, 2009).

An influential challenge to associationism began in 1959 with Chomsky's review of Skinner's *Verbal Behaviour*. Chomsky argued that the speed with which infants become able to understand and deploy complex language, and the similarity of the stages of development between different children learning different languages, could not be explained on the basis of the input that these infants received from the linguistic environment.

Borrowing a concept from Plato referring to the inadequacy of empirical experience for explaining the universality of human concepts, Chomsky asserted that learning from ambient talk, the *performance* of speech in real situations, could not account for the *competence* that people acquire to produce a potentially infinite number of well-formed, rule-governed sentences, because of the 'poverty of the stimulus' (Chomsky 1988 pp 3-4). Speech in real situations, he argues, is generally not well-formed, but full of errors, incomplete utterances, false starts and idiosyncratic usages. Lightfoot

(1982) likens the expectation that children could learn language from the talk that surrounds them to the expectation that one could learn how to play chess by observing a game in which a large but unspecified number of moves breaks the rules.

Chomsky's alternative explanation is that the capacity to use language is a species-specific innate endowment, analogous to the capacity of other species to fly or spin webs. Just as a spider is equipped with the genetic pre-programming and anatomical equipment to do the latter, the child is equipped with a 'language acquisition device' which enables him or her to construct language. The 'LAD' is a component of the 'mind-brain', which processes imperfect input from the world of language use and somehow derives generative rules governing the structure of grammar. These rules act as hypotheses underlying the child's early attempts to communicate, eventually enabling children to comprehend and produce the sentences of the ambient language.

Miller (paraphrased by Bruner, 2006) described the choice between associationist and innate theories of language as one:

...between an impossible theory that assumes we learn everything by association (the facts deny it and the sheer arithmetic tells us that there would be just too much to learn even in a dozen lifetimes), and, on the other hand, a magical theory that says we already know about sentences before we start.
(Bruner, 2006, p7)

As Donaldson (1978) points out, neither associationism nor the theory of an innate mechanism afford much importance to the activity of the child. Reinforcement in the former and the operation of the LAD in the latter involve processes which *happen to* a basically passive learner:

The old idea was that associations were built up in quite mechanical, automatic ways. They were bonds between isolated elements. The person in whom these bonds developed was passive. Something happened to him, and an association, say, between a word and a thing was the result ...

Chomsky's LAD is a formal data processor, in its way just as automatic and mechanical as processes of an associationist kind. In go the linguistic data, out

comes a grammar. The living child does not seem to enter into the business very actively (not to say fully) in either case.
(Donaldson, 1978, pp 37, 39)

2.3.2 Interactionism

In more recent decades, interactionist accounts have emerged from research which investigates the child's attempts to make sense of the world in general and its linguistic elements in particular (Gallagher & Richards 1998; Berko Gleason & Ratner, 2009). These accounts do not deny that language is at least partially determined by human biology; this seems undeniable given both the universal similarity of language acquisition phases in individual children learning different languages, and the synchronicity of development between brain function and speech organs in human evolution (Pinker, 1997). Nor do interactionist accounts deny a role for imitation and reinforcement: both processes appear to play at least some part in early vocabulary acquisition (Dale 1976) and in the later mastery of certain forms of complex syntax (Perera, 1984). However, interactionism emphasizes the social aspects of acquisition, and in particular the active, and frequently proactive, role played by the child's own initiations.

Trevarthen's exploration of intersubjectivity (1998) for example, used split screen video-taping of infants only weeks old interacting with their parents to show that gestures and vocalisations *actually initiated by the infants* evoke communicative responses from the adults, which in turn elicit further responses from the infants. In summarising a range of similar research, Crystal (1997) provides an engaging description of how the child's emergent capabilities and the mother's (or other caregivers') responses to them interact to shape gradually more complex forms of dialogue:

The mother's behaviour is not random. She uses a large number of questions, followed by pauses, as if to show the baby that a response is expected, and to provide an opportunity for it to respond... this cyclical pattern of speech and silence anticipates the fundamental structure of older conversations.

The mother's utterances change as the baby's vocalizations grow. At around 2 months., the emergence of cooing elicits a softer voice. Some time later, the baby begins to laugh, and the mother's voice become more varied in response. (p241)

Interactionist accounts stress the importance for language development of contingent adult responses to initiations from young children. As Wells (1984) remarks,

Children whose conversational initiatives are habitually responded to in ways that indicate that their topics are of interest and relevance are more likely to be strongly motivated to initiate conversations than those whose initiatives do not receive such contingently appropriate responses. (Wells, 1984, p 405)

The plainness of the point being made here is matched by that of Bohannon & Bonvillian (2009) in summarising extensive research into the consequences of contingent response:

... mothers who are more responsive to their children's vocal behaviour typically have children who show more rapid language growth. (Bohannon & Bonvillian 2009 pp 235-236)

Typically⁴, these responses are conveyed in a register popularly known as 'motherese' (Newport, 1977) or, more formally, Child Directed Speech (CDS). This differs from speech between adults and between adults and older children in a number of ways. These include slower rate, exaggerated intonation, shorter and more syntactically simple utterances, more frequent repetitions, the use of language play and of non-verbal support such as pointing (Snow, 2006; Bohannon & Bonvillian 2009).

As children acquire gradually more complex language, the vocabulary and grammatical structures used by the primary caregiver in conversation with the child appear to track this level of complexity, remaining at or just beyond the child's

⁴ Typically, that is, for the cultural contexts in which the research has been conducted.

threshold of comprehension (Wells, 1984; Snow 2006). This ‘fine-tuning’ ensures that the primary source of language for the child is at a level which is either immediately understandable, or understandable in the context of the gestures, actions and experiences in which the child and caregiver are mutually engaged.

Fine-tuning is also evident in typical adult feedback to immature child-grammar. Overt correction and instruction is rare. Instead, caregivers respond to the meaning of the child’s utterances. Those which are semantically faulty, that is, either untrue or mistaken, are corrected. When the child makes a syntactic error, the adult commonly responds with an amended form of the utterance, using its semantic content to model the conventional form (Bohannon & Bonvillian 2009 p 245). This process of recasting (Nelson 1989) has the potential to enrich the child’s vocabulary, syntax and morphology without breaking the flow of the conversation.

All of this suggests that, in the discourse environment of the children who have been studied, the stimulus is not impoverished, but rich and precisely targeted.

Moreover, as well as fine-tuned conversations with the primary caregiver, the child is also likely to be involved, actively and passively, with a range of other interlocutors in a variety of physical contexts. Depending on the child’s background, this might include other members of the family, including the secondary caregiver, older or younger siblings, playmates, and a range of other adults. The degree of accommodation that these interlocutors provide for the child is, of course, variable from person to person and situation to situation. It may be minimal or non-existent, but there is evidence that such variability may in itself have a role to play in language development.

Berko-Gleason (1975) formulated the idea of the ‘bridge hypothesis’ in response to observations that fathers’ speech to their children appeared to accommodate less to immature language than that of mothers. These observations were made of families in which the mother was the primary caregiver and the father the secondary caregiver, the latter thus being less familiar with the child’s interests and language

patterns. Comparisons between mothers and fathers interacting with the same child showed that although fathers did make many of the speech adjustments typical of CDS, their discourse showed less responsiveness to children's utterances, a more directive style, and a greater likelihood of conversational breakdown (Barton & Tomasello, 1994).

Therefore, it is likely that children who experience regular interaction with both a primary and secondary caregiver will experience two contrasting styles of conversation. The first, with the primary caregiver, regardless of gender, may be highly supportive and accommodative. Often occurring in the course of shared physical activity, and thus accompanied by concrete sensory referents for what is being talked about, it affords rich opportunities for the acquisition of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. Interaction with the secondary caregiver requires children to adapt much more to their conversation partners. It may involve the children in more cognitive effort in processing unfamiliar vocabulary and syntax; it may include more demands for clarification; it may require more repairs of misunderstandings; frequently, the topic may concern things which are not 'here and now'.

If the secondary caregiver can be seen as a bridge for developing the communication skills required in the outside community, then it is possible to conceptualize conversational experience with a variety of partners as a series of bridges depending on the degree of accommodation they provide. Barton and Tomasello (1994) for example extended the notion of the "father bridge" to the "sibling bridge". In the same way, it is inevitable that at school and in other social environments, the child encounters different levels of discourse accommodation in interactions with a range of peers and adults. This more loosely scaffolded, and hence more risky, form of interaction therefore necessitates the development of *pragmatic* skill and knowledge: the communicative competence required to put acquired linguistic knowledge into action with less familiar partners in a range of social contexts: Bohannon & Bonvillian (2009) state that:

Multiparty conversations allow children to hear more talk, hear greater varieties of talk, and observe and assume different conversational roles. Such

conversations require children to deal with participants' varying degrees of background knowledge and to be assertive and clever in finding ways to participate.

(Bohannon & Bonvillian, 2009, p 211)

There are obvious implications here for school experience in general, and reading experience in particular. Snow and Blum-Kulka (2002) for example, suggest that the ability to take multiple perspectives in multiparty conversations aids text comprehension. In the reading group, the varied voices of peers, teachers, and classroom assistants are joined by the heteroglossic voices of a range of prescribed and incidental texts. Each of these voices will vary in terms of accommodation and familiarity. In learning to read at school, the child is confronted by, and participates in, the voices of an immense multitude, with commensurate potential for harmony or cacophony.

However, before considering in more detail the implications for education, it is vital to emphasize that the child's acquisition of language through interaction is not exclusively a linguistically-centred process.

2.3.2.1 Shared action as the ground of participation in language

The child does not learn language *just* by being exposed to it, or *just* as a participant in contingent, coherent discourse. Rather, exposure and participation are concomitants of social activities aimed at satisfying a range of communicative and practical intentions (Bruner, 1981).

The earliest of these intentions, according to Bruner, is 'to achieve and regulate joint attention with another' (Bruner, 1981, p162). The establishment of eye-to-eye contact between caregiver and child signals the beginning of intersubjectivity, or shared focus of consciousness, a concept resembling Bakhtin's notion of the emergence of a sense of Self from awareness of the Other. Following an initial focus on the caregiver's face, 'infants as young as four months of age will also follow the mother's line of regard outward to the surrounding environment' (Bruner 2006, p10).

From this turning of joint consciousness outwards, towards objects and events in the environment, particularly those which signal changes of one kind or another (Dale, 1976), develop all of those adult-child flexible routines in which language is scaffolded in the pursuit of shared goals. These range from simple pointing and grasping as concomitants of referring and requesting, through to more complex routines such as meal-times, bed-times, games and outings, each with its specific sets of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic demands.

These flexible routines constitute a library of ‘scripts’ (Nelson 1989) or a set of ‘formats’, a term Bruner defines as:

... a constrained and segregated transaction between child and adult, with a goal, a mode of initiation, and a means-end structure that undergoes elaboration. A format provides a familiar locus in and a familiar routine in which communicative intentions can be conventionalised and interpreted ... Above all, a format is what frames communication and locates it in a particular segment of reality where the child can cope well enough to steer his hearer. (Bruner 1981 p162)

We will return to this idea in the next section, but at this point it may be useful to acknowledge the similarities between Bruner’s definition of a format and the conventional picture of a school lesson, or more specifically, the picture of a reading session that I drew in the introduction. It may also be useful to emphasize the crucial difference between format and traditional lesson expressed in the last ten words of the quotation. In a traditional lesson, enabling the child to ‘cope well enough’ is often the ‘end’ of the lesson in both a temporal and teleological sense. An instructional objective has been achieved; the gift of competence or knowledge has been handed down; the lesson is over. In Bruner’s account, ‘coping well enough’ is the prerequisite empowerment of the child for an active role in continuous, open dialogue aimed at ever greater competence in an ever wider variety of practical and cognitive contexts.

Rogoff (1990) has called this type of dialogue ‘apprenticeship in thinking’. Her research has shown how ‘guided participation’ in purposeful routines is a feature of

learning contexts in many cultures. Guided participation shares the quality of contingency observed in parent-child interactions in the ‘western mainstream’ family contexts which have provided much of the data outlined above. However, Rogoff stresses the fact that shared action is the matrix of language, and that the parent-child dyad is not the only model of interaction:

In the concept of guided participation, I mean to include not just parent – child relationships. But also the other social relationships inherent in families and communities, such as those involving children, parents, teachers classmates and neighbours, organised not as dyads but as rich configurations of mutual involvement ... in guided participation children are involved with multiple companions and caregivers in organised, flexible webs of relationships that focus on shared cultural activities ... [which] provides children with opportunities to participate in diverse roles.
(Rogoff, 1990 pp 97-98)

Wood (1998) reiterates the point that learning often occurs most effectively in the context of doing other things:

Not all guided participation involves deliberate or explicit attempts to teach and learn. [It] may occur when, for example, children set out to ‘help’ their parents, or as they participate in everyday activities or in playful encounters with siblings and peers.
(Wood 1998 p 102)

Wood’s allusion to the potential of playful encounters reminds us that practical ends include recreational and affiliative ones. Children’s needs include both play and friendship, two elements treated with great ambiguity in the context of the classroom (see for example, Roskos and Christie [2001] on attitudes to play in the early years, and Baines et al [2009] on friendship grouping).

2.3.2.2 Early literacy and play as contexts for talk

Bruner (2006; 1981) emphasises the importance of two specific types of flexible routine, both of which have strong links to schooling, as being particularly generative sources of language development. These are picture book sharing and imaginative

play, the one typically originating in adult-child interaction, the other often originating here too, but quickly becoming a feature of both child-to-child and independent activity.

Looking at picture books together concentrates the joint attention of mother and infant upon highly compressed foci of attention.
(Bruner, 2006, p 12)

As sources of representations of a potentially infinite number of alternative worlds, picture books enormously extend the range of stimuli available as topics of conversation between adult and child; *ipso facto*, they enormously extend the potential for the contextually supported use of new vocabulary, syntactic structures and pragmatic aspects of language use. Moreover, the linguistic and physical routines involved in book-sharing – page-turning, the alternation of listening and reciting, turn-taking at questioning and answering on the part of both adult and child, labelling, predicting, and making aesthetic and empathetic comments - can act as templates for later literacy experiences and for other forms of educational enquiry. Furthermore, picture book sharing often involves strong elements of oral and physical play – for example, in the form of action rhymes – that immerse the child's imaginative, emotional, linguistic and psychomotor capacities in the creation of what Bruner (1986) has called 'possible worlds'.

Play, according to Vygotsky, constitutes a self-proclaimed zone of proximal development for the child. 'In play, a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head higher than himself' (Vygotsky, 1978, p102). Both Vygotsky and Bruner emphasise the rule-governed nature of play, Bruner suggesting that 'the tendency in young children not only to pretend and to simulate, but to draw others into their pretence and simulation with evident delight' may have learning potential beyond the scope of language:

... pretend-playful situations become quickly organised into rules about adjacency pairings, substitution, privileges of occurrence during the first half of the second year. These rules have a generativeness well in advance of those that govern speech in such 'real' activities as feeding, noise-making, etc. Could

it be that language from a very early age functions as an hypothesis generator about systematic possibilities?
(Bruner, 1981, p163)

However, the affiliative urge and the delight that Bruner cites as characteristics of play can also lend themselves to the disruption of all things systematic. Language play provides a vivid exemplification of how double-sided play can be in relation to rules and regularities.

No sooner do young children acquire the patterns of language than they begin to play with them, as if they are 're-playing' such ludic aspects of CDS as exaggerated pitch range, the use of 'nonsensical' and reduplicative vocabulary (*dum-dum; wee-wee; bow-wow*), and semi-linguistic vocalisations like clicks and coos (Crystal, 1998). Children begin to engage in such phonological play from around the age of one, often in spontaneous soliloquies which include onomatopoeic lexicalisations of environmental sound (*brumbrum, neenaw, wuff*). An awareness of rhyme and a readiness to experiment with it characterises the speech of children in their third and fourth years. From this age, children will often home in on an 'accidental' rhyme in conversation, then attempt to outdo each other in generating variants of the rhyme, often producing strings of nonsense words in the process (Garvey 1977).

During the school years, language play continues to develop and diversify. Play with morphological features of words has been identified in the conversations of children as young as five (Garvey, 1977). Children collect and invent taboo and exotic words; they deliberately misname everyday items and make up names for people and things; they experiment with phonology through the use of play voices; they engage in riddles and puns and knock-knock type jokes that juggle with the syntax and semantics of everyday speech; they memorise rhymes and songs to mock a range of pragmatic functions; they inherit play languages which are based on sophisticated rearrangements of onsets and rimes; some children even teach themselves to talk backwards (Cowan and Leavitt, 1982).

All of this suggests that children exhibit what is evidently a global tendency to play with language at all levels, from the phonological to the pragmatic. The Russian folklorist Chukovsky (1963), a pioneer of research into children's language play, declared that the only children who do not appear to engage in these activities are those who are either neglected or ill. Many of the games mentioned above require quite highly developed metalinguistic awareness, relying as they do on facility in manipulating semantic, syntactic and sublexical aspects of spoken and written language (for a cross-cultural survey of such games, see Schwartz 1982). Children are locating the rule-governed regularities of language, and pushing those rules to the point of parody.

As Crystal (1998) and Cook (2002) have pointed out, this tendency and the underlying skills involved would seem to have significant educational potential. High levels of oracy and literacy require dexterity with language, and dexterity with language is exactly what children exhibit in their linguistic play. Furthermore, as Adams (2001) points out, language play has the potential to bridge the divide between meaning and the rote manner in which phonics is often taught:

A child can parrot responses perfectly without having a clue as to what they mean; however, a child cannot get a joke or answer a riddle without understanding what it is about.

There is in short no reason in which phonemic awareness training should increase classroom drill and skill It is about developing ... the attentional and metacognitive control that renders unnecessary the drill and skill of traditional phonics.
(p76)

In spite of this, linguistic play has traditionally been seen as something that children should do in the playground rather than the classroom (Grudgeon, 2002). However, much of the reading material that children encounter in the classroom is an incitement to language play, either deliberately, in the form of playfully patterned texts, or inadvertently, in the forms of texts like 'Tim dug in the mud.' (Introduction, Section 1.3) the dry solemnity of which invites mockery. As I suggested in the introduction, teachers are understandably nervous of the disruptive potential of such

mockery. Although the rhetoric of primary education typically extols the power of play in the early years, the influence of policy, in literacy at least, is more conducive to its suppression (Roskos & Christie 2001).

Before moving on to discuss this and related topics in the next section, I will summarise the main points I have made about learning to talk in the pre-school years, and how these might relate to talk in reading groups in the early years of schooling.

2.3.3 Summary

Psycholinguistic research suggests that all healthy children are born with an innate capacity to learn language. In the course of childhood they are able to detect patterns in the language around them and to generate and test their own hypotheses about language use. However, as Wood (1998) reminds us:

Simply because the child is active, constructive and generative in his or her recreation of language (and knowledge generally) it does not follow that others cannot be more helpful and facilitative, or unhelpful and inhibiting, along the way.
(p141)

Research into adult-child interaction, mainly in Western mainstream family contexts, has suggested that the following factors are facilitative of language development.

- Joint focus of attention: adult and child converse about a topic which is mutually interesting. The topic might be a shared activity involving immediate concrete sensory referents, or it might be a representational stimulus such as a picture book. In such contexts the adult has the opportunity to scaffold the child's participation in conversation by modelling aspects of language arising from stimuli which attract and maintain the child's attention.

- Symmetrical conversational rights: the adult does not dominate the conversation, but instead supports the child's participation through semantically contingent responses. Children are responded to in ways that show that the adult is interested in what he or she has just said. The adult interlocutor's role is to extend the topic initiated by the child, to work at clarifying meaning, and to pass the conversational turn to the child in order to sustain his or her participation.
- Responsiveness of adult speech to that of the child: the complexity of the adult's contributions might be finely tuned to the child's current level of development, or it might be pitched somewhat beyond this, persuading the child to adapt to more rigorous communicative demands. The adult may recast child utterances in a different grammatical form, or expand and elaborate these contributions, or prompt the child to do so.
- Tolerance and encouragement of the child's propensity to make playful or idiosyncratic contributions to the conversation. The child's agenda is respected, which involves a diminution in the power differential between adult and child, and hence a greater readiness by the child to think aloud and at length.
- Beyond the adult-child dyad, opportunities to hear and converse with a range of interlocutors while engaged in a range of purposeful activities.

The reading session at school has the potential for developing language, and hence learning generally, in so far as it can provide the learner with the following experiences.

- An effective joint focus of attention in the form of a book interesting enough to capture and engage such attention from the learner and his or her peers.
- Comprehensible experience via the printed text, and the talk arising from it, with novel forms of language: phonological, lexical, syntactical, semantic and pragmatic.

- Opportunities to talk with the teacher or other more experienced language user who will support him or her through the ZPD towards the acquisition of new skills and knowledge.
- Alternations of finely-tuned and more challenging ‘bridging’ responses to his or her contributions from the adult and from peers.
- The opportunity to listen to and consider multiple individual perspectives on the content of the text.
- The experience of entering the text, of responding to one’s own ‘ventriloquisation’ by the voices within it, as an initiation into new ways to mean.
- Experiences of text which are integral elements of a wider range of purposeful activities: instrumental, recreational and affiliative.
- The opportunity to play with the possibilities afforded by all of the above.

I suggest that the facilitative relationship between literacy experience and language development that I have outlined above is reciprocal; that is, the forms of language use generated and sustained by the reading session are likely to assist the development of literacy.

In drawing such implications however, one risks falling into another version of the Naturalistic Fallacy. Attempting to judge, justify or formulate language practices in schools on the basis of how language develops in non-institutional settings could be as misconceived as trying to derive a pedagogy from the ontological principles of a preferred philosophy.

One response to this is that there is no such thing as a non-institutional setting for language development. Families are as much cultural institutions as schools, although, so far at least, much less heavily policed and policy-bound. The research into learning to talk does not disclose ‘natural’ phenomena, but a huge and very varied range of cultural phenomena, only a selection of which I have summarised here. The question is not how well education should mirror nature, but whether or not the factors facilitating language and literacy in a varied range of cultural contexts will facilitate them in another range of more constrained and publicly accountable contexts.

There have in fact been several attempts to formulate learning principles based upon those derived from language acquisition (Halliday, 1994; Gee, 1995; Stubbs, 1996; Cambourne, 2001). Some of the practical applications and outcomes of these will be discussed in the next two sections.

Before leaving this section, I would like to reiterate three important points.

Firstly, the account I’ve given above is simplified, idealised, and based on culture-specific evidence. The research base is observational and correlational, so from a positivist perspective one cannot claim that the conditions of learning language I’ve set out actually *cause* language to emerge. Nor are there any watertight reasons for assuming that the conditions which *might* have proved effective in the early years at home will continue to be effective in the later years at school.

Secondly, in focussing on the child as an active participant in discourse, I have emphasised the role of his or her speech. The active process of *listening* on the part of the child, as well as the adult, also appears to be a vital contributor to the emergence of both spoken language and literacy. Snow (2005) reminds us that the most powerful predictor of a child’s vocabulary in the early years is simply how many words he or she hears in a typical hour. Extensive research into both storytelling and teacher-exposition of interesting, child-appropriate subjects suggests that these experiences are conducive to both motivation for reading and reading

comprehension (Heath 1983; Perera, 1984; Norman, 1992; Larson & Peterson, 2003).

Thirdly, the processes outlined above all presuppose a supportive social environment in which the adult is *listening out* for the child, and the child has the expectation that it is his or her right to *speak out*. Snow (2005) summarises this presupposition thus:

Considerable evidence suggests that adult recognition of and responsiveness to children's communicative intents is demonstrably helpful to children in acquiring language. In fact, all of the factors mentioned in any standard review of what constitutes helpful adult input to children – a child-centred style, talking about a joint focus of attention, semantic contingency, provision of expansions and clarification questions, and so forth – presuppose a social, communicative, intentional child attempting to express his or her own intents. In other words, it is the pragmatically effective child with the capacity to express some communicative intents who creates the opening that adults fill with social support.
(Snow, 2005 p 267)

As the next section and the rest of the thesis will suggest, children's opportunities to speak out in school are limited. The effects of this limitation may extend beyond literacy and beyond the end of the learner's school career. Baxter (2000) in the course of reporting on research into the encouragement of 'speaking out' by girls in secondary school, makes the following point.

"Speaking in public" is not just about the business of delivering a formal speech or taking part in a political or academic debate, skill which perhaps only a small proportion of students may need routinely in their future lives. Rather, it also means the ability to make a convincing case to an audience; to persuade other people to consider your point of view; to be able to resist and challenge the spurious arguments of others; to confront people who may be trying to bully or intimidate you; or to make an impact on public opinion. Being able to speak out and be heard can empower people in a variety of ordinary settings in which they might otherwise find themselves marginalised or silenced, such as participation in a public meeting or inquiry; making a complaint about shoddy goods or poor service; taking part in a job selection or appraisal interview; being a member of a court jury, or dealing with bureaucracy.
(Baxter, 2000, p27)

Although such concerns may seem distant from the learning experiences sketched in the introduction, it is at least a reasonable hypothesis that the skills, attitudes and levels of confidence developed by the child in school experiences like the reading session do affect the competence with which we address the demands of adult life.

2.4 Talking to learn

In this section I will review findings into differences between adult-child talk at home and at school, and will relate these to historical and institutional factors. I will summarise objections to transmission teaching and the Initiation-Response – Evaluation / Feedback structure which characterises it. I will describe some examples of attempts to make teaching more dialogic, and examine some of the difficulties of implementing these. Finally, I will try to summarise the dilemmas faced by the classroom teacher in trying to resolve the tensions between transmission and dialogic teaching, proposing that teaching children to read is an area of the curriculum in which these difficulties are particularly marked.

2.4.1 Discourse at home and at school

The similarities and differences in spoken interaction at home and at school have been the focus of much educational research. Using data from the Bristol Study of Language Development, Wells (1981, 1986) showed that although many children starting school have already become familiar with the types of interactional structure they will encounter there, there are disparities between the two contexts in the frequency of opportunities for engaging in certain types of conversation. At school, children may not demonstrate the true extent of their communicative abilities. For example, at school they have fewer conversational turns, make fewer requests, and are less likely to ask questions, initiate interactions with adults, or have their own contributions extended. They express a narrower range of meanings, using language that is grammatically less complex than the language they use at home.

At least in part, this difference is the result of the demands of a context in which one adult is responsible for directing the activities and behaviour of large number of children (Wells, 1986). However, although it is true that the findings recorded in the previous section about adult-child talk were made in contexts where the talk is one-to-one or small group, the different scale of the classroom is not the only factor. A

more fundamental cause is, perhaps, the radical difference in the purposes of adult-child talk at home and at school. At home, adults' talk to children does not usually have a tightly structured pedagogical purpose. Though much of it may be aimed at establishing routines, answering children's questions and modelling vocabulary and syntax, these functions usually arise from the child's actions and talk, and are therefore frequently *responsive* to various initiations from the child.

At school, it is usually the teacher who makes the initiations and the child who makes the responses. The picture that emerges is of a relatively passive role for the child in responding to a predominance of 'display' questions; that is, questions asked by 'a teacher who is not seeking to know something, but to know if you know something' (Edwards, 1992, p236). There is a marked asymmetry of rights between children and teachers to choose topics, initiate interactional sequences, influence turn-taking, and explore their own meanings. In short, children have little access to the agenda (Richards, 1990). Alexander (2006) asserts that classrooms are too frequently places where:

... teachers rather than children do most of the talking, where supposedly open questions are really closed, where instead of thinking through a problem children devote their energies to trying to spot the one 'correct' answer, and where the supposed equality of discussion is subverted by ... the 'unequal communicative rights' of a kind of talk which remains stubbornly unlike the talk which takes place anywhere else.
(Alexander, 2006, p14)

Historical and cultural factors contribute to these practices. Although talk has traditionally been the medium of education, its main role has been as a teacher-dominated input channel for curriculum delivery. The teacher transmits knowledge by telling, interpreting or explaining, the learners listen, and are then required to demonstrate that they have assimilated the knowledge by recitation of it. The 'recitation script' (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) has its roots in the memorisation of sacred texts in the religious institutions which formed the foundations of educational practice. In its purest form, it is seen when learners are required to memorise and recite texts, spellings, definitions, dates, formulae, and number bonds such as

multiplication tables. However, it is also the core process at work when learners are asked to express ideas ‘in their own words’. Often, this is merely a prompt to the learner to provide an accurate paraphrase of the ideas transmitted by teacher or text (Edwards & Mercer, 1987). Although these drill and rote procedures have been defended as efficient ways, within a much broader talk curriculum, of building a foundation of basic facts that require automatic deployment rather than reflection (Alexander 2000) it is clear that for anything other than the reproduction of accepted ideas, a more active role on the part of the learner is required. Wells argues that:

... it is not possible, simply by telling, to cause students to come to have the knowledge that is in the mind of the teacher. Knowledge cannot be transmitted. It has to be constructed afresh by each individual on the basis of what is already known and by means of strategies developed over the whole of that individual’s life both inside and outside the classroom.
(Wells, 1986, p 217)

So, even if we are satisfied with a goal of education as narrow as furnishing learners with ‘the knowledge that is in the mind of the teacher’, the recitation script will not achieve even this.

2.4.2 Challenges to transmission teaching

Objections to transmission teaching have had a long history. The most frequently cited names in this tradition of dissent are, in order of the period of their writing, Montaigne, Rousseau, Locke, Froebel, Montessori and Dewey (Cohen and Garner, 1967), but this litany can be extended backwards at least as far as the debate between Plato (427-347BC) and Isokrates (436-338BC). Socratic dialectic, as represented by Plato, aimed at the *maieusis* or rebirth of knowledge through the guided reconstruction of innate truths. Isokrates is perhaps the earliest proponent of the idea that experience is more effective than the transmission of skills and knowledge in teaching students practical reasoning. (Muir, 2005).

In more recent times, transmission teaching and the recitation script have been subjected to at least three decades of co-ordinated challenge from psychological and

sociolinguistic research, informed by extensive classroom observation in both primary and secondary schools (Alexander, 2006). The link between dialogue and the development of both language and thought has been an abiding theme since the popularisation in educational circles, from the 1960s onwards, of Vygotsyan theory. This influence is however comparatively recent and vulnerable. For every move towards more interactive teaching, there has been a counter-move towards more traditional teaching⁵. *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky's seminal text, although written in the 1930s, was not translated into English until the 1960s. It is barely more than thirty years since Wilkinson (1965) introduced the term 'oracy' to educational discourse, and the pioneering work of Barnes, Britton and Rosen (1971) demonstrated the importance of exploratory, loosely-structured discussion between learners.

Vygotskian learning theory was at the basis of the influential work of Jerome Bruner (1968, 1986, 2006) who extended its research base into mainstream schools in American and the UK, applying the core ideas of collaborative learning into specific curricular frameworks. At about the same time, work by sociolinguists in the UK (for example Tough, 1979) was examining the role of teacher's talk in classrooms and its impact on learning. The Bullock report into education in the UK (DES 1975) recognised the role of spoken discourse as a tool for thought in its advocacy of 'language across the curriculum'. Between 1987 and 1993, the National Oracy Project in England united educators interested in implementing these ideas through a network of school and faculty based investigations into the use of dialogue in classrooms (Norman, 1992).

In arguing for a more active role for the speech of the learner in the classroom, supporters of these developments largely shared a critical attitude towards traditional patterns of classroom talk epitomised by the Initiation – Response – Evaluation

⁵ Typical examples of the rhetoric involved can be appreciated by comparing Froome's note of dissent within the Bullock Report (DES, 1975 pp 556-559) with the official response to the Cambridge Review of Education (DfCSF 2009).

(IRE) or Initiation – Response – Feedback (IRF)⁶ cycle identified as the typical, and intrinsically limiting, form of classroom interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1978). This pattern is deemed by its critics to set up a quasi- or pseudo-dialogue, in which the teacher's role is to elicit pre-taught knowledge and to reward its regurgitation, while limiting the child's contribution to constrained responses to questions which are frequently closed and 'inauthentic'; that is to say, the questioner already knows the required answer, so the child's response is for display rather than genuine information.

Note that this critique is a portmanteau one: both the relative roles of teacher and learner (initiator, responder, evaluator) and the form that initiation, response and evaluation typically take (closed or knowledge-checking question; right or wrong answer; positive or negative evaluation) are held to be both dominant and oppressive. The widespread acceptance of this broad critique has led to the castigation of the IRE/IRF pattern becoming a shibboleth amongst educators committed to classroom dialogue.

Certainly, both the dominance and the oppressiveness of IRE/IRF in parts of the UK and USA at least have been consistently confirmed by research recorded over several years (Dillon, 1990; Edwards & Westgate, 1995; Nystrand et al, 1997; Galton et al 1999; McPake, 1999; Smith et al, 2004). However, the way in which the pattern is deployed need not be as monolithic nor as oppressive as this research reports.

The I (initiation) component of the sequence is frequently characterised as taking the form of questions, variously described as closed, knowledge-testing, convergent, lower order, display or inauthentic; however, it is of course possible for the teacher instead to ask questions which are open, divergent, higher-order and authentic (Wragg & Brown, 2001). Redfield and Rousseau (1981) in a meta-analysis of teachers' questioning behaviour, found that the use of open, stimulating questions improved learner achievement.

⁶ Seedhouse (2004) states that IRF is a British Usage and IRE American. Hereinafter I will refer to the cycle as IRE/IRF.

The teacher might also elicit a response by means other than a question, such as a directive, comment or recitation. Van Lier (1996) indicates a range of possible functions for the first term in the IRE/IRF:

... [it] can be used to make the students repeat something verbatim, to require them to produce previously learned material from memory, to ask the students to think and then verbalise those thoughts, and, finally, to ask them to express themselves more clearly and precisely.
(Van Lier, 1996, p154)

Learner responses are not therefore necessarily bound to take the form of right or wrong answers. In the context of reading sessions, for example, they might be expressions of opinion, predictions about the story, comments on characters' actions, aesthetic responses to the text or link-making between the text and the learners' lives. The nature of the Initiation still, inevitably, constrains the content of the response, but it need not exclude creativity or complexity.

However, it has been pointed out that merely changing the form or the cognitive demands of a question, or other form of elicitation, does not in itself improve the quality of discourse. A 'higher-order' question – one aimed at evoking critical thinking or problem solving - does not guarantee a 'higher-order' answer (Dillon, 1990; Myhill, 2006). Such answers require that the Initiation be made in a context where the learner has been given the *expectation* to answer more fully, and where he or she is provided with the social and cognitive scaffolding to do so.

Much attention has been paid to the potential of the third term in the IRE/IRF sequence for moving discourse beyond mere reproduction of knowledge. Wells (1993) in re-evaluating the IRE/IRF sequence, notes that the function of the F-move need not be limited to 'feedback', a teacher evaluation that closes the cycle, but can also act as 'follow up': a prompting, probing or extending move that sustains learner involvement. As with primary caregivers' elaborations and recasts of young children's immature utterances, the teacher's response can provide clarification and extension of the learner's contribution. The emphasis here is on keeping the

conversation going rather than closing the exchange: by showing that the contribution is valued, continued participation is supported. As Skidmore (2006) points out, the teacher's rejoinder to a student response can be used:

... to clarify, exemplify, expand, explain, or justify a student's response; or to request the student to do any of these things.
(Skidmore 2006 p65)

Van Lier (1996) also argues that it is the use to which the 'the third phase' of exchanges is put which makes the difference between interactive and transmissional discourse, a difference which will also affect the general climate for learning in the classroom. This is echoed by Buzelli (1996) who makes a distinction between IREva and IRExp in her discussion of the moral implications of classroom discourse. The former type of move, in which the third moves evaluates the child's contribution in terms of whether or not it satisfies the teacher's instructional agenda, 'limit[s] children's opportunities to initiate and develop their own topics' (p 519). The latter, in which the third move expands the child's utterance, can constitute an invitation to the learner to participate in more extended and 'authentic' dialogue. She stresses the ethical implications of this distinction. A preponderance of 'Eva' moves assumes the child to be an empty vessel to be incrementally filled with deposits of knowledge, as in Freire's notion of the 'banking concept of education' (Freire 1970). 'Exp' moves serve to enable the child to participate in dialogue on an increasingly equal basis. In Freirean terms, 'exp' moves attempt to create 'horizontal dialogue' between interlocutors of equal status rather than 'vertical dialogue' in which knowledge is 'passed down' from the learned to the ignorant. Note that these prepositional metaphors are accompanied by a rhetoric evoking emotionally charged polarities of oppression and liberation.

The notion of 'authenticity', called upon by Buzelli, Freire, Van Lier and others, is however a difficult one. One approach to authenticity is to equate it with 'naturalness', the implication being that the more classroom discourse can resemble 'natural' conversation, the better it will be for the learner. Camborne (2001) for example, argues that classroom discourse is most helpful when it serves the functions

of enabling the learners to be immersed in language, surrounded by demonstrations of its use, expected by adults to engage in these uses, given choices and responsibility, encouraged to make gradually more accurate approximations to mature language, and provided with supportive feedback by mature language users. All of these conditions he derives from the Hallidayan model of language development in natural settings as ‘learning how to mean’ (Halliday, 1975).

However, classrooms are not ‘natural’ settings. They are institutional locations for the enculturation of large numbers of children by smaller numbers of adults. Cullen (1998) suggests that classrooms have typical patterns of discourse that can be regarded as ‘authentic’ relative to an educational environment. To an extent this is inevitable: every social setting, from a pub to a courtroom, is characterized by specific power relations between participants, mutual expectations about what discourse within this setting is meant to achieve, and what variety of discourse is ‘proper’ to this situation. It is these relations and expectations that provide more or less flexible frameworks structuring the variety of discourse that occurs. And, as Seedhouse (2004) reminds us;

... there is no basis in communication or linguistic theory for characterizing one variety of discourse as more genuine or natural than another, with the exception of scripted interaction typical of films and television programmes. (Seedhouse, 2004, p69)

He points out that the critique of IRE/IRF from advocates of ‘natural’ conversation as a medium for instruction is undermined by the fact that this pattern, frequently featuring display questions as Initiation moves, is very common in home conversations between parents and children in the course of first language acquisition, and is in fact common throughout, and beyond, instructional settings regardless of cultural variations and historical change (Seedhouse 2004, p 73).

Seedhouse denies that ‘ordinary conversation’ can ever be the medium of instruction (at least in L2 classrooms). He bases this on a definition of ‘ordinary conversation’ from Warren (1993):

... a speech event *outside of an institutionalized setting* [italics added] involving at least two participants who share responsibility for the progress and outcome of an impromptu and unmarked verbal encounter consisting of more than a ritualized exchange.
(Warren quoted in Seedhouse, 2004 p70)

From this he concludes that:

The only way therefore that an L2 lesson could become identical to ordinary conversation would be for the learners to regard the teacher as a fellow conversationalist of equal status rather than as a teacher, for the teacher not to direct the discourse in any way at all, and for the setting to be non-institutional. (p70)

While it seems clear that conversation thus defined cannot play an integral part in instruction, the definition itself is self-confirming: if a 'non-institutional' environment is an *a priori* criterion of 'ordinary conversation', then, *ipso facto*, it is futile to look for empirical evidence of it in institutions. Yet, observation does suggest that discourse that sounds *somewhat* conversational can be heard between teachers and learners in classrooms. Both the Egg and the Sausage episodes described in the introduction are examples. Furthermore, 'equal status' of participants is also a highly restrictive, and perhaps chimerical criterion: again, in many institutions - factories, hospitals, sports-grounds - it is possible to hear discourse between interlocutors of unequal status that sounds *somewhat* conversational. I have used this phrase twice deliberately: although I accept that the idea of the discourse of a lesson becoming 'identical to ordinary conversation' is unrealistic, there are times when the management of turns and the choice of topics are more equitably managed, suggesting that it is possible to aim for 'conversations' in which there is a greater symmetry of speaking rights and duties than is evident in traditional IRE/IRF patterns, without the prerequisite of equality of status in terms of knowledge and institutional power. According to Van Lier:

Equality refers to factors extrinsic to the talk ... symmetry refers to the equal distribution of rights and duties *in* talk. More precisely, interaction is

conversational to the extent that it is oriented towards symmetrical contributions.
(Van Lier, 1996, p175)

An important point, to be returned to later, is that in both of the Egg and Sausage conversations, which took place when teacher-monitored word-identification on the part of the child had been suspended, and both interlocutors were speaking in a more open-ended way about the semantic content of the text, the most intellectually challenging Initiations were made by the six-year old learners. To return to Richards' (1990) analogy of allowing children 'access to the agenda', the talk involved is still within the agenda of literacy education, but it is as if the children are being given permission by the teacher to raise issues under 'any other business'. The important point is that these might well be the issues of greatest importance for the children themselves.

I have argued that while the IRE/IRF pattern can be oppressive, it is adaptable enough to act as a bridge to more interactive discourse, particularly when the learner is supported in his or her appropriation of the active role. Van Lier (1996) summarises the position thus:

The IRF sequence, while it is effective in maintaining order, regulating participation, and leading the students in a certain predetermined direction, often reduces the student's initiative, independent thinking, clarity of expression, the development of conversation skills (including turn-taking, planning ahead, negotiating and arguing) and self determination. ... On the other hand, by exploring the different types of IRF available, by deliberately pushing towards a participation orientation, clear thinking and precise expression, and by moving away from a focus on display, repetition, and regurgitation, IRF use may be beneficial in securing students' engagement and building a bridge towards more contingent forms of instructional interaction.
(p156)

I have already mentioned two examples of 'different types of IRF/[IRE]' which might bridge towards 'more contingent forms of instructional interaction'. The first type is the teacher-led exchange in which the third term builds upon the learner response, extending it and/or braiding it into the ongoing chain of discourse. When this happens, IRF/IRE is not so much a 'cycle', an instance in a linear sequence of

closed triadic loops, but a part of series of ‘adjacency pairs’ or ‘paired utterances such that on the production of the first part of the pair (e.g. question) the second part of the pair (answer) becomes conditionally relevant’ (Seedhouse 2004 p17). As in the cumulative steps in Socratic dialogue, the chain of adjacency pairs acts as a set of stepping stones through phases of exposition (Van Lier, 1996, p186).

For example, in the extract below from one of the sessions in this study, the teacher, conducting the reading of a fantasy adventure about a spaceship, is trying to get the children to think about how space communication works:

T: What do you think they use the radio for?

Ch: Oh for listening to music.

...

T: Yes, but they have to be in touch with who if they’re in space?

Ch: The manager.

T: And who is the manager?

In both of the teacher E/F moves here, the evaluation doubles as an initiation. The child’s R move is accepted, but in a form of words that encourages the child, or the rest of the group, to reflect and respond anew. The E/F move is both backward and forward facing, shaped by everything that has been said, and anticipating what is yet to be said, a clear instance of addressivity,

The other type of more contingent IRE/IRF occurs when the child appropriates the I slot and poses the question to the teacher, as in the child’s inquiry about the development of the chick embryo in the Egg episode. Another example occurs in the continuation of the spaceship sequence above, after the teacher has suspended elicitation in favour of exposition:

T: If the spaceship left from Earth and then they’re in space, they have to be in touch with whoever is looking after them in what’s called the headquarters on Earth so that-

Ch: How can it go down to earth if it's in space?

T: Because the microphone picks up the voices – they've got very special machines that do that.

Here the child takes the floor from the teacher, interrupting her mid-clause, without making any kind of bid for approval to speak, in order to *demand* clarification. It is notable that the teacher implicitly accepts the child's right to do so, promptly complying by attempting to provide the demanded clarification. Such instances are not frequent in my data, but when they do occur they appear to be handled by the teacher without fuss, as if she accepts that the work of classroom 'meaning-making' (Wells 1986) can be achieved through more 'democratic'⁷ forms of discourse than the default IRE/IRF. It needs to be emphasised that in my data the teacher always reclaims the directive role within a small number of turns, usually by initiating an IRF/IRE exchange linked to the text, but the fact that these episodes occur at all appears to support the view that the pattern does not *necessarily* impose deterministic discourse roles on teachers and children; rather, in the ways in which the participants navigate between roles, they actively create possibilities for a more open pedagogical context. The unmarked form in teacher-child interaction is teacher-led turn-taking, so these episodes of 'turn-breaking' are significant. They represent the teacher's readiness to concede that turn-taking rules are permeable barriers between the mere anarchy of free heteroglossia and the robotic sterility of scripted monologism.

As I have indicated above, in the data to be discussed in this report, these episodes occur most frequently in relatively relaxed interludes between more teacher-directed stretches of discourse devoted to convergent tasks like word-identification and the recall of literal details from the text. They are analogous to what Seedhouse (2004) refers to as 'meaning and fluency and contexts' in L2 classrooms, where, instead of focussing on accurately producing L2 forms, 'Participants talk about their immediate environment, personal relationships, feelings and meanings, or the

⁷ Alexander (2000, p 521) warns that, '... apart from the polarities that it invites, 'democratic' carries other kinds of cultural and indeed nationalistic baggage which makes it unsuitable as a descriptive term in the context of pedagogical research.' However, in this context, the term seems appropriate.

activities they are engaging in' (p111). It is evident that in these conditions clarification or information-seeking questions from the learners themselves will be frequent.

Nystrand et al (2001) argue that questions from learners have great potential for transforming classroom ethos:

... student questions heighten the dialogic potential of classroom discourse, and they are an important source of dialogic bids. Unlike teachers, students rarely ask test questions, i.e., students almost never ask questions when they already know the answer, but instead typically pose questions eliciting additional information and/or clarifying something the teacher has said.
(p8)

However, in the context of the reading session, child initiations are not limited to response-demanding-questions after the model of the traditional IRE/IRF. As in more 'ordinary conversation', they can take the form of comments, such as those made in the child's critique of the Sausage story, which relate the story to their personal lives, beliefs and feelings. In this context, the expectation set up by a personal comment as the first utterance of an adjacency pair is that it will be met with a contingent comment or question. Whether or not this expectation is fulfilled depends on everything else that is going on in the session at the moment of utterance, including the complex demands on the teacher's time.

The Egg and Sausage episodes were dyadic exchanges, so the management of interactional space was relatively straightforward for the teachers involved. As we have seen with the Jam Session episode, in situations where several children contribute comments in quick succession, and begin to comment on each other's comments, the predictable pattern of the IRE/IRF is not merely reversed, but broken. This happens particularly quickly when children's propensity for language play is involved. It has been pointed out frequently (Garvey 1977, Crystal 1998, Cook 2000) that such play often involves rapid, divergent chain-reactions of utterance and response in which children seem to be seeking to out-do each other in extemporising upon the focus of humour. The monologic alternation of teacher and child voices is abandoned as the children assume localised management of a potentially limitless

number of adjacency pairs distributed throughout the group. The default expectation that all turns be passed through the teacher vanishes, and Bakhtin's 'carnival laughter', the volatile celebration of a festive and all-too-temporary power-reversal, is likely to erupt. In these instances, teachers often show understandable alacrity, or even anxiety, in their efforts to resume control as swiftly as possible.

In the final sub-section, I shall discuss possible causes for this tendency to revert to the 'safe' IRE/IRF pattern, and the implications that this may have for transitions towards more interactive forms of teaching, but for the time being it is as well to suggest the most obvious cause.

Alexander asserts that 'teachers have shared as well as unique biographies' (2000, p285). I believe that one of the most nightmarish experiences in this shared biography is that of a class getting out of hand. In his research into teacher stress, Kyriacou (2001) distinguishes between the immediate stress of dealing with difficult classroom situations, and the longer term stress which occurs with the gradual attrition of a teacher's self-esteem; he asserts that dealing with unruly learners inflicts upon the teacher a combination of both of these. An outcome of this collective trauma is that many, perhaps most, teachers subscribe to the adage that 'a good class is a quiet class'. It would therefore require a lot of convincing evidence to persuade teachers that the risk of allowing less constrained discourse is worth taking. So far, all of my arguments for a more interactive approach to teaching have lacked such convincing evidence. They have shared the weakness of leaping from a preferred epistemological perspective to speculative pedagogical implications: because [I believe that] knowledge is discursively constructed, pedagogy must involve interactive discourse.

In the next sub-section, I will present a brief review of selected, evidence-supported approaches that have been developed during recent decades for creating more interactive classrooms without teachers having to lose control of their classrooms in the process.

2.4.3 Alternatives to Transmission Teaching

In an intervention study focussed on the clarity and effectiveness in conveying information of the oral language of 15-17 year old adolescents in Scotland, Brown et al (1984) reported significant and lasting improvements in previously under-achieving learners. The improvements followed participation in a series of activities in which the learners were required to listen to, evaluate and act upon each others' speech rather than that of the teacher.

In the last decade and a half, several studies have indicated similar improvement when learners are offered more extensive opportunities for taking the linguistic initiative.

Nystrand (1997), reporting on a study of 400 lessons in American high schools, used Bakhtin's contrast between monologic and dialogic modes of discourse in his evaluation. He found monologic patterns to be prevalent, especially in lower attaining classes. The most effective teaching, in terms of actual test results, was associated with autonomous but well-planned collaborative group-work, a higher proportion of authentic questions, incorporation by the teacher of learner responses into subsequent talk, and readiness by the teacher to allow learner contributions to affect the lesson topic. It is important to note that these dialogical factors worked interactively: for example, a high proportion of authentic questions did not in itself improve effectiveness if these questions were unrelated to the lesson. Pedagogical strategies associated with effective dialogue included reflective journals, peer-review of learners' work, and oral presentations by students.

In *Dialogic Enquiry*, Wells (1999) reported on work in Canadian primary schools in which science education is approached by creating 'communities of enquiry', a structured discussion approach adapted from Lipman's *Philosophy for Children* (Lipman, 1988). Science topics were selected by the teacher, but the children had a degree of choice in the investigations they undertook. The teachers guided these investigations, but endeavoured to maintain a facilitative role, in which guidance was

contingent upon student progress. A key role for the teacher was to listen to the students and help them to formulate their own questions. Promising results have also been reported from a community of enquiry approach applied to a school-based programme of critical citizenship in Scotland (AERS, 2008).

In *Dialogue and the Development of Thinking*, Mercer and Littleton (2007) report on the Thinking Together project, which aimed to create 'inter-thinking' via teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil dialogue. In project classrooms, children are taught about exploratory talk, they agree ground rules for its use, and the teacher models and monitors its application to the study of curriculum subjects. Results from research in classrooms in the UK, Mexico, Holland, Japan and Spain, show that in comparison with control schools, children in the Thinking Together classrooms do significantly better in subject area achievement, verbal reasoning, and the quality of verbal interaction in learner groups.

One of the most important influences in this field is Robin Alexander's work on patterns of classroom interaction across five cultures – those of England, the USA, France, Russia and India – and his subsequent formulation of a model of dialogic teaching (Alexander 2000, 2006). This model describes dialogic teaching as being: collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful (2007, p 29). The goal is to encourage learners to 'think aloud and at length' in order to achieve 'common understanding through structured and sequenced questioning, and through joint activity and shared conceptions, which guide, prompt, reduce choices and expedite handover of concepts and principles' (2000, p 527). The model has been trialled in London, Yorkshire and other parts of Britain, and evaluation studies have indicated similar outcomes to the Thinking Together project (Alexander, 2003, 2005).

Internationally, the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking project (RWCT) has been influencing educational policy and practice in the post-Soviet sphere since its launch in 1998. The project aimed at increasing classroom dialogue through a programme of structured activities, related to different areas of the curriculum, all of which involve shared thinking and problem-solving through dialogue. An

independent evaluation of the project, conducted in 2001 in the four sample countries of Kirghizstan, Czech Republic, Latvia and Macedonia indicated that ‘RWCT teaching behaviours are ... associated with higher pupil scores on critical thinking assessments, scores that seem to be attributable to the facilitation of pupil-to-pupil interaction ...’ (American Institutes of Research, 2001) www.reading.org/rwct).

I will conclude this subsection with a brief outline of two strategies related directly to literacy.

Reciprocal Teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1984) is a well-established group-learning strategy for enhancing reading comprehension. It replaces the traditional pattern of comprehension instruction, in which pupils working independently answer questions about texts, with a procedure in which groups of pupils collaborate by contributing responses to a shared text. In each group, children read the texts section by section, and after each section take turns at assuming the roles of predictor, questioner, clarifier and summarizer. Evaluations of the strategy have shown that participants score higher than controls in reading comprehension tests, and are more adept at answering open-ended questions (Ozucks, 2003; Johnson-Glenberg, 2000).

Literature Circles (Daniels, 1994) is another well-established procedure in which small groups of learners who have achieved a similar level of fluency discuss a shared text, using protocols taught and monitored by the teacher. As in the adult book groups upon which they are modelled, there is a great deal of diversity in the ways in which literature circles are conducted, but the main attribute is that discussion is driven by the learners’ questions and comments rather than the teacher’s. King and Briggs (2005) and Allan et al (2005) summarize evidence from teachers and researchers about the value of this practice in English and Scottish schools respectively.

Skidmore (2004), in reviewing applications of dialogic pedagogy over the last couple of decades, summarises his findings thus;

... more dialogic modes of interaction, in which students play an active part in shaping the verbal agenda of classroom discussion, can help them to secure improved attainments in outcome, when compared with the results of teacher-dominated transmission approaches. Furthermore, there are indications that a shift to a more dialogic mode of engagement with learners may have a redistributive effect, i.e., improving the quality of teacher–student dialogue has the potential to bring about a general rise in achievement, but at the same time to narrow the gap between those with lower and higher levels of prior attainment. This is in keeping with an understanding of inclusion which sees the combined development of all as the condition of the full development of each.
(p 511)

All of the projects and practices I have outlined above have demonstrated clear potential for interactive teaching in which the learner is allowed more symmetrical conversational rights, and the teacher responds to the learner’s contributions by attempting to integrate them into the discourse of the lesson, amending its direction, or even its objective, if appropriate. None of them feature the abnegation of the teacher’s responsibility for the planning of, and control over, the discourse, but they all feature a real power shift in recognising the learner’s rights and the value of the learner’s voice. Whether or not the exact features of any of these systematic schemes, most of which have been trialled with older children who already have some competence in fluent reading, are transferable to the early years literacy contexts described in the introduction is a point I will return to at the end of the literature review.

2.4.4 Factors inhibiting classroom change

A government-sponsored survey of teachers’ perceptions of their work, conducted in England in 2001 (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2001), found clear signs of stress and dissatisfaction linked to an intensifying workload and a sense of a growing lack of control and ownership over what they were required to do in the classroom. Much of this has been attributed to ‘innovation fatigue’ in a climate in which incessant developments are imposed upon teachers from above (Hargreaves, 1994; Cohen and Manion 2004). In fact, there is evidence that the late 20th century reform of much of education into a regime of ‘targets, tables and tests’, imposed on education under an increasingly aggressive performativity agenda, have exacerbated teacher stress and disaffection throughout the Western world. Ball states that:

The key points of difference [between pre- and post-reform teachers], or two of them at least, are first, that these re-workings – these ‘post-professionalisms’ are ultimately reducible to exogenously generated rule-following, and second, that they render professionalism into a form of performance, that what counts as professional practice rests upon meeting fixed, externally imposed judgements.

(Ball, 2005, cited in Menter 2008 p65)

Although, from a British perspective, this has been at its most intense in England, in the last three decades Scottish teachers have also been subjected to externally imposed reforms at both national and local authority level (Cassidy, 2008; Menter, 2008). A source of stress frequently referred to by teachers in the Scottish context is the ‘cluttered curriculum’ (Reid, 2008). Amongst the most frequent causes of stress identified by teachers are the administrative burdens of dealing with curriculum and policy changes; an excessive and relentless rate of change; ‘performance anxiety’, particularly in the face of government inspection; criticism by politicians, parents and the media; and dealing with disruptive pupils (Galton & Macbeath, 2003).

In 1994, anticipating the acceleratingly centripetal control of education, Hargreaves predicted the creation of a culture of dependency in which teachers would fall back upon the use of externally produced materials and approaches imposed from without. I would suggest that in addition to this, teachers might also fall back upon, or adhere to if they have not ventured beyond it, a traditional, secure, didactic role, especially in areas of the curriculum in which this role is sanctioned by externally imposed policy. In the next section I will outline some developments in literacy policy which do appear to grant this sanction.

I will close this subsection by mentioning another factor inhibiting change in classroom discourse. For all that I have said about the potential centrifugal power of child speech and language play, another major constraint on classroom interaction in reading sessions is the child’s expectations of what role it is proper for them to take. While researching for an earlier project on one-to-one reading sessions between

children and adults (Hunt and Richards, 2001), I found the type of exchange below to be quite common. The child here is reading a book to a classroom assistant.

Adult: What's that word say?

Child: ... the

Adult: Good girl.

Child: ... the party balloons.

Adult: No, it's just the balloons. Do you like balloons?

Child: (nods)

Adult: Well I'm afraid I don't. I don't like balloons at all in fact.

[4 second pause]

Child: (reads) ... the balloons.

Here the adult made a text-life link by volunteering personal information related to the theme of the book. It was clear from the context that she had a piece of autobiography to share, and her pause appeared to be made in the expectation that the child would take up her remark. The child, however, ignored this opportunity, and resumed the customary business of accurately reproducing the text. It is clear that persuading children to converse about reading is not the straightforward business it might appear (Greenhough and Hughes, 2002). What is needed is early, frequent and consistent engagement in such conversation, so that children come to see talking informally about their reading as an integral part of school experience.

However, talk which evolves under low constraints towards indeterminate outcomes must appear to be a liberal luxury to teachers oppressed by termly objectives and numerical targets. Finding the time and the confidence to encourage learners to ask their own questions and find their own answers is likely to be especially difficult in the area of early literacy, where anxieties arising from parental, political and mass-media criticisms of schools' achievements combine with theoretical strife about models of literacy to make the teacher's job very difficult indeed.

2.4.5 Summary

In this section I have argued that transmission teaching has had a long history, and an equally long tradition of dissent to it has thrived alongside. I have summarised arguments that support the view that interactive teaching is more effective than transmission teaching in both establishing skills and knowledge and in achieving affective outcomes such as learner engagement and confidence. I have indicated that several educational initiatives in the last twenty-five years, conducted with various age-groups in a variety of countries, have supported this position. I have also indicated that, during the same time-span, teachers' work has been increasingly characterised by tensions between externally imposed prescriptive policy and their own professional judgement, and that the latter has been under sustained attack in recent decades from the powerful voices of politics and the popular media. I have suggested that in the face of this attack, some teachers might find security in traditional didactic routines, especially if such routines are supported by external policy. I will now consider how these factors relate to the task of teaching children to read.

2.5 Learning to read

In this section I will argue that theories of reading which present this practice as the application of a set of autonomous skills need to be augmented by a consideration of the sociocultural contexts in which literacy develops, beyond the school as well as within it, and of the place of individual learners within these contexts. I will also argue that reading policy claiming support from an autonomous skills model risks neglecting these contextual considerations, especially when policy takes the form of a monologically prescriptive 'one-size-fits-all' system of instruction, particularly in the early years. Given the constraints of the performativity agenda outlined in the preceding subsection, such systems work against the cultivation of dialogic teaching in literacy.

2.5.1 Reading policy and the reading wars

As most people see reading ability as a competence essential for gaining access to curriculum, culture and workplace, it is hardly surprising that there have been intense debates about what it is and how best learners might acquire it. These debates, better known in English speaking educational circles as 'the reading wars', tend to polarise around the points represented table 1. I acknowledge that I have presented polarisations for the sake of argument. The views of most practitioners might be more accurately described as lying somewhere on a spectrum between the paired positions set in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Positions on Reading Instruction

Reading is	Reading is
acquired naturally, in much the same way as speech, through interaction with other readers and writers.	a technology which needs to be explicitly taught.
a socially constructed and culture-specific set of practices.	a hierarchy of universally applicable skills that all readers operate regardless of particular environments.
best <i>acquired</i> by steeping children in the whole texts and authentic purposes to which literacy is put in their own communities.	best <i>taught</i> by breaking the process of reading into simple skills and subskills and teaching them systematically and incrementally.
like any other aspect of living language, constantly adapting itself as the cultural and technological environment changes.	based on relatively unchanging rules governing the encoding and decoding of spoken into written language.

Though each of the pairs represents a tension between two ways of conceptualising reading, no contradiction would be involved in subscribing to beliefs from both columns on a pair by pair basis. Yet there is a tendency in the educational press, the popular media and in informal literacy discussions to represent these choices as they are in the table: one set clustering to the left and the other to the right. 'Left-field' or 'whole language' statements have come to carry connotations of child-centredness and liberal or radical beliefs, while 'right field' or 'decoding-emphasis' statements are associated with an authoritative curriculum and a conservative social agenda. (Stanovich, 2000, presents a discussion of the evolution and a critique of the implications of these perceptions.) The point of this observation is to emphasise that discourse between reading researchers frequently represents not merely evidence-based disagreements about how to teach reading, but an ideological schism expressed in contrasts of rhetoric (Moorman, Blanton and McLaughlin, 1994). Thus, the rhetoric of the 'right', as I have deliberately placed it in the table, is often characterised by the vocabulary of accountability and methodological rigour; that of the 'left' by the vocabulary of 'humanistic' concerns and social criticism.

In terms of pedagogy, the key point of dispute is the relative importance of word recognition and meaning in the process of learning to read. A traditional and long-established model of reading instruction (see for example DES 1975; DCSF 2008) sees it as a process consisting of well-defined hierarchical stages. Learners are first taught to decode graphic symbols into the spoken words that they represent. Decoding is the foundation upon which later stages are built. These consist of comprehension skills, stratified into progressive levels such as 'literal': the recall of explicitly stated information, and 'inferential': the ability to use background knowledge in order to discern information implied but not explicitly stated by the author. A further 'level' of comprehension skills relates to the ability to bring one's own powers of judgement to the text in order to make evaluations about such aspects as relevance, veracity and quality of expression. The Bullock Report (A Language for Life, DES 1975, based on Douglas, 1973) refers to these phases in an influential

metaphor, as ‘reading the lines, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines’

It should be pointed out here that in English, the process of decoding, or ‘reading the lines’ is particularly complex. English spelling represents the contemporary standard pronunciation of many words, or at least the consonants within them, according to predictable patterns. However, it represents the pronunciations of many others as they were spoken by the learned classes living in the triangle of South-East England between Oxford, Cambridge and London during Caxton’s day. It was during this period, the fourteenth century, that the onset of publication began to standardise the spellings of English words, just as the Great Vowel Shift, which was to radically change their pronunciations, was underway (Barber, 1964; Crystal 2004).

English spelling also privileges the ‘deep’ morphemic structure of words over their ‘surface’ pronunciations, for example in word families such as sign, signature, design, designate etc (Nunes and Bryant, 2004). Furthermore, the link between graphemes (letters and letter-groups) and the sounds they represent operates at different ‘grain sizes’, with complex rules applying at the level of both the phoneme, or individual speech sound, and at the level of onset and rime within the syllable (Goswami, 2008)⁸.

The sequence from word decoding progressively more complex levels of comprehension, though long-established, reflects the ‘simple view of reading’, offered by Gough and Tunmer (1986) as an attempt to balance the perspectives of decoding-emphasis and whole language approaches. It has recently been adopted in England as the basis of a revised reading curriculum (DCSF 2006). The model states that reading comprehension is the product of listening comprehension – the child’s understanding of spoken language – and the child’s ability to decode;

⁸ ‘The phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that changes meaning.’ (Goswami 2008). For example, *tree*, *three*, *through* and *true* all have three phonemes, each differing from its adjacent partner(s) by one phoneme. Within syllables, the onset is any sound or sounds before the vowel, the rime is the vowel plus any sound or sounds that follow it. In my example, words 1 and 4 and words 2 and 3 share the same onset, and words 1 and 2 and words 3 and 4 share the same rime.

RC = LC X D

Thus, both aspects are necessary but insufficient factors in creating reading comprehension, and it is the *interaction* of the two that is effective. Clearly, there can be no reading comprehension without recognition of what the words on the page actually ‘say’; equally, being able to ‘say’ every word on the page without understanding their meanings does not constitute reading in any useful sense. It is possible, for example, for a monolingual English speaker to use his or her alphabetic decoding skills to ‘read out’ every word of a text written in a graphophonemically regular orthography like Spanish, without understanding any of it.

However, in practice, it is decoding that takes priority in terms of teaching, if not of importance. (Stuart et al 2008). The simple model supports the common sense view of the priority of word recognition skills as the *precondition* for reading. Word recognition has to be automatic, or nearly so, for the comprehension of the text to be possible. A reader who is struggling to decode the marks on the page into the appropriate sounds will not have sufficient processing capacity to discern the syntactic and semantic relationships between the words he or she eventually produces, and to link them to background knowledge. Unless the learner is reasonably fluent, short-term memory constraints determine that the meanings of words already decoded will have been forgotten as the child struggles with the meaning of later words. (Scarborough, 2001)

This position is often interpreted as implying that comprehension and critical skills can and should be delayed until decoding skills are secure. The danger of thus delaying personal engagement with the meanings conveyed by texts has been the focus of much debate about policy initiatives which support this ‘phonics fast and first’ priority. (See for example, Brooks, 2003, 2007; Stuart et al 2008; Wyse & Styles 2007 on the revision of the English National Literacy Strategy towards this policy. See also Watson & Johnston, 1998, 2005; Harrison 1999, and Ellis, 2006 on the controversial Clackmannanshire synthetic phonics project which influenced changes in England and in some local authority policies in Scotland.)

The problem is that while lip-service is paid to the complementary roles of word-recognition and comprehension, policy makers tend to give disproportionate attention to the former in setting out in detail what has to be done in classrooms. For example, the overview to the Rose Report on the teaching of early reading (DCSF 2006) asserts that:

... ‘high-quality phonic work’ should be taught systematically and discretely as the prime approach used in the teaching of early reading. This means that settings and schools should put in place a discrete programme as the key means for teaching phonics. *Importantly, the report makes clear that high-quality phonic work is not a ‘strategy’ so much as a body of knowledge, skills and understanding that has to be learned.*
(p3, emphasis in the original)

This is followed by a lengthy list of bullet points declaiming how teachers must teach phonics, including the stipulation that the programme should be ‘adhered to *with fidelity*’ [emphasis in the original]. Although another bullet point stipulates that the programme should be ‘part of a broad and rich curriculum that engages children in a range of activities and experiences to develop their speaking and listening skills and phonological awareness’ (p3) this is the only mention that the broader context receives. The arguments against an over-emphasis on decoding in the early years can be summarised thus:

- Such an emphasis risks demotivating children as they focus on isolated, word-level and sub-lexical sounding-out in the absence of real reading materials that demonstrate the relevance and applicability of this activity (Cambourne, 2001, 2009). Moreover, children who have experienced such materials at home or in pre-school contexts, for example as participants in Bookstart programmes that supply children with appropriate literacy materials from birth (Hall, 2001; Bailey et al, 2002) are likely to encounter a discontinuity in the early years of their schooling.

- This isolated, word-level and sub-lexical activity neglects the social and individual aspects of literacy use which motivate reading in real life. This point will be returned to in the next subsection.
- If reading instruction is largely confined to phonics and sight word recognition, the relatively rapid skill acquisition which is often reported in successful decoding programmes might mask lack of progress on the part of some children in text appreciation, comprehension and critique. For example, while the Clackmannanshire project showed significant gains in isolated word-reading for its subjects, gains in comprehension were insignificant (Ellis et al, 2006).
- In programmes operating a one-size-fits-all policy, children who already have decoding skills are denied the holistic application of them while they undergo unnecessary instruction, thus wasting potential progress. Moreover, this approach ignores evidence that different children process print in different ways, some of them synthesizing information at the level of letters and phonemes, others analysing information from words or longer stretches of print (Chittenden et al, 2001).
- Because decoding involves only the accurate reconstruction of the literal text, if overemphasised in the early stages it might inculcate in children a mindset for reading as reproduction, impeding the development of inferential and critical skills (Cambourne, 2001, 2009).
- The orthography of English is too complex for graphophonic decoding to provide a reliable stratagem for identifying unfamiliar words. Furthermore, the relationships between word identification and meaning making in reading are far too complex for a single strand approach to be effective in facilitating them (Goswami, 2008).

Note that these objections only apply to reading policies which require children to spend most of their time working at the word or sub-lexical level without regular access to age-appropriate, meaningful texts, read with support from their teachers and peers - for example, by unison participation in refrains or familiar phrases – and discussed with their teachers and each other. Although one of the main motivators of the current project was my anxiety that such policies were operating in many of the schools I visited as a student supervisor, it is also evident that decoding through phonics and whole word recognition can be taught in ways that connect with reading for pleasure and information, and where memorisation of letter-patterns and word-shapes is achieved through playful investigation rather than rote repetition (Lewis and Ellis, 2006; Dombey et al 1998).

A more dynamic view of the interaction of word recognition and comprehension factors in learning to read is presented by Scarborough (2001) in her metaphor of reading as the braiding of ‘top-down’ processes, such as background knowledge, verbal reasoning and oral vocabulary, with ‘bottom-up’ processes such as phonological awareness, decoding ability and the sight recognition of familiar words.

In this model, both word recognition and language comprehension consist of cables of woven processes which themselves intertwine as the reader looks at the page. The more experienced the reader, the smoother the braid. To shift metaphors, the interaction of graphophonic and cognitive factors is a dialogue between what the brain tells the eye and what the eye tells the brain (Smith 1971). In relating this model to reading difficulties, Scarborough re-asserts the importance of oral language comprehension in the reading process:

... reading skill can also be seriously impeded by weaknesses in the comprehension strands, particularly beyond second grade when reading materials become more complex. Even if the pronunciation of all the letter strings in a passage are correctly decoded, the text will not be comprehended if the child (1) does not know the words in their spoken form, (2) cannot parse the syntactic and semantic relationships among the words, or (3) lacks critical background knowledge or inferential skills to interpret the text appropriately and ‘read between the lines’. Note that in such instances ‘reading

comprehension deficits are essentially *oral* language limitations. [emphasis in the original]
(Scarborough, 2001, p 98)

Scarborough's emphasis on oral language supports the view that children and teachers talking about meaningful text is a vital part of reading instruction. Paralleling the points she makes above, I would argue that it is through talk about interesting texts that children (1) build their oral vocabularies, (2) gradually appropriate a wider range of syntactic and semantic relationships by participating in the voices within the text and amongst their fellow readers, (3) extend their background knowledge, and, through interpersonal talk about the implications of texts, learn to independently interrogate texts in order to construct inferences. There are dangers involved in any form of instruction that limits or delays these affordances by confining children's attention to decoding - and thereby possibly establishing a mindset for literal reproduction as the essence of reading.

2.5.2 The sociocultural context of reading development

So far I have been discussing reading as if it were exclusively a school-based practice involving ideologically neutral processes. This 'autonomous' model of literacy has been subjected to at least two and a half decades of critique from proponents of the view that literacy is a manifold cluster of ideologically loaded social practices in which texts and talk are used in different ways, in different locations, for different purposes (Street, 1984; Street & Lefstein, 2007). There are wide variations in the uses of written language both between cultures and within them. Just as the word *game* denotes a vast range of practices, from two rugby teams brawling over a ball to a lone card-player setting out a game of patience, so the word *literacy* subsumes a similarly vast range of practices, from a *hafiz* reciting the Koran from memory to a network of campaigners circulating a petition on the internet.

The view of literacy as social practice disputes the notion that reading and writing can ever be ideologically neutral. Readers and writers are inevitably influenced by such factors as their power relations with the people with whom they are

communicating, the purposes they are pursuing, and by their age, gender, social class, sexuality and affiliation to various belief systems. In educational settings, mastery of such specific forms of literacy as the ability to answer questions on set texts and to write within school-sanctioned genres, determine the difference between educational success and failure, even though learners deemed illiterate by these criteria may well be adept in forms of literacy not valued by the school (Gilmore, 1986; Hamilton 1998).

One of the main implications of this is that teachers should be aware that the view of literacy espoused by the school may provide continuity and extension of such literacy experience for some children, but possible rejection or conflict for those who are from ethnic, religious linguistic or socio-economic groups whose literacy practices differ from those of the school.

Another implication is that teachers should strive to make links between the children's experiences and their reading, and support children's spontaneous attempts to do this themselves. Cochrane-Smith (1984) in an observational study of the enculturation of children into literacy in an American kindergarten, emphasises the central importance of two types of teacher-child interaction during story-reading. The first is the life-to-text link, when the teacher or storyteller relates her own first hand or literary experience to the events in the unfolding story. This kind of commentary creates a cohesive scaffold for the children, helping them to trace chains of cause and effect and to respond appropriately to the emotional dimensions of the stories. In other words, life-to text-links mediate between spoken and written language by enabling children to create a mental model of the text. The second type of interaction is the text-to-life link, whereby discussions of real life experiences are enriched or clarified by the teachers' making reference to related experiences in the texts that children have shared. Thus children are shown that reading is relevant to their own concerns. Cochran-Smith emphasizes that children must learn to make these connections themselves in order to become readers, and in order to make texts their own:

... readers contribute actively to the reading process by bringing their individual knowledge to bear upon texts (hence one book can have many realizations).
(p235, emphasis in the original)

A third implication is the need for critical literacy. If all text-production and consumption is imbued with power-relations, then it is never too early to help children become aware of them. It is a tenet of critical literacy that *all* forms of text are trying to do something to the reader, and are structured accordingly. Legends and folk-tales convey traditional values about the morality of individual and group action; historical texts recount carefully selected events to support privileged and contestable versions of reality; research literature foregrounds favourable findings while filtering out others; and, as Luke, O'Brien and Comber point out:

even a medicine bottle label features particular values and positions – a possible world where the reader (as prospective purchaser, medicine consumer and 'patient') is constructed and located.
(2001, p113)

None of this obviates the need for people who are learning to read to acquire 'decoding' skills. Luke and Freebody (1999) point out that decoding is an essential part of the reading process, but it is only one aspect of a network of competencies that also includes text participation (understanding what the text means), text use (knowing what the text is actually for) and text analysis (working out how the text has been constructed to produce specific effects on the reader). Although these four aspects are discernible in the common-sense model of literacy outlined in the preceding subsection, critical approaches do not regard them as sequential or hierarchical. Whereas the hierarchical model would postpone critical analysis until decoding and so-called lower level comprehension skill have been secured, critical approaches insist that reading experience from the very beginning has to include all of them if the reader is to achieve independence. Comber (2001) asserts;

I want to question any suggestion that critical literacy is a developmental attainment rather than social practice which may be excluded or deliberately included in early literacy curriculum... in the early years of schooling, students

learn what it means to read and write successfully in terms of school practices. They need opportunities to take on this text analysis role from the start, as part of how culture defines literacy, not as a special curriculum in the later years of schooling or in media studies.
(pp 92-93)

Luke (2000) compares the literacy experiences of young people to that of a surfer on a sea of signs: “post modern childhood involves the navigation of an endless sea of texts”. In such an environment, reading instruction which neglects or postpones critical reflection will not necessarily prove empowering to learners.

2.5.3 Summary: reading as a complex activity

My arguments for regarding reading as a complex activity are summarised below.

2.5.3.1 Reading is active, but involves a degree of surrender to the text.

In order to read, the child must connect the meanings suggested by the marks on the page to all of the relevant knowledge he or she possesses at the time of the reading. In speculating about how a reader manages to make sense of the first two sentences of a novel⁹, Eagleton exemplifies how reading:

... involves us in a surprising amount of complex, largely unconscious labour: although we rarely notice it, we are all the time engaged in constructing hypotheses about the meaning of the text. The reader makes implicit connections, fills in gaps, draws inferences and tests out hunches; and to do this means drawing on tacit knowledge of the world in general and of literary conventions in particular ... Without this continuous active participation, there would be no literary work at all.
(Eagleton, 1983 p 76)

⁹ The sentences are: ‘ “What do you make of the new couple?” The Hanemas, John and Angela, were undressing.’ from *Couples*, John Updike, 1968. In the pages preceding the quotation above (pp 74-76) Eagleton entertainingly demonstrates how a ‘conventional’ visualisation of the scene suggested by these words in terms of the number, identity and location of the participants is a socioculturally shaped selection, on the part of the labouring reader, from a potentially vast range of ‘unconventional’ visualisations.

But at the same time as this labour is going on, the reader is also complying with the *imposed* messages of the text, as the words on the page shape the possibilities that the reader brings to them. To use an analogy from Piagetian theory (Piaget, 1977): the reader actively assimilates information from the environment of the text through the schemata of his or her ‘tacit knowledge’, but by this very process, these schemata undergo a process of accommodation as the new information extends and elaborates them. The equilibration which results from this interaction is dynamic and unstable: the reader’s understanding of a particular text will develop as he or she reads on; the reader’s identity as a reader will develop as he or she reads on through life; *but only if, in both cases, the learner can be convinced that the fruits of the labour involved are worth the effort.*

Bakhtin’s notion of voice is also relevant here. In reading a text, the reader is possessed by its voices (Bakhtin, 1986, p89). The reader enters his or her reconstruction of the story or information world, and to a greater or lesser degree ‘suspends disbelief’. But at the same time, the reader is both making the text voices his or her own, and engaging in dialogue with them. When we empathise with a character, or project ourselves into a fictional or real-life environment evoked by a text, we are both inside the text as participants, and outside of it as critics, as the child’s comments on the Sausage episode demonstrate. We can never quite get wholly lost in a book, anymore than we can disappear into the world on the other side of the looking-glass. Again, the process is a dynamic one throughout the course of both the reading of the text-at-hand and the broader literacy experiences that constitute a reader’s life, *but only if the opening moves of the dialogue offered by the text are alluring enough for the reader to want to pursue them.*

2.5.3.2 Reading is social, but also involves processes which are peculiar to the solitary individual.

The ‘tacit knowledge’ of the world in general and of literary conventions in particular’ that Eagleton alludes to develops as children participate in sociocultural activity. Some of this is school-based, subsuming types of knowledge and skill

endorsed by educational authorities. Some of it is community-based, subsuming types of knowledge and skill endorsed by sociocultural allegiances and memberships, from family and sect to gang and blog, entered into before, during and beyond schooling. These variably separate-but-overlapping bodies of knowledge and skills have potentially problematical interactions. Heath (1983) for example, in her longitudinal study of literacy practices in the Carolinas, has shown how the 'ways with words' practised by a black working class and a white working class community differ both from each other, and from the 'mainstream' literacy practices endorsed by the schools that the children of both communities are compelled to enter. Mismatches between the school's expectations of how children should 'take meaning' from texts, and how they actually do so, may precipitate communication problems and self-fulfilling low expectations on the part of the school.

The influence of literacy and identity is further complicated by the fact that sociocultural memberships are not necessarily static; even for young children they can be multiple, permeable and shifting (Gee, 2001). In an early years environment, it is possible for a child to be embarking on an English-medium reading scheme while learning one or more languages other than English outside of school, including literacy in a non-alphabetic script, while at the same time engaging in the literacy aspects of several types of digital and non-digital recreation. It is possible for an older learner to be simultaneously a *hafiz*, a rapper, a Daily Mail reader and a student of Shakespeare, and for his or her level of commitment to each of these roles, and others, to shift from day to day (for case-studies of changing literacy identities, see Pahl & Rowsell, 2006).

What these diverse learners bring to the classroom is complicated yet further by the fact that each of them is an individual as well a member of multiple groups. Each will have his or her own literacy biography, the source of unique patterns of competences and learning needs, likes and dislikes. Furthermore, the literacy biography is part of a unique life history which has created unique ways of associating words and meanings. Just as everybody speaks both a dialect and an idiolect, each young reader responds to classroom literacy experiences in ways that

sometimes signify solidarity with others in the group, and sometimes isolation. As the data of this project will show, the alternation between group and individual voices is reflected in the structure of the reading session itself, with its semi-planned and semi-spontaneous transitions between unison reading, polyphonic responses, and the singling-out by the teacher of the individual child for solo reading aloud, or permission to submit a contribution, or interrogation about knowledge and attentiveness.

The anxiety, for teachers as well as learners, which attends the aspect of solo performance is particularly marked in relation to the complexities of the alphabetic code.

2.5.3.3 The alphabetic code is more complex than it looks.

Much has been written about the affordances offered by a system of symbolic communication ‘capable of representing any speakable expression ... by means of remarkably few symbols’ (Adams, 1990 p19). However, as I have indicated in section 2.5.1, the alphabetic principle, that a specific speech sound can be represented by a specific symbol, does not apply to English orthography in any simple manner.

A more fundamental level of difficulty inheres in the fact that in learning written language, the child is striving to master an extra layer of mediation between elementary perception and reality. Spoken language provides the first such layer: in learning words for things, the child acquires a symbolic tool-kit which frees him or her from the need for gesture in the immediate presence of objects (Vygotsky, 1978). Written language vastly expands this tool-kit, not least by obviating the need for face-to-face communication, but children have to learn that the shapes written language presents them with are not symbols of objects (in the way that pictures are), but symbols of the abstract components of spoken words, words which are in themselves symbols. Moreover, this second-order symbolism operates at several levels in English orthography: at the level of the phoneme - reliably only for

consonants - at the level of onset and rime, at the level of the morpheme (Goswami, 2008; Nunes & Bryant 2004), and in instances where contemporary spelling continues to represent extinct pronunciations (for example in such common words as *eye* and *one*) at the level of the whole word.

2.5.3.4 All of these complexities interact in the reading session

In this section I have argued that while there is some truth in the ‘common sense’ idea that reading is (1) passive, (2) largely solitary, and (3) a process of decoding print into word meanings, all three aspects of this ‘simple view’ overlie complexities which the teacher has to deal with while putting the hegemonic policy based on the simple view into effect.

A group of children sharing a book with a teacher bring to the event their own shared and individual needs, abilities and interests. While they may all be looking at the same page, what they are seeing and understanding will be different. Some children will be struggling to construct the sounds of words grapheme by grapheme, or the meaning of sentences word by word, or the meaning of the text sentence by sentence. Others will be reading more fluently, but the pace and focus for *every* individual will vary throughout the course of the session in response to the content of the unfolding text. The transparency of meaning afforded by easily readable parts of the text solidifies into opaqueness whenever an unfamiliar word, idiom or grammatical structure is encountered. Responses to the meanings of the decoded words will also be kaleidoscopic because of the idiosyncratic connotations that individuals bring to these words. Moreover, another layer of complexity is added to the reading session because the teacher herself brings her own biography as a reader and as a reading teacher to the event.

However, in spite of these complexities, most children in mainstream education appear to learn to read successfully, in the sense of being able to decode, regardless of the methods that are used to teach them. The effects of instruction and of reading diet might nevertheless have effects upon attitudes towards particular texts, and towards reading in general as a source of knowledge and enjoyment (Barrs et al,

2008) It is also a concern that a narrow view of reading as a set of technical skills runs the risk of neglecting what talk based on texts can do for children's thinking and learning in general (Mercer & Littleton 2007). If we value reading, and if we accept Eagleton's assertion that reading involves a surprising amount of labour, it is important that this should not become *alienated* labour that the child clocks-off from with a sigh of relief as soon as school is over.

2.6 Summary of literature review

To conclude this chapter, I will summarise some features of literacy-related classroom talk that would appear from the literature reviewed above to be conducive to reciprocal progress in children's reading development and to their learning in general.

- Shared thinking and collaboration. Children are given opportunities to talk about ideas stimulated by their reading with each other, with the teacher, and with people beyond the classroom – for example, in the form of home-school reading links, or informal suggestions by the teacher to discuss these ideas beyond the reading session.
- Contingent responsiveness. The teacher tries to respond to children's contributions in ways that show that their ideas are respected, for example by probing, or extending them, or by integrating the content of the contribution into the next step of the session. She also tries to encourage the children to respond to each other's ideas in a similarly appreciative way.
- Cognitive apprenticeship. The teacher models ways of taking meaning from text, but allows the learner to integrate these individually.
- Child initiations. Children's contributions are not confined to the response slots in IRE/IRF sequences. They feel confident enough to make their own initiations, and to comment upon initiations made by other children.

- Support for play. Within reasonable bounds, children are encouraged to play with both the language of the text and the ideas conveyed by it. The teacher responds to children's spontaneous language play in ways that balance an appreciation of the value of play with the need to achieve specific objectives.
- Life to text and text to life links. The teacher helps the children to see how their own prior experiences relate to those that are depicted in the reading. She also relates the content of their reading to subsequent experiences that the children have. The children are encouraged to make these links themselves.
- Critical literacy. In ways that are appropriate to the children's age and experiences, the teacher supports children's learning about the sociocultural aspects of literacy, helping them to see how texts carry potentially manipulative messages, are written from specific perspectives, and signify by what they omit as well as what they include.
- Symmetrical conversational rights. As far as organisational constraints allow, the children are encouraged to think aloud and at reasonable length. The teacher does not dominate talk. Children are given the confidence to contribute their own ideas, and sufficient time and organisational space is allowed in the reading session for them to do this.

It is clear that the integration of these features into the everyday literacy experiences of children in the classroom requires a careful balancing of the play of centripetal and centrifugal factors on the part of the teacher. Factors such as adherence to a coherent curriculum, the modelling of reading behaviour, instruction in specific skills and concepts, correction of errors, the teaching and monitoring of turn-taking, listening and speaking protocols, all require the exertion of centripetal control. Factors such as adapting the curriculum to the needs and interests of individual children, the encouragement of personal responses to literature, support for life to text links, questions and other initiations on the part of the child, participation in

humour and language play, and allowances for potentially unruly child to child interaction, all require the management of centrifugal forces. Dialogical interaction involves both of these sets of factors

Therefore the relationship of the literature review to my central research question should be clear:

To what extent and by what means do teachers encourage dialogical interaction in their management of the centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in the discourse of their reading sessions?

The methodology by which this and the other research questions will be addressed is set out in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The sample and setting

The sample consisted of eight groups, each comprising a teacher and a varying number of children, the smallest being four, the largest eighteen. All of the groups were Primary 2, so the children were aged between six and seven. Three schools were involved, two of them in the City of Edinburgh, the third in a village in the Scottish Borders. Both of the Edinburgh schools had mixed populations in terms of language, ethnicity and socio-economic status. The intake of all three schools included children from what the staff described as ‘difficult backgrounds’.

Primary 2 was chosen because my first research question concerns the processes by which children who had been taught to read through a highly structured code-orientated programme in their first year of schooling were being inducted into a more dialogic form of reading as they were introduced to storybooks. The children in Primary 2 were at a point in their education where the centripetal process of inducting them all into a shared understanding of the graphophonic code was met by the centrifugality of individual responses to text. Initially I had planned to interview children as well as teachers about their perceptions of this process, but it soon became clear that this would be impractical (see briefing notes in Appendix 1).

The children in the Schools 1 and 2 had all been through the City’s Early intervention programme of synthetic phonics lessons for the first year and one term of their reading instruction, and were at the time of the study embarking upon the early stages of the Oxford Reading Tree scheme, which consist of a series of simple storybooks, of progressive difficulty, linked by a small cast of characters.

My first research question implies that there are different means by which the transition from code emphasis to meaning/story emphasis might be managed, and an opportunity for investigating possible alternatives was provided by School 3. Here, too, the children had been taught through a structured synthetic phonics scheme,

‘Jolly Phonics’, but this being a small school with only two full time staff and vertically grouped classes, reading policy was conducted in a more individualised and flexible manner. Furthermore, though the school did use a structured reading scheme, this was supplemented by storybooks from outside the scheme, known in primary education as ‘real books’ to distinguish them from scheme books which are written in accordance with controlled readability criteria. Teaching strategies in this school therefore differed from those of the City schools in that there was already a more centrifugal approach from the start of schooling, represented by greater attention to individual children, and more diversity in reading resources; at the same time, however, the highly structured ‘core’ reading scheme continued to exert a strongly centripetal influence.

This was purely an opportunity sample. The schools, and most of the teachers, were known to me through my supervision of students on school placement in their classrooms. In the course of my visits to these schools during the five or six years before the study began, I had engaged in informal discussions of reading policy and practice with the students’ host-teachers, headteachers, and other members of staff. When I decided to undertake the study, I approached the headteachers of several schools in which I had worked, and, once I had obtained the necessary permission from the Education Authority, started to make recordings and conduct teacher interviews in the five from which I received interested responses. One of the five schools fell out of the study due to changes in staff and headteacher. In another, I decided not to pursue the analysis because the final recording was atypical of the rest of the sessions: the group were high achievers who had already acquired fluency in reading.

Each teacher was visited at least three times. The first visit was a preliminary one in which I explained the aims and procedures of the study. In the second I recorded a reading session to check the positioning and reliability of the recording equipment and to accustom the target group to my presence, before making the recording on which the study is based during the next visit.

3.2 Research design

My use of a range of methods for both data collection and analysis was necessitated by the scope of the research questions, and by the longer-term aim of the project, set out in the introduction, which was to help the teachers involved to gain more insight into their teaching of reading.

The first and third research questions, relating respectively to teachers' stated beliefs about the discourse of reading instruction and their perceptions of the value of the project itself, were addressed through semi-structured interview and informal discussion, with some support from questionnaire data in phase one. For the second, central research question I chose a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses of various aspects of discourse, the latter supported by observational notes. A summary of the research design is set out in table 3.1.

3.2.1 Interviewing: Research Questions 1 and 3

Research questions one and three are concerned with teachers' stated beliefs and attitudes:

What do the teachers say about the conflicting factors involved in encouraging dialogue during their reading sessions?

What do the teachers have to say about the value to themselves of the process of analysis that my research has subjected them to?

Because I wanted to address these questions in a way which would be dialogical, and grounded in the teachers' own practice rather than generalities, I decided that semi-structured interviewing, based on classroom observations of practice in the teachers' schools, would be the most direct way of doing this.

However, the use of interviewing in qualitative research has been criticised for a variety of reasons. According to Silverman (2007), it is a symptom of the needs of the 'interview society' for sensation and sentiment; it provides the researcher with the illusion of being able to access the 'inner meanings' which inform respondents' behaviour; it enables the researcher to be highly selective in what to report.

Underlying these criticisms is the belief that interviews involve 'manufactured data', when the researcher should be observing 'naturally occurring' social phenomena (Silverman, 2007 pp 37-60). I would dispute the assertion that human communication can be so clearly divided. While it might appear 'obvious', for example, that a person exchanging opinions amongst friends in a pub is operating more 'naturally' than the same person answering prepared questions in a televised interview, any context is bound to have an effect on the behaviour which occurs within it; and the behaviour will, of course, affect the context within which it occurs. The shape and subject matter of the informal talk and semi-structured interviewing through which I collected the data related to research questions one and three shared many characteristics with conversations about educational policy that occur within classrooms and staffrooms every day; in this, they are as 'natural' to the institution of the school as casual banter is to the institution of the pub, or more self-conscious responses to the institution of the television studio. Issues of power-difference, face and bias will be returned to when I discuss ethics and validity later in this chapter, but it is worth stating here that these issues are present to some degree in all conversations (Cameron, 2001). Attempts to purge research interactions of them are likely to make the encounter much more contrived than it needs to be. As Speer remarks, 'attempts to control bias may not only be futile, but may stifle the very features of interaction that are theoretically interesting' (Speer, 2002, p 513).

Furthermore, my intention was not to pursue the chimerical 'inner thoughts' of other people, by probing into what might have 'really motivated' particular actions, but to listen to and consider what they *said* about actual instances of classroom practice that I had observed prior to phase one, and had observed, recorded and analysed prior to

phase three. Thus, the context of the interviews was collaboratively created, the talk prompted and shaped by shared attention to shared experience. To quote Speer again:

‘Interviewers can be active participants, arguing with members, and questioning their assumptions, just as participants can ‘turn the tables’ on researchers prompting them to explain their questions and offer opinions.’
Speer, 2002, p 513

The dialogic potential of the semi-structured interview was indeed realised in both phases one and three, informing the focus of my subsequent observations in the former, and the assumptions that I had brought to the entire project in the latter.

Table 3.1: Research design summary

Phase and methods	Qualitative	Quantitative
Phase one: Preliminary interview and questionnaire	Research question one Investigating teachers’ stated beliefs about factors affecting discourse in the reading sessions.	
	Identification and comment on common themes and individual responses.	
Phase two: Discourse analysis and observation	Research question two Assessment of the relative strengths and interactions of centripetal and centrifugal forces in the discourse of the observed reading sessions.	
	Identification of discourse patterns and pattern-breaking episodes; consideration of institutional, textual and interpersonal factors shaping participation; issues of conversational rights, power and resistance; locating instances of contingency, critique, creativity, play and text-life links.	Mean length of turn and length of longest turn for teacher and child. Relative durations of teacher and child talk times. Focus durations and changes. Comparative frequency of teacher and child initiations. Frequency of contingent teacher responses. Comparative frequency of display and referential questions.

Phase three: Post-analysis interview	Research question three Investigating teachers' perceptions of the value of involvement in the project.	
	Identification and comment on common themes and individual responses.	

3.2.2: Research question two: a rationale for mixed methods

In a discussion paper about mixed methods, Bannen (2005) states that paradigmatic choices should not be 'made in a philosophical void'. She continues;

... research questions should be thought about in relation to epistemological assumptions ... Thus in terms of best practice, researchers may well be advised to consider what kind of knowledge they seek to generate.

Bannen 2005 p7

My own philosophical position is a pragmatic one. I am sceptical about research positions which commit to an incompatible dualism between 'objective' and 'subjective' approaches, preferring an approach which:

Recognizes the existence and importance of the natural and physical world, as well as the emergent social and psychological world that includes language, culture and human institutions, and subjective thoughts.

[and]

Replaces the historically popular epistemic distinction between subject and external object with with the naturalistic and process-oriented organism-environment transaction.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004 p 18

The epistemological implication of this pragmatic ontology is that, because the knower is always embedded in a real but socioculturally and linguistically mediated world, *certain* knowledge is impossible, but *useful, provisional* knowledge can be

achieved through one or more historically accredited channels, including those related to both the 'exact' and the social sciences. By 'historically accredited channels', I simply mean those methods of finding things out that are based on 'warranted asertability': knowledge that has provided grounds for effective action (Dewey, 1920). This is of course, a simplified account; I will return to certain aspects of it in my discussion of validity and research ethics.

Banner's advice to researchers about considering the type of knowledge they seek to create reflects the pragmatic view that the method or methods should match the subject matter under investigation (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A mixed methods approach matches a field of enquiry in which agents are involved in both the imponderabilia of social interaction and the need to make careful, accountable judgements about measurable aspects of their work. My second research question relates to such a field:

To what extent and by what means do the teachers encourage dialogical interaction in their management of the centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in the discourse of their reading sessions?

Teachers conducting group reading instruction are orchestrating complex behavioural patterns comprising relevance, motivations, meanings, emotions, preferences, understandings, interpretations, and the linking of fiction, verse and wordplay to the personal lives of several individual children. All of this involves interactive subtleties of language, silence, gesture and gaze. Such qualities are difficult, if not impossible, to quantify.

But they are also working with variables that are quantifiable. They watch the clock as they allocate reading turns, and rations of their own attention, to the individuals in their care; they are obliged to monitor the number of words recognized and books read by each child, attend to the readability indices of those books, and assess the pace at which such progress is achieved; they must look from the immediate context of *this* reading event to its implications for the child's reading score, rank within the

class, and level of performance on national scales. All of these are quantitative concerns. Accordingly, my analysis of the interactions includes calculations of the mean length of turn of teacher and child participants, comparative durations of teacher and child talk times, the durations of attention to various aspects of the session, and the comparative frequency of teacher and child initiations.

These quantitative factors are very closely related to qualitative outcomes. For example, the frequency of child contributions to talk in the reading group, and the number of different children who participate, which are *quantitative* factors, have a direct bearing on the *quality* of dialogic interaction within the group.

A mixed methods approach is also germane to the pursuit of the third research question, which requires attention to seamless imbrication of the quantitative with the qualitative.

What do these teachers have to say about the value to themselves of the process of analysis that my research has subjected them to?

Addressing this question obviously necessitated close discussion with teachers about both the specific occasion of the session analysed, and their more general approach to discourse and literacy. For these discussions to be mutually informative and satisfying, the data and analyses I brought to them had to be as rich and as relevant as possible. To have provided only quantitative or only qualitative resources would not have reflected the teachers' own lived experiences of their teaching, as it was communicated to me in phase one of the project, and observed in phase two.

My use of mixed methods is not therefore an attempt to corroborate the findings of qualitative enquiry with quantitative, or *vice versa*. Rather, the two perspectives are both essential to the creation, for my informants as well as for me, of a unified representation of what happens in the sessions. As Bannen points out, this reflects the original meaning of triangulation in surveying, where 'the second bearing is not

used to check or verify the first bearing; rather each complements the other in order to identify a particular location.’ (Bannen, 2005 p12)

Of course, for the purposes of analysis and writing-up, the quantitative and qualitative had to be treated separately, a process more akin to the taking of scans or X-rays through living tissue than to the labelling and calibration of the parts of a dissected cadaver. However, in the sections which report the findings of quantitative analyses (4.2.1 and 4.2.2) I have discussed those qualitative aspects of the social context which appear to have affected the frequency and duration of certain discourse phenomena, and in the section which reports qualitative analysis (4.2.3) I have made exact references to frequencies and durations when this has appeared to support my interpretations of events.

3.2.3: Discourse analysis

The term discourse analysis subsumes fields of study which attempt to investigate the ways in which spoken and written texts are structured, the functions they serve in specific communicative contexts, and the ways in which these texts and contexts reciprocally affect each other (Cameron, 2001). Applied to education, discourse analysis investigates how learning is mediated by texts and talk, the ways in which speech might ‘unite the cognitive and the social’ (Barnes, quoted in Cazden, 2001, p60) and, more recently, how sociocultural and political forces underlying classroom talk and texts contribute to learner and teacher identities (Luk, 2008).

For the purposes of this project about talk, I have focused on spoken language, and have based the transcription and have used a modified Exchange Structure system (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975) to transcribe and code the data. The IRE/IRF structure of this system, outlined in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2, was the foundation for much of the quantitative analysis, and for some aspects of the qualitative.

As I have indicated in the Literature Review, the Exchange Structure system was specifically constructed to model the distribution of linguistic forms typical of

classrooms. Sinclair and Coulthard depicted classroom talk as a hierarchical system in which *lessons* could be analysed into phases, which they termed *transactions*. Each transaction consisted of a number of *exchanges* between the teacher and the pupils.

Exchanges typically took the form of a cycle of three moves: Initiation, Response and Evaluation or Feedback. Moves are realized through *acts*, the lowest rank of the hierarchy, which are defined by the functions they serve in interactions. For example, Initiations can be realized through questions, prompts or informing statements, Responses by replies or bids to reply, Evaluations by acknowledgements or comments.

This is a top-down, severely structural approach, which as Cutting (2001, p26) points out, ‘does not accommodate easily to the real life pressures and unruliness of the classroom’; it posits a very traditional classroom in which the teacher controls discourse, rather than one in which children talk to each other in groups, pairs and whole-class circles, and in general are prepared to question the teacher. Nor does it account for ‘the ways in which teachers design their turns at talk by using various resources including syntax, prosody, and nonverbal behaviours’ (Mori and Zuengler, 2008, p18). However, the IRE/IRF structure has ‘been found to be the most common sequence in teacher-led discussions in classrooms all over the world. (Giraldo, 2008). In the decades since the 1970s, researchers investigating classroom discourse this pattern have pointed out not only its limitations as a form of effective discourse when strictly adhered to, but also its variations and complexities (Barnes, 1976, Wells, 1999, van Lier, 1996, Buzzelli, 1996).

It became clear in the course of the analysis of my data that the IRE/IRF cycle, even with the adaptations summarized above, and the ones I made myself which are set out in section 3.5.4.5 below, does not capture the complexities of the interactions during the reading sessions. Nevertheless, I considered it appropriate to use an adapted version of Sinclair and Coulthard’s system because the rhythms of interaction and the regularity of teacher and learner roles and power positions that it

codifies were quite clearly present, as a *basso ostinato*, beneath the more improvisatory forms of talk in the observed sessions. Sessions most frequently opened and closed with IRE/IRF sequences, and the pattern was reimposed by the teacher whenever the talk in between deviated too far from this structure. In this sense, the degree to which the sessions conformed to the IRE/IRF pattern indicated the strength of the centripetal force being brought to bear on the talk.

However, in adopting and adapting this system, I was aware of the danger of prematurely categorizing the data and thereby losing the idiosyncratic and context-sensitive aspects of the interactions. As Seedhouse (2004, p64) points out, ‘... IRE/IRF cycles perform different interactional and pedagogical work according to the context in which they are operating.’

In seeking to maintain a focus on the specificities of the exchanges, I tried to incorporate a Conversation Analysis (CA) perspective (Seedhouse 2004), considering how participants’ utterances were not merely the products of an homogenous institutional context, but were also active in creating and changing that context. As Halliday suggests,

... the context of spoken language is in a constant state of flux, and the language has to be mobile and alert ... the complexity of spoken language is more like that of a dance; it is not static and dense but mobile and alert.

Halliday, 1985, quoted in Seedhouse, 2004, p64

The CA perspective affords a view of interactions independent of any *a priori*, institution-determined structuring; the analysis turns towards the ways in which participants co-construct the context of the reading session turn by turn, sometimes assuming roles (such as clown, sage, show-off, helper) quite independent of the teacher-pupil dyad assumed by the IRE/IRF cycles of Exchange Structure:

CA considers that any speaker’s talk at any moment should be viewed as a demonstration of the speaker’s understanding of prior talk by the coparticipants, and simultaneously its delivery and design should be viewed as a reflection of the speaker’s orientation and sensitivity toward the particular coparticipants ...

for CA researchers, the IRE structure simply presents a regularity to which the participants may or may not demonstrate their orientation.
Mori and Zuengler 2008 p18

In my analysis of the sessions, I take CA perspective by considering utterances not just as components in teacher-led exchanges, but also as dynamic contributions by individuals which build upon preceding sequences and shape the ones to come, reflecting the Bakhtinian insistence on the addressivity of speech (see section 2.2.2) and the idea that centripetal discourse structures established by tradition and authority are inevitable met by the centrifugal forces of individual voices.

Both Exchange Structure and CA have tended to regard the discourse under investigation as a phenomenon that can be studied in isolation from a wider social context. Exchange Structure seeks to codify classroom interaction without considering the historical origins of IRE/IRF or its pedagogical implications; CA, in its 'pure form' confines itself to how participants organize and sustain spoken interaction without considering such factors as participants' age, gender or socio-economic status (ten Have 1990). However, as Fairclough (1989, p12) says, conversation does not exist within a social vacuum. Educational discourse is not just a matter of top-down adherence to traditional structures on the one hand, or bottom-up, participant-centred creativity on the other. Classroom talk around texts is connected to language and literacy policies imposed at various levels, and to more general societal expectations. Accordingly, my approach also incorporates a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective. Rogers (2008) summarises this approach thus:

A ... shared assumption within the CDA tradition is that discourse is defined as language use as a form of social practice. Moreover, discourse moves back and forth between reflecting and constructing the social world. Seen in this way, language cannot be considered neutral, because it is caught up in political, social, racial, economic, religious and cultural formations ... CDA is a socially committed scientific paradigm that addresses social problems through a range of methodological approaches with the ultimate aim of raising awareness of the ways in which language mediates asymmetrical relations of power.
Rogers, 2008 pp 55-56

My qualitative analysis of the transcripts will therefore address such issues as teachers' accountability to the demands of policy, and the ways in which they exercise power in their balancing of centrifugal and centripetal forces.

3.3 Validity and the researcher in the data

Hammersley states that validity signifies '... truth: the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers' (quoted in Silverman, 2000 p157). In quantitative research, this implies that research procedures should accurately measure what it was intended to measure; I describe my attempts to ensure 'objective' accuracy in the measurable aspects of the research under data collection in section 3.5. Validity, applied to qualitative aspects, implies that accounts should provide enough plausible data and reasoned argument based upon this data to be convincing to an informed audience. Given the design of this project, the first audience I needed to convince consisted of the participants themselves.

I tried to ensure validity in this respect by ensuring that all participants were aware of the key concepts informing the research and of their relevance to their own teaching; that the quantitative procedures were transparent; that all of the data upon which both quantitative measures and qualitative comments were based were available to the participants in the form of unedited audio recordings and full transcripts of these recordings, sent to them as promptly as possible; by providing explanations of all coding categories used in the transcripts, and, during phase three, encouraging them to question my assignments of utterances to categories.

Another aspect of validity as 'convincingness', taking into account the needs of an 'external' audience, demands that the researcher consider the impact of his or her own presence and values on the setting of the research, on data analysis, and on the 'truth status of a respondent's account'. (Silverman, 2006 p 290).

It is axiomatic of all forms of research that the researcher affects the data. Even in positivist traditions where certainty about the physical characteristics of a putative 'real world' are being pursued through experimental methods, knowledge creation is

mediated by the 'paradigmatic presuppositions' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) generated by the history and structure of the researcher's discipline. In social research, the effect of the researcher on the environment and participants being researched is more obvious.

In my own case, I was known to the teachers, and perhaps to at least some of the children, as a person whose job it was to assess student teachers. The teacher usually introduced me to the group as a visitor, sometimes adding words to the effect of, 'whom you may have seen in the school before'. I sat slightly outside the circle of the group as I watched, made notes and operated the relatively unobtrusive recording equipment. Apart from some subdued participation in the laughter that accompanied humorous exchanges elicited by the stories, I remained silent until the end of the sessions, and I did not directly intervene in the group other than by my presence.

The influence of mere presence does, however require some reflection. I was known to the teachers to have an interest in early literacy. It seems likely, therefore, that the adult participants, at least, would be performing their teaching under what they would see as a judgemental gaze, and that their responses to interviews and questionnaires might be similarly affected. For my own part, I brought with me the preoccupations which had motivated the project: a desire to find data interesting enough to sustain my involvement in it, and a hope that my analysis of this data might be of use to the teachers involved. On both sides there were asymmetries of different types of knowledge and hence of different types of power. The teachers probably considered me as somebody who could help to inform their future practice by offering some kind of 'expert analysis' of episodes of teaching; this perception was confirmed during phase three. I looked to them for knowledge about the content and operation of current policies, teaching materials and means of assessment. On both sides, this exchange was tinged with anxiety: I tried to regard myself as an investigator rather than an adviser, and strived as diplomatically as I could to make this clear to the teachers; some of the teachers I observed mentioned that the experience of having their teaching observed, annotated and recorded reminded them of being vulnerable students again.

All of these factors could be construed as having a potentially ‘distorting’ effect on the data, but only if one adheres to the notion that research can somehow provide a faithful representation of the social world ‘undistorted’ by the fusion of the perspectives and biographies of the observer and the observed. An alternative viewpoint holds that the very existence of the social world, and of consciousness itself, is constituted by this fusion: ‘He who can see the back of my head creates my being’ (Bakhtin, 1990). Therefore all observed acts, and all acts of observation, are inevitably conditioned by all the acts that have preceded them. Applying this standpoint to action research, Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) argue that the researcher must accept that

... people and the way they act are ... formed historically – that they always come to situations that have been preformed, and in which only certain kinds of action are now appropriate or possible. Moreover, this view is also conscious that it must take into account that people’s own perspectives, and their very words, have all been formed historically and in the interactions of social life – they are historically, socially and discursively constituted.
p 577

For the researcher this means that ‘there is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it’ either by ‘becoming a fly on the wall or a full participant’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p17 and p19). Hammersley and Atkinson argue that researchers can attempt to minimise and/or monitor the reactivity of participants to the researcher; I tried to do the one by adopting the low profile described above, and the other by keeping field notes of encounters. More importantly, they also argue that interactions between participants and researcher in themselves provide data: “how people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react in other situations” (p17).

In my own case, the way in which teachers choose to perform lessons before, or answer questions posed by, a judgemental academic with an interest in literacy become in themselves part of the data to be analysed. However, this process of reflexivity, of repeatedly subjecting data to alternative interpretations, is in itself

problematical. On the one hand it can degenerate into a game of second guessing what informants 'really' believe, or how they would 'really' behave in the absence of a particular observer. This game privileges the perspective of the analyst, who plays it behind the backs of his 'subjects', while pursuing the chimerical 'real meanings' supposedly hiding behind the protective personae donned by informants while performing the roles of teacher and interviewee.

On the other hand, turning suspicion on oneself and continuously second guessing one's own second guesses in the light of one's own research desires leads only to an infinite regress, propelled again by the idea that successive cycles of self-doubt and other-doubt might somehow lead to a foundational certainty about the way things 'really' are. As Schwandt, (quoted in Smith and Deemer, 2000) suggests, such certainty is not to be found.

We must learn to live with uncertainty, with the absence of final vindications, without the hope of solutions in the form of epistemological guarantees. Contingency, fallibility, dialogue, and deliberation mark our way of being in the world. But these ontological conditions are not the equivalent to eternal ambiguity, the lack of commitment, the inability to act in the face of uncertainty.
p884

In the end, I decided that a reasonable balance of trust and consideration of the demands of 'face' had to suffice. I also hoped that the long term nature of the project, based as it was on familiarity with a small number of schools, repeated visits and a sharing of my data and analyses with the participants, would help us all to come to a shared understanding about some of the factors affecting the discourse.

The issues arising from the relationships between the researcher and the people whose practice is being researched have clear ethical implications, which are discussed in the next section.

3.4 Ethical aspects of the research

The official aspects of research ethics related to this project were unproblematical. The proposal was approved by the University Ethics committee and classed as being non-interventional. The project did not require any changes to be made to the normal classroom experiences of the children or teachers involved. I sent an outline of the proposal to the schools and authorities involved. Permissions to proceed were obtained from the Children and Families division of the City of Edinburgh, from the headteachers of each of the schools, from the individual teachers who participated, and from the parents of the children in their classes. Local authority permission to work at School 3 was arranged by the headteacher. Thus the principles of informed consent and minimal intervention were satisfied. Copies of the relevant documents are in Appendix One.

However, ethical issues emerged in the course of conducting obtaining data and conducting analysis in all three phases. I was an intruder in the workplace of busy people doing complex jobs, allowed access out of their consideration. Hammersely and Traianou (2007) suggest five principles, paraphrased below, that educational researchers in such positions need to consider in relation to the people that they study.

1. Avoiding doing any **harm**, not only in the immediate circumstances, but also beyond this particular setting and this particular time.
2. Respect the **autonomy** of people, particularly their freedom to make fully informed decisions about participation.
3. In making research results public, ensure that the **privacy** of informants is protected.
4. Consider appropriate means of **reciprocity** for the time and effort that informants contribute to the researcher's work.

5. **Equity:** treat all informants equally, and as equals.

I considered that my obligation to the teachers was to be as little a nuisance as possible, to answer all questions fully and honestly, and, above all, to avoid causing any distress to them or interference to the work with the children.

The later two points presented ethical difficulties. As the project progressed into the third phase, it became clear that at least some of the teachers wanted practically-oriented feedback, rather than just the data and analyses exemplified in Appendices 2 to 5. This was to be expected, given the circumstances outlined in the preceding section, and my obligation to provide feedback is implied by principle three, by the more over-riding principle of openness, and by the research design itself, especially research question three. However, in these specific circumstances, giving feedback, even if done as delicately as possible, risks infringing the principle of avoiding harm, while offering practical advice raises more complex questions involving both the principle of equity and that of avoiding harm.

The information that I communicated to teachers as the foundation for phase three discussion took the form of 'neutral' description and analysis, but in the field of teacher-child relationships, any description of how a teacher works, including the decisions they make about what and how much to say, is loaded with implied judgements. For example, a simple statistical recording that in a particular session a teacher spoke for more than 80% of the time and the children less than 20% - an actual finding - in a field of discourse where it is 'common knowledge' that teachers should talk less in order to allow children to talk more, *does* constitute a form of judgement. It was in fact read as such by the teacher involved, who had in phase one expressed a strong commitment to encouraging dialogical interaction.

Offering practical advice was even more problematical, as my very presence as a researcher was predicated on the fact that I had little knowledge of what was going on in the setting. Offering specific advice would therefore have risked the asymmetry

of knowledge mentioned in the preceding section mutating into an exercise of ill-informed power.

In trying to deal with these problems, I used the following strategies.

- Informants were kept as fully and promptly informed as possible. CDs of the recorded sessions sent out immediately after the sessions, and transcripts and analyses as soon as possible afterwards.
- Statistical findings of the type mentioned above were never presented in isolation; the full transcript, a second copy of the CD, and the full range of analyses accompanied them.
- During the phase three discussions, I drew the teachers' attention to how the dialogue in their classrooms related to similar findings from other research. I also drew their attention whenever appropriate to what the data and analyses revealed about their strengths, and about the real and some times stressful challenges they faced during the sessions.
- I avoided offering specific advice, without evading direct questions. I tried to ensure that my comments always arose from and returned to the actual data, and that any practical implications were the result of shared attention to this data.

The outcomes of these strategies, and the ethical implications of the responses of the teachers to my research, will be further discussed in the findings chapter, and in the conclusion.

3.5 Data collection

I carried out data collection in three phases, related to the three research questions.

3.5.1 Phase one

The data collected in this phase related to research question one:

What do the teachers say about the conflicting factors involved in encouraging dialogue during their reading sessions?

Teachers' opinions about how to teach reading, and the role of conversation in the process, were sought during informal discussions early in the project. These took place during the preliminary visits in which I explained the project to teachers who had expressed an interest in participating. In the case of the Edinburgh schools these data were recorded as field notes made in situ and written up shortly after the visit; I conducted a recorded interview with the two teachers at the Borders school.

In addition to this, after the visits I sent a questionnaire to each of the twelve teachers initially in the study, consisting of the following questions:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of working within a structured programme to teach reading?
- What role should discussion play in the teaching of reading?
- What are the main things a teacher has to focus on when working with a reading group?
- What are the most important ways in which teachers or other adults can help children learn to read in class?
- Apart from learning about reading, are there any other ways in which sharing books and other texts might be good for a child's education?

- What are the most important difficulties teachers may have in teaching reading, and how might they be overcome?

Even after sending out reminder letters, I received back only three completed forms, so the main evidence from this phase is in the form of the field notes from the initial interviews, reconstructed from memory and from some fragmentary phrases written in the midst of conversation during visits to schools.

3.5.2 Phase Two

Data collected in this phase related to research question two:

To what extent and by what means do the teachers encourage dialogical interaction in their management of the centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in the discourse of their reading sessions?

The main part of the data is in the form of audio-recordings of eight reading sessions, one from each of the teachers who remained in the study after the preliminary phase. In the Edinburgh schools, five of the sessions consisted of the teachers conducting their groups through read-alouds of titles from the Oxford Reading Tree, and one of a teacher conducting a read-aloud from a story book from a parallel reading scheme. At the Borders school, the teachers conducted the children through readings of ‘real books’ related to the theme of Halloween, which was about to take place on the day of the final recordings.

There were both differences and similarities in the overall pattern of the sessions. In five of them, the teachers assigned a rotation of read-aloud turns to individual children to ensure the systematic participation of all group members. In three of sessions, the teacher took the lead role in reading aloud, signalling when she wanted all of the children to participate in unison recitation, or individuals to take turns reading alone for parts of the text, or to ‘help’ her in identifying specific words. In these sessions the teacher used a large format ‘big book’ rather than a standard-sized book for each child. In all of the sessions, the teachers controlled the interactions,

kept the focus on a single text, conducted a combination of phases of children reading together and reading alone, and provided opportunities for children to focus on words, the story, and extra-textual knowledge and experiences related to the story.

The sessions were recorded using an Edirol R10/2 digital recorder, backed up with an iPod voice recorder. None of the teachers wanted the added difficulty and potential disruption of using video equipment, and neither did I.

While the teachers were being recorded, I remained in the classroom and made informal observational notes of anything going on in the group that I thought might be of interest. This included a rough seating plan with codes for the children's names and gender, paralinguistic information such as movement, gesture and gaze that would not be captured by the recording, notes on the reading material and other teaching resources being used, and descriptions of the physical environment. I also made a note of any instances of children assuming noticeable roles in relation to each other, the text or the session itself.

3.5.3 Phase Three

Data collected in this phase related to research question three:

What do the teachers have to say about the value to themselves of the process of analysis that my research has subjected them to?

The final phase of data collection followed my analysis of the data from the second phase. My intention here was to assess what use, if any, the teachers could make of the experience of being recorded, and having their use of language, and their shaping of the children's use of language, analysed and displayed in various ways. This phase began shortly after the recording, when I sent each teacher a CD of the session, with a request that they listen to it and note anything about the session that they found interesting or surprising. I informed the teachers that I would be sending them a

transcript and set of analyses in due course. After several months, each teacher was sent a pack containing the following items:

- another copy of the CD.
- a transcript of the session with codings for turn number, time, speaker, turn content, and focus of attention (see below).
- a table and pie-chart showing focus of attention durations.
- a colour coded time line for the session, representing both focus durations and focus changes during the session (see below).
- measures of comparative participation by teacher and children comprising:

mean length of turn

length of longest turn

quantities of talk time

numbers of initiations made by teacher and children

an inventory of the content and context of all child initiations

- separated lists of the content of teacher and child turns, set out so that teachers could see at a glance differences in the lengths of turns.
- a comparison of the frequencies of display and referential question types.
- a breakdown of word recognition strategies modelled by the teacher during sessions in which children had difficulties in decoding words.

This information was given to the teachers in both tabular and diagrammatic form (see Appendices) in an attempt to provide several ‘pictures’ of the session as well as simple statistical description.

The teachers were asked to look through the material in advance of a final interview, which was based upon the following framework of questions, modified by the teachers’ responses and the questions they asked themselves about the analysis:

- Is there anything you want to me to clarify about the documents?
- What did you find most interesting about the transcript?
- What do you think of the relative proportions of talk contributed by you and by the children?
- What about the distribution of turns/contributions between the children?
- Could you tell me about what makes you decide to focus and switch focus as the reading evolves?
- Do you have any other comments to make?
- What, if anything, has the analysis shown you about your conduct of the session, and the nature of the session in general, that you didn't know before?
- Have you learned anything useful from your participation in the research?
- If you do see some use in participation, do you have any ideas for how these procedures might be adapted for Continuing Professional Development?

I conducted interviews with five of the eight teachers. One teacher had gone to work in Malawi since the initial recording, another was on maternity leave, and a third had left her school. In most cases the interviews were recorded and supported by notes made in situ. One interviewee asked not to be recorded.

Table 3.2 Summary of data

	Teacher	Years in service	Story	Group size	Lesson duration	Date of recording	Date of final interview
School 1	1.1 KL	30+	Running Water	4	8m 5s	22/11/7	13/3/09
Edinburgh	1.2 LB	2	Spike	18	13m 10s	19/11/7	13/3/09
School 2	2.1 LE	2	New Trainers	8	13m 10s	29/1/08	3/5/09
Edinburgh	2.1 LY	3	Storm	8	21m 11s	13/6/7	n/a
	2.3 FR	5	Vikings	8	14m 24s	13/6/7	n/a
	2.4JP	20+	Spaceship	5	19m 37s	13/6/7	3/5/09
School 3	3.1 MN	20+	Wolves	10	10m	30/10/7	14/5/09
Borders	3.2 SC	10+	Winnie the Witch	10	21m 27s	30/10/7	n/a

Table 3.3 Time line

Autumn term 2006	Spring term 2007	Summer term 2007	Autumn term 2007	Spring term 2008	Summer term 2008	Autumn term 2008	Spring term 2009
Preliminary visits	First recording sessions	Main recording sessions. begin transcription and analysis			Continue transcription and analysis. Analyses sent to teachers.		Interviews and completion of Phase 3 analysis.

3.6 Transcribing and coding

The audio files were stored and played back via iTunes. The quality was generally good enough to allow me to transcribe confidently most of what had been said. I

occasionally had to consult copies of the texts that the children were reading in order to disambiguate some words and phrases. There were, however, several occasions upon which it remained impossible for me, even after several re-playings, to discern particular words and phrases, usually in cases when there was background noise, or several children speaking together. In all such cases I have recorded the indiscernible words as a line of Xs.

The conventions used in the transcripts are outlined below

<i>Biff and Kipper were in the garden.</i>	Words read aloud.
What is the <u>title</u> of the book?	Emphasised word.
Jason would you like to- let's all read together.	Break or interruption.
I wonder if ...	Trailing off.
What. Does. This. Say?	Word by word speaking.
{3}	Pause, with the number of seconds indicated.
{laughter}	non verbal communication
{indicates the book}	
{addressed to Sally}	
What else can you see [in the picture? [A sloth.	Overlapping speech.
How long do you think it took them to build the rocket? [Five minutes.]	Simultaneous speech: the second utterance is completed before the first one finishes.

XXXXX No:.....	Unclear speech, the number of Xs roughly corresponding to the length of the unclear part of the turn. Prolongation of a word or syllable.
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3.6.1 Layout of the transcript and coding

Turn	Time	Spkr	Content	F	M	A
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The transcript and coding was organised into a tabular format with the content in the centre and three coding columns on either side.

The left-hand codes record the ‘turn’ number (the first column), the ‘time’ elapsed from the beginning of the transcript at which the turn began (the second column), and the ‘identity’ (e.g. ‘teacher’ or ‘child 1’) of the speaker (the third column), as far as I was able to pinpoint this. These columns were the most straightforward to fill, but they were far from unproblematical. I have deliberately referred to them as codes because filling them required decision-making rather than a simple recording of objective data.

The central column is the ‘content’ or text column, a record of everything that was said during a turn, separated into lines which are intended to show my classification of the separate acts performed by the speaker during each turn.

Turning now to the right-hand codes, the fifth column is the ‘focus of attention’ column, an indication of which aspect of the reading session the speaker is attending to during this turn; the codes here reflect the fact that during the short duration of a session in class, group and individual attention can shift, sometimes abruptly, from the decoding of a spelling pattern in a story book, to speculation about a character’s mood or motives, to discussion about the function of punctuation marks, to the

behavioural conduct of members of the group. These examples are not exhaustive. Attention shifts are usually, but not always, initiated by the teacher.

The sixth column indicates the 'move' in the turn. The categories here are adapted from Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) analysis of teaching events into a hierarchical exchange structure of lessons, transactions, exchanges, moves and acts. While the structure of the reading sessions did sound at first hearing as if they conformed to the pattern of a sequence of cyclical IRE/IRF exchanges, the fit was not a neat one. For example, in many cases, the Evaluation move which closes an exchange in the Sinclair and Coulthard system served at the same time as the Initiation of a new exchange. The multifunctionality of many of the turns in the data is reflected in the adaptations I have made to Sinclair and Coulthard's codes. This multifunctionality is also signalled by the preceding Focus column: for example, a teacher-led IRE/IRF sequence when attention is focused on word aspects is likely to signal a straightforward teaching exchange; when it is focused on a text-life link it is more likely to be working at learner engagement or motivation. More complex possibilities are signalled when, for example, the focus of attention shifts within an exchange.

Finally, the seventh column classifies each of the subdivisions of the 'act' in the move. This is a miscellany of forms of speech attempting to capture in a limited set the diverse choices made by speakers in 'realizing' the moves in the preceding column. For example, a teacher may signal a new exchange with an Initiation move in the form of acts, that I labelled display question, referential question, directive, read aloud, comment or snippet of teaching. When a child is responding to the initiation, he or she may simply give an answer, hesitate for thinking time, or maintain silence (the child may also *not* respond directly, but make his or her own Initiation); the teacher's evaluation move may take the form of praise, simple acknowledgement, correction, elaboration of the response, or ignoring of it. The purpose of attempting to identify the variety of acts deployed is to inform qualitative speculation about how speaker choices on an act-by-act basis affect the level of contingency and hence of dialogic interaction in the session. The sort of question that I asked myself was 'Is the 'common sense' view that referential questions are more

likely to lead to less text-reproductive responses than display questions' supported by the data?' The acts are based upon earlier models of discourse analysis (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, Flanders 1970) but are essentially an ad hoc grouping of categories emerging from the data.

More detail on how each of the columns was constructed is provided below, together with a rationale for including each code in terms of its role in my analysis of the sessions.

3.6.1.1 Turn

The column labelled 'turn' was originally labelled 'utterance'. It was my initial intention to follow a developmental linguistic line and to take the utterance, in the sense of one or more of the syntactically coherent units constituting a turn (MacWhinny 2000), as the unit of analysis. It quickly became clear that if the focus of the project is interaction between speakers, then the dynamic between turns would be more important than the syntactic structures within them. Accordingly, I adopted Bakhtin's criterion for an utterance, which states that 'the boundaries of each concrete utterance as a unit of speech communication are determined by a *'change of speaking subjects'* (Bakhtin 1986). This means that each utterance in the transcripts corresponds to what in developmental linguistic studies (such as the Bristol Language Development Project, Wells 1986) would be referred to as a *turn*. In such studies, turns consist of one or more utterances, the boundaries of which are determined by syntactic, semantic or phonological criteria, or some combination of these, depending upon what the researcher is investigating. The focus is usually upon the linguistic development of individual children or groups of children as evidenced by increasing length and complexity of utterances. The main focus of this study is interactive participation: the degree to which, and the variety of ways in which, children and teachers contribute to the social-pedagogical event of the reading session. Although the length and complexity of their individual contributions are relevant considerations, it seems more in keeping with a study of interaction (as well as more practical) to treat the entirety of each such contribution and its relationships

to adjacent utterances as the unit of analysis, rather than to attempt to anatomise its internal structures.

A major problem with Bakhtin's criterion is that even within the highly structured turn-taking of the reading session, 'a change of speaking subject' is seldom as clearly marked as he describes. 'The utterance is not a conventional unit, but a real unit, clearly delimited by the change of speaking subjects, which ends by relinquishing the floor to the other, as if with a silent *dixi*, perceived by the listeners as a sign that the speaker has finished' (Bahktin, 1986 pp71-72). There are several overlaps of speaker contributions in the data, which I have indicated with conventional square bracketing (see separate table of transcription conventions). A less common, but more difficult, phenomenon is simultaneous speech. This occurs in a number of different ways. Sometimes two or more children contribute simultaneous 'turns' with different content. Where the content of each strand of the medley is clear, these have been numbered and bracketed. Any unclear content has been marked by a number of Xs roughly corresponding to the length of the unclear word or words. A more difficult case is when, on a very small number of occasions within the data, the teacher allows children to speak together as a group or in pairs. Here, of course, there are very many voices and it is impossible to fully discern what any one child is saying. As both the number and length of turns are phenomena under investigation, this is problematical, and will be referred to as a complicating factor when the dialogues in which it occurs are being discussed. For transcription purposes, these episodes have been numbered as one turn, but the fact that they are actually polyphonies has been stated between brackets in the content section.

3.6.1.2 *Time*

In the preliminary discussions before data collection began, the teacher participants were unanimous in stating that pressure of time was one of the most, if not the most, powerful factors in how they organised talk in their reading sessions. I therefore considered it important to attempt to represent time distribution as accurately as possible, in terms of both teacher and child speech durations and the amounts of time

spent focussing on the different aspects of the sessions, in order to present the teachers with some kind of graphic representation of how time was used.

The iTunes time-scroll display enabled me to identify the time of the beginning of each utterance and its duration. This also enabled me to work out an approximation of the total amount of time occupied by the teacher in relation to the amount occupied by the children as a group. Timing of individual children was more problematical because of their numbers and the uncertainty of identifying them, though this was easier when particular children played prominent roles in sessions. However, the approximations are rough, because the timer works only on a second-by-second interval. Where there are two or more speakers overlapping, or talking simultaneously, the times that I have given to individual speakers are more approximate. Teacher time may have been over-estimated because I have included in it teacher-controlled pauses such as 'wait time' after questions before the teacher nominates a child to answer, and pauses when a child's hesitation has been counted as teacher time on the criterion that a turn is the time occupied by one speaker between the words of adjacent interlocutors. This might seem to exaggerate teacher time, but can be defended on the grounds that during this time the teacher retains the 'right' to re-prompt or redirect the task. In one of the transcripts, the Wolves, the teacher sometimes pauses after the close of an exchange before asking another question, or initiating in some other way. Again, these silences have been incorporated into teacher time.

To check against any gross errors in time allocations, for three of the sessions I compared the 'clock-time' for the whole of the recorded session in iTunes with the total amount of time arrived at by adding the time allocations for teacher and child talk, and the total amount of time arrived at by adding the time allocations for foci of attention.

3.6.1.3 Speaker

The groups consisted of a teacher and between four and eighteen children. In the content section of the first draft transcripts, teachers' and children's names were first written down as they were spoken. These were later anonymised in the write-up. Individual children in the speaker column have been identified as Ch1, Ch2 etc. Names were linked to Ch- codes through the teacher's use of the name as an 'invitation' to speak, and by field notes and seating diagrams made in the classroom during observation and recording. Where it has been impossible to decide which individual is speaking, I have used the code ChX. Where two or more children are speaking in unison, for example, when the teacher prompts the group to read aloud together, I have used the code ChU. Where the number in the group exceeds 5 or 6, I have found it frequently impossible to identify the individual speakers named in my field notes. Rather than using guesswork, I have used the ChX code. This reduces my ability to say anything confidently about the role of individual children in interactions, though it is still possible to discern in at least some parts of some sessions the influence of children assuming salient roles, for example the 'expert' in the Spaceship session, the 'outcast' in the Storm, and the dialogue between the 'clown' and the 'sage' in the Running Water session

3.6.1.4 Focus of attention

Focus of attention is an attempt to categorise the different areas of the reading experience that the teacher (and occasionally the child) attempts to direct the group's speech and thoughts toward in the course of particular turns or sets of turns. The overall reasons for including this are

- to give teachers a picture of the complex sequences of attention shifts that constitute the reading session, and hence to enable them to consider the factors involved in such shifts.

- to enable them to compare the amount of time, and hence the degrees of emphasis, that they give to the different aspects of the reading process (eg word decoding, story comprehension, literacy knowledge etc).
- to provide a conceptual map for locating episodes of dialogical interaction, and investigating the environments in which they are found; an important question to be pursued is ‘which zones of attention are more conducive to longer, more complex and more initiative-taking moves by the children?’

The six categories of focus zone that emerged from the data are described below.

3.6.1.4.1 Miscellaneous

The attention of the group is directed towards the general classroom environment or to specific events within it. When directed by the teacher, this typically includes organisational aspects of the reading session at its beginning and end, and dealing with disruptions and interruptions. When directed by the child, it may include questions and comments about such organisational matters. (For example, *I’ve lost my book.*) It may also include ‘off-task’ or ‘attention-seeking’ behaviour.

Examples

1	0.00	T	Right what we’re going to do is I’m going to read you your new story.	M
---	------	---	---	---

23	1.29	Ch3	{laugh, whistle, [brrrrr!]}	M
24	1.35	Ch1	[Mrs Laurie Sally’s being-	M

The rationale for including this category was that I wanted to be able

- to give teachers as accurate as possible a picture of how time is spent in the sessions by highlighting points at which time is seemingly not being spent on reading.
- to emphasise the importance to the learners of events within the session that may seem peripheral to the teacher because they are not directly concerned with reading, but are nevertheless intrinsic to the social experience of reading instruction. The exchange between the two children in the second example is an extract from an antagonistic parallel dialogue that lasted almost the length of the session.

3.6.1.4.2 Word

The attention of the group is directed towards the spellings and sounds of individual words, or towards spelling and sound similarities between two or more words. The intention of the focusing move is to teach or consolidate graphophonic knowledge and decoding skills in order to regain access to the narrative when a word recognition difficulty presents a barrier to this within the current session, and in so doing to empower the children to use such skills in their future reading. Very occasionally within these data, the teacher may simply tell the child a difficult word, but it is much more common for the teacher to guide the child through a sounding out process, or to remind children of rules which complicate this process.

Examples

42	3.30	Ch3	<i>Animals had..</i>	W
43	3.34	T	<i>Noh..</i>	W
44	3.36	Ch3	<i>Nothing to .. drink but ..</i>	W
45	3.41	T	<i>Honnn.....</i>	W

46	3.42	Ch3	<i>Honey.</i>	W
51	6.42	Ch13	Erm .. /mi/ .. /mi/	W
52	6.50	T	Now. It's a magic e word Jasper, so the /e/ changes to /i/.	W
53	6.54	Ch13	<i>Mike.</i>	W

The prevailing orthodoxy in official reading policy is that a graphophonic approach to word-recognition is the essential foundation of the reading process (see literature review). The reading session enables children to practice graphophonic skills in the context of the potentially enjoyable, motivating, and instructive reading of holistic texts. However, there is a danger that an over-emphasis on word level decoding can limit the time available for such holistic experience. Decoding strategies are essentially text-reproductive, and there is a case for advising teachers that in the context of story reading, more time can be made available for holistic experience by either telling the children words, or encouraging them to 'guess' the word by considering what would 'make sense' in relation to *both* initial letters *and* the overall context, thus forming a link between word level and story level processing. (There are *no* instances of this once common strategy in the data.) A prevalence of word level exchanges in the session may also alert teachers to the possibility that the selected text is too difficult for its meaning to be easily accessible to at least some members of the group. If this is the case, then opportunities for dialogue around the meaning of the text will of course not occur.

3.6.1.4.3 Story

The attention of the group is on the events in the story. This occurs when the children's reading aloud is going fluently, relatively unhampered by word level difficulties, or when the teacher is reading aloud to the children, or when the group are talking about what has happened or what may happen next. Teachers and children frequently refer to the storybook's illustrations during these phases.

Examples

15	1.06	T	Who can remind me what the story's been about so far? {2 } We've only read a few pages. Who can remember what's happened in the story so far? Lucy.	S
16	1.20	Ch3	Erm its about erm a boy and a man go to the go to Ted's house to see the dog and the house and it's had five babies.	S

80	6.09	Ch4	<i>He wanted to get in the rocket ship with Wilf and Chip.</i> <i>Go away Floppy, called Chip.</i> <i>The rocket is going to take off.</i>	S
81	6.25	T	Poor poor Floppy. How do you think Floppy's feeling Jo?	S
82	6.30	Ch3	Sad that he can't come.	S

The rationale for this coding this is that the experience of being able to read an enjoyable story is the main motivating force for reading instruction in secular education systems. In the successful reading of a story, the separate strands of the text-processing are braided into an experience that makes sense to the child. Discussion of story is also a promising source of the dialogical interactions that are held to be beneficial to learning. The reading session is the main school-based context in which the ability to read stories (and, eventually other texts) independently is developed. However, it is clear from even casual observation of reading sessions that other foci of attention, which provide less opportunity for dialogue, occupy a lot of time in the sessions.

3.6.1.4.4 Literacy knowledge

In this phase, attention is still on the text, but not so much on reconstruction/comprehension of this particular story as on specific elements of punctuation, typography or physical features of the book. When the teacher directs attention to this zone, she is using the book as a vehicle for teaching these elements of the curriculum. When the child does so, it usually arises from curiosity about unfamiliar physical aspects of text. (This occurs only once in the data.)

Examples

70	8.47	T	Put your hands up if you can tell me how many sentences are on this page. {3} Sara?	LK
71	8.51	Ch14	Two.	LK
72	8.53	T	Two. There's two sentences. How can you tell? {2} Do you know? Lennon?	LK
72	8.58	Ch15	Because there's two full stops.	LK

9	0.33	T	Who's the author of or story? {5 } Lucy?	LK
10	0.44	Ch3	I. Read.	LK
11	0.46	T	I. Read, and it's actually the same person who's written all of the stories isn't it? And remind me what an illustrator is? {4 } Erik, do you know what an illustrator does?	LK

The questions of how and when to teach children such technical aspects of language as punctuation and grammar are perennial. The problem has been expanded in recent decades as the literacy knowledge curriculum has expanded to include such items as genres features and publishing information. The reading session provides a context in which such instruction can be transmitted and made meaningful. Conversely, attention to such features as punctuation and typography can, if carefully ‘braided’ into the appreciation of narrative, enhance the children’s understanding and enjoyment of the current text in particular, and the way in which texts are constructed in general, and thus help to inform children’s conversations about the text. However, mere ‘unbraided’ information transmission about technicalities reduces the potential of the session for such dialogue.

3.6.1.4.5: General knowledge

Book content is used by the teacher as a vehicle for extending the children’s general knowledge and vocabulary, or as an opportunity for the children to display the knowledge that they already have.

Examples

1	0.00	T	Now did anybody learn anything about the Vikings last night? Could you put your hand up if you managed to find anything out. What did Jamie find out?	GK
2	0.10	Ch1	That they made weapons.	GK

47	3.43	T	First of all. Where do you get honey from? Who gives us honey?	GK
48	3.45	Ch5	mmmmmmmmmm	GK
49	3.46	Ch1	Bees.	GK

50	3.47	Ch3	Bees bees bees.	GK
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The importance of the teaching and display of general knowledge in the reading session is similar to that of literacy knowledge. The session provides a meaningful context for the transmission, reinforcement or elicitation of facts and concepts related to the text, and conversely, the sharing or activation of this background knowledge can help to deepen understanding of the text. As with literacy knowledge, the quest to find a new ways of communicating general knowledge has become more pressing recently as the primary curriculum, in Scotland at least, has moved back towards a cross-curricular or inter-disciplinary model. The diversity of topics and settings provided by children's storybook material provides a wealth of opportunities for teachers, or children, to inject 'interesting' material from various subject areas into the conversation around such stories, but the potential for this to become an conversation-stopping exercise in 'information-dumping' is clear.

3.6.1.4.6: Text-life link

In these phases, the teacher invites the children to converse about how some event or aspect of the story relates to the children's life experiences, or how their life experiences relate to the story. Alternatively, the child may offer such a link to the conversation about the text. This focus is derived from Cochran-Smith's 1984 study of the socialisation of kindergarden children into literacy, in which she contrasted life-to-text with text-to-life prompts (Literature Review). For the purposes of this project, I have conflated the two categories.

Examples

5	0.26	T	The title of the story is the storm. Has anyone ever been in a storm before?	LK TL
6	0.35	C1	Erm I've been in a storm erm on holiday one time.	TL
7	0.41	T	You've been in a storm on holiday? And what happened in the storm?	TL
8	0.44	C1	Erm it-	TL

9	0.45	T	What was the weather like?	TL
10	0.46	C1	Erm cloudy.	TL

31	2.46	T	And where is South America? Who knows where South [America is?	GK
32	2.48	Ch1	[Eh-whe- there it is there it is. {points to globe} It's there over [there!	GK
33	2.51	T	[That's it down there. That's [right.	GK
34	2.53	Ch1	[That's where I come from.	TL

As points at which the material of the story impinges upon the lived experience of the children, turns in the text-life link phase provide the richest opportunities for developing dialogue, and also for enhancing comprehension and appreciation of the text by integrating vocabulary, concepts and narrative structure into the children's previous knowledge. They are also points at which the sequential threads of both the textual narrative and the teacher-led route through the space-time of the session can get tangled and broken as participants take off in personally chosen directions. They are perhaps the most powerful of the centrifugal forces pulling the dialogue away from curricular objectives. On the other hand, text-life links can be tokenistic, and lead the conversation into dead-ends.

3.6.1.5: Moves and acts

In attempting to apply Sinclair and Coulthard's IRE/IRF framework to the data, I found that although many of the turn sequences did appear to conform to this pattern, many others did not. In some cases a teacher initiation led to a response which was then disputed by other children, the first response thereby acting as an initiation in itself. Sometimes children interrupted the teacher-led IRE/IRF exchange by making initiations of their own. When this happened, the teacher would sometimes make an R move to these child initiations in the form of a question serving to enable the teacher to retake the initiative. At other times, child initiations were ignored. Often,

the teacher's E was not a simple evaluation of the response, but an extension or elaboration of it. Examples of these sequences are provided below.

Conventional IRE/IRF sequence

59	4.29	T	How did they get up to the tree-house?	S	I	dq
60	4.33	C5	The ladder.	ST	R	a
61	4.34	T	The ladder. They climbed up the ladder good.	ST	EV	ac pr

Children breaking the sequence and the teacher restoring it

85	6.40	T	Could they have fitted Floppy into the space ship?	S	I	dq
86	6.42	ChU	No:::	S	R	a
87	6.44	Ch1	Yes they could.	S	R	a
88	6.46	T	Could they?	S	EVI	dq
89	6.47	Ch1	They could have put him in that big can.	S	R	a
90	6.50	T	Oh they could have done but I'm not sure that would have been very good for Floppy. Right let's [turn over.	S	EX I	com dir
91	6.54	Ch3	[those those XXXX they go [in spaceships	TL	I	com
92	6.54	Ch2	[cause dogs can't go in space ever XXX	TL	I	inf
93	6.54	Ch1	[don't turn [over cause XXX	M	I	dir
94	7.00	T	Hang on a minute.	M	I	dir
95	7.05	T	Oh so you have – right – We've got- we've done Floppy ran off – ran away. <i>He wanted to get in the rocket ship [with Wilf and Chip.</i>	M S	I I I	com com rd
96	7.11	Ch3	Oh the radio is going to fall down [and break!	S	I	com

97	7.13	Ch1	[No no I know what's going to happen next!	S	I	com
98	7.16	T	What do you think is going to happen next?	S	RI	rq
99	7.18	Ch3	We haven't read page 2.	M	I	com
100	7.19	T	[We did.	M	R	inf
101	7.19	Ch4	[I did.	M	R	inf
102	7.20	T	We have yes we did Darrel read it. So turn over. So what do you think is going to happen next?	M S	R I I	inf dir rq

In the final drafts of the coded transcripts, all of the moves were assigned one of the following codes:

I: an initiation which begins a new exchange, closing the former exchange and moving onto a new topic, or elaborating some aspect of the previous exchange.

R: a more or less immediate response to an initiation, its content determined by the demands of that initiation.

EV: evaluation without extension or incorporation into the next initiation

EVI: evaluation which forms the basis of the next initiation

EX: evaluation which extends the response made by the learner

EXI: evaluation which both extends the response and incorporates it into the next initiation.

Table 3.4: Summary of moves and acts in final coded transcripts

Initiation	Response	Evaluative feedback	Evaluative reInitiation	Extending feedback	Extending reInitiation
I	R	E	EVI	EX	EXI
Display question (dq)	Answer (a)	Praise (pr)	Display question	Reformulate (ref)	Reformulate + question
Referential question (rq)	Hesitate (hes)	Acknowledge (ac)	Referential question	Elaborate (el)	Elaborate + question
Directive (dir)	Bid	Reject (rej)	Comment	Comment	Comment
Inform (inf)	Read aloud	Correct (cor)	Probe (pb)		Probe
Read aloud (rd)	Refuse to respond (ref)	Ignore (ig)	Prompt (pt)		Prompt
Comment (com)	'Don't know' (dk)				
Bid (bd)					

3.6.2: Critical commentary on the coding

The more I examined the data, the more convinced I became that every single utterance ever made in any context is *inevitably* both a response to *all* previous utterances, and a prompt to *any* future ones. My rationale for using a modified IRE/IRF coding is that the differentiation of utterances into these categories within the relatively contained context of the 'lesson' (for the purposes of the project, this is 'the reading session') provides one type of picture of the flow of power within the lesson. As mentioned in section 3.2.3 under discourse analysis, it was as if the

IRE/IRF pattern was present throughout the sessions as a ground bass, with both children and teachers extemporising from it when the talk arising from the content of the text became animated enough for them to temporarily free themselves from its constraints.

However, the assignation of an utterance to a particular category at the level of either move or act remains problematical. Mercer, Wegerif and Littleton (2004, p194) criticise the use of *a priori* coding schemes on the following grounds;

- actual talk, as data, may be lost early in the analysis. All a researcher works with are the pre-defined categories;
- pre-determined categories or other target items will limit analysts' sensitivity to what actually happens;
- the analysis cannot handle the ways that meaning is constructed amongst speakers, over time, through interaction.

On the one hand, it is clear that there is no one to one correspondence between specific types of utterance and the functions that they serve across different contexts. On the other, it is also clear that, examined in specific contexts, features such as teacher (or child) monopolisation of Initiation moves, or a preponderance of praise at the 'act' level, provide interesting ways of comparing and characterising sessions.

The crucial point in considering Mercer et al's criticisms is that this strand of analysis is far too weak to support any kind of argument if it is separated from all of the other strands in the interpretive cable. Interactions must be examined turn by turn before *and after* these turns are categorised and used in aggregate form to suggest general patterns of interaction. The same point applies to all of the other quantitative measures such as mean length of turn, and talk and focus durations. These procedures are useful in providing pictures which suggest provisional patterns, but these picture must be consistently re-examined in the light of the data as a whole.

In this project, the a priori categories I borrowed and adapted from Exchange Structure discourse analysis were used to suggest regularities in the data, but my interpretations of them were always subjected to further consideration from the perspectives of conversational analysis and critical discourse analysis. Most importantly, these interpretations were also offered for consideration to the teachers themselves.

3.7 Quantitative analysis summary

The data analysis procedures applied to the coded transcripts in phase two were selected in order to answer the central research question motivating the project.

To what extent and by what means do the teachers I am observing encourage dialogical interaction in their management of the centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in their early years reading sessions?

My calculations of mean length of turn (MLT), length of longest turn (LLT), and total amounts of talking time constitute an attempt to provide pictures of the 'extent' of relative contributions to the sessions by children and teachers, and hence an indication of dialogic interaction. Teacher dominance would indicate a centripetal tendency; child dominance a centrifugal one (though such a simple dichotomy would need to be confirmed by qualitative considerations). As well as the tabular data for these measures presented in the next chapter, teachers also received bar-graphs and pie-charts derived from them, and a print-out of separated teacher and child turns that provided another visual representation of quantities of participation (see Appendices 2 to 6).

The following points about these measures are important.

- The MLT for the children is based on an amalgamation of all turns for all children within a particular session, and therefore takes no account of variations between the degrees of participation of individual children.

- The MLT for both children and teachers includes reading aloud turns, so it does not distinguish between the children's own spontaneous or elicited language production and recitation of the author's words. This of course risks giving an exaggerated impression of the extent of the children's participation. I would argue, however, that participation in reading aloud is participation in a classroom speech-genre, and omitting words read out would give a far more distorted picture than including them.
- The LLT measure, on the other hand, excludes reading aloud turns for both children and teachers. This was in an attempt to provide a better indication of the potential of the children's own language in the context of the reading session.
- The MLT and LLT for all participants includes hesitation sounds, repetitions, backtracking and incomplete words. Again, these items represent significant participation by children. In Wood's words 'frequent pauses, "hms", repetitions, backtracking and attempts at self-correction ... suggest both that [the child] is aware of, and *working on*, the many problems that he has yet to solve in making what he says sensible to another person' (Wood 1998, p 152).
- The total quantity of talk time includes pauses. Most of these are teacher controlled 'wait times' after asking questions, but they also include hesitations within child turns.

The other quantitative measures were

- durations of focus of attention zones over the course of the session.
- a timeline of focus of attention transitions.
- a comparison of the number of initiations made by teacher and children.
- a comparison of the frequencies of display and referential question types.

To reiterate the points made in section 3.2.2: I am aware that representations of complex social phenomena in the form of numbers and diagrams have limited value. A picture is not the same thing as the event it depicts. Amalgamated measures cannot indicate how the content of specific utterances contribute to a conversation. Measuring and counting length and number of utterances cannot give a sense, for example, of the power of silence, or of how a single, brief utterance can provide a turning point, climax or resolution to a conversation. My rationale for producing and presenting this abstracted and decontextualised data was twofold. Firstly, it reflects findings that suggest that the sheer *quantity* of language that children participate in has significant effects on their learning (Wells, 1986; Hart and Risley, 1995; Snow 2006). Secondly, I hoped that these representations would serve as interesting conversational prompts during phase three interviews by emphasizing some features of the sessions and ignoring others, after the manner of X-ray slides, or scans, or caricatural drawings. Simple statistical descriptions were an attempt to augment the verbal descriptions more typical of qualitative research.

3.8 Qualitative analysis summary

The qualitative analysis of phase one of the investigation addresses the first research and involved a simple sorting of the disparate data into common themes, guided by the notion of centrifugal and centripetal forces discussed in the Introduction.

Phase two of the investigation addressed the central research question, this time examining the details of how each teacher went about balancing the centrifugal trends of dialogic interaction with the centripetal demands of coverage and control as the session unfolded. The analysis focussed on the following aspects of the transcripts.

- The discourse environment of child initiations: what aspects of text and talk precede these ‘turn-breaking’ moves, and how, if at all, are they followed up by the teacher or other children?

- Teacher and child contributions which make links between text and real life, or intertextual links to previous reading, or to other forms of vicarious experience.
- Instances of the use of text patterns or events as occasions for language play.
- Instances of children making critical and/or creative comments on the text.
- Assessment of the teachers' dialectical and dialogical strategies in the form of contingent responses which sustain child engagement by seeking to clarify, extend or contest contributions by children, while keeping the interactions open and supportive.
- Assessment of how the teacher manages shifts of attention between foci of attention, and in particular, how accurate reading of the text is reconciled with children's comments and interpretations.

Phase three of the project addressed the third research question:

What do these teachers have to say about the value to themselves of the process of analysis that my research has subjected them to?

This phase extended this qualitative inquiry by bringing the teachers' perspectives to bear on the recordings and transcripts of their sessions, and on my phase two quantitative analyses of these data. The semi-structured interviews were based on the prompts listed under Data Collection in section 3.4.3. Interview responses were analysed for common responses to the experience of reflecting on their own work and the researcher's analysis of it, but I also tried to detect particularities arising from the specific experiences of each participant.

3.9 Problems and limitations

- Incomplete data for phase three, during which only five of the eight teachers were available for interview. Therefore, the achievement of my aim of maintaining thorough and coherent connections between different phases of the research was severely compromised.
- Length of time between phases, particularly phases two and three. The transcription and analysis of data took me far longer than I expected. It is inevitable that both the teachers' interest in the project and their memories of the session under analysis declined between the phases. This and the preceding point meant that my goal of making the project dialogic in a thorough sense failed to some extent.
- Reliability of focus of attention demarcations. For the most part, the categories proved distinct enough for boundaries between them to be clear to me in the context of my memories and recordings of the sessions, but they were not discrete. For example, Literacy Knowledge and General Knowledge could be distinguished from Story because, when participants were sharing such knowledge, the discourse was no longer about the story, but elements of the curriculum related to but antecedent to the story discussion. However, consideration of the story was merely suspended, and when resumed may be subsequently informed by the content of the LK and GK foci.
- The most difficult coding decisions were in distinguishing between Story and Text-life. There is a sense in which any response of any kind to any text constitutes a text-life link, since it necessitates some kind of reaction between the marks on the page and the physical and cognitive behaviour of the reader. I confined this coding to episodes where the child either volunteers a reference to personal experience, or where the teacher's initiation demands that the child searches life experience for a response. Questions such as 'How do you think Floppy is feeling?' or 'What do you think dad should do next?'

did not qualify, as in order to formulate the expected response, the child does not have to go beyond the story so far.

- There is also a problem in classifying all fluent reading aloud turns as Story. This assumes that, because the children are reading the *words* with ease, they are focussing on the *story*. It is possible that they might be merely decoding the former without understanding the latter. This is a difficult problem to resolve, because researchers do not have direct access to children's comprehension levels. I would defend this coding on the pragmatic grounds that the Story code has only been used when the audio-file shows fluent reading of the text. As all the texts appeared to be age and content appropriate for the child or children reading them, it is at least reasonable to assume that they were following the storyline with at least some level of literal understanding. The uncertainty of making external judgments about comprehension is a point I will return to in the conclusion.
- Another concern was the fact that I was applying the same set of analytical procedures to two similar but distinct types of reading event: five 'circular' reading sessions when children take it in turns to read individually, and three teacher-led Big Book sessions when the teacher leads the reading and signals the group and individuals to join in. However, my research aim was to investigate the oral language deployed and elicited by the teachers during whatever instructional practices the schools used to support the children's transition from the phonics-based programme to book reading, rather than to focus on a particular form of reading organisation. In all eight cases, there were alternations of child and teacher voices, shifts of focus, and links made between reading and life. As it turned out, the sessions were as similar to and as different from each other in the aspects I was investigating, regardless of the method. The exception to this was word recognition. In the three Big Book sessions, there were no occasions when children had decoding difficulties. In the other five sessions, the number of decoding difficulties ranged from two to nine.

Finally, there is the perennial problem of being able to claim anything of wider relevance from a small sample of episodes, involving small numbers of similar but irreducibly different human beings, engaged in similar but significantly different practices. As Harrison remarks,

Traditional research methods find it close to impossible to capture and make generalisations about the heuristic and context-bound literacy acts in which individuals struggle to clarify goals, deal with partial understanding, then go on to transform knowledge, juggle rhetorical constraints and bring to bear a lifetime of cultural, social and linguistic practices as they compose a text. (Harrison 2004 p 85)

In educational research it is common to focus on quiddities, to look for the essence of good teaching, to try to identify common characteristics of a set of practices that constitute effective reading instruction, to try to ‘capture generalisations’ by drawing out patterns and themes that might be relevant to classrooms beyond the ones under investigation. In the summary sections of the next chapter, this is what I will be doing, but with a greater emphasis on the unique characteristics of the eight events, as I attempted to construct them from observation and analysis, throughout the chapter, and due deference to the haecceity of each event whenever I attempt to make more general remarks. Phase two research was based on the work of eight individual teachers, and its findings were offered back to them. The account might be of interest to other teachers, but whether it is of practical relevance depends on the unique circumstances of their own teaching.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Phase one: the teachers' beliefs

Data gathering in this phase, which sought to identify teacher's beliefs about how to teach reading, and the role of conversation in the process, took place during the preliminary visits. The quotations in this section are taken from interview data from two participants, questionnaires from another two, and both questionnaire and interview data from a fifth. My summaries are also informed by notes made during and after conversations with all participants. I have grouped them below under four headings based on a clustering of the six questionnaire items (Methodology 3.3.1). These are

- The role of structured reading programmes
- The role of discussion
- The main aspects of reading that teachers should focus on during group reading sessions and the strategies teachers should use.
- The benefits and difficulties of shared reading in groups

I chose to use these overlapping categories in an attempt to approach the research questions from a number of related perspectives. Because of this, there is an overlap in the content of the findings under some of headings.

The first paragraph under each heading restates the relevance of the findings below it to the research aim. I then report the findings, and finish with a summary of points to be discussed in following sections.

4.1.1 The role of structured reading programmes

The use of reading schemes has often been criticised by people committed to dialogic literacy education. Reading schemes consist of sets of purpose written

books, arranged in levels of progressive difficulty. The gradient of difficulty is often determined by formulaic application of ‘readability factors’ such as word and sentence length, and the proportion of predictable to decodable words (Hiebert and Martin, 2001). Because of this, they are held to be potentially low in ‘text engagingness’ (McCarthy and Hoffman, 1995) – a construct referring to variable combinations of design, content and language factors that attract children’s attention, arouse their desire to read, and in group situations their readiness to talk about what they are reading. Furthermore, reading schemes consist of not only books for children, but also of prescriptive instructions for teachers on what to do and say during lessons. Hence, even if the reading material is high in engagingness – and it was clear from my observations that this was the case for at least some of the children in all of the sessions – the teachers’ freedom to build contingent dialogue from children’s responses is restricted. On the other hand, supporters of reading schemes have argued that the reassuring nature of the routines associated with their use provides a context conducive to talk. Oxford Reading Tree (ORT), for example, the most widely used scheme in Scotland, features a small cast of characters, whom the children get to know, as they would those of a soap opera, as this group of friends and family members move between real-life and fantasy settings. If predictability of texts and the routines associated with reading texts are accepted as facilitating factors in learning to read confidently, and hence of being able to talk about what you have read, then the texts used during the recorded sessions provide this.

All of the teachers were aware of the potential tension here. Teacher 2.1 acknowledged that ORT provided:

The expectation of a time format and content that children are familiar with.
 Easy monitoring of performance.
 The children see themselves improving so there is an overall momentum that would be difficult to equal without a scheme.
 (Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

But she also identified constraining factors:

Set pace may hold some back.

Less experience of real books.

(Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

Teacher 1.1 accepted that ORT provides ‘Logical progression with appropriate vocabulary and content’ but that ‘It can be rather contrived in its effort to be logical and therefore boring’ (questionnaire).

Teacher 1.2 responded in a similar way, perhaps implying by her use of the definite article that a reading scheme can give access to a common underlying sequence of reading learning outcomes:

Structured so every step is covered in the logical order: vocabulary, content, common words.

(Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

Her reservations concerned text engagingness, but stated that this was a problem more relevant to older readers:

Can be constrained and stilted – isn’t a problem for young children who are just beginning as reading is still a great excitement, but it can put older more confident readers off.

(Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

My informal notes from discussion with the other participants in schools 1 and 2 confirm that the main perceived advantage of a reading scheme is that it provides an easily monitorable route of progression through a series of increasingly challenging texts. The main perceived disadvantage is that in providing such structured progression, text engagingness can suffer. Three of the teachers from school 2 stressed that this difficulty could be remedied by ensuring that children experience supplementary readers from outside the scheme, but admitted that finding time to broaden experience in this way was difficult. The teachers in school 3 agreed with these points, but appeared less anxious about the problem of finding time for wider reading, as the group sessions they conducted customarily included a mix of scheme and non scheme books.

To summarise, participants confirmed the common perception of learning to read as the acquisition by individual learners of a set sequence of technical skills, reflected in the use of reading schemes. It was notable that the teachers, while commenting on the text engagingness of the schemes, did not make any evaluative statements which were specifically about the potential of the reading materials for inspiring dialogue or shared activity.

4.1.2 The role of discussion

The main aim of this project is to explore the reciprocity between literacy and oral language. I have indicated in the literature review that learning to read can be facilitated by engagement in discussion about the ideas met with in reading material. I have also indicated that discussions based on reading experience can reciprocally facilitate the further development of oral language and hence of thinking.

All of the teachers appeared to agree with these ideas.

Promotes interest facilitates understanding general enhancement of experience.
(Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

Very important- without understanding reading is meaningless- teach children to read for understanding not read like a parrot.
(Teacher 1.1 questionnaire)

JP added a further point about the special role of child-to-child talk:

Often children are better at explaining to each other what is going on or what has been missed. It's a group dynamic which adds to the whole process.
(Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

Teacher 3.1 described the role of preliminary discussion of a book, based on its title and cover illustration, for both the activation of the learners' background knowledge related to the reading, and the way in which the teacher can make an on the spot

assessment of the level of this background knowledge in order to teach responsively to it:

... it does two things: it starts to get them excited about the book hopefully and predict what the story might be about – it also gives you some idea about their knowledge what they know about different kinds of stories ... If they come up with nothing you've got a different set of questions to ask than if they've given you a lot of rich ideas about it – so it is to draw on their knowledge but it's also to do with getting them to look ahead – it's like the dot dot dots – to be kind of in there and working out what's going on.
(Teacher 3.1 interview)

Teacher 3.2 made a point about the affective and class management aspects of discussion:

It's formative assessment on the hoof isn't it, in that you're planning your lesson ... I just calm them down and from their own point of view assess how responsive they're going to be to know what sort of pace to go at.

She also argued that discussion in the course of reading provided opportunities for teaching literacy knowledge within the integrative context of story:

You can link it on with other things they've been doing in the literacy like making sentences on their fingers ... *{counts words on her fingers}* 'I can see a red bed with a white blanket'. So they see it's made of different words and what do have between each word? A space. And what do you have at the end?
(Teacher 3.2 interview)

Teacher 3.1 indicated the potential conflict between such embedded teaching and the need to keep children engaged with the motivating enjoyment of story, but linked the costs and benefits back to formative assessment and the importance of allowing children to display and deploy their own knowledge and ability to speculate during the reading session:

In a way it's a bit like what you do with your children at night – you wouldn't go so deeply into it – they'd get frustrated at not getting the story – but just talking around it and their other knowledge gives some children a chance to shine verbally and show what they know, because if you keep to a script you wouldn't

get information about that particular child's strengths – sometimes you get surprised - children who've struggled suddenly coming up with really clever ideas about what will happen next or what the character's thinking.
(Teacher 3.1 interview)

Teacher 3.2 also stressed the importance of discussion in integrating home and classroom life:

One of the things we've identified here is that children struggle to make links between their learning and their own lives. They seem to think they come to school to do school, in a way that is quite challenging to us sometimes – they find it hard to empathise with characters in a book ... a lot of them don't have access to literacy at home, so you try to do what you would do at home with your own children - try and make it as informal as possible.
(Teacher 3.2 interview)

Teacher 1.1 made a similar point, indicating that the affective benefits and 'socialising into literacy' role of preliminary discussion were more important at the early stages than accomplishing an accurate reading of the book:

It's so important to get the children talking about their own ideas around the book especially when they've had no experience of books, so when we were doing "Come on the Reds" I didn't mind at all that we didn't finish it. The important thing was to get their ideas out.
(Teacher 2.2 field notes)

Two further points from field notes deserve mention here. Most of the teachers commented ruefully on the amount of time taken up by discussion, Teacher 2.3 remarked that 'when you're in a rush, discussion is the first thing to get neglected'. Another commonly acknowledged point, related to this, was that the unpredictability of children's contributions made it difficult to *both* keep group attention *on* the text, *and* to take up and extend the ideas that children bring *to* the text. As Teacher 3.1 remarked in interview, 'the children bring things to the reading as well, so whatever you've got planned, they'll broaden it out to things you've not even thought about'.

Teacher 1.2 cited the example of a story from the Edinburgh Reading Scheme in which a group of children camping out are woken up by a cow visiting their tent in

the middle of the night. When she asked the group what the children might do, one of them replied that they should butcher the cow and have a midnight feast. This led to the start of an animated exchange about what they should do with the surplus meat. LB intervened to bring the conversation back to the text. I considered this a particularly vivid example of the dynamic between the children's rhapsodic imaginings, originating in, but pulling away from, the text, and the teacher's obligation to return attention to the task of word decoding and literal level text comprehension.

To summarise, all of the teachers expressed the need for reading sessions to feature discussion of the meanings conveyed in text, rather than just the accurate reproduction of the author's words by the children. They acknowledged the importance of using discussion to socialise children into the uses and pleasures of reading. They saw this as particularly important for children whom they perceived as coming from homes where opportunities for engaging with books might be scarce. They saw reading-based discussion as offering opportunities to engage in embedded teaching of literacy and general knowledge, and to conduct formative assessment. One teacher mentioned the potential of child-to-child interaction for peer scaffolding of comprehension. Another made it explicit that discussion can empower children by allowing them to contribute otherwise 'invisible' knowledge and ideas to the group.

The teachers were also aware that incorporating discussion into the reading session could be problematical. They perceived a danger that it can draw children's attention away from the text, and thus detract from both the immediate aim of comprehending the text-at-hand and the longer term aim of fostering enjoyment of texts in general. They were aware that time factors generated a struggle between the demands of text reproduction and skills teaching on the one hand, and the development of personal response and text-life links on the other. Further complications arise from children's ability to introduce an element of creative chaos into interactions that could disrupt the teacher's own agenda for how the session should go.

4.1.3 The main aspects of reading that teachers should focus on during group reading sessions, and the strategies that they should use.

Teachers' beliefs about which aspects of reading they hold more important will clearly have an effect on the types of interaction that are encouraged in the sessions they teach. A focus on automatic decoding skills implies a very different type of classroom communication than a focus on reflection. Often the teacher's beliefs will be over-ruled by prescriptive policy when it comes to strategic decision making, but as the persons putting policy into effect, it is likely that most teachers retain a degree of control over how this affects the details of classroom discourse.

Responses here reflected again the common dichotomy made between emphasis on the graphophonic code and emphasis on the comprehension and enjoyment of meaning. All of the teachers expressed some variant of the view that they should ensure a balance of emphasis between these two aspects, but there were clear differences in the preferences expressed. These are represented in the questionnaire data extracts set out below, where Teacher 2.1 appears to champion a meaning based emphasis with a nod towards the code, 1.1 reversing these emphases, and 1.2 dividing her commitment more equally.

Understanding of the text not just sounds of the words but authorial intent and narrative as well as purpose and pleasure of texts.
(Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

Make sure everyone is following the words together.
Develop awareness of words spaces punctuation.
Strategies for decoding words phonics or using pictures to aid meaning
(Teacher 1.1 questionnaire)

Punctuation, content, vocabulary, new words, above all enjoyment and excitement in the written word.
(Teacher 1.2 field notes)

When the same teachers were asked about the most effective strategies for helping children learn to read, however, a more complex mix of responses was produced:

Experience as large a range of texts as possible
Give them basic literacy skills – phonics and spelling and grammar

Create a structured reading experience which enables consistent progression for the child at their level of ability
(Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

Convey an enjoyment of reading ourselves
Listen and help with hard words
Extend vocabulary
Attempt to have a quiet environment
(Teacher 1.1 questionnaire)

Reading to them
Write for them so that they see the written word
Modelling good habits
Having things labelled
(Teacher 1.2 field notes)

The term ‘balance’ occurred frequently in my conversations with all of the teachers about how policy should be put into practice. The six teachers in the two Edinburgh schools were working with children emerging from a highly prescriptive code-emphasis programme, and all saw it as their responsibility to ‘balance’ the move towards more exploratory text experience with consolidation of the decoding skills that the children had been taught earlier. The two teachers from the borders wanted to ‘balance’ experience of ‘real books’ with the security afforded to children – and their parents and teachers - by graded progress through a reading scheme. All of them were well aware of research findings about the dominance of classroom talk by teachers, and expressed a desire to achieve a greater ‘balance’ of participation in their classrooms.

4.1.4 The benefits and difficulties of group shared reading

It seems reasonable to believe that teachers’ beliefs about the benefits and difficulties associated with conducting reading groups will shape the way in which they control children’s participation in the sessions. Their beliefs about the reading group as a forum for dialogue will be of particular relevance for the project. It is interesting that the development of oral language is not explicitly mentioned in the list of benefits mentioned in the questionnaire data below.

Texts should be more frequently used as models of writing – what makes it work – its purpose – try to emulate it or use as basis for inspiration
 Working with a group T can cover far more text than with an individual, does allow T to focus on larger issues.
 (Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

All information in the first instance comes from books
 Can share a book in the way you can't share web-pages
 Children learn about different types of genres from books
 (Teacher 1.1 questionnaire)

Data from interview and informal conversation data revealed a similar pattern of pragmatic and pedagogical goals: the reading group was seen as a reasonably efficient way of training children of a similar level of attainment in reading skills, and as a way of trying to inculcate desirable attitudes towards books. It was not seen as an opportunity for dialogue *per se*.

When teachers turned to the difficulties, shortage of time again emerged as a consistent theme, together with the need to impose consistency, order and quiet upon the groups.

Organising time
 Resourcing a range of books – new and relevant materials
 Joint quiet reading time across the school
 One teacher in charge to ensure consistency and priority
 Time quietness – it's not easy.
 (Teacher 2.1 questionnaire)

I consider the main theme emerging from this cluster of responses is the teacher as controller of fragile resources – those resources being time and children's attention. Reading group sessions are seen as pragmatically useful, but difficult to organise effectively and efficiently. Within regular but all too brief sessions, teachers have to match the varying interests and attainment levels of their pupils against a standard set of reading materials and a long and complex set of learning objectives. This demands a high level of control and direction, hence the ritualistic, teacher-centred nature of the sessions. The desire expressed by some of the teachers for a quiet atmosphere is significant: dialogue cannot of course be silent, and the lively, multivocal, and often

argumentative dialogue arising from the appreciative discussion of a story can be far from quiet. The qualitative section of this chapter will offer my reflections on how teachers managed to integrate a preference for control and quiet with the desire they all expressed to get the children talking confidently about their reading.

4.1.5: Summary of phase one: research question one

My first research question asked:

What do the teachers say about the conflicting factors involved in encouraging dialogue during their reading sessions?

The responses summarised above suggest that the teachers are aware of the multifaceted nature of learning to read and of their own role in orchestrating strategies to help children achieve literacy. The facets of this role reflect the potential dichotomies that have characterised literacy education throughout its history: they are instruments of externally imposed policy who nevertheless retain considerable autonomy in mediating how the details of that policy are tailored to the individual needs of the children in their care; they are responsible for training children in ‘basic’ technical skills like phonics and spelling, and at the same time for role modelling for holistic reading behaviour; they strive to elicit long, complex and creative contributions from children, while simultaneously acting as timekeepers, editors and censors of children’s talk. In other words, the teachers are aware that those aspects of their work that demand the exercise of their power over children’s voices and those that demand relinquishment of that power are in some respects contradictory, and in other respects complementary.

The next section will explore how the discourse of the reading session is shaped by teachers’ attempts to manage the tension between these centrifugal and centripetal forces.

4.2 Phase two: the reading sessions

Data gathering in this phase took place over the course of a year, and consisted of the recording and annotating of a single reading session from each of the eight teachers. The recordings were transcribed, and then subjected to a series of quantitative analyses, summarised below. I then engaged in qualitative analysis, centred mainly on exploring the discourse environment of child initiations, searching the transcripts for episodes of contingent response, conflict, play, role-taking and reflection in an attempt to find patterns that might help to identify factors facilitating or impeding the development of dialogue.

4.2.1 Quantitative analysis of the transcripts

4.2.1.1 Mean length of turn and length of longest turn

These data are summarised in table 4.1. The teachers received this information about their own session as a table and bar-graph.

Table 4.1: Mean length of turn and length of longest turn

	MLT (words)		LLT (words)	
	Teacher	Child	Teacher	Child
Running Water	14.8	4.6	109	8
Spike	19.9	9.7	67	45
New Trainers	36.1	2.8	49	6
Storm	17.6	3.7	67	34
Vikings	19.1	11.0	73	30
Spaceship	17.6	10.2	91	53
Wolves	19.7	6.4	49	39
Winnie	22.4	6.5	80	43

The striking thing about these findings is that although both MLT and LLT measures confirm the expected ‘rule of two-thirds’ regarding teacher-dominance (Flanders 1970), in six of the eight sessions, the inequalities between teacher and child are far less marked than those identified in recent, larger scale studies of teacher-child talk ratios in UK classrooms. Smith et al (2004) for example, concluded that “student

responses of three words or fewer comprised 70% of the total response types” (p 403) whereas even in Running Water, the session with the greatest disparity, child turns as short as this amounted to only 62% of the total, in spite of the fact that during some of these turns the child participants were struggling with word by word decoding. In Vikings, one of the least teacher-dominated session, 25% of child turns in group dialogue are over 20 words long, and in addition the children are given the opportunity to talk in pairs without teacher mediation or interference for 84 seconds (see below).

On the other hand, it is significant from the point of view of dialogic teaching that in half of the sessions, Running Water, Spike, New Trainers and The Storm, where the teacher more clearly dominates, most of the longer and more grammatically complex child contributions consisted of reading aloud from the text. That is to say, most of the words that the children uttered consisted mainly of reproductions of the author’s language rather realisations of their own. It is not to say, however, that these sessions were devoid of occasions for children to use their own language creatively

The scale of the disparities between child and teacher turns constituted the most surprising aspect of the analysis for the teachers, even though they were aware before engaging in the study that such disparities were typical of the primary classroom. This will be discussed in further detail under the findings for phase three and in the next chapter.

4.2.1.2 Relative quantities of teacher and child talk time

These data are summarised in table 4.2. The teachers received this data about their own session as a table and bar-graph.

Table 4.2 Relative quantities of teacher and child talk time

	Teacher's talk time		Children's talk time	
	seconds	% of session time	seconds	% of session time
Running Water	405	83.0	81	17.0
Spike	491	73.5	177	26.5
New Trainers	425	73.0	157	27.0
Storm	841	69.7	362	30.3
Vikings	382	46.2	445	53.8
Spaceship	528	51.7	493	49.3
Wolves	380	68.8	172	31.2
Winnie	888	69.9	383	30.1

Again, it is interesting that the mean across the eight sessions for the ratio of teacher to child talk (67% / 33%) approximates almost exactly to traditional estimates that teachers' talk occupies at least two thirds of the available time in classrooms (Flanders 1970). What is more interesting is the wide variation in this measure between sessions. In Running Water, teacher talk takes up over 80% of the time; in five of the other sessions it varies between two thirds and three quarters; but in the Spaceship teacher talk and child talk are almost exactly equally balanced, and in Vikings the children actually take up more talking time than the teacher. It is worth repeating at this point that the Vikings session is the only one in which the teacher deliberately prompted children to talk to each other, setting a thinking and talking task, then allowing the children 84 seconds of child-to-child dialogue with no interruptions from the teacher.

Possible reasons for such differences between sessions will be discussed in the qualitative analysis section.

4.2.1.3 Focus durations

These data are presented in appendix number two in tables 4.3 to 4.11.

In all except one of the sessions, *Running Water*, attention to the storyline, either through reading aloud or the talk associated with it, occupied between 60.5 and 77.5% of the total time. This provides at least provisional support for the proposition that reciting, understanding and enjoying the story remains the first priority for how these teachers distributed their time.

In the case of *Running Water*, the teacher divided over 80% of the time almost equally between helping children decode words, teaching them about punctuation, and eliciting general knowledge related to the story but not essential for its comprehension or enjoyment. Story reading and discussion of the storyline occupied only 15% of this session. A large amount of time devoted to word decoding suggests a mismatch between the difficulty of the text at word level and the decoding ability of at least one of the group members. Examination of the actual transcript shows that three of the six children did have decoding problems that slowed their reading.

In six of the other groups, decoding occupies less than 10% of the time; in two groups there was no time spent on it at all. In the latter cases, the teachers were reading aloud to the children with unison participation at selected points. In the only other transcript in which word-decoding approached 20%, *New Trainers*, this can be traced to the difficulties encountered by two of the eight children in pronouncing unfamiliar words.

In general, then, the texts were either well matched to the children's decoding skills, or the teacher took the lead in reading aloud with strongly scaffolded support for group participation. Word recognition was not the main focus of any of the sessions. The teacher helped out with decoding when this was necessary, but did not spend time on consolidating graphophonic knowledge at the expense of reading and appreciating the story.

In the one case, where a teacher did point out graphophonic regularities unprompted by a preceding problem with a child's decoding, this was done in order to draw children's attention to the author's use of alliteration, making a shift from a word

level to a literacy knowledge focus. Therefore the teacher's action could be interpreted as being directed at text appreciation as much as or more than at decoding.

It was interesting that none of the teachers encouraged children to use context as an aid to decoding when they encountered unfamiliar words. On almost every such occasion, graphophonic decoding was the only recourse. The only exceptions were when teachers simply supplied the word. This is significant in that it reflects the teachers' acceptance of a 'phonics first' approach. It could also be argued that the teachers' channelling of learners' attention to sub-lexical aspects of the text in such situations prevents them from developing a propensity to consider all of the available information when processing text, and reduces the amount of time they spend thinking about text meanings.

Attention to literacy knowledge featured in all of the transcripts, ranging from 0.4% of the time in a session where the single instance took the form of a teacher reminding a child to "pause for a wee breath" at a full stop, to 26.3% in the Running Water session mentioned above. In the latter, much of this time was devoted to teaching about the different ways in which emphatic language can be represented by punctuation and typography. The teacher also elicited or taught such terminology as *author*, *blurb* and *illustration*.

Talk about technical terminology featured in the literacy knowledge focus of all the other six sessions. Routine prompts or reminders about the meanings of the words *author*, *illustrator*, *title*, *blurb* and *spine* formed part of the ritual of the early stages of seven of the eight sessions. However, in spite of this emphasis on the book as a humanly created physical commodity, it is notable that talk in this zone did not include any instances that might be described as supportive of critical literacy, in the sense of drawing attention to the means of production of the book, how it came to be in the classroom, or the intentions of the writer or publisher.

In five sessions, attention was drawn to the use of full stops and capital letters to demark sentences and provide cues for pauses during reading aloud. One session, Vikings, focussed explicitly on fluency and expression, with the teacher pointing out the intonation patterns signalled by question marks and by the use of three dots to indicate suspense. In the same session, the teacher introduced a cut-out thought bubble to prompt the children to discuss what the characters might be thinking about. In the Borders school, where the children were reading from 'real books', in which the vocabulary is not formulaically controlled, the teachers attempted to elicit from the children the meanings of the word *ridiculous* in one lesson, and *unwisely* in the second. These were the only instances in which word meanings, other than those specific to book structure and production, were discussed.

These episodes of literacy knowledge talk vary in their degree of relevance to the task of reading, understanding and appreciating the story. Attention to book terminology is, for the most part, routine to the point of ritual. On the other hand, attention to punctuation is invoked as a way of structuring oral reading into sentences, and of attending to the rhetorical elements of reading aloud. Hence, this potentially enhances both comprehension and enjoyment. Discussion of word meanings essential to the story is clearly aimed at the same goal.

The question of relevance to the story also arises when the focus of attention turns to general knowledge. This happens in five of the eight sessions, with the time allocation ranging from 1 to over 27% of the session length. In the Vikings session, the teacher introduces the story by getting the children to report back on homework about Viking culture and history; in the Wolves session, a child offers a new perspective on the teacher's conduct of an intertextual discussion about the stereotypical image of wolves in traditional stories by contributing information about these animals not being dangerous in real life; in the Storm, the teacher asks children questions about the seasons, storm durations, and the name of a plant in an illustrated classroom scene; in the Spaceship, the teacher attempts to elicit information about weightlessness and the lack of weather conditions in space; in Running Water, there is a very lengthy interlude in which the children are asked to name the various

animals featuring in pictures of the Amazon jungle. None of this talk appears at first glance to be strictly essential to understanding of the stories themselves, though it may serve other functions, such as activating background knowledge schemas, arousing curiosity, and encouraging children to become positively involved in the sessions by enabling them to display their own knowledge. This will be discussed more fully in section 4.2.2.

Teachers and children made explicit links between the text and children's personal lives in all but two of the sessions. The proportion of time devoted to these links in the six sessions ranges from 3.6 to 28% of the time, and their content varies widely.

A summary of this data is presented in table 4.12 in Appendix 3. Note that no text-life links occurred in either 'Spike' or 'Vikings'.

The diversity of topics referred to during life to text links and under the heading of general knowledge suggests the fertility of the reading session as a source of lively, wide-ranging conversation. Such conversation is of course reliant on the story and its illustrations being reasonably well-matched to children's interests, and the teacher allowing the time for the talk to take place, factors which were present in all of the sessions, although to a varied extent. In all of the six sessions in which these links occur, there are occasions when the children talk enthusiastically about their own knowledge and/or their lived experiences as these relate to the unfolding events of the story. It is clear from field notes, interview data and from the transcripts that teachers value this aspect of story-based talk, albeit very cautiously. It is also clear that they seize upon the opportunities that the sessions afford for using the story content as a vehicle for extending literacy skills and knowledge, and for teaching or consolidating knowledge from other parts of the curriculum.

However, these personal contributions have the potential to centrifugally pull the group's attention away from the officially sanctioned, default objectives of an accurate reading of the text-at-hand and rapid progress through the reading scheme or other reading resources. The encouragement of informal talk, knowledge sharing

and life to text links, by which the children are invited to enter the text more searchingly and more personally, are the very ones by which the 'official' version of the text can be neglected. The sometimes cursory way in which teachers rein in these contributions represents their anxiety, again confirmed by interview data, about the children deviating too far from the script.

I will discuss the ways in which teachers attempt to work with this struggle between centrifugal and centripetal forces in section 4.2.3, but at this point it would be relevant to refer to how the struggle is further complicated by the everyday messiness of classroom life. In all of the sessions, teachers spent time ranging from 1 to over 10% of the total time on dealing with events other than the reading and discussion of the text or other educationally relevant matters. I have categorised these as miscellaneous in the data analysis. Much of this time was to do with the inevitable settling down and winding up routines involved in any shift of activity, as children change their positions in the classroom while gathering together or putting away resources. Some deviations are highly predictable: children answer questions by asking to go to the toilet; they lose their place in the book; in shared Big Book sessions, they tussle for a better view of the pictures. However, some of the attention shifts are less predictable than this. In *Running Water*, a teacher supporting a group of children with disparate decoding abilities has also to manage a session-long running dispute between a child who spends most of her time making funny noises and another child, the only fluent reader in the group, who appears anxious to display his knowledge and skills. In the *Wolves* session, the headteacher who is conducting the reading ends it abruptly, without the ritual closure exchanges, as she responds to a silent gesture from the secretary at the door, indicating that HMIE are on the phone. All of this indicates the presence of an undercurrent of potential disorder that pervades any classroom event, and perhaps contributes to the teachers' desire to counterpoise the cultivation of centrifugally enthusiastic dialogue with an adherence to centripetal control strategies.

4.2.1.4 Focus changes

Examples of focus change charts are presented in Appendix 5, displayed as timed transitions on a colour coded time. The purpose of the display is to provide a picture for the teacher of how durations of the different foci elapse and alternate in real time. Thus the teacher is able to see not only how much time is devoted to each focus, but also patterns of change and continuity. The potential usefulness of this representation might best be demonstrated by the first two examples in the Appendix, both of them from School 1, and both recorded during the same week. Both of these transcripts, together with the others in the data set, show the framing of the entire session with a focus on classroom organization routines, coded as miscellaneous, but beyond this they provide evidence of very different sessions. The Running Water chart shows a series of varied and frequent focus changes, with the longer stretches of single-focus talk being devoted to general knowledge, literacy knowledge, and word decoding, and the storyline occupying relatively brief and widely distributed slots. The chart also indicates the frequent and, relative to other transcripts, time-consuming emergence of behaviour management episodes. The Spike chart shows a much more regular alternation, with longer storyline periods in the central spread of the session, punctuated by attention to literacy knowledge and a single instance each of behaviour management and support for word decoding. This suggests that in the former session there is a stronger centrifugal tendency than in the latter. It is interesting that attention to the actual exchanges further suggests that this emerges from both the distracting influences of individual children, and the teacher's frequent departures from the storyline to teach general and literacy knowledge.

It is clear that this graphic representation of 'the story of the lesson' cannot in isolation do anything but give hints about teacher priorities and session contingencies, but taken in conjunction with the full transcript it provides the teacher and the researcher with an account of the play of forces during that particular lesson. More importantly, it provides the teacher with an overview which, informed by the teacher's knowledge of individuals in the group, might help to inform future practice.

A summary of teachers' responses to this overview will be provided under the findings for phase three.

4.2.1.5 Comparative frequency of teacher and child initiations.

These data are summarised in table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Comparative frequency of teacher and child initiations

	Running water	Spike	Storm	New Trainers	Vikings	Spaceship	Winnie	Wolves
Teacher	53	51	168	65	52	87	189	51
Child	9	4	26	1	11	30	20	18

As was to be expected, teacher initiations far outnumber child initiations in all sessions, but on at least one occasion in each of the sessions, a child departed from the traditional response role and made a spontaneous contribution to the talk. Child initiations are thus one of the main indicators of the dialogic quality of the sessions. This data will be further analysed in section 4.2.2.2 where it will be cross-referenced to foci of attention, and in 4.2.3 where the discourse environment of the child initiations from each of the sessions will be discussed.

4.2.1.6 Frequency of take-up strategies in teachers' E/F moves.

These data are summarised in table 4.14.

The column headings indicate:

EV: evaluation without extension or incorporation into the next initiation

EVI: evaluation which forms the basis of the next initiation

EX: evaluation which extends the response made by the learner

EXI: evaluation which both extends the response and incorporates it into the next initiation.

Table 4.14 Frequency of take-up strategies in teachers' E/F moves

	EV	EVI	EX	EXI	TOTAL	%takeups
Running water	27	1	2	4	34	17.6
Spike	28	1	8	9	46	39.1
Storm	67	3	25	38	133	49.6
New trainers	27	2	10	3	42	35.7
Vikings	25	4	10	7	46	45.6
Spaceship	42	14	19	7	82	48.8
Winnie	41	16	8	2	67	38.8
Wolves	20	5	5	2	33	36.3

The findings suggest that although the majority of teacher evaluation moves in all sessions are closed, providing feedback to the responder but not contributing directly to the next exchange, in most of the sessions the teachers do extend and incorporate a large proportion of child responses. Thus, to some extent, the teachers do use semantically contingent evaluations of child turns to provide cohesive links between exchanges. The details of how the teachers provide and withhold semantically contingent cohesion between turns will be set out in section 4.2.3.

4.2.1.7 Comparison of frequency of display and referential questions

These data are summarised in the table below. The teacher received information about their own session in table and pie-chart form.

Table 4.15 Comparison of frequency of display and referential questions

	Running Water	Spike	Storm	New Trainers	Vikings	Spaceship	Winnie	Wolves
Display	23	26	81	52	13	46	44	23
Referential	3	15	36	6	9	17	16	7

Again, the findings here echo those of earlier research showing the teachers asking a large number of recall and factual questions, and a paucity of questions that demand ‘higher order’ thinking, such as inference making, interpretation and critique from children.

There are however, complications in the referential/display division which will be discussed in the phase three section in conjunction with the teachers’ comments on how their questions were interpreted by me. I will just note here that it is perfectly possible for a referential, text to life question to be closed and cognitively undemanding; for example, *Do you have your own dog at home?* Conversely, as one teacher reminded me, it is perfectly possible for display questions requiring only factual recall to act as portals into lively discussion; for example, *What are some of the other stories like this that we’ve read?*

4.2.2 Cross-referencing of quantitative analysis

4.2.2.1 Locating longest turns within focus of attention zones.

These data are summarised in Appendix 4, where the details of the content, focus and context of the longest three child turns from each of the transcripts are given. This suggests that longer turns tend to occur when children are speculating about story possibilities rather than the recalling of story details, and when the children are making life to texts links. It is evident from a comparison of this data and the earlier figures that the shortest maximum length turns occur in the sessions (Running Water and New Trainers) where there is the greatest disparity between the lengths of teacher and child turns. It is also evident that these sessions are characterised by the teacher’s use of a large proportion of recall and knowledge level questions, rather than ones that require children to predict, explain, empathise or speculate.

4.2.2.2. Child initiation frequencies within focus of attention zones

These are summarised in the table 4.16.

Table 4.16 Child initiation frequencies within focus of attention zones

	Text-life	Story	Literacy Knowledge	General Knowledge	Word decoding	Misc	Unclassifiable*
Running Water	2	0	1	0	0	6	0
Spike	1	2	0	0	0	1	0
New Trainers	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Storm	7	12	0	0	4	0	4
Vikings	2	3	0	2	0	1	1
Spaceship	14	11	0	0	2	5	0
Winnie the Witch	9	15	0	0	0	0	0
Wolves	5	9	2	0	0	1	0

* Unclassifiable because they are bids for attention which are not taken up by the teacher.

The data here suggest that the children make initiations more frequently when the talk concerns the story and how it relates to their own experiences. Examples of these initiations are given below. Child initiations are marked with an asterisk.

Story based initiation from The Storm: the children are discussing what the characters should do after the tree in which they had a tree-house has been blown down.

253	15.30	T	You think maybe they might try to build another tree house? [Maybe they should. I know you think- Elliot?	S	EV EX I	ref com com dq
*254	15.31	C6	[Miss Yale? Maybe they should erm stick er the tree back in the ground and XXXX er maybe.	S	I	com

Text to life initiation from Running Water. The teacher is eliciting knowledge about the source of the folk story they are reading.

31	2.46	T	And where is South America? Who knows where South [America is?	GK	EVI	dq dq
32	2.48	Ch1	[Eh-whe- there it is there it is. {points to globe} It's there over [there!	GK	R	a a
33	2.51	T	[That's it down there. That's [right.	GK	EV	ac ac
*34	2.53	Ch1	[That's where I come from.	TL	I	inf

Literacy knowledge initiation from the Wolves. The teacher and children have been talking about different parts of the book.

*67	3.59	Ch	There's the spine of the book. There's the spine.	LK	I	inf
68	4.00	T	Uh huh. Down er this bit that's actually the spine of our book. Yes.	LK	R EX	ac

Word decoding initiation from Vikings. The children are taking turns to read.

38	3.15	Ch2	<i>Mr Johnson showed the children a picture of a Viking ship.</i> <i>The ship was called a long ship, he said.</i> <i>It had Oi-</i>	S	R	rd
*39	3.32	Ch4	[<i>Oars</i>	W	I	cor
40	3.32	T	[What did we say that word was?	W	I	dq
41	3.34	ChU	<i>Oars</i>	W	R	a

Miscellaneous initiation from the Storm: the teacher has paused the reading to ask the children to anticipate what might be about to happen. One child tries to look ahead in the book, and another child reprehends him.

*164	12.02	Ch1	[Don't turn over.	M	I	dir
165	12.02	T	[Don't turn over just now.	M	I	dir

As mentioned in 4.2.1.6, child initiations are occasions that represent independent action on the part of the learner, when he or she steps out of the passive role and contributes an unsolicited turn to the conversation. Sometimes, as in the reprehension move from The Storm, above, the child briefly appropriates a teacher role.

As the aim of the project is to look into the factors that appear to facilitate dialogue, I was interested in investigating what happened in the conversation on either side of the child initiation. In the next section, I will look at child initiations from each of the sessions in more detail, offering some observations on the circumstances in which they occur and the ways in which teachers and other group participants respond to them. I will also discuss the making of text-life links by learners and teachers, and the extent to which these are integrated into the reading experience, as well as

considering the teacher's strategies for balancing centrifugal and centripetal forces in their sessions.

4.2.3: Qualitative analysis of the sessions

In this section I will present data from each of the eight sessions in turn. The main part of each subsection will be devoted to a discussion of the discourse environment of the child initiations from the session, but I will also consider children's and teachers' interactions more generally, and conclude with some summary remarks, including references to other parts of the talk in the session if these are relevant to the general points I wish to draw out here. In the extracts from the transcripts, turn numbers which constitute a child initiation are marked with asterisks.

4.2.3.1 *Running Water*

There are nine child initiations in this session. One is a curiosity question from Child 1 about the recording equipment. Four arise from Child 3's 'off-task' behaviour and Child's 1's responses to it. Two are unsuccessful attempts by Child 1 to initiate one life-text link and to extend another. One of them is a spontaneous question, which goes unanswered, about a text feature. The last one is Child 1's closure of the session. All of the child initiations are given in context below, with a comment after each.

1	0.23	T	Right then.	M	FR	foc
*2	0.24	Ch1	Mrs Lawrence what's that for ?	M	I	rq
3	0.27	T	Who can tell me what this book is called?	LK	I	dq

Child 1 asks about the audio-recorder. His question is ignored. Perhaps this was because the teacher wanted to minimise further distractions for what turned out to be a difficult group.

4	0.39	Ch2	The story of running[water.	LK	R	a
*5	0.40	Ch3	[I thought I had my book upside down. {laughs}	E	I	com
6	0.45	T	What's it called Sally?	LK	I	dq

			Kate has just told us			pt
7	0.52	Ch3	The story of running water.	LK	R	a

At turn 5 Child 3 makes a potentially distracting comment. The teacher focuses her attention on the reading task. This is Ch3's first move in her role as clown.

22	1.48	T	... Let's turn to the [first page	M	I	dir
*23	1.52	Ch3	{laugh, whistle, [brrrrr!}	M	I	ply
*24	1.58	Ch1	[Mrs Lawrence Sally's being-	M	I	inf
25	2.00	T	Just turn to the first page Joshua.	M	I	int/dir

Child 3 appears to be continuing to distract the others. Child 1's protest is interrupted by the teacher's ignoring of child 3, and her insistence on routine turn taking. Again, the need to keep the group as calm as possible appear to feature here.

31	2.46	T	And where is South America? Who knows where South [America is?	GK	EVI	dq dq
32	2.48	Ch1	[Eh-whe- there it is there it is! {points to globe} It's there over [there!	GK	R	a a
33	2.51	T	[That's it down there. That's [right.	GK	EV	ac ac
*34	2.53	Ch1	[That's where I come from.	TL	I	inf
35	2.55	T	It's it's from South America. Now can anybody tell me ...looking at the picture ...whereabouts this story has taken place? What kind of countryside is it?	GK S	EV I	ig/ac dq dq dir

			Callum?			
--	--	--	---------	--	--	--

Child 1 initiates a text-life link at turn 34, the only time that a child-initiation of this kind occurs in the session, offering unbidden personal information. The teacher ignores this initiation and continues the routine chain of display questions about the children's background knowledge. I will return to the significance of this exchange at the end of this sub-section.

52	3.50	T	Yes bees. And would you like to drink honey all the time?	GK TL	EV I	ac rq
53	3.53	U	No::::!	TL	R	a
54	3.54	T	Why not?	TL	I	rq
56	3.56	Ch6	It's sweet.	TL	R	a
57	3.58		It's very sweet. Well done Ibrahim. It's very very sweet. It's nice to have honey but if you were really thirsty I don't think that would be nice.	TL	EV EX	el pr el com
*58	4.07	Ch1	But-	TL	I	com
59	4.08	T	Could you read me the next page please? <i>[They ...</i>	S	I	int/dir pt

After asking the children about the origin of honey, the teacher has initiated a text-life link at turn 52. The content of her questions at 52 and 54 suggest that they could be referential, as she does not appear to be checking knowledge but eliciting a statement of how the children feel about something; however, the responses are predictable, and her use of praise at 57 seems to suggest that Child 6 has given the 'correct' answer; this is another instance in which I found the referential/ display distinction problematical. Child 1's 'But-' seems to signal that an alternative opinion is about to be voiced, but the teacher's interruption terminates the text-life sequence, the only other such sequence in the session, and resumes the read-aloud routine.

95	6.02	T	Can you see that word <i>so</i> everybody. It's written in a slightly different way. And it's – people write – a word that they want you to say much more – strongly or louder than the others as a capital letter and they could have done it there but in this one all they've done is they've written it as leaning over to one side and you know when you see it like that that you've got to say it much louder. <i>I am so:::thirsty!</i> Can you look at the next page please Caitlin?	LK	I	dir inf
*96	6.38	Ch2	What's that what's they for?	LK	I	rq
97	6.42	T	And there's another way. What's the mark at the end of the sentence? It's a ...?	LK	I	ig/inf dq pt

This is part of a lengthy exchange in which the teacher is focussing the children's attention on typography and punctuation. Child 2 is also paying attention to a graphic feature of the text, but his referential question is ignored as the teacher continues the instructional sequence.

103	7.00	T	[An exclamation mark. Well when you've got an exclamation mark-	LK	EV	ac inf
*104	7.02	Ch3	[XXXXXX {laughter}]	M	I	ply
105	7.04	T	Sally.	M	R	dir
106	7.05	Ch1	Stop it Sally [don't be so funny.	M	R	dir

Child 3 continues to be distracting. She succeeds in briefly interrupting the teaching sequence and sustaining the responses from Child 1.

113	8.22	T	Well you were right well done. Now could you please put that away everybody.	S M	EV I	pr dir
*114	8.27	Ch1	Now is the time to close the book.	M	I	com
	8.28		END			

Child 1's closing comment, spoken in solemn tone of voice, seems to express an awareness of the ritual nature of the reading session: the mass is over, go forth in peace.

Turning to the general tenor of the teacher's strategies for eliciting and responding to children's contributions, in the areas of general knowledge and literacy knowledge, which together take up 53% of the time in the session, the teacher's initiations are mainly display questions, prompts arising from children's attempts to answer them, and instructional sequences. When focussing on the story, which occupies only 15% of the time, the content is used as a foundation for topic shifts into general and literacy knowledge. Whenever the story-reading breaks down as a result of children's difficulties in word decoding, the focus naturally shifts to word level. At this level, the only decoding strategy modelled is phonemic analysis. Use of context as a support for identifying words, a strategy which would shift attention back to the story, is never used.

Therefore, most of the discourse tends towards contained and convergent contributions from the children. The teacher makes one text-life link about honey, but the focus is quickly turned back towards general knowledge. When Child 1 attempts to extend the discussion, signalling, with the word 'But-', dissent from the teacher's rounding off of the topic, he is not allowed to go any further than this one word.

It appeared to me that the monologic emphasis of this session - the teacher retaining the role of purveyor of information, controller of time allocations and suppressor of centrifugal tendencies, is related to the dissonant forces she was attempting to orchestrate in the eight and a half minutes that it lasted. This topic will be revisited in section 4.3.1 when I discuss post-analysis interview data from this teacher, but it is relevant to point out here that she was dealing with difficulties arising from two main factors: a text-to-reader mismatch and a power struggle between two of the participants, one in the role of sage and the other in the role of clown.

The text contains many words which some of the group find difficult. Hence, more than a quarter of the time is occupied by the slow word-by-word decoding of the text rather than discussion of its content. The term ‘frustration level’ is used in readability literature to describe texts in which more than 10% of the words in a text present difficulties (Moon and Raban, 1992), and it is evident that at least half of the group are reading at this level. However, this mismatch presents difficulties of a different nature to Child 1, who can read the text fluently. Throughout the session he is eager to display his skills and knowledge. The teacher often allows him to do so, with due praise, as in the exchange below:

81	4.58	T	... Do you know what you call this animal with the with the the very- looks like a shell on it?		I	dq
82	5.05	Ch1	Oh it's an armadillo!	GK	R	a
83	5.06	T	It's an armadillo. My goodness me what a clever boy! I didn't think anybody would know that. Ah here's one that you might not- we drew- some of us drew pictures of this. What's this creature?	GK	EV I	ac pr pr pt dq
84	5.16	Ch1	Sloth!	GK	R	a
85	5.17	T	It's a sloth. Well done.	GK	EV	rep pr

			I can't ask too many questions here.			pr
			It seems to me you know such a lot.			pr

However, she interrupts his attempted text-life initiation at turns 58 and withholds a response from his intact text-life initiation at 34, when the child makes a statement about his own identity and origins. Probably for sound class-management reasons, she also ignores, or pays minimum attention to, the running dispute between him and Child 3. The latter makes a series of funny noises and facile responses throughout the session, as in the example below, where the teacher is offering a phonic cue to prompt her to name one of the animals - which is plainly a monkey – in the illustration.

75	4.47	T	That's a ... Think it might be a mmm ...	GK	I I	pt pt
76	4.48	Ch3	Rabbit. {laughs}	GK	R	a

The key point about this session for me is that both Child 1 and Child 3 are 'playing the text' (Mackey 2002) in different and antagonistic ways, using it as the platform for performances of their sage and clown roles. Neither child has any problems with decoding- Child 3's word reading in the rest of the transcript strongly suggests that the response at turn 76 was a joke. Child 1 uses every opportunity he can to display his impressive knowledge, while at the same time trying to suppress Child 3's laughter, either directly or by appealing to the teacher, who is meanwhile trying to scaffold the word-recognition skills of the struggling readers.

Child 1's attempts to police Child 3's behaviour presents one of several instances in the data where children begin to participate in the roles normally associated with the teacher; his ritual closing of the session can be similarly interpreted. We will see in the discussion of subsequent sessions how this process of appropriating voices suggests an empowerment of the learners as they begin to pool knowledge, share perspectives and begin to participate in, rather than silently submit to, the 'authoritative discourse' of the classroom. However, Teacher 1.1's responses to

Child 1's policing remarks suggest that she is insistent on retaining this role herself, a reminder relevant to all of the sessions that the management of interpersonal strife is as much a preoccupation for the teacher as the 'delivery of the curriculum' or 'the nurturing of life-long critical readers'.

One of the most significant aspects of this session, from the point of view of classroom research in general, was revealed to me after it was over. I was struck during the session by the way in which the teacher appeared to gloss over Child 1's text-life initiation regarding his identity at turn 34, considering that a critical moment, with opportunities for dialogue to open up, had been ignored. During conversation with the teacher after the lesson, she referred to this exchange, unprompted by me, and said that the child was not from South America but West Africa, that he had confused the shapes of the two continents, and that as a child proud of his general knowledge he would have been embarrassed and upset at having this pointed out to him. This illustrates how easy it is for researchers, inspectors and other outsiders to make judgements about classroom practices in the absence of much evidence about what is actually going on between teachers and learners.

This is particularly problematical when the judgements relate to motivation and other aspects of another person's consciousness. These are fundamentally unknowable; we can never get to know 'what is actually on' between two consciousnesses, even when one of them is our own. Yet much of what we do in social discourse and social life in general appears to be based upon such guesswork, as is much of the rest of what I have to say in this thesis.

Finally, the episode also illustrates the sheer complexity of the centrifugal forces that the teacher has to deal with in the most routine encounters.

4.2.3.2 Spike

In this session there were three brief child initiations.

The teacher is asking the children to predict what will happen when a father takes his son to look at a litter of puppies.

27	3.36	T	Joseph what do you think was going to happen [next?	S	I	rq
28	3.41	Ch5	[I think ... there was a square thing where there's a hole what you put them in.	S	R	a
29	3.48	T	Say that again.	S	RI	dir
30	3.50	Ch5	This thing ... what you put them in and it's a square [thing-	S	R	a
31	3.53	T	[Ke[nnel. So you think they're going to get a kennel? OK. Anna what do you think?	S	EV I	ac ac ac rq
*32	3.54	Ch5	[Kennel!]	S	I	inf
*33	3.54	Ch3	[Kennel!]	S	I	inf
34	3.57	Ch8	I think erm that erm when they're all going to go for the biggest puppy erm who's called Spike he's going to run away.	S	R	a

The simultaneous child initiations at turns 32 and 33, by Child 5 and Child X, interrupt and complete the teacher's evaluation of Child 5's response to the teacher's referential question at the end of turn 27. At turns 28 and 30, Child 5 attempts a makeshift description of the object he cannot yet find the name for. It could be that the teacher's pronunciation of the first syllable of the target word resolves Child 5's 'tip of the tongue' struggle and triggers Child 3's contribution, or it could be that one or both children would have produced the word anyway. In my opinion, the latter is more likely: the teacher did not pronounce this syllable in isolation as a prompt, and the children's pronunciations of the word sound more like a crystallisation of Child 5's circumlocutions than a response to such a prompt. The significant thing is that the teacher's referential question, followed by her demand for clarification at turn 29, affords Child 5 and his companions the opportunity to *both* imagine possibilities as

to what will happen when the child sees the puppies *and* to strive to formulate the language in which to express them. Child 3's taking of the initiative to offer child 5 the term he is groping for is another example of the children appropriating the knowledge-sharing role of the teacher, and hence the power to make initiations.

89	10.26	T	So you think he going to get two home not just one. OK. Erm Charlie what do you think?	S	EV I	ac rq
*90	10.33	Ch1	Can I go to the toilet?	M	I	req
91	10.36	T	Wait a minute. Lennon, what do you think?	M S	R I	dir rq

The third initiation at turn 90 provides a reminder of the physical, and biological, realities of the classroom, the competing needs for the attention of both the teacher and the learners.

In spite of the relatively low number of child initiations, and the absence of any teacher elicitation of explicit links between the book and the children's own experiences of keeping pets, there are other distinctive features about this session which can be read as indicators of dialectical scaffolding, in that the teacher provides incremental support for the children to refine their responses. At 17 children, the group size is the largest of the sample, but the teacher elicits responses from all of the participants with systematic questioning. She directs questions to each child in turn, but allows 'supplementary' responses from children who put their hands up. More than three quarters of all the talk (77.4%) concerns the storyline. The teacher makes no explicit appeals to the children's general knowledge, nor does she make or invite explicit text-life links. However, her consistent use of referential prediction questions, inviting the children to offer their ideas on what will happen next, requires children to call upon their own experiences of, and their own background knowledge about, pet ownership and the possible course of a family outing. It also requires them to use more complex language than would be needed to answer either display

questions that can be retrieved *en bloc* from the text, or less demanding referential questions based, for example, on text-life links (a typical strategy would be for the teacher to ask which children have dogs and what their names are.) The two longest child utterances are also interesting:

39	4.23	T	OK so you think Ted's going to give dad one. Leila?	S	EV I	ac rq
40	4.27	Ch10	Maybe the new erm .. maybe when he went home ... one of the puppies will come round and ask the mum because .. [because one has a XXX they have ... and some XXX Ted ..Ted ran after the dog because it ran-	S	R	a
41	4.40	T	[Loud voice.]	S	I	dir
43	5.03	T	So you think one of the dogs is going to run away and Ted's going to run after it?	S	EXI	rq
44	5.04	Ch10	They going to miss it and Ted's going to run after it and he's going to manage to get the pup.	S	R	a
45	5.14	T	OK. Nicky last one.	S	EV I	ac rq
68	8.18	T	You think he wants to take them <i>all</i> home? {laughter} You think his dad would let him take them all home? {murmured yes and no} You think yes, Chloe? Maybe. Anna what do you think?	S	EV EXI I I	ac rq ac ac rq
69	8.28	Ch8	I think he wants to see the other ones because he likes this one too much so he thinks he might see the others and then when he sees the others he can choose which one he wants to	S	R	a

			take home um to his parents.			
--	--	--	------------------------------	--	--	--

70	8.47	T	OK. Put your hands up if you can tell me how many sentences are on this page. {3 second pause} Sara?	S LK	EV I	ac dq dir
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The teacher uses a consistent strategy of either asking for clarification, or stating what she has understood by the child's utterance with a questioning intonation that asks the child for confirmation that this is what was meant. This works very effectively with child 10, as can be seen in the development between her responses at turn 40 and turn 44. In the former, the child's use of 'maybe', the place-marker 'erm', her hesitations, repetitions, and her shift from imagining aloud what *might* happen to recounting what in her imagination *has* happened, all suggest 'shaping at the point of utterance' (Britton 1970) the use of language to think through possibilities creatively. At turn 44, following the teacher's scaffolding move, her message is clear and complete. Once the meaning has been clarified, the teacher tends to give a minimal acknowledgement: for example, 'OK' at turns 45 and 70; 'maybe' at turn 68, the latter response leaving the exchange unfinalised and open for further thinking and opinions. She then moves on to elicit a response from the next child, or as in turn 70, to shift the focus of attention to another zone. The teacher does not use extravagant praise; rather, she concentrates on giving everybody a hearing, and ensuring that their contributions have been heard and understood. In this, her strategy is in line with recently expressed reservations about the potentially devaluing and inhibiting effects of redundant classroom praise (Alexander 2000).

Another distinctive feature of this session is that the teacher allows time for the children to read the text to themselves "in their own heads". The children's reading during the 50 seconds of this episode consists of a medley of sub-vocalisations. This provides a break in the otherwise highly regular alternation of traditional IRE/IRF exchanges, and perhaps affords the children the opportunity to think through the possibilities of the text for themselves as they read independently.

To summarise, the session is characterised by a text-reproducing, traditional IRE/IRF series of exchanges. However, by consistently modelling the need for clarity, and by asking the children to make predictions from their reading, and by ensuring that everybody gets the opportunity to express an opinion, Teacher 1.2 helps the children to construct clear, thoughtful, relatively lengthy and individualised responses. Her balance of a centripetal insistence on reconstructing the text at hand while encouraging text-constrained speculation provides an interesting example of the dialogue between authoritative and internally persuasive discourse.

4.2.3.3 *The Storm*

There were 26 child initiations made during this session. Nine of them were brief interjected comments on pictures and events, and were not taken up by the teacher. Two more were truncated attempts at text life links made towards the end of the story, when the teacher was running out of time and was attempting to close the session. I have made observations on a number of the other child initiations, selected because of the light I think that they throw on the complexity of the teacher's role.

The first two examples show children relating their own experiences to those of the characters, who lose their tree house when the tree supporting it is blown down during a storm.

*37	2.11	C3	Once I was blown down and in a- in a windy day and my sister and me had a new umbrella and when she erm was holding it the wind turned it upside down.	TL	I	I
38	2.25	T	Ah! Did it? I wonder if that will happen in our story called the storm.	TL S	R EXI	ac ac com

*122	8.40	C1	[You know what I sleep in a tree house and I've got a tree house.	TL	I	in
123	8.45	T	Have you? Who did you sleep in a tree house with?	TL	R EXI	ac rq
124	8.47	C1	Erm my sister.	TL	R	a
125	8.51	T	And was mummy okay about that?	TL	EXI	rq
126	8.53	C1	Yes and sometimes my mummy and daddy come up.	TL	RI	in
127	8.56	T	Oh right.	TL	R	ac
128	8.57	C1	And have a picnic today.	TL	I	in
129	8.59	T	Oh well that's just like the story. <i>It was bedtime.</i>	LT S	EXI I	com rd

The teacher here uses what might be called a braiding strategy. She acknowledges the child initiation, and in the second example invites the child to provide more extended information. In both cases the teacher weaves the potentially distracting personal information carried by the initiation back into the reading of the text by linking them to the next teacher initiation, so that the child's participation forms a cohesive strand in the talk around the story. However, as the time allocation for the lesson elapses, this happens less frequently, as shown by the exchange below, occurring just over 3 minutes later.

*199	13.10	C5	Miss Yale? Miss Yale? I hope my gate didn't blow over.	TL	I	bd bd com
200	13.12	T	I hope your gate I know. That wouldn't be very good. You'd have to go and mend it once the storm passed wouldn't you?	TL	R EXI	ac el el
*201	13.17	C3	Do you know what my-	TL	I	rq
202	13.18	T	Do storms always pass eventually or do they stay a long long time?	TL	I	int/dq

Here Child 5's text to life link, in which he appears to be taking a participatory stance within the story (Sipe 2000) is acknowledged, commented upon and braided into the topic being read about at this point in the session, which is the aftermath of the storm. However, Child 3's attempt to make a further text to life link is truncated by interruption as the teacher hastens back to the main thread. In the exchange below, when the item on the teacher's agenda is the generation within the children of sympathy for the fictional teacher who has had to look after the fictional children all day while the storm rages, a child's text-life initiation of a different topic on his personal agenda is also ignored.

207	13.25	T	... Why do you think Mrs May wasn't sorry to see the children go home?	TL	I	rq
*208	13.34	C5	[I like storms.	TL	I	com
209	13.34	C1	[Er because it was windy.	TL	R	a
210	13.37	T	Hm-Hm. [But what do you think she felt at having the children in the class all day?	TL TL	EV I	ac dq
*211	13.38	C5	[I like storms.	TL	I	com
212	13.40	CX	I think she was happy and it made her sad.	TL	R	a

The reason why some child initiations and responses are taken up and others interrupted, ignored or minimally acknowledged is a matter of speculation; teachers' post analysis interview responses, to be discussed under Phase 3, throw some light on this. However, it is worth indicating that in this session, lack of take up appears to be associated with the need to get the children through the allotted pages of a narrative which excites a lot of child engagement. At the point when the children see the picture of the fallen tree and wrecked tree house there is a medley of voices in which the children in unison, then three children as individuals, make spontaneous comments:

240	15.06	T	It's not just the tree house [that's fallen down-	S	I	com
*241	15.07	CU	[The tree!	S	I	com
242	15.08	T	The tree has come down too.	S	I	com
*243	15.10	C6	I thought-	S	I	com
244	15.12	T	Pardon?	S	R	pb
*245	15.13	C6	I thought that was-	S	I	com
246	15.14	T	You thought that was going to happen?	S	EVI	dq
*247	15.16	C3	I thought [that.	S	I	com
*248	15.17	C4	[I knew the tree was going to fall down.	S	I	com
249	15.18	T	Right. {2} What do you think they'll do next?	S	R I	ac rq

This is followed by an exchange in which a child offers, via the teacher, a creative suggestion to the characters in the story, again implying a participatory rather than a passive stance.

*255	15.31	C6	[Miss Yale? Maybe they should erm stick er the tree back in the ground XXXX er maybe.	S	I	com
256	15.43	T	You maybe er think maybe they should- Say that again.	S	R I	pb dir
257	15.46	C6	Put the tree back.	S	R	com
258	15.47	T	Ah! You think they should try and get the tree back into the ground? Do you think that will be possible?	S	EV EX EXI	ac el rq
259	15.51	ChU	No.....	S	R	a

*260	15.52	C1	They'll need lots of people to help. Strong people!	S	I	com com
261	15.55	T	Strong strong people. They would indeed. Shall we [read on and find out what happens next?	S	EX I	el com dir
262	15.57	C7	[Miss Yale? Miss Yale?	TL?	I	bd
*267	15.59	C2	[And some strong rope!	S	I	com
268	15.59	C7	[Miss Yale?	TL?	I	bd
	16.00	T	I wonder- Shall we read on and find out what happens?	S	I	ig/dir
*269	16.01	C7	[Miss Yale?	TL?	I	bd
270	16.01	T	<i>[I wonder who needs some firewood, said Dad.</i>	S	I	ig/rd

The teacher's take up of Child 6's suggestion, asking for its clarification before offering it to the group for a feasibility check, elicits specific and spirited responses from two other children. However, Child 7's repeated attempts to enter the conversation are ignored. Fifty seconds after the teacher's topic shift, while she is encouraging the group to speculate about the discovery by the children's dog of a box amongst the roots of the tree, Child 7 finally makes his contribution at turn 279:

276	16.42	T	Mmm. What do you think he was trying to say to the children by barking?	S	EV EXI	ac rq
277	16.45	CX	I found a box.	S	R	a
278	16.47	T	Maybe he was saying I found a box. Or maybe he was saying, Look!	S	EV EX	ac el
*279	16.51	C7	I hope my swimming didn't fall down.	TL	I	com

280	16.52	T	Hope your?	TL	R	pb
281	16.53	C7	Swimming didn't fall down.	TL	RI	com
282	16.54	T	Your swimming?	TL	RI	pb
283	16.55	C7	Yes.	TL	R	a
284	16.56	T	What do you mean your swimming?	TL	I	pb
285	16.58	C7	Swimming lesson.	TL	R	a
286	16.59	T	Oh right. But that wouldn't happen in a storm. <i>Everyone looked at the box.</i>	TL S	EV EX I	ac com rd

The teacher makes three attempts to clarify the meaning of turn 279 before making a brief acknowledgement and refocusing group attention on the reading aloud of the story. In conversation after the session, we both remarked on our lack of understanding of what the child could have meant. The remark does not appear to be related to preceding turns, though it does parallel a different child's initiation, "I hope my gate didn't blow over" at turn 199, three and three quarter minutes earlier. It seems reasonable to suggest that such apparently idiosyncratic remarks present the teacher with a dilemma. On the one hand, in line with the implications of the research reviewed earlier, there is the adult's obligation to listen to and to strive to understand the child, at the same time ensuring that the child knows that he or she has been listened to, understood, and his or her contribution valued. On the other hand, there is both the common sense, hegemonic view that reading teachers should focus on building a shared understanding of the text, and a body of research that suggests that the suppression of capricious responses to the text can serve this purpose (Pressley 2000). Perhaps over-ruling both of these is the pressure of limited time, impinging on the role of the teacher as guarantor of curriculum coverage (Twistleton, 2002). Teacher 2.1's response to Child 7's puzzling initiation seems to me to represent a best effort at resolving these opposing pressures, a pragmatic acknowledgement that still leaves the meaning of the child's contribution unresolved and undeveloped.

4.2.3.4 New Trainers

There is only one child initiation in this session, when a child points out a detail of the illustration that the teacher has omitted.

71	06.33	T	Well done <u>went</u> cause you got stuck on that word went last time didn't you? Chip <u>went</u> to play. You can see Biff and you can see Kipper and he's gone to play hasn't he?	S	EX	pr com ac el
*72	06.41	Ch3	And Floppy	S	I	com
73	06.43	T	And Floppy's in the park as well yes. You can see Floppy in the park there. Could you tell me what's happened to the trainers now?	S	R	ac com
				S	I	dq

The alternation of moves throughout the session is closest to the traditional structure of IRE/IRF exchanges. The session also features the shortest mean length of turn and length of longest turn for the children. The children in this group are the youngest in the sample, and the teacher the least experienced.

Many of the exchanges in this session involve teacher repetition of both her own words and those of the children, and a tendency to reformulate more general questions, implying extended answers, into narrower ones, implying shorter answers:

1	00.00	T	OK who can remember the name of the book that you've been reading? Can you remember it Sean? What's the book called?	S	I	dq
2	00.11	Ch1	New trainers	S	R	a

3		T	Well done, New Trainers. And who can remember what happens in the book? What happens in the story? Who is the story about? Erm, Phoebe?	S S	EV I	pr dir dq dq dir
4	00.20	Ch2	Erm, Kipper.	S	R	a
5	00.22	T	It's about Kipper. Is it about Kipper? Who gets the new trainers?	S	EV I	ac dq dq
6	00.30	Ch2	Chip	S	R	a
		T	It's about Chip. Chip gets the new trainers. That's right. It's about Chip then isn't it? It's about Chip.	S	EV	ac ac ac ac ac

However, she does make consistent attempts to get the children to participate more actively in the session. In over a third of her evaluation moves she extends the children's responses, and / or incorporates them into her next initiation.

She also makes life to text links at key junctures in the story. On one occasion she links the main event to her own experiences: in the extract below the children have just answered a question about how a father feels after his son has ruined his new trainers by stepping into a puddle:

45	04.12	T	... Can I tell you a tale of what my boy did today- not today the weekend Saturday? He went out in his new trainers, to the park, and guess what happened to them?	TL	I	inf inf dq
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46	04.25	Ch1	They got muddy.	TL	R	a
47	04.27	T	They were covered in mud. And guess who was cross?	TL TL	EX I	el dq
48	04.30	ChU	You.	TL	R	a
49	04.32	T	Of course yes. Brand new trainers and they were all covered in mud. OK let's have a look. Who can tell me what the title of the book is?	TL LK	EX I	ac com dir dq

This storytelling episode engaged the children's attention, but their participation in it was limited to a three word individual response and one word unison response. The teacher herself provides an elaboration of the child's response at turn 46 before shifting the focus back to literacy knowledge.

On two subsequent occasions she prompts the children to speculate about the fate of the ruined footwear, requiring them to link the story to their own experiences:

91	08.15	T	... Will they ever be new trainers again, Harry?	TL	I	dq
92	08.19	Ch4	No	TL	R	a
93	08.20	T	Why not?	TL	EVI	rq
94	08.21	Ch4	Because he will mess them up again.	TL	R	a
95	08.24	T	He'll mess them up again. Do you think if he cleans them they would look like new again? Or do you think they're not just quite right? What do you think? {1 second pause} Kylie?	TL	EV I	ac rq rq rq dir
96	08.34	Ch3	No	TL	R	a
97	08.36	T	No they're never quite the same. Once you've got them dirty they're never	TL	EX	el com

			brand new again.			
106	09.35	T T	What has he stood in? Harry?	S	I	ig/dq nom
107	09.37	Ch4	The concrete.	S	R	ans
108	09.38	T T	The concrete. And what's happened to Dad's shoes Kylie?	S	EV I	rpt dq
109	09.40	Ch3	They got they got dirty	S	R	a
110	09.44	T	Do you think they'll be able to be cleaned or do you think they're completely ruined?	TL	I	rq
111	09.46	Ch2	They're completely ruined.	TL	R	a
112	09.49	T	I think they'd struggle to get concrete off shoes like that because it'll get very hard quickly won't it?	TL	EXI	com dq

However, as with the first text-life link, the children's responses are minimal, and the teacher elaborates them herself without attempting to elicit further details from the children.

The teacher herself recognised these features of the session and raised them unprompted during the post-analysis interview. Her comments will be discussed under phase 3 below.

4.2.3.5 Vikings

The eleven child initiations in this session consist of two text-life links where one child expresses surprise at aspects of Viking life, four episodes focussed on word decoding where the children corrects each other's reading, a single instance of a child stating how he thinks a character is feeling, three turns by one child where he is role playing the reactions of the characters, and a single instance of a child complaining about a companion's annoying behaviour.

The word-focused initiations were interesting in that they again illustrate the process of role appropriation that has been mentioned in preceding sessions. In the extract below, two different children take it upon themselves to help the child reading aloud to correct mispronounced words.

45	4.45	Ch6	<i>Mr Johnson ... looked .. [looked the children into-</i>	W	R	rd
*46	4.52	Ch4	<i>[took</i>	W	I	rd
47	4.55	T	[He didn't <i>look</i> the [children he <i>took</i> the children	W	EV	cor
*48	4.56	Ch4	<i>[took</i>	W	I	rd
49	4.57	Ch6	<i>Took the children into the school hall. They made a big long ship. Then they all dressed up as Vikings....</i>	S	R	rd
50	5.17	T	<i>And ...[pretended ...</i>	W	I	pt
*51	5.18	Ch2	<i>[pretended</i>	W	I	pt
52	5.20	Ch6	<i>And pretended to row it. It's hard work being a Viking said Biff.</i>	S	R	rd

A similar process is evident in the extract below, from earlier in the session, where two children provide evaluations of the accuracy of the general knowledge that another child brings to the preliminary discussion:

13	0.55	T	[And what they were doing? What were they doing? Lewis?	GK	I	dq dq dir
14	1.00	Ch4	They came from an island and they were trying to take over erm one of er they were trying to take over Scot[land, and not Britain	GK	R	a
*15	1.07	Ch2	[No Britain.	GK	EV	a
*16	1.07	Ch1	[Britain they were trying to take over Britain		EV	

17	1.10	T	Good. They were trying to take over Great Britain and they came from another country. Well done.	GK	EV EX	pr el
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Although these are isolated episodes, and in both cases the teacher is the final adjudicator, the children's readiness to adopt such roles, and their peers' readiness to respect their contributions, can be interpreted as the beginnings of the decentering of the pedagogic role from the teacher.

This empathetic participation in the story has been scaffolded by the teacher at three points earlier in the session. At one point she gets the children to imitate the expression of a character who is disbelieved by the others when he claims to have seen a magic key glowing:

65	7.26	T	I think they think he's joking don't they, so he's feeling upset. Look at the picture of him. Can you pretend that you're Kipper at the moment? { <i>children imitate vexed expression</i> } That's exactly what he looks like! Good.	S SI S	EX I I EV I	el dir dir pr pr dir
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Immediately after this a child makes a story focused initiation; the teacher comments positively on this and incorporates the child's contribution into the next initiation:

*66	7.45	Ch2	[He feels left out- left out because no one believes him. [Feels left out.	S	I	a
67	7.46	T	[Left out. That's a good word as well so let's put expression in our voices when Kipper's speaking.	S	EV EXI	ac pr dir

In the next turn, she further encourages the fusion of text and child worlds through the prompting of spirited group participation:

68	7.53	ChU &T	<i>Kipper was upset.</i> <i>The magic key glowed in the night, he said.</i> <i>It glowed when it was dark.</i> <i>It did. It did. It did.</i>	S	R	rd
69	8.10	T	Oh I think you can sound even angrier than that.	S	EV	dir
70	8.12	ChU	<i>It did! It did!!! IT DID!!!</i>	S	R	rd
71	8.17	T	Good! Carry on.	S	EV I	pr dir

This immediately precedes the point in the session when the teacher prompts the children to enter the mind of one of the characters and to discuss with a partner what the character might be thinking. As the children looked at an illustration showing one of the characters looking thoughtful, the teacher produced a piece of paper cut into the shape of a thought bubble and presented the task.

88	9.21	T	... If we had a thought bubble above Biff's head I wonder what you think would be in it [at the moment.	S	EXI	rq
89	9.32	ChX	[Nuh!	S	R	bid
90	9.33	T	I want you to talk with the person next to you-	S	I	dir
91	9.35	Ch1	Mrs Robertson XXXXX nicked my plastic	M	I	inf

			folder.			
92	9.38	T	It's all right you won't need one Jamie. Could you just talk to Sergio about what you think would be in the thought bubble above Biff's head just now.	M	R I	a dir
93	9.46	Ch	{children converse in four pairs for 1 minute 24 seconds}	S	R	com
94	11.00	T	Let's see if we can finish off that sentence. It says, I wonder dot dot dot. Can anybody think of what Biff might be wondering? What did you say to your partner? I wonder ... see if we can finish what her thoughts are. Matthew?	S	I	dir pt rq rq pt dir

Beyond setting the task, the teacher exerted no control at all over the content of the children's talk for the 84 seconds that the child to child interaction lasted, a simple but effective strategy for increasing the time available for child language, diversifying interpersonal communication channels, and encouraging more personal and creative responses to the text. As mentioned above, this is the only occurrence in any of the sessions when the teacher sanctions child-to-child interaction without teacher mediation. This, together with the fact that this is the only session in which teacher talk time is less than child talk time, seems to suggest that Teacher 2.3's commitment to dialogic teaching is being realised in classroom action.

The session closes with the teacher setting a thinking task for the children. The illustration she refers to below shows the children encountering living Vikings as the magic key begins to work.

109	12.28	T	OK. I would like you tonight at home to read pages nine to sixteen. And I think you'll find out if you read on what Biff is wondering. And while you're reading, could you just have a look at pages nine to sixteen just now.	S M S	EV I I	ac dir com dir
*110	12.47	Ch4	Hoh - the Vikings are still alive!	S	I	com
111	12.51	T	When you get to page fourteen I want you to imagine- Has everybody got page fourteen? Good. I want you to imagine that there is a thought bubble above that Viking's head and think about what you would put in it. And tomorrow we will hear some of your ideas about what you think would be in his head. You'll need to read the story first to find out what's [happening.	S	I I I I	dir dir com dir dir
*112	13.20	Ch4	[Who are they? Who are they?	S	R	a
113	13.23	T	That's a good idea. But read it first, and then when we come back tomorrow I'll hear some of your [ideas about what you think he might be thinking.	S	EV I	pr dir
*114	12.35	Ch4	[Who are they?	S	R	a
115	12.37	T	OK close your books now and I'll write in your diaries later.	M	I	dir

In the course of this section, Child 4's spontaneous verbalisations of what he thinks the children are thinking at turns 110, and of what the Viking is thinking at turn 112 and 114, suggest a level of engagement described by Sipe (2000) as one in which 'The world of the text, for the moment, seem[s] to be identical and transparent to the children's world.' (p267). As with the earlier thought bubble activity, the children are being helped to make the transition from repeating the words of the text to making them their own, and in the process creating an elaborated text. In Bakhtin's words,

Our speech ... is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of 'our-own-ness', varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and reaccentuate. (Bakhtin, 1986 p 89)

A more general point should be made here. The playful and collaborative strategies employed by the teacher which precipitate the children's involvement are not aimed in this instance at linking the text to the children's experience; on the contrary, they pull the children away from lived experience and deeper into the story, or rather seek to dissolve the distinction between the two at crucial points. The implication is that dialogic interaction does *not* necessarily require text-life links in the form of explicit reference to the identity or lived experience of the individual reader. Submerging one's identity, and temporarily forgetting lived experience, by 'getting lost in a book' can bring this about as well, while at the same time, I would argue, affording the opportunity for both personal identity and lived experience to be enriched.

4.2.3.6 The Spaceship

Just over 25% of the initiations in this session were made by the children, a figure markedly higher than in all of all the other sessions apart from Wolves, in which the percentage of child initiations is 26%. This suggests a lively session, characterised by a readiness on the part of the children to speak out, an indication which is confirmed by the audio-file. In ten of the initiations, children make comments about the illustrations, either pointing out details or predicting what might be about to happen.

It is noticeable that the teacher consistently responds by braiding the child's contribution back into the storyline through take-up moves including contingent questioning. An example of this is presented below. The children are looking at a picture of the characters building a make-believe spaceship out of junk in their garden. Child 2 is reading the label on a cardboard box built into the model.

*19	1.39	Ch2	It says chocolate China cook.	S	I	com
20	1.43	T	So it does - so where does that tell you they've got all the things for this?	S	RI	ac dq
21	1.46	Ch2	China	S	R	a
22	1.48	T	They've gone to China to get these things have they?	S	EVI	dq
23	1.50	ChU	No:::.....	S	R	a
24	1.52	Ch2	I would say maybe it's just the news the newspaper that's from China.	S	R	a
25	1.56	T	I think what they've maybe used- Well do you think it's a newspaper or do you think maybe it might be something a wee bit thicker than a newspaper?	S TL	EV EXI	com dq
26	2.01	Ch2	Cardboard	TL	R	a
27	2.02	T	Yeah What might it have been before?	TL	EVI	ac dq
28	2.03	Ch3	Oh a box.	TL	R	a
29	2.05	T	A box. And what's maybe been in the box, Cara?	TL	EVI	ac dq
30	2.08	Ch2	Chocolate XXX.	TL	R	a
31	2.10	T	I think maybe if they'd gone all the [way to China-	TL	I	com
32	2.11	Ch2	[Chocolate.	TL	R	a
33	2.12	T	Yeah it's [chocolate-chip	TL	EV	com
34	2.13	Ch2	[Chocolate China	TL	R	a

35	2.15	T	It's not chocolate China it's actually chocolate chip ... cookies. You can almost see so what's been in it. What're chocolate chip cookies? {2} What're cookies?	TL S GK	EV EX I	cor com dq dq
36	2.28	Ch4	Oh they're biscuits!	GK	R	a
37	2.29	T	Yes they're biscuits so they've cut up [the box.	TL	EV	ac
38	2.30	Ch1	[Cookies are cookies.	GK	R	a
39	2.31	T	Yes cookies are cookies {laughs} Right let's start reading then.	GK M	EV I	ac dir

The process of taking up the child's initiation, developing her realisation of what she is looking at, and then returning her and the group to the text takes almost a minute of the 17 minutes and 10 seconds of the session. The teacher conducts similar segues, albeit more briskly, throughout the session.

Although all of the children contribute to the discussion, and all of these contributions go beyond just recitation of the text, a point that will be discussed further is that most of the text-life initiations are made by a single child, Child 2, who provides a regular commentary linking events to her own experiences. Three of these are illustrated below. The first is from the discussion of the picture of the home-made spaceship:

*51	3.41	Ch2	... Do you know I thinks it's – you know how when sometimes in pubs you get this- like a big bottle of-	TL	I	inf
52	3.48	T	Ah like you get the kegs the big kegs of beer the big barrels that beer comes in.	TL	EX	com

			Yes it could be that.			com
*53	3.54	Ch2	[I can see it from my window because I've got a pub on that side and a pub on that side.	TL	I	inf
*54	3.54	Ch1	[They used cans.	S	I	a
55	4.00	T	Sebastien, what else have they used?	S	I	dq

The second occurs when the character Nadim arrives with his computer game:

*151	10.59	Ch2	I know why Wilf is good at that game. Cause it's his game and he plays it.	TL	I	com com
152	11.02	T	Nadim you mean. Aha yes it's just what exactly you were saying a wee minute ago. That Nadim because it's his game he's played it a lot he's becoming quite an – What do you call it when you're good at something you become an /e/-	TL GK	R EX I	cor el
153	11.11	Ch2	[Expert.	GK	R	a
154	11.11	Ch1	[An expert.	GK	R	a
155	11.12	T	That's it.	GK	EV	ac
*156	11.13	Ch2	That that- once I was playing with my friend's Gameboy and I can't really work Gameboys and he's better.	TL	I	com
157	11.18	T	I would need to somebody to [show me how to do it anyway.	TL	I	com
*158	11.19	Ch1	[I'm good at it.]	TL	I	com
159	11.22	T	Yes- Guess what's going to happen now? {spoken in a whisper} {4 }	S	R I	ac rq

The third occurs as the characters are about to enter a full-scale rocket when the story enters its magical phase:

200	15.39	T	Why is Chips a bit worried?	S	EVI	dq
201	15.47	Ch1	Because he might fall down and get hurt.	S	R	a
202	15.50	T	He could do aha. Because it looks very [scary.	S	EV EX	ac com
*203	15.54	Ch2	[Because it's erm far – because if you go there it's very far away from home erm it's far and he's scared to go up. My erm dad is too scared to go up high in a plane to Spain so we have to go in a boat or something	TL	R I	a com
204	16.13	T	Well that's it's very much the same thing. He's a bit scared.	TL	R	ac

As with the spontaneous comments about the illustrations, in each instance the teacher acknowledges the text-life link, provides feedback, sometimes with extension, and then returns attention to the text before the conversation gets too far away from it. In the first example, the teacher takes up Child 2's contribution about objects resembling beer kegs appearing in the illustration of the spaceship, but not the location of the child's home between two pubs. In the second, she channels Child 2's first initiation into a brief vocabulary teaching and gives her second one a reciprocal text-life comment, whereas Child 1's claim about his expertise is given only minimal acknowledgement, perhaps to avoid time-consuming competing claims from other participants. In the third, the teacher promptly relates Child 2's father's fear of heights and flying to Chips' anxiety about climbing the ladder to enter the rocket, rather than for example, inquiring further into the personal, extra-textual content of the child's contribution. In this way the teacher, while acknowledging and encouraging Child 2's comments, keeps the focus on the story and avoids the danger of a confident and loquacious child dominating the discourse.

In spite of this deft orchestration of centrifugal and centripetal forces, there are points at which the teacher herself appears to risk departing from the text by teaching, or trying to elicit, background knowledge related to the story. The following two extracts demonstrate this. In the first, the teacher is talking about communications between spaceships and ground-control.

67	4.46	T	If the space ship left from Earth and then they're in space they have to be able to be in touch with whoever it is looking after them in what's called the headquarters on Earth so that-	GK	I	inf
*68	4.49	Ch2	How can it go down to Earth if it's in space?	GK	I	rq
69	5.02	T	Because the - microphone picks up the voices - they've got very special machines that do that. [Now let's turn to page two shall we?	GK	R	inf
				S	I	dir
*70	5.11	Ch1	[They used cardboard.	S	I	com
*71	5.12	Ch3	[I've got I've got machines like that they cost ninety pounds.	TL	I	com
72	5.14	T	They're very they're very expensive. Sebastien could you do page two please then and everybody following Sebastien.	TL	R	ac
				S	I	dir

Here again we see the teacher's braiding strategy employed, this time in relation to both her own departure from the text to convey rudimentary technical information, and to the contributions from Child 2 and Child 3. The former, at turn 68 constitutes a probing challenge which interrupts the teacher's steadily lengthening informing move, and it is given a reasonably full response. As mentioned in the Literature Review (2.4.2), the child's demand for clarity – interrupting the teacher mid-flow - and the teacher's prompt compliance, exemplifies a nimble reversal of IRE/IRF roles, and a move from authoritative to internally persuasive discourse.

The latter, at turn 71, a purely personal statement that is unlikely to further engagement with the text, is given a more cursory treatment, but is still acknowledged in words that are contingent upon, and lexically cohesive with, Child 3's contribution.

In the second the teacher is anticipating a development in the story.

171	12.45	T	... The the place where the story's taking place is going to change now. How different is it going to be do you think Joshua? Can you think of one way that it's going to be different for them when they go from the house or the garden to this new place? How is it going to be different do you think?	S GK	I I	dir el rq rq rq
172	13.04	Ch3	Maybe it's going er they're going to where normal rockets go to er and-.	TL	R	a
173	13.08	T	Well how would it be different Joshua?	GK	I	rq
174	13.10	Ch3	Because ... they're going to er erm ... to erm the rocket station.	TL	R	a
175	13.18	T	Right they might. They're going to a [rocket station- but when they go into space ...	TL GK	EV I	ac
176	13.20	Ch1	[Ah I know this.] { <i>makes floating gesture</i> }	GK	R	com

177	13.24	Ch3	Cause that rocket that they're in they're gonnae take the rocket that they made they're going far into that kind of space then they're going to go in here then the rocket'll - will become erm ... another kind of rocket in space XXXXX and the rocket'll-	TL	R	a
178	13.46	T	But listen to what I'm asking you to tell me. How is it going to be different when they're in space to when they're in the garden or in the house?	GK	EVI	dir dq
179	13.51	Ch1	Because of thin air.	GK	R	a
180	13.54	T	It's in-?	GK	EVI	pt
181	13.55	Ch1	The air.	GK	R	a
182	13.56	T	In the air? Is it in the air up in space? {4}	GK	EVI	pb
183	14.00	Ch1	It's in space.	GK	R	a
184	14.01	T	How come you went like that just now Sebastien? <i>{imitates Ch1's floating gesture}</i> What were you trying to show me? What happens to you in space?	GK	EXI	dq dq dq
185	14.05	Ch4	You're flying.	GK	R	a
186	14.06	T	Yeah you'd be flying yes you'd be flying. We'll find out what why that is in a wee while.	GK	EVI	ac

Here the teacher's protracted efforts to get the children to state what at least one of them appears to know about low gravity in outer space exemplifies the point that several of the teachers made in Phase 1 about the opportunities afforded by the

reading session for building and consolidating cross-curricular knowledge. Later in the story, the concept of weightlessness does play a part; how much time needs to be devoted to eliciting the concept at this point is debatable. It must be conceded that the teacher does close the exchange by returning to the text *before* her target concepts of gravity and weightlessness have been made explicit, appearing to settle for the child's idea of people 'flying' in space as a proto-concept that can be clarified later. These ideas were in fact discussed in a very informal conversation with the children *after* the reading session, as they were putting their books away.

Immediately after the exchange above, the teacher goes on to attempt to elicit another piece of information.

186	14.06	T	... And how else would it be different? {2} Can you think of any other ways it would be different? {2} Well do you know something? Do you see how it rains?	GK	EVI I	dq dq com dq
187	14.20	Ch2	It's different.	GK	R	a
188	14.21	T	Do you hear that – yes it's different that's right. It rained just earlier on Earth. You wouldn't get that when you're in space – But let's read on and find out how it is so different.	GK	EX I	ac el dir
189	14.31	Ch4	Rain comes from space.	GK	R	a
190	14.33	T	It comes from the sky- it comes from the clouds. Space is even further up Darrel. Would you like to read Cara?	GK M	EX I	el inf dir dir

The interesting thing here is that, unlike the weightlessness phenomenon, the lack of terrestrial weather conditions in space is not relevant at all to the course of the story. Episodes like this suggest what might be called a didactic reflex in the teacher: an urge to be always on the look-out for opportunities to draw children's attention to interesting aspects of things in general. This urge applies to teaching opportunities for ethical and affective aspects of life as well as to general knowledge. In the next extract, the teacher uses the characters' decision to change their game to social interaction in their own lives.

126	9.01	T	That's right – it's a bit like on Friday at choosing time	TL	EX	el
127*	9.03	Ch1	Miss Porter-	?	I	bid
128	9.04	T	Just a minute, listen – It's a bit like on Friday at choosing time when perhaps you're playing with something and you've played with it for quite a while and then you spot Joshua has got something different over in the corner – you think mmmmm I'd quite like to play with that and then maybe Joshua thinks I'm getting a bit tired of that I'd like to play what Sebastien's playing with. So they're both wanting to play with what the others have been playing with because, like [you say-	TL	EV EX	ig/dir el
*129	9.29	Ch2	[They like swap them	TL	I	com
130	9.30	T	Yeah They like swapping over. That's correct – So anyway what happened to decide what they were going to do?	TL S	EV I	ac ac ac dq

Such “opportunistic teaching” (Pressley et al 2001) might be dismissed as mere information dumping, but it can also be defended on the grounds that it integrates subject specific knowledge into the flow of story, and at the same time valorises story as a source of both cognitive and affective learning, thus demonstrating to children the usefulness of reading and its relevance to their own lives. In relation to dialogic learning, the extracts above suggest that there might be a danger that the teacher’s adherence to a didactic agenda can get in the way of the children’s own meaning-making. In turn 177 above, Child 3 is striving to shape and share a description of his vision of the make-believe spaceship turning into a real one; the teacher’s response ‘But listen to what I’m asking you to tell me.’ dismisses his effort in favour of the traditional, didactic ‘guess what’s in my head’ imperative. At turn 127, Child 1’s initiation is truncated by ‘Just a minute, listen-‘when it interrupts the teacher’s didactic move, but is not in fact taken up taken up again when she completes this move just half a minute later.

However, we have to weigh this criticism against the fact that the sharing of story-related information in this session is reciprocal. If the arguments in the literature review about the importance of the teacher modelling of reading, thinking and speaking processes are valid, we could suggest that the teacher here has provided a forum in which children feel confident about sharing their own opinions and knowledge. As well as Child 2’s sustained linking of the text to her experiences, and her questioning of the teacher, there are other occasions on which the children speak not just to the teacher, but to each other. In the following extract there is the beginnings of an argument about whether or not dogs can survive in space:

85	6.40	T	... Could they have fitted Floppy into the space ship?	S	I	dq
86	6.42	ChU	No:::	S	R	a
87	6.44	Ch1	Yes they could.	S	R	a
88	6.46	T	Could they?	S	EVI	dq
89	6.47	Ch1	They could have put him in that big can.	S	R	a

90	6.50	T	Oh they could have done but I'm not sure that would have been very good for Floppy. Right let's [turn over-	S	EX I	el dir
*91	6.53	Ch2	[Cause dogs can't go in space [ever XXX	S	I	com
*92	6.54	Ch3	[Those dogs that XXX they go in space XXX	GK	I	inf
*93	6.54	Ch1	[No they - don't turn [over cause I XXX	M	I	dir
94	7.00	T	Hang on a minute.	M	I	dir

And in the extract below, children go beyond the text and bring their own knowledge to bear upon the teacher's question about why the characters go indoors to play with the computer:

132	9.38	T	Why did that happen Sebastien? Why did they have to go inside to play with Nadim's computer?	S	EVI I	dq
133*	9.42	Ch1	Because out there - they weren't – you need - where did they have the plug to put the plug in?	TL TL	R	a com
134	9.50	T	What just happened? {3}	S	I	dq
135	9.56	Ch2	Ah I know what!	TL	R	a
136	10.00	Ch3	Electricity would not get in inside because out there it would get wet.	TL	R	
137	10.01	T	That's right.	TL	EV	a
138	10.02	Ch1	And the computer will explode!	TL	R	a
139	10.03	Ch2	And the radio!	TL	R	a

The excited answers given by the children here, linking the characters' decision to their own knowledge about the workings of electricity and the extreme danger of getting electrical equipment wet, arise from a more active stance towards the text

than was required by the expected response, confirmed by the teacher after the session, “because it began to rain”. It is very likely that the children acquired this knowledge, particularly the part concerned with danger, through vivid conversations with caregivers, and the urgent tone in which they share it – as if they are shouting warnings to the children in the story - is indicative of a transparency between text and life emerging again, the learners’ world merging with that of the characters.

Finally, as with the other sessions, there are points at which the children begin to appropriate the role of the teacher, correcting each other’s reading and page location errors.

To summarise, the Spaceship offers a very vivid example of the potential of the reading session for dialogic teaching, while also demonstrating the dangers that open up as soon as the conversation does. The children are encouraged to enter the world of a text they find exciting, under the guidance of a teacher who models appreciative response and the value of the story as a source of learning. She prompts participation by encouraging children to predict and to deploy their own life knowledge. She encourages more extended language by probing vagueness and elaborating on some contributions herself. Consequently, she has to keep the enthusiasm generated by the text and her mediation of it within manageable bounds. As in the last two extracts above, she is prepared to allow the children to interact without her mediation and to speak without being called upon, but she steps in when there is the danger of a mere altercation developing. She encourages extended responses and spontaneous comments, but manages not to allow the child who offers most of them to dominate. She consistently braids stray threads of conversation back into the fabric of the storyline while always respecting the feelings of the speaker.

It is indicative of the complexity of the teacher’s role that the more successful she is in making fruitful matches between children and books, and in promoting the lively talk that arises from the encounter, the more vigilant she has to be in keeping the conversation constrained enough to fit within the boundaries of time and curricular expectations.

4.2.3.7 Winnie the Witch

Of the 20 child initiations in Winnie the Witch, the first seven are clustered around the opening of the lesson where the teacher relates the subject matter of the book to the occasion of Halloween, which the children were celebrating on the day of the reading. Many of the later initiations consist of enthusiastic comments, including sound effects, on the events of the story, and on its illustrations. The enthusiastic atmosphere which appeared to facilitate these lively, engaged comments was established between the teacher and the children in the first one minute and forty seconds of the session, transcribed here. Some of the tensions which both teachers and children face when engaging in classroom dialogue are exemplified in this section.

1	0.00	T	OK now I've chosen a book today which is really special for me because when my boys and girls were little I used to read it to them all the time. It's one of my favourite books and [it's called-	TL	I	inf
2	0.42	Ch1	[Is it Halloween?	TL	I	rq
3	0.43	T	Exactly Geoff. That is why I chose to read it today because it's [Halloween today.	TL	R I	a com
*4	0.48	ChU	[Hallowee:::::::::n!	TL	I	com
5	0.51	T	Is anybody going guising [today?	TL	I	rq
6	0.51	ChU	[Huh! {hands up}	TL	R	a
7	0.52	T	OK hands down.	M	EVI	dir
*8	0.53	Ch2	Guising – that's going out going out for sweets?	TL	I	rq
9	0.55	T	Absolutely.	TL	R	a

*10	0.56	Ch1	What is-	TL	I	rq
11	0.57	Ch3	You mean it's another word er for Halloween?	TL	I	rq
12	1.01	T	Trick or treating. Guising is the old Scottish word.	TL GK	R I	a inf
*13	1.04	Ch4	Mrs Crawford I'm-	TL	I	inf
14	1.06	T	I'm waiting for everyone to be good listeners. <i>{Stan has raised his hand}</i> It's your turn to listen Liam. Stan's got something to say. Thank you Liam that's lovely listening. He's looking at you now.	M	I	ig/dir dir
15	1.15	Ch2	I don' go guising because I er cause I have a Halloween party and we er play loads of games and we don't want to miss all the games and that's why we don't go guising.	TL	I	inf
16	1.32	T	That's lovely having your own [Halloween party.	TL	R	com
*17	1.33	Ch3	[I do the same as Stan.	TL	I	inf
18	1.34	T	Well this is a very very nice story about Winnie the Witch [and-	S	I	ig/inf
19	1.40	ChU	Oooooooh! <i>{appreciation of vividly eerie illustrations}</i>	S	R	com
20	1.42	T	Listening shhhh listening. <u>W</u> innie the <u>W</u> itch	S	RI	dir rd

The teacher opens the session with a text-life link which is taken up spontaneously by a child in the second turn. The excitement of the group is evident in their unison uttering of the word Halloween, simultaneous with that of the teacher, in turn 4. That

the class normally work to a system of competitive bidding for permission to participate in talk is evidenced by their hand raising and bidding noises (a unison ‘Huh!’) in turn 6. However, after the teacher’s ‘hands down’ directive in turn 7, Child 2 asks a spontaneous question. The teacher’s response to this is semantically contingent, without any reminder of the pragmatic rules about bidding by putting hands up. Immediately afterwards, there are two adjacent child initiations, in the form of questions. The second of these is a request for clarification of the first child-teacher I-R exchange at turns 8 and 9. It is reasonable to assume that the truncated question at turn 10 is about the same topic. Again the teacher responds contingently, using the children’s experience of ‘trick or treat’ to introduce less familiar vocabulary. When child 4 attempts to submit an unbidden contribution, the pattern of structured, teacher directed participation is re-enforced in turn 14 with a reminder about ‘good listeners’ and ‘lovely listening’: these are common classroom directives reminding children to display an alert and attentive bodily attitude towards the teacher-designated speaker.

This reminder is accompanied by Child 2 raising his hand. After he has completed his initiation, the teacher responds with a brief contingent acknowledgement before directing attention back to the text, in the process ignoring Child 3’s spontaneous life to text initiation at turn 17. The teacher then responds to children’s appreciative unison utterance at turn 19, as she discloses the vivid Gothic illustrations of the Big Book, by gently subduing their enthusiasm with another reminder about listening behaviour, before drawing their attention to the author’s use of alliteration.

I have described this brief exchange in detail because it demonstrates how the teacher has to micro-manage, from moment to moment, the centrifugal factors at play in the session. In this case, these include the children’s anticipatory excitement at celebrating Halloween, their intense appreciation of the chosen text, and their varying levels of readiness to abide by a hands-up system of bidding for participation. The factors also include the effects of the teacher’s own teaching strategies: her signalling, at turn 1, of the validity of personal experience as a topic

for talk, her choice of text, and her temporary, implicit suspension of the hands-up rule.

The flexible way in which the teacher deals with spontaneous contributions in this session, sometimes responding contingently to them, sometimes ignoring them, at other times suppressing them with reminders about ‘good listening’, exemplifies the complex shifts of teacher response evident in all of the sessions. There appears to be a spectrum of reactions, from authoritarian suppression to gentle encouragement, which teachers use according to the pressures of the moment. At the authoritarian end of the scale, teachers frequently use variants of the ‘I’m waiting for everybody to be good listeners’ directive which opens turn 14 above (a move which also truncates the preceding child initiation). Variants in the data include ‘Show me good listening’, ‘Show me your best sitting’, or the simple interjection ‘Good listeners!’. These formulae demand not merely silence: children in most of the classrooms I have visited are expected to assume a sitting-up-straight posture with their gaze directed at the teacher or at another specified focus of attention, such as a designated child or the pages of a shared text. This ritualistic disciplining of the bodily habitus appears at first sight to be aimed at a straightforward consolidation of teacher power and child compliance, with the child traditionally positioned as a passive receptacle for whatever teacher and text have to offer. However, in my data, the posture and the silence associated with it rarely last more than a few seconds. As in the extract above, the resumption of exchanges leads to a decentering of attention as the children begin to listen and respond to each other and to the unfolding story and illustrations. Rather than promptly ordering a return to the ‘good listeners’ posture when the children begin to make their own initiations again, the teacher more often responds contingently. This is exemplified in the extract below, which occurs towards the end of the story, when Winnie the Witch transforms her uniformly black house into a colourful one in order to prevent herself from tripping over her black cat. The extract opens with the teacher reading to the children.

170	18.00	T	<i>Winnie waved her wand again [and again and again.</i>	S	I	rd
171	18.01	ChU	<i>[and again and again!</i>	S	I	rd
172	18.03	T	<i>And now, instead of a black house she had a fabulous wonderful yellow house.</i>	S	I	rd
*173	18.10	ChX	[Ping!]	S	I	com
174	18.12	T	<i>With a red roof and a red door. The chairs were white with red and white cushions. Can you see the red and white cushions on the chairs?</i>	S	I	rd dq
*175	18.24	ChX	That looks like a better house [than just a black house.	S	I	com
*176	18.25	ChX	[That's a better house.	S	I	com
*177	18.25	ChX	[XXXXXX	S	I	com
178	18.27	T	Do you think you like that one better Sara?	S	I	rq
179	18.28	ChU	Yes!	S	R	a
180	18.29	T	Why do you why do you like that one better?	TL	EVI	rq
181	18.34	Ch5	Cause imagine just sitting in black all the time and just looking at black all the time.	TL	R	a
182	18.39	T	Do you think it would be nicer in a colourful house?	TL	I	rq
183	18.40	ChU	[Yes!	TL	R	a
*184	18.42	Ch1	[Let me tell you something- if he went in there you wouldn't see him because that's black. <i>{indicates dark room in the picture}</i>	S	I	com

185	18.47	T	That's right there's one room that's black.	S	EV	ac
*186	18.48	ChX	And and-	S	I	bd
187	18.50	T	Sit on your bottom so everyone can see there's lots- Let's read on and find out what all the other things were now. <i>The carpet was green with pink roses and the bed was blue with pink and blue and white sheets and ink blankets and the bath was gleaming white.</i> <i>And now Winnie can see Wilbur no matter where he sits.</i>	M S	I	dir rd
*188	19.16	Ch1	Mrs Crawford the stairs aren't there now.	S	I	com
189	19.19	T	Are the stairs not there? I think it's because we can see the outside of the house Geoff . I think you're right we can't see the stairs any more but do you think they're still inside the house?	S	EXI	ac com dq
190	19.28	ChU	Yes.	S	R	a

The three child initiations at turns 175-177, which follow the spirited unison reading, are not responded to directly by the teacher, but their content is taken up by her in the form of the question at turn 178 and a follow-up question at turn 180 inviting responses from a child who has not contributed. The teacher does respond directly with a contingent comment to the child initiation at turn 184, but the succeeding child initiation at turn 186 is met with a directive to sit down and listen. After this, the teacher completes the story. It is perhaps significant that after the story has been completed, that is to say, when the designated amount of text has been 'covered', she responds contingently to the child initiation which immediately follows. In fact, the

two minutes and forty-one seconds between the end of the story and the end of the lesson has a distinctly relaxed pace. It remains teacher-directed, consisting of a series of IRE/IRF exchanges punctuated by children's comments, but the questioning is more open-ended, prompting children to make personal responses to the pictures of the transformed house.

The teacher's reactions and degrees of responsiveness to the children's contributions are therefore inconsistent, but not necessarily unsystematic. As in the other sessions, the degree of tolerance and encouragement for children's speaking-out appears to be linked to factors such as the amount of text that has been covered in the elapsed time, the number of children who are competing for floor-space, and the likely relevance of children's spontaneous contributions to the appreciation and comprehension of the text. There are probably also factors present which are invisible to the observer, such as the teacher's informed opinions about which individuals deserve more or less of the available talking time.

Given the complexity of the factors at work, it would be unrealistic and perhaps inadvisable to adhere strictly to a set of participation protocols. For example, although it is clear from the literature that contingent responses to contributions are likely to encourage more sustained participation from the person receiving such 'considerate' responses, it is also likely that a teacher acting on the maxim that all child initiations should be taken up would be in danger of leaving little time for anything else. There would also be the risk of tangling the unifying thread of a session by trying to braid in too many subsidiary threads.

Similarly, while it could be argued that the 'good listeners' type directives can serve an enabling role by signalling a return to a shared focus when the dialogue is getting unruly, or is excluding less vociferous children, it would be extremely oppressive if such directives were used as the default response to all unprompted contributions.

The children do appear to recognise that participation protocols are applied flexibly. They know, for example, that compliance with the 'good listening' posture is not the

required default state for them during the reading session; if it were, there would be no child initiations at all. But do all the children know this? Perhaps teacher flexibility, or inconsistency, affords extra talking rights only to those children who are confident enough to take advantage of it. Other children must rely on the teacher's ability to distribute rights equitably based on her moment-by-moment alacrity in monitoring participation while simultaneously limiting and eliciting contributions in accordance with this monitoring.

Perhaps one way of making the task of equitable participation less dependent on the 'tact of teaching' (Van Manen, 1991) is to hand more responsibility for it to the children themselves. Although children are given frequent reminders of the bodily and behavioural requirements of 'good listening', I found very little systematic attention in my observations to what might be called 'good talking'. Several initiatives in recent years have set out versions of the characteristics of 'good talking' in pedagogical contexts (for example, Alexander 2005, Mercer & Littleton, 2007) but it is clear that setting guidelines for active, responsive and considerate talking is more problematical than the 'sit up, shut up and pay attention' command conveyed by 'good listening'.

A distinctive feature of this teacher's discourse is her commitment to drawing learners' attention to the pleasures of language and literacy. Her attention to the alliterative title of the book is an example of this. Another occurs after her question about why Winnie the Witch sat on Wilbur.

102	9.52	Ch5	He went to sleep and Winnie couldn't see him because he was camouflaged in the in the black because he's black and the erm er and it hidden erm his blackness hid him in the chair and Winnie accidentally sat on him.	S	R	a
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103	10.14	T	<p>What a good word you used there.</p> <p>I heard you use the word camouflage.</p> <p>He was camouflaged and because he closed his green eyes and Winnie couldn't see him anymore.</p> <p>That was a very good word Sam.</p>	LK	EV EX	pr com el pr
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The word 'camouflage' does not occur in the book, but is evoked from the child's lexicon by the teacher's question. In later turns, the word is used by other children, perhaps because of the value that the teacher put upon it. The combination of text content and the teacher's language awareness in evoking and developing vocabulary through reading based dialogue is worthy of further attention.

The final observation I wish to make about this session also concerns the 'tact of teaching' and the potentially inhibiting effects of putatively enabling strategies. I have suggested that the teacher's encouragement of text-links is a promising strategy for encouraging dialogue and comprehension, since it enables the child to make connections between lived experience and reading material. In this session, the children do respond readily to the teacher's sharing of personal information at strategic points in the session, her references to the children's celebration of Halloween, and her prompting of the children to express personal opinions about the house transformations shown in the illustrations. However, the exchange below demonstrates how text to life links need to be deployed with due tact.

The exchange occurred when the children were talking about how Winnie's cat might be feeling after she has changed his fur from black to multicoloured.

150	14.26	T	<p>You think he feels a bit cross with Winnie for turning him into all these colours?</p> <p>Let's read on and find out.</p> <p><i>And Winnie could see Wilbur even when he climbed to the top of the tallest tree.</i></p> <p>I think he's feeling a bit embarrassed isn't he?</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Can you tell me about a tie you felt embarrassed, Neil?</p>	S	EVI	pb
				TL		dir rd com rq dir
151	15.48	Ch6	<p>Erm. {3}</p> <p>I forgot.</p>	TL	R	hes ref
152	15.55	T	<p>You've forgotten.</p> <p>OK</p> <p>Neil er Liam sorry.</p>	TL	EV	ac
					I	dir
153	15.57	Ch4	<p>When we had to do the show.</p>	TL	R	a
154	16.01	T	<p>Did you feel a bit shy then?</p> <p>Do you know what happened to me at the weekend?</p> <p>I started mountain biking and I kept falling off my bike.</p> <p>And lots of people were watching me and there were two girls from my other school there who saw me fall off my bike two or three times and I felt a bit embarrassed,</p> <p>And I think poor Wilbur feels really embarrassed.</p>	TL	EV	ac
					I	inf

The teacher's attempt to get child 3 to talk publicly about an embarrassing experience, aimed perhaps at encouraging the child to talk at more length, or at eliciting empathy with the character of Wilbur the cat, or at assessing and consolidating the child's knowledge of the word 'embarrassing', is understandably followed by hesitation and hedging on the part of the child. Embarrassing experiences are, after all, exactly those which most people would prefer not to talk about. Although the exchange occurs in the context of respectful classroom relationships, it could be construed as the child being put in a vulnerable position by somebody with more power than him demanding a potentially uncomfortable or even humiliating self-disclosure. The teacher does not, however, press the case; another child provides the required clarification of the concept, and the teacher consolidates this with a light-hearted self-disclosure of her own: one which poses no threat to face.

This episode illustrates how closely the pedagogical aspects of classroom discourse are entwined with affective ones. It is a truism that the communication of knowledge, skills and attitudes from teacher to learner is closely associated with motivation, which at its simplest can be understood as the drive to seek pleasant and avoid unpleasant experiences and the emotions associated with them. This pedagogical entwinement has the obvious ethical implication that the teacher must pay attention to the sensitivities of children when engaging them in dialogue; a corollary implication is that infringement of these sensitivities might well have pedagogical consequences in causing children to opt out of forms of classroom talk which threaten their dignity and security.

4.2.3.8 Wolves

This session feature a big-book sharing of the story "Beware of the Storybook Wolves", the adventures of a child who is menaced in his bedroom by a pair of wolves that have escaped from the pages of the Red Riding Hood storybook his mother has left at his bedside.

There are 18 child initiations in this session, which at 26% comprise the largest percentage of child to teacher initiations in the data. Half of these consist of enthusiastic comments on the illustrations, and another two are demands for a better view of the illustrations. Four initiations occur when children are making observations about the physical structure of the big-book being read to them, using literacy knowledge terminology such as *back cover* and *spine*. On two occasions, the children make evaluative comments on preceding child contributions as to their accuracy or relevance. Two initiations occur in the course of a child contributing an item of personal knowledge. On one occasion a child completes the teacher's comment, and on another occasion a child disputes the teacher's remark about a related story (see the extracts below). There is one unison child initiation which consists of the group providing sound effects to go with the sense of suspense signalled by the three full-stops which the teacher has pointed out to them. The frequency of these unprompted but text-inspired contributions, and the variety of different ways in which the children make them, attest to the interactive nature of the session. The control exerted by the teacher is consistent but gentle, the former quality evidenced in a conventional series of teacher led IRE/IRF exchanges, the latter in the quiet, unhurried tone of the teacher's voice and in her deployment of pauses. (I will return to the problem of investigating affective variables such as 'gentleness' in the conclusion.)

As with the Winnie the Witch session, the teacher's opening remark prompts the children to link the book with their celebration of Halloween.

1	0.03	T	Why do you think I've chosen this story for today? What do you think?	TL	I	rq
2	0.06	Ch1	[Cause-	TL	R	a
3		Ch2	[It's Halloween.	TL	R	a
4	0.09	T	It's Halloween. It might be- it might be a little bit...	TL	E I	ac pt
5	0.11	Ch2	Trick or treatish?	TL	R	a

In the following exchange, the teacher prompts the children to make an intertextual link, activating the children's relevant cultural knowledge about the role of wolves in stories.

8	0.15	T	{3} Where do wolves come in stories? Do you know any stories with wolves in them? {2}	TL	I	dq dq
9	0.23	Ch1	Err the Wolf and the Pig.	TL	R	a
*10	0.24	Ch2	It's not actually a wolf because look at them again in their shoes.	TL	I	com
11	0.27	T	The three little pigs? So you're thinking of that one? What do you thinking of Laura?	TL	EV I	pb rq

The exchange shows a distinctive strategy used by this teacher: she makes a substantial pause at the end of the preceding exchange, as if reflecting on what has been said already before beginning the next exchange. In turn 10, the child's initiation is a corrective comment on the group's assumption that the creatures featuring in the story are wolves: he thinks that they are humans in disguise because the cover shows them wearing shoes. His speaking out provides evidence of confidence in his right to voice dissent from shared interpretations of the story. This may also be described of as an appropriation of the teacher's role in providing interpretations of the text. The teacher does not take up this contribution. The following extract is a continuation of the children's sharing of their knowledge about wolves in stories.

25	1.24	Ch4	They eat people.	S	R	a
26	1.26	T	They sometimes do in stories don't they like the like the Three Little Pigs.	S	EX	com
*27	1.30	Ch2	They don't eat them there- they killed him.	S	I	com
28	1.32	Ch5	They kill people.	S	R	a
29	1.35	T	Shall we go into it and see what's what's	S	EVI	dir

			going to [happen.			
*30	1.37	Ch6	People say-.	TL	I	inf
31	1.39	T	This is a story we haven't mentioned.	S	I	ig/inf

At turn 27 Child 2 again signals dissent by reminding the group that in the 3 Little Pigs, it is the wolf who is the victim. Again, the teacher does not comment on this, passing on to the business of introducing the text of the day, and in the course of doing so sidelining an attempted initiation from Child 6. The child tries again 18 seconds later at turn 40, after the teacher has read the book blurb, which implies that wolves are dangerous. This time he succeeds in gaining attention.

39	1.56	T	OK OK. Now this says <i>Beware of the storybook wolves.</i> <i>Beware, [Watch out.</i>	S	I	foc rd
*40	2.03	Ch6	[It's er- usually people say this- People usually say this- er... We- they're more scared of us than we are of them.	TL	I	inf
41	2.13	T	That might be for real wolves mightn't it? But storybook wolves...	TL	EXI	com
*42	2.19	Ch5	They're trying to kill you.	TL	I	com
43	2.20	T	They're a bit different aren't they? Here we are again. See what that says Kayla?	S	R I	com foc dq

Turn 40, the second longest child utterance in this session, is notable for the fact that the child is contributing an item of personal knowledge to the discussion which is both relevant to the story and counter to the 'common knowledge' expressed by the storybook and by the teacher and the rest of the children. Although the teacher does respond with an acknowledgement of the child's real life link, it is a little surprising that she does not elaborate more on a contribution which has the potential to provide the rest of the group with a genuinely new and more complex perspective on fictional stereotypes. Instead, she uses the next child initiation at turn 42, which supports

‘common knowledge’ about wolves, to return attention to the text. In a sense, the cultural capital that Child 6 brings to the conversation is devalued.

It is interesting to compare the distribution of teacher attention in the extract above with that displayed in the next set of child initiations, which show children sharing and clarifying items of literacy knowledge with the teacher.

59	3.42	Ch3	[And there's a wolf.	S	R	a
60	3.43	T	What do you think's happening?	S	I	dq
*61	3.44	Ch4	The back of the book there's a wolf- And what does the back say?	S	I	com dq
62	3.46	T	Hm-mm?	S	R	pt
63	3.49	Ch4	Of the book?	S	I	dq
64	3.50	T	That's the back of the book is it?	LK	I	pt
65	3.51	Ch4	Yeah what-?	S	I	rq
66	3.52	T	Well spotted. That's the book isn't it? I hadn't noticed that.	LK	EV	ac ac com
*67	3.59	Ch3	There's the spine of the book. There's the spine.	LK	I	inf
68	4.00	T	Uh huh. Down er this bit that's actually the spine of our book. Yes.	LK	R	ac
*69	4.04	Ch5	It's a really big book.	LK	I	com
70	4.05	T	It is. It's a very big book. Sometimes we have awfully big books don't we to read stories from.	LK	R	ac com

Here the child is making a story-focussed enquiry about the blurb on the back of the book and the teacher interprets this as a display of knowledge of terminology. Her

take up of this remark leads into further sharing of such terminology by the other children. As discussed in the methodology section, knowledge of book structure is an accepted part of the literacy curriculum. Since ‘discussion’ of it rarely involves more than a naming of parts and an indication of the purposes of each, there is little likelihood that literacy-knowledge based child initiations will either take up too much time or threaten the default goal of getting the text read in the available time. This is in contrast to initiations such as ‘they’re more scared of us than we are of them’. One could argue that this remark, as well as disrupting accepted knowledge, threatens to disrupt the children’s expectations of a frightening story. Again, the teacher is faced with a troubling choice between elaborating on a potentially fruitful child-initiation, or fulfilling routine reading practice on time. It is also likely that the more interest that the text has for the children, and the more successful the teacher at engaging with such interest, the more such troubling choices she will have to face.

4.2.4 Summary of Phase Two: Answer to research question two

Research question two asked:

To what extent and by what means do the teachers encourage dialogical interaction in their management of the centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in the discourse of their reading sessions?

Both the quantitative and the qualitative data discussed above show very wide variations between sessions. However, there are some discernible common patterns. In relation to the eight criteria set out in section 2.6, many of these patterns signal monologic discourse:

- asymmetry of rights: teacher dominance of talking time (except in *The Spaceship and Vikings*) and of turns and topic choices.
- absence of planned opportunities for collaboration and thinking together (except in *Vikings*).
- absence of play with language and ideas (except in *Vikings*).

- absence of support for critical literacy.

However, there was evidence in all of the sessions of the following ways in which teachers encouraged dialogical interaction:

- modelling and supporting text-life links.
- encouragement and /or tolerance of child initiations
- contingent response to such initiations.
- tolerance of and support for children's spontaneous interactions with each other.
- use of comments, questions, prompts and probes that scaffold children's understanding and self-expression.

As well as differences between the sessions, there were modulations within them, as teachers responded to both the centrifugal force of children's participation in the reading and to the centripetal pressures exerted by time and other non-educational constraints. These findings will be further discussed in section 4.4, where I present a synopsis of the three phases of the research.

4.3 Phase three: teacher responses to the analysis

Phase three of the investigation took place after all of the sessions had been transcribed, the quantitative analyses completed, and the qualitative analyses were in progress. I sent all of the teachers a letter asking if I could conduct an informal individual interview about the sessions I had recorded in their classrooms, accompanied by a pack containing the transcript, a CD and the analysis documents listed in the Methodology chapter, section 3.3.3. I managed to arrange interviews with five of the eight teachers. Subsequent sections summarise teacher responses and what I see as the implications of them.

4.3.1 Teacher 1.1

Teacher 1.1 conducted the session in which the children read the first few pages of *The Story of Running Water*. The session was characterised by a running feud between an inattentive child who spent the session clowning, and a child who was a knowledgeable and fluent reader who wanted the first child to behave more seriously. The teacher had to keep the peace between the two children. In her conduct of the session, she directed attention to the pictures to focus on the fauna of South America, and she also spent a lot of the available time explaining the function of the punctuation marks on the page.

Teacher 1.1 did not want to be recorded, so the information below is reconstructed from the handwritten notes I wrote as we talked in her classroom at the end of the school day.

This teacher appeared to have found the outcomes of her participation in the project distressing. She was approaching the end of her career, and told me that she was both sorry and relieved to be leaving the teaching profession, because it appeared to be impossible for teachers to do anything right in the eyes of non-teachers. The material in the pack I had sent her appeared to have contributed to her sense of demoralisation. She interpreted the asymmetry of participation between herself and the children, evident in the quantitative measures and in some of her responses to child initiations, as reflecting badly upon her stated commitment to help children become both fluent readers and enjoyers of literature.

Her remarks were often defensive, but also often self-critical:

You have to remember that this was a poor group.

The child who was doing all the talking was on the autistic spectrum ... his mother was having terrible problems with him.

With the top group you can focus on expression and different meanings – with this group you’ve got to keep it concrete, get them to focus on the words in front of them.

I suppose I could have brought them in better. Having more support would have helped.

Yes I was doing too much of the talking, I admit it.

There is so much to talk about in any good book, but they tend to just want the story.

All I want to do is to inject enjoyment of books into their lives, but it’s so hard.

There should have been more opportunities for discussion, but it’s time, time, time – the single thing you have to worry about most in teaching is time.

This set of remarks could act as a précis for both the preoccupations of the teachers, and for many of the issues that have been raised already: the difficulty of conducting teaching which is both equitable and differentiated given the range of personalities and levels of attainment in even a small group; the threats to the stability of the teaching session posed by children with volatile behaviour; the problematical belief that children who are less accomplished readers should be limited to decoding the words on the page, with engagement in dialogue with the text and fellow readers deferred until decoding becomes automatic; the unrelenting pressure to achieve pedagogical goals without support in a overcrowded timetable.

The most vivid and disconcerting message conveyed to me by this interview was, however, the reminder it provided of how vulnerable the teacher is, not only as the

subject of externally imposed curricular demands which add to the inevitable burdens of teaching and caring for children, but also as the subject of the researcher's gaze and his anatomical toolkit.

If the ethical imperative guiding the researcher is to do no harm to the people whose lives are being studied, then something appears to have gone wrong with the way in which my findings were revealed to this particular teacher. Perhaps closer and more frequent communication between us could have alleviated this, but given the pressure of time and commitments alluded to frequently in the report so far, this would have been impossible for both of us. This and other ethical implications of the project will be further discussed in the conclusion.

4.3.2 Teacher 1.2

Teacher 1.2 led the children in a reading of the story 'Spike' about a child's visit to a house to purchase a puppy. This was the largest group in the sample.

The teacher's most immediate reaction to the transcript was that her speech 'looked terrible written down', a point I will return to at the end of this section. Her first response to my questions about the analyses was, like that of the previous teacher, one of surprise that she had dominated the talking time so much. She at first ascribed this to a deficit in the ability of these younger children to produce long utterances:

I was amazed at how much I the teacher spoke compared to the children but then I don't know if that's because they're younger children. Most of the children's responses are very short and that is all they ever say.

She also expressed the opinion that children of this age are egocentric, and identified one of the main purposes of talk with younger children as the reduction of egocentricity.

It's difficult with primary one. Young children are every egocentric. The world revolves around them so it's trying to get them to look at the world from a different perspective ... which is why so much of what we do in reading is

talking about the character and the story. Draw them out more towards we and them instead of me and I ... It's not just about themselves.

Later in the interview, she conceded that in small groups children could be more forthcoming:

If you were to come back to listen to the actual small reading group you'd hear more because they tend to speak more in a small group – depends on the group as well – you can have children who can talk for an hour quite happily about nothing.

This signalled a change of perspective, from describing children as being limited in speech and sealed within individual worlds, to being ready to talk about anything, or 'nothing', and capable of using language for social purposes like humour:

That's the thing with children – you never know what they're going to say next. Do you remember the first [session] about the cow where it was going to get chopped up or something – you can never predict what their responses are going to be, and they can bring up very random, very different things that are totally away on a tangent.

I think it's a lot to do with knowing the children – you tend to know the ones who will make a silly response because they're going for a laugh and the ones who make what might be perceived as a silly response but to them it's quite sensible, knowing the children.

It is interesting that the episode arising from a story shared during an earlier visit, in which the children suggested butchering a cow that was disturbing campers in the story, was not an idiosyncratic or 'egocentric' remark, but the result of children sharing and building on each others' ideas.

So, as the interview progressed, Teacher 1.2's self-description of her role changed from that of an elicitor of talk from inarticulate and egocentric children, to that of a controller of talk from children who could be loquacious, creative and responsive to each other's contributions.

If it's something I think is relevant then we discuss it. If it's something I don't think will be of any benefit then I get them back to the reading.

This insistence on adherence to the story was mentioned as a justification for her use of display questions during the session:

And looking at the types of questions I asked as well, whether I was looking for an answer I already knew or for something I genuinely didn't know, I'd say most of them were answers I do know – but isn't it all to do with finding out what they know?

This is an interesting self-assessment, in that the analysis showed that this teacher did in fact consistently use referential prediction questions which elicited some complex language from the children (see section 4.2.3.2). Furthermore, in spite of her adherence to reading accuracy, she was also clear that reading was not simply a process of pronouncing the words on the page:

I think it's to get them past the idea that reading's not just about the words on the page. There's a lot more to a story than just that – it's to do with what you talk about, reading between the lines, which they tend to do further up the school, but we can be sowing the seeds when they're young.

The belief that discussion of text is more suited to older children was shared by most of the teachers. Teacher 2.1 reiterated it when talking about how the project had affected her view of her own teaching:

It's made me very aware of my own teaching – of how much I'm talking to the children, and it's made me think, would that change, the further up the school you were to go and I think it would because I think your focus is very different at different stages throughout the school

Another significant remark concerned what she saw as the effectiveness of the structured programme the children had experienced before entering P2:

It is radical - the Edinburgh programme has helped children especially boys who wouldn't've come within a mile of the reading and especially the writing who have interest in it now, because they've realise they can do it – whereas before they'd have said, I can't do that – give me something else.

Like her colleagues in other schools, this teacher believed that a recent emphasis on structured phonics had given children an unprecedented head start in the decoding of words. The question of what teachers should do in order to make the best of children's improved decoding ability will surface again in subsequent sections.

Finally, I would like to return to the teacher's opinions about the usefulness and relevance of the research project. Towards the end of the interview she returned to the theme of how reading the transcript and analyses had made her 'very aware' of her own teaching.

I think it is interesting, because as a teacher every day you're doing so many different things that you're not thinking: oh right, I'm going to ask this kind of question right now, you just do it sort on instinctively ... a lot of the things you say if somebody were to say to you, you just said this, you'd say: oh did I? You don't remember because you're so involved. So it's interesting to have to go back to what you said and how you said it and the children's responses to it, so in that respect it's been useful.

Other teachers in the sample make similar observations about the experience of 'the defamiliarisation effect' (Shklovsky, 1994). This concept, grounded in Russian Formalism, expresses the distinction between routine and artistic experience. The former is compared to prose, the latter to poetry. The greater degree of artifice of the latter is held to detain the reader's or viewer's attention and to remove the 'automatism of perception' associated with everyday speech and other routine auditory and visual experiences. It seems that the teacher's encounters with their own speech, written down and analysed by a listener, created a similar experience of distancing. In this case, the sense of strangeness comes not from the poetic artifice of what is being read, but from the fact that the reader's own prosaic words are being re-experienced as text. The teacher's initial reaction to seeing her speech in writing, 'The way I talked looked terrible written down', referred, in the first instance, to the repetitions, elisions, false starts and repairs that are natural to spoken language, but are largely imperceptible to the speaker, who is focusing on communicating meaning rather than perfecting form. The sense of dissatisfaction was, however, also felt to different degrees, and with different degrees of unease, by all five interviewees in relation to the professional interactions represented in the data, with regard in

particular to graphic representations of measures of participation and zones of attention. The capture of evanescent speech by recording, transcription and analysis affords the opportunity to re-examine one's spontaneous words as artifice, and thereby to begin the work of reshaping the ways in which words are used. But this is a process which always carries the risk of inflicting or deepening a sense of insecurity or demoralisation. The impact of these representations raises ethical issues which I will return to in the conclusion.

4.3.3 Teacher 2.1

Teacher 2.1 conducted the session in which the children read the book *New Trainers*. Her group were the youngest in the sample and the lesson was very teacher-centred, with the greatest difference between teacher and child measures of participation. The interview with teacher 2.1 took place at a table in her classroom with the transcript and analyses spread out before us. Her first comment was 'I was startled by the amount of talking I did'. When I asked her why she thought that this had happened, she was initially defensive, but her responses became more specific to her own part in the dialogue as she read and re-read the transcript. The sequence of extracts below, all within the first few minutes of the interview, illustrate this transition.

They were quite a difficult class to get information from. They were lazy and they would like to just sit and it was hard work getting anything from them generally.

I'm teaching them a lot so I suppose I'm doing more verbalising. But I was still quite shocked. I really thought they said more.

A lot of the questions I was asking were expecting one-word answers. I suppose when you're talking about the vocabulary that's to be expected, but when you're talking about the actual story and linking it to their experiences I suppose I could ask different questions and get them to give me more information in their own words.

I was putting too much information into the questions - and the comments. I'm just grabbing one here that hitting me in the face: *Ethan, how did the trainers get wet* and his answers *they went into the puddle*, so I went *they went into the puddle didn't they*, and then I gave him more information: *He forgot, and then they went into the puddle* – maybe I should have said to Ethan, uh be more specific – once he said *they went in the puddle* I could have said *yes and what happened?* I gave him the next step rather than him giving it to me.

It appears from this that a repeated reading of the transcript enabled the teacher to focus upon details of participation specific to this session, and to formulate her own ideas for how children's participation in future sessions might be improved.

When I asked Teacher 2.1 about the lack of child to child interaction during her session, and infant-level reading sessions in general, she at first remarked that this was an idea that had never occurred to her, then linked the question constraints of time, exacerbated by the emphasis on rapid teaching pace demanded by the Education Authority's prescriptive reading syllabus:

The problem is when you're teaching reading especially these days when we're doing the literacy programme and the numeracy programme it's quite structured - so it's we're doing this and we've got to get through that and its duh-duh-duh-duh! You don't have lots of time with your reading groups. I suppose you want to get through it as quickly as possible - but yeah that would be something that would be a good activity I think. I want you to go away and discuss this or even just give them some time.

Here the teacher makes explicit reference to anxieties about the three aspects of the 'cluttering of the curriculum' which has been much debated by teachers and policy makers. In the literacy and numeracy programmes she mentions, the content of lessons is prescribed in great detail, the sequencing of instruction is rigidly structured, and the pace at which material is covered has to be urgent (expressed as the stacatto duh-duh-duh-duh by the teacher). All three of these factors militate against the teacher's take-up and considered response to potentially time-consuming and tangential child initiations. They are also inimical to child-to-child interactions, since such interactions are intrinsically difficult to monitor and direct with the level of carefully timed control demanded by the programmes. Although one of the objectives of the Curriculum for Excellence is to create more space for teacher

initiative, classroom interaction and creativity it is as yet unclear how the national, centrally planned curriculum will impinge upon prescriptive policies which are set by local education authorities. Although the teacher appears to want to give the children ‘some time ‘ for interaction, her preceding words seem to suggest that this could be wishful thinking.

However, this teacher also pointed out what she saw as a great advantage of the literacy programme

If you’d come in to do this ten years ago, before we did the literacy programme, I’d’ve done an awful lot more word decoding in the books, but because a lot of that is taught in the literacy programme it really teaches them to read, the reading scheme is a means now to for them to show they can read and use a book and the book language like that sort of things and get the comprehension from the book.

So the situation appears to be that by giving children early expertise in word-recognition, a process which this teacher equates with “really teach(ing) them to read” the structured programme has created more time for the teacher to spend time on developing comprehension. Yet the teacher still feels rushed. Perhaps a clue to why can be found in her remarks about what children might learn from the books that they are reading.

Certainly in the early stages stories are very, very simple. There’s not a huge amount of depth in which you can look at punctuation in primary 1, just capitals and full stops, so maybe you can do a little on them. It may well be that as children get older with more reading stamina you might concentrate one day on punctuation and work on it from the reading book, something like that .

Certainly you’re looking at developing reading for enjoyment and book language and using the pictures as picture clues - word order, sentence formation, sort of thing.

This could be interpreted as more evidence of the ‘didactic impulse’ – the teacher’s commitment to nurturing enjoyment of reading is asserted, but the books themselves are seen as not particularly interesting. They do however, afford opportunities for the teacher to familiarise children with technical skills, knowledge and vocabulary about

such subjects as punctuation and sentence structure. Thus the time that becomes available for discussing book meanings and how they relate to the readers' experiences is instead occupied by the more discrete and assessable aspects of the prescribed programme. I am not arguing here that the discussion of technical aspects of writing should be avoided altogether in the reading session: it is clear that children's encounters with published material can offer the teacher potentially stimulating opportunities for demonstrating to children how such technicalities are deployed in real contexts. It would, however be a concern if the teacher saw these 'very, very simple texts' just as sentence patterns to be read aloud and then used for analysis without a teaching phase devoted to the meanings expressed and the effects achieved by 'word order, sentence formation, that sort of thing'.

Teacher 2.1's view of the value of the research process was quite positive.

It was interesting – you just tend to do things normally and you don't analyse what you're doing, you just do it without thinking. You know reading because you do it so often in your everyday job you don't often think of the things you're really saying, so this makes you think. There's a lot of things for me to take on board with it. It's useful to have these categories and maybe a rough breakdown of how much time you should spend on it. I don't know - obviously you've done the research - if there is a pattern that comes up as to how much time *most* teachers spend on them. It does make you start thinking about what you're actually doing.

Here the teacher's distinction between conducting classroom discourse automatically ('you just do it without thinking') and reflectively ('this makes you think') parallels the contrast between automatic decoding and reflective appreciation in the act of reading. In both cases, the switch from unthinking fluency to a more searching mode of awareness involves labour and a sense of being unsettled. For the transition to occur, the knower must experience a sense of alienation from life as it is transparently lived; she must move away from the reassurance of doing things as they are done by others in similar circumstances, and take responsibility for her own decisions about how to act. A similar commitment is shown every time a child reader makes an initiation offering an alternative perspective on the text being read by the group. This is, of course, an anxious process, and one which may be accompanied by

a longing for the sense of security that comes with conformity to group behaviour. So I also found illuminating the teacher's desire to find out how much time *most* teachers spend on each category illuminating, and how much time they *should* spend. Most of the teachers seemed to think normatively about such concepts, asking, in one way or another, how they had done in their lessons. There seems to be a complex process of self-development and self-submergence going on here: teachers want to find out how well they are doing as individuals, and to improve their professional performance as individuals. At the same time, they want to know what is expected of them; they want to calibrate their performance, or have somebody else calibrate it, against a standard model of teaching reading that can be prescribed and quantified.

4.3.4 Teacher 2.4

Teacher 2.4 conducted the story of the Spaceship. During this session there was a comparatively high degree of interaction. Just over 26% of all the initiations were made by the children, and the audio-file conveys a sense of lively involvement by the children, with the teacher deftly braiding children's contributions into the flow of the story. The children are clearly fascinated by the transition in the story from playing with an outer space themed computer game and becoming involved in an 'actual' space adventure. The teacher tries to use this level of interest to elicit and transmit some 'interesting facts' about space.

Like the previous teacher, teacher 2.4's first response during the interview expressed her surprise at how fragmentary and repetitive her spoken language looked when it was written down. Her main concern was at the balance in the amounts of teacher talk and child talk, and also the balance in the content of what was talked about:

I wondered if I'm speaking too much during a reading session. Should the children be left more to their own devices? I know we have to direct - you have to ensure they understand. Let's say you want them to predict what they think is going to happen next, which is an important part of reading skills. You have to make that quite clear which obviously involves you speaking quite a bit, but I did think maybe they should be speaking more in terms of giving their opinions as opposed to just reading the text?

When asked about encouraging text-life links, the teacher mentioned the different affordances for this provided by different types of text:

I think different stories lend themselves to you exploring different reading skills. So at that point with that adventure story there was a quite a bit of me asking them what they thought was going to happen next, whereas with another story you might be asking them to share their experiences which have come from the story. For example if it was about a birthday party it'd be what happened when *you* had a birthday party, what did you feel et cetera et cetera.

She was also clear about the motivating power of children having their contributions recognised by the teacher.

The thing I remember even now is how J spotted in the picture that the children had used the back of a chair as a ladder. I hadn't noticed that so I remember telling him how impressed I was. I think that makes children feel that their contributions are valued, if they think they've noticed something nobody else has.

Like all of the interviewees, teacher 2.4 expressed dismay at the shortage of time she felt was available for more extended talk. She also linked this to pressure exerted by parents who wanted to see their children progressing rapidly through the reading scheme.

Because time's limited, you don't always get the opportunity to pursue that type of conversation. I think it's quite nice to spend a fair bit of time on a particular book, maybe more than perhaps parents would like it. You know for them it's so important: when are you getting your new book? They want to get things covered, but it would be quite nice with that book and that group to have made from some boxes a spaceship. There's nothing wrong with spending a bit of time, because that way you can engage them in the story ... It's not too difficult to do that in an infant classroom.

She stressed that this sort of text-inspired project would only be worth the investment in time if the book had succeeded in motivating a particular group.¹⁰ In the same

¹⁰ She also stated that the Spaceship story had created a lively session because it appealed to the boys who formed a majority of the group. In fact, the most assertive and loquacious child in that group had been a girl. I did not remind the teacher of this

passage, she makes a significant point about how teaching materials impose constraints upon discourse, and the risks involved to children's learning if these constraints are ignored:

That's where you're going to get the enthusiasm, where it matches with everything: environmental studies projects, whatever you do. If the children are not interested in a book it's very difficult to get them interested. If you're following a reading scheme it's difficult to skip that book because obviously you've got all the vocabulary and what-not that goes along with it, and I think I'm not there to question – if we're doing a particular reading scheme, then that's the one you follow. You can't slow down too much on the literacy programme phonics and spelling because if you do then they don't have the tools to do the writing and the independent reading: they don't know how to make all the sounds.

The implication I detect here is that 'sticking to the script', or at least to the order of books and skills prescribed by the school and local authority, does not necessarily amount to either meek compliance or the suppression of spontaneity. She is implying that professional judgement is involved in deferring to policy, and thus ensuring that children are given the *expected* set of opportunities to learn. This involves taking a centripetal approach which, while acknowledging the value of individual learners' contributions, nevertheless insists on coherence, consistency and continuity for the group. Of course, an over-concentration on these three c-words could characterise an uncritical and anti-creative curriculum. However, the teacher went on to describe how she strove to balance centripetal principles with children's centrifugal contributions in the making of moment-to-moment decisions:

This is where the curriculum would kick in. When you're doing that type of thing you don't want to go away from the story too much, sometimes you have to reel it in, but you make a wee note in your head: let's touch on that later on, maybe do it at the end of the session. You don't want to get in the way of the enjoyment of the book especially, for some people because there might just be one child who's particularly interested in an aspect of it, while the rest of them are not particularly interested. I think it's all about just looking: picking up cues from the children and trying to do your best. When they start to fidget or look around, you think, they're not interested in that. You've got to keep the

during the interview, so I wonder if an opportunity had been missed here to probe her assumptions about what stimulates children to speak out.

group together, and sometimes it does seem a bit dismissive of a point and you think, oh that could've been a good, a very interesting point, maybe for one or two children, not for the rest, so pick it up later on.

This passage, while again emphasising 'the tact of teaching', also touches upon two points made in the discussion of the phase two data. Firstly, the fostering of children's development of reading has at least as much to do with 'the enjoyment of the book', a valuable experience in its own right, as it does with discussion of how the book relates to personal experience. Secondly, epistemic talk stimulated by the reading of a book can take place *beyond the limits of the reading session*, and will therefore be inaudible to a researcher focusing strictly on episodes of reading instruction (just as the reason for teacher 1.1's ignoring of Child 1's statement about his homeland was unknowable during the session). As a matter of record, this teacher's seemingly fruitless attempts to elicit knowledge about the concept of gravity during the session did eventually fructify during the dispersal of the group towards playtime, when one child spontaneously mentioned the word 'gravity', and others started to share ideas about it. It is also clear from observations made during my school-placement visits that both children and teachers make references to the content of reading material when talking during other lessons. Furthermore, as previous references have attested, a broad body of literature supports the view that children's play experiences are enriched by characters and events originating in their reading.

The issue of individual differences emerged when I commented about the readiness of the children in this group to appropriate the teacher role and help fellow group-members struggling with decoding difficulties. Teacher 2.4 pointed out the complications that can attend this practice:

It's noticeable about how some children readily accept help from others in word decoding, and I'm fussy about that, I say no: you have to give Hazel some thinking time – and she usually gets there in the end, but she's happy to be helped, whereas you get other children who just do not want it, and they make it perfectly clear that they don't want help from the rest of the group. So here again these are factors you've got to take into consideration in the management of the reading group and you've just to go with the flow.

When I mentioned how difficult it must be to manage such individual differences alongside all of the other variables we had discussed, she echoed the preoccupation mentioned by all of the teachers at one time or another in all phases of the investigation:

That word *time* is always there. It's always a factor, a big factor.

Finally, teacher 2.4 was the most explicit in voicing her belief that the data and its analysis *must* represent some kind of normative judgement on the quality of her teaching. She was also clear about what she saw as the responsibility of the researcher to communicate this to the person who has provided that data:

I think the coloured charts were quite interesting – my questions to you is: what do you think of it? I was thinking, my god that looks like a big chunk of the chart - am I doing it properly? Because teachers – you're always asking, am I doing this properly, am I doing things that are in vogue – doing it the way it's supposed to be done today? So maybe to have some reassuring statements that none of this was – it would have been quite nice, but other than that – I was reassured by that – the teacher-child talk times, I felt that was quite errr... And I thought our session right now has been quite useful, because it has reassured me.

This oft-mentioned, or oft-implied, need for reassurance, and the broader ethical issues that it represents, including the role of the researcher as a judge of practice, will be returned to in the conclusion.

4.3.5 Teacher 3.1

This interview took place at the small village school in the Scottish Borders where teacher 3.1 had conducted a group reading of *The Storybook Wolves*. Her session had been characterised by quiet enthusiasm for the story both on her part and that of the children who had contributed a quarter of all of the initiations made in the session. She was the second most experienced teacher in the sample, and had conducted CPD with her own staff about improving classroom interaction.

Teacher 3.1 was the only teacher who explicitly challenged the coding decisions I had made, and in doing so made me seriously doubt the usefulness and validity of the distinctions I had made between referential and display questions. Teacher 3.1 had asked a series of intertextual and text to life questions at the start of the session. I classed several of these as display questions, since I believed at the time that the teacher knew what the answers would be. The example we discussed at most length was: *What other stories do you know with wolves in them?* I coded this as a display question because I believed that the teacher knew that the answers would fall within a small range including the Three Little Pigs and Little Red Riding Hood. The responses did indeed fall within this range, but the teacher argued that this was not a foregone conclusion:

What other story books – obviously I know what other stories they might have read, but they could have come up with something I didn't know, and it was to collect a variety of answers – it wasn't like a display question where you're looking for an answer that's wrong or right – adding up or taking away – a lot of the answers they give to these are more open-ended. There were different types of display question because what I was trying to do was to open up a discussion – not get set answers. That sort of question could lead to all kinds of answers. You never know when you ask that kind of question – you get more than you bargain for.

I realised that I had made an assumption about both the teacher's assumptions, and about the limits of the children's knowledge. The teacher's remark about getting more than you bargained for echoed teacher 1.2's assertion that 'When children start to talk, you never know what they are going to say', both remarks appreciative of the unpredictability of children's thinking and speech, and their looser adherence to maxims of conversation. Her remark about how display questions open up discussion was in fact endorsed by a child's initiation, remarking that in the three little pigs it was the wolf who ended up being the victim. Later, after the teacher had asked about the typical characteristics of storybook wolves, the same child pointed out that these could be mistaken because he had heard that wolves were more frightened of humans than we of them. Although the teacher did not, in my opinion, give this particular initiation the attention it perhaps deserved, she made the point that it was her use of

questioning that had enabled this readiness on the part of the children to respond divergently within the constraints of the story to be read.

What you've got to do is open it up for the children and make them feel that there are a range of possibilities, not that you've got an answer in your head, and they've got to get that particular one. Because, ok, there is a story we have to read, but it's their ideas and predictions that will draw them into that, and I think they've got that idea now: that we're not looking here for one accurate answer.

I asked teacher 3.1 about strategies I considered had been successful in facilitating children's participation, such as her thoughtful pauses before asking the next questions, her use of children's names, and her use of more open questions, such as, *What are you thinking about?* and *Can you tell me a bit more?* Her responses showed a considered awareness of how and when to deploy such strategies. Her first point below reflects the finding by Wood (1992) that teacher modelling often precedes children's speculative moves:

Sometimes, if you pause, they do start thinking with you, they start wondering.

On the whole all the children contributed pretty well. I did use names to draw them in, especially when one or two drifted off, and when somebody was wanting to speak but others were more dominant because they were excited. There were a lot of contributions and some of their ideas were good.

I'm trying to mirror what they say in order for them to expand more. It was interesting that there were some long turns from the children and there were some points where they initiated things themselves. I hoped there would be but I was pleased there was a good discussion, not just focussed on story but a good discussion.

Her remarks about how to deal with the tension between discussion 'just focussed on the story' and more wide ranging talk also showed a thoughtful approach:

I don't just want to tell them a story. I want them to think about how stories connect to other stories and how stories connect to real life. I do quite like the idea of the intertextual links reinforcing knowledge of other stories, and getting children to think about how have wolves come to get that kind of character.

She was aware of the danger of distracting attention from the text to be read by ‘information dumping’, but asserted that she would take her lead from the children in judging how far to pursue peripheral interests:

I don't think you'd go down that route [of using the reading of the Storybook Wolves to teach about wolf characteristics] but say we're doing the Highland Clearances up in the top class: if I say, what do you know about wolves, I wouldn't put in a lot of my knowledge unless we were doing it as a theme, but if the children opened it up by asking, were there any wolves in Scotland then, that would be a different thing, I'd try to follow their lead.

This shifting of attention, in response to cues from the children, between the meaning of the text as a whole and discussion of matters arising from it was mirrored in her approach towards the role of decoding and context in reading. This parallel was signalled to me when she answered my question about the rarity of appeals to context to help solve word-recognition problems.

I'd try to use multi-strategies, to avoid over-dependency on one way, I guess. A lot of our children don't come from literate homes so you've got to give them the whole picture, spend a lot of time just looking at books. Sometimes you want to focus on the meaning and sometimes to remind them of code. I think in this context where you're reading aloud with children I would supply the word and maybe go back later to think them through how we could have worked the word out. If I was doing it with [an individual] you'd get them to work it out, then read it again to recover the meaning because you lose the meaning if you're decoding too many words. In general it would be phonics first or recognize it as a tricky word if phonics won't work, but always repair the link to meaning.

Both the shifts between the text itself and discussion of text-life links and general knowledge, and the shifts between the text itself and the graphophonics of the words that constitute it, can be seen as journeys in and out of the narrative flow. These journeys are guided by the teacher's judgement, but that judgement is guided by cues from the children, and at the end of each excursion, there is a ‘homecoming’ to the text, during which the teacher helps the children to ‘recover the meaning’ or ‘repair the link to meaning’.

Teacher 3.1 recognized the complexity of the teacher's role in this respect, and the challenges this presents for younger teachers; her comment about novice-teachers trying to hold off imagined 'mayhem' by talking incessantly encapsulates the struggle between centrifugal and centripetal forces.

The links can bring the book to life and get the children excited about getting into it before you even start, so that kind of balance about how much you read and how much you talk, and who's doing the talking is really important. Even for a new student, it's important to think about how long you talk for, because sometimes you see students and even young teachers going on and on and on and the children just want to crawl away. They need to pick up all the cues. There's a nervousness about staying in control – they have dreams and nightmares about all sorts of mayhem breaking out.

She considered that the analysis of reading sessions along the lines presented by the project might help teachers to develop their awareness of this complexity.

It's useful to see a transcript of what you say because you can think oh that was a good bit or that was a daft thing to say or maybe I could've done that bit slightly differently. If you look at the pie-charts, breaking things down like that is useful. Another thing is the types of questions that you want to ask – it's useful to know that that type of question elicits that type of response – closed or open or drawing on their knowledge or even just using pauses and has to try and get more talk. It might prompt you to try and elicit more or less from the children.

Teacher 3.1 considered the identification of text-life links and the tracking of focus-shifts to be particularly useful. However, later in the interview she remarked that just reading the uncoded transcript of a session, or even listening to a recording, could help teachers 'become aware of what is the purpose of all of that discussion and where are you going with it?' We agreed that this could help teachers reduce the amount of peripheral talk they engage in when more might be gained by getting on with the story, a point also noted by the previous teacher. A commitment to the importance of personal engagement in text does not preclude acknowledging that there are times when the common sense objective of helping children to arrive at an accurate reproduction of the words on the page is a defensible objective.

Towards the end of the interview she did, however, emphasize the value she put upon her ability to engage children actively in going beyond the words on the page. She began by commenting on the number of child-initiations that occurred in her session.

That gives me pride really, that there were so many. That's a funny thing to say – but maybe I have a confidence there that I wouldn't have had initially. I'd have thought, oh my goodness, it's going away from what I'm talking about – the children are saying something. And I like all these asides, developing little bits, because I think if your children ask a question they're receptive to an answer most likely, and children tend to ask very few questions in school. I think because they don't see that as their place, whereas little children at home with parents just never stop. I have this theory that children are stopped when they come to school because they haven't kept that curiosity necessarily once they're in school, and we may have encultured them that way as well so – if we can encourage them in the nursery in particular then in the early years to be asking questions we'll be having people who are keen to learn and find out.

She concluded the interview by saying that she had found the process of participating in the project helpful because of the opportunities it had afforded for reflection on practice.

It's so easy to look at things superficially in teaching because you're moving on so constantly from development to development.

Teacher 3.1 was the most confident interviewee. She, like the others, felt that her teaching had been judged by the very processes of coding, measurement and analysis, but she did not appear to feel threatened by this. She was certainly self-critical, but was also able to identify strategies by which she was attempting to balance the incessant shifting of attention from 'development to development', in both policy change and moment-by-moment teaching, with the need to pause and reflect. These strategies will be further discussed in the conclusion.

4.3.6 Summary of phase 3: Answer to research question three

Research question three asked:

What do the teachers have to say about the value to themselves of the process of analysis that my research has subjected them to?

In the rest of this chapter I will make a shift from the particularities of individual teacher experience and draw together some common themes that unite those experiences, taking the phase three data as a starting point from which to retrospectively examine the teachers' shared problems and ways of coping with them.

All of the five teachers shared the following responses to their involvement in the project.

- Surprise at the asymmetry of teacher-child participation in the sessions as represented by the quantitative measures. Even though my response to the defensive or distressed tone in which teachers commented on this was always to point to interactive features of their teaching, and to remind them that the ratio of teacher-to-child talk in their sessions was nothing out of the ordinary, they remained surprised at the sheer extent of the imbalance.
- Some version of what has been called a deficit view of the capacity of the children to engage in dialogue. Teacher 1.1 remarked on the difficulties of teaching a group containing a child 'on the autistic spectrum' as well as others who had reading difficulties. Teacher 2.1 described her group as 'lazy'. Teacher 3.2 expressed her belief that the children came from non-literate homes. All of the teachers mentioned the inexperience of the children, an inevitable concomitant of their age.
- A belief that priority should be given to decoding – recognising and uttering the actual words on the page was seen as the *sine qua non* of reading. Any kind of discussion of the text and its links to experience was seen to depend upon, and by implication be less important than, this fundamental process.

- In spite of this, recognition of the importance of engaging children in talk aimed at going beyond decoding. They all wanted children to engage with text meanings and become habitual readers who appreciate the informational and recreational aspects of reading.
- An insistence that shortage of time, in conjunction with a ‘cluttered curriculum’ was the major constraint on the encouragement of such talk.
- Recognition that children’s initiations and text-to-life links might constitute a threat to the ‘basic’ objective of getting children to accurately decode the target text in the allocated time. At the same time, they recognised the value of such child contribution for fulfilling the comprehension and appreciation objectives mentioned above.
- Acknowledgment of the need to monitor their own interactions with children in reading sessions as the basis for CPD. They regarded the analytic procedures I used as impractically complex and time-consuming for that purpose, but considered that the underlying process of identifying foci of attention and types of teaching exchange could be useful if made more teacher-friendly and feasible in terms of time and simplicity.
- A sense of defamiliarisation, most immediately in response to seeing their spoken language rendered into a literal, ‘unrepaired’ transcription, but also in response to seeing features such as the balance of teacher and child talking time and utterance length rendered visible by charts and graphs.
- A belief that the data analysis represented a judgement on their own teaching ability/ professionalism. The dismay voiced by one teacher, and the need for reassurance expressed by others, suggest that this was a matter of some anxiety to them.

- Recognition that the teaching process necessitates decisions made moment-by-moment about how to balance the needs of individuals and the group, and, as a corollary to this, how to teach a detailed curriculum within a complicated, particular context.

4.4 Phases one, two and three: a summary and synopsis

The composite picture of the reading teacher emerging from phase one is of a person who recognises the importance of teaching both the technical skills of reading, and the capacities for reflection and appreciation that enable children to become critical and habitual readers. This teacher recognises the need for automaticity of response in relation to graphophonic information, literal understanding of word meanings and sentences, and the ability to modulate reading in response to punctuation. However the teacher also recognises that children must be taught more reflective aspects of reading: how to recognise implicit meanings, authorial intent, and the relationships both between texts and between texts and real life.

This teacher values discussion of what is read, rather than just the accurate reading aloud of the text. She sees discussion as a way of achieving the less automatic and more holistic aspects of reading, such as comprehension, appreciation, and sustained engagement in both specific texts and reading as a habit. However, the teacher regards the positive relationship between reading and discussion as being largely unidirectional; she does not explicitly value reading as a source for oral language development, except in the domain of vocabulary extension. Furthermore, though texts themselves are seen in the conventional, authoritative sense as being sources of general knowledge, the acquisition of which can be facilitated by talk, talk is not in itself seen as an instrument of thought. On the other hand, talking is valued for the opportunities it provides for children to learn social practices like turn-taking and sharing personal information.

The teacher is aware of great challenges in applying her principles. The challenges include: insufficient time for developing a wide range of skills within a 'cluttered curriculum'; the variation in levels of attainment and motivation within groups; the task of getting such diverse groups to engage in a common set of prescribed texts; and the everyday distractions arising from managing the trajectories of large numbers of young children through both the cluttered curriculum and the exigencies of each school day.

In phase two, I have tried to show how the eight individual teachers from whom the composite teacher is derived try to put their principles into practice, and in phase three I have shown how they reflected upon their efforts.

In bringing these phases together, I would like to draw upon a tripartite categorisation of rationales for teachers' decision-making made by Twiselton (2004) in the context of a study of students in initial teacher training. Twiselton argues that these student-teachers can be 'crudely divided' into the categories of task managers, curriculum deliverers, and concept builders. The task manager justifies her actions in relation to getting things done promptly and unproblematically. Her rationale is based on getting herself and her charges through the school day with as little disruption as possible. Hence, her disposition can be described as favouring a centripetal approach to classroom discourse: potentially volatile heteroglossia is to be suppressed, and the monologic voice imposed. The curriculum deliverer justifies her actions in relation more to educational objectives, but only insofar as they are laid down by an externally prescribed curriculum. Her rationale is based on covering prescribed content successfully according to the sequence set out in the curriculum. Again, the disposition towards discourse suggested here is centripetal: policy directives are to be obeyed. The concept builder also justifies her actions in relation to educational objectives, but the source of these objectives is not the prescribed curriculum, but her professional judgement about what is educationally appropriate for the learner. Here the disposition towards discourse is a balance of the centripetal and the centrifugal: prescribed policy has to be adapted to a multiplicity of needs; in assessing and addressing those needs, some form of dialogic interaction is essential.

In phase 1 of the project, the teachers all presented themselves as concept builders. They all couched their beliefs about how to teach in terms of their responsibility for meeting children's educational needs as perceived by themselves as classroom teachers rather than agents of policy. It was obvious that they were also aware of the demands of the curriculum as embodied by national guidelines and local authority policies. Their responses reflected both positive and negative aspects of these

demands. On the one hand, they recognised the support provided by a set sequence of objectives and teaching experiences with a well-defined gradient of difficulty; this was particularly noticeable in the Edinburgh teachers' comments about how the structured programme had facilitated word-recognition. On the other hand, they saw detailed objectives and rigid sequencing as both inimical to their own autonomy in choosing how to conduct sessions, and as a further factor in diminishing the amount of time they would have available for the interactive style of teaching they all embraced.

The summary of findings for phase 2 (Section 4.2.4) showed that the principle of interactive teaching, was, to various extents, marginalised in actual practice. Coverage of the reading curriculum appeared to be a more powerful imperative than dialogue.

However, as is evident in the individual session analyses in section 4.2.3, all of the teachers continued to strive consistently to fulfil the beliefs about interaction and holistic literacy that they had expressed during phase one.

My own view as an observer of the sessions was that the brute facts of the classroom context, including both the demands of policy imposed from outside the classroom and the resources with which to 'deliver' it, made the fulfilment of dialogic principles extremely difficult. With insufficient time available to allow for sustained interactions contingent upon children's own contributions, the teachers were drawn into prioritising curricular demands. Therefore, each of the teachers became, in effect, a task-manager. This does not however, imply a completely pragmatic abandonment of the 'concept-building' role; rather, in striving to realise their principles, the teachers tried to make the best use they could of limited resources to meet their children's diverse literacy needs in the brief time available.

In phase three, all of the five teachers interviewed recognised that their stated commitment to interactive teaching had been limited, though both teachers 2.4 and 3.2 recognised aspects of their teaching in which it had been fulfilled. The factors to

which they attributed the limitations of their lessons seemed to me to fall into three categories:

- Deficits in the children or in their backgrounds; for example, children were variously described as lazy, mischievous, ‘on the autism spectrum’, too young to engage in lengthy exchanges, domineering, or from non-literate homes. I have no evidence to judge the accuracy of these descriptions, though I find the attribution of laziness to young children very suspect. It is also true that in some cases, as we have seen in the data above, teachers contradicted or mitigated claims about laziness and lack of linguistic capacity.
- The detail and pace of the curriculum in relation to available time; this has probably been the most consistent theme in the data. All of the teachers expressed a sense of restlessly shifting their attention from task to task at high speed, an experience pithily summed up by teacher 2.1: *‘so it’s we’re doing this and we’ve got to get through that and its duh-duh-duh-duh!’*
- Aspects of their own teaching; specifically, the tendency to teach in a routinised, or even ritualised, manner, which rendered the degree of their own dominance invisible. Again, this was a common attribution, and its recognition seemed to be grounded in the perspective afforded to the teacher by the project itself. Again, teacher 2.1 sums this up well: *‘It was interesting – you just tend to do things normally and you don’t analyse what you’re doing, you just do it without thinking. You know reading- because you do it so often in your everyday job, you don’t often think of the things you’re really saying, so this makes you think.’*

Research into attribution in education (Weiner, 1992) categorises the factors that subjects identify as affecting their performance according to three dichotomous and intersecting dimensions: within and outside the subject, stable and unstable, and controllable and uncontrollable. People tend to interpret their actions in such a way as to protect their own self-esteem. So for example, a teacher whose lesson has gone

badly may attribute this to the children's abilities or to an inappropriate but compulsory syllabus, which are external, fixed factors over which she has little control, rather than to a failure of effort or preparation, which are internal, changeable factors over which she has more control. It is interesting that the teachers in this project presented a more complex set of factors. I have tried to represent the attributions offered by them in table 4.17.

Table 4.17 Teacher attributions about factors in reading instruction

	location	stability	control
curriculum	external	unstable	uncontrollable
children's abilities	external	stable	uncontrollable
routine teaching	internal	unstable	controllable

Thus, they see the curriculum as an externally imposed constraint; though it affords some scaffolding for their teaching, it is subject to periodic flux, and they feel that they have little control over changes in its content and structure. The abilities of the children that they teach are externally located, relatively stable if we take them to be determined by innate factors, and therefore outside of the teachers' control. The teachers' own classroom practices, although somewhat constrained, do (*pace* determinism versus free will arguments) originate in 'internal' decision making; they are unstable because they can change, and, again to an extent, that change is under the control of the teacher.

It is a principle of Continuing Professional Development that the process should start with aspects of performance over which the professional feels she has some control (Day and Leitch 2007). Four out of the five teachers interviewed in phase three expressed a sense of curiosity, and some satisfaction, about the outcome of the analyses of their teaching. The term 'empowerment' is probably used over-abundantly and over-optimistically in CPD, but there is some evidence (Cazden, 2001, AERS 2008) that teachers' collaborative reflections on their own discourse can improve classroom learning. Furthermore, it could be that the sense of empowerment that teachers might derive from *collaboratively* changing their teaching could extend

the sense of control that they have over other factors. The curriculum could come to be regarded as something to be applied selectively and flexibly. In the Scottish context, this would be in keeping with the way in which the official curriculum is now being proffered, though there are tensions between the national curriculum and prescriptive, local authority policies. More importantly, self-affirming assumptions about the fixedness of learners' linguistic and cognitive capacities might be modified as teachers witness how self-directed changes in their own learning affect that of the children in their charge. These points will be further discussed in the conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This research project has found that the teachers involved value dialogical interaction, and are aware that their work in establishing it as an integral part of early literacy instruction involves the balancing of centrifugal and centripetal forces. They identify the main centripetal factor as the need to attend to individual needs while striving to achieve prescribed goals under pressure of very limited time.

This is my main conclusion related to research question one.

In their teaching, they exert centripetal control by the strict allocation of turns, correction of errors, instruction in accurate word recognition and relevant facts and concepts, and the suppression of responses deemed to be potentially disruptive. However, they also encourage and support a measure of centrifugal diversity in discourse by supporting children's personal responses, life to text links, and spontaneous interactions with each other and with the text.

This is my main conclusion related to research question two.

They are aware of the irresolvable, paradoxical tension in interactive teaching highlighted by this study: that in the context of a prescriptive curriculum, the more the teacher succeeds in stimulating dialogical interaction, the more pressure she comes under to suppress it; in other words, dialogical affordances decline in direct proportion to their effectiveness.

This is my main conclusion related to research question three.

I will finish with some comments and suggestions for further research and professional development.

The topic of this project might be extended in the following directions.

- The most stridently silent voices in this study are those of the children. Listening to children's perspectives on the discourse of early years reading instruction, particularly if they had been given the opportunity to observe and reflect upon their own participation through a simplification of some of the procedures used here, would be of great interest.
- Related to this, use of video or more sophisticated audio technology would help researchers to investigate the language of individual children, and enable the study of variables neglected in this project, such as the gender and sociocultural background of the learners.
- Application and adaptation of the methodology used in this project could be applied to discrete forms of organisational settings. This would enable researchers to make comparisons between the uses of oral language during, for example, round-the-table reading, Big Book sharing, teacher-child, assistant-child and child-child dyads, reciprocal teaching groups, literature circles (see section 2.4.3, p 73), or other types of groups working independently of the teacher.
- Broadening the focus to consider the influence of the visual environment. It is clear that much of the talk around reading in this project was triggered by the illustrations, another factor I have largely ignored. Investigation could also be made of the talk arising from uses of multi-media sources of text, such as computer gaming and reading sessions from interactive whiteboards.
- Fine-tuning the analysis of child utterances to include such variables as syntactic and semantic complexity, lexical diversity and cohesive relations with text structures and earlier utterances, perhaps using the CHILDES systems for transcription and analysis (MacWhinney, 2000). These could be cross-referenced to focus of attention zones, just as the cruder measures of MLT and LLT were in this study, as well as to other variables such as different texts and interlocutors.

- It would also be interesting to combine lexical diversity and corpus analysis in a longitudinal study to trace possible relationships between growth of vocabulary size and diversity in children's speech, and the lexis of the texts they read. For example, VOCD measures of lexical diversity in the growth of children's vocabulary (Malvern and Richards, 2002) could be correlated with the lexis of the ascending reading levels of the texts they read. In relation to teaching episodes such as the one that occurred around the use of the word 'camouflage' in the Winnie the Witch session (4.2.3.5. p199) a similar procedure could be applied not just to individual children, but to the dialogues they engage in with the teacher and others while reading.
- Teachers' approaches to dialogue could be investigated more systematically by observing the strategies used by a range of teachers of children of similar age, using the same book to promote dialogue in their classrooms (the Motorway from LRT might be a good candidate- see section 1.2.5). A possible focus could be changes in strategy relative to accumulating teaching experience (Snow et al 2005).

Regarding the ethical issues that have arisen, my most abiding impression at the end of the project is of the vulnerability of the teacher to complex and sometimes contradictory demands, and of the distress that this can cause. I have provided below a by no means exhaustive list of these demands as they relate to the theme of this project.

Table 5.1 Demands on the teacher during group reading

CENTRIPETAL	CENTRIFUGAL
Follow policy	Adapt policy
Allocate and terminate turns and topics	Allow disagreement
Complete the task	Allocate time for reflection
Converge perspectives	Encourage interaction
Correct	Link text to experience
Ensure accuracy	Model critical reading
Equalise participation	Model uncertainty
Keep on time	Offer alternative interpretations
Keep the peace	Relinquish the floor
Monitor behaviour	Promote play
Police body language	Prompt and probe
Prompt knowledge display	Stimulate diverse responses
Repair misunderstanding	Support creativity
Reprimand	
Scaffold learning	
Set the pace	
Suppress conflict	
Teach skills and concepts	

The items in the two lists are all essential components of teachers' work, and dialogical teaching involves the balancing of them. Although the lists are not necessarily contradictory, the teacher is often subjected to external demands to privilege one over the other, often at the same time. In reading, the dominant official discourse demands early automaticity in decoding skills. It also demands a creative early years curriculum. I have suggested that a literacy curriculum rich in language play might be one way of fulfilling both demands, but in the atmosphere of synthetic, mendacious, media-amplified urgency regarding educational achievement that often afflicts educational discourse, conceding to policy-commanded rote is always a danger.

Bakhtin (cited in Matusov, 2004. pp 5-6) called for 'new humanitarian sciences where subjects of scientific research would not only be objectivized, but also addressed and subjectivized through bringing their voices into the research as

dialogic responses to researchers' statements about them.' I have attempted to do something similar on a very small scale with this project, but would suggest that subjects' gradual appropriation of the role of the researcher might also be a good idea. A long-term strategy for reducing teachers' vulnerability to changes in command-delivered policy might be to establish small-scale communities of enquiry investigating their own literacy practices. The foci of investigation might include recordings of their own teaching, literacy resources, and policy documents. Courtney Cazden, commending the work of the Brookline Teacher Research Seminar, quotes a teacher from this long-established, teacher-led Boston self- group who extols the 'honesty and power' of basing CPD on shared transcripts of her own and her colleagues' work (Cazden, 2001, pp 6-7).

Such communities would be in a better position than solo academic researchers to address problems such as the following.

- The potentially demoralising effects of beholding your own efforts through the gaze of an investigator. I have mentioned the dismay of many teachers at seeing representations of their interactions in the form of the transcripts and diagrams I prepared, but if variants of this kind of work could be done collaboratively by colleagues who also share experiences of the practices being represented, the impact might be more akin to that expressed by the Brookline teacher. I must admit here that though the forms of representation I chose were of interest to the teachers, and did appear to be effective as discussion supports in the manner I anticipated in the Methodology chapter (section 3.6), the more I revisit the primary data in the less abstract form of the audiofiles, the more I see how much of the haecceity of the unique event of the reading session is suppressed by these forms, particularly the subtlety with which the teachers modulated their authoritative discourse.
- Related to this, the difficulty involved in representing the affective factors of interactions, often conveyed by what might be called 'microtonal' gradations of voice, gesture, movement, gaze, posture and facial expression. Neither

coding nor transcription can capture such elusive but significant qualities as attentiveness, sternness, gentleness and so on, but maybe live dialogue between colleagues sharing a joint focus of attention, in the form of a teaching session, can do this better.

- How to bring the voices of learners into educational enquiry in ways which safeguard their rights.
- How to address questions such as the extent to which dialogic pedagogy can be pursued in schools as they exist now, how to begin to establish it, and how to integrate it with prevalent modes of education (Matusov, 2007; Lefstein, 2006; Cazden, 2005). Cazden (p 6) states that, 'There is too little research showing which educational objectives require more dialogic forms of discourse, and which do not', but the answer to this is likely to vary according to educational environment and participants. Similarly, a systematic approach such as Alexander's dialogical pedagogy (2006) conveys detailed prescriptions about the characteristics of dialogical teaching that demand contextual modification.
- How to resist top-down impositions of policy, or at least adapt them creatively to specific circumstances, while also acknowledging some teachers' appreciation of authoritative guidance. A related problem is the tendency for strategies introduced to stimulate interactive learning to ossify into purposeless routines, a process frequently exacerbated by the commodification of these practices by educational entrepreneurs. To some extent this fate has befallen Reciprocal Teaching (section 2.4.3) as it has become more popular (Cazden, 2001). Communities of inquiry could help sustain the 'evergreening' of reading practices by collaborative formative assessment.

With regard to the implications of my findings for specific classroom practice, my findings support the following tentative suggestions.

- If teachers can avoid its ossification, the practice of Literature Circles for younger readers appears to be a promising way to liberate reading-based dialogue from the immediate control of an adult (King and Briggs, 2005). In her fascinating study of the reading group, Elizabeth Long shows how ‘textual interpretation as collective action’ has had a much longer, broader and deeper history than represented by the current resurgence of adult reading groups (Long, 1993). This history could be extended earlier into the life of the child.
- The relatively recent focus in reading instruction about the book as a physical object, which has already ossified into ritual exchanges about blurb, author, spine and so on, could be re-vivified by linking it to critical literacy. This could begin with age-appropriate talk about the reading book’s origins as a cultural and economic commodity. If teachers could relate discussion about the production of books to the children’s own writing, the dethronement of the solitary reader as the sole source of knowledge implied by the Literature Circle (Long 1993) could be accompanied by the dethronement of the reading scheme author or children’s writer as the sole source of reading material as children and teacher begin to write for themselves.
- Language play appears to have been neglected as a source of literacy development, at least in some aspects of high-intensity early-years word-decoding programmes. The incorporation into these programmes of practices similar to those discussed in section 2.3.2.2 might be beneficial, and would have a long tradition of both school-based and ‘feral’ traditions to draw upon. This could also inform reading and writing at the level of sentence and story, where the recruitment of children’s propensity for imitation, parody and nonsense could, at the risk of provoking some carnival laughter, help to revivify reading instruction.

Finally, I would like to suggest an analogy involving storybook characters to encapsulate the plight of teachers striving to help children become readers. Policy and tradition demand that they focus on the completion and finalisation of tasks, using resources which are often both meagre and dull: limited time, prescribed texts and policy commands. Their labour has often reminded me of that of Rumpelstiltskin, spinning gold from dry straw. Dialogic teaching demands openness, continuing the conversation, 'ever newer ways to mean'. Perhaps the teacher's model here should be Sheherazade, who found ways of constantly rekindling curiosity through the ingenious, intertextual braiding of one story into another. Teachers working together might find ways of becoming less like Rumpelstiltskin and more like Sheherazade, as long as the task does not become for them, as it was for her, a matter of life and death.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Information and communication with participants

- **Sample letter to Headteacher**
- **Sample letter to Local Education Authority**
- **Letter to parents**
- **Consent form**
- **Project outline sent to schools and Local Education Authorities**
- **Sample reply from Local Education Authority**
- **Sample reply from Headteacher**

Appendix 2: Focus durations

Appendix 3: Focus changes

Appendix 4: longest child turns within focus zones

Appendix 5: Text to life links within sessions

Appendix 6: Teacher documents for “The Spaceship”

- **Full transcript**
- **Focus durations**
- **Focus changes**
- **Quantity of teacher and child talk**
- **Mean length of turn and length of longest turn**
- **Number of teacher and child initiations**
- **Content and context of child initiations and teacher responses to them**
- **Content of teacher and child turns**

15th October 2007

To

During last term you and your staff kindly assisted me in my research for a doctoral investigation into conversation in early years reading groups. The focus of my research is on children at the early stages of book reading.

I would like to continue my research this term and would be grateful if I could visit your school again to record more sessions. I have appended an extract from my original letter as a reminder of the rationale for the work.

The participation of teachers would involve:

- Being audio-recorded while conducting a reading with a small group of children
- Commenting on a recording and transcript of their lesson
- Participating in a discussion or interview about their views on reading in relation to the recorded session.

I will try to contact you during the week October 29th – November 3rd when I return from an overseas teaching project. In the meantime I can be contacted via email (george.hunt@ed.ac.uk).

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely

George Hunt

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Dear Parent,

I am a lecturer in education at the University of Edinburgh and have visited your child's school in the past to supervise primary B.Ed. and P.G.D.E. students on their practical teaching placements. I am currently researching how reading is taught, and I would like to do some brief video and audio recording of reading lessons in your child's class.

I am writing to ask your permission for your child to be taped for about 20-30 minutes during a reading lesson, and for about 15 minutes during a group discussion of the lesson afterwards. Information from the tapes will be analysed and used to inform suggestions about how reading instruction might be made more effective.

I would like to draw your attention to the following.

- I will be observing how reading is currently taught, so the study will not involve any changes in your child's customary classroom experience.
- The study is not concerned with levels of reading ability, so no information of this type will be sought or recorded.
- Your child will not be identified by name at any stage in the course of the study, or in any reports or other publications arising from it.
- You will be given access to any reports or publications arising from the study.
- If you give your permission, you may withdraw it at any time. Your child will be asked if he or she is happy to be observed, and has the right to withdraw from being recorded at any time.

I have attached a consent form. If you have any queries, please contact me at the postal/email address or phone number above. Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

George Hunt
Education Lecturer
Department of Educational Studies
University of Edinburgh
EH88AQ

0131-651-6600

CONSENT FORM

I, give my permission for my child to participate in a study into reading lessons conducted by George Hunt of the University of Edinburgh.

I understand the following:

The study will not involve any changes in my child's customary classroom experience.

No information about my child's reading ability will be sought or recorded.

My child will not be identified by name at any stage in the course of the study, or in any reports or other publications arising from it.

I will be given access to any reports or publications arising from the study.

I have the right to withdraw permission for my child's participation at any time.

My child has the right to withdraw from observation and group discussion at any time.

Signed

January 17th 2006

To: Council Headquarters, 10 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh EH1 3EG

From: George Hunt, Department of Educational Studies, University of Edinburgh,
EH88AQ

Dear Mr J

I am writing to you as a lecturer in primary education at the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh in order to request permission to conduct small-scale observational research in Edinburgh classrooms.

I enclose an outline of the research project, drafts for permission letters and information sheets, and a copy of my Disclosure Certificate.

I would be very grateful if you could advise me of any or other documents you may need to see. I would also be grateful if you could inform me of the details of the procedure for clearing permission, and how long this is likely to take. I would welcome any questions you may have about the project.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

George Hunt
george.hunt@ed.ac.uk

PROJECT OUTLINE SENT TO SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

Speech patterns in small group teacher-led literacy lessons.

Aims of the research

To analyse the types of conversation that occur in small groups when teachers are engaging early years children in book reading.

To investigate teachers' rationales for the ways in which they conduct reading conversations.

To investigate childrens' perceptions of the nature of these conversations.

To evaluate an analytical framework that might help teachers reflect on the nature of classroom conversation in general.

Rationale

The quality of classroom conversation is an important consideration for all teachers. It is largely through conversation, or activities closely accompanied by conversation, that learning of all kinds is accomplished, particularly for younger children who are not yet fluent readers.

Classroom conversation is problematical. Teachers, as adults who are more learned and experienced than their charges, are traditionally expected to take the lead in explaining, eliciting, directing, questioning and answering. However, children's cognitive development, and their engagement in classroom activity, is largely dependent on their being able to participate actively in conversation. They have to be able to ask their own questions, reformulate ideas into their own words, and whenever appropriate express opinions, levels of understanding, doubt and disagreement. Given that conversational time is limited in the classroom, it is

difficult to balance such potentially opposed elements as teacher initiations and child initiations, teacher-child exchanges and child-child exchanges, conventional question and answer sequences and more loosely structured discussion.

Another difficulty is that teachers are obliged to adhere to a curriculum whose content may not always be of immediate appeal to children. Young learners have their own interests, and teachers have to do their best to link what children want to talk about with what the curriculum demands that they should listen to.

Conversations about books provide rich opportunities for learning through talk. At the same time they are occasions on which these tensions, and opportunities for resolving them, are particularly noticeable. The teacher is obliged to teach specific skills, but also to inculcate a positive attitude towards literacy in general. The book conveys a particular story or body of information, while the child may want to make his or her own comments or interpretations. The decisions taken by the teacher in negotiating these demands could be influential in determining the child's stance towards literacy and learning in general.

While teachers are aware of demands that they both ensure that the curriculum is covered, and that they move towards more 'dialogic' forms of interaction, they seldom have the opportunity to engage in detailed analysis of how far their own teaching embodies the resolution of these demands.

The overall aim of this research is to investigate with teachers how tensions between curriculum delivery and dialogue are played out in real life reading conversations.

Method

Teachers who want to participate in the project will be asked to complete a short open-ended questionnaire concerning their beliefs about classroom conversation and reading.

They will then be asked to conduct a reading of a set book with a group of year 1 or year 2 pupils. They will be asked to do this in whatever way they think will best benefit the children in the group. The reading will be audio or video taped.

I will observe the reading, and talk to the teacher and children about it afterwards in order to get an immediate idea of how the participants have construed the purpose and the significance of the event.

I will then make a transcription of the conversation and analyse it both informally and through the CLAN (Child Language Analysis) programmes. These will provide measures of mean and maximum lengths of utterance and turn for each participant, and also indications of vocabulary diversity. Transcripts and analyses will be sent to the participating teacher.

After the teacher has had the time to read and reflect on this material, I will return to the school to engage in a more detailed discussion of the recorded conversation and of how my interpretation of the event compares with that of the teacher. I hope that the opportunity to discuss practice in relation to both an analytic framework and a discussion of underlying beliefs and influences will help teachers with professional reflection and development.

◆ EDINBURGH ◆

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Date 13 December 2006
Your
Our Ref QD/SFS/RR06
Direct dial 0131 469 3121

George Hunt
University of Edinburgh
Department of Educational Studies
Holyrood Road
Edinburgh
EH8 8AQ

Dear George

RESEARCH PROJECT: Language Literacy

I am writing in response to your application requesting permission to undertake research in schools in The City of Edinburgh.

Your request has been considered, and I am pleased to inform you that you have been given permission **in principle** to undertake your research. I must stress that it is the policy of this Authority to leave the final decision about participation in research projects of this kind to Head Teachers and their staff, so that approval in principle does not oblige any particular establishment to take part.

I request that you forward a copy of your completed findings to me when they become available. In this case an electronic summary of your thesis would be preferred. Your work may be of interest to a number of staff in the Children and Families Department.

I would like to thank you for contacting the Children and Families Department about your work, and wish you every success in the completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

MBA
Quality Development Support Manager



Edinburgh EH7 4LD
Tel: 0131 556 7028
Fax: 0131 556 7001
Headteacher:
Mr Alan Devine

Mr G. Hunt
Educational Studies
The Moray House School of Education
The University of Edinburgh
Holyrood Road
Edinburgh
EH8 8AQ

20 June 2006

Dear George,

I am sorry for the delay in responding to your recent letter regarding your research project.

We would be very happy to be involved. Please phone me in order to arrange details.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 2: Focus durations

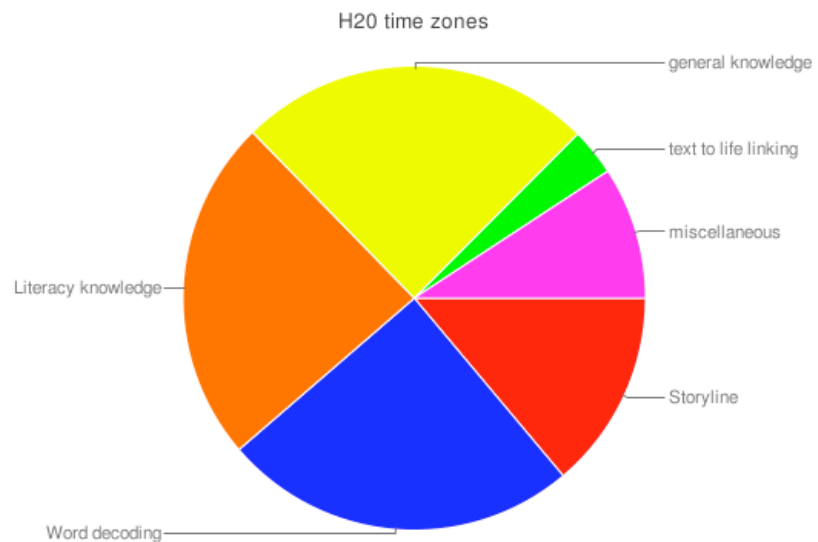
Table 4.3 Focus codes

CODE	FOCUS	EXPLANATION
S	storyline	Attention is focussed on the events of the story, either in reading aloud or in discussion of the text and pictures.
W	word recognition	The teacher helps the child or children to recognise and pronounce unfamiliar written words.
LK	literacy knowledge	Attention is focussed on such features of the text as title, author, blurb, illustrator, typography and punctuation.
GK	general knowledge	Attention is focussed on facts relevant to, or inspired by the events of the story or the illustrations.
TL	text to life linking	The teacher or the child makes an explicit link between the content of the text and the real life experience of the teacher or child.
M	miscellaneous	Attention is focussed on behaviour and events not directly related to the meaning of the texts e.g classroom management and organisation

The Tale of Running water

Table 4.4: Approximate focus durations within 8 minutes 5 seconds

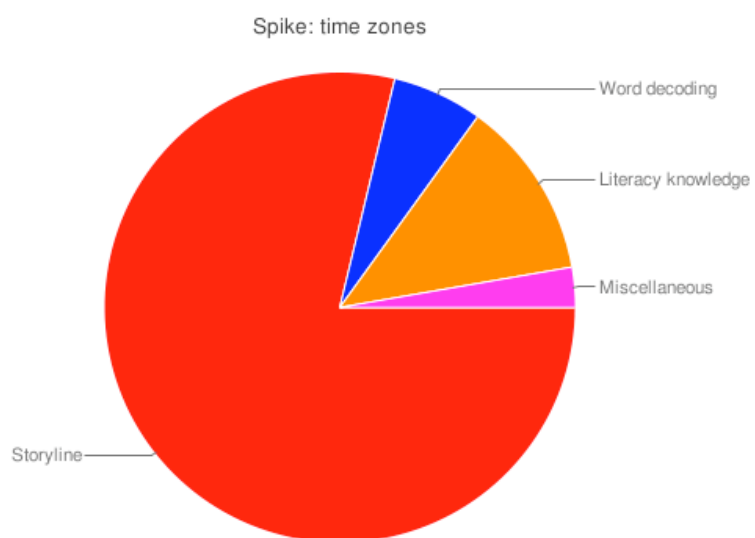
	Time in seconds	% of total time
Storyline	75	15.2
Word decoding	134	27.2
Literacy knowledge	130	26.3
Background knowledge	134	27.2
Text to life linking	18	3.6
Miscellaneous	50	10.1



Spike

Table 4.5: Approximate focus durations within 11 minutes 8 seconds

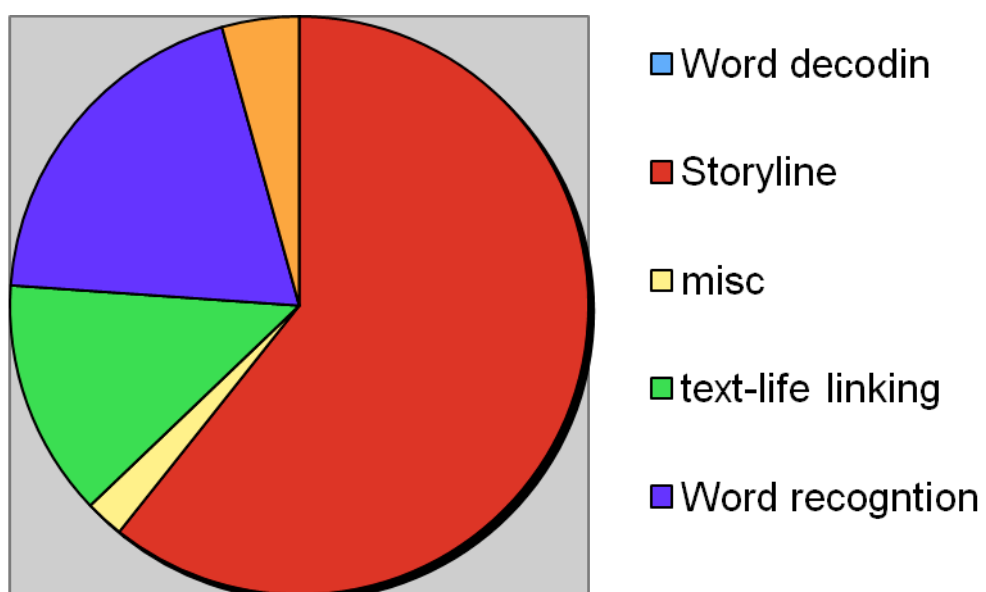
	Time in seconds	% age of time
Storyline	518	77.5
Word decoding	41	6.1
Literacy knowledge	81	12.1
Background knowledge	0	0
Text to life linking	0	0
Miscellaneous	18	2.7



New Trainers

Table 4.6: Approximate focus durations within 10 minutes

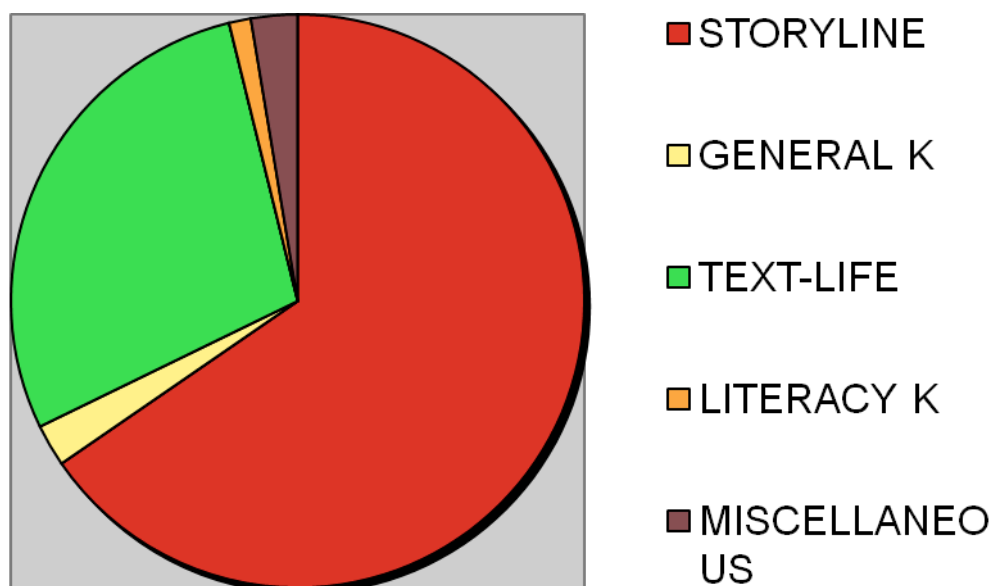
	Time in seconds	% age of time
Storyline	366	61.0
Word decoding	118	19.6
Literacy knowledge	26	4.3
General knowledge	0	0
Text to life linking	80	13.5
Miscellaneous	13	2.2



The Storm

Table 4.7: Approximate focus durations within 20 minutes 35 seconds

	Time in seconds	% age of time
Storyline	798	65.6
Word decoding	0	0
Literacy knowledge	15	1.2
General knowledge	29	2.3
Text to life linking	346	28.0
Miscellaneous	32	2.6



Vikings

Table 4.8 Approximate focus durations within 13 minutes, 38 seconds.

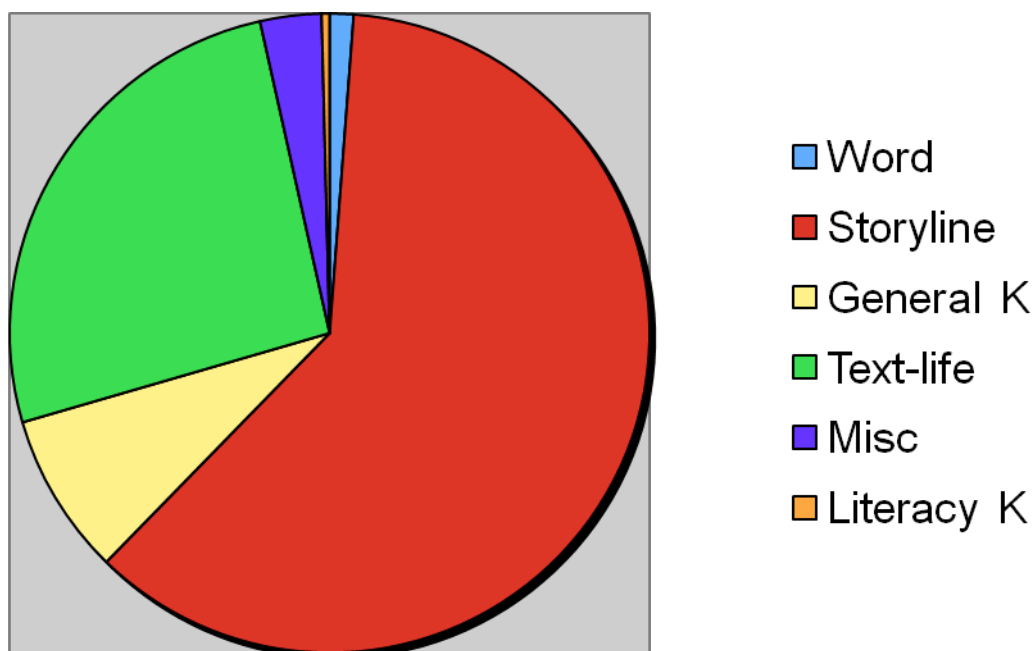
	Time in seconds	% age of time
Storyline	611	75.7
Word decoding	5	0.6
Literacy knowledge	127	15.7
General knowledge	48	5.9
Text to life linking	0	0
Miscellaneous	16	1.9



The Spaceship

Table 4.9: Approximate focus durations within 17 minutes 10 seconds

	Time in seconds	% age of time
Storyline	613	60.5
Word decoding	12	1.2
Literacy knowledge	4	0.4
General knowledge	83	8.2
Text to life linking	251	24.8
Miscellaneous	51	5.0



Appendix 3: Focus changes

	Storyline	Attention is focussed on the events of the story, either in reading aloud or in discussion of the text and pictures.
	Word decoding	The teacher helps the child or children to recognise and pronounce unfamiliar written words.
	Literacy knowledge	Attention is focussed on such features of the text as title, author, blurb, illustrator, typography and punctuation.
	General knowledge	Attention is focussed on facts relevant to, or inspired by, the events of the story or the illustrations.
	Text to life linking	The teacher or the child makes an explicit link between the content of the text and the real life experience of the teacher or child.
	Miscellaneous	Attention is focussed on behaviour and events not directly related to the meaning of the text e.g. classroom management and organisation, off-task behaviour, interruptions to routines.

Columns show the sequence of changes and the turns and times during which they occurred.

The Story of Running Water: focus changes over 114 turns, 8 minutes 5 seconds

1.	0.00
2.	
3.	0.04
4.	
5.	0.17
6.	0.22
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	0.53
12.	0.59
13.	1.01
14.	1.07
15.	
16.	
17.	1.12
18.	1.15
19.	
20.	
21.	1.24
22.	1.25
	1.26

26.	1.29
27.	
28.	
32.	1.52
33.	2.06
34.	
	2.09
36.	
37.	2.18
38.	
39.	
40.	
41.	2.30
42.	2.33
44.	
45.	
	2.57
51.	2.59
52.	
53.	
54.	
55.	
56.	
57.	
58.	

59.	
60.	3.20
61.	
62.	
63.	
64.	
65.	
	3.28
67.	
68.	
69.	
70.	
71.	
72.	
73.	3.45
74.	3.46
75.	
76.	
77.	
78.	
79.	3.55
80.	
81.	
82.	
83.	

84.	
85.	
86.	
87.	
88.	
89.	
90.	
91.	
92.	
93.	
94.	
95.	
96.	
97.	
98.	
	5.01
86.	5.06
87.	

88.	
89.	
90.	
91.	
92.	
106.	5.28
107.	5.37
108.	5.39
96.	6.14
97.	6.15
98.	
99.	
113.	
114.	
115.	
116.	
117.	6.39
118.	
119.	
120.	6.43

	7.06
	7.07
	7.11
108.	
109.	7.28
	7.36
110.	
111.	
112.	
113.	7.59
114.	

End 8.05

Spike: focus changes over 94 turns 11.08 minutes

1	0.00
	0.07
2	
3	0.14
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	0.37
10	
11	
12	
13	

14	
15	1.09
16	
17	
18	
19	1.58
20	2.13
21	
22	

23	
24	
25	
26	
27	
28	
29	
30	
31	
32	
33	
34	
35	
36	
37	
38	
39	
40	
41	
43	
44	
45	
46	

47	5.21
R E A D I N G	5.33
48	6.23
49	
50	
51	6.42
52	
53	
54	
55	
56	
57	
58	
59	
60	
61	
62	7.23
63	
64	

65	
66	
67	
68	
69	
70	8.47
71	
72	
73	
74	
75	
76	
77	

78	9.29
79	
80	
81	
82	
83	
84	
85	
86	
87	
88	
89	
90	
91	10.33
92	10.36
93	
94	11.05
End	11.08

New Trainers: focus changes over 126 turns, 10 minutes

Turn	Time
1	00.12
2	
3	00.24
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	0.53
9	
10	01.02
11	
12	
13	
14	

15	
16	
17	01.33
18	
19	
20	
21	1.50
22	
23	
24	
25	
26	
27	
28	
29	

30	
31	
32	
33	
34	
35	
36	
37	02.35
38	
39	02.51
40	
41	
42	
42	
44	
45	
46	
47	
48	03.25
49	03.27
50	
51	03.37

	03.57
52	
53	04.02
	04.03
54	
55	04.07
56	
57	04.13
58	
59	
60	
61	0.438
62	
63	04.45

	04.49
64	05.01
65	
66	
67	
68	
69	
70	
71	
72	
73	
74	
75	
76	
77	
78	
79	06.08
	06.09

80	
81	
82	
83	06.33
	06.39
84	
85	
86	
87	
88	
89	

90	
91	
92	
93	
94	
95	
96	
97	
98	
99	
100	

101	
102	
103	08.16
104	
105	
106	
107	
108	
109	
	08.43

	08.47
	08.48
110	
111	
112	
113	

114	
115	
116	
117	
118	
119	
120	
121	
122	
123	09.44
124	
125	
126	09.56
127	09.59

End: 10.00

The storm: focus changes over 350 turns, 20 minutes and 35 seconds

1	0.00
	0.02
2	
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5	0.17
6	
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25	1.11
26	
27	1.27
28	
29	
30	
31	
32	
33	1.37
34	
35	
36	
37	1.56
38	2.11
39	

40	
41	2.33
42	
43	
44	2.40
45	
46	
47	
48	
49	
50	
51	
52	4.04
53	
54	
55	
56	
57	
58	
59	

60	4.17
61	
62	4.34
63	4.35
64	
65	
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82	

83	
84	
85	
86	
87	6.17
88	
89	
90	6.37
91	
92	
93	
94	
95	
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99	
100	
101	
102	
103	
104	

105	
106	7.54
107	
108	8.02
109	
110	
111	
112	8.12
113	
114	
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116	
117	
118	
119	
120*	
121	
122*	
123	
124	
125	
126	
127	
128	
129	
130	8.45

131	
132	
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	10.52
164	
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166	
167	10.59
	11.09
	11.33
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169	
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171	11.38
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177	12.54
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182	12.01
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208	13.18
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229	
230*	14.04
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232	
233	14.30
234	14.44
235	14.45
236	14.46
237	14.47
238	14.49
239	14.51
240	
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243*	
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250*	
	15.07
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261	
	15.41
262	1542
262	
263	
264	
265	15.55

266	15.56
267	15.56
	16.00
268	16.02
269	16.03
270	
271	
272	
273	
274	
275	
276	16.36
277	
278	
279	
280	
281	
282	
283	
	16.45
284	
285	

286	
287	
288	
289	
290	
291	
292	
293	
294	
295	18.56
296	18.58
297	
298	
299	
300	
301	
302	
303	
304	
305	

306	
307	
308	
309	
310	
311	
	18.52
312	18.53
313	
	18.59
314	19.15
315	
317	
318	
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332	
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335	
336	
337	
338	
339	
340	
341	
342	
343	
344	
345	
346	20.28
	20.34
END	20.35

Vikings: focus changes over 119 turns 12 minutes 38 seconds

Vikings	
1	0.00
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	0.24
9	
10	
11	0.48
12	0.55
13	0.55
14	
15	
16	
17	1.22
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	

23	1.42
24	
25	2.00
26	
27	
28	2.06
29	
30	
31	2.45
32	
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119	12.37
End	12.38

The Spaceship: focus changes over 215 turns, 17 minutes, 10 seconds

Turn	Time
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	0.02
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	2.24
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38	2.29
39	2.30
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	2.32
41	2.39
42	2.47
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	2.51
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52*	3.41
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54*	
55	3.54
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69*	
70	
	5.10

71*	
72*	5.12
73	
	5.15
74	
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76	
77	5.35
78	6.00
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93	6.54
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124	8.28
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127	9.01
128*	9.03
129	9.05
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131	
	9.33
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134*	9.42
135	9.50
136	9.53
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140	
	10.05
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143	
144	
145	
146*	
147	
148*	10.55
149*	10.57
150*	
151	10.58
152	10.59
153	
	11.09
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155	
156	
157*	11.13
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159*	
160	11.22
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163*	
164	
	11.55
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166	
	12.03
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169	
170	12.25
171	12.27
172	
	12.55
173	13.04
174	13.08
175	13.10
176	13.18
177	13.20
178	13.24
179	13.46
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198	15.20
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200	15.24
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204*	15.54
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	16.15
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	16.43
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	16.52
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	17.08
End	17.10

Appendix Four: longest child turns within focus zones

Session	Content	Focus	Context
Running water	1. I thought I had my book upside down.	M	A jocular remark at the start of the session.
	2. Now is the time to close the book.	M	Child solemnly confirms the end of the session.
	3. Stop it Sophie don't be so funny.	M	One child tells off another for distracting behaviour.
Spike	1. I think he wants to see the other ones because he likes this one too much so he thinks he might see the others and then when he sees the others he can choose which one he wants to take home um to his parents.	S	Child empathises with the uncertainty of a character choosing a puppy to take home.
	2. Maybe the new erm maybe when he went home one of the puppies will come round and ask the mum because one has a XXX they have and some XXX Ted ran after the dog because it ran-	S	Child predicts what might happen when the character takes the puppy home.
	3. I think erm that erm when they're all going to go for the biggest puppy erm who's called Spike he's going to run away.	S	Child predicts which of the puppies the character will choose, and what might happen when he has selected him.
Storm	1. Once I was blown down and in a- in a windy day and my sister and me had a new umbrella and when she erm was holding it the wind turned	LT	Child relates a personal experience linked to the topic of the story.

	<p>it upside down.</p> <p>2. Miss Young the rain was on me and soaked my feet and daddy had to carry me because I had my storm clothes on</p> <p>3. Miss Young? Maybe they should erm stick er the tree back in the ground and XXX er maybe.</p>	<p>LT</p> <p>S</p>	<p>Child relates a personal experience linked to the topic of the story.</p> <p>Child imagines what the characters might do about a fallen tree.</p>
New Trainers	<p>1. Looking at the new trainers for him.</p> <p>2. Because he will mess them up again.</p> <p>3. Because his trainers got dirty.</p>	<p>S</p> <p>S</p> <p>S</p>	<p>Child answers a question about an illustration.</p> <p>Child answers a question requiring her to make a prediction.</p> <p>Child answers a question about a detail of the story.</p>
Vikings	<p>1. I wonder that we might have a Viking adventure because they normally do when they're at home then they have an adventure about it.</p> <p>2. It means erm you're just taking like a wee break off and the and then like you say the word.</p> <p>3. They came from an island and they were trying to take over Scotland, and not Britain.</p>	<p>S</p> <p>LK</p> <p>GK</p>	<p>Child imagines what the characters in the story might be anticipating when they realise that something magical is about to happen.</p> <p>Child answers a question about the use of three dots as a hesitation marker.</p> <p>Child contributes a 'fact' he has learned to discussion about the topic of the book.</p>
Spaceship	<p>1. Play with the rocket because that's his er computer. He gets a bit bored when he plays with it on his own and they want to play with that and they get a bit bored playing with their rocket so that's theirs and they wants to play with that so</p>	<p>S</p>	<p>Child speculates about why a newcomer to the story would rather play with the spaceship the other children have built than the computer game he has brought with him.</p>

	<p>Nadim wants to play with that.</p> <p>2. Because it's erm far – because if you go there it's very far away from home erm it's far and he's scared to go up. My dad is too scared to go up high in a plane to Spain so we have to go in a boat or something.</p> <p>3. Cause that rocket that there in they're gonnae take the rocket that they made they're going for into that kind of space then they're going to go in here then the rocket'll - will become erm ... another kind of rocket in space XXXXX and the rocket'll-</p>	<p>LT</p> <p>S</p>	<p>Child explains why she thinks that the children embarking on a space-journey look anxious.</p> <p>Child speculates that the home-made spaceship is about to turn into a real spaceship.</p>
Winnie	<p>1. He went to sleep and er and Winnie couldn't see him because he was camouflaged in the in the black because he's black and the erm er and it hidden erm his blackness hid him in the chair and Winnie accidentally sat on him.</p> <p>2. I don't go guising because er cause I have a Halloween party and er we play loads of games and we don't want to miss I don't want to miss all the games and so that's why I don't go guising.</p> <p>3. Might be feeling sad and er so er because she fell down the stairs and er because er then she cast a spell on him.</p>	<p>S</p> <p>LT</p> <p>S</p>	<p>Child makes an inference about why the main character sits down on her cat.</p> <p>Child shares personal experience explaining why he will not be doing trick-or treat in the evening.</p> <p>Child answers question asking him to think about the mood of the cat in the story.</p>

Wolves	<p>1. I know my erm I think that may be the wolf there and there's one of their- someone might be pretending er trying to scare the er little boy. Erm erm there's two eyes there and one eye there.</p> <p>2. It's er- usually people say this- people usually say this- er... We- they're more scared of us than we are of them.</p> <p>3. It's not actually a wolf because look at them again in their shoes.</p>	<p>S</p> <p>LT</p> <p>S</p>	<p>Child interprets an illustration to explain what might be about to happen in the story.</p> <p>Child offers an alternative view of wolves as a part of the discussion preceding the reading.</p> <p>Child interprets a picture as suggesting that the wolves in the story are wearing human clothes.</p>

Appendix 5: text to life links within sessions

Session	% time	Content
Running Water	3.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child identifies the source of the story as his homeland • children comment on drinking honey
The Storm	28.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children describe their own experiences of storms • children share ideas on how to fix and decorate a tree-house • children comment on a picture of a picnic • a child relates her own experiences of owning a tree-house • children answer questions about their behaviour during wet playtimes, as the teacher prompts them to empathise with the teacher in the story • two children talk about what they would be worried about during a storm • a child states that he likes storms • a child comments on the possibility of replanting a fallen tree • a child attempts to comment on his father's experience of cutting a finger • children comment on the possibilities offered by the discovery of a magic key

New Trainers	13.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the teacher tells the children about her own son ruining his new trainers • children comment on whether or not muddy trainers can be renewed • the teacher prompts a similar exchange about ruined shoes
The Spaceship	24.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children comment on the materials used by the characters to build a spaceship • one child speculates that they could have used the type of beer barrels she sees being delivered to pubs near her house • the children comment on the possibility of using an ordinary radio to communicate between earth and space • a child claims that he has a microphone of the type used by astronauts • children relate their own experiences of playing games to an episode in the story. • a child wonders how the children can play a computer game outside without a plug • a child points out the danger of playing with electrical equipment in the rain • a child points out that you become skilled at games by playing them frequently • the teacher and two of the children comment on their levels of expertise at computer games • a child relates the characters' anxieties about travelling into space to her own father's fear of flying.

Winnie the Witch	14.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the teacher and children talk about their own experiences of Halloween before reading a story about witchcraft • the children speculate about what cats use their claws for • the teacher prompts the children to empathise with a black cat who has suddenly become multi-coloured • the teacher asks a child to share an experience of being embarrassed • the children comment on their preferences for differently decorated houses • the teacher shares her experiences of having read the story to her own children
The Wolves	17.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the teacher prompts the children to link the content of the story to their own previous reading, listening and viewing. • the teacher prompts children to think about whether they prefer having a bedside light on or off

Appendix 6: The Spaceship: teacher documentsFull transcriptThe Spaceship Lorne June 13th 2007

U	Time	S	Content	F	M	A
1	0.00	T	You've been waiting to have this for quite a while time now. Don't open the book just now because I want you to have a look at the front cover. And this is our new book. Well have a wee look at the picture. What do you think's happening here Sebastien?	E ST	I I	com dir com dir dq
2	0.20	Ch1	They're in a spaceship and they're in space at the window and there's a red planet.	ST	R	ans
3	0.22	T	Whoa-ho that's a lot of information isn't it? They're in a spaceship How do you think they got into a spaceship? Kara?	ST	EV I	com ac dq dir
4	0.24	Ch2	The magic door.	ST	R	a
5	0.26	T	The magic door right. And what would have to have happen for the magic door to be there? What must have happened?	ST TT TT	EV EXI	ac dq dq
5	0.34	Ch2	They must the key must have glowed and then they picked up- Kipper must've picked up the key and took it.	TT	R	a a

6	0.46	T	Right OK right. So let's start. We'll have a wee look at the at some of the pictures starting with this one. I'm looking to see who we'll get to start off. Erm would you like to start please Joshua? Tell me what you're seeing in the picture first of all? Where are they?	TT ST ST E ST	EV I I I 	ac dir dir dir dir dq dq
7	1.00	Ch3	They're in their back garden.	ST	R	a
8	1.02	T	They're in their back garden. Right. And what does it look like they're doing Darrel?	ST	EV I	ac dq
9	1.05	Ch4	They're building building I think they're building something. And they're building a space ship.	ST	R	a a a
10	1.15	T	You think they're building – What makes you think it's a spaceship Sebastien?	ST	EV EXI	ac dq
11	1.17	Ch1	Well there's a pointy bit like that and it looks like that.	ST	R	a
12	1.21	T	[Ah right.	ST	EV	ac
13	1.23	Ch1	And there's stairs and that's a robot.	ST	R	a
14	1.27	T	Aha so just it looks like a spaceship. OK And does it look as though they've been working on it for quite a while?	ST	EV I	ac ac dq
15	1.31	Ch1	No.	ST	R	a
16	1.32	T	No?	ST	EV	ac
17	1.33	Ch1	It might have just been done in one hour, or half an hour.	ST	R	a

18	1.36	T	Possibly possibly.	ST	EV	ac
19*	1.39	Ch2	It says chocolate China cook.	ST	I	com
20	1.43	T	So it does - so where does that tell you they've got all the things for this?	ST	R I	ac
21	1.46	Ch2	China	ST	R	a
22	1.48	T	They've gone to China to get these things have they?	ST	EVI	dq
23	1.50	ChU	No:::.....:	ST	R	a
24	1.52	Ch2	I would say maybe it's just the news the newspaper that's from China.	ST	R	a
25	1.56	T	I think what they've maybe used- Well do you think it's a newspaper or do you think maybe it might be something a wee bit thicker than a newspaper?	ST TL	EX EXI	com dq
26	2.01	Ch2	Cardboard	TL	R	a
27	2.02	T	Yeah What might it have been before?	TL	EV EVI	ac dq
28	2.03	Ch3	Oh a box.	TL	R	a
29	2.05	T	A box. And what's maybe been in the box, Cara	TL	EV EVI	ac dq
30	2.08	Ch2	Chocolate [XXXX	TL	R	a
31	2.10	T	I think maybe if they'd gone all the [way to China-	TL	I	com
32	2.11	Ch2	[Chocolate	TL	R	a
33	2.12	T	Yeah it's [chocolate-chip	TL	EV	com
34	2.13	Ch2	[Chocolate China	TL	R	a
35	2.15	T	It's not chocolate China it's actually chocolate chip ... cookies. You can almost see so what's been in it. What're chocolate chip cookies? {2 second pause}	TL ST TL	EV EX I	cor com dq

			What're cookies?	GK		dq
36	2.28	Ch4	Oh they're biscuits!	GK	R	a
37	2.29	T	Yes they're biscuits so they've cut up [the box.	TL	EV	ac
38	2.30	Ch1	[Cookies are cookies.	GK	R	a
39	2.31	T	Yes cookies are cookies {laughs} Right let's start reading then. Joshua would you like to start us off? And everybody following remember.	GK E	EV I	ac dir dir dir
40	2.39	Ch3	<i>Wilf came to play with Chips.</i> <i>They made a rocket ship out of bits and pieces and the rocket ship was looks kw- [quite good.</i>	ST	R	rd
41	2.47	Ch1	[There was no <i>and</i> .	SW	I	cor
42	2.48	T	Right - there was no <i>and</i> there – the rocket ship looked quite good. <i>They made it out of bits and pieces.</i> We've already talked about the top bit – this pointy bit at the top been made out of a – box that had biscuits in it – what else have they used to make- Don't turn over just now let's – What else have they used to make the rocket ship? Joshua?	ST ST E ST	EV I I I	ac rd com dir dq dir
43	3.19	Ch3	They used the back of a chair.	ST	R	a
44	3.21	T	Oh that's act- That's quite clever. I didn't notice that.	ST	EV	ac com com
45	5.24	Ch1	No it's not a chair it's not the back of a chair.	ST	I	com
46	5.25	T	It is I think. [Look.	ST	I	com dir
47	5.29	Ch2	[It's got a flag on.	ST	I	com

48	5.30	T	Yes but look at it. Joshua's quite right. It looks like the back of a chair and they've turned it into ladders.	ST	I	ac com com
49	3.37	Ch1	Plant pots.	ST	R	a
50	3.39	T	They've used plant pots.	ST	EV	ac
51*	3.41	Ch2	And they've used XXXXX, Do you know I think it's – you know how when sometimes in pubs you get this- like a big bottle of-	ST TL	R I	a inf
52*	3.48	T	Ah like you get the kegs the big kegs of beer the big barrels that beer comes in. Yes it could be that.	TL	EX	com com
53*	3.54	Ch2	[I can see it from my window because I've got a pub on that side and a pub on that side.	TL	I	inf
54	3.54	Ch1	[They used cans.	ST	R	a
55	4.00	T	Sebastien, what else have they used?	ST	I	dq
56	4.01	Ch1	Cans	ST	R	a
57	4.02	T	They've used cans. Joshua I think that's really clever actually, I never noticed that. I never noticed that. Yes?	ST	EV EX	ac com com com dir
58	4.09	Ch1	A radio.	ST	R	a
59	4.10	T	They've got a radio there. What do you think they might use the radio for? {4 second pause} Darrel I'm asking you could you put your hand up.	ST TL	EV EXI I	ac dq dir
60	4.17	Ch4	Oh for listening to music.	TL	R	a

60	4.19	ChX	XXXX [XXXX	TL	?	?
62	4.21	Ch4	[But even like – you know people that go into space, they use things like that.	TL	R	inf
63	4.27	T	Yes, but they have to be in touch with who if they're in space?	TL	EVI	dq
64	4.32	Ch2	The manager.	TL	R	a
65	4.33	T	But who's who is the manager?	TL	EVI	dq
66	4.34	Ch2	It's er there. Not not where the spaceship is – maybe at the spaceship's station.	TL	R	a a
67	4.46	T	If the space ship left from Earth and then they're in space they have to be able to be in touch with whoever it is looking after them in what's called the headquarters on Earth so that-	TL	I	inf
68*	4.49	Ch2	How can it go down to Earth if it's in space?	TL	I	rq
69	5.02	T	Because the - microphone picks up the voices - they've got very special machines that do that. [Now let's turn to page two shall we?	TL ST	R ST	inf dir
70*	5.11	Ch1	[They used cardboard.	ST	I	com
71*	5.12	Ch3	[I've got I've got machines XXXX they cost nine pounds.	TL	I	inf
72	5.14	T	They're very they're very expensive. Sebastien could you do page two please then and everybody following Sebastien.	TL ST	R I	ac dir
73	5.21	Ch1	<i>Wilf and Chip played in in the rocket ship.</i> <i>They ...</i> {3 second pause}	ST	R	rd
74	5.33	T	<i>They.. pretend ...</i>	ST	I	pt

75	5.34	Ch1	<i>Pretended [to be ... spacemen ... The rocket ... is going to ... take off ... he said Wilf. Five four three- Five four three two one_</i>	ST	R	rd
76	5.35	T	[Pretend good]	ST	EV	pr
77	6.00	T	Would have been one but it's not there is it? <i>Five four three two –</i> And then what happens? Would you like to read on Darrel?	ST	EX EXI I	com com dq dir
78	6.07	Ch4	<i>Floppy ran up.</i>	ST	R	rd
79	6.08	T	Aah! Carry on.	ST	I	com dir
80	6.09	Ch4	<i>He wanted to get in the rocket ship with Wilf and Chip. Go away Floppy, called Chip. The rocket is going to take off.</i>	ST	R	rd
81	6.25	T	Poor poor Floppy. How do you think Floppy's feeling Joshua?	ST	EX EXI	com dq
82	6.30	Ch3	Sad that he can't come.	ST	R	a
83	6.32	T	Right a bit sad. And why are they wanting- why do they not want Floppy to come?	ST	EV I	ac rq
84	6.38	Ch1	He might break the whole thing around the edge.	ST	R	a
85	6.40	T	He might well do but look at them. Could they have fitted Floppy into the space ship?	ST	EV I	pb dq
86	6.42	ChU	No:::	ST	R	a
87	6.44	Ch1	Yes they could.	ST	R	a
88	6.46	T	Could they?	ST	EVI	dq
89	6.47	Ch1	They could have put him in that big can.	ST	R	a

90	6.50	T	Oh they could have done but I'm not sure that would have been very good for Floppy. Right let's [turn over.	ST	EX I	el dir
91	6.54	Ch3	[those those they go [in XXX	ST	I	com
92	6.54	Ch2	[cause dogs can't go in space ever XXX	TL	I	inf
93	6.54	Ch1	[don't turn [over cause XXX	E	I	dir
94	7.00	T	Hang on a minute.	E	I	dir
95	7.05	T	Oh so you have – right – We've got- we've done Floppy ran off – ran away. <i>He wanted to get in the rocket ship [with Wilf and Chip.</i>	E ST	I I	com com rd
96	7.11	Ch3	Oh the radio is going to fall down [and break!	ST	I	com
97	7.13	Ch1	[No no I know what's going to happen next	ST	I	com
98	7.16	T	What do you think is going to happen next?	ST	I	rq
99	7.18	Ch3	We haven't read page 2	E	I	com
100	7.19	T	[We did.	E	R	com
101	7.19	Ch4	[I did.	E	R	com
102	7.20	T	We have yes we did Darrel read it. So turn over. So what do you think is going to happen next Sebastien? {3 second pause}	E ST	R I I	com rq
103	7.26	Ch1	Erm.	ST	R	hes
104	7.27	T	Who's turned up? {1second pause} Who's turned up?	ST	I	dq dq
105	7.31	Ch1	Nadeem.	ST	R	a
106	7.32	T	Nadeem.	ST	EV	ac

			Right Cara you've [not read.			dir
107	7.33	Ch3	[No that's Nadeem.	ST	R	com
108	7.35	Ch2	No that's Wilf.	ST	R	com
109	7.36	T	That's Nadeem and that's Wilf. Right off you [go Cara	ST ST	EV	com inf
110	7.40	Ch3	No that's Nadeem that's Wilf	ST	I	com
111	7.41	Ch2	No that's Nadeem.	ST	I	com
112	7.43	T	T-sh-sh. No that's Nadeem	ST	I	dor com
113	7.47	Ch2	<i>Nadeem came to play. He had his computer with him but he liked the look of the rocket ship. He wanted to go in it.</i>	ST	R	rd
114	8.00	T	<i>He wanted to play?</i>	ST	EVI	cor
115	8.02	Ch2	<i>...in it too.</i>	ST	R	rd
116	8.03	T	<i>Play in it too because she thought I'd be very interesting. And who's got their way and got onto the rocket ship?</i>	ST	EX I	el dq
117	8.07	Ch3	Floppy.	ST	R	a
118	8.08	T	Floppy has.	ST	EV	ac
119	8.10	Ch4	And that's going to break the radio [because it's falling off.	ST	I	com
120	8.12	T	[Well it may well – that may well do - that's right. Joshua would you like to read again then page 5?	ST	REX I	ac dr
121	8.21	Ch3	<i>Just then it began to rain. Here's-</i>	ST	R	rd
122	8.27	T	<i>There's ...</i>	ST	EV	cor
123	8.28	Ch3	<i>There's not room for all of us said Chip. Let's go inside and play with Nadeem's computer.</i>	ST	R	rd

124	8.38	T	Right so we've got the boys here. What's what's Nadeem wanting to do – What would Nadeem like to do Cara?	ST	EX I	com rq rq
125	8.45	Ch2	Play with the rocket because that's his er computer. He gets a bit bored when he plays with it on his own and they want to play with that and they get a bit bored playing with their rocket so that's theirs and Nadim wants to play with that- so Nadim wants that.	ST	R	a el
126	9.01	T	That's right – it's a bit like on Friday at choosing time	TL	EX	el
127*	9.03	Ch1	Miss Porteous-	?	I	bid
128	9.05	T	Just a minute, listen – It's a bit like on Friday at choosing time when perhaps you're playing with something and you've played with it for quite a while and then you spot Joshua has got something different over in the corner – you think mmmmm I'd quite like to play with that and then maybe Joshua thinks I'm getting a bit tired of that I'd like to play what Sebastien's playing with. So they're both wanting to play with what the others have been playing with because, like [you say-	TL	EV EX	ig/dir el
129	9.29	Ch2	[They like swap them	TL	I	com
130	9.30	T	Yeah They like swapping over. That's correct – So anyway what happened to decide what they were going to do?	TL ST	EV I	ac ac ac dq
131	9.36	Ch3	They went to play with the computer.	ST	R	a

132	9.38	T	Why did that happen Sebastien? Why did they have to go inside to play with Nadeem's computer?	ST	EVI I	dq
133*	9.42	Ch1	Because – they weren't – Where did they have the plug to put the plug in?	ST TL	R	a com
132	9.48	T	Ah but what [happened-?	ST	EVI	dq
133	9.49	Ch1	[Huh!	ST	R	bid
134	9.50	T	What happened? {3 second pause}	ST	I	dq
135	9.53	Ch3	Ah I know what.	ST	R	a
136	10.00	Ch1	Electricity would not get in because it would get wet.	TL	R	
137	10.01	T	That's right.	ST	EV	a
138	10.02	Ch1	And the computer will explode.	TL	R	a
	10.03	Ch2	And the radio.	TL	R	a
139	10.04	T	Well it would do It started to rain and that's why they were having to move inside. OK. Let's turn over to page 6 then. And I think I'm going to have Joshua read again, would that be all right Joshua?	TL ST	EV EX I	ac el ac dir dir
140	10.13	Ch3	OK <i>They played a game on the computer.</i> <i>They had to-</i>	ST	R	a rd
141	10.16	T	Careful you've skipped a wee bit [on that line	ST	EV	dir
142	10.18	Ch2	[Missed a bit – a line	ST	I	com

143	10.22	Ch3	<i>It was called Red Planet They had to land a rocket on the planet. They had- Wilf- Wilf had Chips crashed. Wilf and Chip crashed the rocket. Nadeem didn't. He was good at the game.</i>	ST	R	rd
144	10.48	T	Right so. [Cara-	ST	EV I	ac
145*	10.49	Ch1	[He said <i>Wilf had Chip-</i>	ST	I	com
146	10.52	T	Yes I know but he went back he went back and corrected it.	ST	R	ac
147*	10.55	Ch2	I know why-	TL	I	com
148*	10.57	Ch1	[Because it-	ST	I	com
149*	11.57	Ch2	[I know why erm-	TL	I	com
150	1058	T	Sh-sh. [Cara?	ST	R I	dir rq
151	10.59	Ch2	Why Wilf is good at that game. Cause it's his game and he plays it.	TL	I	com com
152	11.02	T	Nadeem you mean. Aha yes it's just what exactly you were saying a wee minute ago. That Nadeem because it's his game he's played it a lot he's becoming quite an – What do you call it when you're good at something you become an /e/-	TL GK	R EX I	cor el
153	11.11	Ch2	[Expert.	GK	R	a
154	11.11	Ch1	[An expert.	GK	R	a
155	11.12	T	That's it.	GK	EV	ac

156*	11.13	Ch2	That that- once I was playing with my friend's gameboy and I can't really work gameboys and he's better.	TL	I	com
157	11.18	T	I would need to somebody to [show me how to do it anyway.	TL	I	com
158*	11.19	Ch1	[I'm good at it.]	TL	I	com
159	11.22	T	Yes- Guess what's going to happen now? {whisper} {4 second pause}	ST	R I	ac rq
160	11.31	Ch4	<i>Suddenly the magic key began to glow. Chips and Wilf pulled Nadeem away from the computer and ran into the room. Come on, called Chips, it's time for an adventure.</i>	ST	R	rd
161	11.51	T	Wow- It's time for an adventure	ST	EV	ac com
162*	11.53	Ch1	Floppy's going too.	ST	I	com
163	11.54	T	So – what - we're going to do –. Don't turn over just now because I've got a wee question for you. At the beginning –	ST E ST	I	dir dir rq
164	12.02	Ch1	[Don't turn over.	E	I	dir
165	12.02	T	[Don't turn over just now. At the beginning the story was taking place in the garden and in the house..... What's going to change now?	E ST	I	dir com dq
164	12.13	Ch1	[They're in space.	ST	R	a
165	12.13	Ch2	[In space.	ST	R	a
166	12.17	T	In space – yes- in space.	ST	EV	ac

167	12.18	Ch2	They're going to go into the space rocket ... and then they'll be pleased-	ST	R	a
168	12.24	Ch1	No no-	ST	R	int
169	12.25	T	Cara's speaking	E	I	dir
170	12.27	Ch2	Because they'll like because because they might not know it might be the red planet XXXX adventures are not the same like the red planet.	ST	R	a
171	12.45	T	The set- Go back there just now. The the place where the stories taking – place is going to change now. How different is it going to be do you think Joshua? Can you think of one way that- it's going to be different for them when they go from the house or the garden to this new place? How is it going to be different do you think?	ST GK	I I	el dir el rq rq rq
172	13.04	Ch3	Maybe it's going er they're going to where normal rockets go to er and-.	TL	R	a
173	13.08	T	Well how would it be different Joshua?	GK	I	rq
174	13.10	Ch3	Because ... they're going to er erm ... to erm the rocket station.	TL	R	a
175	13.18	T	Right they might. They're going to a [rocket station– but when they go into space ...	TL GK	EV I	ac
176	13.20	Ch1	[Ah I know this.]	GK	R	rq

177	13.24	Ch3	Cause that rocket that there in they're gonnae take the rocket that they made they're going for into that kind of space then they're going to go in here then the rocket'll - will become erm ... another kind of XXXX in space XXXXX and the rocket'll-	TL	R	a
178	13.46	T	But listen to what I'm asking you to tell me. How is it going to be different when they're in space to when they're in the garden or in the house?	GK	EVI	dir dq
179	13.51	Ch1	Because of thin air.	GK	R	a
180	13.54	T	It's in-?	GK	EVI	pt
181	13.55	Ch1	The air.	GK	R	a
182	13.56	T	In the air? Is it in the air up in space? {4 second pause}	GK	EVI	pb
183	14.00	Ch1	It's in space.	GK	R	a
184	14.01	T	How come you went like that just now Sebastien? {imitates Ch1's floating gesture} What were you trying to show me? What happens to you in space?	GK	EXI	dq dq dq
185	14.05	Ch4	You're flying.	GK	R	a
186	14.06	T	Yeah you'd be flying yes you'd be flying. We'll find out what why that is in a wee while. And how else would it be different? {2 seconds pause} Can you think of any other ways it would be different? {2 seconds pause} Well do you know something? Do you see how it rains?	GK	EVI I	ac com dq dq dq dq

187	14.20	Ch2	It's different.	GK	R	a
188	14.21	T	Do you hear that – yes it's different that's right. It rained just earlier on there You wouldn't get that when you're in space – But let's read on and find out how it is so different.	GK	EX I	ac el dir
189	14.31	Ch4	Rain comes from space.	GK	R	a
190	14.33	T	It comes from the sky- it comes from the clouds. Space is even further up Darrel.. Would you like to read Cara? Everyone following. OK	GK E	EX I	el inf dir dir dir
191	14.39	Ch2	<i>The magic key turned to a rocket ship. It took Floppy too. The rocket looked as if it was about to take off but the door was open. Nadeem wanted to look inside the rocket.</i>	ST	R	rd
192	14.55	T	Well done. Remember when you come to a full stop take a wee breath and pause. You don't need to do it really fast it's not a race.	ST LK	EV EVI	pr inf inf
193	15.00		<i>Nadeem was in was running to the [rocket ship-</i>	ST	R	rd
194	15.04	T	Why do you why was Nadeem running to the rocket ship Darrel?	ST	EVI	rq
195	15.06	Ch4	Because he XXXXXX the rocket ship door and he doesn't want to take off because he wants to go into space with it.	ST	R	a
196	15.14	T	He wants to go into space with it right. Let's read on then Joshua. Would you like to read on?	ST	EV I	ac dir

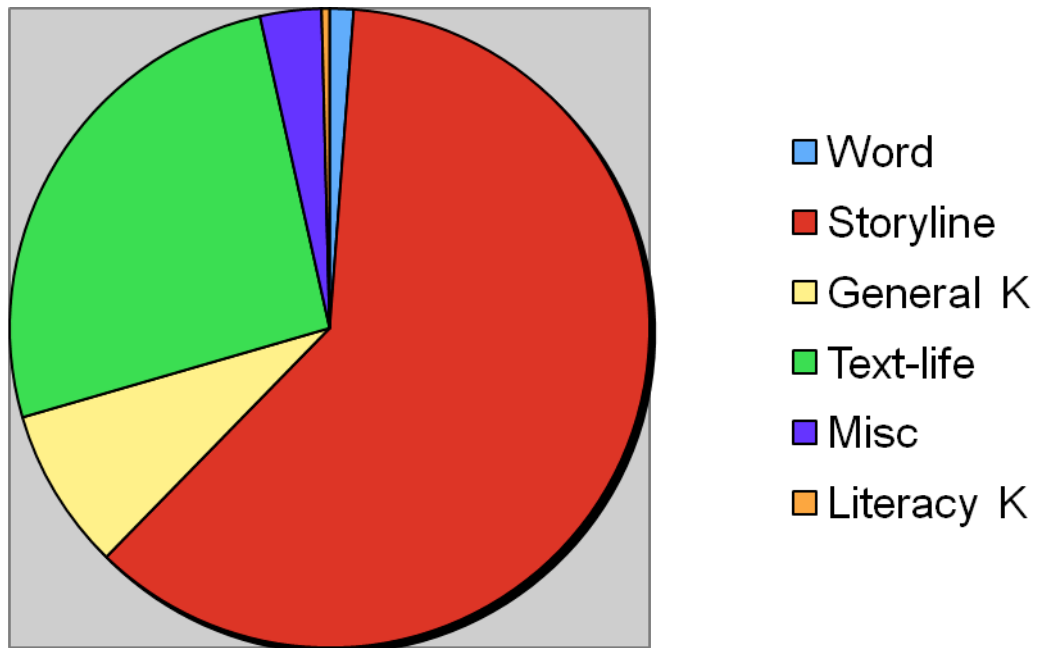
197	15.20	Ch3	Nine is it?	E	I	rq
198	15.23	T	Yes there.	E	R	dir
199	15.24	Ch3	<i>Come on, he called.</i> <i>Chip didn't want to go I inside.</i> <i>It may not be safe he said.</i> <i>Why not said Nadeem.</i> <i>This is a magic adventure.</i>	ST	R	rd
200	15.39	T	Right. So Chips is a wee bit worried isn't he? Sebastien, why is he worried? {3second pause} Why is Chips a bit worried?	ST	EV EVI	ac dq dq dq
201	15.47	Ch1	Because he might fall down and XXXX.	ST	R	a
202	15.50	T	He could do aha. Because it looks very [scary	ST	EV	
203*	15.54	Ch2	[Because it's erm far – because if you go there it's very far away from home erm it's far and he's scared to go up. My erm dad is too scared to go up high in a plane to Spain so we have to go in a boat or something	TL	R I	a com
204	16.13	T	Well that's it's very much the same thing. He's a bit scared. But Nadeem says ... why not? What does he say? Why not, this is a...?	TL ST	R I	ac ac com dq dq
205	16.23	ChU	<i>Magic adventure.</i>	ST	R	rd
206	16.25	T	Magic adventure. Nadeem's assuming that because it's a magic adventure-	ST	EV I	ac el

207	16.28	Ch2	You have to go.	ST	R	a
208	16.30	T	You have to do it- Well maybe you have to do it- but is it going to hurt them?	ST	EV I	ac
209	18.33	Ch2	[No	ST	R	aa
210	18.33	Ch1	[Hmm.	ST	R	a
211	18.34	T	Well Nadeem's assuming that because it's a magic adventure it's going to be OK. Well we're going to leave that there. That's our that's our eight pages. I'd like you to practice that.	ST E	EX I I	el dir com dir
	16.44	Ch2	Nine	E	I	com
	16.45	T	Well yes that's correct we've got nine. I'd like you to practice that for Friday please. I'll write it in your diaries. OK did you like that? Do you think you're going to like this story?	E ST	R I I	ac dir com dq dq
	16.56	ChU	Yeah	E	R	a
	16.57	T	Yes and unfortunately we didn't even get on to where they go OK. There we are. Let's take these and put them in your plastic wallets now and I'll write in your diaries later.	ST F	EX I	com com com dir
	17.10		END			

The Spaceship

Approximate focus durations within 17 minutes 10 seconds

	Time in seconds	% age of time
Storyline	613	60.5
Word decoding	12	1.2
Literacy knowledge	4	0.4
General knowledge	83	8.2
Text to life linking	251	24.8
Miscellaneous	51	5.0



The Spaceship: focus changes over 215 turns, 17 minutes, 10 seconds

Turn	Time
1	0.00
	0.02
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
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12	
13	
14	
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16	
17	
18	
19	
20*	
21	
22	
23	
24	

25	
26	1.56
27	
28	
29	
30	
31	
32	
33	
34	
35	
36	
	2.24
37	
38	2.29
39	2.30
40	
	2.32
41	2.39
42	2.47
43	
	2.51
44	
45	
46	
47	
48	

49	
50	
51	
52*	3.41
53	
54*	
55	3.54
56	
57	
58	
59	
60	
	4.11
61	
62	
63	
64	
65	
66	
67	
68	
69*	
70	
	5.10
71*	
72*	5.12

73	
	5.15
74	
75	
76	
77	5.35
78	6.00
79	
80	
81	
82	
83	
84	
85	
86	
87	
88	
89	
90	
91	
92	
93	6.54
94	
95	
96	
	7.06
97	

98	
99	
100	7.18
101	
102	
103	
	7.22
104	
105	
106	
107	
108	
109	
110	
111	
112	
113	
114	
115	
116	
117	
118	
119	
120	
121	
122	
	8.26

123	
124	8.28
125	
126	
127	9.01
128*	9.03
129	9.05
130	
131	
	9.33
132	
133	
134*	9.42
135	9.50
136	9.53
137	
138	
139	
140	
	10.05
141	
142	
143	
144	
145	
146*	
147	
148*	10.55
149*	10.57

150*	
151	10.58
152	10.59
153	
	11.09
154	
155	
156	
157*	11.13
158	
159*	
160	11.22
161	
162	
163*	
164	
	11.55
165	
166	
	12.03
167	
168	
169	
170	12.25
171	12.27
172	
	12.55
173	13.04
174	13.08

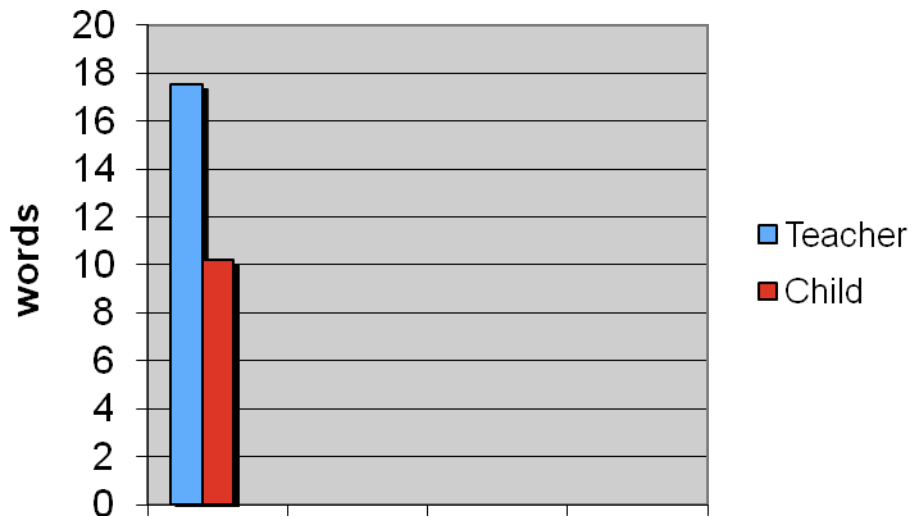
175	13.10
176	13.18
177	13.20
178	13.24
179	13.46
180	
181	
182	
183	
184	
185	
186	
187	
188	
189	
190	
191	
	14.37
192	
193	
	14.56
194	15.00
195	
196	
197	
198	15.20
199	
200	15.24

201	
202	
203	
204*	15.54
205	
	16.15
206	
207	
208	
209	
210	
211	
212	
	16.43
213	
214	
	16.52
215	
216	
	17.08
End	17.10

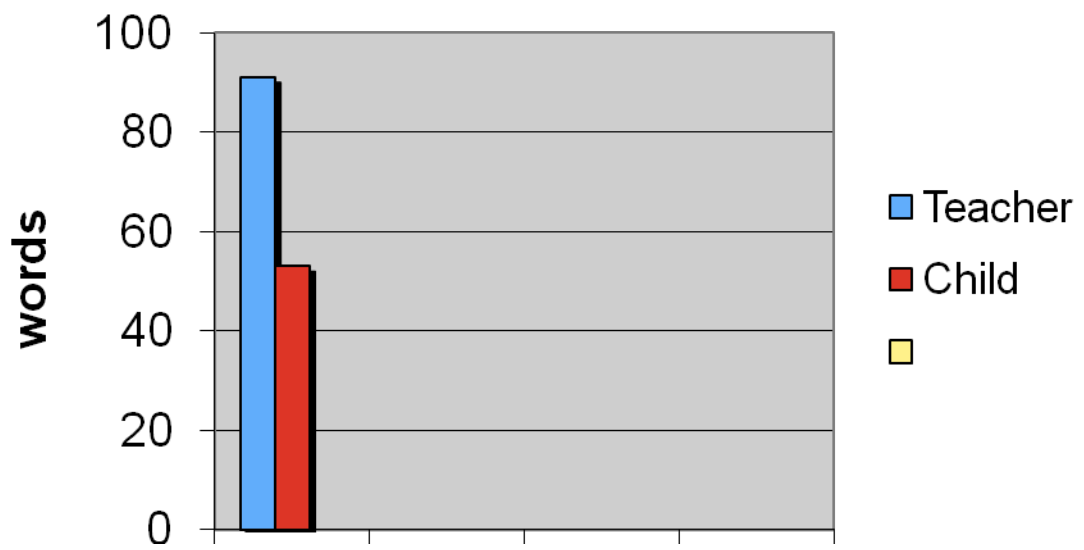
The Spaceship: MLT and LLT

Mean length of turn is the average number of words uttered by a speaker whenever he or she takes a turn as the main or sole speaker. The figure for the children is based on their amalgamated utterances, and it includes turns in which the child is reading aloud. The length of longest turn figure *omits* the words read aloud during turns.

	Teacher	Child
MLT(words)	17.56	10.2
LLT(words)	91	53



Length of longest turn

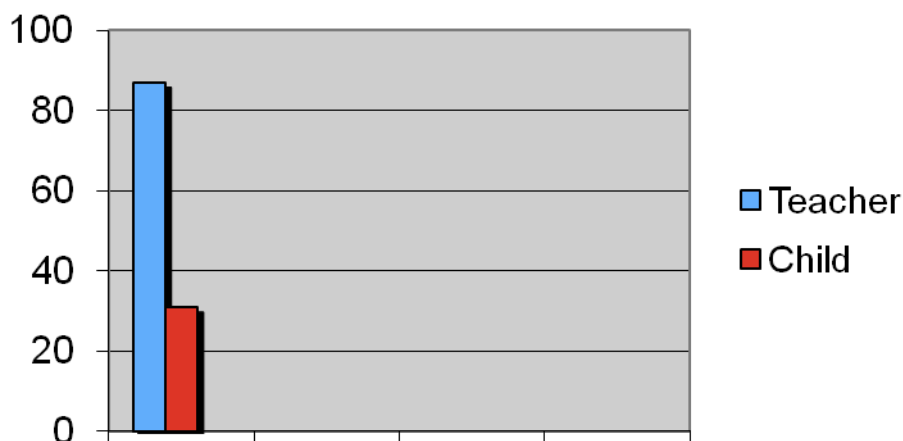


The Spaceship: Initiations

Initiations are self-motivated utterances in which a speaker ‘takes the initiative’ and makes a contribution which has not been directly elicited from him or her by another speaker. In classrooms, initiations are usually made by the teacher in order to elicit responses from pupils.

	Teacher	Child
Initiations	87	30

Initiations



Context of child initiations and teacher responses to them.

1

19*	1.39	Ch2	It says chocolate China cook.	S/W	I	com
20	1.43	T	So it does - so where does that tell you they've got all the things for this?	S	R EVI	ac dq

2&3

45	5.24	Ch1	No it's not a chair it's not the back of a chair.	S	I	com
46	5.25	T	It is I think. [Look.	S	I	com dir
47	5.29	Ch2	[It's got a flag on.	S	EVI	com
48	5.30	T	Yes but look at it. Joshua's quite right. It looks like the back of a chair and they've turned it into ladders.	S	I	ac com com

4&5

51*	3.41	Ch2	And they've used- Do you know I thinks it's – you know how when sometimes in pubs you get this- like a big bottle of-	S TL	R I	a inf
52*	3.48	T	Ah like you get the kegs the big kegs of beer the big barrels that beer comes in. Yes it could be that.	TL	EX	com com
53*	3.54	Ch2	[I can see it from my window because I've got a pub on that side and a pub on that side.	TL	I	inf
54	3.54	Ch1	[They used cans.	S	R	a
55	4.00	T	Sebastien, what else have they used?	S	I	dq

6-8

67	4.46	T	If the space ship left from Earth and then they're in space they have to be able to be in touch with whoever it is looking after them in what's called the headquarters on Earth so that-	TL	I	inf
68*	4.49	Ch2	How can it go down to Earth if it's in space?	TL	I	rq
69	5.02	T	Because the - microphone picks up the voices - they've got very special machines that do that. [Now let's turn to page two shall we?	TL S	R I	inf dir
70*	5.11	Ch1	[They used cardboard.	S	I	com
71*	5.12	Ch3	[I've got I've got machines XXXX they cost nine pounds.	TL	I	inf
72	5.14	T	They're very they're very expensive. Sebastien could you do page two please then and everybody following Sebastien.	TL S	R I	ac dir

9-14

85	6.40	T	He might well do but look at them. Could they have fitted Floppy into the space ship?	S	EV I	pb dq
86	6.42	ChU	No:::	S	R	a
87	6.44	Ch1	Yes they could.	S	R	a
88	6.46	T	Could they?	S	EVI	dq
89	6.47	Ch1	They could have put him in that big can.	S	R	a
90	6.50	T	Oh they could have done but I'm not sure that would have been very good for Floppy. Right let's [turn over.	S	EX I	el dir

91	6.54	Ch3	[those those they go [in XXX	S	I	com
92	6.54	Ch2	[cause dogs can't go in space ever XXX	TL	I	inf
93	6.54	Ch1	[don't turn [over cause XXX	M	I	dir
94	7.00	T	Hang on a minute.	M	I	dir
95	7.05	T	Oh so you have – right – We've got- we've done Floppy ran off – ran away. <i>He wanted to get in the rocket ship [with Wilf and Chip.</i>	M S	I I	com com rd
96	7.11	Ch3	Oh the radio is going to fall down [and break!	S	I	com
97	7.13	Ch1	[No no I know what's going to happen next	S	I	com
98	7.16	T	What do you think is going to happen next?	S	I	rq
99	7.18	Ch3	We haven't read page 2	M	I	com
100	7.19	T	[We did.	M	R	com
101	7.19	Ch4	[I did.	M	R	com
102	7.20	T	We have yes we did Darrel read it. So turn over. So what do you think is going to happen next Sebastien?	M S	R I I	com rq

15&16

109	7.36	T	That's Nadeem and that's Wilf. Right off you [go Cara	S S	EV	inf dir
110	7.40	Ch3	[No that's Nadeem that's Wilf	S	I	inf
111	7.41	Ch2	[No that's Nadeem.	S	I	com
112	7.43	T	T-sh-sh. No that's Nadeem	S	R EVI	dir com

16

116	8.03	T	<i>Play in it too</i> because she thought I'd be very interesting. And who's got their way and got onto the rocket ship?	S	EX I	el dq
117	8.07	Ch3	Floppy.	S	R	a
118	8.08	T	Floppy has.	S	EV	ac
119	8.10	Ch4	And that's going to break the radio [because it's falling off.	S	I	com
120	8.12	T	[Well it may well – that may well do - that's right. Joshua would you like to read again then page 5?	S	REX I	ac dr

17&18

126	9.01	T	That's right – it's a bit like on Friday at choosing time	TL	EX	el
127*	9.03	Ch1	Miss Porteous-	?	I	bid
128	9.05	T	Just a minute, listen – It's a bit like on Friday at choosing time when perhaps you're playing with something and you've played with it for quite a while and then you spot Joshua has got something different over in the corner – you think mmmmm I'd quite like to play with that and then maybe Joshua thinks I'm getting a bit tired of that I'd like to play what Sebastien's playing with. So they're both wanting to play with what the others have been playing with because, like [you say-	TL	EV EX	ig/dir el
129	9.29	Ch2	[They like swap them	TL	I	com
130	9.30	T	Yeah They like swapping over. That's correct – So anyway what happened to decide what they were going to do?	TL S	EV I	ac ac ac dq

19&20

141	10.16	T	Careful you've skipped a wee bit [on that line	S	EV	dir
142	10.18	Ch2	[Missed a bit – a line	S	I	com
143	10.22	Ch3	<i>It was called Red Planet</i> <i>They had to land a rocket on the planet.</i> <i>They had-</i> <i>Wilf- Wilf had Chips crashed.</i> <i>Wilf and Chip crashed the rocket.</i> <i>Nadeem didn't.</i> <i>He was good at the game.</i>	S	R	rd
144	10.48	T	Right so. [Cara-	S	EV I	ac
145*	10.49	Ch1	[He said <i>Wilf had Chip-</i>	S	I	com
146	10.52	T	Yes I know but he went back he went back and corrected it.	S	R	ac

21-26

147*	10.55	Ch2	I know why-	TL	I	com
148*	10.57	Ch1	[Because it-	S	I	com
149*	10.57	Ch2	[I know why erm-	TL	I	com

150	10.58	T	Sh-sh. [Cara?	M	R I	dir rq
151	10.59	Ch2	Why Wilf is good at that game. Cause it's his game and he plays it.	TL	I	com com
152	11.02	T	Nadeem you mean. Aha yes it's just what exactly you were saying a wee minute ago. That Nadeem because it's his game he's played it a lot he's becoming quite an – What do you call it when you're good at something you become an /e/-	TL GK	R EX I	cor el
153	11.11	Ch2	[Expert.	GK	R	a
154	11.11	Ch1	[An expert.	GK	R	a
155	11.12	T	That's it.	GK	EV	ac
156*	11.13	Ch2	That that- once I was playing with my friend's gameboy and I can't really work gameboys and he's better.	TL	I	com
157	11.18	T	I would need to somebody to [show me how to do it anyway.	TL	I	com
158*	11.19	Ch1	[I'm good at it.]	TL	I	com
159	11.22	T	Yes- Guess what's going to happen now? {whisper} {4 second pause}	S	R I	ac rq

27

161	11.51	T	Wow- It's time for an adventure	S	EV	ac com
162*	11.53	Ch1	Floppy's going too.	S	I	com
163	11.54	T	So – what - we're going to do –. Don't turn over just now because I've got a wee question for you. {3 second pause} At the beginning –	S M S	I	dir dir rq

28

164	12.02	Ch1	[Don't turn over.	M	I	dir
165	12.02	T	[Don't turn over just now.	M	I	dir

28

196	15.14	T	He wants to go into space with it right. Let's read on then Joshua. Would you like to read on?	S	EV I	ac dir
197	15.20	Ch3	Nine is it?	M	I	rq

198	15.23	T	Yes there.	M	R	dir
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200	15.39	T	Why is Chips a bit worried?	S	EVI	acdq
201	15.47	Ch1	Because he might fall down and get hurt.	S	R	a
202	15.50	T	He could do aha. Because it looks very [scary	S	EV EX	ac com
203*	15.54	Ch2	[Because it's erm far – because if you go there it's very far away from home erm it's far and he's scared to go up. My erm dad is too scared to go up high in a plane to Spain so we have to go in a boat or something	TL	R I	a com
204	16.13	T	Well that's it's very much the same thing. He's a bit scared.	TL	R	ac

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211	16.34	T	Well Nadeem's assuming that because it's a magic adventure it's going to be OK. Well we're going to leave that there. That's our that's our eight pages. I'd like you to practice that.	S M	EX I I	el dir com dir
212	16.44	Ch2	Nine	M	I	com
213	16.45	T	Well yes that's correct we've got nine. I'd like you to practice that for Friday please.	M	R I	ac dir

The Spaceship: quantities of talk time

The amount of time occupied by the teacher and the children in the dialogue has been calculated by totalling the durations of each turn. It includes overlaps and unison speaking when this occurs.

	Teacher	Child
Talk time (seconds)	528	493
Talk time(%)	51.7	49.3

