UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Young Children's Literacy Learning

by

Jane Katherine Payler

Master of Philosophy (Research Methods)

Research and Graduate School of Education

December 2000

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH AND GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Master of Philosophy (Research Methods)

YOUNG CHILDRENS LITERACY LEARNING

by Jane Katherine Payler

Many dyslexic children learn to read and write given appropriate early intervention. Assessment and intervention are individually based, but problems exist relating to the detection and definition of dyslexia. This study arose from the question of whether or not mainstream literacy teaching could learn from a successful intervention programme, with the premise that if important elements could be included in mainstream teaching, dyslexic children may have a greater chance of developing literacy skills without falling behind.

To address the question, the study looked in detail at mainstream literacy teaching in one reception class in terms of the literacy development opportunities for young children. It looked at how six children, three with apparently strong Baseline Assessment scores in early literacy skills and three with weaker scores, coped with the literacy learning opportunities and how their literacy skills developed, taking into account home support and opinion. The study, adopting a socio-cultural perspective, used neo-Vygotskian constructs to examine the interaction between the literacy learning opportunities and the learners. The same constructs were used in the analysis of a literacy remediation programme, SIDNEY, which shows success, at least in the short term, with young children in year one at risk of literacy difficulties.

The main findings are that children's literacy development potential in the short term cannot be easily predicted from school entry assessment. Their progress in class depends on complex relationships between many factors. An important factor appears to be the level of their close involvement in problem solving, their close interaction with the literacy development opportunities within their zones of proximal development. Rates of progress may be partly masked by how well a child fits into the ethos of the classroom.

The analysis of SIDNEY identified a pattern of teaching and learning in which the children had a higher rate of active cognitive involvement in the problem solving, and in which a clear process of handover leading to appropriation could be seen. Short periods of closer involvement with a small group in reception led to some children, previously falling behind, overtaking some others in the class. The conclusion attempts to isolate and describe the model of interactive teaching that appears to be an important factor in successful learning, both in the SIDNEY programme and in the most successful elements of the mainstream literacy teaching.

Contents

Page

List of Tables iv

List of Abbreviations v

Foreword vi

Part 1 Introduction to the study

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Development of Early Literacy 4

Dyslexia 13

Chapter 3 Methodology

Outline 25

Strategy 26

Piloting 30

Sampling 32

Methods of Data Collection 36

Methods of Data Analysis 40

Ethical Issues 44

Reflective Comment 47

Part 2 Presentation and Analysis of Data

Chapter 4 Literacy Learning Opportunities in Reception

Whole Class Teaching 50

Small Group Literacy Learning Opportunities 73
Other Literacy Learning Opportunities 77

Chapter 5 The Learners: Six Children in the Reception Class 80
What Can We Learn from the Learners? 110

Chapter 6 The SIDNEY Teaching and Learning 113
How Does the SIDNEY Programme Help? 123

Part 3 Conclusion and Discussion

Chapter 7 Conclusion 127
Final Comment 133

Appendices

Appendix i Parent Interview Schedule 134

Appendix ii Average Baseline Assessment Scores for Older and Younger Reception Children 137

Appendix iii From Scaffolding to Handover: An Examination of One Episode of Literacy Teaching and Learning 140

Appendix iv Transcription of Video Recording of SIDNEY Teaching. 169

References 172

List of Tables

		Page
Table 1	Categories of Literacy Teaching in the Whole Class Part of the Literacy Hour	50
Table 2	Henry's End-Test	84
Table 3	Susan's End-Test	88
Table 4	Katrina's Writing	92
Table 5	Katrina's End-Test	93
Table 6	Lydia's End-Test	98
Table 7	Alan's Work Sheet	103
Table 8	Alan's End-Test	104
Table 9	Ian's End-Test	108
Table 10	Interactive Teaching and Learning Model	130

List of Abbreviations

BA	Baseline Assessment
BDA	British Dyslexia Association
CA	Classroom Assistant
CoPS1	Cognitive Profiling System
CVC	Consonant vowel consonant
DEST	Dyslexia Early Screening Test
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DLO	Desirable Learning Outcomes
ELG	Early Learning Goals
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
SATs	Standard Attainment Tests
SCAA	Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority
SIDNEY	Screening and Intervention for Dyslexia Notably in the Early Years
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Foreword

A personal note

Several years ago, an educational psychologist diagnosed one of my children, aged eight years, as dyslexic. We had had two years of upset and concern, fuelled by his own worries that he was finding it very difficult to learn to read and write, in spite of his obvious abilities compared to his peers in all other areas of development and performance. He began a two-year programme, later extended to three years, with a dyslexia specialist twice weekly, supported by short daily periods of work at home. He made good progress and by the time he was eleven years old, his reading age had gone from over a year below to a year above his chronological age, though his spelling remains weaker. The increases in his confidence and self-esteem were immeasurable.

I was intrigued. As the parent most often working with him on his programme, I was surprised to find that he appeared simply to be learning what, to the best of my knowledge, was taught in the very early years at school. His pre-school preparation for literacy had been good. He had easy access to a wide range of children's books, pencil and paper activities and stories read by an adult as a daily routine, in a house where books were stacked in every room except the bathroom. He particularly enjoyed handling books and sharing stories, and could confidently re-tell stories with detail. Before starting school, he knew most of the alphabetic sounds and could form many of the letters. He observed and took part in adult related literacy activities. Once at school, as parents we added his shared reading of the school reading books and sets of words to his daily routine of stories.

I was interested to find out what it was about the dyslexia teaching and learning that appeared to make it so much more effective for such children than the mainstream literacy teaching. I was interested to know why the mainstream appeared to work so much better for some children than for others. The specialist programme did have some obvious benefits in that it was one to one and multi-sensory in delivery. But it was one to

one for only reasonably short periods, some of which were already offered prior to the programme. These included reading practise and word learning one to one with a parent each evening plus some one to one time in school, usually twice weekly, reading with a teacher. The value of working in a multi-sensory way did not escape me, having worked with young children for some time. It is a method widely used with pre-school children. I wondered whether there was something of value worth investigating that may have a place in teaching all young children at school and so prevent some of the falling behind and loss of self esteem.

Several years later as the opportunity arose to carry out the study, it became apparent that schools in some areas had begun to routinely assess some, or in some schools all, children at the end of reception for signs of risk factors that could lead to literacy difficulties. Those most at risk in some schools, particularly in Hampshire, were offered a remedial programme, SIDNEY, lasting about fifteen weeks. According to the evaluation of the pilot of the programme, it led to a high proportion of children being able to spell consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words by the end of the programme. It appeared to show some success in teaching children skills in a relatively short space of time that they had failed to gain in reception. Again, it raised questions for me about why the 'at risk' children had failed to absorb the skills and information in reception, but were apparently capable of doing so using the SIDNEY programme. Could part of this programme inform and usefully be applied to reception teaching before children had the chance to experience even minimal failure?

Part 1 Introduction to the Study

Chapter 1 Introduction

The context

The context in which literacy is taught in schools has changed dramatically in recent years. In September 1998, the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (Department for Education and Employment 1998) was introduced in primary schools in Great Britain in a climate of concern surrounding British children's literacy levels compared to those in other countries (Brookes, Pugh and Schagen 1996). The aim of the NLS was to raise standards of literacy. A national target was set for eighty per cent of all eleven year olds to achieve a reading and spelling age at least equivalent to their chronological age by the year 2002, a level that should enable the children to cope adequately with the secondary school curriculum. This was to be measured by the government set Standard Attainment Tests (SATS). The NLS emphasised whole class teaching, with a tight structure of one hour split into four blocks of teaching, one of which was independent work for twenty minutes. It stressed a three pronged approach to literacy: word level work including phonics, sentence work and text level work. The National Literacy Project, in which the NLS was piloted, was evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER 1998) and by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI 1998). Both reported improved scores in literacy tests, though children with special educational needs made less progress.

Alongside these changes, new guidelines were published for the teaching of children from the ages of three to five, initially in the Desirable Learning Outcomes (DLO) (Department for Education and Employment 1996) and later replaced by the Early Learning Goals (ELG) (DfEE 1999). Requirements were also set out for the Baseline Assessment of young children on starting school. The ELGs identified a 'new' stage of education, referred to as the Foundation stage, extending from age three years to the end of the reception year, by which time children range in age from just five to almost six years. One element in the ELGs is Language and Literacy, stated to be in line with the

objectives for reception year teaching set out in the NLS. However, the methods of teaching implied in the ELGs and the NLS are quite different. Reception teachers now face the difficult task of meeting the requirements of both with young children who, by the end of reception, should be ready to cope with the objectives set out in the NLS for year one children.

The context for dyslexic children in schools has also changed. The condition, though still widely misunderstood and still providing anecdotal evidence of scepticism amongst some teachers, can be tested for at an early age, for example, using the Dyslexia Early Screening Test, DEST, for children from four and a half years, devised by Nicolson and Fawcett (1995). Remedial help to some degree or other can be offered. The danger is that the 'problem' is seen as having been 'solved', further marginalising less severe though average to high ability dyslexics whose condition may not be noticed, assessed and properly supported. OFSTED (1999), in the report on *Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties in Mainstream Schools* concluded that most dyslexic pupils were making satisfactory or better progress in their work. The accuracy and reliability of the assessments and the effectiveness of intervention programmes, however, still require further investigation themselves. For example Dear (1999) included a report from a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator who noted that high ability dyslexics sometimes showed a result of a 'low-risk' of dyslexia when tested at the end of reception using DEST, but whose condition was quite apparent using a different test at age eight. The situation is clearly better for some dyslexic children, but the difficulties are far from solved.

The study

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching and learning of literacy in a reception class and in particular to consider how six learners fared in terms of their literacy development. Alongside this, the interface between teacher and learners in the SIDNEY remedial programme was examined with the aim of better understanding the

factors that contribute to its apparent success. The question of how it differed to reception literacy teaching was considered.

The study was carried out in one reception class in a primary school in a small town from January to April 2000. The class had thirty pupils, one full-time teacher, two part-time classroom assistants and several regular parent helpers. The literacy hour was conducted first thing each morning. For the independent work, children were grouped according to ability. The SIDNEY programme teaching took place in the same school with one Special Needs Assistant teaching two year one pupils at a time.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

The Development of Early Literacy

Before considering how and why a particular programme achieves a certain success in helping children along the road to literacy and how, if at all, it could inform mainstream early literacy teaching, I first consider how children develop the skills of reading and writing, and the factors influencing their development. There has long been a debate amongst those involved in researching or teaching children's literacy development about the relative importance of 'bottom up' using phonics and 'top down' using whole language approaches to teaching children to read and write. Over the years, the debate has led to strong feelings on both sides, with proponents of each perspective arguing vociferously that without the influence of their approach, children would not learn to read and write adequately.

The psycho-linguistic approach to literacy is based on the belief that, just as children acquire language by being immersed in their home language, so children will acquire literacy skills by being surrounded by literacy and by sharing books and stories with skilled readers. The apprenticeship approach to reading (for example, Waterland 1988) and some of the writings from the emergent literacy perspective (for example, Teale and Sulzby 1986) are based on these views. Frank Smith (for example Smith, 1973) and Kenneth and Yetta Goodman (for example Goodman 1986) are most frequently associated with these views and have been influential in teacher education. The emergent literacy and psycho-linguistic approaches see children as active, competent learners who are adept at making meanings from the complex world around them. Children make sense of being born into a literate society and, by exposure to the purposes of literacy, make sense of the processes of reading and writing. Teale and Sulzby (1986), for example, state that literacy is not simply a cognitive skill, but a '*complex sociopsycholinguistic activity*' (page 2) in which the focus for research is the child's perspective. The approach has been criticised for ignoring the central role of word recognition in learning to read (Stanovich 1980). Doubt has also been cast on the idea

that as competent, active learners, children should learn to read by reading, by being exposed to 'real' books, when clearly some children do not (see for example Beard and Oakhill 1994).

At the other end of the spectrum there has been an emphasis on teaching reading and writing in a stilted, strictly controlled manner, teaching phonics first and relying on simple, restricted 'reading' books which used a tightly controlled, repetitive vocabulary of mainly short words and sentences. Children were similarly encouraged to base writing on simple, short words as they were learnt, or copying from a model. Such approaches have been heavily criticised for denying children's ability to make sense of their world, to enquire and learn in multi-faceted ways. It has been criticised for being restrictive, teaching children to read and write language that is unexciting and unnatural and which loses the importance of meaning and message.

In the last decade, there has been a distinct shift towards a balance between these two perspectives as a clearer understanding emerges of the processes involved in learning to read and write. Frith's research (1985) gave a model of children's literacy development as occurring in three phases moving from the logographic (recognising whole word shapes) through the alphabetic (grapheme-phoneme correspondences are learnt) to the orthographic (automatic recognition of sound-spelling pattern correspondences, syntax and semantics). The development of reading and writing support each other in different ways at different stages. The interdependent and connected nature of literacy development is highlighted and further emphasised by Adams (1990) in her extensive review of research relating to learning to read and, to some extent, write.

> *The parts of the reading system must grow together... In order for the connections and even the connected parts themselves to develop properly, they must be developed conjointly. They must be linked together in the very course of acquisition. And, importantly, this dependency works in both directions. One cannot properly develop the higher-order processes without due attention to the*

lower. Nor can one focus on the lower-order processes without constantly clarifying and exercising their connections to the higher order. (Adams 1990, page 6).

In the very early years of a child's life, research by Hall (1987), Weinberger (1996) and Ehri (1995) has demonstrated the importance of a child's access to a literary environment, and of seeing adults as role models and collaborators in the use of literacy. For children to develop a sense of themselves as belonging to a literate culture, they need to see people using literature with purpose and pleasure. For children to see themselves as having a part to play in becoming literate, they need to share literary experiences with adults, and have access to literacy tools and equipment for their own purposes. These might be for use in their role-play, for communicating using drawings, symbols and 'pretend' writing, for browsing and enjoying. Weinberger (1996), in her research monitoring children's literacy development at three, five and seven years of age, found that

> *Children reading well are those whose literacy was resourced at home, allowing them experience of favourite books, whose parents read stories to them, and maybe as a consequence, these children chose to look at books in nursery. The children saw their parents read at home, and the parents themselves had some idea about literacy teaching in school* (Weinberger 1996, page 151).

She adopts a neo-Vygotskian approach in some of her analysis, emphasising the socio-cultural nature of becoming literate.

> *Children can learn a great deal about literacy from having books read to them, with adults providing a 'scaffold', where the adult supports the child's current abilities and provides help for them to move on to the next stage* (Weinberger 1996, page 9).

She suggests, for example, that re-reading favourite books to a child leads to the text and story being committed to memory, which leads the child to try to decipher the text themselves later, using the pictures to help.

While the emergent literacy perspective has much to offer in understanding very young children's literacy development and may explain how some children learn to read and write in their pre-school years without formal instruction, it alone is insufficient to explain the process. It fails to explain why, amongst children from the same family or similar environments, some learn to read and write easily whilst others struggle. Ehri (1995) cites evidence that learners must acquire and apply knowledge of the alphabetic system if mature sight-reading is to develop. Whilst the 'whole language' approach, in which some attention may be paid to letter-sound relationships usually for initial and end sounds, allows children to practise many of the processes needed for successful literacy development, it does not provide the whole picture. *'Studies indicate that students who fall behind in learning to read often do so because they have not acquired sufficient, working knowledge of the alphabetic system'* (Ehri 1995, page 9). Adam's work (1990) echoes the point. *'Studies suggest that, among broad classes of programmes, those that include systematic phonic instruction generally give young readers an edge in spelling and word recognition skills'* (Adams 1990, page 7).

Although the meaning of the text is of prime importance and the aim for reading and writing must surely be to communicate meaning, access to the meaning of a text is dependent on what Adams describes as the 'lower-order' skills of decoding effortlessly. Only then can 'active attention' be paid to understanding the meaning. But the lower-order skills of decoding need to be learnt before they can become effortless. Smith's research (1994) studied the effectiveness of using a child's own compositions, scribed, typed and bound by an adult, as a resource for the child's own learning to spell and read. Its success emphasised the importance of the child being presented with the 'whole' before attempting to decode. The child already had a good idea of the overall message

and content of the book. The language was that of the child and, as Donaldson (1993) points out, this is very effective in helping the child to decode the words.

Dombey and Moustafa (1998) draw together the most recent research on the learning and teaching of reading. It shows that children learn more readily how to break words down rather than build them up. They emphasise therefore an analytic approach to phonics rather than synthetic. As children tend to look through utterances to meanings, there is a need to begin in the context of whole text work when introducing phonics. The review of the research is convincing and the conclusions Dombey and Moustafa draw are logical. Analysis may be learned more rapidly than synthesis and the context of the 'whole' is always important, but in my opinion analysis may draw less than synthesis on the growing reserves of skill and knowledge, although it provides the underpinning understanding. By gradually incorporating synthesis at the same time, the child is more actively involved in using current learning to create new learning and understanding.

To understand the complexity and connected nature of the process of literacy acquisition, Adams draws upon the connectionist theory of learning. It suggests that as people learn, they gradually build up more complex mind images of objects, events and knowledge, drawing on all the associated things surrounding each encounter to build up ideas of purpose, function and characteristics. To make such information more manageable, we use labels, which Adams refers to as 'conceptual organisers' (Adams 1990, page 200). We use labels to group, sub-divide and refine in our acquisition of concepts. Learning comes from activating the 'input' of knowledge that we have to date and creating or strengthening associations by re-encountering, remembering or reflecting.

In my opinion, the theory offers a useful bridge between learning theories based on individual psychology and those more sociological or ethnographic in origin in which the environment plays an important part. Some children will be better at managing the information input, in making the connections and in recalling, retrieving and sorting the encounters. However, of importance from the child's environment is the number of

occasions on which reflections, revisiting and new associations can be made to cement the connections and allow learning to take place. What are new, relatively 'unconnected' concepts for some children will be more familiar, revisited and 'connected' concepts for others. Ideas, concepts and knowledge, however systematically introduced, will always be taken up at different levels or rates by individuals, depending on how the ideas fit into the system of connections established to date. By making explicit the important, fundamental concepts, which Edwards and Mercer (1987) call 'principled knowledge', teachers can assist children in making useful, sensible connections.

Longitudinal studies show that there is a significant relationship between children's early phonological skills and reading development (Bradley and Bryant 1983, Bryant and Bradley 1985). Snowling (1996) reviews research into the teaching of reading in the light of more recent theoretical developments. She draws attention to the work of Treiman (1983) and Goswami and Bryant (1990) for clarifying young children's phonological awareness in terms of rhyme, alliteration, and onset and rime as an intermediate level between syllable and phoneme, and the use of these in learning to read. Bradley and Bryant (1985) and Goswami (1999) have shown that children's awareness of alliteration and rhyme are good predictors of later reading success, and that these skills can be developed in young children. Snowling (1996) points out that while children need to become aware of the alphabetic principle if they are to learn to read, learning via *'larger phonological 'chunks' reduces the memory load involved when phonological segments have to be synthesised to form pronunciations'* (Snowling 1990, page 141). Equally important is the fact that in English, larger units have *'a greater degree of orthographic regularity'* than at the level of the phoneme (Snowling 1990, page 141).

Snowling draws the conclusion from the available evidence that phonological awareness training combined with reading using 'real' books and work on phoneme-grapheme correspondence together offer the best base for children in developing reading skills. Such an approach seems to me to make explicit the connections between spoken language, the way in which the meaning is sub-divided into words and smaller units, and

the way in which this is systematically represented in written language, which in turn is capable of being decoded. While some children, it appears, are capable of making such connections for themselves without being specifically 'taught', others clearly are not.

> *Whilst it is true that most children learn to read proficiently regardless of how they are taught, the choice of teaching method is crucial for the child 'at risk' of reading failure or indeed who already has reading difficulties* (Snowling 1996, page 139).

It is evident from research that the formation of these connections may similarly be assisted by encouraging children's emergent writing, where symbols are gradually replaced by graphemes, invented and phonetically plausible spellings. Snowling (1996) suggests that the effect of encouraging emergent writing on reading progress may be based on the fact that it forces children to think about print. Similarly, Adams (1990) reports on research into independent invented spellings. She concludes that

> *The evidence that invented spelling activity simultaneously develops phonemic awareness and promotes understanding of the alphabetic principle is extremely promising especially in view of the difficulty with which children are found to acquire these insights through other methods of teaching. Equally inspiring are the reports that early writing activities promote children's interest in learning about what words say and how they are spelled* (Adams 1990, page 387).

As children's phonic knowledge and confidence begin to develop Adams advocates gradually more emphasis on correct spelling.

Connecting sounds and letters is something that Tizard's research across thirty-three London infant schools shows has a long-term impact on the rate of a child's literacy development (Tizard 1993, Tizard et al 1988). Children who began school already knowing some or all of the phoneme-grapheme correspondences went on to be the most

able readers at seven and eleven years. The research also drew attention to the influence of parental help in teaching a child before beginning school, of teachers' expectations and of the positive impact of explicit literacy teaching in reception classes. Such research, together with the extensive review of research carried out by Adams (1990) and Snowling (1996), indicate that the notion of children gradually and naturally developing literacy by being immersed in a literate culture is only part of the story. Explicit teaching and learning, whether carried out by a formal teacher or informally by parents or pre-school practitioners, have an influential role to play. Teale and Sulzby's findings (1989) led them to state that children learn through active engagement and trying to work out how language works. They learn about literacy through interactions with a carer, parent, or siblings around print. This doesn't however provide the more detailed knowledge about the most effective types of interaction. Tizard, Adams, Snowling, Bryant and Goswami do offer us some insight into what is effective. The teaching and learning is particularly effective if based on phonological awareness, phoneme-grapheme correspondence, attempts to make connections between spoken and written language, and if presented in a context of literacy for a purpose, including pleasure, linked to meaningful, relevant text.

The research evidence has told us something of the objectives for the interaction. There is a need to investigate further the *nature* of the interactions themselves that best help achieve the objectives. The work of Lev Vygotsky and that of the socio-culturalists or neo-Vygotskians offer a perspective that focuses on interaction and its role in learning. It is based on Vygotsky's belief that language and thought are inextricably linked and developed out of the social nature of human relationships and the need to communicate. An example of this proposed by Vygotsky and later developed by others was the notion that social interaction between an adult and child could develop the child's intellectual abilities (see for example Wertsch and Tulviste 1996, Rogoff 1990, Schaffer 1996).

Czerniewska's work (1992), from large-scale research based on the British National Literacy Project and her direction of an adult literacy project in New York, points to

literacy as a social process. The child is seen as actively developing and redeveloping ideas about literacy from experiences and environment. She draws on the work of Heath (1983) to illustrate how conceptions of literacy vary between cultures, even within the same country, and how these conceptions affect a child's literacy development. Particular types of writing and reading are more highly valued in school than others.

> *Literacy is not a static concept, its definition varies over time and between cultures... Teachers of literacy always need to be asking themselves about the view of literacy they are promoting. Does the view support or conflict with the literacy practices of the child's home culture?* (Czerniewska1992, page76).

Vygotsky, in *Thinking and Speech* (1987), addressed this issue of the *'situational specificity of mental functioning'* (Wertsch and Tulviste 1996, page 65). He offered an analysis of not only how conceptual thinking develops through interaction, but also how the interaction and thus development are socio-culturally specific, with regard to both the setting and the *manner* of the interaction. It seems that many factors contribute to literacy development including a child's socio-cultural background, individual profile of strengths, weaknesses and interests and the teaching received. The Vygotskian perspective provides constructs that could usefully be applied to an analysis of children's literacy development, particularly in examining the nature of the interaction between teacher and learner and in taking into account both the social and individual factors that influence development. It was by adopting these constructs (explained more fully in Methods of Data Analysis page 42) that I attempted to address such issues in this study.

Throughout the review of the literature on early literacy, it has been evident that whatever perspective is adopted or however balanced a position is maintained in reviewing the evidence, some children learn to read and write far more readily and rapidly than others. It is to a specific group of people who find literacy more difficult to acquire that I now turn attention.

Dyslexia:

Definitions

Definitions of dyslexia have been the subject of debate and disagreement for some time (Hammill, 1990). Consequently, the detection and incidence of dyslexia have also been debated widely (Miles and Miles, 1999). Nevertheless, amongst those who study and teach dyslexics, there is now widespread agreement about remediation: in the words of Fawcett (1994), *'Do it well, do it early'* (page xvi). The specifics of remediation and the notion of prevention have been held up by difficulties in definition, in establishing underlying causal links and so establishing precise methods of identification.

The definition used is often linked to the definer's perspective on the nature of the problem, whether it be language based, a reading and spelling problem, a visual perception difficulty, and so on. A synthesis of these varying approaches recently has led to a more encompassing definition:

> *Dyslexia is a complex neurological condition which is constitutional in origin. The symptoms may affect many areas of learning and function, and may be described as a specific difficulty in reading, spelling and written language. One or more of these areas may be affected. Numeracy, notational skills (music), motor function and organisational skills may also be involved. However, it is particularly related to mastering written language, although oral language may be affected to some degree* (Crisfield 1996 in Ott 1997, page 4).

Here is a move away from the original concentration on problems with reading and spelling to a definition which sees these as part symptoms, not the nature of the problem itself, a stance I find useful. It seems illogical that, once reading and writing are required skills, something occurs in the child that did not previously exist. It seems more likely that it simply lay undetected.

Fawcett and Nicholson's (1999) recent work on the role of the cerebellum in dyslexia and the research on the genetic and neurological base of dyslexia confirm the view that it is a syndrome in existence in children irrespective of reading and writing. These are merely symptoms, though important and central. There are other related symptoms linked to motor skill, sequencing, language difficulties, auditory and visual perception to name but a few (Ott 1997). Fawcett and Nicholson (1999) concede that the research into the role of the cerebellum is currently speculative. Other researchers would see the cause of dyslexia as being based in a phonological deficit (Rack 1994), a difficulty in automatisation (Yap and van der Leij 1994), or impairment in temporal aspects of sensory and motor performance (Lovegrove 1994, Stein 1994).

Bryant and Bradley (1985) have seen dyslexia not as a distinct deficit, but rather as a set of difficulties along a continuum. The continuum runs from ease to difficulty in learning to read and write and in language development. They cite many examples of research pointing to dyslexic children's varied difficulties in fact being similar to those of children matched for reading level rather than chronological age. They do point to difficulties in phonological awareness and ability to use all available strategies for reading and writing, but claim that these are part of the same process through which other emergent readers go. Difficulties for Bryant and Bradley do not equate to specific deficits; the differences are quantitative not qualitative.

Bryant and Bradley's work does give useful insights into the possible prevention of some of the symptoms associated with dyslexia. It does not, however, give an adequate explanation for all that is known about dyslexia. Neuropsychological findings (Pavlidis 1990a and b) support the idea of dyslexia being a specific syndrome, though complex and difficult to define. The basis for dyslexia being a specific difficulty is that it persists into adulthood (although remediation can be very effective in coping with and reducing symptoms), it shows distinctive and persistent mistakes in reading and spelling, has familial incidence and is more often seen in males (Pumfrey and Reason 1991).

As Quin and Macauslin (1986) point out, it is often the observer's restricted view, based on professional training and experience that leads to a particular interpretation. Pumfey and Reason take it further. *'An adequate understanding of aetiology, prognosis and the effects of interventions on children's reading difficulties is unlikely to derive from the effort of any one group of specialists'* (Pumfrey and Reason 1991, page 8). The complex nature of dyslexia and the argument about definitions and cause have led to some professionals, especially those relating day-to-day with dyslexic children, to say that the arguments are irrelevant. The focus should instead shift to effective remediation, a stance Pumfrey and Reason (1991) outline, but with which they disagree. The approach has, however, been influential in public policy. In my opinion, research into the underlying cause and nature of dyslexia, balanced by comparisons with non-dyslexic children, must be pursued if the condition is to be adequately understood and fully accepted. Alongside this, research by educationalists into effective remediation should continue to ensure that the best possible help, based on current levels of understanding, is available to those who need it.

The 1981 Education Act and later the Code of Practice for Children with Special Educational Needs (Department of Education 1994) moved away from the use of specific categories of handicap. Instead of concentrating on matching a child to a label with a clear definition, children were to be considered individually in terms of their educational needs. If these were substantially different along a continuum of need to the majority of their peers, resulting in learning being more difficult, special measures should be taken. Issues then surround diagnosing the child's *learning* difficulties and how best to alleviate or support them. Resources are needed for this. The issue of allocation of funds comes into focus and, at this point, policy again meets theoretical debate. How are limited resources for diagnosis and extra support to be made? On the basis of severity of difficulty, or potential improvement? On the basis of 'willing but not able' as opposed to 'able but not willing'? On the basis of meeting targets, perhaps by concentrating on children just below a certain level of performance rather than those in a wider spectrum, regardless of potential? It is noteworthy that *legally* dyslexia exists, can be identified and

special provision should be made (Chasty and Friel 1991), with the possibilities of litigation having arisen. In an educational climate of literacy targets, performance league tables, 'value-added' and local school management, issues surrounding detection and remediation of pupils with dyslexia have been heightened.

Detection

Pumfrey and Reason (1991) offer an indicative list of the range of assessment methods linked to teaching of literacy skills currently used to detect dyslexia. Twenty-three are listed. Other methods have since been added including the two most used in schools in Hampshire. The first of these is the Dyslexia Early Screening Test (DEST) for 4.6 to 6.5 year olds or Dyslexia Screening Test for 6.6 to 11 year olds (Nicolson and Fawcett 1995). The second is the Cognitive Profiling System (CoPS1) for 4 to 8 year olds written by Singleton and colleagues at the University of Hull (Singleton et al 1996).

Given the research available on the social and emotional effects of undetected dyslexia (Riddick 1996), the importance of early detection has been stressed. The newer tests aim to provide early screening in a form that would be relatively cheap and easy to administer. Early detection has not been without problems, however, and this again links back to theory, definition and causal debate. If one concentrates on dyslexia as a difficulty primarily with literacy, one has to 'wait' to some extent for the child to demonstrate some level of failure. It is the mildly dyslexic pupil who is most likely to go undetected for the longest period of time, scraping through, underachieving and possibly falling relatively further behind, adopting evasive and concealing strategies. Riddick (1996) investigated the social and emotional effects of this struggle on the individual and highlighted patterns that many people involved in teaching and parenting children in this category would recognise.

Bryant and Bradley (1985) and Goswami and Bryant (1990) make a strong case for a link between phonological awareness and later reading success or difficulty. Phonological awareness includes early sensitivity to rhyme and alliteration, onset and rime and the ability to detect initial sounds in words and syllables. They suggest that difficulties can be prevented by the provision of opportunities to develop phonological skills in the pre-school years, though evidence that a lack of such skills can be used to reliably detect later literacy difficulties was less conclusive.

Weinberger (1996) found that the children who developed literacy difficulties by the age of 7 years had been those who knew fewer nursery rhymes at 3 years. They had lower vocabulary scores, were less likely to have had a 'favourite book' by 3 years, and less likely to choose to look at books at nursery. Weinberger makes a case for prevention being an issue for partnership between parents and early years educators. The child's social and cultural literacy environment was an important factor in later success or difficulty. The notion of *'family literacy difficulties'* (Weinberger 1996, page 121) was also noted, whereby parents who had had problems with literacy also had children who experienced difficulties. Questions of why the difficulties had occurred, how they were being passed on, or any links with dyslexia were not within the scope of the research, but it does give some support to the idea that a pre-school child's skills and experiences can provide indicators of likely difficulties. These must be looked at in the social and cultural context of the family. The DEST and CoPS1 go some way towards detecting literacy difficulties before children experience failure, but do not take into account social and cultural factors, which would also need to be addressed if remediation was to be as successful as possible.

The Baseline Assessment carried out in reception classes since 1998 gives a snapshot of a child's performance on the day(s) of the assessment in the first half-term at school. Many different schemes for Baseline Assessment (BA) exist, based on government guidelines on what should be included (Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority1997). The use of BA is limited in that it is given at a time when children are adjusting to a new

situation in the first half-term at school, rather than in a more familiar environment (at home or towards the end of pre-school may be better). Children being assessed vary in age from just over four to just over five years, a very wide age range in the early years. Given its limitations, it can however begin to offer some indicators of areas in which children may experience difficulties or weaknesses. It would do so more accurately if some of the shortcomings noted above could be solved, particularly timing and location. These, together with a family history, could be used to provide teachers with questions to raise about a child's learning needs, or at least which areas required further investigation. It covers many of the areas mentioned above, difficulties with which are linked to dyslexia, for example phonological awareness, speaking and listening skills, recognition of letter shapes, motor skills. They are not the same as the sub-tests used by the DEST or CoPS1, but can provide indicators. The Baseline Assessment in Hampshire includes a brief family history, asking for details of any specific learning difficulties. I am not suggesting that the Baseline Assessment should be used in place of an early screening test for dyslexia, but it might highlight potential problems if used in conjunction with knowledge about a child's family background and pre-school experiences.

Incidence

Miles and Miles (1990) state that incidence of dyslexia cannot be measured because of the absence of consistent selection criteria, again returning to the debate about definition. However, attempts have been made at estimating the incidence. The 1994 Code of Practice states that only two per cent of children have special educational needs. Lawrence and Carter (1999) quote figures from recent research and statistics as being two to four per cent of the population severely dyslexic and six per cent mildly or moderately affected. They also indicate a ratio of four to one incidence of dyslexia in males compared to females. The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) estimated that ten per cent of children have some degree of difficulty (Crisfield 1996).

Remediation

A wide range of remediation programmes is available. Pumfrey and Reason (1991) listed twenty specialised approaches to which others have since been added. Despite the variety, there are distinct similarities in the approaches, most concentrating on phonics, and being multi-sensory, highly structured, detailed and systematic. They also appear to have many features in common with mainstream teaching of literacy. *'The important differences appear to be in the degree of structure, detail, assessment, systematic teaching, record-keeping and overlearning that characterise the specialised approaches for pupils with SpLD'* (Pumfrey and Reason 1991, page118). It would be useful to investigate further the common factors between the specialist programme and mainstream teaching of literacy, particularly to see if aspects of a successful remediation programme could usefully be incorporated into the classroom. This study aims to begin that process. Not only could this give a better start for mild to moderate dyslexics, who are most likely to remain unsupported and initially undetected if a very basic level of literacy can be achieved regardless of 'intelligence', but may also benefit the teaching of literacy to all children.

Of the newer remediation programmes, SIDNEY, featured in this study, was piloted in 1995/6 in nine schools in Hampshire. Since 1996, it has been policy to offer the SIDNEY programme to all infant and primary schools in Hampshire. It is a multi-sensory, structured programme that aims to develop early reading and writing skills in five to seven year olds. It was designed for use by special needs assistants, working one to one with a child for fifteen minutes a day for about fifteen weeks, and includes very detailed teaching instructions. It has two elements; *the phonological route* to develop auditory awareness of words, syllables, phonemes, onset and rime, and blending; and *the core route*, which uses an alphabet 'rainbow' of plastic letters to teach phoneme/grapheme correspondence, blends, and onset and rime. The rainbow is always visible and letters are taken from and returned to their position in the alphabet. The emphasis is on systematic skill development and constant revision of previously mastered material. The course

book recommends a pre- and post-programme spelling test of CVC words (the children are not specifically taught how to spell these words) to monitor its success. Evaluation of the pilot programme showed improvements in children's ability to write recognisable letter shapes, in fine motor control, ability to discriminate phonemes in spoken words, and the ability to match phonemes to graphemes (Bentote 1998). Using the pre- and post-intervention spelling test of six CVC words, the following results were noted from 385 cases:

> *74% of all pupils spelled 3 or more cvc words correctly in the post-intervention spelling test having scored 0 in the pre-intervention test.*
> *50% of all pupils spelled all 6 cvc words correctly in the post-intervention spelling test having scored 0 in the pre-intervention test* (Bentote 1998).

Dear (1999) in an evaluative study of the SIDNEY programme also noted that SIDNEY does *'help most children to achieve basic literacy skills'* (page ii). Long term results are not yet known.

In contrast to the individual approach to remediation, Pumfrey and Reason (1991) describe a change in the early 1980's as services for children with special educational needs shifted from remedial services focusing on helping individual children to special educational needs advisory services providing support to schools. More recently, there has been pressure from the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) to move further towards whole class instruction for all children and away from individualised teaching. It sees individual teaching as ineffective and inconsistent (DfEE 1998). In the classroom, there is pressure on the teacher to turn the NLS into weekly and daily plans of objectives and tasks to meet a broad range of texts, ages and abilities. There is pressure to aim the teaching at the higher levels with less scope for individualised target setting to feature in the teaching objectives and strategies.

Early literacy development and dyslexia

It is relevant to consider the implications for dyslexic children of the knowledge available on early literacy development and teaching. Research and theorists provide the following suggestions:

Socio-cultural context

- Children begin the process of becoming literate soon after birth by being born into a literate world. The social and cultural context, focused in early childhood on the family, is very influential in shaping children's future literacy and in supporting and shaping older children's developing literacy (Hall 1987, Weinberger 1996).

  Implications for dyslexics

  Children born into families where parents have literacy difficulties or where the value and pattern of literacy differs substantially to that in school are more likely to experience literacy difficulties themselves (Weinberger 1996, Heath 1983).

Language development

- Development of literacy is a complex process, rooted deeply in the development of language and influenced by social and cultural factors (Beard 1987, Wells 1985, Heath 1983).

  Implications for dyslexics

  Dyslexic children often show pre-school language impairment or late acquisition of speech (Ott 1997). According to Ott *'Most researchers agree that language development is the most significant underlying feature in the identification of dyslexia and has to be examined carefully'* (page 37). This should be treated with caution, however, as some dyslexics possess very good verbal skills (Duane 1991).

Phonological awareness

- More specifically, children's phonological awareness and sensitivity are very important in literacy development (Bryant and Bradley 1985, Goswami and Bryant 1990, Fawcett and Nicholson 1994, Rack 1994, Beech 1994). Again this links to social and cultural factors. It has been shown that children's phonological ability can be 'trained' in the pre-school phase and that it does have a positive long-term effect on learning to read and spell (Lundberg, Frost and Peterson 1988, Bryant and Bradley 1985).

Implications for dyslexics

Dyslexics show a poorer ability to detect and process speech sounds (Rack 1994, Bryant and Bradley 1985, Fawcett and Nicholson 1994, Stanovich 1988). Goswami (1999) concludes from recent research in reading development and dyslexia that the quality of early phonological representations has an important causal connection to reading and that dyslexic children have '*phonological representations that are less well-specified segmentally, or less distinct, even though their vocabulary may be large'* (page 237).

Literacy development

- Literacy develops through a series of distinct stages from the logographic, to the alphabetic, and then on to the orthographic. (Frith 1985). Reading and spelling have independent patterns of development, but are the driving force of development, each influencing the other at different stages of literacy development.

Implications for dyslexics

Snowling (1987) and Frith (1985) consider that dyslexic children fall down at the alphabetic stage, where phonology has a major part to play.

Learning strategies

- In reading, children use a variety of strategies based on grapheme-phoneme recognition, context, whole word recognition and attempting to derive meanings (Bryant and Bradley). Similarly, a range of strategies is used in writing. Different blends of strategies are used for different needs and the competently literate person needs to be able to *use* the strategies, and know *when* to use them. This partly forms the basis of the NLS approach to teaching literacy, concentrating on three different levels of focus, word, sentence and text level (DfEE 1998).

Implications for dyslexics

Dyslexics do not necessarily develop the use of all strategies easily. They need to be taught about the range of strategies and how best to use them (Bryant and Bradley 1985, Brooks and Weeks 1999)

Conclusion

From the research evidence available to date, it is apparent that dyslexia is a distinct condition that exists independent of literacy, affecting people with varying degrees of severity. Difficulty in acquiring literacy skills is but one symptom. Dyslexia cannot be 'cured', but dyslexic people can develop literacy skills given the right approach to teaching and learning. The level of skill they acquire depends on their particular severity of difficulty and, equally important, on the timing, appropriateness and quality of the intervention. As early detection of dyslexia is not yet without difficulty, it perhaps makes sense to address the question of how children with potential literacy difficulties develop literacy skills in reception and how this might be improved.

There appears to be a conflict in education currently between individual needs and a move towards less individualised teaching. We have individual assessments (Baseline Assessment and SATS), more readily available screening programmes for dyslexia (such

as DEST and CoPS1), and remediation programmes. On the other hand, there is pressure for a less individualised way of teaching, based on nationally pre-determined sets of objectives. I attempted to investigate the way in which this conflict impacts on young children's literacy learning. In particular, I aimed to look at how the reception literacy development opportunities met the needs of children at risk of literacy difficulties, and those with low risk, and how this differed to the teaching and learning in the SIDNEY programme.

Research questions

The questions that were addressed are as follows:

- What are the literacy development opportunities in the reception classroom?
- What are the individual children's literacy development needs?
- What is the relationship between these two?
- How is the SIDNEY programme used to teach children at risk of dyslexia and how does it match their individual literacy needs?
- How does the SIDNEY programme teaching compare to the mainstream literacy teaching in reception?

An outline and critique of the methodology now follows.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Outline

Each participant in an educational setting brings his or her own perspective. Participants bring with them their current level of skill and knowledge, their culture, familiar language and style of interaction, interests, abilities and their ideas about the nature and purpose of the setting. Children also bring with them stages of development, which may vary between different aspects of development. Whatever educational opportunities are made available in the classroom, even where delivery is to the whole class, it will be received by different children in different ways. Added to the teaching in terms of delivery and learning opportunities deliberately created – the explicit messages of education – are the implicit messages in terms of ethos and culture in the classroom, which again may affect how individual children learn.

It is by focusing on the interaction between the learners, the teaching and the learning opportunities that I feel gives the clearest view of what and how children learn. It must also, in my opinion, include some attempt to hear the participants' views as well as observing their interactions, and to attempt some understanding of what they bring with them as individuals. In the case of the children in this study it should include their experiences at pre-school and at home. In order to address these issues, my strategy was a case study. It combined firstly an ethnographic view of literacy teaching and learning opportunities in the Reception classroom with a closer look at the experiences of six learners, and secondly a neo-Vygotskian analysis of the teaching/learning interface in Reception and in the SIDNEY programme. To use Stake's definition, it was an 'instrumental' case study in that it attempted to *'provide insight into an issue…facilitating our understanding of something else'* (Stake 1998, page 88), in this case to understand better the process of interactive literacy learning for different children.

Strategy

Several different research methods were used to address the research questions. Observations of the literacy hour in a Reception class were carried out on three days each week from 21st January 2000 to the end of the Spring term, 13th April 2000. The observations included the whole of the literacy hour for each day, giving a total of twenty-one literacy hours observed, two of which were video-recorded, and afternoon 'choosing' sessions. For the initial whole group part of each literacy hour, the observations concentrated on content and style of delivery and the children's reactions. During the small group work elements, observations again aimed to note the children's actions and involvement, and the type of activities in which they were engaged. I also noted the assistance and direction given by staff and adult helpers. Literacy opportunities in the classroom available during 'choosing' times and incorporated into play activities were reviewed and noted. Prior to focusing the observations on target children (see below), I spent three weeks in making more general observations of the literacy hour. This gave me time to become familiar with the classroom, routine, staff and children, as well as to concentrate more directly on the teaching.

At the end of the term (April 2000) I interviewed the Reception teacher in a semi-structured taped interview in which I raised issues that had become evident throughout the term. The aim was to clarify my understanding of the teacher's underlying beliefs and objectives and to be sure that I had correctly understood the routines and procedures.

To address the question of how children interact with the available literacy development opportunities I selected a small sample of six children. The sampling decisions are discussed on page 32. I observed the children in the literacy hours and in the afternoon 'choosing' sessions, when the children could choose an activity from a given range. I focused on a different target child each day until each child had been observed in three morning literacy hours and one afternoon 'choosing' session. The observed sessions for each child were spread over seven weeks so that all observations for any one child were

not on consecutive days. I felt that it was important to gain some idea of how the child progressed through the term. It also gave a better chance of gaining a more balanced view of a child. If observations of one child ran consecutively, then an emotional upset, minor illness or tiredness due to a special event could all affect how the child interacted in class and how he or she was perceived. Observations spread over a longer period helped to minimise the risk of such impacts.

In order to add to my information on the children's level of literacy development and rates of progress, I discussed the children with the teacher, reviewed her assessments of them and photocopied a selection of their work. Having observed the teaching and learning for the period described, I gave the children a very simple 'end test' and brief interview, with the approval of the teacher. This had not been part of the planned research strategy. However, it became apparent over the weeks that there was very little evidence of the children's ability to use their phonic knowledge to write simple consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words from a verbal prompt or to attempt independent spelling. I had also not sought the *children's* views on their favourite books or how often they read or had stories read to them at home, although I had questioned their parents for this information (see below).

The 'end test' (see for example Table 2 'Henry's End-Test', page 84) consisted of five drawings illustrating CVC words with a space next to each picture to write the word. I carried out the test with the six children, one at a time, on 13th April 2000. The children had seen me regularly in their classroom as a helper since January. With each child, I introduced the pictures one at a time. I asked if they knew what the picture showed; we talked about the object a little ('Do you have a cat?'), and then I asked them to write the word in the space before we proceeded to the next picture. I pronounced the word clearly, but did not help with the spelling by phonemically segmenting it. I did not indicate whether they were writing correctly or not, but simply praised their effort at the end of each word, giving time to see whether anything was to be added to their attempts.

The test gave me some insight into how the children were able to use their phonic knowledge.

These were very young children, between four and five years of age, in only their second term at school, some having only been full-time for a very short period. Consequently, I felt that it was important to have the parents' views of their children's pre-school literacy, their literacy development at school, and their literacy experiences and role-models at home. I interviewed the mothers of the six children using tape-recorded semi-structured interviews (see interview schedule in Appendix i page 134). When asking permission to include a child in the study, I addressed the letters to both parents, except where I knew that only one parent was at home, and asked them to arrange a time to be interviewed at their convenience. However, it was the mothers who replied and with whom I arranged the interviews. The questions raised in the interviews were developed from the review of the literature with regard to influences on children's early literacy development.

The SIDNEY programme was offered to year one children who had been identified at the end of their reception year as being at risk of literacy difficulties. I observed three of the SIDNEY teaching sessions which involved a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) working with two children for about twenty-five minutes. The lessons did not always involve the same two children and I observed three different children in total. One of the observed sessions was video-recorded. The observed sessions took place on 10th February 2000, 6th March 2000 and 16th March 2000. I also reviewed the teaching material and two evaluative studies of the programme.

Whilst the original intention had been to review the SIDNEY teaching in light of the school's assessment of the needs of the children in the SIDNEY teaching group, this did not develop fully. There was some reluctance for the assessments of these children to be shared with me and, once they were made available, relationships and timing made it difficult to question the meaning of the assessments and the progress of the children. For

other reasons that I discuss under Ethical Issues (page 44) I also felt uncomfortable pursuing this. Yin (1989) mentions the need for 'adaptiveness' and flexibility in case study research, but notes also the need to balance it with rigor. The circumstances meant that I maintained the depth of enquiry, but restricted the breadth in one aspect.

Critique of the strategy

The strategy was largely successful in that it gave several different viewpoints on the mainstream teaching and learning. It offered triangulation in the form of participants' perspectives, different methods of data collection and different sources of data, which Anderson (1990) describes as *'using triangulation to interpret converging evidence'* (Anderson 1990, page 163). An impression of the children's literacy progress, for example, was based not only on teacher assessments, but also on observations, samples of work collected over time, a specific and limited 'end test', and parents' opinions of their child's progress. I have, however, gained a gender specific view of the children's home environment and pre-school experiences, having only interviewed the mothers. This probably, though, reflects the reality of the bulk of the children's pre-school literacy experiences, dominated as they are by female carers and role-models.

An overriding problem with the strategy has been the volume of data generated. Although I dealt with the data as it arose (see Methods of Data Analysis page 40), and feel that each part has had a useful purpose, nevertheless managing the data has been challenging given the constraints of time and word limit. The impression gathered of the SIDNEY teaching was more restricted, owing to circumstances and time constraints, but was supplemented by reviewing research carried out previously on the SIDNEY programme (Bentote 1998 and Dear 1999).

Piloting

Yin (1989) describes the purpose of piloting as helping to refine data collection *'with regard to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed'* (Yin 1989, page 74). With this in mind, four aspects of piloting were carried out: a trial observation of a SIDNEY session; observations within a reception class; video-recording in a reception class; and a trial run of a semi-structured interview with a parent. All were carried out in a school different to the one used in the study.

Several things arose. First, young children appeared to be unaffected and lacking in obvious curiosity about my video recording. The video-recorder I used was a very small hand-held digital camera with fold out screen. I could therefore record the children without holding the camera to my face, which could potentially have drawn their attention to the recording and placed a physical barrier between the children and my face. The quality of sound on the recording was very good and I could zoom in to particular children or their work without it being noticeable. However, in spite of its apparent success and the possibility for detailed analysis of the recordings, I found that operating the camera took my attention from what was going on around me, which could affect my decisions about what was important to record. It also gave a rather narrow viewpoint when played back and much of the context could be lost, although making notes immediately after recording supplemented the tapes. The quality of the notes would, however, have been limited by my reduced attention. The adults also appeared to be slightly inhibited by the video camera.

Secondly, I was able to make quite detailed notes very quickly during observations and, providing I wrote them up immediately afterwards, felt that I was able to capture an enormous amount of detail. I recognise that I was necessarily being selective in deciding what was worthy of noting and discuss this further in Methods of Data Collection, page 36. Interestingly, the children appeared more intrigued by my making notes than by the video recording, and asked what I was doing.

Thirdly, it was unusual for an extra adult to be present in the SIDNEY teaching sessions, unlike in the reception classroom, and my presence could potentially affect the children and SNA. I considered setting up the camera and letting it run without being present, but decided the risk of missing detail or the best viewpoint was too great.

In the pilot SIDNEY observation (one hour of four fifteen-minute sessions of an SNA working with four individual children), two of the children appeared slightly inhibited for the first few minutes. For the study, I attempted to overcome this by emphasising in simple terms that I was interested in what and how they were being taught, not in their behaviour or abilities; 'I'm watching what Mrs. Cole is doing. Is that okay?' I was able to reassure the SNA about my interest in the nature of the programme, rather than her ability to use it, in more detail before beginning observations.

Fourthly, the pilot interview with the parent revealed that the recording of sound was adequate and didn't appear to inhibit the respondent, though of course this was only one person. It did highlight the need for me to be flexible in the ordering of questioning and the style of the interview to suit the needs of the respondent. I had intended the interview schedule to be an aide-memoir for a conversation rather than a series of questions to be inflexibly asked. The pilot showed that it was possible to work in this way. I also became aware of how much I was talking in an effort to reassure and give positive feedback. I resolved to attempt to use more non-verbal techniques to communicate the same thing.

As a result of the pilot observations, I decided to rely mostly on observation and field notes made during and immediately after the observations for the majority of the literacy hours and afternoon 'choosing' sessions. To supplement this, I decided to video-record two literacy hours, one near the beginning and one near the end of the study, which would allow closer analysis of the interaction even though the scope would be limited. Similarly, I video-recorded one of the three SIDNEY sessions in the study.

Sampling

In a case study, sampling in terms of case selection and sampling within the case are, according to Stake, a matter of balancing the required attributes with variety and accessibility, but the primary concern must be *'opportunity to learn'* (Stake 1998, page 102). These were my aims in sampling. There were two main sampling decisions to be taken. These were the choice of school (and class) and the choice of children.

The choice of school presented the most practical difficulties, though the aim in selection appeared straightforward. The aim was to choose a school that was comfortable with operating the National Literacy Strategy and in which the Reception class at least, if not the whole school, could be considered as an example of good practice. The rationale was to find a school in which children's mainstream literacy development was as good as could be expected and was not being held back by obviously negative factors such as poor teaching or poor management. The school chosen also had to be in a location that I could reach by the beginning of the literacy hour, after fulfilling my own commitments.

In practice, it was difficult to find someone willing to say which, if any, of the schools geographically possible could be considered good examples of reception, key stage one or whole school literacy. I unsuccessfully pursued several possible sources of advice. Finally, following the advice of the local education authority, I had to rely on Primary school SATS league tables, barely appropriate in that they were based on eleven year olds' results, and on OFSTED inspection reports of schools chosen from the league tables. I finally selected one school on the basis of its SATS results, geographical location and OFSTED inspection report. The report contained the following statements:

> *Children in the reception classes reach high standards which are above the national expectation.*
> *By the age of five, children's attainment in language and literacy is above what is expected nationally.*

Standards of literacy are high.

Reading competence is above average.

Standards of writing are good in both key stages and in the early years.

The quality of teaching is outstanding.

The management of special educational needs provision is excellent (OFSTED inspection report, July 1997).

The school proved to be willing to participate in the study. It had two reception classes, but the choice of class was made for me by the headteacher. Having no reason to question the decision, I accepted. It became apparent that the choice was that of an experienced, organised, effective teacher who had a particular interest in helping children to reach the high expectations set for literacy development in her class.

The selection of six children to include in the study was reasonably straightforward, though in reality the choice was rather limited. I looked at the Baseline Assessment scores for each child and ranked the children according to age. My aim was to select children fairly close in age to minimise the influence of development and maturity on their abilities and progress, of which three had strong baseline assessment scores and three had weaker scores. I hoped to have two girls and four boys to reflect the higher incidence of literacy difficulties amongst boys. I began with a group of eight possible children and discussed each with the teacher. She advised against including two of the children because of developmental/family circumstances, which left me with six; three boys and three girls. Others were either too old or young to be added to the sample. Of the high scoring group, two were girls and one a boy. Of the lower scoring group, one was a girl and two boys. One of the lower scoring boys had not in fact been assessed as having a particularly low average Baseline score. However, his weaknesses appeared to be in the elements that could potentially show a risk of literacy difficulties, possibly due to dyslexia, particularly phonological awareness and gross motor skills. Fortunately, the parents of each of the six children selected agreed to their inclusion in the study.

Critique of the sampling

To assess the quality of the sampling decisions taken, I intend to address the questions of representation and the rigor of the criteria by which the selections were made. Firstly on the issue of representation, I pose the questions by what means and to what extent do the samples chosen represent the population from which they are drawn. The school chosen was in a reasonably affluent, stable community with a high proportion of owner-occupied homes and a very low proportion of children qualifying for free school meals. The children apparently come into this school with attainment *'above average for the county'* (OFSTED inspection report, July 1997). In this sense the school is clearly not an average or typical school for the county in which it is placed. However, it is a 'purposive' sample (Robson 1993) in that it represents some elements of good practice. Not only are children's literacy attainments high, as might be expected given the intake, but the standards of teaching and management of the school are also judged as being extremely good. In that sense, then, it does provide an example of a school in which the literacy teaching and learning are running well.

The children were chosen to represent those who come into school with already higher levels of attainment in early skills relating to literacy development, and those who have lower levels of attainment on entry. The aim was that they should be close in age rather than from the extremes of age range in the class. Robson (1993) describes this as 'dimensional sampling'. Other children would have provided a neater sample, for example by reducing the age range further or including more extreme 'highs' and 'lows'. Considerations of background and the potential impact of the study on child or family meant that they could not be included and in the final sample, there was an age range of six months between the six children. The value of the sample as being representative was in this way compromised slightly to allow for ethical considerations.

Secondly, I question the rigor of the criteria by which selection was made. For the choice of school, 'good practice' and high standards of literacy teaching and learning were the criteria used. SATS results were inadequate in two ways: 1) they measure attainment at

eleven years, not immediately relevant to reception children's performance or the teaching they receive and 2) they measure individual attainment under certain conditions using set tests, taking no account of baseline attainment or quality of teaching. Whilst I would have been interested in assessment or judgement of the schools from other quarters, only the judgement of OFSTED was available. Much time and effort goes into the preparation for an OFSTED inspection by a school and the nature of the inspection itself could potentially influence how teaching was seen on the week of the inspection. How far it shows the usual teaching and learning is therefore open to question. It should be recognised that it gives a particular viewpoint. In hindsight, the selection criteria for the school has led me to choose a school in which the management, teaching and catchment area combine to result in a school efficiently run, well-disciplined and achieving high academic attainment according to government measures.

For the choice of children, using the Baseline Assessment as a measure of attainment on school entry is also problematic. It attempts to measure in the child's first half-term at school, using teacher assessment, the child's abilities in Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Knowledge and Understanding of the World, Information and Communication Technology, Physical Development, and a Drawing a Person Assessment, the last three being optional for the school. The Baseline Assessment is carried out on very young children, who are new to a strange environment, by a person who is a stranger to them, when they are in a period of transition. Some of the elements of the assessment appear not to be truly valid measures, partly because of the nature of child development. Part of the science element, for example, is assessed in terms of a child's ability to talk about 'shiny' objects. This is clearly going to be affected as much by their language development and their social and emotional development, given the timing and setting, as it is by their Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

I carried out a statistical analysis of Baseline scores for this class, using a t-test. It indicated that the younger children in the class were more likely to have significantly lower average Baseline score than the older children (see Appendix ii 'Average Baseline

Assessment Scores for Older and Younger Reception Children'). With this in mind, I attempted to select six children who were fairly close in age and to modify the choices by discussions with the teacher. In my opinion, though offset to an extent by the discussions with the teacher, the Baseline scores were not an ideal criterion by which to select. They were, however, readily available and so a practical solution in this small-scale study. The sampling has, then, been a compromise between carefully considered aims and practicality in a study limited by time and resources.

Methods of Data Collection

The data collection methods used were observation, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The observations could be divided into unsystematic non-participant observation, systematic non-participant observation and participant observation. The majority of the observations were unsystematic and non-participant in which I sat at the edge of the whole class group or next to groups of children at tables, listening, watching and making notes.

The aim for my observations depended on the stage of the research, the timing and my previous observations. For the whole class parts of the literacy hour, for example, I concentrated on noting the content and style of delivery by the teacher, the interactions with the children and the reactions of the target children. For the small group work, I focused on the actions, literacy activities, and interactions of the target child with other children and adults. In the afternoon 'choosing' sessions, I followed and noted the actions and interactions of the target child. In the three weeks prior to beginning the child-targeted observations I concentrated on a different group each day. My intentions were to be open to what was offered to the children in terms of literacy development opportunities and open to the ways in which they interacted with the opportunities. Although the review of the literature and my own previous knowledge and experience meant that I had a clear idea of what might constitute an early literacy development

opportunity, for example saying nursery rhymes, I did not have a set schedule of items I was seeking. Instead, I aimed to be receptive to what was actually going on. Adler and Adler (1998) describe the advantages of such an approach:

> *Qualitative observation... enjoys the advantage of drawing the observer into the phenomenological complexity of the world, where connections, correlations, and causes can be witnessed as and how they unfold. Qualitative observers are not bound, thus, by predetermined categories of measurement or response, but are free to search for concepts or categories that appear meaningful to subjects* (Adler and Adler 1998, page81).

As a result of questions raised from my early observations, I decided to use a form of scheduled observation on two occasions to note which children were invited to answer questions or make contributions and which received negative feedback during the whole class part of the literacy hour. The aim here was to find out how evenly the invitations were spread through the different ability groups and by gender. Although this added a useful detail to the picture, systematic observation was not used to create the picture itself.

In addition to the non-participant observation, I was sometimes asked by the teacher to help a group of children in the small group parts of the literacy hour, or at least to start them off on an activity. Occasionally, I assisted children because I could sense that it may be needed, an issue I consider later under 'Ethical Issues', page 44. It was during the participant observation periods, which accounted for about a quarter of the small group observations, that I was sometimes able to be involved with the children in problem-solving in relation to their given activity and so obtain further idea of their abilities. It meant that field notes had to be written immediately after, rather than during, the observation and so depended on my memory of events. It also meant that children may have been slightly confused about my role, something I discuss under 'Reflective Comment', page 47.

Semi-structured interviews were used for obtaining the parents' perspective (interview schedule in Appendix i 'Parent Interview Schedule') and that of the teacher. Each of these interviews, except one, was tape-recorded with the permission of the respondent. The transcription of the tape was sent to the respondent for deletions or additions. Unfortunately, on one occasion, the tape-recorder failed to work, which didn't become apparent until the end of the hour-long interview. I wrote notes immediately afterwards and sent them and the interview schedule to the respondent, who was able to make some amendments.

The purpose of using semi-structured interviews was to ensure that key issues of interest to the study were covered, whilst retaining the flexibility of a conversational format to allow for unforeseen items to arise and to put the respondents at ease. Given this format, the interviews varied enormously as I followed the respondents' leads. Some had issues they wished to raise and talked freely, in which case I had to check through the schedule during the interview to be sure that I also had the information I had anticipated requiring. Others were led entirely by my questioning and the interview strayed little from the schedule, though I asked supplementary questions as they arose. Others were somewhere between the two.

The final element of the data collection was the review of relevant documents. This occurred throughout the study, starting with the review of the SIDNEY teaching material, the Baseline Assessments and other teacher assessments of the children at the beginning of the study. A review of the teacher's plans for the literacy hours, targets for individual children, and work produced by the children continued as the study progressed. Towards the end of the study, the teacher's end of term assessment of the children's phonic knowledge was included. I also generated an example of the children's work myself in the form of the small 'end test' described previously on page 27. This was to bridge a gap in my knowledge about the children's abilities that became apparent from the observations.

The documentary analysis has provided reference points, clarity and sometimes written evidence to support observations. In this sense, it has provided detail and markers along the way in the study. In some instances, the information gleaned has been contradictory to that from the observations. An example of this was in the individual targets set for the children by the teacher, some of which called for greater independence in attempting writing. From the observations, it was seen that the ethos and procedures used in class made it difficult for the children to feel comfortable in doing so. I explain the point further in Chapter 4 Whole Class teaching, page 58. I was able to raise points such as this in the interview with the teacher. In a sense, the methods of data collection were complementary to each other, providing different perspectives. They offered triangulation both in the sources of data and in the methods of collection. As Denzin and Lincoln (1998) point out, the purpose of using triangulation is to *'secure an in-depth understanding'* and can best be understood as a *'strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation'* (page 4).

Critique of data collection methods

In using a combination of methods, I have offset the shortcomings and strengths of one against another. However, underlying all of the methods, and indeed the strategy itself, are my values and interests. The choice of what to note, what appeared worthy of pursuing, on whom to focus attention or the camcorder viewfinder and which aspects of interaction to report were all influenced by me. Here, I outline the strategies I used in an attempt to overcome being restricted by my values during data collection.

Firstly, though not a foolproof way of avoiding bias, triangulation has provided me with a series of discrepancies and means of corroboration that have led to further analysis. Yin (1989) points out that a conclusion is *'likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode'* (page 97). Secondly, by actively pursuing participants' perspectives (of staff, parents and children) my own perspective has been challenged and balanced. By offering the

interview transcriptions for amendment and giving the opportunity and means to contact me with new information as they wished, my recording of the respondents' intentions and meanings was negotiated. Thirdly, the review of the literature before and during data collection helped to guide and challenge my values, which in turn were reflected in the minute by minute decisions about what to record, and in the data analysis. Fourthly, the flexibility and openness in the data collection methods allowed new issues to arise. Included in this were the unsystematic observations, the semi-structured conversational style interviews rather than tightly structured interview schedules or questionnaires, and the regular checking of my understanding in short, immediate conversations with staff, parent helpers and children, which all allowed for issues previously unforeseen by me to arise.

Methods of data analysis

Data analysis occurred both during and after data collection. Analysis during data collection was formative, described by Huberman and Miles (1998) as inductive, in that it helped me to form ideas about what was important, about previously unpredicted issues and about which items were missing to answer my research questions. I kept a log of questions and issues to pursue as I wrote up each observation or interview. This, and the original research questions, was the basis on which the continuous analysis was carried out. It was, in a sense, also negotiated with the participants. Stake (1998) describes the choice of issues to be analysed as *'chosen partly in terms of what can be learned within the opportunities for study'* (page 92). But such choices would be made differently by different researchers and so in part again reflect background and interests.

Three levels of data analysis were necessary to answer the research questions in this study. The first was an analysis of the data on the teaching of literacy and the literacy development opportunities. The second was an analysis of the data relating to the learners, their starting point, progression and home influences. The third was an analysis

of the interaction between teaching (or opportunities) and learning, both in reception and in the SIDNEY programme. Each of these overlap and influence the others. Treating them separately for the purpose of clarity here denies the complexity of the interrelationships. In the Presentation and Analysis of Data, whilst trying to maintain some separation and clarity, overlap between the methods and subjects of analysis are more apparent.

Analysis of the Literacy Development Opportunities in Reception

To make sense of the wide range of literacy development opportunities available to the children in the reception class, I categorised aspects of the teaching. The categories arose out of the observations themselves and were not pre-determined. By reviewing each of the observations in the field notes and listing each type of literacy activity that occurred, I was able to collapse the individual activities into categories. The review of the literature helped to inform decisions about which were literacy development activities (for example, the use of rhymes or demonstration of alliteration), and how these might join into broader categories (for example, phonological awareness), but the categories themselves reflect what was seen in the observations. For example, one of the categories that emerged was that of a 'child centred approach' in which the teacher regularly made links between the children's interests and experiences and the literacy teaching.

The method equates roughly to Huberman and Miles' (1998) *'tactics'* for generating meaning which include *'noting patterns and themes'*, *'seeing plausibility'*, *'clustering'*, *'making metaphors, a kind of figurative grouping of data'*, *'counting'* and *'making contrasts and comparisons'* (Huberman and Miles 1998, page 187). These are the first six of thirteen tactics offered by Huberman and Miles, which provide the descriptive stage of analysis. It was by combining this with the analysis of the learners and particularly of the interaction that I attempted to move from the descriptive to the explanatory.

The unit of analysis for the literacy development opportunities was the number of days on which a category or sub-category appeared. Counting the total number of occasions on which a category occurred rather than the number of days would have given a more accurate picture of its frequency, but the manner of observing and recording meant that I could not be sure of capturing each small instance of an activity.

Analysis of the six learners

For the children, the approach to analysis was to use the observations, parental interview transcriptions, examples of the children's work and the teacher's assessments both formal and informal, pertinent to each child, and attempt to track the child's progress. I was interested in the children's pre-school interests and abilities in relation to literacy development, their level of literacy related abilities in the early part of their first school year, and the progress they had made up to Easter after two terms at school. I also attempted to draw out from the field notes how they interacted with the literacy development opportunities in the classroom and how these opportunities apparently matched their levels of knowledge and skill.

Analysis of the interaction

The video-recorded episodes of observation, both in the reception teaching and in the SIDNEY programme, were transcribed prior to analysis. Conventions for transcription had to be formulated according to my needs. These are outlined and the rationale for them discussed in Appendix iii 'From Scaffolding to Handover: An Examination of One Episode of Teaching and Learning'.

I used constructs from the neo-Vygotskian or socio-cultural paradigm as a guide for analysing the teaching and learning interaction between the staff or adult helpers and the children. In particular, I was interested in whether or not the teaching and literacy development opportunities were within the children's zones of proximal development (ZPD). I was also interested in investigating how far scaffolding was evident in the teaching and learning episodes, the way in which it was handled, and in looking for

evidence of handover, evidence that the children were appropriating the skills and knowledge. Each of these constructs is discussed below.

The ***zone of proximal development (ZPD)*** was a concept proposed by Vygotsky (1978). It describes the zone from a child's independent ability at one end to the level of performance a child is likely to be able to achieve when working with a more competent partner, usually but not exclusively an adult, at the other end. Eventually that which was once in the child's ZPD becomes part of the child's independent ability, and so the child's cognitive abilities develop.

The term ***scaffolding***, coined by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), has been widely used to describe the supportive role an adult plays in helping a child to achieve something they could not achieve alone, at least to the same level. Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) outlined six features of scaffolding (for details of these see Appendix iii) which I used to analyse the teaching and learning in the different situations included in the study. Scaffolding gives us some idea of how and to what extent a child is being supported by an adult to work in his or her ZPD. This is important because, as Schaffer (1996) points out in reviewing relevant research to date, children's performance improves during and following joint involvement with an adult in a learning situation. It should be noted, however, that most of the evidence cited by Schaffer relates to young children with their mothers rather than a teacher.

Handover refers to the gradual *'transfer of responsibility'* (Rogoff 1990) from the adult to the child for tasks or elements of tasks as the child's competence grows. The transfer of responsibility, according to Rogoff's research, may be initiated by the adult or child or negotiated between them. It is related to the child's gradual ***appropriation*** (owned for themselves) and internalisation of skills or knowledge which allow the child to act independently, at least in part. Internalisation implies that a *'child's mental approach to problems'* has been reorganised (Schaffer 1996). According to Schaffer, much more research is required on teasing apart the different aspects of child and adult contributions

to the learning process. Does the transfer of responsibility precede, follow or occur simultaneously with the internalisation of knowledge or skill? How does each influence the other and what role does each participant play?

In this study, I have looked for evidence of the children's appropriation of the knowledge and skills in their contributions. I have looked at what they say and do as evidence for what they know. This is clearly an oversimplification in that children may well know more than they demonstrate. Equally, they may well be able to pick up clues from the teacher as to what is the 'correct' or expected contribution without fully understanding or owning the knowledge, what Edwards and Mercer (1987) call *'cued contributions'*. However, as an approximation of their knowledge or skills, I have taken *'spontaneous and elicited contributions'* as defined by Edwards and Mercer (1987). The elicited contributions in particular interest me for there is evidence here too of the teacher's or adult's role in the interaction. In what way and how often does the teacher encourage the child to demonstrate and use his or her knowledge or skills? In causing the child to think about and use his or her knowledge, is the process of internalisation added to by recall and application? I used the constructs for analysis of the reception teaching and learning (some of which is presented in Appendix iii), for analysis of the SIDNEY teaching and learning, and to some extent to analyse how each of the six chosen learners in reception interacted with the literacy development opportunities.

Ethical Issues

Fontana and Frey (1998) and the British Educational Research Association (1992) include under ethical considerations for qualitative research informed consent, right to privacy, protection from harm, and reflecting participants' perceptions of themselves. These echo the main ethical concerns that arose during this study.

The informed consent of the participants is one of the starting points for an ethical study. However, in practice, this proved to be something that was not easily achieved and led to some compromises and alternative approaches being adopted. Informed consent was obtained from the school, reception teacher and the SNA working on the SIDNEY programme through the headteacher, who was given a clear outline of the purpose, methods and time commitment of the study. I approached the headteacher to ask for permission to inform the parents of all the children in the reception class and those involved in the SIDNEY programme of the nature of the research and of my presence in the classroom. It was agreed that I could write a letter to be sent by the school to the parents of the six children chosen for the study, seeking parents' written consent, but consent from or information to other parents was considered unnecessary. I felt uncomfortable about this, but unable to challenge the decision and risk compromising the school's goodwill. I attempted to salvage the situation in other ways. The class had many volunteer parent helpers. I made a point of talking to them informally and explaining what I was doing, thereby spreading the information without contradicting the school's decision. With the children involved in the SIDNEY programme, I decided not to pursue my interest in their individual abilities, but to focus more on the teaching and learning process.

Another issue that arose with regard to informed consent was how far the consent of the children themselves could be obtained. For such young children, the consent of the parents was the primary objective. However, when sitting down at a table with children, I did make a point of asking if it was all right to look at their work. Some children were interested in my writing and asked me about it. I always tried to explain in simple terms of 'finding out what children learn at school' and by asking if that was all right. The answer was invariably a nod, but in reality the children were not in a position to object to an adult's presence or interest in the classroom. It was highly unlikely that they would have voiced any objection, so it cannot be claimed that their permission was truly obtained, a problem noted by others in fieldwork with children (Holmes 1998). On occasions, though, I could detect that either a child preferred not to be watched, for

example in an aspect of solitary imaginary play, or that he or she did not want to answer a question. In such cases, I would move away or withdraw the question.

Parents may also have felt duty bound to agree to something asked of them by the school, particularly something that displayed an interest in their children's learning. Equally, it was the mothers of the children who replied and whose signed consent I accepted. I did not know the fathers' opinions, something I had not foreseen. If I had gone back to specifically ask for the fathers' permission, I felt as if I was creating a bigger issue than was necessary. As the interviews were also with the mothers, it may have given a gender-specific slant to the study.

The issue of confidentiality had to be considered carefully, too, not just in terms of the end product and concealing the identity of the school, staff, children and parents adequately, but also in the process of the research. I was involved in talking to staff and parents separately and felt that it was important to make it clear to each that I could not reveal anything said to me by the other parties. Knowing something of each person's opinions of others at times felt uncomfortable.

'Doing no harm' was another ethical issue that arose in the early stages of the research. I was concerned that selecting children as 'strong' or 'weak' in terms of early literacy abilities might be in some way harmful in the sense that it might label a child and cause concern to the child or parents. Attempts to avoid this by not making the basis for selection transparent did not sit well with attempts to be open in providing information prior to consent. The conflict of interest here was dealt with in two ways. On the teacher's advice, I selected children whose parents were less likely to find the implications of the study daunting or threatening. How far it is admissible to simply avoid including difficult cases is debatable, but in these specific cases the reasons given by the teacher sufficiently convinced me that their inclusion could be troublesome to the families. I also made clear the use of the Baseline Assessments in selecting children, but sought the parents' opinions of how well the BA reflected their children's abilities at that

time. The parents therefore had the opportunity to provide extra information, which was useful given the limitations of the BA. Whilst the use of the BA scores was made clear, I talked with parents only of their own child. At no time were comparisons with other children made, although parents themselves occasionally did this, particularly in relation to siblings.

My role in the classroom occasionally raised ethical questions for me about how far I should simply observe and how far I should offer assistance. Sometimes the decision was made for me in that the teacher asked me to work with a group. Whilst my main concern was to observe, I did feel that I had an obligation to help to an extent, to give as well as receive. Alongside this was my own history. I have experience of working with young children and at times found it difficult to stand back when I could see things that needed to be done (children to be supervised in the toilets, a child struggling with clothing after PE, sand being thrown at others by a child). Safety aside, I felt that not to help might threaten my credibility in the setting. Similarly, it was difficult to simply observe a child in difficulty with some literacy activity. Decisions were made on the merits of each occasion. I didn't step in, for example, to help children avoid making mistakes unless they requested assistance. Even then, I would question to help them find the answer from their own knowledge if possible. However, faced with a child who had completely missed the point of an activity and had no idea what to do, I did try to offer sufficient guidance for the child to then attempt the activity. My overall guiding aim, however, was to avoid unduly influencing what would normally happen. It would be naïve to assume that to be completely possible, or indeed ethical under certain circumstances, for example where safety was an issue.

Reflective comment

My aim has been to be reflexive throughout the study, from its design, through the fieldwork, and during the analysis and writing, and this is evident in much of the report.

Here, I attempt to address some of the issues that have not been adequately covered elsewhere.

My role was something that was gradually negotiated during the research period as my relationship with the participants developed. Although I thought I had given a very clear and quite detailed outline of the study before beginning, other people's understanding of that was not automatically the same as mine. At first, in some ways I was treated as a parent helper. I was not invited into the staff room at breaks, but was offered coffee with the other parent helpers, and I was given a group of children to work with in the class. Although I hadn't anticipated it, it was a very helpful way to get to know the children and classroom routines. On the other hand, information was shared with me from the outset that would not usually be discussed with parent helpers, and the teacher joked about looking forward to being told 'how it should be done'. I felt I negotiated through the potentially conflicting roles of helper, observer, staff and inspector until, by the end of the study, my role of researcher had been established, but with the attached obligation to deliver results. The effect of this on me was to increase my resolve to avoid being judgmental, and to constantly guard against being presented or seen as some kind of 'expert'. The children may have found my role confusing, especially as I usually watched but sometimes helped. However, their adaptability was interesting and by the end of the study, they had settled into a pattern of engaging me in conversation whenever I wasn't making notes and largely ignoring me when I was.

The issues raised during the study appeared to have some impact on some of the participants. They appeared, for example, to lead to the teacher pursuing an interest in the SIDNEY programme and in incorporating aspects of it into the teaching of her phonics recovery group. Parents appeared to become more questioning of the role of the Baseline Assessments, of the purpose of individual targets set for children, and of children's progress. It seems that the very existence of another person's attention to and questioning of something is sufficient to make others re-examine their own perceptions.

Whether this is sufficient to bring about any change in beliefs, behaviour or procedures is another matter entirely.

The study also raised issues for me that I had not foreseen, issues that I consider important but that could not be pursued because of the constraints of the study. These include the following:

- the impact of a largely female-led environment on young boys
- the limited scope for uninterrupted, well resourced, child-led but adult-supported exploratory play in today's reception classes
- the difference in children's attention span and involvement between adult-directed and child-led but adult-supported activities

The role of voluntary helpers in schools is also something worthy of further investigation and clarification. In some classes, interaction with a voluntary helper forms a large proportion of the child's individual close involvement with an adult at school.

In Part 1, the study has been introduced and the methodology explored. In Part 2, the main findings of the study are presented and analysed.

Part 2 Presentation and analysis of data

Chapter 4 Literacy Learning Opportunities in Reception

Whole class teaching

In the whole class parts of the literacy hour, many different levels of literacy teaching were offered in any one session, shifting constantly between word, sentence and text levels. Given the complex picture that emerged from the observations, it was useful to produce an overview of how often the elements appeared to gain some idea of their relative importance.

Table 1: Categories of Literacy Teaching in the Whole Class Part of the Literacy Hour

Category	*No. of days*
Child-centred	21
Phonics	20
Reading	20
- strategies and practice	14
- meaning/message	13 (1)
Ethos and expectations	17
Writing - spelling and letter formation	13
Phonological awareness other than at phonic level (2)	11
Writing - composing	9
Punctuation	6

Note:

(1) Days on which categories appear are not mutually exclusive and cannot therefore be added together

(2) For example, word, syllable, rhyme.

To give a description of the pattern and frequency of literacy learning opportunities in the whole class parts of the literacy hour categories were devised as outlined in Methods of

Data Analysis page 41. A more thorough examination of the patterns within categories was then made, analysing and explaining each category separately. The categories are listed in Table 1.

It is immediately obvious that phonics and reading as a group with the teacher leading played a large role in the literacy teaching in the classroom, with the children practising them almost every day. It is also clear that the teacher used what I have called a child-centred approach for at least part of every session. For example, children were invited to bring in items to 'show' every day and these were used as the basis for practising phonics and for discussion of science, the purpose of objects, and for number work. The category of ethos and expectations also occurred frequently, with the key messages of accuracy, diligence, purpose and pleasure. Writing, focusing on the spelling of words and formation of letters was taught on over half of the days. Of those, eight days (plus one different day) included composition where the teacher scribed a story, poem or list from the children's ideas, inviting individuals to help. In half the sessions, phonology other than at the phonic level was taught, particularly using rhyme. Emphasis on simple punctuation was noted less often.

The pattern of teaching that emerged in the twenty-one observed sessions was a pattern characterised by much emphasis on phonics and reading, with half the amount of time spent on writing. It was also characterised by clear expectations and delivered in part each day in a child-centred approach. But what did each of these categories mean in practice? What are the teaching emphases and the learning opportunities within each? I turn now to a discussion of each category as they appeared in practice in the classroom.

Child-Centred Approach

The NLS is very prescriptive in its framework, setting out how many minutes each day should be spent on whole class work and small group work, and the literacy learning that should take place in each over a term. Anyone viewing a whole class section of the Literacy Hour will inevitably see this reflected in the children on the mat, the use of the

big book, the discussion of the sounds/words/text and usually some whole group writing. It is very teacher-centred and teacher-led. It is, however, interactive with the children to be kept involved by the use of questioning at different levels to suit different abilities.

Within the confines of the NLS Framework the teacher in this class used opportunities each day that were child-centred and child-led. Children were encouraged to bring in objects, drawings, books and toys from home to show to the class. These were shown and discussed, often making links with other parts of the curriculum. For example, in response to an action figure with a parachute, the child was asked to explain what happened and how it worked. *'Why do you think it opens up?'* On another day, when 'sh' was the sound of the week, a girl brought in a toy sheep to show. The teacher asked if she thought she could do a 'sh' on the white board. The girl did, joining the two letters, and was praised. Another child had brought in his diary (all children were keeping a diary of events at home as a way of remembering the days of the week). He had written several sentences, which were read out jointly with the teacher to the rest of the class. A child was invited to show and talk about a dolly she had brought in. The teacher then led the class in signing 'Miss Polly had a dolly'

During the teaching of the Literacy Hour, links were often made to children's experiences and their ideas incorporated into the sessions. Writing and discussion around the week's reading included journeys the children had made, what they enjoyed doing at home, and ideas for musical instruments to represent pages in a book. The choice of objects used to illustrate sounds in words was child-related; school shorts, a shirt, a packet of small biscuits often found in lunch boxes, chocolate. A hand puppet was frequently used to take part in activities such as reading or giving the sounds for objects. The children were given the task of helping the puppet and pointing out its mistakes. As the teacher managed the puppet, it gave a nice shift of power with the children in control of correcting and monitoring. They clearly enjoyed and were engaged by it. It offered a way of reinforcing, consolidating and practising skills of sound and

word recognition without simply being repetitious. Questions about why something was incorrect were addressed.

The approach can also be seen as involving by doing, although this was more clearly seen in the small group tasks that I examine later. In the whole class part, the teacher did not simply talk about or point out rhyming words, for example. Instead, the children were invited to choose and join in with nursery rhymes, using hand or body actions. The teacher did not simply explain and demonstrate the correct formation of a letter. Instead she sometimes invited the children to join in with the action, draw the shape in the air with a 'magic finger' and invited individuals to attempt to write the letter on the white board.

As suggested in the NLS, the teacher used differential questioning during the whole class parts of the literacy hour to take account of children's varying skills and understanding. The more capable readers were asked to read a word or phrase from the big book or asked to write a word on the whole class composition with a less straightforward spelling, for example, 'barn' and 'she'. Younger less skilled children were asked *to 'find the word that says 'and''* on the big book or add the full stop at the end of a sentence in the whole class composition. However, although such questioning has a part to play in engaging the children and allowing them to participate and succeed in contributing, in terms of their involvement in problem-solving or building on understanding and skills, it may have more limited use than it first appears. The teacher appeared to usually direct questions of these types in terms of extremes. The few most able were always asked to read/write words or phrases of which she knew they were capable. The youngest, least able were always asked to contribute the full stops. This pattern was borne out when looking at the frequency of invited contributions for all the children in the class. On two occasions I simply noted who was asked to contribute and how many times. This revealed that the groups most frequently asked were the top group (oldest, most able) and the two bottom groups, (youngest, less skilled).

It is difficult, whilst teaching thirty children and trying to maintain pace and interest, to keep track of each child's abilities and the questions they should be asked. The extremes are more easily remembered and may be perceived as needing more concerted effort to keep them involved and make the teaching relevant to their level. In the reception class, volunteering to answer was the norm. Children were rarely asked questions unless they volunteered or were disruptive, or clearly appeared to be losing attention. It was possible to avoid being questioned, then, by appearing attentive and not volunteering. On the other hand, volunteering didn't necessarily indicate the level of the children's knowledge or understanding. It was clear on several occasions that children put up their hands although they had nothing to contribute, or had forgotten. In my opinion, differential questioning had quite limited use in terms of actively engaging the children in the problem solving of reading and writing within their zones of proximal development, although this still happened occasionally. Instead, its purpose was primarily that of engaging attention and maintaining pace and control of the session.

Phonics

The teacher focused on two letters of the alphabet each week from early in the academic year until all had been completed and then moved onto the blends 'sh', 'ch', 'th', 'wh'. The twenty-six alphabetic sounds were taught, rather than the forty-three. The teacher was already up to 'r' and 'q' when observations began at the end of January. She used a combination of different approaches including the Letterland (Carlisle and Wendon 1985) finger puppets, Letterland songs and Jolly Phonics actions (Lloyd 1992).

Emphasis for about half the time was on recognising graphemes. Children were shown a grapheme or Letterland puppet with the letter written on and asked to give the sound. They were also often asked to do the Jolly Phonics action for the sound, and sometimes invited to write the letter on the whiteboard. Occasionally, they were all asked to write the letter in the air. Individuals were invited to the front on a couple of occasions to draw an object beginning with the given letter, or to highlight the words in the class text

beginning with that day's grapheme. Most days, however, involved giving the sound and action for a grapheme, and the teacher or invited children writing it on the board.

The other half of the emphasis was on recognising phonemes in speech, concentrating on the initial phoneme – onset – with only three exceptions, all in February. Usually a word would be said and the teacher would ask for its initial sound. She then usually asked for children's ideas for other words beginning with the same sound. Accurate pronunciation of the phoneme was encouraged and on five days the teacher described and demonstrated the mouth/tongue position for standard pronunciation of a phoneme.

On some days, other methods of teaching phonics were used. A 'feely bag' was used on five days containing either objects familiar to children or plastic letters. The teacher would invite a child to choose an object, name it, say which sound it began with and do the action. On one occasion, the bag contained objects of CVC words such as 'fan', and the children were asked to give the initial, middle and final phoneme. Children were encouraged on a couple of days to 'Listen to the sounds in the words', as a general comment, but word segmentation into anything other than the onset (but with much less emphasis on the rime) was rare. The teacher explained in interview that she saw phonemic segmentation as the next stage. During the summer term, she would begin to encourage segmentation of CVC words. The following are examples of interaction.

1. *A child brought in a bag to show to the class.*

   T: What sound does 'bag' begin with?

   Ch: 'b'

   T: Good. What could be in the bag beginning with 'b'?

   Ch: Bat and ball

   (Field notes 2.3.00 page 99.)

Note: In excerpts from the field notes, a lower case letter indicates the *sound* of the letter being used by participants, for example 'd', and a capital letter indicates the *name* of the letter, 'D'.

2. *Teacher shows a Letterland finger puppet.*

T: *Who can remember what sound this is?*

Ch: *'c'*

T: *Can you do the action? (All do it, including teacher)*

T: *Give me a word beginning with 'c'*

The sequence of teaching meant that often several different senses were used one after the other to reinforce the phonics learning, as the example below illustrates.

> *The teacher showed the children a finger puppet marked with 's'. She asked the children for the sound, which a selected child gave. She then asked all the children together to do the Jolly Phonics action for 's', which involved drawing a 's' in the air with a finger whilst making a 'sss' sound. The finger puppet showing the grapheme was held up for view throughout. The children were then invited to sing the Letterland song for 'Sammy Snake says 's' in words' all together with the teacher playing the guitar.* (Field notes 8.2.00 page 48).

Some permutation of some of the following was used almost every day:

- grapheme recognition
- phoneme recognition
- Jolly Phonics action
- finding a word beginning with a given phoneme
- giving the initial sound of a visible object
- use of Letterland characters and/or songs.

A set sequence in which each sense was consistently included was not used. The teaching of phonics could be described as loosely multi-sensory, but not in a systematic way of consistently reinforcing each sense in turn or all together.

The teacher attached importance to learning phonics, partly illustrated by her decision to monitor each child's phonic knowledge termly, based on the ability to give the

corresponding phoneme for a grapheme. She also set up of a 'phonics recovery' group in January (of which I will say more later) for a group of 6 children, who had up to that date recognised few, if any grapheme/phoneme correspondences. However, it is clear that phonics teaching was considered to be one element, albeit a large and important one, in learning to read and write.

Ethos and expectations

Part of the literacy teaching involved creating an ethos and a set of expectations within which the children's learning about literacy could take place. The teacher presented reading as a pleasurable and sometimes exciting experience that related to the children's everyday experiences. The teacher frequently expressed enthusiasm about the 'big book' to be read, commenting on illustrations, story line or content. Children were encouraged to bring in books to show, which were often read to the class at the end of the afternoon. Examples from field notes:

> *T:* *All eyes on this wonderful book. What do you think this book is going to be about? (Examined book with children, talked about title and cover). I'm really looking forward to reading it to you".* (Field notes 1.2.00 page 29.)

When a child brought in a book from home, as children often did.

> *T:* *'Oh what a super book. Can I put it up here to read to you all later?'* (Field notes 23.3.00 page 167.)

In response to a story used in the class,

> *T:* *A very exciting story. It's so exciting!* (Field notes 8.2.00 page 47)

The purposes of reading or writing, other than for pleasure, were rarely explicitly referred to but were occasionally implied. On a large sheet of illustrated text of 'Ring a Ring of Roses', the class were asked to suggest names for each child in the picture. The names

were then written onto the sheet and the purpose of writing to label or identify items or people had been implied. On another occasion, the class was asked to compose a poem about mothers to be printed and stuck into the Mothers' Day cards they had been making. Each child was encouraged to say something about their mother and suggestions were then taken for lines of the poem beginning with 'I love my mummy because…' The teacher acted as scribe and typed the finished poem for the children to read the next day. The implied purpose was that writing was a way of expressing feelings and communicating the message to another person. The children's joint composition was valued as a text to be typed, read and put into cards as gifts. Another purpose of reading was implied when the 'big book' consisted of a non-fiction book about frogs. The teacher asked the children what they would like to know about frogs and used the contributions to demonstrate how to search the index and find the information required.

Expectations were regularly stated or implied about children's developing ability to spell, read or correctly form letters. Usually these were explicitly stated when writing as a group.

> *T: 'And', a nice easy word. I hope you can all write 'and' by now and if you can't, now is the time to learn because it's a jolly useful word. (After 2 incorrect attempts…) Oh, I think I'd better write 'and' properly! That's our second attempt. Who thinks they can write 'and' properly?…. Now I'm sure you can write 'how'. Try and make your letters properly when you write, starting at the top… I'd like you all to be able to write 'and'. You have to practice that.'*
> *(At end of the whole class session before small group work…)*
> *'When you're writing, remember your spaces and remember your sounds. And I'm sure you could have a go at writing these words. Just listen to the sounds in words.'* (Field notes 3.2.00 page 39)

In another instance of the children composing a story all together with individuals being invited to write words or parts of words, a child suggested 'Floppy went in the barn'

T: *'We can write all the words ourselves' (implying that individuals invited up should be able to spell all the words. 'Floppy' and 'barn' were in previous sentences visible to the children).... 'Come on, John, you can write 'look'' (qualified by...) 'Don't worry, I'll help you out.' (Then, when a child was trying to write a word...) 'She's forgotten. Who can help her?' (in a supportive, accepting tone, not implying disappointment or disapproval).* (Field notes 10.2.00 page 53.)

So expectations are clearly set for the class, but individuals are supported in trying to meet the expectations. The teacher used the phrases "work hard" or "hard work" almost daily to encourage the children to concentrate or participate.

Some of the messages about standards and expectations were implied rather than clearly stated and sometimes the stated message was undermined by the implicit messages. For example, children were encouraged to 'listen to the sounds in words' and to 'have a go' at writing independently, especially in the whole class instructions preparing for the small group work. But 'listening' to the sounds in words and 'having a go' at four or five years of age results in many phonetically plausible but unorthodox spellings. The implied message, on the other hand, was that spellings were either right or wrong. Incorrect spellings in the whole class modelled compositions were removed or didn't appear in the first place.

T: 'Let's cross these two out because they weren't very good' (in response to 'a' and 'ad' for and). (Field notes 3.2.00 page 39).

(As a child writes 'ss' at the beginning of 'see')

T: "Oh, that's a funny way to write 'see' (which is then rubbed out). (Field notes 3.3.00 page 109.)

The dilemma here is how to encourage independent attempts at spelling when allowing an incorrect model to be shown to the children may not be seen as desirable. The problem spills over into the small group work in attempts at independent writing. The result was that when children were faced with a word they could not spell, which was very often for most of them at this age, they asked an adult. The word was then written onto paper for them to copy or occasionally spelt out to them, often using the names rather than the sounds of letters (usually by a parent helper).

Also implicit was the expectation that children would read daily to their parents at home and practice their spellings.

> *T: 'Have you been practising Lydia?'*
>
> *T: 'Can you write 'the', John? Because your mummy says you can write 'the'.'*

Expectations and standards were set by the choice of children's work to show to others in the plenary session and by the comments made about them. Neatness and diligence were often praised.

Reading: Strategies and Practice

On fourteen of the twenty-one days, some emphasis was placed on either practising reading aloud, watching the teacher reading and pointing to the words and/or pointing out strategies for using books and decoding words. On six days, the teacher pointed out some combination of cover, title, author, illustrator index and back page, using simple terms such as 'the person who wrote it' and 'the person who drew the pictures'.

Using pictures to predict the content of the book or to read meaning was encouraged on eight days and sometimes involved asking children to recall the previous day's story using the pictures as clues. The children were orientated towards the nature and content of the story before reading began which assisted prediction and understanding of the text.

Children were also encouraged to predict words using initial sounds/letters, 'words hiding in words' such as 'is' and 'his', and using rhyming words.

> *T:* *(after asking for lots of suggestions of rhyming words) 'Keep thinking about rhyming words because they'll help you with your reading!'*

At times, the teacher read the text to the class, stopping to ask children to predict the outcome of the next incident, helping them not only to decode but to think about the meaning of the text.

> *T:* *'What's going to happen next?... Why are the children not answering the door? Who else could be coming?'* (Field notes 2.3.00 page 99.)

At other times, depending on the difficulty of the text, the whole class was asked to read the text with the teacher. The class was usually asked to read back class compositions altogether.

Individuals were asked to read words or phrases in texts to the whole class on three days. The teacher appeared to choose the children based on her knowledge of their abilities. Children who could read well were asked to read the more difficult phrases. Other individuals were asked to 'point to the word that says...', a simpler task as the word had already been given and the clue of the initial phoneme/grapheme helped to identify it.

> *T:* *Can you point to the word that says 'BEAR'?*
>
> *Ch:* *(points to 'the')*
>
> *T:* *No. It is difficult because it is in capitals... Can you point to 'AND'? It is in capitals, so it's difficult.* (Field notes 1.2.00 page 30.)

A glove puppet was used regularly by the teacher to perform various reading tasks and make mistakes. The children were often asked to correct its mistakes by putting up a hand to indicate an error.

Reading: meaning/message

Blending into the teaching about strategies for decoding and the practising of reading was almost equal emphasis on the meaning or the author's message. This included six of the same days mentioned for strategies and seven separate days. It included elements such as looking at descriptive language, relating the story to feelings, or giving alternative words to those in the text, thereby indicating understanding of meaning.

> *(Using a book in which music is played by a girl and described in relation to the sunshine, a forest, a stream).*
>
> *T:* *'What is he feeling, playing the sunshine?'*
>
> *Ch:* *'Happy'*
>
> *T:* *'How do you know she is feeling happy?'* (Field notes 15.2.00 page 67.)
>
> *T:* *'Henry is going to give us another word for 'outing'.'*
>
> *H:* *'Going out'* (Field notes 14.3.00 page 139.)
>
> *T:* *What does it mean if you are disguised?* (Field notes 4.4.00 page 201.)

The teacher also discussed with children the sequence of stories by asking them to remember the order of events. In the context of Little Red Riding Hood, they discussed alternative endings. Children were asked to bring in Little Red Riding Hood books from home which were read to the children. They were asked to recall different versions. The teacher pointed out how one story could be retold in many different ways. *'All the same story, but lots of different ways of telling it'* (Field notes 6.4.00 page 211.)

Another technique occasionally used to help children to focus on working out or remembering meaning was 'cloze' where stickers were placed over certain words in a text and children were asked to guess or remember the word beneath the sticker. If the story had not been read to the children before, then it was a matter of predicting meaning from context and so in part belongs in the 'strategies for reading' category.
In this class the teacher usually used it on a text that had already been read to the children the day before, and so involved memory and/or prediction. One example, when asking for suggestions for the covered word was as follows.

> *T:* *'Something that makes sense with the sentence.' (*After a suggestion…*)* *'Do you want to see if you are right? Come and have a look. A jolly good suggestion.' (*And later…*) 'It doesn't matter if you're wrong. Have a suggestion. Good! You were listening really well.'* (Field notes 8.2.00 page 47.)

Writing

Sometimes the emphasis was on spelling and handwriting and linked to phonics learning. At other times, the route to spelling and writing was through composition. Composition without emphasis on spelling and handwriting was, however, very rare.

In the instances when emphasis was on spelling and letter formation rather than composition, it was part of a phonics activity. On one occasion, the teacher used plastic letters on the white board to demonstrate spelling and reading by analogy using 'at' as the rime and alternating the initial sounds of p, s, b, h, m. Once the combinations had been read, volunteers were invited to write one of the words. The plastic letters, now disassembled except for 'at' were still on the board. When volunteers were practising the formation of 'ch', a clue for spelling was again given to the children. *'It's two letters, but it just makes one sound, 'ch''* (Field notes 14.3.00 page 139.) Similarly, when the class was working on 'x' and the teacher asked for words ending in 'x', she made the following point. *'It makes a "cks" sound, but some other words (sic) make that sound as well, so you'll just have to learn which is which'* (field notes 3.3.00 page 109.)

Although correct letter formation and aspects of spelling linked to the phonic work appear on a greater number of days, the largest volume of whole class writing was based on class compositions. The process of writing was modelled by the teacher from generating ideas, to forming them into sentences and writing them into words onto the board or large sheet of paper. Sometimes elements of composition such as structure and sequencing were mentioned or modelled. This included, for example, re-telling and writing a familiar story that has been read to the children recently and talking about the beginning, middle and end, encouraging the children to think about sequencing. The way to end a story was suggested. *'Now we need a nice finishing off sentence, a rounding off.'* (Field notes 10.2.00 page 53.) At times, originality was asked for to encourage the children to think of new ideas to add interest to the 'story'. When continuing to write a class story started the day before, the teacher asked for ideas for something else to write. *'It must not be the same as yesterday, because that would not be interesting. It must be interesting.'* (Field notes 10.2.00 page 53.)

The teacher encouraged the class to think of ideas before beginning writing. For example, after reading a story about a train ride, the class was asked to write about what they could see from the train window on an imaginary train ride. The children had been asked the day before about any train journeys they had been on. Children's ideas were then taken and the sentences written onto the large sheet, with volunteers invited to write words in the sentences. When the class was asked to join in writing a poem to go inside the Mother's Day cards, the teacher began by passing a teddy round the circle of children and inviting the person holding the teddy to say something special about their mummy. Children were allowed to pass if they had nothing to say. The teacher then asked for ideas to add to the opening line, 'I love my mummy because...' Children contributed sentences and on this occasion the teacher acted as scribe.

When the whole class was involved in writing a joint composition, the levels of emphasis and instruction switched constantly from sound/word level to punctuation, to spelling

patterns, and to the meaning being expressed. The work was also interactive. Children's ideas were used. They were invited to help with writing and reading back. Tasks of different levels of difficulty were offered to children to match their abilities. The most competent readers/writers were invited to write whole words or read phrases. Children whose writing and reading skills were at an earlier stage of development were asked to 'point to the word that says 'and',' or to 'write the full-stop at the end of the sentence', or write the initial letter of a word. Reading back what had been written was an important part of the process and always used. It was used during the composition, especially if the work spread over two days, and at the end.

The following example illustrates how the different levels were inter-related with the teaching taking place in context. It was the second day of writing a version of their big book story for the week. The previous day's part of the story was displayed on a large sheet of paper. The teacher talked to the children about the story first, checking on their memory of the story line.

> *T: 'Who can remember what a hero is?... What is the title of our story, then?... Let's see if we can read our story first of all!'* (Field notes 10.2 00 page 53.)

The children read the story together, the teacher pointing at the words. She then asked for ideas for the next sentence. A child suggested *'Floppy went into the barn.'*
The teacher wrote 'Floppy' then said '*We can write all the words ourselves*', before inviting another child to write 'went'. Details of the rest of the example are quoted from the field notes.

> *T: 'Leave a space!'*
> *(The child is asked for the first sound and writes 'w'. The teacher then asks the class)*
> *'What sound comes next?'*

(Child 3 volunteers a 't' next, but the teacher says)

'What's hiding before the 't'?'.

(Other children call out 'n' and the rest of the word is written. The teacher stresses)

'Listen to the sounds and try to write it.'

(A boy is invited to write 'in'.)

T: 'You can write 'in'. Don't forget the space.'

(The child is successful. A girl is then invited to write 'the'. All are volunteers. She stands at the board and appears unsure.)

T: 'She's got stuck. What does it begin with?'

(Someone suggests 't'. The teacher points out that it is the same as Thursday. The weekday word card had been shown to the class a few minutes earlier... A child with advanced reading and writing skills for this class is invited to write "barn", which he does with no help. The teacher reminds the class about a full stop, then asks what must come afterwards for a new sentence.)

Ch: 'A big letter.'

(The teacher praises her. A younger child is invited to say and write the initial sound of 'said', which she manages. Another child writes 'the', which is already on the board.)

T: 'Wonderful. Always start at the top with your letter! Now we need a nice finishing off sentence – A rounding off!

Ch: 'Everyone looked at Floppy.'

(Teacher writes 'everyone', then asks for a volunteer to write 'look'. A volunteer comes to the front and writes 'l').

T: 'Don't worry, I'll help you out.' (Field notes 10.2.00 page 53).

Throughout, the atmosphere was one of willing volunteers who were made to feel supported if they ran into difficulty. The teacher praised regularly, but was very clear about what was correct and what was not.

The whole picture

The teaching and learning of reading and writing are complex and the complexities are reflected in the use of a variety of techniques and levels of focus employed in the whole class part of the literacy hours in the classroom. The teaching shifted from interpreting the author's message to predicting and retelling story lines to the punctuation of a sentence to the initial grapheme/phoneme correspondence. Each literacy hour frequently covered several, if not all, levels and they were inter-woven. An example from the field notes illustrates this. The class was working on "ch" sounds and the big book to be read was "Mr Gumpy's Outing" by John Burningham. It was the first day this book had been used with the class. The teacher had covered the title and asked the children to predict the content and title from the picture. They were encouraged to think of possible interpretations of what they saw.

> *T: 'What is the little boy doing? Why? ... What could the story be about? ... Who is in the boat? ... Where could they be going? ... What can you tell me about Mr Gumpy from the picture?'*
>
> *(Once the title has been revealed, the children are encouraged to think of alternative words to 'outing', so that its meaning is explored and their vocabulary of alternatives is extended. The teacher then shifts to introduce 'ch' as a digraph. She demonstrates how to write it, joining the two letters and describing her movements as she does so. The children are asked to volunteer words beginning with 'ch'. Lots of correct examples are given; cherry, cheese, chair, 'choo-choo', children, champion. One child volunteers 'jam' and the teacher points out the difference between 'ch' and 'j'. She also talks about spelling 'ch'.)*
>
> *'It's two letters, but it just makes one sound, 'ch'.'* (Field notes 14.3.00, page 139).

The teacher included reading/text level work, interpreting pictures, decoding words and interpreting meaning. She included word level work on alternative words and extending vocabulary. She introduced a new phoneme/digraph with emphasis on the sound as the onset of words, correct pronunciation, handwriting to form the digraph correctly and the fact that one sound is made from two letters.

Children's Learning in the whole class teaching

Given the complexity and work at different levels, the teacher nevertheless had a distinct emphasis on the teaching of the twenty-six alphabetic phonemes plus digraphs sh, th, ch and wh, taught almost exclusively as onsets of words. The phoneme/grapheme correspondence was clearly taught and reinforced by the use of actions and visual stimulants. Emphasis was also on enjoying and interpreting different texts in terms of reading, including 'reading' illustrations. For writing, the emphasis was on accuracy, punctuation, and correct spellings. Imaginative writing appeared rarely. Re-telling a story was more usual.

Before leaving an examination of the whole class aspects of the teaching, I consider the evidence for the children's active involvement in their zone of proximal development and for handover of the skills and knowledge being taught. In an earlier paper (Appendix iii), I argued for using neo-Vygotskian constructs of scaffolding and spontaneous and elicited contributions to examine the learning process. Whilst a thesis of this size would not allow scope for such detailed analyses of all the teaching/learning observed, I intend to use the constructs here to examine the learning. I rely on the earlier paper for a more in-depth rationale. The constructs are outlined in Methods of Data Analysis, page 42.

The teacher scaffolded the children's learning in so far as it is possible to offer such support to thirty children all at slightly different levels of ability and skill. She *recruited the children's interest* in the tasks by using their contributions from home life and their interest as a springboard for the teaching. She also used enthusiasm and suspense to engage.

'What do you think it is about?'

'It's a very exciting story. What happens next?

'I'm really looking forward to reading it to you'.

The teacher *simplified tasks* for the class, reading most of the words in the texts to them, asking for recognition of phonemes generally as onset only, acting as scribe for many of the words and sentences produced by the class in whole class compositions. When children were invited to contribute, for examples to the reading, spelling or offering words beginning with a particular sound, the teacher was adept at *correcting*, usually in a very positive way, pointing out the *'ideal solution'* and how it differed to the child's contribution. Reading to the class and acting as scribe also offered *an idealised version of the act to be performed.*

She *maintained pursuit of the goal* using classroom management techniques of pace, interest and questioning of those who appeared to be disruptive or inattentive. She moved distracting children closer to her or away from friends. She kept the tasks short and used voice variation, visual aids, music and actions to maintain interest. The children who chose to respond to invitations to contribute were involved for a high proportion of the whole class time. As discussed earlier, the teacher clearly attempted to vary the levels of questioning to enable children to be involved at their ability or developmental stage, though there were difficulties with putting it consistently and successfully into practice, even for this experienced and organised teacher.

The teacher was scaffolding the children's learning en masse. For a few children, a high proportion of the skills teaching (use of books, phonics) was below their ZPD. They were secure in their phonic knowledge to at least the level taught by the end of reception, could read quite fluently and write sentences with a high proportion of correct spelling of simple words. Other aspects of the teaching/learning situation may have been within their ZPD, for example social and emotional development, working as part of the class and learning the rules and procedures of school. Appreciating different styles of

literature and illustration, and aspects of composition were also within their ZPD. For other children, the literacy teaching appeared to be at precisely their level and their development matched the pace of the lessons. For them, the messages were sufficiently explicit and the scaffolding helped them to work in their ZPD.

Some children, however, appeared to be a little left behind by the pace of the teaching. They seemed to find it more difficult to retain what had been taught and so had not consolidated one stage of learning before the next was introduced. Some aspects appeared to be retained whilst others were not. In some instances, the children had not yet made clear links between spoken and written language making the system somehow mysterious and complex. For them, the teaching had not been sufficiently explicit or enough time allowed for practising and consolidating to gain a more principled understanding. The teacher was aware of and concerned about such children. She knew which were apparently not keeping up and by January had set up a 'Phonics Recovery' group for six of the children most behind. This ran for five minutes everyday, and was led by a classroom assistant, following the teacher's instructions and largely using Jolly Phonics. More of this and its results later but suffice it to say here that the teacher appeared to be aware of the difficulties of the whole class teaching and vigilant in attempting to compensate for them.

So, what do we know of the children's learning in the whole class sessions? What is the evidence for handover by the staff, and of the children's appropriation of the new skills? Of course, much evidence of their learning may come from other parts of the school day or even at home and will not necessarily be confined to the interaction in the whole class part of the literacy hour, or indeed the whole of the literacy hour. However, I consider it to be important to look for evidence of the handover of knowledge or skills in the interaction if we are to see the learning as part of the process.

As explained in the earlier paper (Appendix iii), there needs to be evidence of children's active involvement in the problem solving and of their using the skills and knowledge

gained to demonstrate their level of understanding. Only then can the teacher make minute adjustments to the teaching to ensure even more appropriate scaffolding towards the children's appropriation of knowledge, shifting into ZPDs at a new level.
As in the earlier paper, I intend to use spontaneous and elicited contributions as an approximation of the children's knowledge and skills. Providing the children are not simply picking up signals for what needs to be said, ('cued elicitations' in Edwards and Mercer's words, 1987) which do not necessarily show any understanding, they should offer some clue for the teacher as to what is understood and known. How the teacher uses such indicators herself may also show what the teacher sees as important with regard to the teaching and learning objectives.

Many of the contributions from the children were analysed earlier when examining the nature of the whole class teaching. Here, I provide a summary of the most frequently observed contributions. Spontaneous contributions were rare and generally equated with 'calling out', or making a comment or question without raising a hand and being invited to speak, which was not acceptable. Perhaps when things spontaneously occur to such young children, they find it difficult to remember to raise their hand before speaking. Such contributions appeared to be received differently by the teacher from different children, something I consider further in a later chapter (***Henry*** page82).

As discussed earlier, the majority of questions posed to children, resulting in elicited contributions, related to recognition and production of initial phonemes and graphemes. A very high proportion of the class were invited to respond to questions of this nature and on some occasions children could be seen demonstrating their knowledge to themselves or each other without attempting to raise their hand to be chosen to contribute. Children's incorrect contributions were usually handled positively and corrected in such a way as to help the child to understand the mistake. For instance, the teacher asked for words beginning with 'r'. One child volunteered 'mouse'. The teacher responded *'No, that's not 'r'. What sound does mouse begin with?'* (to the rest of the class), thereby ensuring the children heard the correct answer. The children were actively involved in the

problem-solving process of how to read or write on few occasions in the whole class parts of the literacy hour. One particular occasion, referred to earlier on page 66, (field notes 10.2.00 page 53), gives a good example of how children can be involved in a way that teaches methods and skills they themselves can put into practise, attempting to use their newly gained knowledge as they go along. Here, children were involved in suggesting a sentence to be written, in breaking down the words into phonemes until the sentence, and eventually the story, was written. This is a lovely example of the teacher scaffolding and making slight adjustments to the input to take account of the children's success in using their knowledge, and thereby maintaining their involvement in problem-solving. There are two other examples of this kind in my field notes, (not video recorded) but unfortunately the observations do not give details of precisely what *all* of the children in the class were doing and to what extent each was involved in the process. However, the manner in which this particular piece of teaching was carried out encourages me to the conclusion that there was genuinely something for children of different ability levels in the class.

A few of the children could have written the sentences without help with the spelling, but they could gain practice in recall and story composition, as well as becoming even more familiar with spellings. Other children were involved in phonemic segmentation and phoneme/grapheme recognition and recall in a step by step manner that modelled a method they themselves could try to adopt in attempting to write. Much of their ability to do this, however, was dependent on their alphabetic knowledge and explains the time and energy put into phonic teaching. These children, insecure in their knowledge of phoneme/grapheme correspondence, would not be able to adopt this model unaided unless a high proportion of mistakes was to be tolerated.

I have considered the whole class teaching separate to the small group aspects of the literacy hour for ease of analysis. Clearly, this is an artificial boundary when looking at children's learning, for the small group work is sometimes the opportunity for the children to be more involved in putting into practice their new knowledge and skills. I

now turn to look at the literacy development opportunities in the small group/individual parts of the literacy hour.

Small group literacy learning opportunities in the literacy hour

The children in the class were split into five groups of six for this part of the literacy hour. The groups broadly reflected the children's abilities based on the teacher's assessments, their ages and on their baseline assessment results. Activities varied each week, with groups rotating to a new one each day. Some activities featured regularly, often weekly, and included the following.

- Each child had a phonics workbook with one letter per page in which the child drew and labelled objects beginning with that sound, using picture dictionaries to help. A few higher ability children wrote a sentence for each object. The purpose appeared to be alphabetic knowledge, recognition of initial phonemes and graphemes, practice in using dictionaries, and copying words (in very few cases, writing independently).

- Each child had a handwriting book with a letter per page to trace, to trace over dots, and with space to practice the letters freehand.

- A craft activity involving painting, cutting, sticking or dough, loosely related to a literacy objective was included, such as painting <u>th</u>ick and <u>th</u>in lines when 'th' was the sound for the week; or making dough food beginning with 'ch' when 'ch' was the sound for the week.

- Worksheets were used involving reading tasks such as 'find the words beginning with… ', or looking for the same words in a row, or matching words to pictures.

- Sequencing activities were used, sometimes cutting and sticking pictures from a story into order, sometimes involving some reading.

- Word search or word 'bingo' based on sets of key words, again a reading task.

The children were also involved in one to one reading to the teacher from their reading books almost every day. The teacher did this by spending two to three minutes with each child whilst simultaneously supervising a group at a table and overseeing the whole class.

In this class, there was a lot of extra support in the form of voluntary parent helpers, student nursery nurses and the class room assistants. The Special Needs Co-ordinator also worked with one or two groups during the group work part of the literacy hour on one morning per week. It was usual for almost every group to have an adult working with it during the group work, though occasionally one group worked alone for this section of the literacy hour. The teacher co-ordinated the help carefully, preparing the task for each group (with the help of CAs), and giving written instructions to each helper. However, how helpers interacted with and supported the learner varied from one to another.

Although the teacher's weekly plans do not reveal any variation in tasks to take account of individual children's or group's differing abilities, in reality there clearly was variation. On thirteen days, my field notes record the teacher and classroom assistant exchanging views on how the groups had coped with the given tasks. The teacher usually prompted this by asking how a group had managed. Plans were briefly discussed as to how the work could be varied next time to take account of groups' and sometimes individuals' progress. The following excerpt from my field notes provides an example.

> *While the children were lining up for assembly, the teacher asked the classroom assistant how the group she had been working with had coped with the task. CA reported that the 'brighter' 3 had been fine, but the other 3 had really needed a list of words for help instead of relying on the dictionaries. The teacher said she*

would adjust the task for next time. Task was a simple crossword puzzle. (Field notes 25.1.00 page 3.)

The teacher regularly monitored progress by walking around the room, checking with children and helpers. The tasks, although the same on paper, were adjusted for groups and individuals. Higher expectations were set for more able children, an example being the way in which the phonics workbooks were used, as described above. The writing tasks and individual reading to the teacher also allowed a child to work in his or her ZPD, rather than to a level set for the whole class.

In reality though, with the best of intentions, it did not always result in the children working in a manner that genuinely made use of and extended their capabilities. My critique of one episode of teaching and learning in a small group (Appendix iii) raises questions about the extent to which learning can be said to be taking place unless children are actively involved in the decision-making and problem-solving of a task, (in this case using phonic knowledge to write), making optimum use of the knowledge and skills they have acquired to date and gaining new understanding to be put into practise next time. It was very effectively done in this reception class for initial phoneme knowledge and production of grapheme from initial phoneme. It was less effectively done in phonemic segmentation and attempted translation of phonemes into graphemes or orthographic units, which would necessarily involve a high rate of error for most children of this age. Encouraging independent writing is something that Adams (1990) advocates.

Moreover, whether viewed at the level of text generation, sentence generation, or word generation, it is an activity that inherently requires children to think actively – and such activities are both invaluable and hard to come by in the classroom. (Adams 1990, page 387).

In another episode, (field notes 6.4.00 page 207) the highest ability group, helped by a parent, had been asked to rewrite the story of Little Red Riding Hood in their own words and cut and stick pictures from the story into the correct sequence, putting their own captions below. Other less able groups had simply been asked to cut, stick and sequence the pictures with the attached printed captions, which was primarily a reading and memory task rather than a writing task.

The teacher's instructions to the parent helper working with the higher ability group were to encourage the children to write their own words as far as possible, but this was only partly done. Two of the group did show some ability to sound out some of the words for themselves and to try to create the words from their speech or from available words. Others were less able or willing to attempt it.

> *Susan managed to write 'little' from memory. She sounds out 'went' phonetically and manages to write it correctly. She wants 'round', writes 'r' herself and asks for help. I point out how 'ou' make the 'ow' sound in the word and encourage her to sound out the rest of the word herself. She manages and writes it correctly. She writes 'the' alone then asks for 'corner'. I provide elements of the word, 'or' and 'er', pointing out the sound the combination of letters make, and ask her to provide the intervening sounds. She manages.* (Field notes 6.4.00 page 212.)

> *Katrina asks for 'what' to be spelt. The parent helper gives the letter names, W-H-A-T, orally. She manages to write 'big' herself, then asks for 'eyes'. The parent helper again spells it out orally using letter names E-Y-E-S. Katrina says she doesn't know how to do a 'Y'. She has written 'y' before in this story, which may have been copied, but I think she does not recognise the* <u>*name*</u> *of the letter. She later asks for 'along', having written 'a' herself. The parent helper again spells out the rest of the word orally using letter names.* (Field notes 6.4.00 page 212.)

Katrina had not extended her ability to phonemically segment spoken words and attempt to write them. She wrote the word she could manage herself (big), but the way in which she was helped with more difficult words, in my opinion, provided no strategies that she could usually appropriate for herself in her future attempts to write, unless she could memorise correct spellings given or ask an adult. Her knowledge of how to independently translate spoken into written language had not been usefully extended.

As we see later, the SIDNEY programme is entirely different in that it clearly establishes the (simpler and beginning) relationships between spoken and written language in a manner that ensures that the child appropriates the knowledge and skills. It extends only to the ability to write CVC words. Interestingly, the Additional Literacy Support Scheme, introduced nationally in September 1999 for Key Stage 2 children with literacy difficulties, adopts a very similar approach for more advanced orthographic relationships, which children should ideally have some knowledge of by the end of Key Stage 1. Again, it is a specially designed recovery programme, used in groups of about five children per adult, which uses an explicit teaching style and attempts to secure appropriation of the spoken to written language relationship (and vice versa) by securing the children's active cognitive involvement.

In both these programmes, very specific and detailed written guidelines are given to the special needs assistants about what should be said and done in order to support the learning. Such detailed guidance is not available to helpers in mainstream classrooms, which means that children can face a variety of approaches on a daily basis. For some children, this is not a problem. For others, it amounts to confusion.

Other literacy opportunities

Once the children had finished their allotted group work task, they were encouraged to find an activity relating to literacy. These included a good selection of puzzles and

games designed to teach alphabetic knowledge and a book corner, all of which were frequently used with apparent enjoyment by the children. There was also a corner for listening to taped stories, and a writing table with pens, pencils and paper and only two seats, quite often used so that frustrated children sometimes awaited a place in one of the two seats. The role-play area, at first a hospital and then a bus at a bus stop, was also very popular and incorporated literacy opportunities, such as a set of bus tickets to be written on and stamped, bus timetables and magazines to 'read'. Play dough, occasionally used to form dough letters, chalk and white boards for writing and drawing were also available.

In the afternoon, before beginning other tasks, the classroom assistant spent some time with the 'phonics recovery group'. The teacher had identified at Christmas a small group of children who she felt were behind in their alphabetic knowledge. She set up a 'phonics recovery group' of six children who were worked with, under her guidance, by the classroom assistant for five to ten minutes each day in total, not per child. The CA worked on the twenty-six phonic sounds, using the Jolly Phonics actions and introducing two sounds per week. Each child in the group was asked to recall and practise phonemes, graphemes and actions regularly in the group, constantly using their growing knowledge. Three weeks before the end of term, the teacher and CA introduced the 'rainbow' of the alphabet to the group, as used in the SIDNEY programme. Thereafter, the phonemes/graphemes were always taken from and returned to their place in the visible alphabet rainbow. The 'phonics recovery group' work ensured a high rate of elicited contributions from each child. By Easter, four of the six children had mastered all twenty-six sounds, overtaking others in the class who had initially appeared more able. The other two were well on their way, making particularly rapid progress (noted by the CAs) since the introduction of the alphabet rainbow in the last three weeks.

The analysis of the literacy learning opportunities in the reception class shows a complex picture of literacy teaching and learning on many different levels. The whole class work

showed a high level of interaction and involvement, but not necessarily of all the children genuinely being fully involved in problem solving within their ZPDs. The small group work showed many aspects of literacy learning and genuine attempts to account for children's individual learning needs. However, again it was seen that there was room for closer involvement of children in supported problem solving, particularly if the importance of product could more often give way to that of process. Much was on offer to the children in this class. Having reviewed the literacy learning opportunities, I now turn to an analysis of how six children fared in terms of literacy development.

Chapter 5 The Learners: Six Children in the Reception Class

I analysed each child's pre-school literacy, his or her progress and the way in which the child interacted with the literacy learning opportunities in the classroom. The children's names have been changed.

The high scorers:

Henry

Of the three children chosen with strong Baseline Assessment scores, only Henry could read and write before he began school. He had enjoyed pencil and paper activities from an early age.

> *As soon as he could pick things up, at about eighteen months, as soon as he could manipulate the pencil; and then he went on to writing almost of his own accord, really* (interview with Henry's mother, 10.3.00).

He could write recognisable letters by three years and by four years was regularly writing stories, which were partly incomprehensible but with some phonetically feasible spellings. *'You could just about decipher it'* (Henry's mother 10.3.00). He had also enjoyed books from a very young age. *'I think that's partly because I've always read to them from a very young age'*. With regard to reading, he knew the sounds of letters by the age of three and *'began combining them into words at three and a half to three and three-quarters, certainly by four years'* (Henry's mother 10.3.00).

He scored very highly in his Baseline Assessments (scores from 0 to 5 were possible) in all areas except information technology and dexterity (scores of three), and gross motor skills (score of two). So, how did the literacy learning opportunities in the classroom match Henry's literacy abilities when he started school and meet the needs for his development? Henry was encouraged by the teacher to take home reading books suited to his level of ability. He was not given sets of words to learn to read at the beginning of the

school year, unlike the other children. His individual targets, set by the teacher for all children in October, included:

> *To read a range of literature, responding to the plot, characters and ideas.*
> *To write in sentences beginning to show an awareness of simple punctuation, e.g. full stops and capital letters* (Individual target sheet 26.10.99).

By March 2000, the targets had changed and now included:

> *To express his opinions about major events or ideas in stories, poems and non-fiction.*
> *To continue to develop his joined-up style of handwriting.*

Other targets related to physical motor control and self-organisation, both of which were seen as weaknesses by his teacher and mother.

In the whole class part of the literacy hour, much of the work on phonics and phoneme/grapheme correspondence appeared to be below Henry's level of ability. He was secure in his phoneme/grapheme knowledge and some spelling conventions before starting school. As we have seen in the earlier section on whole class teaching, much of the time was devoted to work on phonics. However, the field notes reveal that Henry was generally attentive and appeared interested in the sessions. The stories, songs, visual aids and interactive devices used by the teacher helped to maintain interest and involvement. The teacher also used individual questioning to challenge Henry. This involved asking him to read more difficult words from the 'big book' and answering more complex questions.

> *Henry is asked 'What do binoculars do?' He answers 'If they're far away you'll be able to see them as if they're near,' using his hands to demonstrate.* (Field notes 9.3.00, page 125.)

Although Henry appeared to be attentive and could usually answer any question asked of him, he often chose not to volunteer for questions that were well within his ability. He occasionally 'called out' to make an observation without first raising his hand and waiting to be invited. Unlike most other children, he was very rarely reprimanded for doing so. He was listened to attentively and his ideas, suggestions and questions were responded to in a manner used for mature, adult contributions.

> *Whenever Henry speaks, he is listened to with respect and if his meaning or question is at first unclear, the staff work at trying to understand. It seems that they have come to expect sensible, mature comments from him and so if they don't understand, they assume they have misunderstood. Very good for his self-esteem.* (Field notes 6.4.00, page 211).

I do not imply that other children were treated with disrespect, dismissed or their ideas not listened to, but Henry was treated slightly differently.

In the small group work, much of the routine work set for the children again appeared to be below Henry's level of ability, but the work was adapted to be more challenging for him. For example, on 9.3.00 Henry's group members were working on phonics. They had to think of things beginning with 'y' or 'z', drawing a picture and writing the word for each, using picture dictionaries to help them. Instead, Henry was encouraged to write a sentence for each word, using cursive writing.

> *He is competent in his spelling. He writes 'sailing' correctly without help and 'zebra' without checking in his book. He writes 'yoak' for 'yolk', but his mother (acting as a helper) points out his mistake and tells him to change the 'a' to a 'l'.* (Field notes 9.3.00, page 121).

In this way, his literacy abilities were being extended in the small group work, though this was not always with evident pleasure.

Tension is noted again surrounding writing. Henry is very reluctant to finish his story from yesterday, It takes his mother a lot of chivvying to get him going. He does it without pleasure or enthusiasm. He had written a whole side yesterday (Field notes 6.4.00, page 209).

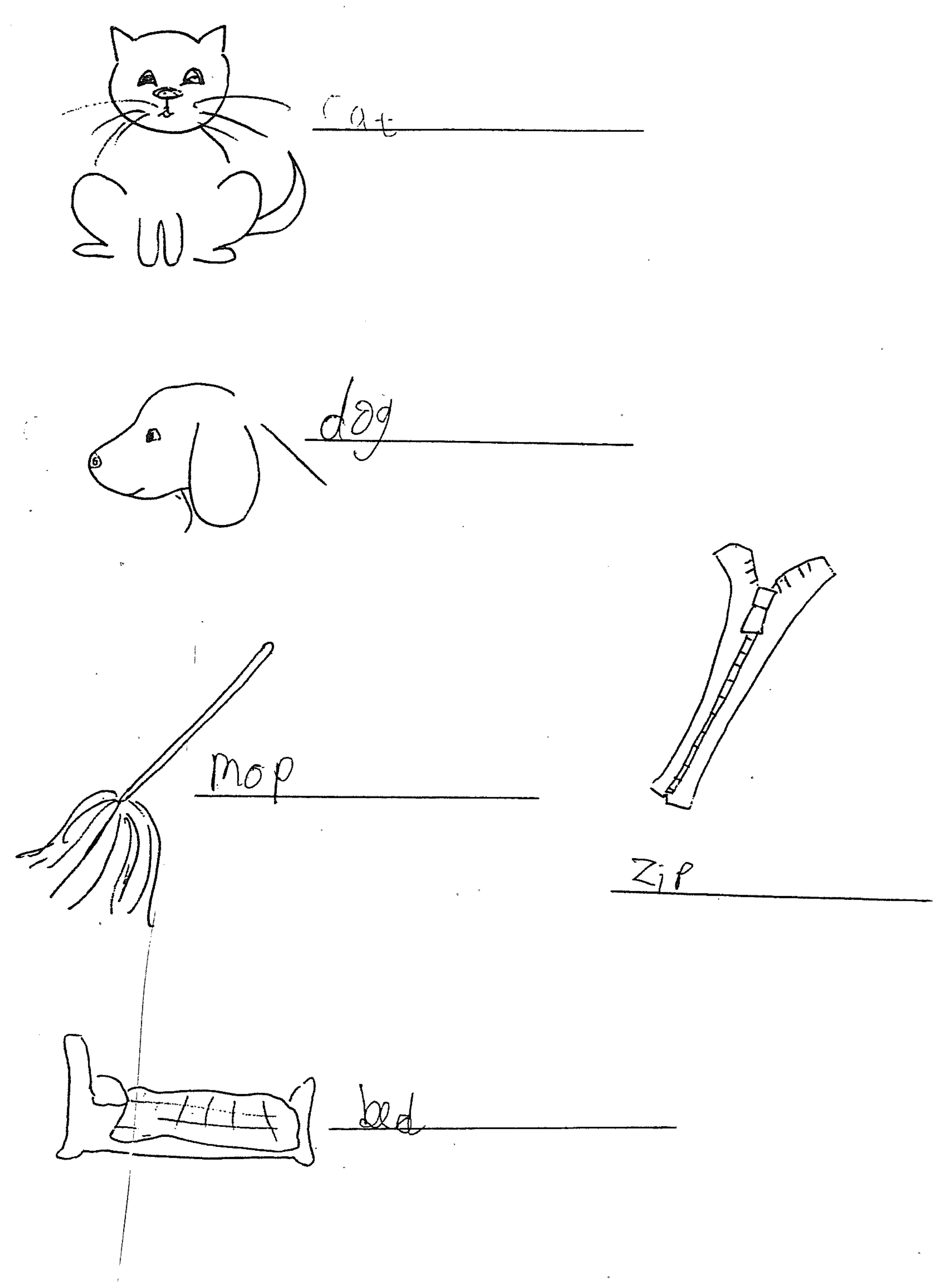
However, other aspects of the literacy hour did seem to challenge and interest him. These related more to the physical organisation and creative aspects of small group tasks, rather than literacy learning. Henry also chose to write sometimes during the free play sessions in the afternoon, so clearly did enjoy it.

Henry sits at the drawing table and draws a complex picture with words. He writes 'Tiddley winks' and 'Stephanie' unaided. He also writes 'Dear Mum, thank you for the Robin Hood hide out. Love from Henry', no help, beautifully written (Field notes 17.2.00, page 82).

Henry read daily at home and had recently progressed to what he described to his mother as 'reading with his eyes', meaning reading silently (interview with Henry's mother 10.3.00). On 13.4.00, he described his favourite books to me as being magazines, games, crossword books and 'lots of different books'. He has two older siblings and joins in with pencil and paper activities while they do homework each evening. His home environment clearly supported his early literacy learning, but his mother pointed out that she had been led by his interest. One of his older siblings, the middle child, although clearly raised in the same environment, had in fact been much slower to read and write and had not favoured pencil, paper or reading activities.

The small 'end test' given to children on 13.4.00 to assess their ability to use their phonic knowledge to write CVC words was well below Henry's level of ability. He completed the task promptly and accurately (see Table 2 'Henry's end test'). He could have done so at the beginning of the school year.

Table 2: Henry's End-Test



Susan

According to her mother (interview 6.3.00), Susan began school knowing few letter sounds, but knowing some of the names and able to recite the alphabet. She had enjoyed books and pencil and paper activities from an early age, but had only had regular bedtime stories from the summer prior to starting school when she was four years old. By December 1999, the teacher recorded her phonic knowledge as knowing twelve sounds and twenty names of letters of the alphabet. On starting school, she could not write her first name completely or read any words. She did do some pretend writing, *'Some letters she would do, yes. Scribble'* (interview with Susan's mother 6.3.00). Her Baseline Assessment scores were mostly fours and fives, except for Drawing a Person and Writing, both scoring two.

Susan made good progress in literacy at school. By 6.3.00, her mother listed her abilities as including

- knowing all the alphabetic sounds
- reading three sheets of twenty-four words each, sent home from school
- attempting to build simple words from phonic knowledge when reading
- correct spelling of two sheets of words sent home from school
- segmenting and spelling some simple words herself from her phonic knowledge, for example 'fox' and 'box'. *'She was just spelling them herself'.*

She had easy access to writing and drawing materials at the desk in the playroom and still chose to draw, write and cut up paper frequently.

In the whole class sessions of the literacy hour, Susan was attentive and participative. She anticipated questions and was very eager to answer. She raised her hand for a high proportion of the questions. The phonics teaching has been within her ZPD and she has clearly appropriated the phonic knowledge. In the small group work, her attempts to write and occasionally (when encouraged) spell words alone using her phonic knowledge show that she had started to make clear connections between spoken and written language.

In an afternoon free play session in the role- play area, which has been turned into a 'bus', Susan helps a friend to write a bus ticket. She uses sounds and letter names to tell her friend how to spell 'bus' correctly (Field notes 13.3.00, page 131).

To begin with, the field notes show that she was reluctant to try to spell unknown words herself, as were most children in the class.

As other children in the group, Susan is unwilling to make attempts at spelling unknown words, but asks for the words to be written to be copied. She is able, when prompted, to give the initial sound, but either not able or willing to attempt a more complex middle sound (Field notes 29.2.00, page 83. I was acting as a helper to the group on this occasion).

But by the 6.4.00, when I again helped the group, with encouragement she managed 'went', 'for', 'she', and the 'r' and 'nd' for 'round'. The simple 'end test' (13.4.00) indicated that she had understood and appropriated the alphabetic stage. She was confident in her writing (see Table 3, 'Susan's end test').

Susan and her friend Katrina appear to thoroughly enjoy the female environment and constantly draw attention to and rehearse their femininity in terms of

- choice of colours (pastels rather than dark colours)
- neatness and carefulness
- organising and tidying
- diligence and sensible behaviour
- not playing with boys.

The following examples from the field notes illustrate. The first is from a free play period, when the girls were outside at the sand tray, the second from a small group literacy activity involving a creative element.

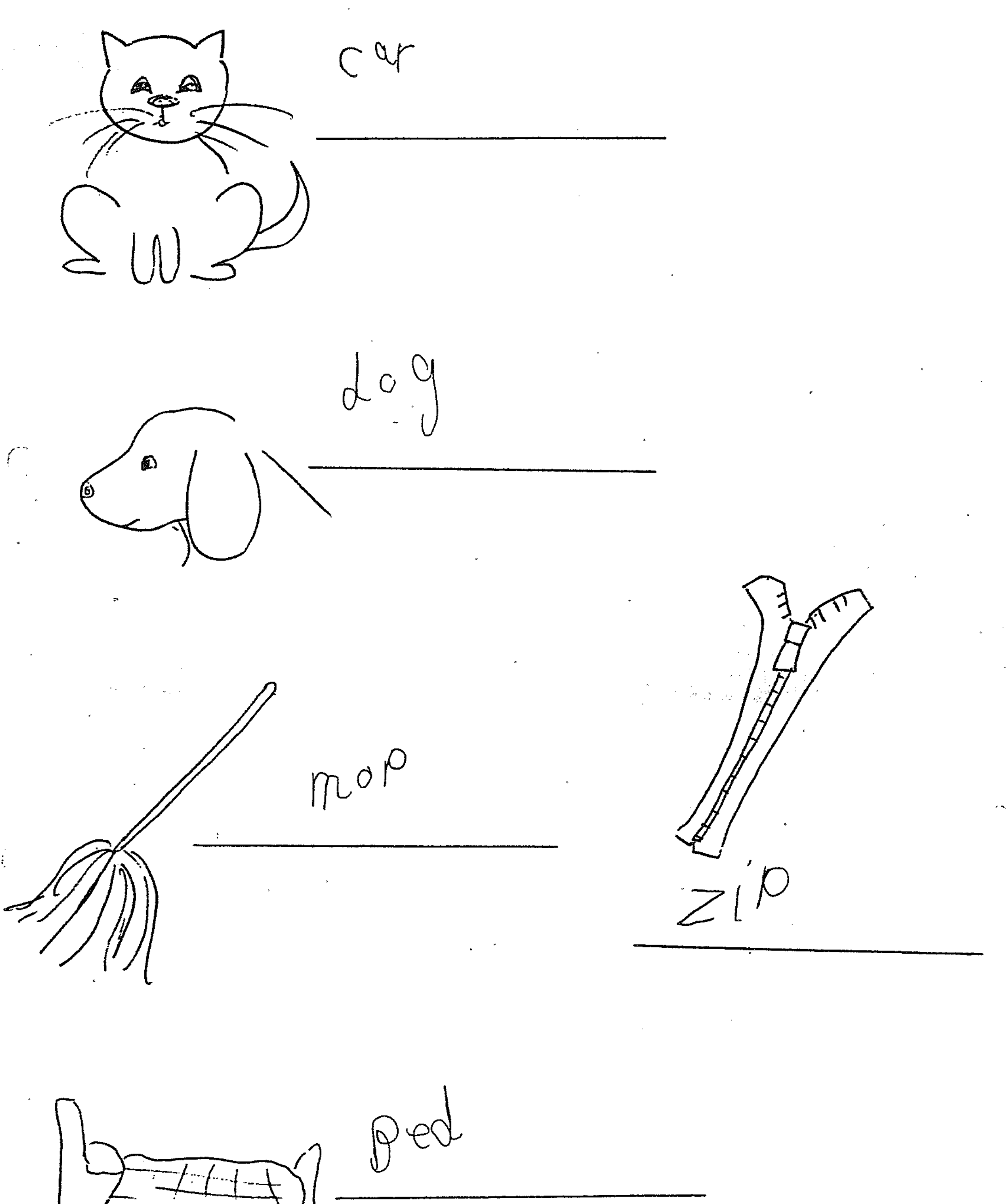
Susan and Katrina spend much time trying to keep the floor clear of sand by sweeping up with a dustpan and brush while other children play. They quickly come to tell me when a child is not following the rules and throws sand (28.2.00 page 94).

Susan says 'We don't like dark blue, do we Katrina? We only like light blue. Ray, you always rush.' She is criticising rushed work that appears to lack care (29.2.00 page 97).

In terms of the literacy learning opportunities at school, they appear to have been pitched perfectly at Susan's level. She has been constantly involved in attempting to answer questions, often clearly rehearsing the answers as she waits. Her reading and writing have progressed to match the teacher's objectives. She practices her reading and spelling frequently at home. She has embraced and taken pleasure in the organisational and social rules of the classroom, which is dominated by female staff and helpers. The teacher described her as 'a pleasure to teach' because her progress had been steady and her interest enthusiastic. It may be that there was a fortunate match between Susan's literacy development needs as she began school, her maturity and developmental readiness to learn, the literacy opportunities delivered in class and her affinity to the style of delivery, classroom ethos and organisation.

Susan's home environment was supportive of her literacy learning, making books and writing/drawing equipment readily available. Susan named her favourite series of books. Whilst her mother reported that the school reading books were read with Susan every day, Susan said that she looked at other books on her own. She didn't have a bedtime story every night, but often watched a video instead.

Table 3: Susan's End-Test



Katrina

As mentioned above, Katrina was a good friend of Susan's and there was an element of friendly competition between them. Katrina joined Susan in taking great delight in femininity, in organisation and in sensible behaviour.

In her pre-school years, Katrina had been very keen on drawing and pretend writing. She enjoyed books and stories.

> *Drawing she's mad on. At pre-school, she went straight to the painting easel every day. Books she likes as long as they're pretty... Katrina loves hardbacks, flaps, wheels* (interview with Katrina's mother 13.3.00).

She had attended nursery in a different English-speaking country and had learnt some letter names and could recite the alphabet. She couldn't recognise all letters. The teacher assessment in September showed that she could give the name of eighteen graphemes, but the sound of only one. By December, it had increased to ten sounds. She had made good early progress in the class with her reading. By April, she could give the phoneme for twenty-two of the graphemes shown to her (ability to write the grapheme from the phoneme was not tested). Her written work in class was neat and legible and she was diligent and rule abiding.

However, her mother and teacher had both identified an area of slight concern. *'She's going through a blip at the moment. That's what we're calling it'* (Interview with mother 13.3.00). She had lost confidence in her reading ability and was reluctant to try any word of which she wasn't absolutely sure. *'You can't even get her to try the first letter. She says 'I don't know.''* Similarly, she wouldn't try to spell unknown words. *'She'll copy it down. You write it all down for her, but she won't try herself... She will not try her own spellings'* (Katrina's mother 13.3.00). Indeed, my field notes reveal the same observations. Katrina was organised, hard working and able to get on with tasks. She was, however, unwilling to attempt to sound and formulate words for herself. Writing

appeared to be something to be endured. The lack of errors in her written work further illustrated how reliant she was on copying unknown words from a model rather than attempting to form them herself (see Table 4 'Katrina's writing')

The 'end test' of CVC words (Table 5 'Katrina's end-test') demonstrated to me that she felt very unsure of how to phonemically segment words and synthesise them using phoneme/grapheme correspondence. She wrote 'cat' instantly without thought, indicating that she knew the word from memory. 'Dog', 'mop' and 'bed' were difficult for her, though she did get the initial phonemes of 'mop' and 'bed'. She appears to have spelt 'zip' correctly, but with letters reversed. Although I was supportive and non-pressuring, she appeared uncomfortable and slightly embarrassed.

Katrina was in the top group with several other children who were beginning to formulate words or who could already read and write. Her lack of confidence may have been based on her desire to conform to the group, together with her awareness of her incomplete understanding about how to decode or formulate simple words compared to her peer group. The targets set for Katrina in March 2000 include:

> *To know the sound of all the letters of the alphabet and the blends sh, th, ch.*
> *To write independently using learned spellings and attempting unknown words using her phonic knowledge* (individual targets set by teacher).

We have already seen how the implicit messages and strategies employed in the whole class and small group teaching made this quite difficult to achieve. The example from the field notes 6.4.00 page 212, which was cited earlier in Chapter 4 page76 illustrates how Katrina interacted with the teaching. I suggest that she particularly would benefit from a closer involvement in the problem-solving of decoding and creating words, drawing on her current knowledge (including phonic knowledge) and skills to practise current and create new understanding. She appeared to have missed a link in the chain of translating spoken language into written and vice versa, which was creating a mystery surrounding

reading and writing and may have accounted for her insecurity. By ensuring appropriation of every link in the chain through closer involvement of recall, cognitive activity and supported new learning, perhaps such difficulties could be avoided or overcome.

The teacher and Katrina's mother were alert to her difficulties and in partnership attempted to address the problem. Her mother had made a point of taking Katrina to buy new books. *'I took her at the weekend to buy her some new, silly books, gimmicky stuff, to try to get her confidence back and her interest in books,* (interview with Katrina's mother 13.3.00). The teacher was attempting to build Katrina's confidence by praising her work.

> *Katrina's writing is praised by the teacher for neatness and she is teased gently. 'Did Mrs. Brown (the classroom assistant) do it for you?' The implication is that it is so neat, an adult must have done it. Katrina is pleased.* (Field notes 31.3.00, page 181).

In the whole class parts of the literacy hour, Katrina was attentive and sometimes volunteered to answer some questions. She was very rarely told off. The whole group and small group phonics work were very much in her ZPD, but in spite of the emphasis on this, she had experienced some difficulty in appropriating the phoneme/grapheme correspondence within words. Delivery of information within a child's ZPD together with home support clearly does not automatically guarantee easy appropriation. Something more is called for in some cases.

Table 4: Katrina's Writing

My name is ....

Little Red Riding Hood

Little Red Riding hood Rran

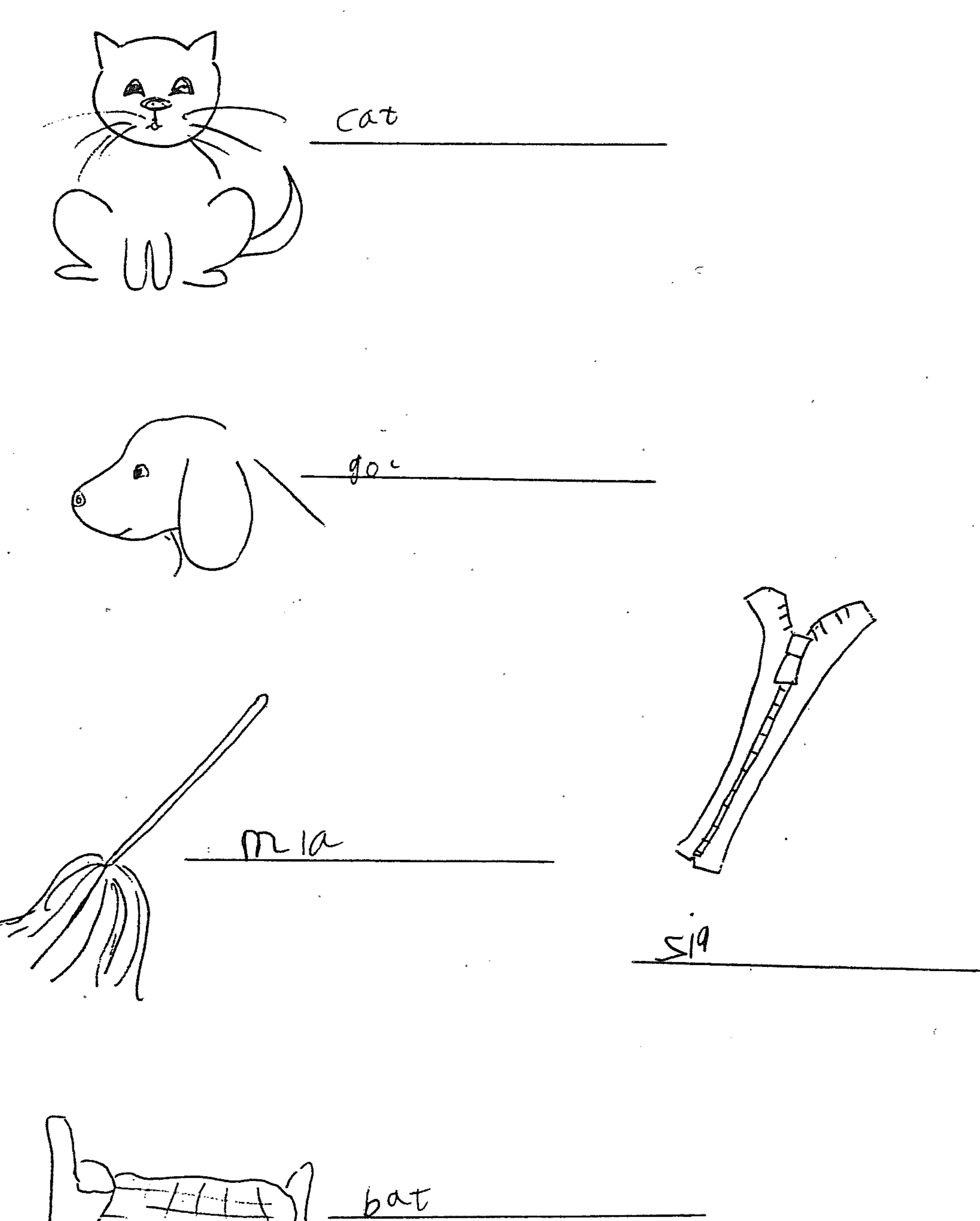
to Granny house. The wolf wos

Her. when she got there she

said to Granny what big

eyes.

Table 5: Katrina's End-Test



The lower scoring group:

Lydia

Lydia, the youngest of four siblings and the youngest in the sample, began school knowing no letter sounds or names. By December, she hadn't retained any and knew only one word from her list of reading words, 'the'. In her pre-school years, she had shown very little interest in pencil and paper activities, although drawing and writing materials were readily available and her mother provided 'early learner' books for colouring and games. Lydia was reluctant to use them. She did, however, enjoy stories and books. Bedtime stories were part of her daily routine. Her older siblings also enjoyed reading to her.

> *Reading books always an interest, but writing, never. But books, yes. And with everyone wanting to read to her, it was easily fed to her... She did not choose to do (writing and drawing) at all, even though I used to buy her colouring books and the house was stacked full of things. But she never chose to do that* (interview with Lydia's mother 20.3.00).

Of Lydia's siblings, two could read and write before starting school, and one had had some difficulties before being diagnosed as dyslexic in year three at school. At the time of interviewing, Lydia had begun to show more interest in pencil and paper activities and was beginning to learn some letter sounds. Her knowledge of phoneme/grapheme correspondences out of context was still unreliable, even for the initial letter of her name, although she could write her name unaided. The teacher had put Lydia into the 'phonics recovery' group in January and she made some progress with her phonic knowledge. The rate of progress was noticeably faster once the 'rainbow' of letters had been introduced in the phonics group. This is not surprising as the field notes reveal some of Lydia's strengths relating to spatial organisation. She was very aware of the placing and storage of items in the classroom, frequently helping others to find and tidy away toys or equipment.

Lydia is confident and negotiates successfully with a friend how to play with Duplo. When something can't be found, Lydia shows assertively that she knows where items in the classroom live and helps her friend to find things. She shows good spatial awareness and sorting skills, as well as determination. (Field notes 17.2.00 page 79).

Her mother, describing her as 'very organised', reinforced the impression.

'She will get herself up and get dressed and ask for help if she's stuck... Curiously, she's still getting muddled up with her shoes, though, between left and right... She likes to organise her bedroom. She has places for things (interview with mother 20.3.00)

Being able to locate the letters of the alphabet in a given position and link recall of the position to their sounds, as well as to the Jolly Phonics actions used by the teacher, appeared to help Lydia to learn. In March 2000, one of her individual targets set by the teacher was '*To learn the sounds of five (or more) letters of the alphabet*', which she clearly was not able to do at that time. By mid-April, however, she was able to give the phoneme for fourteen graphemes out of context.

In the whole class parts of the literacy hour, Lydia was not always attentive or participative, something her mother acting as a parent helper in the class had also noticed. One of her targets in March was *'To try to concentrate at all times, particularly during periods of whole class teaching.'* When she was interested and attentive, though, it was rewarded.

Lydia is more attentive than usual through the big book session and is volunteering answers very often. Her extra attention and enthusiasm appear to be rewarded by the teacher, who asks for her contributions on at least five

> *occasions, quite unusual for Lydia. She is given positive feedback on each occasion.* (Field notes 4.4.00 page 197).

In the plenary, she again volunteered and the teacher helped to ensure success, although Lydia had problems sequencing.

> *The teacher asks the children if they can remember the order of the route taken by Little Red Riding hood. Lydia again volunteers answers. She gets the first one right, but the second wrong. The teacher then asks her for the third answer, which she had given as the second, to give her chance to succeed. The teacher prompts her by pointing out it was the one she had said before.* (Field notes 4.4.00 page 199).

The whole class teaching and the practising of phonic knowledge in the small group work were clearly within Lydia's ZPD. We have already seen how the teacher successfully attempted to scaffold the children's learning. We have here a child who is from a supportive home environment, albeit in a slightly chaotic, associative, creative manner rather than in logical order, in which two children have already been raised with distinct literacy strengths rather than weaknesses. Why then had Lydia's development apparently been slow to take off? It could in part be due to her younger age, though some children younger than Lydia made faster progress, at least initially. It may be that Lydia needed a greater emphasis on close involvement of cognitive activity in recalling known and formulating new skills and knowledge. The phonics recovery group, as we have seen, used more of this style of teaching and learning, which appears to have been of benefit to Lydia.

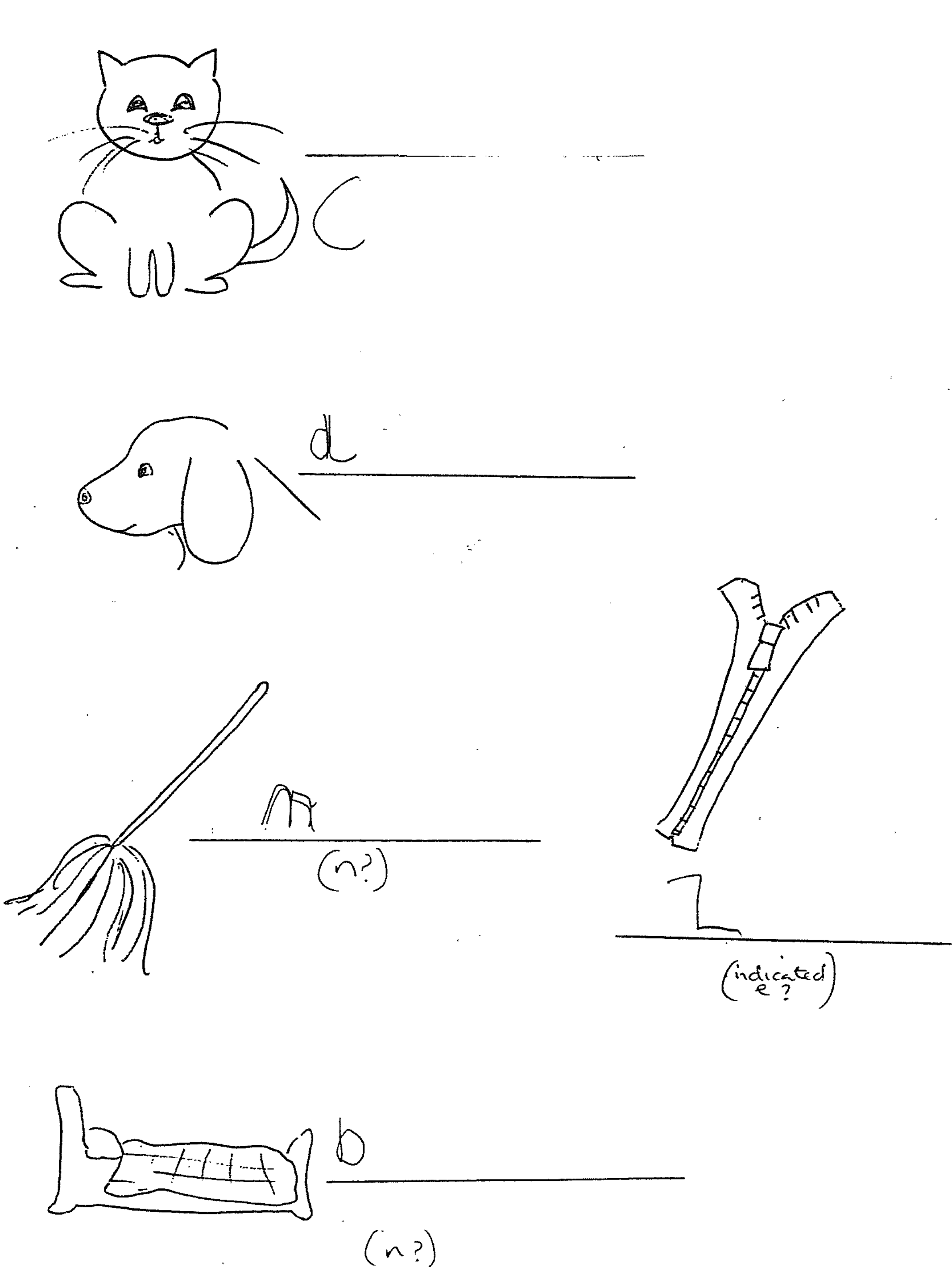
In the small group work, Lydia participated in handwriting and reading exercises, in using her phonics workbook, and in trying to write stories using spellings given to her on paper. For Lydia, this was largely a copying exercise, though importantly it gave the opportunity to increase familiarity with letter shapes and sounds. One occasion, when

Lydia was being helped to write a message inside her Mother's Day card, illustrates how she had not yet made a secure correspondence between spoken and written sounds. The classroom assistant, working with a small group, was writing a message on a white board for children to copy.

> *Classroom assistant (CA) asks 'What does Mummy begin with?' Lydia immediately says 'm'. The CA writes 'M' on the board. Lydia says 'Oh, I didn't know that!' She had not realised what 'M' looked like. CA writes 'To Mummy'. Lydia writes 'To M', which takes up the whole line. CA rubs out Lydia's work apologetically and helps her to write it so that it fits onto the line. CA then asks 'What does 'with' begin with?' Several children call out 'w'. CA writes the word, then asks 'What about 'love'?' Lydia again says 'w', but changes it to 'l'. CA writes 'Love from'. Lydia asks 'Where is the love?' On the board is now the message 'To Mummy with love from'. Lydia attempts to copy it as the CA has been writing. She ends up with 'To Mummy love with froml (sic)'* (Field notes 30.3.00 page 176).

The writing had given her the opportunity to become familiar with letter shapes and to make a connection between initial phonemes and graphemes 'm' and 'l'. A more explicit demonstration and involvement of the children in phonemic segmentation and grapheme correspondence may have helped to strengthen for Lydia the connection between spoken and written sound. She knew that the words conveyed the message, but was not clear which spoken words mapped onto which written words. (It should be acknowledged here that the CA was putting particular emphasis on product rather than process partly because the cards were meant to be gifts.)

Table 6: Lydia's End-Test



Although Lydia was one of the children in the class who found the phonics learning difficult to appropriate, she showed none of the anxiety surrounding reading and writing that Katrina and some other children displayed. The success in the phonics group may have helped to build her confidence and stimulate interest in reading and writing. The end test showed that she had grasped initial phoneme/grapheme correspondence for the words given (see Table 6 'Lydia's end test'). The bracketed letters indicate that Lydia asked me, before attempting to write, whether it was 'n' for 'mop' and 'bed'. For 'zip', she knew the phoneme 'z' but couldn't remember the grapheme. She drew an 'e' in the air with her finger to ask me if that was correct. I indicated that it was 'z'. She was not able or willing to add any other sounds to the onset.

Alan

Alan was an exceptionally quiet, reserved, shy child in class. In his Baseline Assessment, he scored one and two for the elements relating to Language and Literacy, but higher in the Science and Gross Motor Skills elements. On starting school, the teacher recorded no knowledge of the sounds or names of letters, though his mother indicated in interview that he did know some initial letters of names; his own, his family members and a friend. The middle of three children, Alan comes from a home environment accepting and supportive of his strengths and weaknesses. He was described by his mother as lively and athletic at home, but very quiet in a group setting. However, he had started school without showing reluctance or being upset and had made some progress. By December, the teacher recorded that he knew only three letter sounds, but stated that his responses were so quiet, it was difficult to assess. At this time, he also had sight knowledge of eleven of the first forty-five reading words.

At home, he read his school books to his mother every day, which he enjoyed, and about twice a week would choose to look at books, draw pictures and sometimes copy words from his picture dictionary. He had easy access to pens, paper and books. When asked on

13.4.00, he was unwilling or unable to tell me of his favourite books or whether he enjoyed listening to stories at home.

In the whole class part of the literacy hours, the delivery of the phonic knowledge was within Alan's ZPD. He needed to learn and become secure in his knowledge of phoneme/grapheme correspondence. In spite of this, he had not appropriated many sounds by December. Part of the reason for this may have been his low level of involvement in the whole group sessions. From January to March Alan very rarely volunteered to answer a question, to make a statement or ask a question in the whole class part of the literacy hour. He always appeared attentive and was never disruptive or obviously distracted. Consequently, he was very rarely required to make a contribution.

> *Alan looks attentive throughout the mat session on the weather, date, 'showing time' and literacy, but does not volunteer. The teacher does not tend to ask children who do not have their hands up, unless she has a reason such as not paying attention or being disruptive.* (Field notes 2.3.00 page 95).

Alan was put into the phonics recovery group in January and by April was able to give the phoneme for twenty-two graphemes out of context. In the phonics group, he was required to make contributions constantly for a short period of time in a smaller group. In this setting and manner, his understanding and misunderstandings were clear and progress easier to plan and monitor. The example below is taken from the field notes immediately following my observation of the phonics recovery group.

> *CA initiated a discussion with me on the difficulty for some children in distinguishing between the graphemes 'i' and 'j', which were introduced together to the children and do not look very visually distinct except for direction. We talked about Alan's particular difficulty in distinguishing between them. I pointed out that I had noticed his left-handedness and that he had written his name as a mirror image. I asked if he often did that. CA confirmed that he did. We discussed*

how indistinct the two letters would appear to someone for whom direction was not immediately obvious, and CA suggested different ways of introducing the letters next time. (Field notes 14.2.00 page 61).

From later observations, it appeared that Alan was not consistently left-handed and in fact began to favour his right hand more and more. I had noticed his dexterity and spatial abilities in assembling a cardboard teddy bear with paper fasteners. It was unusual for Alan to take the initiative to attempt a task without waiting for permission or reassurance. In view of this, perhaps the use of the 'rainbow' of letters later in the phonics group helped to harness his strengths and provide a frame for the learning.

In the small group parts of the literacy hour, Alan was quiet and diligent but lacking in self-confidence. He would not attempt to ask for instructions or risk doing something alone. He was in a lively group with two children who could be boisterous and my field notes reveal that he usually followed whatever they did in terms of work. In the following example, the group was working on pencil control activity sheets while waiting to read to the teacher.

Alan completes the sheet by 9.47 am. He sits quietly, waiting. Paul also finishes and tells the teacher in a firm voice. She praises him and tells him to get on with colouring in the picture. Alan, listening to this, follows the instructions too. Again he works quietly. (Field notes 2.3.00 page 95).

On another occasion, the group was working on a sheet to choose the correct initial sound for each of a set of pictures (see Table 7 'Alan's work sheet'). It was a very disrupted, noisy session as building work was being carried out next to the open plan classroom. The children were distracted and the CA had to work hard to maintain focus. Alan was quiet and diligent. His sheet was completed correctly and later I notice that the teacher had written 'Unaided' on it. In fact, my field notes reveal that Alan had copied the work of two other children. That is *not* to say that he was *incapable* of completing it

alone. As his confidence in the small group setting developed, later in March and early April, he became a little more forthcoming. Acting as a helper on one occasion, I challenged him to use his own ideas.

> *Paul writes and draws 'chair' for the first 'ch' word. Alan does the same. Paul does 'chip' and Alan shows intention of doing that too until I challenge him to think of some different ones. He then becomes more independent, looking for words in the dictionary himself. He also thinks of an original one that no one else has, 'Chewits'.* (Field notes 14.3.00 page 137).

He was able to hear the 'ch' sound at the beginning of words and recognise them himself.

In the early months, Alan often adopted a tense facial expression when he anticipated being asked to read or write. It was a distinct expression with eyes screwed up as if he was desperately trying to remember or think of a word, even before he had been asked to do anything. The teacher was encouraging and praising. However, I suggest that he was so rarely required to draw upon and use his current knowledge and skills that he was missing the opportunity to develop confidence and security in his knowledge base. When he was required to recall and use his knowledge to problem-solve new knowledge, for example in the phonics group and when challenged to think of things for himself, he appeared to begin to develop a little more confidence. By March, his individual targets set by the teacher included:

> *To speak clearly and confidently in a group situation.*
> *To learn the sounds of ten (or more) letters of the alphabet.*
> *To continue to build up a secure sight vocabulary.*
> *To start to write independently using familiar words and initial sounds.*

Table 7: Alan's Work Sheet

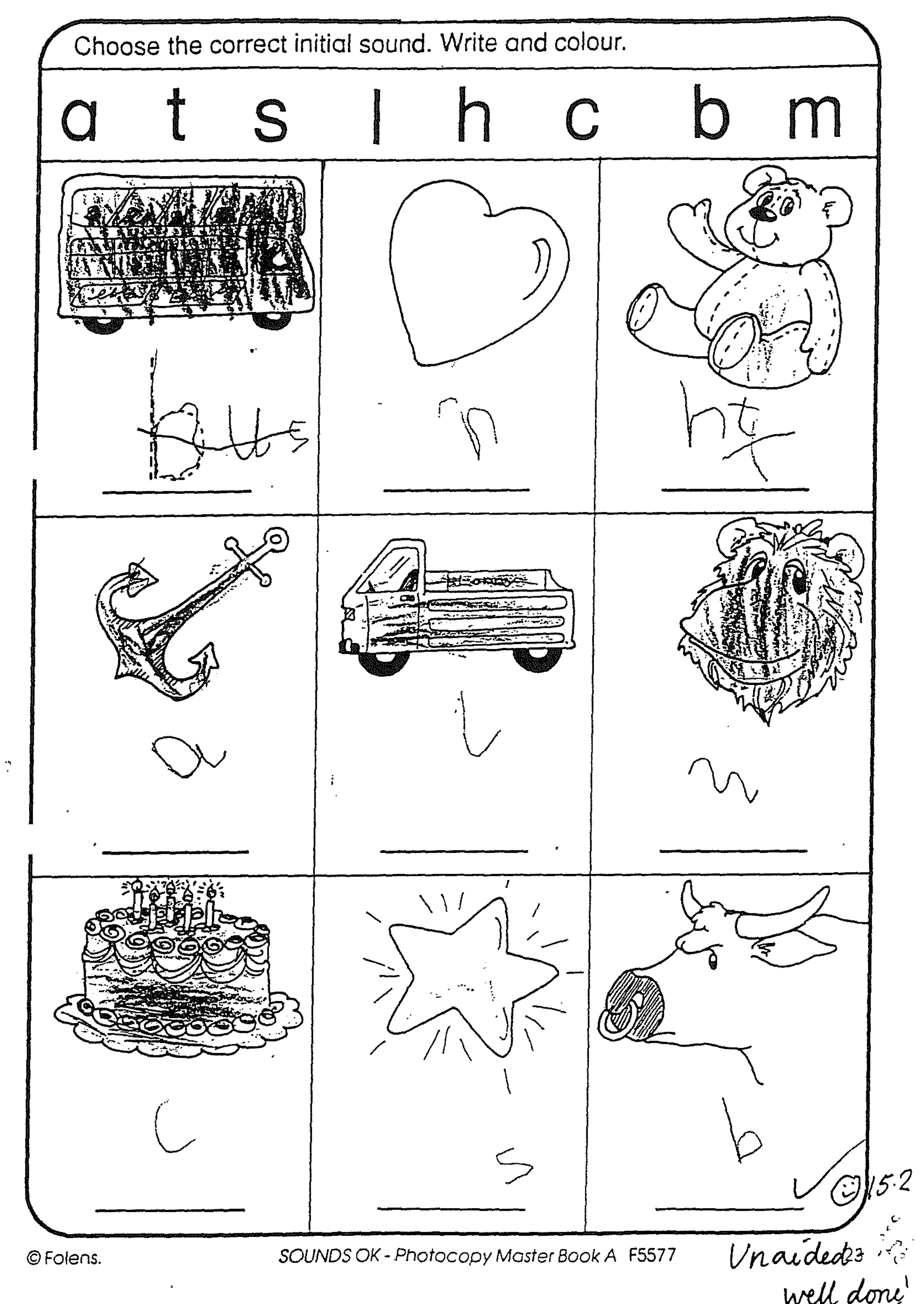
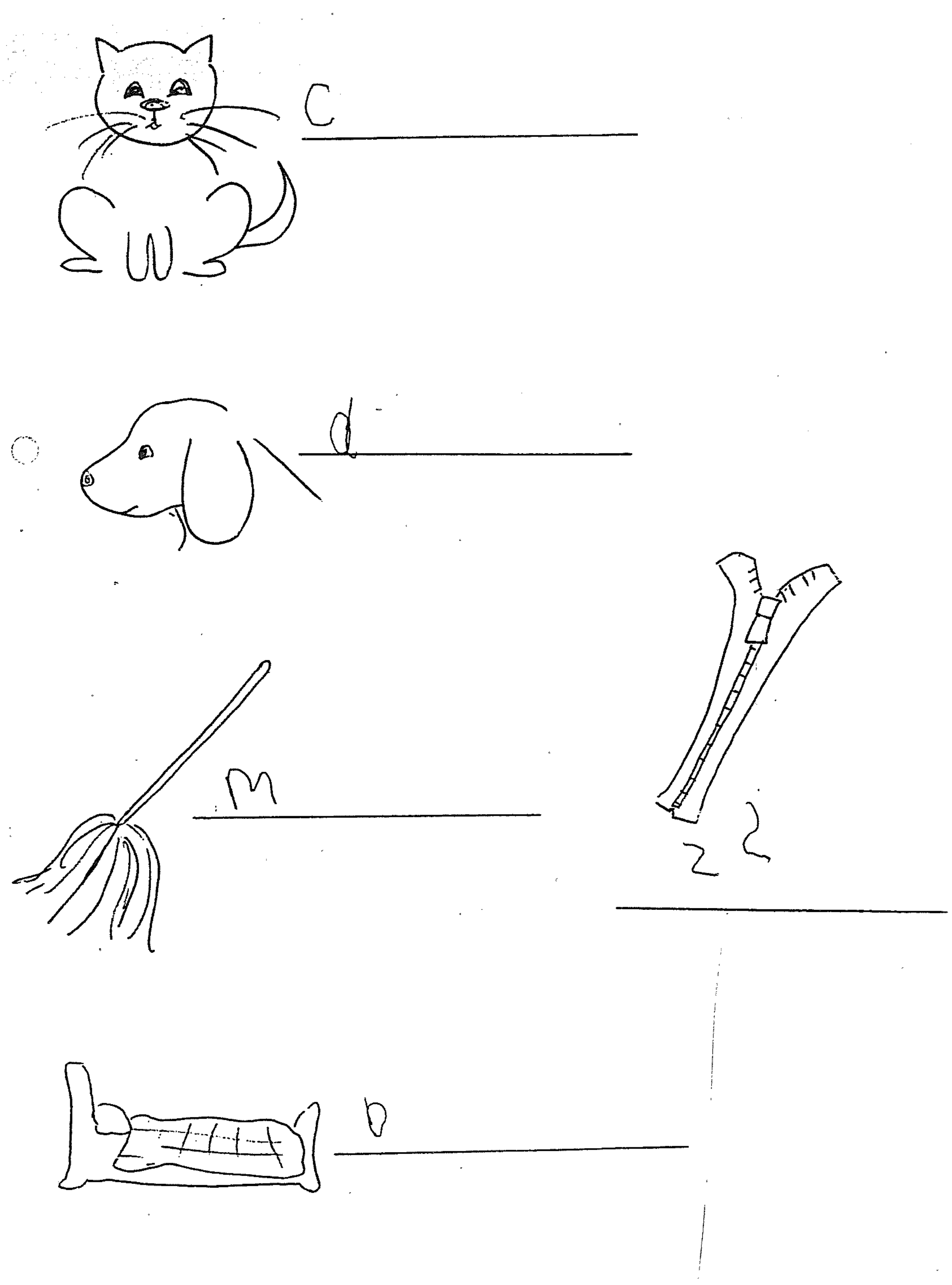


Table 8: Alan's End-Test



In the end test (Table 8 'Alan's end-test'), Alan gave the initial letters quickly and accurately. When I gently prompted with 'Anything else?' to see if he could add anything more to each word as it was written, he shook his head. However, he appeared so secure in his phonic knowledge by then that I felt, given the smallest guidance or prompting, he would have been able to make feasible attempts at the end if not the medial sounds. This had not yet been the objective of the classroom teaching.

Ian

On beginning school in September, the teacher recorded Ian's phonic knowledge as consisting of the sounds of four and the names of six letters. By December, he had learnt fourteen sounds and was able to read twenty-three out of the forty-five words from the reception reading list. His Baseline Assessment scores consisted of three for Speaking and Listening, Reading Behaviour, Letter Knowledge and Handwriting. He scored two each for Phonology, Writing and Gross Motor Skills. Most of his other scores were three to five. I had selected Ian as 'low scoring' because of his comparatively low scores in some of the elements later associated with literacy difficulties.

Ian was the second of two children and spent his early pre-school years in another country with a different language. He went to a bilingual nursery and had a nanny from another language group. He showed little interest in pencil and paper activities in his pre-school years and did not engage much in 'pretend' writing or very much drawing.

> *Massive difference with his sister. He hardly wanted to pick up a pencil or crayon at all. He did hardly any colouring. He didn't do any of that kind of pretend writing. He's just reluctant. I haven't pushed it... He has been into more structured type of things like dot to dot or mazes. He likes those.* (Interview with Ian's mother 20.3.00).

However, he always enjoyed stories and books as part of his routine and had favourite books from an early age. Ian was able to describe his current favourite book to me on 13.4.00 and elaborated by describing his bookshelves and books. Each evening, he read his schoolbook when he arrived home and on most nights he had a bedtime story. *'He wouldn't dream of going to bed without his stories. It's never just one... he chooses to go and look at books at times'* (interview with mother 20.3.00). He was familiar with magnetic letters, Letterland characters and enjoyed Letterland books and games, all of which were available at home, as well as a variety of drawing and writing materials.

The targets set for Ian by the teacher in October included:

> *To learn the sound of twelve letters of the alphabet.*
> *To start to build up a sight vocabulary of key words.*
> *To write his name neatly at all times without being asked.*

By March, the targets had changed to include:

> *To know the sounds of all the letters of the alphabet and the blends sh, th, ch.*
> *To continue to build a secure sight vocabulary.*
> *To write independently using learned spellings and attempting unknown words using his phonic knowledge.*

By April, the teacher recorded that he knew all of the sounds and the given blends. The work in class on phonics and the approach to learning to read, mainly using a logographic approach with picture and initial letter clues appear to have been within Ian's ZPD and he has been able to appropriate the knowledge. He appeared to have gained a secure sight vocabulary of a set of words.

> *It seems to be he is much more into recognising whole words. He doesn't seem to use the sounds much, although he's starting to do that a bit more now... he uses*

picture and context clues mainly. Writing is still a struggle. He doesn't like it at all (interview with mother 20.3.00).

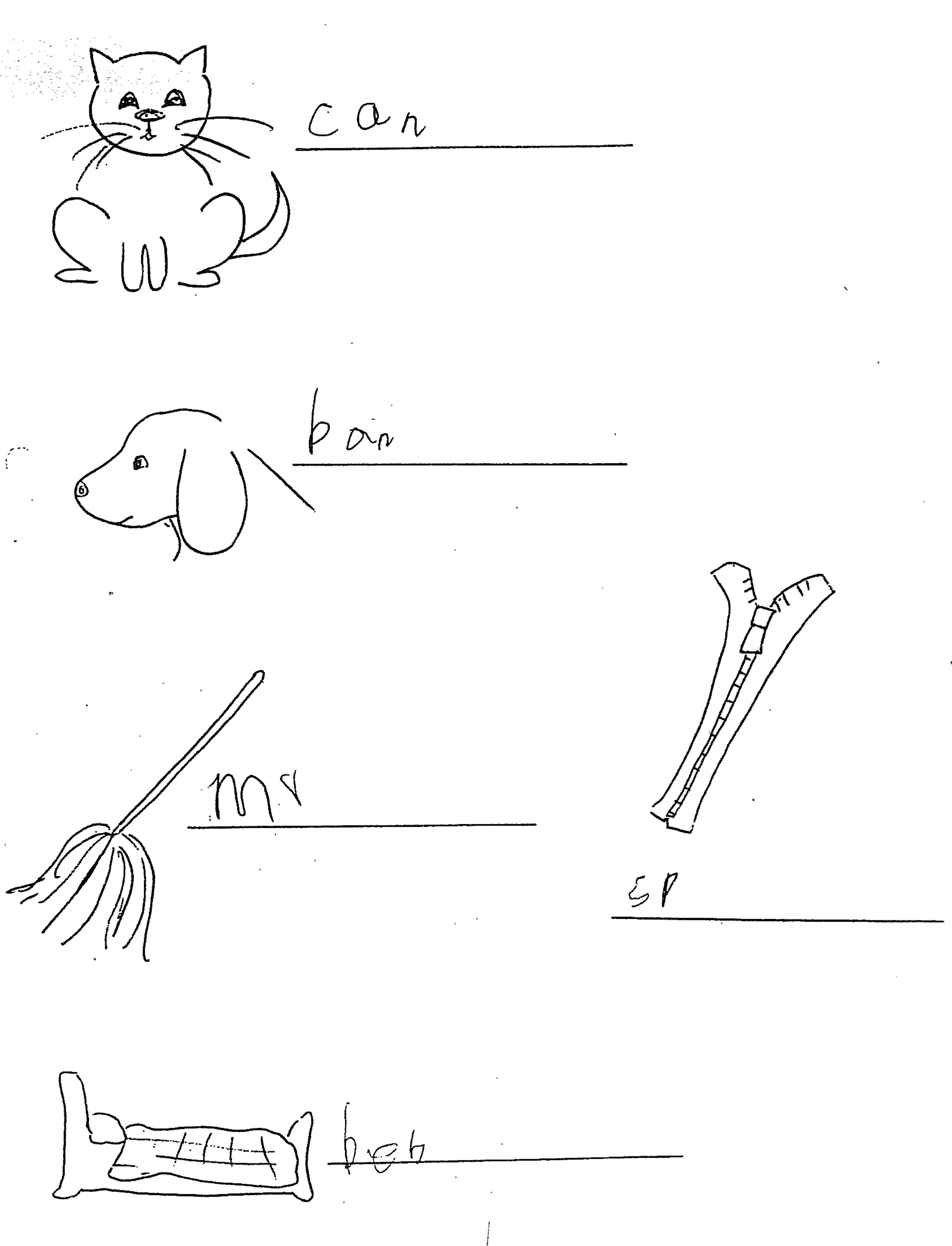
Ian was using his phonic knowledge for initial sounds of words when attempting to write, but beyond that he didn't use his phonic knowledge to attempt to phonemically segment and recreate words in the whole class or small group work. Indeed, as we have seen earlier, much of the style of teaching and learning in the class did not encourage it. In Appendix iii, the child labelled P3 was in fact Ian. We can see the pattern of relying on learned spellings, initial phoneme/grapheme and then the copying from a given model when approaching writing. The end result was writing without any spelling mistakes or phonetically plausible but incorrect attempts. It reads back well, but would be difficult for the child to recreate alone using the learnt strategies. The strategies rely on learnt whole word spellings and adult support to provide unknown spellings. Tackling unknown words independently would be difficult if relying on these strategies.

In the end test (Table 9 'Ian's end-test'), Ian began by putting only the initial letters of the words.

> *I encouraged him slightly by saying 'Listen to the sounds in the words,' but didn't sound the words for him. I could see his mouth moving silently to form 'mop', apparently thinking about the sounds. He was quite successful at segmentation and wrote part of 'mop', the whole of 'bed' and made a good attempt at 'zip', getting the initial and end sounds.* (Field notes 13.4.00 page 221).

He had reversed some letters, but had shown that he was able to make plausible attempts to translate simple, spoken words into previously unlearnt written words by drawing on his phonic knowledge.

Table 9: Ian's End-Test



Ian was in the same small group as Alan. He was lively and enthusiastic in his relationships within the group and was sometimes seen by staff as needing to focus and concentrate more. His individual targets reflected this:

> *To complete a directed task to the required standard* (October 1999)
> *To work hard to maintain a high standard of behaviour in the classroom* (March 2000).

In the whole class work, Ian showed interest in what was going on. He didn't often volunteer to answer, but sometimes showed that he did know the answer.

> *He draws a 'p' in the air to his friend when that is the answer to the question the teacher has just asked, and demonstrates the Jolly Phonic action for another letter whilst a child is trying to write it* (Field notes 15.2.00 page 65).
> *Ian is attentive on the mat, mouthing words and sounds, but not always volunteering* (Field notes 16.3.00 page 143).

He was not chosen to contribute very often. On the two occasions I monitored invitations to answer, he was asked twice on the first day and once on the second. The number of invitations per child ranged from nought to seven. He was mildly reprimanded quite often, but did not show signs of being upset or withdrawn.

He was usually focused and able in the small group work, although his manner of working could involve talking to others, which was sometimes seen as disruptive, as was the case in the example below, in which he had to match initial letters to pictures.

> *Ian is very capable in this task. He has completed three of the nine entries before being officially 'allowed' to start. Some of his talking is to confirm his ideas or make queries about exactly what a picture is showing so that he can choose the correct sound. For example, he asks Angela for help with identifying the 'ape'*

picture, but realises himself it is meant to be 'monkey'. He is interested and focused on his work, although there are lots of distractions. (Field notes 15.2.00 page 66).

The children then played word bingo, the CA having abandoned the other planned tasks for the group because of a perceived lack of concentration. Ian was able to read the words in the game easily and confidently. My field notes reveal that in my opinion, Ian could have achieved much more in this session, and that the work was now below his ZPD.

Ian's social relationships and choice of activities in the afternoon 'choosing' time were boisterous and masculine, involving jokes, cars, and trucks being chased and captured. He appeared to enjoy being part of a boyish social group, but this did not fit well into the female oriented classroom. On one occasion, a male newly qualified teacher spent some time in the classroom. He was quiet and appeared reserved. He was asked to work with the group to which Ian and Alan belonged, male dominated and often boisterous. '*Group appeared to be much more focused with male teacher. Boys responded very positively*' (Field notes 17.2.00 page 74). This was just one incident from which little can be concluded, but it may serve to raise questions about the role of gender in the classroom.

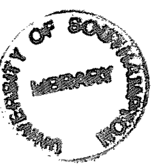
What can we learn from the learners?

Children come into school with widely varying levels of ability and achievement. The differences between individuals are not immediately obvious from the Baseline Assessment scores, and the BAs alone cannot provide a reliable prediction of how a child will progress in reception. Home support, a literary environment at home and an awareness of how and why literacy is taught in school are not automatic precursors to rapid literacy development in young children, although the absence of these may indeed have a negative impact. The parents most well-informed and concerned were not

necessarily those of the children making most rapid progress, although in these six cases all parents showed a good degree of concern and effort in relation to their children's literacy progress.

What appeared to make the most difference was whether or not the teaching and learning style suited the child's needs. If a child was participative in terms of actively trying to seek answers to the questions posed, to problem-solve with the teacher when invited, and the teaching was within the child's ZPD, then the child had a good chance of achieving appropriation. However, if a child was not participating, or found it more difficult to quickly assimilate and retain information, or had missed or misunderstood part of the chain of information or skills, he or she may find it difficult to appropriate knowledge from the literacy hour. The things most explicitly taught and most often requiring the children's active cognitive involvement (in this reception class, initial phoneme and grapheme recognition and production, and whole word recognition of given words) were most likely to be appropriated. Even then, by setting up a phonics recovery group with a more rapid rate of success in appropriating phonic knowledge, the reception teacher demonstrated the effectiveness of a small amount of input when it requires closer cognitive involvement of the child. Progress appears to come from involving the child in working from his or her current state of knowledge, through the child's ZPD towards new knowledge.

Issues relating to how well a child fits into the ethos of the classroom may, to some extent, mask a child's true level of knowledge and skill. Given that female staff and helpers dominated this reception classroom, as in many others, children who fit more readily into the culture may be seen as more successful than those who do not, which may in turn affect how adults respond to them. That is not to say that it is a simple matter of cause and effect. Instead, I suggest it is but one shade in the total picture of how a child negotiates with the teaching and learning situation. How a child is seen in the whole class context is but one part of the child. Other elements help to complete the picture. These include how the child responds in small group and one to one teaching situations,



and the child's level of skill and ability at any given time. The relationship between home and school may further have a bearing on the child's position in the situation, a position that is not necessarily stable, but is ever re-negotiated.

The parents of the six children all expressed a great deal of confidence in the teaching staff and report good relationships with them. The members of staff in the reception class, led by the teacher, show a deep concern for the individual child and his or her learning. Whilst ensuring a high standard in the delivery of the NLS through the literacy hour to thirty children, the teacher seems to recognise the shortcomings of trying to teach to each child's level at once. She tries to address this through individual targets, to be worked on in partnership with parents. She also sets expectations for work to be done at home, groups the children along ability lines for small group work and identifies those in need of extra support, such as the phonics recovery group. But the question remains of whether some changes in approach might be more successful in ensuring learning for all of the children.

Having looked in some detail at the literacy learning opportunities and the interaction between these and the literacy development of six children in the reception class, I now examine the teaching and learning evident in the SIDNEY programme.

Chapter 6

The SIDNEY Teaching and Learning.

In order to address questions about scaffolding, handover and appropriation in the SIDNEY programme, I have focused on the detailed analysis of one video recorded episode of teaching and learning, using the same method as for an episode of mainstream small group literacy teaching (Appendix iii). This is supplemented by field notes of the other SIDNEY sessions observed. The complete transcription of the videotape is included in Appendix iv and the conventions for transcription are made clear.

The episode

The child observed in this episode (P1) had almost completed the SIDNEY programme and was familiar with the pattern of teaching and learning. He also appeared to have formed a relaxed working relationship with the Special Needs Assistant (referred to as T in the transcription). The very beginning of the session, where the SNA settled both of the children to work (P2 works on a worksheet alone, whilst waiting for his turn) was not recorded. This episode, according to my observations, recordings and review of the teaching materials, appeared to be typical of the style of teaching and learning used in the SIDNEY sessions, though the particulars of what was taught depended on the individual child and their stage in the programme.

Evidence of scaffolding

I first examine how the child is supported to work in his zone of proximal development, using Wood, Bruner and Ross's (1976) description of the features of scaffolding.

Recruiting interest in the task; maintaining pursuit of the goal.

From the videotape, there was little evidence of the teacher recruiting interest in the task in any way other than by involving the child in the tasks to be performed. From the outset, the child was constantly active in carrying out parts of the task and making small decisions, based on his knowledge. Such involvement does not automatically recruit or maintain interest in itself, particularly if the task is too easy or too difficult for the child. However, when a task includes some element of cognitive challenge, whilst also drawing on the child's current knowledge and skills, and each small success is encouraged and rewarded, interest can be stimulated and maintained and confidence built.

Sequence 1

1 00.00 T>P1 Can you find the letter that says 'y'? *(P1 takes the letter 'y' from the arc.)*

2 00.06 T>P1 Oh, well done. Now can you write it for me in the sand? *(T passes sand tray to P1. P1 uses finger to correctly form 'y' in the sand.)*

3 00.11 T>P1 Oh, that's a really good one. Can you do it in the air? *(P1 traces a large 'y' in the air with his finger.)*

4 T>P1 Brilliant! Can you do it with your finger on the board? *(T moves sand tray out of the way. P1 traces 'y' on the board using his finger.)*

5 T>P1 Do you think you could be really clever and do one in your book? *(T passes exercise book and pencil to P1.)*

Sequence 2

49 T>P1 Could you do this word for me, P1? In your book could you do 'bad'? *(T looks in pot for pencil. P2 shows T broken pencil.)*

50 T>P2 Can you sharpen it for me? Over there at the bin. *(P1 begins to write.)*

51 5.07 T>P1 Oh, well done. We can tick that one off. How about 'kid'? *(P1 writes again, T watching.)* Oh, excellent and you remembered which sort of 'k' it was. Why is it that sort of 'k'?

52 5.28 P1>T 'i'

53 T>P1 Because it's followed by ... *(T points at 'i')*

54 P1>T 'i'

Sequence 3

62 T>P1 Now, where did we get to? *(T checking records)* We're going to make some 'ip' words. Do you think you could find me the letters that make 'sip', P1?

:

65	P1>T	's-i-p'. *(P1 takes each letter in turn and puts it into position on the board.)*
66	T>P1	Can you sound it for me?
67	P1>T	's-i-p'.
68	T>P1	Spells?
69	P1>T	Sip.

In these examples, the child was asked to carry out each of the tasks himself and was usually praised for his success. Some of the tasks were challenging, as in sequences 4 and 5 below.

Sequence 4

25 P1>T 'z'

26 T>P1 Can you do me two more? *(P1 nods, looking contented.)* Really good ones. *(P1 begins. Interruption by P3 coming into room with query for T. T answers, P3 leaves.)*

27 3.30 T>P1 Try one more? Nice and straight. *(P1 does so.)* Can you think of something that begins with that letter? *(P1 puts pencil to head and looks around, evidently thinking.)*

28 3.47 *(T waits for sometime to allow child time to think. No response.)*

29 3.57 T>P1 Place with lots and lots of animals?

30 P1>T Zoo.

31 T>P1 Yes! Can you think of another one that begins with 'z'? *(T gives time to think. No response.)*

32 T>P1 Black and white stripes?

33 P1>T Zebra.

34 4.07 T>P1 Yes! There aren't many 'z' words, are there?

Sequence 5

71 T>P1 Oh, well done. Can you change 'rip' into 'dip'? *(P1 puts back 'r' and takes 'b', making 'bip'. T notices but does not immediately correct.)*

72 7.41 T>P1 Are you going to sound it out for me? *(T points at letters. P1 begins to sound the first letter, saying 'd' instead of 'b'.)*

73 T>P1 Oh, is that right? Have a look at that letter again.

74 P1>T 'p', no, 'b'. *(T points to other letters)* 'i-p'.

75 8.11 T>P1 Is that 'dip'? Did that sound like 'dip'? Try again? *(P1 has already realised his mistake and swiftly changes the 'b' for 'd'.)*

76 T>P1 That's right, that's right. Well done. Change 'dip' into 'tip'.

Others were less challenging and at one point, P1 appeared rather bored with the routine of a new letter being introduced by tracing it in the sand, air, on the board and then writing it (Sequence 6 below).

Sequence 6

17 T>P1 'zzz'. Now, I'll show you how it goes. *(T takes pencil and traces 'z' in the sand, saying as she does so...)* Across, back...Can you put your finger on it and try it out? *(P1 does so.)* And what sound does it make?

18 2.23 P1>T 'z'

19 T>P1 'z'. Are you going to try one by yourself, now?

20 P2>T I found two 'z's.

21 T>P2 Well done. Can you colour in, now ...the pictures? *(P1 traces a 'z' in the sand with his finger.)*

22 2.36 T>P1 Oh, that's a really good one. Let's see if you can do it in the air with your finger. *(P1 and T trace 'z' in the air with fingers simultaneously.)* Can you do it on the board? *(P1 does so. He looks slightly bored at this point, though has not until now.)* Can you do one in your book? *(T passes book back to P1.)* Now, where does 'z' go? It sits on the ...?

23 P1>T Line.

His boredom was momentary and he soon appeared to be involved again in his tasks. He could probably grasp this newly introduced letter without the routine, but by using the steps, the learning was consolidated and practised, the aim being that it would become

more automatic. Children who retain new skills and information more rapidly and easily may not require such an emphasis on consolidation, thereby removing the danger of boredom, but only by constantly involving the child and drawing on his or her knowledge and skills could a teacher make such a judgement about the rate of progress.

Simplifying the task; demonstrating an idealised version of the act to be performed; marking critical features and discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution.

Simplifying the task was partly done by breaking the task down into a series of steps, demonstrating how to perform each step and encouraging the child to copy, then carry out the step for himself.

Sequence 7

13 T>P1 It's called 'Z', isn't it? *(Interruption from another teacher. T passes sand tray back to P1.)* Do you know what sound it makes?

14 2.03 P1>T Um *(shakes head),* I don't know.

15 T>P1 It goes, look at me, it goes 'zzz'. Try it. What sound does it make?

16 2.11 P1>T 'zzzz'

This combined in some instances with demonstrating an idealised version of the act and marking critical features by talking through the demonstration.

Sequence 8

17 T>P1 'zzz'. Now, I'll show you how it goes. *(T takes pencil and traces 'z' in the sand, saying as she does so...)* Across, back...Can you put your finger on it and try it out? *(P1 does so.)* And what sound does it make?

18 2.23 P1>T 'z'

19 T>P1 'z'. Are you going to try one by yourself, now?

20 P2>T I found two 'z's.

21 T>P2 Well done. Can you colour in, now ...the pictures? *(P1 traces a 'z' in the sand with his finger.)*

22 2.36 T>P1 Oh, that's a really good one. Let's see if you can do it in the air with your finger. *(P1 and T trace 'z' in the air with fingers simultaneously.)*

In this instance (sequences 8 and 9), part of the marking of the critical features occured in advance of the child carrying out the step in order to ensure a good chance of success.

Sequence 9

22 2.36 T>P1 Oh, that's a really good one. Let's see if you can do it in the air with your finger. *(P1 and T trace 'z' in the air with fingers simultaneously.)* Can you do it on the board? *(P1 does so. He looks slightly bored at this point, though has not up until now.)* Can you do one in your book? *(T passes book back to P1.)* Now, where does 'z' go? It sits on the ...?

23 P1>T Line.

24 3.02 T>P1 Line. *(P1 writes a 'z' in his book.)* Oh, well done. What sound does it make? *(P2 is muttering words. T does not respond. P2 may be simply saying words aloud to himself, as T does not usually ignore pupils!)*

25 P1>T 'z'

26 T>P1 Can you do me two more? *(P1 nods, looking contented.)* Really good ones. *(P1 begins. Interruption by P3 coming into room with query for T. T answers, P3 leaves.)*

Another feature of the SIDNEY teaching, an example of which was in this taped episode (sequence 5 earlier), but also noted in other observed sessions, was the encouragement of the child to spot his or her own mistakes supported by the teacher. In this way, discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution were picked up by the child and so became part of the child's repertoire of methods of checking his or her own performance. It is cognitively less passive than simply being told where a mistake has been made. This is not, however, the same as simply allowing children to learn from making mistakes or simply asking them to check their work. Had P1 not noticed the discrepancy, from my other observations, it is clear that he would not have been allowed to miss it. It would have been pointed out to him that he had selected 'b' and made the sounds 'b-i-p' rather than 'dip'. The teaching was therefore explicit, but involved the

child's cognitive activity in the learning. Another example taken not from this episode, but from field notes of my other observations of SIDNEY teaching, further illustrates the point.

> *Child is asked to make the word 'quit' using the plastic letters. He makes 'qit'. Rather than immediately pointing out the mistake, T says 'Does it look right?' When the child does not realise his mistake, she prompts further by saying 'Does 'q' look right on its own?' and then 'What do we always have with 'q'?' The child then realises his mistake and inserts 'u' into the word.* (Field notes 16.3.00 page 151).

Whilst this can seem rather like a guessing game, with the teacher trying to prompt the child into saying the right thing, an example of what Edwards and Mercer call 'cued elicitation' (Edwards and Mercer 1987, page 142), it is in my opinion an approach that encourages thought. It also offers strategies that can be used by the child independently, in these cases checking whether a spelling says what it is supposed to and checking whether it looks right. Because the approach is used consistently, the child regularly has to draw upon these strategies to check their work and be involved in creating the words. It is also based on 'principled knowledge' (Edwards and Mercer 1987, page 92) of the spelling rules which are taught explicitly as part of the programme:

- use 'k' before 'i' and 'e'
- always follow 'q' with 'u'.

The children have greater opportunity for being involved, understanding and so appropriating the knowledge and skills.

Controlling frustration during problem solving

There was little evidence of this aspect of scaffolding in the taped episode. However, it could be argued that the very design of the programme and the nature of the teaching and

learning approach in themselves serve to prevent and control frustration. The step-by-step nature of the programme, its systematic build up of skills and, most importantly, its involvement of the child's cognition throughout with the teacher making tiny adjustments to support and pace depending on the child's progress, means that frustration is largely avoided. Sequences 1 and 9 above illustrate the point. The problem of boredom occurring through repetition of method was noted briefly once, but the pace of progress adjusted for each child and the use of child-centred rewards helped to reduce the threat of boredom.

Evidence of handover and appropriation

As in previous analyses (Appendix iii, and earlier section on whole class teaching, page 68), having established that scaffolding was taking place, I turn to an examination of evidence for the handover of knowledge and skills, for appropriation by the child. I again looked for evidence of what the child knew and could do independently, and for evidence of the process that ensured new knowledge and skills were appropriated by the child. As before, I used 'spontaneous' and 'elicited contributions' (Edwards and Mercer 1987 page 131) as an approximation of the child's knowledge.

As in previous analyses, spontaneous contributions are extremely rare. It appears that children in these circumstances expect to be guided by the teacher and follow her agenda. One instance of a spontaneous contribution occurring here was that of P1 suggesting a word beginning with 'z' after the teacher had indicated an intention to move on.

Sequence 10

31 T>P1 Yes! Can you think of another one that begins with 'z'? *(T gives time to think. No response.)*

32 T>P1 Black and white stripes?

33 P1>T Zebra.

34	4.07	T>P1	Yes! There aren't many 'z' words, are there? While you've got your book out, shall we practice some of these words? *(P1 is mouthing 'zoo' to himself.)*
35		P1>T	Ah, I've got another one.
36		T>P1	Oh, go on then.
37		P1>T	Zowie *(pronounced as in 'know')*
38		T>P1	Pardon?
39	4.19	P1>T	Zowie.
40		T>P1	Oh, Zowie! *(pronounced as in 'how'.)* I don't think I've got Zowie with me. *(T looks in pencil holder.)*
41		P1>T	No, Zowie! *(pronounced 'know' emphatically)*
42		T>P1	Zowie...oh, the girl's name. Do you know someone called Zowie?
43		P1>T	Yes.
44		T>P1	Hmm, well done.
45		P1>T	Mrs H's little girl.
46		T>P1	Oh, yes. I remember her. Are you going to sit up nicely? *(P1 has slumped into chair)*

P1 had clearly been trying to think of 'z' words and, dissatisfied with only having the two examples 'zoo' and 'zebra' prompted by the teacher, continued to search for one of his own. Once he had thought of one, he was assertive in ensuring that it was heard correctly and in explaining its origin.

Elicited contributions

The episode of teaching, typical of the SIDNEY teaching I observed, was littered from beginning to end with elicited contributions. Rather than attempting to refer to and comment on each instance, which would result in almost the entire transcript being replicated here, instead I list the skills and knowledge elicited from the child. The line numbers refer to the transcription, Appendix iv page169.

- ability to recognise and select the grapheme 'y' from its given phoneme (line 1)

- ability to copy the grapheme 'y' in sand, in the air, on the board, and on paper using a pencil (lines 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
- knowledge of the position of the grapheme 'y' when written on a line (line 7)
- knowledge of the position of 'y' in the alphabet (line 10)
- ability to copy 'z' from example and instruction (lines 19, 21, 22, 23, 24)
- ability to think of a word beginning with 'z' (lines 27, 35, 37)
- ability to formulate and write the words 'bad', 'kid', 'bed', 'dig', and 'bag' (lines 49, 50, 51, 55, 60)
- ability to give (correct) reason for choosing 'k' in 'kid' (lines 51, 52, 53, 54)
- ability to select and order plastic letters to formulate the words 'sip', 'rip', 'tip', 'zip', and 'pan' from a verbal request (lines 62, 65, 70, 76, 82, 83)
- ability to sound out and so read back the words formed (lines 66, 67, 68, 69, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85)
- ability to return letters to their correct position in the alphabet (line 88)
- ability to recognise a mistaken 'b' for 'd' when prompted by the teacher (lines 72, 73, 74, 75, 76).

Only two of these contributions involved the child in copying, a more passive form of cognitive activity. The others (perhaps less so for the prompted correction) involved a more active drawing upon and using knowledge and skills. Sequence11 illustrates:

Sequence 11

86 9.03 T>P1 We found another 'z' word, didn't we? Now, here's a difficult one. Think about which letter you need to keep. Can you change 'zip' into 'pan'? *(P1 puts back 'z' and 'i')* Oh, well done. *(P1 forms rest of 'pan' using plastic letters.)* Sound it out for me? *(T pointing at letters.)*

87 P1>T 'p-a-n'.

88 T>P1 Oh, brilliant. Can you put them back in the alphabet, all of them this time?

An example taken not from this episode, but from my field notes of other observations of SIDNEY teaching, show how typical this pattern of teaching and learning is of the programme.

> *A child is asked to make the word 'yip', then to make a word that rhymes with 'yip', using the plastic letters. She makes 'hip'. The child is asked to make 'zap', then to make a word rhyming with 'zap'. She makes 'cap'. Here the child is drawing on her knowledge of what makes words rhyme (the rime!) to help her to spell by analogy, as well as drawing on her knowledge of phoneme/grapheme correspondence and phonemic segmentation* (Field notes 6.3.00 page 117).

It is the pattern of teaching and learning that I believe ensures a more rapid handover of knowledge and skills and helps to explain the rate of learning. The contributions were not necessarily verbal, but they involve the child in recall, thought and use of the developing skills and knowledge to demonstrate current and simultaneously formulate new understanding. This is the process of learning.

How does the SIDNEY programme help?

In terms of literacy learning, what does the SIDNEY programme offer to children? Its emphasis is clearly on teaching the alphabetic system. To use Frith's model of literacy learning which describes the progression from logographic to alphabetic to orthographic stages of reading and writing (Frith 1985), the programme sits firmly in the alphabetic stage. As it is designed for children experiencing or at risk of literacy difficulties, this is a very sensible aim. Research has shown that dyslexic children often appear to 'get stuck' in the logographic stage, with difficulty in cracking the alphabetic code and orthographic stages of reading and writing. This leaves some children with the very laborious and difficult task of learning each new word logographically (Frith 1985, Snowling 1987). A child can be helped towards moving beyond this hurdle by explicitly teaching and ensuring learning of the alphabetic stage (Ehri 1995, Snowling 1996).

At first glance, it appears that the mainstream literacy teaching based on the Early Learning Goals (DfEE 1999) and the National Literacy Strategy include a similar aim. Certainly the teaching observed in the reception class placed great emphasis on learning phonics, the basis of the alphabetic system. However, on closer examination, I believe there to be three small but fundamental differences, in addition to fact that the SIDNEY programme is taught one to one and is consistently multi-sensory.

First, there is greater and more explicit emphasis in the SIDNEY programme on the direct link between spoken and written language, using both the 'phonological' and the 'core' (alphabetic) routes. Shortcomings of this feature, beneficial in the early stages of reading and writing, may become apparent at a later stage as clearly all reading and writing does not work phonetically. This can be avoided if the orthographic rules of spelling and reading are taught in a similar manner, in the way that 'qu' was introduced (field notes 16.3.00 page 151) and as in the Additional Literacy Support programme. Generally speaking, though, SIDNEY does not aim to go further than the alphabetic stage.

Secondly, the SIDNEY programme makes use of cognitive supports and strategies that I suggest offer 'conceptual frames' in which to locate the learning. An example of this is the consistent use of the 'whole picture', the rainbow of letters always visible in alphabetic order, giving a defined set of letters to be learnt, to select from, and a place in which to locate each one. Another example is the systematic nature of the skills' development, helping the child to assimilate the new information. An excerpt from the field notes illustrates the point.

This is how each new phoneme/grapheme is introduced to the child:

- *new letter is introduced*
- *its sound is asked for and given*
- *child looks at its position in the alphabet rainbow*
- *child is asked to think of something beginning with that sound*

- *child writes in the air with a finger*
- *child writes in the sand with a finger*
- *child writes on the board or table with a finger*
- *child writes on paper with a pencil, teacher checks its position on the line and talks about it*
- *child is asked to use it correctly to create words using plastic letters and to write words*
- *child is asked to return the plastic letter to its correct position in the alphabet.* (Field Notes 10.2.00 page 57)

Spelling rules are made explicit and practised, drawing children's attention to them and requiring them to be able to recall and use the rules at later sessions. *'Which type of 'c' do we need before 'a'?... Which type of 'c' do we need before 'i'?... What does 'q' always need after it?'* (Field notes 6.3.00 page 115)

Self-help or self-checking strategies such as sounding out and reading back the words that have been created with plastic letters or written, and checking to see if they 'look right' further encourage appropriation. They also help to make the links between skills used by young children for reading and those used for writing. The research of Bryant and Bradley (1985) shows children do not automatically make such links. Using the skills of each for the other help children to make leaps forward in both reading and writing.

The third, and I believe most important difference, is the amount of involvement of the child's cognitive activity in the problem solving and so the existence of a process more likely to result in handover and appropriation. Whilst the content of the literacy teaching in SIDNEY is clearly important and the style of its delivery suits the needs of the children using it, the most interesting and useful feature I believe to be the implicit model of teaching and learning on which it appears to be based. It is this that I feel can offer most to mainstream teaching. I suggest that its effects could apply equally well to

the teaching of other subjects and not be confined to literacy learning. I attempt to identify and describe the model in the conclusion.

Part 3 Conclusion and Discussion

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Tizard's research (Tizard et al 1988) suggested that teachers and parents tended to apportion blame or credit to each other, but that the characteristics of the child often appeared to be overlooked. The research also pointed to the special importance of teaching in the reception year as something that could be used to redress the gap evident between children's literacy skills and knowledge on starting school. This study has attempted to take into account individual children's characteristics and interactions in looking at literacy teaching and learning. It has also attempted to identify a model of teaching and learning interaction that may be even more effective in helping children to progress. In the conclusion, I now attempt to make this more explicit.

Though I realise I am not comparing like with like by studying the SIDNEY programme in year one alongside the NLS in a reception class, it was the differences in the style of teaching and learning in which I am specifically interested. Clearly there are some obvious differences which could help to explain the apparent success of SIDNEY. The programme operates on a one to one or one to two basis in year one, so the children are a year older than reception children. It is offered to children who have been identified as being 'at risk' of literacy difficulties. Literacy recovery is clearly on the agenda for these children and it is feasible this might influence the behaviour of parents and teachers towards them which in turn could influence the rate of recovery. It is also, in common with many dyslexia remediation programmes, a highly systematic, multi-sensory approach.

However, I believe that there are other distinct though slight differences between this programme and mainstream teaching. These are differences in the way in which the children are involved in the learning process. It is these that interest me and which I feel could offer important lessons to mainstream teaching.

Firstly, the information in the SIDNEY programme is presented to the children within what I would call *'conceptual frames'*. In other words, not only are the objectives explicit and what is expected of the pupils made explicit, but a constant reminder of the 'whole' gives a pattern into which new information can be slotted, thereby making it more manageable for the children to understand and remember. An example of this is the use of the rainbow of plastic letters of the alphabet, presented as part of a closed set with a specific place for each, making the information more manageable. When the children are asked to create CVC words using the plastic letters, they take them from and return them to the rainbow. This reinforces the link between spoken language being translated into written language using the alphabet. Another conceptual frame is the explicit teaching that spoken and written messages are divided into words and that words are divided into syllables and phonemes, which are made up from the alphabet.

The mainstream reception teaching, though incorporating very similar content, appeared not to use these devices consistently, except where they were introduced to the 'phonics recovery group' with seemingly impressive results in helping some children. The exception to this was the way in which the teacher promoted a sight vocabulary of reading words. The words were presented to children pictorially as bricks making up a wall. The words also featured in the reading books that most of the children used.

Secondly, there is the greater *involvement of the children in problem –solving* the creation of words or in reading words presented to them. Only a close examination of the interaction transcription reveals how much the SNA in the SIDNEY programme used elicited contributions to ensure direct involvement of the child, compared to level of involvement in problem solving in the reception class in the whole class and small group work. In my opinion, it is this close involvement, the rehearsal and putting into practice learnt skills and knowledge and the joint problem-solving of new tasks which leads to the faster rate of appropriation. This may in part be responsible for the high 'success-rate' of the SIDNEY programme in teaching children to read and spell CVC words (Bentote 1998).

Thirdly, the *incremental and systematic* nature of a programme such as this is also, I suggest, part of its difference in approach to learning. By this, I do not mean 'systematic' in the sense that it is usually meant, that one stage must logically and inflexibly follow another, although that is part of its nature. Instead, I refer to the way in which understanding and appropriation of each step by the child is ensured before any attempt is made to move the teaching forward. Whilst this may sound slow and laborious, it instead allows for dynamic interaction, involving the child closely, ensuring understanding and the ability to use information while stepping up to the next stage or level of knowledge. The rate of progress is set by the child's ability to understand, retain, recall and use knowledge or skills. It is an approach that appears to build confidence, as the child becomes secure in his or her knowledge and understanding. The teaching never goes ahead leaving the child behind, and there are no 'mysteries' for the child, with the teacher unaware that minute though possibly important levels of understanding have not been achieved. The model (Table 10 'Interactive teaching and learning model') attempts to illustrate.

In the model, the elicited contributions are not simply a method of checking the child's knowledge, although this is in itself important. Rather, they also involve the child in *recalling* and *using* what he or she knows to develop deeper understanding and appropriation as well as beginning to form the next level of understanding.

The mainstream reception teaching is systematically and carefully planned and delivered. It does offer flexibility to take account of children's varying needs and attempts to build in individual learning objectives. However, a close analysis shows the much smaller amount of close involvement of some of the children in problem solving, drawing on their knowledge and skills.

Table 10 Interactive teaching and learning model

Starting point

(A) = child's current level of knowledge and ability

↘

Teacher *elicits* (A), supports child in problem-solving *using* (A) and *adds new input* in small amounts, leading to (Ai).

↙

Child *uses* (A) and (Ai) to *practise* new skills, *problem-solve* using these skills, *recall* information and *consolidate learning*, leading to (B) = child's current level of knowledge and ability

↘

Teacher *elicits* (B), supports child in problem-solving *using* (B) and *adds new input* in small amounts, leading to (Bi)

↙

Child *uses* (B) and (Bi) to *practise* new skills, *problem-solve* using these skills, *recall* information and *consolidate learning*, leading to (C) = child's current level of knowledge and ability.

But what of the difficulties involved in achieving this type of teaching and learning with a whole class of children? Before despairing, because it clearly is easier one to one or one to two, I do think there are ways in which the important elements can be incorporated into the general reception classroom, some of which the experienced, competent and concerned reception teacher I observed has demonstrated.

1. Some of the conceptual frames can be provided for the children quite easily in the whole class teaching and in the small group working. For example, the use of an alphabet rainbow could be included whenever phonics, writing, spelling or reading is taught. Being very explicit about phonology may help, for example how spoken language is divided into words and words into syllables; that spoken language can be split into sounds and the sounds written as letters and words; that some words 'sound out' easily and others don't.

   Taking Edwards and Mercer's (1987) point on the need to be explicit about what is to be learnt, I suggest that there is room for many of these things to be made more explicit. In the same way, reading strategies can be made very clear to children rather than waiting for the children to discover the strategies for themselves. The reception teacher in this study clearly encourages whole word recognition, use of context clues, use of illustration clues, and phonics (mainly initial letter clues) to help children to learn to read. I suggest being even more explicit by telling children in simple terms about the strategies that might help them, rather than just demonstrating their use.

2. A little bit of regular closely involved teaching and learning interaction goes a long way. The 'phonics recovery group' in reception, described earlier, showed rapid progress in phonic knowledge, overtaking some other children in the class during the spring term, although the group only ran for five to ten minutes each day.

   It appears that by carefully grouping the children based on their current level of knowledge, skill and ability, providing the conceptual frames and explicit messages, it is possible to make a difference. This could be done in short bursts of time by involving the children closely in problem-solving, using elicited (and spontaneous wherever possible) contributions to ensure effective scaffolding, work in their ZPDs and continuous appropriation. I emphasise the short but

regular time slots, particularly for young children, who may find the more active cognitive involvement tiring.

The reception class teacher has shown us how children can be actively involved in the process of whole class writing, though it is not clear how many of the children were actually involved. My feeling is that the interactive model of teaching and learning described above would be most effective in small to medium size ability groups where the contribution and so understanding and performance of all the children could be effectively monitored, and the support accordingly adjusted. This would differ to the more individual work currently done in small groups in reception, where achievement of end product is sometimes at the expense of the learning process and genuine, deeper understanding (Appendix iii).

The other dilemma, of course, is that clearly not all children need this approach in order to learn. Many of the children are learning at a perfectly acceptable rate with the current arrangements and some were well ahead in reading and writing even before formal education began, apparently through no specific input (see ***Henry***, page 80) Some children seem more able to make sense of the complex messages around them and able to assimilate, order and put into practice information and skills. Other children, on the other hand, not necessarily through any lack of 'intelligence', find it more difficult to decipher or unravel implicit messages, to maintain a pace of reception and understanding. Once left behind in one or two key sub-skills or nuggets of information, other new things become a mystery, particularly as new understanding can depend on previous understanding. A challenging thought is that perhaps the very able children would learn even more rapidly and with greater understanding, using the approach. Based on the evidence presented in the study, I suggest that it might be both possible and beneficial to move all children forward with greater understanding and pace by employing this model at least for some of the time, sufficient to affect progress.

It may not be easy to implement in a busy class of thirty or more children, whilst trying to put into practice the government initiatives of Early Learning Goals, National Curriculum, National Literacy Strategy and the Numeracy Project. However, minor shifts in approach may make it more possible to engage in the complex task of helping each child to learn, leaving fewer behind. Further research into the nature and impact of a more interactive model of teaching and learning, in which learning rather than delivery comes into sharper focus, is needed. Other remediation programmes successful in helping people with literacy difficulties to learn may provide sources of useful data.

Final comment

I set out expecting to find something of interest in the content of the SIDNEY teaching programme that would account for its greater success in helping children with potential literacy difficulties along the road to literacy development. I was surprised and intrigued to find that the differences may be in the detail of the model of teaching and learning used, rather than in the content. This has been a very small-scale study and the conclusions drawn can be only tentative, indicating the need for more research. However, given the possibility that the pattern of interactive learning, if corroborated by further research, could have potential benefits for other areas of learning, I feel that further research would be worthwhile.

The study has gone some way towards understanding the processes involved in literacy teaching and learning in one reception class. It has raised questions about the extent to which 'scaffolding' as described by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) contributes to learning and has attempted to show that active cognitive involvement by the child, though supported by an adult, may be more conducive to learning than the child simply being supported in a more passive sense.

Appendices

Appendix i

Interview Schedule

Parent Interviews
Guideline for questions

Pre-school *(Child's position in family?)*

When did your child start talking? Did s/he have any speech difficulties at all?

1. In your child's earlier years, how much interest did s/he show in
   - books, stories
   - 'writing', drawing?

2. Did s/he know any letter sounds/names before starting school? Was s/he able to read or write any words before starting school? (NB. Name, pretend writing)

3. How frequently did you read to your child or spend time writing with your child? Did you try to teach your child to read? How?

4. What sort of pre-school or nursery experience did your child have? How did the pre-school encourage literacy, if at all? (eg. teaching letters, encouraging writing, pencil control, use of books). Describe frequency, type of activities, routines.

Starting school

5. (Assuming you have seen your child's Baseline Assessment), how accurate do you think it was? Anything that didn't seem to accurately reflect your child's abilities?

6. How did your child feel about starting school?

Now

7. How is your child progressing with reading and writing now? What do you think are his/her capabilities at the moment? (letter sounds known, reading, beginning to write?)

8. Is there anything your child is not so good at? Do you have any concerns?

9. Does your child choose to look at books, read, write (or pretend) at home? What does s/he do to have access to books, paper, pencils? (ie. does child need to ask, are they readily accessible, where are they located?)

10. What are your child's favourite free-time activities at home? What does s/he choose to do when playing alone?

11. What is you child's favourite book(s)?

12. How often do you or a member of the family spend time reading with/ writing with your child? For how long? Give examples.

13. Can you give me some examples of how your child would routinely see members of the family making use of literacy? (Reading, writing lists, using lists, catalogues etc)

14. What were the targets for your child at Parents' Evening? How are these being worked on? By whom?

15. What are your thoughts on how literacy is taught/encouraged in reception? How much do you know about it? What about the contact between home and school?

16. Has any member of your family (extended family, child's grandparents, too, if known) had any difficulty when learning to read or write?

Thank you! Please feel free to phone me or contact me at school if you think of other things in relation to the conversation (however small), or if you want to change the information given. You or your child will not be identified in the study. However, I may use direct quotes from the conversation or paraphrase parts. I may phone you to check my accuracy of understanding. Is that okay?

Appendix ii:

Average Baseline Assessment Scores for Older and Younger Reception Children

Analysis of Average Baseline Assessment Scores for Reception Children

In order to see if there was any link between age and Baseline Assessment scores, the ages of the children were turned into a numerical code that would allow the ages to be plotted against the numbers of the scores. Years and months do not translate simply into a figure useful for calculations clearly because of their non-decimal nature. Instead, the children were given an age in numbers of days over 4 years on the 1st November 1999, the date on which the Assessment was completed. The figures ranged from 383 days to 64 days.

The next step was to plot the ages against the scores, which ranged from 0 to 5 over a number of elements. To begin with, each child's mean score was used. A line of best fit was drawn and the correlation coefficient calculated. The result was very low, indicating that there was not a strong linear relationship between the two variables.

I then explored the differences between the scores for the 'older' children and the 'younger' children. This was done by calculating the average age and comparing the average score amongst the 12 above average age children with that of the 17 below average age children. The results looked considerably different for each of the two groups, even with the inclusion of the two lowest scoring older children in the first group and the 3 higher scoring younger children in the second group. A T-test showed the result to be statistically significant (0.014); that is, it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. The figures are shown overleaf.

Older children

No. of Days over 4 yrs on 1.11.99	Average Baseline Score
383	4.2
377	3.8
375	4.4
369	3.3
365	3.5
332	4.4
312	4
294	4.2
275	3.3
271	2
249	2.6
231	3.3

Older group

Average BA score	**3.58**
Stand. Dev.	**0.55**

Younger children

No. of Days over 4 yrs on 1.11.99	Average Baseline Score
206	3.3
199	2.9
194	2.7
181	3.5
170	2.8
161	2.8
141	3
121	3.1
113	3.1
105	2.7
102	3.6
99	3.3
84	2.3
78	2.7
69	2
67	2.8
64	3.3

Younger group

Average BA score	**2.93**
Stand. Dev.	**0.17**

T-test 0.0145

Appendix iii:

From Scaffolding to Handover: an Examination of One Episode of Teaching and Learning.

The following paper was an assignment for the Classroom Interaction elective as part of the portfolio submitted for the M Phil (Res Meth). I used one six-minute episode of a video-taped observation from the main study to analyse in detail. The purpose was partly to pilot the *method* of analysis, and partly to allow for detailed analysis that the word limit on the main study would not allow. The findings were then referred to in the main study in a much abbreviated form, though supported by the weight of the evidence contained in this paper.

Classroom interaction assignment

From scaffolding to handover:
An examination of one episode of literacy teaching and learning

MPhil (Research Methods)

Research and Graduate School of Education
University of Southampton

Jane Payler
June 2000

Contents

	Page
Introduction	143
The sample	143
Issues of recording and transcribing	144
Approach to analysis	147
Analysis - Scaffolding	149
- Spontaneous contributions	159
- Elicited contributions	160
Conclusion	163
Appendix: transcription	165
References to assignment	168

Introduction

The process of how children learn interests me. The socio-cultural theories of learning by apprenticeship in an interactive manner with an adult or more competent peer guiding and supporting the learning offer a convincing approach to understanding the process.

In this paper, I use the approach to examine evidence in one episode of teaching and learning for how the guidance and support given by the teacher result in learning by the children. By evidence, I do not mean some form of post-test of independent ability, but rather evidence during the interaction of understanding and skills established and of fine tuning of further support to build on growing understanding and abilities.

I intend to describe and explain my choice of sample before briefly highlighting some of the issues involved in recording and transcribing. The underlying approach to analysis is then outlined and the analysis carried out, looking at the teacher's scaffolding and the children's contributions. I conclude that scaffolding alone, even when done by a competent, experienced and sensitive teacher, may not be sufficient to lead automatically to internalisation unless elements of handover or transfer of responsibility are constantly built into the teaching and learning situation in truly interactive joint problem-solving. I suggest the use of spontaneous and elicited contributions to monitor this and make it possible.

The sample

The sample of classroom interaction used was collected as part of a larger research project. It is taken from one of two literacy hours in a Reception class which were video recorded. For the main research, many other literacy hours were observed, though not recorded, over a 10 week period and field notes made.

The excerpt chosen from one of the two recorded literacy hours shows a six minute episode of the teacher at a table with initially five children. It shows the children rewriting a story in their own words that had previously been read to them. The teacher is helping them. At the beginning of the excerpt, the children had already been working on their stories for 5 to 10 minutes, but this earlier work is not on tape. I had been recording other small groups.

My intentions in video recording were to try to capture evidence of the literacy teaching taking place and the children's interaction with it. I wanted to capture evidence of their learning in progress. To do so, I wanted to be able to study the words and actions of the participants. Words alone from audio-tape would have meant missing essential elements of the teaching and learning.

Edwards and Westgate (1994) warn about the impact of the researcher's orientation on the research carried out.

'This will influence the choice and definition of topic. It will affect ways in which data are recorded, analysed and interpreted, and in which outcomes are eventually conceived and reported. Any claim to absolute neutrality or objectivity would imply a failure to grasp the inescapability of these inter-related choices' (page 57).

I will attempt to briefly make my own orientation clear: it is based on a belief that teaching and learning are two separate though obviously linked things, and that the teacher and learner bring different things to and make different sense of the situation. It is also a belief that some teaching/learning situations are more likely to result in the learner eventually owning and being able to use the skills or knowledge than others, though what the learner brings to the situation may impact on this as much as what the teacher brings. Even given each teacher and learner's individual characteristics and life histories brought to the situation, there are generalisations that can be made about types of situations or processes and how, why and to what extent they succeed in the learner 'understanding'.

I was examining the literacy teaching/learning situations with a 'very good' reception teacher in a 'very good' school, which nonetheless had less success with some children during a year than a 'remedial' literacy programme subsequently had in about 15 weeks. I recognise the complexities and values involved in labelling schools and teachers as 'very good', but will not go into them here. I therefore set out to look at the distinguishing features of the teaching/learning situations. This has influenced my choice of sample to analyse. It is an example of individuals in a small group learning to write. It is an example typical for this class and shows the teacher guiding and assisting the pupils to write their own version of a story.

Edwards and Westgate (1994) rightly point out that decisions about how and what to record, transcribe and analyse come partly from questions such as
'How transparently does language carry meaning? In the organisation of talk in particular settings, what are the critical 'indicators' which reveal what is 'happening'? Is other evidence needed to supplement the recorded talk? (page 60).
For me, the evidence is in the talk, the actions, the gestures and the non-verbal communication. I have focused on what is said and what is done.

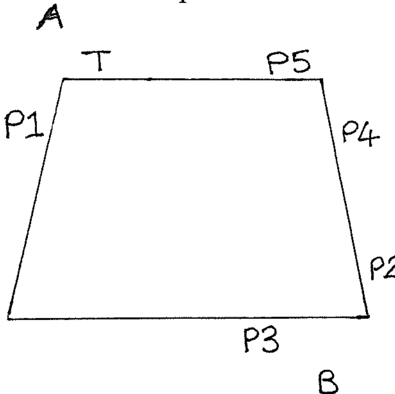
Issues of recording and transcribing

Recording

The recording was done with a small hand-held digital video camera. I had been in the classroom as an observer and helper for two weeks before this recording was made, but this was the first time I had video-recorded. The teacher may have felt inhibited or ill at

ease during recording, but this was not apparent when compared to her earlier and later unrecorded teaching. However, it remains an unresolved issue.

There were problems with the recording of which I was not really aware until I came to transcribe the tape. The diagram below illustrates the positions of the teacher and pupils around the table. The first part of the tape is taken from viewpoint A. The second and longest part of the tape is taken from viewpoint B.



P3 is one of the target children for my main research and apart from a very short part at the beginning of the tape, he is almost always in view. There are occasions, however, when I focus on the children's work and the children and teacher cannot be seen. The teacher's speech is louder and clearer than that of the children and on a couple of occasions I cannot hear the words said by a child. I had previously carried out a pilot run of video taping in a different reception classroom before beginning the main research and the sound quality had been better, but I was unaware of the difficulties with this recording. The problem could have skewed the results slightly. It appears from the tape, for example, that these children rarely spoke to each other during this time and spoke infrequently to the teacher. That is also my memory of the situation, but in fact children who were out of view, talking quietly to each other, would probably not have been picked up by the recording.

Transcribing

Before transcribing, I used Wray et al's guidelines for Transcribing Speech Orthographically (1998) and Edwards and Westgate's (1994) examples of transcription conventions to raise my own questions about what I needed to show in the transcription.

'The final report must provide evidence in support of whatever conclusions are drawn, and allow the reader some scope for judging these against at least sample sections of the record... In general, the guiding principle is still to suit the type and quantity of data to the kind and depth of analysis intended' (Edwards and Westgate 1994, page 61).

My analysis (the rationale for which I outline in **Approach to analysis,** page 8) was to be based on aspects of scaffolding as defined by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) and then

evidence of 'handover' or 'appropriation', using Edwards and Mercer's (1987) *'spontaneous and elicited contributions'* (page 131). In this context, by contribution, I mean both words and actions. For example, a child writing 'l' would be an elicited response to the teacher's prompt to 'Do a 'l''. I also wanted to analyse these things from the point of view of different learners. The transcription therefore needed to show:

- who was speaking and to whom
- participant's actions when in view, whether speaking or not
- an indication of time elapsing during the 6 minutes of the tape
- line numbers for ease of reference and to give an idea of the amount of text extracted and its place in the whole episode when selecting examples for the analysis.

The shortcomings of the recording became more obvious as the restricted view and occasionally indistinct speech of the children gave only partial information. I decided to use conventional punctuation for ease of reading. I haven't emphasised pauses or intonation in the speech, except for where a word had been deliberately segmented as part of the teaching or learning, for example 'g-et', 'ge-t'. In describing the participants' actions, I have tried to balance being brief, giving sufficient information, but avoiding too much interpretation. Children who appear to be waiting for the next instruction are described as 'sitting looking' or 'not writing'.

I have been selective both in the recording and transcribing, for example by omitting complex descriptions of intonation and non-verbal communication. I have chosen elements I consider to be important if an analysis of the features of 'scaffolding' and 'handover' is to be made. Furlong and Edwards (1986) suggest that in classroom research from any perspective, the 'facts' recorded and interpreted are in fact based on underlying theoretical assumptions. They argue that the

'separation of 'theory' and 'method' is quite unrealistic' (page 51)

because the researcher determines what counts as data and how to collect it as well as how to analyse and interpret it.

'In this review of approaches to classroom interaction, what is in question is not the 'objectivity' of the accounts but the researchers' awareness of their selectivity and the theoretical basis of that selectivity' (page 52).

Further selection was made in choosing sections of the transcription to use in the analysis. Furlong and Edwards (1986) have praised the work of Barnes (1976) for using lengthy transcriptions to make more explicit how he views the interaction and to make it more available to the reader for own interpretation. Given the small scale of this transcription and analysis, I have included the complete transcription in the appendix for just these reasons.

Approach to analysis

My theoretical framework for analysis of the interaction is based on the Vygotskian tradition and the neo-Vygotskians: Bruner, Rogoff and Edwards and Mercer. It begins with the belief that children's cognitive development takes place in a socially interactive way, culturally specific, based on their own attempts to make sense of their world, but also mediated and guided by others. Language and action are both important, the first acting as a symbolic tool for cognitive activity and the second a means of developing and demonstrating skills based on cognitive activity.

Vygotsky's notion of the *zone of proximal development* labels the gap from actual to potential cognitive development when guided and assisted by an adult or more competent peer. The process of guiding and assisting has been referred to by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) as *scaffolding*. The aim of this is to make it finally possible for the child to appropriate or internalise the knowledge and/or skill and so proceed beyond the need for scaffolding at that level. As Rogoff (1990) points out

'Most users of the term include notions of continual revisions of scaffolding to respond to children's advancements' (page 94).

She herself describes the handover as *'transferring responsibility'*.

'From the perspective of the caregiver, effective transfer of such responsibility is facilitated by sensitivity to children's competence in particular tasks so that responsibility is given according to their skills' (page 100).

Alongside this are

'Children's active efforts to arrange for participation at an appropriate level' (Rogoff 1990, page 100).

Schaffer (1996) strengthens this point, saying that concentrating on only the input of the adult or competent peer is inadequate alone.

'The adult does not impinge upon and shape an inert child but instead must act within the context of the child's characteristics and ongoing activity. Whatever effects are produced emerge from a joint enterprise to which the child as well as the adult contributes' (page 263).

Whilst accepting this to be the case, I suggest that the asymmetrical power relationship of a young child with a teacher in school may mean that the child is inhibited to a greater or lesser degree from fully participating in the learning situation in a truly interactive sense. The child may only partially make clear his or her interests, wishes, confusions and understanding, unless the teacher actively sets out to promote this. If all children interact fully at once, classroom management may be threatened. The teacher has to balance interaction with active young minds with managing the class of 30 children.

Using the 6 features of scaffolding suggested by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), I intend to analyse the classroom interaction for evidence of the teacher using the technique and of the children working in their ZPD. However, this alone, in my opinion, is insufficient to examine the process of 'handover' or internalisation of the knowledge and skills being taught and learnt. At which point(s) in the scaffolding and by the use of which means is

the guiding adult or peer ensuring handover? What is it that ensures and demonstrates the move towards independent functioning or understanding, rather than remaining in the scaffolded state? Schaffer (1996) reviews research on the mechanisms for internalisation. He refers to the

'Basic problem of how social interactions can affect children's cognition in such a way that joint solutions become the children's own internalised solutions, to be applied independently on all future occasions' (page 276).

One of the ways in which the amount of internalisation can be assessed is through the use of *'spontaneous or elicited contributions'* (Edwards and Mercer 1987). Only when a person attempts to express or do something unaided can their understanding or competence be gauged. Even then, it may only be an approximation of genuine understanding, *ritual* rather than *principled* to use Edwards and Mercer's words. By examining the spontaneous and elicited contributions in the interaction, we are able to gain some idea of how the teaching/learning situation fits into the child's ZPD, how the child is progressing and how involved the child is in the learning. Without elicited or spontaneous contributions, it could be argued that it is difficult for the teacher to decide whether or not s/he is working in the child's ZPD. S/he could be unclear as to whether or not she is making the fine adjustments described by Rogoff (1990) and Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), and what effect it is having on the child's internalisation. In the second part of the analysis, then, I intend to examine the interaction for spontaneous and elicited contributions.

The spontaneous contributions, Edwards and Mercer suggest, are the ones least influenced by the teacher's control, but still tend to be swayed by the teacher's setting of the agenda and criteria for deciding on the relevance and appropriateness of such contributions. These things are often developed over time in the classroom and so may not be immediately obvious from one episode of interaction. Edwards and Mercer define them as

'Occasions when pupils offered, without explicit invitation from the teacher, information, suggestions or analyses of the curriculum subject matter which had not, according to our observations and interviews, been taught or demonstrated' (1987, page 132).

In this analysis, I include actions such as attempting to write a word without prompting by the teacher and children's questions, which might indicate their line of thought.

'Elicited contributions', Edwards and Mercer define as contributions *'directly constrained by teachers' questions'* (1987, page 132). They suggest that the teacher's questions

'function as discursive devices through which the teacher is able to keep a continual check on the pupils' understandings, to ensure that various concepts, information or terms of reference are jointly understood, so that subsequent discourse may be predicated on a developing continuity and context of intersubjectivity' (1987, page 132).

Again, I include actions as well as words in the definition of 'elicited contributions', for example a child writing 'w' in response to being asked to 'Do a 'w''. However, I think it is important to distinguish between actions that demonstrate some level of internalisation of knowledge or skill and those that merely mimic or copy a model. I have also included the teacher's prompts as eliciting contributions, not just questions. A prompt to 'Come on then, do a 'r'' which leads the child to produce the grapheme 'r' from memory gives an elicited contribution demonstrating some level of skill, understanding and memory.

Using each of the tools of analysis outlined, I will consider the interaction by focusing on different children to ascertain what each has experienced. As the teacher holds simultaneous conversations with children, this often necessitates jumping from one section of transcription to another to indicate the continuing conversation with an individual.

Analysis:

Scaffolding

The characteristics of scaffolding, as described by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) are as follows:

1. Recruiting interest in the task
2. Simplifying the task
3. Maintaining pursuit of the goal
4. Marking critical features and discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution
5. Controlling frustration during problem solving
6. Demonstrating an idealised version of the act to be performed.

What evidence is there for the existence of scaffolding in the episode of interaction?

1. Recruiting interest

As the children's task was started before the video recording began, it is reasonable to assume that any recruitment of interest in the main task was done at the beginning and so would not appear in the transcript. There are, however, three examples in this episode. The first is in the preparation the teacher had done for the task. Each child's book had a sheet stuck into it with a picture of a teddy and the words 'This is the bear…', with space below to write the story. It can be seen as a way of recruiting interest and helping the children to begin.

The other two examples are in the transcript.

Key:

1 Line number
0.02 Time on video camera

T > Teacher talking to ...
P1 > Pupil talking to...
'The' Words written or to be written as part of the story.
't' Sound of letter given
(...) Speech unclear
'boy'
(Speech overlap
'boy'
(T points) Observer description
'g-et' Sound segmentation
: Part of transcript omitted

Sequence 1

69 T > P1,P2,P4,P5 What you people are going to do – *(T to P1)* Full stop, please! – is go on the floor – (*T to P3*) Hurry up, P3, you're (...) – is go on the floor and draw me a lovely picture of what you've written about.
70 P2 > T (...)
71 T > P2 Wait a minute, please. You'll have to work on the floor. We haven't got a table.
72 4.21 T > P1,P2,P4,P5 A really nice picture. Draw in pencil, colour in crayon.

Sequence 2

88 5.50 T > P9 Right, P9, we're going to write about that story. Oh dear.

Sequence 1 shows the teacher recruiting the interest of the original group of children in the next task to be done. Sequence 2, which comes right at the end of the tape, shows the teacher recruiting the interest of a member of the next group of children who are about to write the story.

2. Simplifying the task

There is much evidence of the teacher simplifying the tasks for the pupils in this episode.

Sequence 3

14 P2 > T 'Went'. *(in response to earlier question by T 'The boy?)*
15 0.43 T > P2 'Went', 'went', 'w'. *(P2 shakes head while looking at T, then writes 'w')*

The teacher gives P2 the initial sound of the word 'went' to encourage him to write.

Sequence 4

5 0.19 P3 > T 'Lunch'
6 T > P3 Right. Leave a space. What does it begin with?
7 P3 > T 'l'
8 0.23 T > P3 Come on then, write 'lunch', 'l'. Good boy. *(P3 has pen poised, looking at T, mouthing 'l')*
:
12 T > P3 Come on, P3, 'lunch'. Write it yourself. *(P3 holding pen up, looking at T, hesitant)*
:

16 0.49 T > P3 Come on, P3. Can you do 'l'? *(P3 shakes head. T demonstrates with finger in air how to write 'l'. P3 writes it, then waits. P1 is now visible again, sitting, looking)*

The teacher at first asks the child for the initial sound of the word, then recognising that P3 is apparently having difficulty in remembering the grapheme for 'l', she simplifies it by drawing it in the air with her finger. This is also an example of **controlling frustration**.

Sequence 5

23 1.17 T > P2 'The boy went', 'w-ent'. *(P2 had written 'w'. T takes scrap of paper and writes 'went'. P3 and P4 visible, sitting looking. T passes paper back to P2)*
24 P2 > T I've done a 'w'. *(P2 starts to copy 'went'. P4 still sitting, looking. P5's book in view, not being touched)*

The teacher breaks 'went' into its onset and rime, then writes the word out, simplifying the task further by providing a written model to copy.

Sequence 6

26 1.37 T >P2 Good boy, 'went to'?
27 P2 > T 'Get'
28 T > P2 What does 'get' begin with?
29 P2 > T 'g'
30 T > P2 Good boy, go on. *(P2 begins to write)*
31 T > P2 Leave a space, leave a space!
:
34 1.52 T > P2 'G-et', 'g-e-t', 't', 't' *(said in response to P2 having written 'g', then sitting waiting. P2 writes 'e', then looks to T again)*
35 T > P2 't', 't', 'ge-t'. *(P2 writes 't')*
36 T > P2 Good!

Here we can see encouragement of a child to give the initial sound of the word, one of the first stages of phonemic segmentation, by elicited contribution. In response to 'g' being written by P2, the teacher offers the onset and rime, then the complete phonemic segmentation, emphasising the 'e' to encourage the child to write 'e', which he does. The child again looks for support and the teacher simplifies the task again by providing the final phoneme and segmenting the word to emphasise the final phoneme. The child successfully writes 'get' and is praised. This is a good example of the teacher modelling a method of phonemic segmentation of a CVC word. Whether or not the child would then be able to do it himself is not evident from the tape. There is also evidence in this sequence of the teacher **maintaining pursuit of the goal,** line 30, and of **marking critical features and discrepancies,** line 31.

There are many examples in the transcription of the teacher simplifying the task by providing the child with a written model of a word so that it can be copied.

Sequence 7

2 0.02 T > P4 or P5 'Picnic', right, 'picnic' *(T writing on scrap of paper)*

:

19 1.05 T > P3 'Lunch', right. *(T takes scrap of paper and writes 'lunch' on it. While she is writing, P1 indicates to T that she has written the next word. P4 and P2 are both in view, sitting, looking)*

:

23 1.17 T > P2 'The boy went', 'w-ent'. *(P2 had written 'w'. T takes scrap of paper and writes 'went'. P3 and P4 visible, sitting looking. T passes paper back to P2)*

:

38 2.03 T > P2 'His', you can do 'his', 'h-is'. We did it on the board. Do you remember? Go on then. *(T takes a scrap of paper, writes on it and passes it to someone out of view, possibly P1)*

:

40 T > P3 'i' *(P3 has written 'T' instead of –or partly forming- 'I'. T notices, writes 'I' on paper and passes it to P3).*

:

45 2.40 T > P3 'It', go on, spell it. Do a 't' then you've got it. Look! The word 'it' *(taking scrap of paper and writing 'it')* is spelt 'i-t'. *(T passes paper back to P3)*

:

50 T > P2 Good boy, you've done really well. *(T writes 'socks' on scrap of paper and hands it to P2)*

:

55 T > P3 Go on then. *(P3 starts to write.)* Leave a space. You must leave a space. *(T writes, possibly 'raining', on scrap of paper and passes it to P1)*

56 3.18 T > P3 'Was', 'w'. *(T takes scrap of paper and writes 'was'. Passes it to P3.)* It's difficult, 'was'. It's not written as it sounds.

:

83 T > P3 Come on, then do a 'r'. Leave a space. Off you go. Do a 'r'. *(P3 puts a finger on his work to mark a space, pen poised, ready to write 'r'. T takes scrap of paper to write 'raining'*

It was preceded, in most cases, by the teacher asking the child to provide the initial phoneme/grapheme.

3. Maintaining pursuit of the goal

The teacher is often seen actively maintaining pursuit of the goal using different techniques, which include giving instructions, asking questions, using gestures and praising.

Giving instructions

Sequence 8

87 5.39 T > P3 Cross it out because you need to go and draw your picture in a minute. Would you quickly cross out your 'r' and then write 'raining', please *(T pointing at scrap of paper)* and then go and do your picture on the floor. Hurry up, then. *(P3 has pencil poised and begins to write next letter, copying from paper)*

Asking questions

Sequence 9

32 1.41 T > P3 Right, 'This is the boy who ate the lunch.' Full stop. What else are you going to write?

Using gestures

Sequence 10

18 'went'. (...) Leave a space. Now do a *(.T puts finger on P2's page to indicate a finger space. P1 back in shot, sitting, not writing)*

:

60 3.36 T > P3 Right, P3, I don't think we really want you being silly. *(P3 is pulling faces at the child next to him)*. Are you going to write 'was'? *(T points at scrap of paper given at 3.18. P3 has pen poised, ready to write.)*

:

67 P2 > T *(P2 reads rest of words, following T's pointing finger. Can't be heard on tape.)*

Praising

Sequence 11

8 0.23 T > P3 Come on then, write 'lunch', 'l'. Good boy. *(P3 has pen poised, looking at T, mouthing 'l')*

:

20 T > P1 Good girl, leave a space. *(T passes 'lunch' to P3).* 'It was', what sound does 'was' begin with?

21 P1 > T 'w'

22 T > P1 Good girl. Leave a space. *(P1 still sitting, not writing, then out of view)*

:

26 1.37 T >P2 Good boy, 'went to'?

:

30 T > P2 Good boy, go on. *(P2 begins to write)*

:

35 T > P2 't', 't', 'ge-t'. *(P2 writes 't')*

36 T > P2 Good!

:

50 T > P2 Good boy, you've done really well. *(T writes 'socks' on scrap of paper and hands it to P2)*

:

62 T > P2 Good, brilliant. Full stop and read it out to me. That's very good.

:

67 P2 > T *(P2 reads rest of words, following T's pointing finger. Can't be heard on tape.)*

68 4.08 T > P2 Oh, brilliant.

:

84 5.24 T > ? Wonderful. *(T passes scrap of paper back to P3)*

In the taped episode of interaction, most of the praise is directed at P2. He appears to be the most successful in following the teacher's lead promptly, writing 'get' and 'his' and copying the words given to him.

4. Marking critical features and discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution

It appears from the transcription that the critical features most encouraged relate to accuracy in simple punctuation, letter formation including correct case, spelling, recognising initial phonemes and general standards of neatness, care and completion of

the task or sub-tasks. Apart from initial phonemes, these are given as instructions and not in the form of elicited contributions.

Leaving a space

Sequence 12

6 T > P3 Right. Leave a space. What does it begin with?

:

17 T > P2 No, I need a space. Cross your 'w' out with a pencil and leave a space before you write
18 'went'. (…) Leave a space. Now do a (*.T puts finger on P2's page to indicate a finger space. P1 back in shot, sitting, not writing*)

:

20 T > P1 Good girl, leave a space. (*T passes 'lunch' to P3).* 'It was', what sound does 'was' begin with?
21 P1 > T 'w'
22 T > P1 Good girl. Leave a space. (*P1 still sitting, not writing, then out of view*)

:

31 T > P2 Leave a space, leave a space!

:

55 T > P3 Go on then. *(P3 starts to write.)* Leave a space. You must leave a space. (*T writes, possibly 'raining', on scrap of paper and passes it to P1*)

The children frequently appear to forget to leave spaces between words and so are reminded or corrected by the teacher.

Letter formation and case

Sequence 13

40 T > P3 'i' (*P3 has written 'T' instead of –or partly forming- 'I'. T notices, writes 'I' on paper and passes it to P3).*
41 T > P3 There's a capital 'I'. I've done it.

:

85 T > P3 Right. Oh, oh that's a big one. Do a lower case 'R' please. Cross it out in pencil. (*T hands pencil to P3*) Cross it out in pencil, in pencil. Right. (*P3 picks up pencil, shows it to P10 next to him. P10 starts to hit pencil*)

P3 appears to still be confusing the use of lower and upper case letters. The teacher directs him.

Phonemic segmentation

Sequence 14

6 T > P3 Right. Leave a space. What does it begin with?
7 P3 > T 'l'
8 0.23 T > P3 Come on then, write 'lunch', 'l'. Good boy. (*P3 has pen poised, looking at T, mouthing 'l'*)

:

15 0.43 T > P2 'Went', 'went', 'w'. (*P2 shakes head while looking at T, then writes 'w'*)

:

20 T > P1 Good girl, leave a space. (*T passes 'lunch' to P3).* 'It was', what sound does 'was' begin with?
21 P1 > T 'w'
22 T > P1 Good girl. Leave a space. (*P1 still sitting, not writing, then out of view*)

23 1.17 T > P2 'The boy went', 'w-ent'. *(P2 had written 'w'. T takes scrap of paper and writes 'went'. P3 and P4 visible, sitting looking. T passes paper back to P2)*

:

27 P2 > T 'Get'
28 T > P2 What does 'get' begin with?
29 P2 > T 'g'

:

34 1.52 T > P2 'G-et', 'g-e-t', 't', 't' *(said in response to P2 having written 'g', then sitting waiting. P2 writes 'e', then looks to T again)*
35 T > P2 't', 't', 'ge-t'. *(P2 writes 't')*

:

38 2.03 T > P2 'His', you can do 'his', 'h-is'. We did it on the board. Do you remember? Go on then. *(T takes a scrap of paper, writes on it and passes it to someone out of view, possibly P1)*

:

53 3.03 T >P3 'It was', what does 'was' begin with?
54 P3 > T 'w'

:

79 5.11 T > P3 'It was' what?
80 P3 > T 'Raining'
81 T > P3 Right, what does 'raining' begin with?
82 5.17 P3 > T 'r'

The teacher implies through her questioning that the children should be able to share responsibility for identifying the initial phonemes, though she sometimes offers them herself. She also models how to segment some CVC words.

Correct spelling
Sequence 15

42 P3 > T How do you write 'I'?
43 2.32 T > P3 'It!' You need a 't' on the end of that, 'i-t'. Put a 't' on the end of your 'i' , 'it'. *(T pointing to place on P3's writing. P3 still appears hesitant, pen poised, looking at T)*

:

45 2.40 T > P3 'It', go on, spell it. Do a 't' then you've got it. Look! The word 'it' *(taking scrap of paper and writing 'it')* is spelt 'i-t'. *(T passes paper back to P3)*

:

56 3.18 T > P3 'Was', 'w'. *(T takes scrap of paper and writes 'was'. Passes it to P3.)* It's difficult, 'was'. It's not written as it sounds.

The teacher distinguishes between words that she feels the children would find easier to spell, for example 'it', and those that are more difficult, 'was'. Both are often given as a written model, however, and no explicit distinction is made between words that are written as they sound using simple phoneme/grapheme correspondence and those that are not.

Standards of neatness, care and completion
Sequence 16

57 3.22 P6 > T (...) *(P6 comes from another table to show completed work to T)*
58 T > P6 Right, have we got full stops (...)? Are they coloured beautifully? Let me have a look. *(T looks at P6's work)*

59 3.28 <u>T > P6</u> I think we could colour a bit neater than that, couldn't we. Take care with your colouring and put your buttons on your television. *(T turns away from P6. P6 moves away. P4 and P5 still sitting looking. P1 writing, copying from scrap of paper).*

:

74 <u>T > Red group</u> Okay, red group, (...) Put them in the finished tray with your name on. (...) Well, you'll have to leave it, now. You've had plenty of time. Leave the (...) there. Put in (...) Make sure it's named, Sweetie, please. *(Red group had been working on the floor until now*

:

85 <u>T > P3</u> Right. Oh, oh that's a big one. Do a lower case 'R' please. Cross it out in pencil. *(T hands pencil to P3)* Cross it out in pencil, in pencil. Right. *(P3 picks up pencil, shows it to P10 next to him. P10 starts to hit pencil)*
86 <u>T > P8</u> P8
87 5.39 <u>T > P3</u> Cross it out because you need to go and draw your picture in a minute. Would you quickly cross out your 'r' and then write 'raining', please *(T pointing at scrap of paper)* and then go and do your picture on the floor. Hurry up, then. *(P3 has pencil poised and begins to write next letter, copying from paper)*

Expectations are set relating to simple punctuation, neatness and diligence in completing the tasks and sub-tasks.

5. Controlling frustration during problem solving and *6. Demonstrating an idealised version of the act to be performed*

These two aspects of scaffolding often blend into each other. In sequence 4 (page 11) a child is trying to write 'lunch'. The teacher notices P3's hesitancy and first provides a model of the grapheme 'l', then provides a model of the word 'lunch' on paper. In sequence 6 (page 12), the teacher also notices that a child has stopped making progress and so she provides a model of how to proceed, this time by phonemic segmentation.

In the sequence below, there appears to be some confusion between what P3 appears to be doing and the teacher's perception of what he is trying to do.

Sequence 17
40 <u>T > P3</u> 'i' *(P3 has written 'T' instead of –or partly forming- 'I'. T notices, writes 'I' on paper and passes it to P3).*
41 <u>T > P3</u> There's a capital 'I'. I've done it.
42 <u>P3 > T</u> How do you write 'l'?
43 2.32 <u>T > P3</u> 'It!' You need a 't' on the end of that, 'i-t'. Put a 't' on the end of your 'i' , 'it'. *(T pointing to place on P3's writing. P3 still appears hesitant, pen poised, looking at T)*
44 <u>T > P1</u> *(off screen)* What does 'raining' begin with? (...) 'Raining'
45 2.40 <u>T > P3</u> 'It', go on, spell it. Do a 't' then you've got it. Look! The word 'it' *(taking scrap of paper and writing 'it')* is spelt 'i-t'. *(T passes paper back to P3)*

The source of confusion or frustration from P3's point of view is not explored. The teacher does not, for example, find out why he wanted to know how to do a 'l' when she thought he was trying to write 'it'. Instead, the idealised version was provided, at first by verbal instruction and then by a written model, which P3 accepts.

Sequence 18
62 <u>T > P2</u> Good, brilliant. Full stop and read it out to me. That's very good.
63 3.49 <u>P2 > T</u> 'The' *(P2 hesitates, trying to read back his own work)*

64 T > P2 'The bear who ate' *(T pointing at P2's writing and reading with him)*
65 P2 > T 'the picnic lunch' 'boy'
((
66 T > P2 'picnic' 'the' 'boy'
67 P2 > T *(P2 reads rest of words, following T's pointing finger. Can't be heard on tape.)*

In this sequence, P2's hesitancy in reading some of the words prompts the teacher to join in, providing the words needed and leading with her finger.

The only other signs of frustration in the whole episode of interaction are the times when the children sit waiting for the next instruction. These do not truly appear to be signs of frustration, but rather indicators for the teacher that help or the next instruction is needed. P1, for example, is not in view for all of the tape, but it is possible to track her writing and interaction with the teacher. Much of her time is spent waiting.

P1's actions
Sequence 19

1 0.00 T > P1 'The bear', go on, off you go, 'it', 'it' 'it'. *(T pointing with pencil at P1's writing*

:

16 0.49 T > P3 Come on, P3. Can you do 'I'? *(P3 shakes head. T demonstrates with finger in air how to write 'I'. P3 writes it, then waits. P1 is now visible again, sitting, looking)*

:

19 1.05 T > P3 'Lunch', right. *(T takes scrap of paper and writes 'lunch' on it. While she is writing, P1 indicates to T that she has written the next word. P4 and P2 are both in view, sitting, looking)*

20 T > P1 Good girl, leave a space. *(T passes 'lunch' to P3).* 'It was', what sound does 'was' begin with?

21 P1 > T 'w'

22 T > P1 Good girl. Leave a space. *(P1 still sitting, not writing, then out of view)*

:

44 T > P1 *(off screen)* What does 'raining' begin with? (...) 'Raining'

:

52 T > P1 Do a 'r' for raining, Poppet *(P1's hands have been in view since line 39. She has not been writing. P3 is sitting, looking. P5 and P4 are both sitting, not writing.)*

:

55 T > P3 Go on then. *(P3 starts to write.)* Leave a space. You must leave a space. *(T writes, possibly 'raining', on scrap of paper and passes it to P1)*

:

59 3.28 T > P6 I think we could colour a bit neater than that, couldn't we. Take care with your colouring and put your buttons on your television. *(T turns away from P6. P6 moves away. P4 and P5 still sitting looking. P1 writing, copying from scrap of paper).*

:

69 T > P1,P2,P4,P5 What you people are going to do – *(T to P1)* Full stop, please! – is go on the floor – *(T to P3)* Hurry up, P3, you're (...) – is go on the floor and draw me a lovely picture of what you've written about.

P1 appears to have written 'It was raining' during the time of the tape. 'Raining' was provided by the teacher on paper, 'it' may have been written alone, and the 'w' of 'was' had been provided by P1, though it is unclear how she achieved the rest of the word.

It is unclear how much progress is made by P4 and P5 during the tape as they also move in and out of view. However, it does appear that they too spend much time waiting.

P4 and P5's actions
Sequence 20

2 0.02 T > P4 or P5 'Picnic', right, 'picnic' *(T writing on scrap of paper)*

:

9 T > P5 'It was raining'. Full stop.

:

11 0.38 T > P2, P4 (...)

:

13 P4 > T (...)

:

19 1.05 T > P3 'Lunch', right. *(T takes scrap of paper and writes 'lunch' on it. While she is writing, P1 indicates to T that she has written the next word. P4 and P2 are both in view, sitting, looking)*

:

23 1.17 T > P2 'The boy went', 'w-ent'. *(P2 had written 'w'. T takes scrap of paper and writes 'went'. P3 and P4 visible, sitting looking. T passes paper back to P2)*

24 P2 > T I've done a 'w'. *(P2 starts to copy 'went'. P4 still sitting, looking. P5's book in view, not being touched)*

25 1.26 T > P3 Come on, P3, please, 'lunch'. *(T pointing at word on paper. P5's hands in shot, writing a word. P4 still sitting, looking.)*

:

46 2.45 P5 > T Done it, done it.

:

51 3.01 T > P5 Just a minute, P5.

52 T > P1 Do a 'r' for raining, Poppet *(P1's hands have been in view since line 39. She has not been writing. P3 is sitting, looking. P5 and P4 are both sitting, not writing.)*

:

59 3.28 T > P6 I think we could colour a bit neater than that, couldn't we. Take care with your colouring and put your buttons on your television. *(T turns away from P6. P6 moves away. P4 and P5 still sitting looking. P1 writing, copying from scrap of paper)*.

:

69 T > P1,P2,P4,P5 What you people are going to do – *(T to P1)* Full stop, please! – is go on the floor – *(T to P3)* Hurry up, P3, you're (...) – is go on the floor and draw me a lovely picture of what you've written about.

My impression is that P4 has finished writing and has been sitting waiting throughout the tape and that P5 had only 'picnic' left to write, which was given on paper by the teacher and copied. Although one interpretation of the evidence would be that the children spend much of their time awaiting the next instruction or modelled version to copy, another interpretation could be based on the age of the children. They are very young children, all 4 years at the time of the recording, who had been writing for several minutes before taping began and have now reached the end of their attention span. They therefore need extra support and guidance to keep them going. Having observed many such sessions in this classroom, I conclude that both are true. The pattern of writing the initial letter after prompting then waiting for the word to be given was typical. Their ability to do this with

any sort of momentum often did drop towards the end of a task and the children sometimes expressed relief when they had finished.

Scaffolding is not simply a set of features that can be considered individually in the hope that they add up to cumulative teaching and learning. Instead, it is the description of an interactive process. I have identified all of Wood, Bruner and Ross's features of scaffolding as being present to a greater or lesser extent in the taped episode of teaching and learning and the features do often blend into one another. The greatest emphasis appears to be on simplifying the task, maintaining pursuit of the goal, demonstrating an idealised version and marking discrepancies between this and what has been produced. The pattern of scaffolding may to some extent reflect the timing of the taped episode in the whole literacy hour.

From the learners' point of view, they have been involved in:
- thinking up words to re-tell the bear story from memory,
- sometimes producing the initial phoneme of the words and writing the grapheme, prompted or helped by the teacher,
- on three occasions writing a word themselves that was familiar or had been phonemically segmented by the teacher, without a written model,
- and copying the majority of other words from a written model produced by the teacher.

Almost all of these involved the children in waiting and prompting from the teacher, or waiting and indicating to the teacher that the last sub-task had been completed. The teacher appears to be successfully scaffolding, but what of internalisation? What is the evidence for the children's understanding and appropriation of the skills and knowledge being taught, for the process of handover? Rogoff (1990) maintains that the evidence for advances in understanding are present in the interactions or 'social exchanges' themselves and that it is here *'that we should look for the advances in individuals' ways of thinking and acting'* (Rogoff 1990, page 195).

If these are not to be solely reflective of what the teacher has just given to the child, but instead to offer some idea of what progress the child is making in contributing to the task, using his or her growing skills and understanding, then we need to look at the spontaneous and elicited contributions. 'Cued' contributions, as described by Edwards and Mercer (1987), will not be so enlightening.

Spontaneous contributions

There are very few spontaneous contributions from the children, only 7 appearing in the taped episode.

Sequence 21

3 0.06 <u>P2 > P3</u> Did you use these (...)? *(P2 pointing at P3's work)*

:

19 1.05 T > P3 'Lunch', right. *(T takes scrap of paper and writes 'lunch' on it. While she is writing, P1 indicates to T that she has written the next word. P4 and P2 are both in view, sitting, looking)*

:

24 P2 > T I've done a 'w'. *(P2 starts to copy 'went'. P4 still sitting, looking. P5's book in view, not being touched)*

:

26 1.37 T >P2 Good boy, 'went to'?
27 P2 > T 'Get'

:

42 P3 > T How do you write 'l'?

:

46 2.45 P5 > T Done it, done it.

:

57 3.22 P6 > T (...) *(P6 comes from another table to show completed work to T)*

:

613.14 P2 > T I've finished

Of the spontaneous contributions, one possibly, though not decisively, involves P2 writing 'to' completely undirected and unaided (lines 24 to 26). One involves P3 asking for help in writing 'l', but the question seems incongruent with the teacher's perception of what P3 should be trying to write and so P3 is redirected. We are left unclear about why he thought he needed a 'l'. The others are all indications that the child has completed part of the task and is awaiting further help, prompting, praise or permission to proceed. They do not tell us anything of the children's understanding or abilities, except that they need help, prompting, praise or permission before they feel able to proceed.

Elicited contributions

These fall into different categories: contributing words to tell the story; demonstrating a knowledge of initial phonemes; demonstrating the ability to write initial graphemes; demonstrating the ability to read with some assistance; demonstrating the ability to copy words written by the teacher, and demonstrating the ability to write some words when segmented by the teacher.

Contributing words to tell the story

Sequence 22

4 0.14 T > P3 Right. Come on, I want you to hurry up. 'This is the bear that ate the' what? *(T pointing with pencil at P3's writing)*
5 0.19 P3 > T 'Lunch'

:

10 T > P2 'The boy?' *(P3 still sitting, looking hesitant)*

:

14 P2 > T 'Went'. *(in response to earlier question by T 'The boy?)*

:

26 1.37 T >P2 Good boy, 'went to'?

27 P2 > T 'Get'

:

32 1.41 T > P3 Right, 'This is the boy who ate the lunch.' Full stop. What else are you going to write?

:

37 T > P3 'It was raining' *(P3 may have volunteered this before T, but it can't be heard on the tape)*

:

76 T > P3 Come on, 'it was' what? One more word to write. Which word do you want? (*P3 looks at his work*)

:

79 5.11 T > P3 'It was' what?

:

80 P3 > T 'Raining'

Demonstrating knowledge of initial phonemes

Sequence 23

6 T > P3 Right. Leave a space. What does it begin with?
7 P3 > T 'l'

:

20 T > P1 Good girl, leave a space. *(T passes 'lunch' to P3).* 'It was', what sound does 'was' begin with?
21 P1 > T 'w'

:

28 T > P2 What does 'get' begin with?
29 P2 > T 'g'

:

48 T > P2 'Get his…socks' begins with?
49 P2 > T 's'

:

53 3.03 T >P3 'It was', what does 'was' begin with?
54 P3 > T 'w'

:

81 T > P3 Right, what does 'raining' begin with?
82 5.17 P3 > T 'r'

Demonstrating the ability to write initial grapheme once phoneme has been established

Sequence 24

15 0.43 T > P2 'Went', 'went', 'w'. *(P2 shakes head while looking at T, then writes 'w')*

:

28 T > P2 What does 'get' begin with?
29 P2 > T 'g'
30 T > P2 Good boy, go on. *(P2 begins to write)*

:

34 1.52 T > P2 'G-et', 'g-e-t', 't', 't' *(said in response to P2 having written 'g', then sitting waiting. P2 writes 'e', then looks to T again)*

:

52 T > P1 Do a 'r' for raining, Poppet *(P1's hands have been in view since line 39. She has not been writing. P3 is sitting, looking. P5 and P4 are both sitting, not writing.)*
53 3.03 T >P3 'It was', what does 'was' begin with?
54 P3 > T 'w'
55 T > P3 Go on then. *(P3 starts to write.)* Leave a space. You must leave a space. *(T writes, possibly 'raining', on scrap of paper and passes it to P1)*
:
81 T > P3 Right, what does 'raining' begin with?
82 5.17 P3 > T 'r'
83 T > P3 Come on, then do a 'r'. Leave a space. Off you go. Do a 'r'. *(P3 puts a finger on his work to mark a space, pen poised, ready to write 'r'. T takes scrap of paper to write 'raining')*
84 5.24 T > ? Wonderful. *(T passes scrap of paper back to P3)*
85 T > P3 Right. Oh, oh that's a big one. Do a lower case 'R' please. Cross it out in pencil. *(T hands pencil to P3)* Cross it out in pencil, in pencil. Right. *(P3 picks up pencil, shows it to P10 next to him. P10 starts to hit pencil)*

Demonstrating the ability to read with some assistance

Sequence 25

62 T > P2 Good, brilliant. Full stop and read it out to me. That's very good.
63 3.49 P2 > T 'The' *(P2 hesitates, trying to read back his own work)*
64 T > P2 'The bear who ate' *(T pointing at P2's writing and reading with him)*
65 P2 > T 'the picnic lunch' 'boy'
((
66 T > P2 'picnic' 'the' 'boy'
67 P2 > T *(P2 reads rest of words, following T's pointing finger. Can't be heard on tape.)*

Demonstrating the ability to copy words written by the teacher

The following words are given to the children to copy. As far as we can tell from the tape, all are eventually copied successfully:

P1 Possibly 'was' and 'raining', unclear from tape.
P2 'went', 'socks'.
P3 'lunch', 'it', 'was', 'raining'.
P4 or P5 'picnic'.

Demonstrating the ability to write words when segmented by the teacher

P2 'get', 'his'.

What can be concluded from the elicited contributions? We can see that the children are contributing their own ideas for words to use in re-telling the story. To translate those words into a written form, we know that the children can often give the initial phoneme and can sometimes produce the grapheme for the initial phoneme, though the child does not always perform both of these tasks unaided. We also know that at least one child can write the graphemes for other parts of simple words once the teacher has phonemically

segmented the word for him. We know that the children can copy the written words provided by the teacher.

We do not know from this episode whether or not the children are able to extend their ability for phonemic segmentation from the initial phoneme to other phonemes in the words or whether they can translate phonemes into graphemes, other than for the initial phoneme. We are not able to determine the stage of the children's independent word-building and writing skills. The strategies they appear to have learnt to adopt are to wait or indicate a need for assistance so that the teacher will phonemically segment or, more usually, write the word to be copied.

Conclusion

The teacher in this tape has stated a desire, both to me and to some of the parents, for the children to begin to read and write more independently, to 'have a go' and not worry too much if mistakes are made. In practice, it is difficult to see the strategies that are being taught or learnt to make that goal become more realistic. The teacher is working very hard to maintain the children's pursuit of the given task and to support and guide what and how they are writing. She is clearly meeting the criteria for 'scaffolding' the children's learning and they appear to be acting as observers and apprentices in the writing process as she models the correct way to phonemically segment, to form letters of the correct case, to space, read back and spell correctly.

However, what is missing is clear evidence of the process of handover or appropriation of the knowledge and skills by the children in action. That is not to say that I would expect to see a beginning, middle and handover in an episode as short as this. These are skills the children have been working on throughout the year and will continue to do so. But the processes by which they are being given elements of responsibility or independence, in which they are seen taking part in the decision-making or problem-solving, demonstrating their developing understanding and confusions are not clear.

Rogoff (1990), in reviewing the research on conceptual development, concludes that:

- skills improve faster when a child is engaged in conversation about his or her rationale for decisions rather than simply having the rationale explained
- progressively simplifying the task leads to greater success at the time , but less success in a post test of independent ability
- most success in a post test occurs where the scaffolding during training has constantly been adjusted to take account of the child's progress.

> *'A crucial aspect of social interaction is the extent to which children participate in a shared thinking process with a more skilled partner'* (Rogoff 1990, page 164).
> *'It is within social exchanges that we should look for the advances in individuals' ways of thinking and acting'* (page 195).

I have chosen to use spontaneous and elicited contributions as evidence of advances in thinking and acting, decision-making and of constant adjustments to allow for progress. I believe that the analysis of the taped episode shows that in spite of successful scaffolding, there is potential for children's more active involvement in decision-making and in developing strategies for translating ideas and spoken words into a written form. A more active process of appropriation might be possible if greater use was made of elicited contributions, of involving children more directly in decisions about how words should be formed.

(Appendix to paper)

Transcription: Reception Class, Feb 2000, Literacy Hour – working in small groups.

Five children and the teacher are sitting around a table. The children each have an exercise book in front of them and pens. They are supposed to be re-writing a story in their own words that had been read to the class earlier on. A sheet has been glued into each child's book with a picture of a teddy and the words 'This is the bear…', with space underneath to finish the story.

Key:

2 Line number
0.03 Time on video camera
T > Teacher talking to …
P1 > Pupil talking to…
'The' Words written or to be written as part of the story.
't' Sound of letter given
(…) Speech unclear
'boy'
(Speech overlap
'boy'
(T points) Observer description
'g-et' Sound segmentation

Line Time Speaker to
1 0.00 T > P1 'The bear', go on, off you go, 'it', 'it' 'it'. *(T pointing with pencil at P1's writing)*
2 0.02 T > P4 or P5 'Picnic', right, 'picnic' *(T writing on scrap of paper)*
3 0.06 P2 > P3 Did you use these (…)? *(P2 pointing at P3's work)*
4 0.14 T > P3 Right. Come on, I want you to hurry up. 'This is the bear that ate the' what? *(T pointing with pencil at P3's writing)*
5 0.19 P3 > T 'Lunch'
6 T > P3 Right. Leave a space. What does it begin with?
7 P3 > T 'l'
8 0.23 T > P3 Come on then, write 'lunch', 'l'. Good boy. *(P3 has pen poised, looking at T, mouthing 'l')*
9 T > P5 'It was raining'. Full stop.
10 T > P2 'The boy?' *(P3 still sitting, looking hesitant)*
11 0.38 T > P2, P4 (…)
12 T > P3 Come on, P3, 'lunch'. Write it yourself. *(P3 holding pen up, looking at T, hesitant)*
13 P4 > T (…)
14 P2 > T 'Went'. *(in response to earlier question by T 'The boy?)*
15 0.43 T > P2 'Went', 'went', 'w'. *(P2 shakes head while looking at T, then writes 'w')*
16 0.49 T > P3 Come on, P3. Can you do 'l'? *(P3 shakes head. T demonstrates with finger in air how to write 'l'. P3 writes it, then waits. P1 is now visible again, sitting, looking)*
17 T > P2 No, I need a space. Cross your 'w' out with a pencil and leave a space before you write
18 'went'. (…) Leave a space. Now do a *(.T puts finger on P2's page to indicate a finger space. P1 back in shot, sitting, not writing)*

19 1.05 T > P3 'Lunch', right. *(T takes scrap of paper and writes 'lunch' on it. While she is writing, P1 indicates to T that she has written the next word. P4 and P2 are both in view, sitting, looking)*
20 T > P1 Good girl, leave a space. *(T passes 'lunch' to P3).* 'It was', what sound does 'was' begin with?
21 P1 > T 'w'
22 T > P1 Good girl. Leave a space. *(P1 still sitting, not writing, then out of view)*
23 1.17 T > P2 'The boy went', 'w-ent'. *(P2 had written 'w'. T takes scrap of paper and writes 'went'. P3 and P4 visible, sitting looking. T passes paper back to P2)*
24 P2 > T I've done a 'w'. *(P2 starts to copy 'went'. P4 still sitting, looking. P5's book in view, not being touched)*
25 1.26 T > P3 Come on, P3, please, 'lunch'. *(T pointing at 'lunch' on paper. P5's hands in shot, writing a word. P4 still sitting, looking.)*
26 1.37 T >P2 Good boy, 'went to'?
27 P2 > T 'Get'
28 T > P2 What does 'get' begin with?
29 P2 > T 'g'
30 T > P2 Good boy, go on. *(P2 begins to write)*
31 T > P2 Leave a space, leave a space!
32 1.41 T > P3 Right, 'This is the boy who ate the lunch.' Full stop. What else are you going to write? Sit
33 on your bottom please, rather than jiggling around in your chair. Sit on your bottom.
34 1.52 T > P2 'G-et', 'g-e-t', 't', 't' *(said in response to P2 having written 'g', then sitting waiting. P2 writes 'e', then looks to T again)*
35 T > P2 't', 't', 'ge-t'. *(P2 writes 't')*
36 T > P2 Good!
37 T > P3 'It was raining' *(P3 may have volunteered this before T, but it can't be heard on the tape)*
38 2.03 T > P2 'His', you can do 'his', 'h-is'. We did it on the board. Do you remember? Go on then. *(T takes a scrap of paper, writes on it and passes it to someone out of view, possibly P1)*
39 T > ? 'It was raining' Yep. Yeh. (...)
40 T > P3 'i' *(P3 has written 'T' instead of –or partly forming- 'I'. T notices, writes 'I' on paper and passes it to P3).*
41 T > P3 There's a capital 'I'. I've done it.
42 P3 > T How do you write 'I'?
43 2.32 T > P3 'It!' You need a 't' on the end of that, 'i-t'. Put a 't' on the end of your 'i', 'it'. *(T pointing to place on P3's writing. P3 still appears hesitant, pen poised, looking at T)*
44 T > P1 *(off screen)* What does 'raining' begin with? (...) 'Raining'
45 2.40 T > P3 'It', go on, spell it. Do a 't' then you've got it. Look! The word 'it' *(taking scrap of paper and writing 'it')* is spelt 'i-t'. *(T passes paper back to P3)*
46 2.45 P5 > T Done it, done it.
47 T > ? Full stop.
48 T > P2 'Get his...socks' begins with?
49 P2 > T 's'
50 T > P2 Good boy, you've done really well. *(T writes 'socks' on scrap of paper and hands it to P2)*
51 3.01 T > P5 Just a minute, P5.
52 T > P1 Do a 'r' for raining, Poppet *(P1's hands have been in view since line 39. She has not been writing. P3 is sitting, looking. P5 and P4 are both sitting, not writing.)*
53 3.03 T >P3 'It was', what does 'was' begin with?
54 P3 > T 'w'
55 T > P3 Go on then. *(P3 starts to write.)* Leave a space. You must leave a space. *(T writes, possibly 'raining', on scrap of paper and passes it to P1)*

56 3.18 T > P3 'Was', 'w'. *(T takes scrap of paper and writes 'was'. Passes it to P3.)* It's difficult, 'was'. It's not written as it sounds.
57 3.22 P6 > T (...) *(P6 comes from another table to show completed work to T)*
58 T > P6 Right, have we got full stops (...)? Are they coloured beautifully? Let me have a look. *(T looks at P6's work)*
59 3.28 T > P6 I think we could colour a bit neater than that, couldn't we. Take care with your colouring and put your buttons on your television. *(T turns away from P6. P6 moves away. P4 and P5 still sitting looking. P1 writing, copying from scrap of paper).*
60 3.36 T > P3 Right, P3, I don't think we really want you being silly. *(P3 is pulling faces at the child next to him).* Are you going to write 'was'? *(T points at scrap of paper given at 3.18. P3 has pen poised, ready to write.)*
613.14 P2 > T I've finished
62 T > P2 Good, brilliant. Full stop and read it out to me. That's very good.
63 3.49 P2 > T 'The' *(P2 hesitates, trying to read back his own work)*
64 T > P2 'The bear who ate' *(T pointing at P2's writing and reading with him)*
65 P2 > T 'the picnic lunch' 'boy'
((
66 T > P2 'picnic' 'the' 'boy'
67 P2 > T *(P2 reads rest of words, following T's pointing finger. Can't be heard on tape.)*
68 4.08 T > P2 Oh, brilliant.
69 T > P1,P2,P4,P5 What you people are going to do – *(T to P1)* Full stop, please! – is go on the floor – *(T to P3)* Hurry up, P3, you're (...) – is go on the floor and draw me a lovely picture of what you've written about.
70 P2 > T (...)
71 T > P2 Wait a minute, please. You'll have to work on the floor. We haven't got a table.
72 4.21 T > P1,P2,P4,P5 A really nice picture. Draw in pencil, colour in crayon.
73 T > P3 You stay there, P3. *(P3 has been sitting looking, not writing. P1, P2, P4 and P5 leave the table and go onto floor)*
74 T > Red group Okay, red group, (...) Put them in the finished tray with your name on. (...) Well, you'll have to leave it, now. You've had plenty of time. Leave the (...) there. Put in (...) Make sure it's named, Sweetie, please. *(Red group had been working on the floor until now)*
75 4.52 T > P8 P8, come and sit next to me, please. *(Red group comes to sit at the table)*
76 T > P3 Come on, 'it was' what? One more word to write. Which word do you want? *(P3 looks at his work)*
77 5.01 T > P2 P2, P2, you need your work. You're going to draw a picture. *(T passes book down to P2)*
78 T > P8 P8, sit next to me, please.
79 5.11 T > P3 'It was' what?
80 P3 > T 'Raining'
81 T > P3 Right, what does 'raining' begin with?
82 5.17 P3 > T 'r'
83 T > P3 Come on, then do a 'r'. Leave a space. Off you go. Do a 'r'. *(P3 puts a finger on his work to mark a space, pen poised, ready to write 'r'. T takes scrap of paper to write 'raining')*
84 5.24 T > ? Wonderful. *(T passes scrap of paper back to P3)*
85 T > P3 Right. Oh, oh that's a big one. Do a lower case 'R' please. Cross it out in pencil. *(T hands pencil to P3)* Cross it out in pencil, in pencil. Right. *(P3 picks up pencil, shows it to P10 next to him. P10 starts to hit pencil)*
86 T > P8 P8
87 5.39 T > P3 Cross it out because you need to go and draw your picture in a minute. Would you quickly cross out your 'r' and then write 'raining', please *(T pointing at scrap of paper)* and then go and do your picture on the floor. Hurry up, then. *(P3 has pencil poised and begins to write next letter, copying from paper)*
88 5.50 T > P9 Right, P9, we're going to write about that story. Oh dear.
89 6.00 **End of tape.**

References to assignment

Barnes, D. (1976) *From Communication to Curriculum.* Harmondsworth: Penguin books.

Edwards, A. D. and Westgate, D. P. G. (1994) *Investigating Classroom Talk.* London: Falmer Press.

Edwards, D. and Mercer, N. (1987) *Common Knowledge: The Development of Understanding in the Classroom.* (2nd Ed) London: Methuen.

Furlong, V. J. and Edwards, A. D. (1986) *Language in Classroom Interaction: Theory and Data.* In Hammersley, M. (Ed) *Controversies in Classroom Research.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Rogoff, B. (1990) *Apprenticeship in Thinking.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schaffer, H. R. (1996) *Joint Involvement Episodes as Context for Development.* In Daniels, H. (Ed) *An Introduction to Vygotsky* London: Routledge.

Wood, D., Bruner, J. and Ross, G. (1976) *The Role Of Tutoring in Problem –Solving.* Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 17: 89-100.

Wray, A., Trott, K. and Bloomer, A. (1998) *Projects in Linguistics.* Arnold.

Appendix iv:

Transcription of SIDNEY teaching video recorded on 10.2.00

Context: Two children are sitting at a table with a special needs assistant. One child (P2) is working alone on a worksheet, while the SNA works with the other child (P1) using the SIDNEY programme. After 10 mins, the SNA works with P2. The transcription covers the 10 minutes with P1.

Key to conventions:

T> Teacher talking to... (In this episode, the teacher was a Special Needs Assistant)
P1 Pupil no. 1 talking to...
P2 Pupil no. 2 talking to...
(*italics*) Participants' actions
(....) Indistinct speech
'd' Refers to sound of letter
'D' Refers to name of letter

Line no. Rev.

1 00.00 T>P1 Can you find the letter that says 'y'? *(P1 takes the letter 'y' from the arc.)*

2 00.06 T>P1 Oh, well done. Now can you write it for me in the sand? *(T passes sand tray to P1. P1 uses finger to correctly form 'y' in the sand.)*

3 00.11 T>P1 Oh, that's a really good one. Can you do it in the air? *(P1 traces a large 'y' in the air with his finger.)*

4 T>P1 Brilliant! Can you do it with your finger on the board? *(T moves sand tray out of the way. P1 traces 'y' on the board using his finger.)*

5 T>P1 Do you think you could be really clever and do one in your book? *(T passes exercise book and pencil to P1.)*

6 00.35 T>P1 What can you tell me about 'y' when you're doing it on the line?

7 00.47 P1>T It goes under the line.

8 T>P1 It does, doesn't it? See if you can do me a really good 'y' there. *(P1 writes 'y' in his book, watched over by T. T is interrupted by another teacher in the room. P1 watches then continues to do a line of 'y's in his book.)*

9 1.25 T>P2 That's really nice colouring, P2. Very good. Can you find all the 's's? Can you see them all here? *(T pointing to worksheet.)*

10 1.31 T>P1 That's lovely, P1. Now, can you put this 'y' back in the alphabet for me? *(T gives letter 'y' to P1.)* Show me where it goes. *(P1 takes it and replaces it in the arc of letters in the correct place.)*

11 1.45 T>P1 Can you find me the next one? *(P1 picks up 'z' and hands it to T.)* Wow! Do you know anything about this letter? *(T shows 'z' to P1.)*

12 P1>T It's called 'Z'.

13 T>P1 It's called 'Z', isn't it? *(Interruption from another teacher. T passes sand tray back to P1.)* Do you know what sound it makes?

14 2.03 P1>T Um *(shakes head)*, I don't know.

15 T>P1 It goes, look at me, it goes 'zzz'. Try it. What sound does it make?

16 2.11 P1>T 'zzzz'

17 T>P1 'zzz'. Now, I'll show you how it goes. *(T takes pencil and traces 'z' in the sand, saying as she does so...)* Across, back...Can you put your finger on it and try it out? *(P1 does so.)* And what sound does it make?

18 2.23 P1>T 'z'

19 T>P1 'z'. Are you going to try one by yourself, now?
20 P2>T I found two 'z's.
21 T>P2 Well done. Can you colour in, now ...the pictures? *(P1 traces a 'z' in the sand with his finger.)*
22 2.36 T>P1 Oh, that's a really good one. Let's see if you can do it in the air with your finger. *(P1 and T trace 'z' in the air with fingers simultaneously.)* Can you do it on the board? *(P1 does so. He looks slightly bored at this point, though has not until now.)* Can you do one in your book? *(T passes book back to P1.)* Now, where does 'z' go? It sits on the ...?
23 P1>T Line.
24 3.02 T>P1 Line. *(P1 writes a 'z' in his book.)* Oh, well done. What sound does it make? *(P2 is muttering words. T does not respond. P2 may be simply saying words aloud to himself, as T does not usually ignore pupils!)*
25 P1>T 'z'
26 T>P1 Can you do me two more? *(P1 nods, looking contented.)* Really good ones. *(P1 begins. Interruption by P3 coming into room with query for T. T answers, P3 leaves.)*
27 3.30 T>P1 Try one more? Nice and straight. *(P1 does so.)* Can you think of something that begins with that letter? *(P1 puts pencil to head and looks around, evidently thinking.)*
28 3.47 *(T waits for sometime to allow child time to think. No response.)*
29 3.57 T>P1 Place with lots and lots of animals?
30 P1>T Zoo.
31 T>P1 Yes! Can you think of another one that begins with 'z'? *(T gives time to think. No response.)*
32 T>P1 Black and white stripes?
33 P1>T Zebra.
34 4.07 T>P1 Yes! There aren't many 'z' words, are there? While you've got your book out, shall we practice some of these words? *(P1 is mouthing 'zoo' to himself.)*
35 P1>T Ah, I've got another one.
36 T>P1 Oh, go on then.
37 P1>T Zowie *(pronounced as in 'know')*
38 T>P1 Pardon?
39 4.19 P1>T Zowie.
40 T>P1 Oh, Zowie! *(pronounced as in 'how'.)* I don't think I've got Zowie with me. *(T looks in pencil holder.)*
41 P1>T No, Zowie! *(pronounced as in 'know' emphatically)*
42 T>P1 Zowie...oh, the girl's name. Do you know someone called Zowie?
43 P1>T Yes.
44 T>P1 Hmm, well done.
45 P1>T Mrs H's little girl.
46 T>P1 Oh, yes. I remember her. Are you going to sit up nicely? *(P1 has slumped into chair)*
47 P2>T I can't find yellow.
48 4.46 T>P2 There was one in there. *(T looks in pencil holder)*
49 T>P1 Could you do this word for me, P1? In your book could you do 'bad'? *(T looks in pot for pencil. P2 shows T broken pencil.)*
50 T>P2 Can you sharpen it for me? Over there at the bin. *(P1 begins to write.)*
51 5.07 T>P1 Oh, well done. We can tick that one off. How about 'kid'? *(P1 writes again, T watching.)* Oh, excellent and you remembered which sort of 'k' it was. Why is it that sort of 'k'?
52 5.28 P1>T 'i'
53 T>P1 Because it's followed by ...*(T points at 'i')*
54 P1>T 'i'
55 T>P1 'i'. 'Bed' *(P1 begins to write, T watches.)* Oh, that's super. You got that one right. 'Dig'? *(P1 writes, T watches. T also checks on P2 and her records.)* And you remembered the letter that goes under the line. 'Bag'.
56 6.03 P2>T (...)

57 T>P2 Done it?
58 P2>T Not yet.
59 6.10 T>P2 Not yet.
60 T>P1 *(P1 has written 'bag'.)* That's excellent, isn't it? *(P1 nods.)* Really good. Now you're going to try to build some words with your letters. *(T moves P1's book away.)*
61 6.25 P1>T Hey, where has it gone?
62 T>P1 Now, where did we get to? *(T checking records)* We're going to make some 'ip' words. Do you think you could find me the letters that make 'sip', P1?
63 6.47 P2>T Done it, done it!
64 T>P2 Well done.
65 P1>T 's-i-p'. *(P1 takes each letter in turn and puts it into position on the board.)*
66 T>P1 Can you sound it for me?
67 P1>T 's-i-p'.
68 T>P1 Spells?
69 P1>T Sip.
70 7.12 T>P1 Can you change 'sip' into 'rip'? *(P1 changes 's' for 'r'.)*
71 T>P1 Oh, well done. Can you change 'rip' into 'dip'? *(P1 puts back 'r' and takes 'b', making 'bip'. T notices but does not immediately correct.)*
72 7.41 T>P1 Are you going to sound it out for me? *(T points at letters. P1 begins to sound the first letter, saying 'd' instead of 'b'.)*
73 T>P1 Oh, is that right? Have a look at that letter again.
74 P1>T 'p', no, 'b'. *(T points to other letters)* 'i-p'.
75 8.11 T>P1 Is that 'dip'? Did that sound like 'dip'? Try again? *(P1 has already realised his mistake and swiftly changes the 'b' for 'd'.)*
76 T>P1 That's right, that's right. Well done. Change 'dip' into 'tip'.
77 P2>T Is there any blue? *(T looks for blue)*
78 T>P2 You'll have to use this one. *(P1 looking at his letters.)*
79 P1>T What am I doing again?
80 T>P1 'Tip'. *(P1 correctly changes 'dip' into 'tip'.)* Are you going to sound it for me?
81 P1>T 'T-i-p'.
82 8.45 T>P1 Now, we've been using a new letter haven't we? Could you change 'tip' into 'zip'? *(P1 does so looking pleased. T points to the letters and P1 sounds them.)*
83 P1>T 'Z-i-p'
84 T>P1 Spells?
85 P1>T 'Zip'.
86 9.03 T>P1 We found another 'z' word, didn't we? Now, here's a difficult one. Think about which letter you need to keep. Can you change 'zip' into 'pan'? *(P1 puts back 'z' and 'i')* Oh, well done. *(P1 forms rest of 'pan' using plastic letters.)* Sound it out for me? *(T pointing at letters.)*
87 P1>T 'P-a-n'.
88 T>P1 Oh, brilliant. Can you put them back in the alphabet, all of them this time?
89 9.44 P1>P2 Whoops (...)
90 P2>P1 (...)
91 T>P1 Would you like to do this sheet for me, while I talk to P2, now? *(T gives worksheet to P1, pointing at top to indicate instructions.)* What sound is this?
92 10.43 P1>T 's'
93 T>P1 Yes, find the 's' (...) and colour the picture.
94 T>P2 P2, are you going to put that away now and do this with me?

References

Adams, M. A. (1990) *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print.* Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Adler, P. A. and Adler, P. (1998) Observational Techniques. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds) (1998a) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials.* London: Sage Publications.

Anderson, G. (1990) *Fundamentals of Educational Research.* London: Falmer Press.

Beard, R. (1987) *Developing Reading 3-13.* London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Beard, R. (ed) (1993) *Teaching Literacy, Balancing Perspectives.* Abingdon: Hodder and Stoughton.

Beard, R. and Oakhill, J. (1994) *Reading by Apprenticeship? A critique of the apprenticeship approach to the teaching of reading.* Windsor: NFER.

Beech, J. R. (1994) Reading skills, strategies and their degree of tractability in dyslexia. In Fawcett, A. and Nicolson, R. (ed) *Dyslexia in Children: Multidisciplinary Perspectives.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Bentote, P. (1998) *Evaluation of SIDNEY.* Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service.

Bradley, L. and Bryant, P. E. (1983) Categorising sounds and learning to read-a causal connection. *Nature, 301,* p. 419-421.

British Educational Research Association (1992) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research.* BERA.

Brookes, G., Pugh, A. K. and Schagen, I. (1996) *Reading Performance at Nine.* Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.

Brooks, P. and Weeks, S. (1999) *Individual Styles in Learning to Spell.* Farnham: The Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre.

Bryant, P. and Bradley, L. (1985) *Children's Reading Problems.* Oxford: Blackwell

Carlisle, R. and Wendon, L. (1985) *The Letterland ABC.* Walton-on-Thames: Nelson.

Chasty, H. and Friel, J. (1991) *Children with Special Needs: Assessment, Law and Practice - Caught in the Act.* London: Kingsley.

Crisfield, J. (ed) (1996) *The Dyslexia Handbook.* Reading: British Dyslexia Association.

Czerniewska, P. (1992) *Learning about Writing: the Early Years.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Dombey, H. and Moustafa, M. (1998) *Whole to Part Phonics: How Children Learn to Read and Spell,* London: Centre for Language for Primary Education.

Donaldson, M. (1993) Sense and sensibility: some thoughts on the teaching of literacy. In Beard, R. *Teaching Literacy, Balancing Perspectives.* Abingdon: Hodder and Stoughton.

Dear, R. (1999) *An evaluative study of the SIDNEY programme.* Unpublished MA (Ed) Dissertation, Winchester: King Alfred College

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds) (1998a). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials.* London: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds) (1998b) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry.* London: Sage Publications.

Department for Education (1994) *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.* Great Britain.

Department for Education and Employment (1996) *Desirable Outcomes of Nursery Education on Entry to Compulsory Schooling.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Employment (1998) *The National Literacy Strategy - Framework for Teaching.* Great Britain.

Department for Education and Employment (1999) *Early Learning Goals.* Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Duane, D. D. (1991) Neurobiological issues in dyslexia. In Snowling, M. J. and Thompson, M. (eds) *Dyslexia: Integrating Theory and Practice.* London: Whurr Publishers Ltd.

Edwards, D. and Mercer, N. (1987) *Common Knowledge: The Development of Understanding in the Classroom* (2nd Ed) London: Methuen.

Ehri, L. (1995) Emergence of Word Reading in Beginning Reading, in Owen, P. and Pumfrey, P. *Emergent and Developing Reading: Messages for Teachers,* London: Falmer Press.

Fawcett, A. (1994) Dyslexia: a personal view. In Fawcett, A. and Nicolson, R. (eds) *Dyslexia in Children; Multidisciplinary Perspectives.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Fawcett, A. and Nicolson, R. (eds) (1994) *Dyslexia in children; Multidisciplinary perspectives.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Fontana, A. and Frey, J. H. Interviewing: The Art of Science. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds) (1998a) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials.* London: Sage Publications.

Frith, U. (1985) Beneath the surface of developmental dyslexia. In Patterson, K. E., Marshall, J. C. and Coltheart, M. (eds) *Surface Dyslexia.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Goodman,Y. M. (1986) Children coming to know literacy. In Teale, W. H. and Sulzby, E. (eds.) *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading,* 1-14. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Goswami, U. (1999) Causal Connections in Beginning Reading: the Importance of Rhyme. In *Journal of Research in Reading*, vol 22, issue 3, pp 217-240.

Goswami, U. and Bryant, P. (1990) *Phonological Skills and Learning to Read.* Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hall, N. (1987) *The Emergence of Literacy,* London: Hodder and Stoughton with UKRA.

Hammill, D. D. (1990) On defining learning disabilities: an emerging consensus. In *Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 23: 74-84.

Heath, S. B. (1983) *Ways with Words.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (1998) *The National Literacy Project – an HMI Evaluation.* OFSTED.

Holmes, R. M. (1998) *Fieldwork with Children.* London: Sage publications.

Huberman, A. M. and Miles, M. B. (1998) Data Management and Analysis Methods. In Denzin and Lincoln (1998a) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials.* London: Sage Publications.

Lawrence, B. and Carter, J. (1999) The identification and assessment of dyslexia: Class teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of the dyslexia screening test for seven to eight year old pupils. In *British Journal of Special Education,* 26: 2, June 1999, pp 107-111.

Lloyd, S. (1992) *Phonics Handbook.* Chigwell: Jolly Learning Limited.

Lovegrove, W. (1994) Visual deficits in dyslexia: Evidence and implications. In Fawcett and Nicolson (1994) *Dyslexia in children; Multidisciplinary perspectives.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Lundberg, I., Frost, J. and Peterson, O. P. (1988) Effects of a programme to stimulate phonological awareness in 235 6-year-old children. In *Reading Research Quarterly,* 23: 263-84.

Miles, T. R. and Miles, E. (1999) *Dyslexia: A Hundred Years on.* (2nd edition) Buckingham: Open University Press.

National Foundation for Educational Research (1998) *Evaluation of the National Literacy Project.* NFER.

Nicolson, R. and Fawcett, A. (1995) *Dyslexia Early Screening Test.* London: The Psychological Corporation.

OFSTED (1999) *Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties in Mainstream Schools.* OFSTED.

Ott, P. (1997) *How to Detect and Manage Dyslexia: A Reference and Resource Manual.* Oxford: Heinemann Educational.

Pavlidis, G. Th. (1990a) *Perspectives on Dyslexia,* vol. 1, *Neurology, Neuropsychology and Genetics.* Chichester: Wiley.

Pavlidis, G. Th. (1990b) *Perspectives on Dyslexia,* vol. 2 *Cognition, Language and Treatment.* Chichester: Wiley.

Pumfrey, P. and Reason, R. (1991) *Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia). Challenges and Responses.* London: Routledge.

Quin, V. and Macauslin, A. (1986) *Dyslexia: What parents ought to know.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Rack, J. P. (1994) Dyslexia: The Phonological Deficit Hypothesis. In Fawcett and Nicolson (1994) *Dyslexia in children; Multidisciplinary perspectives.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Riddick, B. (1996) *Living with Dyslexia.* London: Routledge.

Rogoff, B (1990) *Apprenticeship in Thinking.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Robson, C. (1993) *Real World Research.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Schaffer, H. R. (1996) Joint involvement episodes as context for development, in Daniels, H. (ed) *An Introduction to Vygotsky.* London: Routledge.

Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (1997) *The National Framework for Baseline Assessment.* London: SCAA.

Singleton, C., Thomas, K. and Leedale, R. (1996) *Cognitive Profiling System (CoPS1).* Nottinghamshire: Chameleon Educational Ltd.

Smith, B. (1994) *Through Writing to Reading: Classroom Strategies for Supporting Literacy.* London: Routledge.

Smith, F. (1973) *Psycholinguistics and Reading.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Snowling, M. J. (1987) *Dyslexia: A Cognitive Developmental Perspective.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Snowling, M. J. (1996) Annotation: Contemporary Approaches to the Teaching of Reading. In *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*; vol 37, no 2, pp 139-148, Great Britain, Elsevier Science Ltd.

Stake, R. E. (1998) Case Studies. In Denzin and Lincoln (1998b) op cit.

Stanovich, K. (1980) Towards an interactive-compensatory model of individual differences in the development of reading fluency. *Reading Research Quarterly 19, 32-71.*

Stanovich, K. E. (1988) Explaining the difference between the dyslexic and the garden-variety poor readers: the phonological core model. In *Journal of Learning Disability,* 21, 10, 590-604.

Stein, J. F. (1994) A visual defect in dyslexics? In Fawcett and Nicolson (1994) *Dyslexia in children; Multidisciplinary perspectives.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Teale, W. H. and Sulzby, E. eds. (1986) *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading,* 1-14. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Tizard, B. (1993) *Early Influences on Literacy,* in Beard, R. op cit.

Tizard, B. ; Blatchford, P.; Burke, J.; Farquhar, C. and Plewis, I. (1988) *Young Children at School in the Inner City.* London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Treiman, R. (1983) The structure of spoken syllables: evidence from novel word games. In *Cognition,* 15, 49-74.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in Society.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Vygotsky, L. V. (1987) *Thinking and Speech* (N. Minick, ed. and trans.) New York: Plenum.

Waterland, L. (1988) *Read with Me: an Apprenticeship Approach to Reading* (2nd edn). Stroud: Thimble Press.

Weinberger, J. (1996) *Literacy Goes to School,* London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Wertsch, J. V. and Tulviste, P. (1996) L. S. Vygotsky and contemporary developmental psychology, in Daniels, H. (ed) *An Introduction to Vygotsky* London: Routledge.

Wood, D., Bruner, J. and Ross, G. (1976) The Role Of Tutoring in Problem–Solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 17: 89-100.

Yap, R. and van der Leij, A. (1994) Automaticity deficits in word reading. In Fawcett and Nicolson (1994) *Dyslexia in children; Multidisciplinary perspectives.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Yin, R. K. (1989) *Case Study Research – Design and Methods.* London: Sage Publications.